

Meeting Minutes: Congleton Partnership AGM

Date: 25th November 2025 **Time:** 5:30 pm **Location:** Congleton Town Hall

In attendance: Peter Aston (Chair), Glen Williams (Vice Chair), Cathy Dean (Officer), David McGifford (Chief Officer), Richard Walton (Oversight), Amanda Martin (Oversight), Suzy Firkin (Senior Forum & Oversight), Vic Brown (Oversight), Jonny Gribbon (Cheshire East), Kate Fallon (CHOC), Ian Carter (No Tier Snooker), Kay Wesley (Bromley Farm Hub Group), Paul Bernardi, Jeremy Lea (Congleton Rugby Club), Sam Ruck (Visyon), Linda Webber (Street Pastor), Simon Bamford & Amanda (Wild Spirit Woods), Ruth Benson (Trees for Congleton), Patti Pinto (William Dean Trust), Stewart Price, Simon Fallis (Congleton Rotary), Brian Rogers (Rode Hall Silver Band), Paul Nixon (Refugees Welcome), Aoife Middlemass (CVS), Pete Marsden & Lesley Turner (Changing Lives Together).

Apologies: Adele Cook (Cheshire Learning Partnership CIC), Jo Money (Community Projects), Helen van der Veken (East Cheshire Eye Society), Lesley Turner (Bromley Farm Hub).

1.	<p><u>Welcome</u></p> <p>Chair Peter Aston opened the 19th Partnership Annual General Meeting by welcoming everyone with a round of introductions.</p>
2.	<p><u>Partnership Overview 24-25</u></p> <p>Peter gave a summary of the projects & events that had taken place over the last year.</p> <p>Events Over the Last Year</p> <p>Following the adoption of the new Constitution at the AGM on 10 September 2024, Congleton Partnership continued to strengthen its role in supporting community engagement, collaboration and wellbeing across the town. Over the past year, a diverse programme of events was delivered, reflecting the refreshed direction of the Partnership and its commitment to bringing organisations and residents together.</p> <p>Our first community event under the new structure—the Meet the Funders Event held on 19 November 2024—proved highly successful. With more than 80 attendees, the event offered local groups the opportunity to connect directly with funding bodies, gain guidance on applications and explore new routes to support their work.</p> <p>In early December, the Christmas Tea Dance brought festive cheer to residents on 4 December. With entertainment provided by Andrew Bell, the event welcomed guests from local care homes and residents from West Heath, Mossley and Buglawton. The afternoon offered companionship, music and celebration for some of our most isolated community members.</p>

Working in partnership with Congleton Volunteer Action, we held **Discover Volunteering** on 11 March 2025 at Congleton Town Hall. The event shone a spotlight on the many volunteering opportunities across the town, introduced the work of CVA and celebrated the invaluable contribution of our volunteer community—the “Congleton Crew.”

On 18 March 2025, we delivered the **Health and Wellbeing Fayre** at Congleton Town Hall, with more than 40 exhibitors taking part. This wide-ranging event showcased the breadth of health, wellbeing and support services available locally, covering everything from fitness and mental health to community groups and specialist care.

We also marked the **80th anniversary of VE Day** on 8 May 2025 in partnership with Congleton Town Council. Inspired by national guidance from the VE Day 80 campaign, we hosted a fish-and-chip or 1940s-themed lunch for local care home residents and individuals who may otherwise have spent the day alone, ensuring the anniversary was observed with dignity, gratitude and a strong sense of shared community.

Later in the year, the **6th annual Green Fayre** took place on 27 September 2025, bringing together around 30 stallholders representing local businesses, groups and environmental organisations. The Fayre provided an accessible way for residents to explore sustainability issues and discover practical, local solutions to help care for our environment.

Projects supported over the last year

Congleton Volunteer Action - CVA, led by Alison Wright, continued to provide a personalised approach to volunteering in Congleton. With support from Cheshire East and Creative Champions funding, the project expanded its ad hoc volunteering offer and supported events such as the Food & Drink Festival. CVA attracted a steady flow of new volunteers and opportunities through partner organisations, social media, and referrals, and began working with Cheshire East on potential volunteer involvement in hospital discharge support.

Case Study

CVA successfully supported a neurodiverse young person who had struggled to find a suitable role. After several trials, they were matched with The Bath House, where supportive mentoring helped them flourish. They have since progressed into paid employment in landscaping.

[Appendix 1 CVC report from Alison Wright.](#)

Christmas Hampers - £1000 grant from Plus Dane and £300 Partnership funds allowed us to create 130 Christmas Hampers for people receiving Old Saw Mill meals.

No Tier Snooker Society – The Partnership helped to support Ian in his quest to set up a group for those diagnosed with early-onset dementia. Supported by Diane Ritherdon, our Dementia Friends ambassador.

Buddy and Befriending telephone scheme with Changing Lives – in total a 196 Congleton residents have been supported.

Congleton Hydro & Solar – New solar installations have been completed on local buildings, Astbury Golf Club, Havannah Primary Club and Daneside Theatre, all of which are performing to plan. Congleton Hydro at Havannah has recently reached another milestone: 900 MWh. The team are actively looking at new sites to install more hydro's with planning permission granted for Congleton Park.

Congleton Repair Café – now has a new home at the Masonic Hall and continues to run monthly sessions.

Dementia Friends – Diane continues her work, and a new edition of the Young at Heart Leaflet has been produced.

Defibs – an 11th Defib has been installed at the Rams Head in Congleton in partnership with Congleton Lions.

Community Transport – The Partnership continues to operate community transport with New Life Church. Successful application to the Flourish fund, awarded £8200 for driver training to increase our pool of volunteer drivers for Partnership buses (D1 Category is a license requirement to drive a 17-seater.)

Grants Supported

Partnership provides admin and marketing support for 2 grant programmes –

Margaret Williamson Memorial Fund – a yearly fund distributing around £2000-4000 to local groups and good causes.

Congleton Hydro & Solar Community Trust – a bi-annual fund which distributes around £10,000 each year to local groups and good causes with an environmental focus.

Future Plans

The next event is the Christmas Tea Party on 17th December.

The Partnership working with CHOC has been successful in the Healthy Neighbourhood Grant to continue and expand the Buddy and Befriending service, the telephone scheme will continue, and a new warm welcome group will be set up in 2026.

The annual Health & Wellbeing Fayre returns on the 17th March at Congleton Town Hall.

Redesign/Relaunch Partnership website.

Action – Provide a list of new member organisations which have joined the partnership over the last year, as well as legacy members/groups.

Included in Appendix 2.

<p>3.</p>	<p><u>Member Updates</u></p> <p>Vic Brown shared an update on a new Community TV channel. https://www.youtube.com/@CongletonCommunityTV</p> <p>Richard Walton shared an update on the white ribbon campaign. https://vimeo.com/1138921825 #WeSpeakUp</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p><u>Ideas session:</u></p> <p>What do you want from Congleton Partnership?</p> <p>Project Ideas –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elizabeth Archive / Museum Resources • I remember...feature community TV • Community Transport Scheme – expanding minibus • Biodiversity Bear Trail (Linking Biodiversity sites) <p>Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get residents to grow trees into saplings for planting by Trees for Congleton. • Trees for Congleton / CTC biodiversity sites invite schools to take part • Appearing Nature – Response to the local museum's disappearing project. • Environmental Fund – establish an annual environmental fund so that biodiversity and other enhancements can be properly planned. • Pride in our local green spaces, ‘friends’ groups for areas, give the spaces names. • Youth rewilders group – lots of work to increase the diversity of local green spaces <p>Locations/Space</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reuse of Vétérans Café • Mainly Networking – shared interests, rural site where various events can take place • Youth Cafe Location (Town Hall ?) • Reuse Warehouse/Library of Things • Meet the geek – Geek retreat • Homework / Study drop-in • Storage space – eg furniture • Sports Facilities <p>Products</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bleed Kits – Support similar to defibs <p>Music</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free Concerts Showcase • Clonta Education Trust – bringing live music to a younger audience

	<p>Other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rough Sleeping – what can be done about rough sleepers around the town? • Work carried out to cover all priorities from the neighbourhood partnership meeting, which are mental health, Social Isolation, Drugs, Alcohol, Smoking and Transport. • Clarity on how to ask for support from the Partnership
<p>4.</p>	<p>Business of the AGM</p> <p>Accepted the minutes dated 10.09.24 as an accurate record of the meeting. No outstanding actions.</p> <p>No new proposals were put forward. Roles remain as:</p> <p>Chair: Peter Aston</p> <p>Vice Chair: Glen Williams</p> <p>Oversight Group</p> <p>As agreed in the constitution, the Oversight Group consists of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Chair (Peter Aston) 2. Vice Chair (Glen Williams) 3. CTC (Richard Walton) 4. CTC (Amanda Martin) 5. Parish Council (Vic Brown) 6. Suzy Firkin (Chair of Senior Forum) 7. ? 8. ? 9. ? <p>The Partnership Officer & Chief Officer have no voting rights.</p> <p>The 4 positions available on the Oversight Group should be reflective of Congleton Interests, like business, sports, etc. S Firkin has expressed a wish to step down from the oversight committee.</p> <p>Nominations for the 4 remaining seats of the oversight group are invited to follow this meeting, the next oversight committee takes place on the 5th December which interested parties will be invited to attend.</p>

Presentation of Accounts.

Cathy Dean gave a summary of the financial state of the Partnership.

[View the summary sheet here in Appendix 3.](#)

Income & Balance carried forward = £ 46,605.00

Spend 2025 = £12,094.75

Allocated = £20,503.29

Unallocated = £14,000.96

Balance remaining = £34,510.25

Action – Clarify Partnership funding position

A.O.B

AGM closed at 7:15 pm

Volunteer Action Congleton (VAC)

Report for Congleton Partnership AGM 2025

Alison Wright continues to manage this project.

VAC is a volunteering project that provides a unique approach to volunteering locally. It has received funding from Cheshire East and the Creative Champions Funding has enabled the ad hoc volunteering aspect of the project to develop.

Each volunteer and volunteering opportunity is assessed individually by Alison and connections are then made. Alison then provides ongoing support.

For ad hoc volunteering opportunities, such as the Food & Drink Festival, Alison attends the event to manage the team of VAC volunteers, whilst volunteering herself. She liaises with the event organiser at the planning stage and provides on the day support for the volunteers.

VAC continues to attract volunteers and volunteering opportunities in Congleton, enquiries being received from the Town Council, the Partnership, social media and referrals.

VAC is working with Cheshire East to establish a link for hospital discharge support for patients in Congleton.

We are also working with Cheshire East's Adult Social Care team discussing volunteering support.

We continue to work with Cheshire East Development Officers, the Town Council and other local organisations and businesses.

We have are building a network and database of local businesses that offer volunteering days for their employers, notably Siemens and Leek Building Society to link them with opportunities where they can make the most difference.

VAC offers a very personal approach, and will continue to do so to help make volunteering accessible to all. This also helps resolve issues as evident in the Case Story below which an internet based system (AMI for example) would not manage.

It's also become obvious that building relationships with those that manage volunteers in Congleton is key and enables us to provide as much information to volunteers prior to them starting as possible (Risk Assessment) - do you always meet when you say you do, if the weather is poor how is a cancellation communicated, what are the access limitations, do you have a safeguarding policy, what communication methods do you use, what do you wear, what do you need to bring, is there car parking.

Alison always completes a Risk Assessment for any new volunteering opportunity, and in the case of the Hoarder (see below) carried out the initial few week's support herself. She also has at least one face to face meeting with any new volunteers, a very informal chat over coffee at a location of their choice.

Volunteer Action Congleton (VAC)

Report for Congleton Partnership AGM 2025

Many of our volunteers are doing so because they are unable to work, are off long term sick, have disabilities, mental health issues and lack self confidence. Some require a lot of 'hand holding' to take the next step in their Volunteering Experience. We consider all it an Experience as a journey would suggest a start and an end, and Experience is open ended, and evolves over time.

Introduction to Volunteering

This event was held at the Town Hall and attracted many organisations with displays advertising their volunteering opportunities and over 70 interested residents. There was a round table session that provided very useful feedback into all aspects of volunteering, with representatives from the organisations talking to the residents.

Food & Drink Festival

A team of volunteers supported the Food & Drink Festival, helping with the Quiet Zone and road closures.

Big Up Buglawton

VAC also supported Big Up Buglawton, a new event aimed at bringing the local community together. Volunteers ran the Meet & Greet area, helped set up and tidy away.

Pride

Volunteers were given the opportunity to support this event.

Bark in the Park

Support was provided to the RSPCA fundraising event, Bark in the Park, with volunteers helping set up and tidy away.

Get Involved in Congleton

Alison is working with Jo Money, Congleton Community Projects, researching all the local organisations and activities so a new publication can be printed.

Congleton Community Television

Alison has met with the organiser to offer advice and support for recruiting and managing volunteers.

Green Fair

VAC helped run the Congleton Community Events stall whilst recruiting new volunteers.

Buglawton in Boom

VAC volunteers will be helping set up their Christmas lights.

Congleton Lights Switch On

A team of VAC volunteers will be supporting this event.

Volunteer Action Congleton (VAC)

Report for Congleton Partnership AGM 2025

Radio Stoke

Alison is being interviewed by Paula White of BBC Radio Stoke in November to discuss the activities of VAC.

Hi Vis & Lanyards

VAC now has it's own 'Volunteer Uniform' to identify the volunteers as a team when supporting event.

Electric Picture House

VAC is now renting office space one day a week at the Electric Picture House. This will also provide a meeting room for training sessions, workshops and social events for the VAC team of volunteers.

Charity Status/Funding

Over the next year, VAC will be investigating opportunities to become it's own charity which should open up access to more funding opportunities.

Case Stories

Bin Bags

A young local resident was referred to VAC for having issues with hoarding as their mental state prevents them from leaving their flat to take rubbish to the bins. They have an issue with communal living and accessing shared spaces and amenities.

After an initial meeting with the referrer, initial visits and completion of a Risk Assessment, arrangements were made for a volunteer to visit this flat to take bin bags to the communal refuse area.

This support has continued to be provided for the last 6 months, every Friday at 9.00am. The volunteer and the resident communicate via text message and have a weekly phone call. The bin bags are securely tied and left in the corridor outside the flat. The y are then moved along the corridor, across a very small car park to the communal bin area.

During this time, trust has been established and the resident now feels able to pursue their application to be relocated to a property with its own front door. They are also decluttering their home and the number of bin bags being removed each week has increased from 3 to up to 15. Most of the contents being cardboard as the resident orders online because they cannot leave their flat. The task takes no more than 10 minutes for the volunteer but it has proved life changing for the resident, the first step in gaining more independence to live a life outside their flat, after 2+ years effectively imprisoned.

It is hoped that the volunteer and the resident will meet - so far no one has met with the resident, all communication has been non face to face, event with Cheshire East. Alison continues to update the referrer with progress updates.

Volunteer Action Congleton (VAC)

Report for Congleton Partnership AGM 2025

Neurodiverse Young Person

VAC has been supporting a younger neurodiverse volunteer who left formal education early because it was not meeting their needs. The father contacted VAC to see if we could offer any volunteering roles, to “get him out of his bedroom”. After several informal meetings, we introduced them to a number of volunteering opportunities, and for a variety of reasons, none suited one or other of the parties.

After 6 months, they were introduced to the Bath House and very soon settled in working with an older, patient and caring volunteer who was able to engage them in all sorts of gardening projects. This volunteer made such a difference that the young person is now employed in a landscaping role.

New Members:

Bromley Farm Hub Group

East Cheshire Eye Society

Rode Hall Silver Band

Biddulph Twinning Association

Refugees Welcome

Dane Valley Scout Group

Trinity Methodist Church

Tytherington Family Worship Church

Choice Support

Genesis Dance Troupe

Vale Allotments & Gardening Association

Springboard (Cheshire Learning Partnership CIC)

The William Dean Countryside & Educational Trust

Congleton Rugby Union Football Club

Congleton Street Pastors

Congleton Pride

Congleton Rotary Club

New Life Church

Wild Spirit Woods AST CIC

Supporting wellbeing and nurturing strength CIC

So Cheshire

CHOC Care Community, Cheshire East Integrated Care Partnership

No Tier Snooker Society

Legacy Groups (Joined pre 2024)

Elizabeths Group

Congleton Sustainability Group

Congleton Museum

Senior Forum

Congleton Apple Juice

Trees for Congleton

Electric Picture House

Community Projects

Dementia Friends

Food 4 Free

Eco Schools

Old Saw Mill

Congleton Hydro and Solar

Congleton Partnership Accounts 25/26

Income

Partnership Funds 25/26	B/F	£32,153.00
MWMF	C Community Foundation	£ 1,700.00
Tree Donations		£ 900.00
Congleton Lions	VE Day Event	£ 300.00
CTC	VE Day Event	£ 852.00
Congleton Lions Defib 50/50	Defib	£ 700.00
CTC 23/24 Grant Transferred		£ 10,000.00
		£46,605.00

Costs

Spend 25/26	
P.Costs	£4,136.52
Senior Forum	£3,148.94
Green Fayre	£1,377.34
CVA	£600.00
Trees For Congleton	£243.60
MWMF Grants	£1,700.00
Creative Champs	£888.35
Total Spend	£12,094.75

Projects allocated budget		Projects budget remaining	
Senior Forum			
CVA	4,577.00		3,977.00
Trees For Congleton	- 298.40		357.98
Mini Bus Drivers	2,000.00		2,000.00
Get Involved Leaflet	1,000.00		1,000.00
Creative Champions	10,000.00		7,600.65
Health& Wellbeing Fayre '26	600.00		600.00
VE Day Celebrations	1,000.00		-
Green Fayre	2,000.00		697.66
Sports Equipment	4,270.00		4,270.00
		Allocated	20,503.29
		Balance Remaining	£34,510.25
		Unallocated	£14,006.96