

BETTER TOGETHER VCSE FORUM

11th June 2026



Better for everyone

Welcome & Introductions

Kate Burrows
Executive Director, Durham Community Action
Chair of the Better Together Forum



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Local Networks

Michael Wilkes
Local Network Manager – North

Transition to Local Networks

- **March 2022 – April 2023** – Review of County Council's main community engagement function (AAPs) which included a countywide consultation
- **July 2023** – New community engagement model for new Local Networks (LNs) to replace AAPs approved by County Council
- **November 2023** – New electoral boundaries for County Durham published by Local Government Boundary Commission
- **February 2024** – County Council agree review of the LN boundaries
- **July-September 2024** – Countywide consultation on proposed boundaries for LNs
- **November 2024** – County Council approve boundaries for LNs, draft Terms of Reference and Funding Criteria & Guidelines
- **March – June 2025** - Staffing restructure
- **June 2025** – Review of previously approved November 2024 Cabinet report
- **March 2026** – Cabinet approve changes to Local Networks

March 2026

- DCC Elected Member led review
- Cabinet agreed the way forward for Local Networks as a new model for how DCC deliver its community engagement practices
- Governance model agreed
- Geographies agreed
- Ways of delivery agreed with key focus on community and partner engagement
- Local Network Plans to drive the work of Local Networks

Locality Board

(including representation from the 12 Chairs of the Local Network Elected Member Boards)



Local Network Elected Member Board

- Has an elected Chair
- Meet 4 times per year
- Made up of ALL DCC elected members within the LN area

Role and remit:

- Final decision-making group
- Receive representation from Chair of Stakeholder Panel to present LN officer and stakeholder updates/recommendations for Local Network Action Plans (LNAPs)
- Discuss and agree LNAPs and the subsequent alignment of LN Funds
- Final sign-off for agreed LN projects and other associated LN Funding opportunities



Local Network Stakeholder Panel

- Has an elected Chair
- Meet up to 4 times per year
- Made up of a standard set of partner representatives (including T&PCs) with the option to locally co-opt up to 6 additional relevant organisations/groups including representatives from the local PIPs and SPPs

Role and remit:

- Information sharing
- Consultative and conversational
- Give focus to and shape the priorities of the LNAPs
- Discussion and consideration of local community consultation
- Discuss and review data sets and trends
- No financial decision making
- Advisory panel to the Local Network Elected Member Board

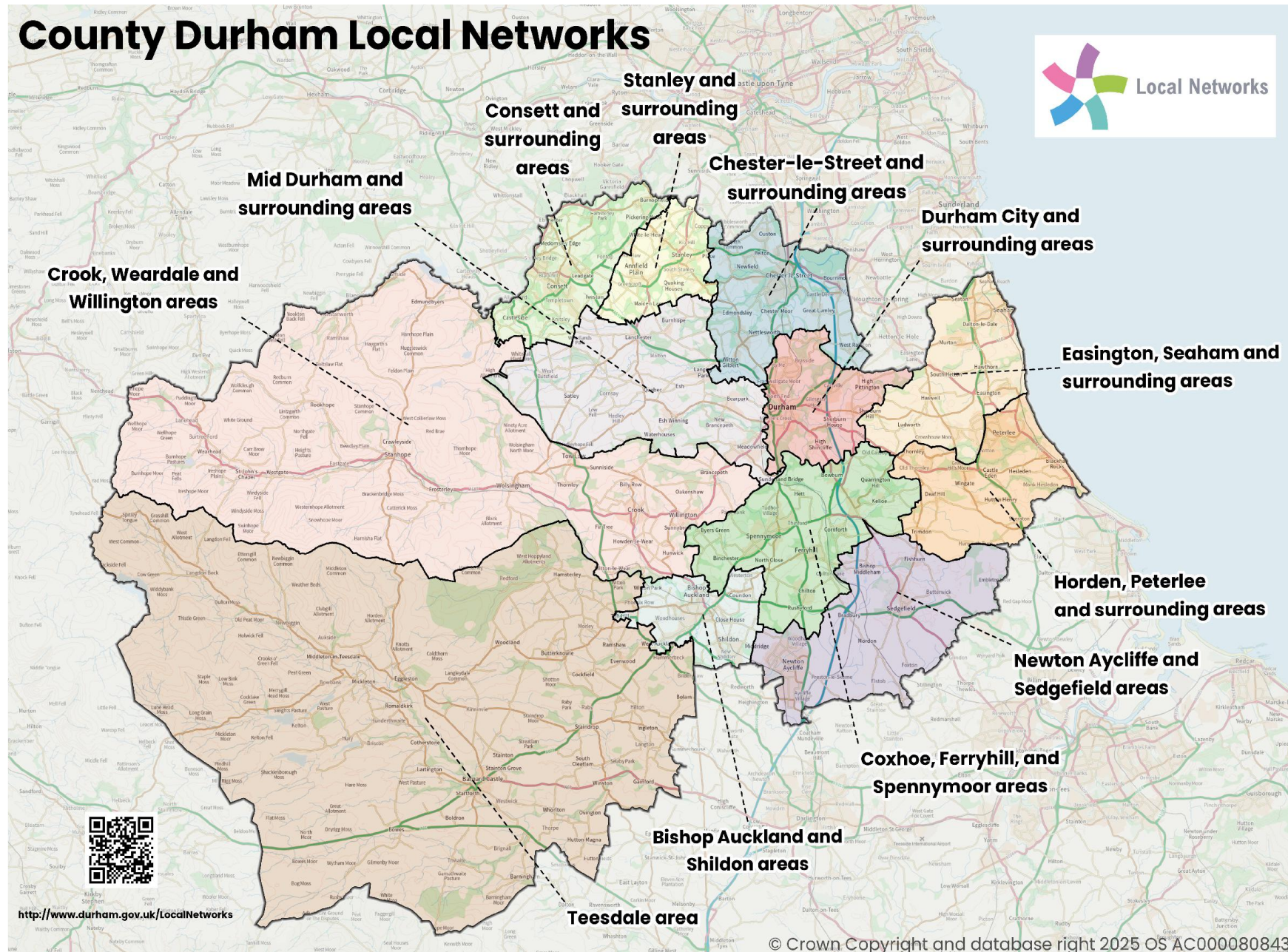
Local Network Community Forums

- Commitment for at least 1 event per electoral ward in each LN area annually
- Open to all who live/work/study in a LN area to attend

Role and remit:

- Consultative and conversational
- Focus on gathering information to inform the content of the LNAPs
- Discuss data sets and trends
- To receive progress updates on the direction of the LNAPs
- Virtual online consultation/engagement methods with forum members (currently over 10,000 members)

County Durham Local Networks



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Local Network (Temporary Name)	Electoral Division Boundaries	No County Councillors	2022 Population Estimates	Local Network (Temporary Name)	Electoral Division Boundaries	No County Councillors	2022 Population Estimates
Newton Aycliffe and Sedgfield areas	Aycliffe North & Middridge Aycliffe South Sedgfield	7	36,749	Horden, Peterlee and surrounding areas	Blackhalls & Hesledens Castle Eden & Passfield Horden & Dene House Peterlee Thornely & Wheatley Hill Trimdon & Wingate	9	51,995
Bishop Auckland and Shildon areas	Bishop Auckland Shildon & dene Valley West Auckland	8	43,719	Mid Durham and surrounding areas	Brandon Deerness Lanchester & Burnhope Langley & Esh	6	34,100
Chester-le-Street and surrounding areas	Chester-le-Street North Chester-le-Street South Lumley & West Rainton North Lodge Pelton Sacriston & Witton Gilbert	12	59,795	Coxhoe, Ferryhill and Spennymoor areas	Bowburn & Coxhoe Chilton Ferryhill Spennymoor Tudhoe	10	53,742
Consett and surrounding areas	Benfieldside Consett North Consett South Delves Lane Derwent & Pont Valley	9	48,349	Stanley and surrounding areas	Annfield Plain & Tanfield Craghead & South Moor Stanley	6	33,538
Durham City and surrounding areas	Belmont Elvet, Gilesgate & Shincliffe Framwellgate & Newton Hall Neville's Cross Pittington & Sherburn	10	58,518	Teesdale area	Barnard Castle Evenwood Lower Teesdale Upper Teesdale	5	23,661
Easington, Seaham and surrounding areas	Dalton & Dawdon Easington & Shotton Murton Seaham	9	49,922	Weardale area	Weardale Crook Willington & Hunwick	7	34,000

Local Network Action Plans

- Will be the key plan for the areas and guide wider locality working
- Will include county wide priorities to be delivered locally and local priorities.
- Will flex depending on other plans existing locally e.g. will be more substantive where SPP's and Pride in Place plans do not exist, will wrap around those where they do.
- Will be data led
- Won't simply be about the LN funding
- Will be a shared plan with wider stakeholders not simply DCC actions
- Focus and enabler for community ownership and resilience.

Resources Underpinning Local Networks

Local Network Funding

- £90,000 annual budget per Local Network (£60,000 revenue and £30,000 capital) which can be rolled forward over a four-year period
- Minimum project value that can be supported is £5,000
- Local Network Action Plans will provide the framework to guide what projects are supported
- Potential for additional funding

Councillor Grants Funding

- £18,700 per County Councillor
- £13,300 Capital and £5,400 Revenue
- Up to £2,000 on Small Grants (grants below £1,000 and a minimum of £100)

Local Network	Co-ordinator	E-mail	Full Team Members
Chester-le-Street and surrounding areas	Michael Wilkes (Local Network Manager – North)	ChesterleStreetLN@durham.gov.uk	Helen Pinkney Allyson Rose Laura Sloan Charlotte Boyd
Consett and surrounding areas	Corinne Walton	ConsettLN@durham.gov.uk	Hayley Gowland Lynn Dougal
Durham City and surrounding areas	Craig Morgan	DurhamCityLN@durham.gov.uk	Lyndsey Hunter Laura Sloan Marie Ainscough
Stanley and surrounding areas	Daniel O'Brien	StanleyLN@durham.gov.uk	Andrea Boyd Lesley Lines
Mid Durham and surrounding areas	Lee Copeland (Local Network Manager – South)	MidDurhamLN@durham.gov.uk	Louise Porter Joanne Ashworth William Lightburn Andrew Embleton
Bishop Auckland and Shildon areas	Peter Garrod	BishopShildonLN@durham.gov.uk	Sheilah Metcalfe Emma Walton
Coxhoe, Ferryhill and Spennymoor areas	Jason Turnough	CoxhoeFerryhillSpennymoorLN@durham.gov.uk	Victoria Grieves Kaye Johns Andrew Embleton
Crook, Weardale and Willington areas	Angelina Maddison	CrookWeardaleWillingtonLN@durham.gov.uk	Nicola Woodgate Susan Richardson
Easington, Seaham and surrounding areas	Sandy Denney	EasingtonSeahamLN@durham.gov.uk	Ian Moran Charlotte Boyd
Horden, Peterlee and surrounding areas	John Murphy	HordenPeterleeLN@durham.gov.uk	Wayne Gibson Kaye Johns Laura Towers
Newton Aycliffe and Sedgefield areas	Jane Bellis	NewtonAycliffeSedgefieldLN@durham.gov.uk	Claire Craft Marie Ainscough
Teesdale area	Adam White	TeesdaleLN@durham.gov.uk	Annalisa Ward Emma Walton



Questions

Roundtable Discussions

What might these changes mean for the VCSE in County Durham?

How do you currently engage across local geographies?

What are the opportunities and challenges this brings?

What actions might we need to take to support the VCSE's role in the new system?



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Information Sharing



Close

Kate Burrows
Executive Director, Durham Community Action
Chair – Better Together VCS Forum



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