



Annual Review 2024/5



Community First
Oxfordshire

Chair Statement

Jackie Wilderspin

I am delighted to introduce the Annual Report for the year I became Chair of Community First Oxfordshire. I am very grateful to my predecessor, Gill Bindoff, for her leadership and commitment over her many years as a trustee. Gill left things in great order with a strong group of Trustees who are supportive, imaginative, and keen to see further development. Do get in touch if this report inspires you to join us!

Community First Oxfordshire expanded in scope and size during 2024-2025 and we were pleased to welcome new staff to support our projects. Two community development officers have joined us, working enthusiastically in outreach across the county, including on the new contract with Stop for Life – the smoking cessation service.

Smoking cessation is a new area of work which fits perfectly with our ongoing Well Together programme, which has been going from strength to strength. It has been wonderful to get reports of the real difference being made in communities across Oxfordshire because of the work of the Community Capacity Builders and the availability of grants. This project has shown that investing a little brings great returns in health and wellbeing in ways that matter to people.

In 2024, we also appointed a Communications and Impact lead, who supported the redesign of our website and has boosted our online and social media presence - I hope you have noticed the difference!

Our Rural and Community-led Housing projects around the county have been picking up momentum thanks to more secure funding and growing networks. We are also delighted that a major research report on community-led stewardship in North-West Bicester Ecotown was so well received - I am sure this will be a blueprint for more work of this kind, enabling community participation in the shaping and management of local assets.

The future of the Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Sector is (as ever) an ongoing concern and we usually mention 'changing times' as an underpinning reason. I would commend the 'Small and Mighty' report as both a valuable insight into the needs of the small and micro VCSE organisations and a call for action.

Our role as an infrastructure organisation and an agent of communication and change is a vital one. We look forward to using our position and experience to support the VCSE Sector and influence those around us as the times continue to change.



Jackie Wilderspin, Chair

Contents

Community First Oxfordshire is a community development and placemaking charity. With over 100 years of working with Oxfordshire's communities, we offer services that support people and places across the county to work together and thrive.

- 4-5** Summary
- 6** Community Action Training
- 7** Advocacy
- 8-9** Community Halls & Retail
- 10** Community Transport
- 11-12** Community Action Projects
- 13-17** Health Projects
- 18** Placemaking
- 19** Stewardship
- 20-21** Planning
- 22-23** Housing
- 24-5** Finances & Funders

Click titles to
navigate to page



'I can genuinely say that the current Community First Oxfordshire team is the strongest, most creative and committed that I can remember.'
Tom - Co-CEO



Our Impact

As an organisation with a long track-record of supporting community development in Oxfordshire, our strength lies in being connected to many different stakeholders.

As well as offering direct support to communities, these connections help us do our best work. From linking up a housing association with a community-led housing group, to bringing residents health concerns to the NHS, to building networks of grassroots organisations tackling inequality, we believe that collaboration based on lived community experience is key.

When people come together in community to take action, they are able to tackle social issues and promote wellbeing in a way that best suits the local context. Our work is community-led and alongside the opportunities from funders, we aim to tailor our work to the needs of communities.

1

Infrastructure needs report

295

Community Insight Profile survey responses

193

Groups supported in Grants Plus projects



This year, alongside our historical services, we undertook several projects related to health and wellbeing. We collaborated with Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action (OCVA) on two Grants Plus funding programmes - Well Together and Connected Communities Fund, and led independently on a smoking cessation outreach project.

We were also commissioned to undertake two Community Insight Profiles, researching local health needs and assets. These projects sat alongside our presence at steering groups and council meetings, where we highlighted community voices and advocated for the Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector.

Our halls and shops affiliation schemes continued to offer support to over 300 members, and the community transport service supported 80 schemes with advice and advocacy. We also advised Parish and Town councils on community-led plans and multiple other topics. In Faringdon, we were commissioned to undertake a nature-based community engagement project, and we continued to support the Community Development Project in Heyford Park.

7

Community development Training Sessions

34

Community transport meetings

168

Community hall queries answered

2

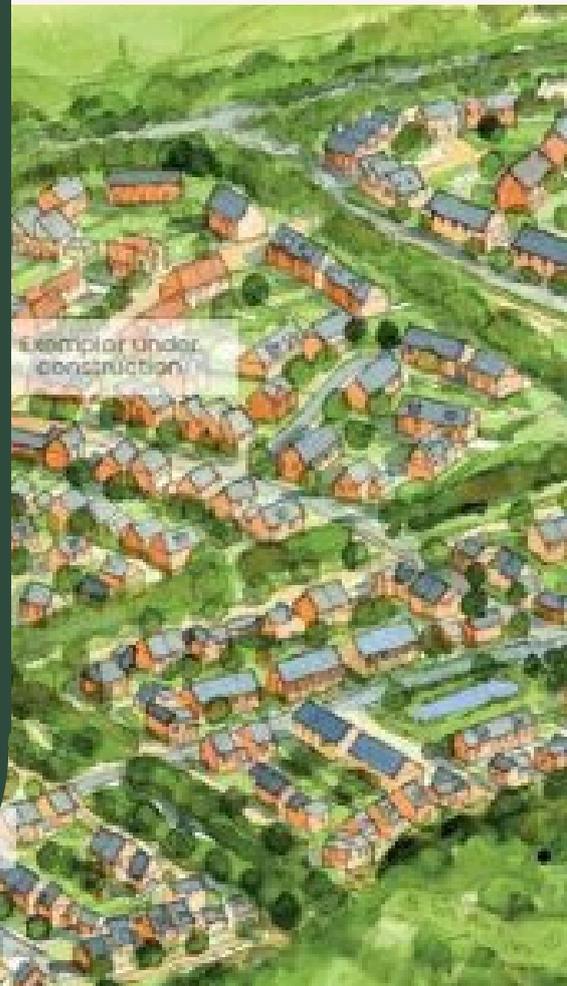
Community-led Plans

Drawing upon our knowledge and experience of community development work in Oxfordshire, we put together a report with OCVA on the strengths and challenges of the VCSE sector in Oxfordshire. Funded by the National Lottery, this 'Small and Mighty' report highlights next steps for the sector.

We believe that good placemaking is the key to successful communities. Our planning services aim to put communities on a level footing with other stakeholders, enabling them to better shape the places they live in.

This year, we supported 8 Neighbourhood Plans, helping communities navigate local planning challenges. We also completed two stewardship projects, setting out strategies for resident-led management (or stewardship) of local assets, building community resilience and meeting needs.

Our Rural Housing Enabling and Community-led Housing services have been in demand. We supported 7 new schemes, which will deliver c. 123 homes. We have also set up two expert groups to oversee these services, sharing knowledge and bringing together key stakeholders such as Local Authorities and Housing Associations.



7

Community-led housing schemes

2

Stewardship projects completed

8

Neighbourhood Plans

2

New housing delivery groups

Community Action Training



Running training sessions allows us to share skills and build capacity in different groups. This year, we delivered 7 Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) training sessions to 62 people, ranging from local council members to community groups. We also delivered Community-led Planning (CLP) training to 10 local councillors. Rhonda - a participant from South and Vale District Council - explains the impact of the ABCD trainings in her own words:



'The Asset-Based Community Development training session was truly outstanding. It provided practical insights and inspiring strategies that empowered participants to recognize and leverage community strengths rather than focusing on deficits.

The facilitators were engaging, knowledgeable, and created a collaborative environment that encouraged active participation. This session has equipped me with valuable tools to foster sustainable community growth and make a meaningful impact.'

Rhonda, South and Vale District Council

We've also delivered training throughout our other projects and workstreams. Look out for this symbol.



7 ABCD Training Sessions
62 People attending



Focus: Advocacy

Our staff members sit on a number of boards and steering groups where they raise the profile of VCSE groups. They use their experience working with different communities to share unheard voices and advocate for the needs and importance of the sector.

From Local Authority meetings to Public Health steering groups to conferences, we advocate, build partnerships, and form networks to work towards a strong community infrastructure across Oxfordshire. Look out for this symbol throughout this annual report to see where advocacy feeds into our work:

'Small and Mighty' Report



The VCSE sector in Oxfordshire includes around 6,484 organisations, with the majority (75%) made up of micro and small organisations. **These groups involve over 80,200 volunteers, employ around 24,000 people, and are the lifeblood of our communities.**

The independent 'Small and Mighty' report, commissioned by Community First Oxfordshire and OCVA with funding from The National Lottery Fund, looked into what these small groups need to keep doing their important work and how we can better support them. Via a comprehensive survey and 18 in-depth interviews, we heard from 297 small VCSE organisations and infrastructure organisations.

'We work with the small and micro groups and know how valuable they are. We've been thinking about this for ages and it's good to finally do something about it. Its very much an actionable report.'

*Emily, co-CEO
Community First Oxfordshire*

Read the report [here](#)



297 Survey Responses

18 Interviews

In the context of reduced traditional funding, with more focus on project specific rather than core funding, it is important to outline the impact on local infrastructure organisations, identifying actions to support them to thrive.

Key Challenges

1. Finding & keeping volunteers
2. Money problems
3. Getting their voice heard
4. Working together

Community Halls

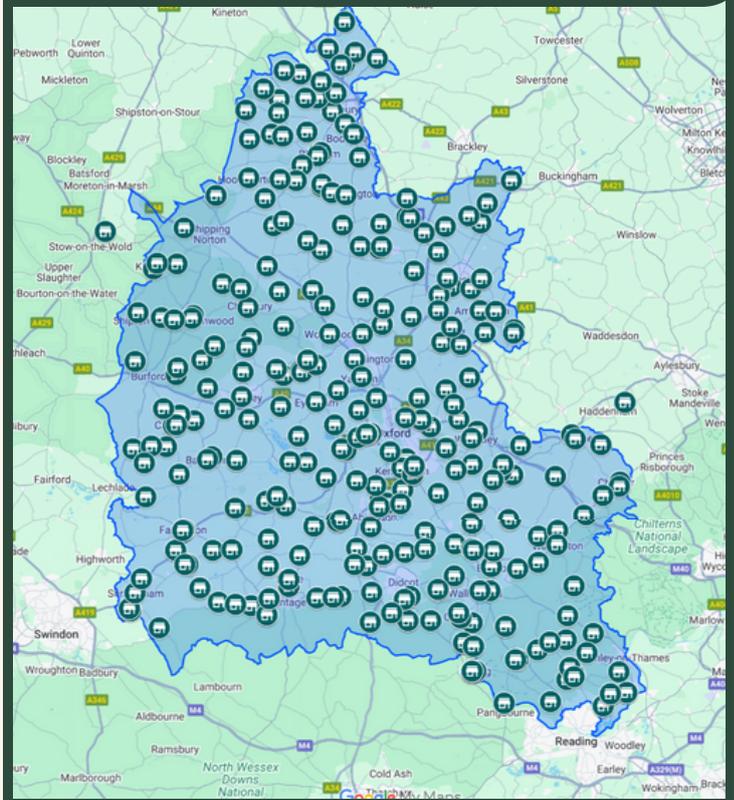


'Halls are a world unto their own. Run by volunteers, they're unique in their remit of promoting educational and leisure activities for the community. They're not for profit and play a vital role in enabling different groups to run activities for the benefit of local people.'

Tessa, Community First Halls Adviser

Our adviser Tessa supports over 300 hall committees and shops across Oxfordshire, enabling these key assets to be well-used and well-managed. The range of activities hosted by these community hubs is astonishingly varied, and supports a resilient, thriving local area.

Map of Halls we support



Support is tailored to each hall, and Tessa draws on a wealth of knowledge and resources to work through issues. These range from the hyper-specific ('concerns about the thermal gradient of warm air from a heat pump') to the more general ('funding opportunities'). Her support ranges from sending an email, to sharing resources, to ongoing conversations and writing up applications.

138 Enquiries

13 Site visits

6 Training sessions



Tessa at Tackley Village Hall

This year, Tessa organised 6 training, networking, and information sharing events:

- Safeguarding
- Recruiting and retaining volunteers
- Website building
- Low carbon and energy efficiency
- Fire regulations & PAT testing
- Refurbishments
- Funding



Village Halls Week 2025 was a lively affair, with 47 participants attending two events. Tea and cakes were shared at Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Village Hall after two presentations. Annette (Hall Committee Chair) gave an overview of their £2m refurbishment project, followed by training from Tessa on 'Recruiting and Retaining Volunteers'.



Digital Training Event



Shrevenham Memorial Hall



Village Hall's Week event

On longevity: We've been working with halls since 1920. This continuity has allowed us to build deep relations with local communities and develop a great bank of knowledge. We hold many original community hall governance documents, providing a back up if a copy is lost (and support to interpret the arcane language!).

Shops

Local shops are often the focal point of communities and some residents rely on them for everyday supplies. As well as providing services to customers, they provide valuable experience to volunteers, often collaborating with charities to support people into work. Oxfordshire has over twenty community-owned shops, run by a mixture of volunteers and employed managers.

6 Site visits
20 Community-owned shops

We continued to offer support to community shops across the county, sending out information, giving advice, and visiting sites. These shops are facing increasing challenges with energy bills and recruiting volunteers, although all strive to provide great services for their local communities. Those who give their time to community shops are incredibly dedicated and we recently nominated a volunteer from Brightwell for the Kings Award for Voluntary Service.

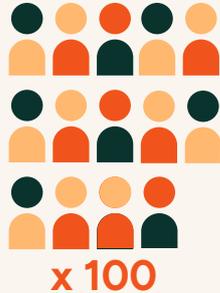
Community Transport



80+ schemes



1400+ volunteers



For 45 years, we have supported Community Transport schemes with tailored advice and support. There are over 80 minibus and car schemes across Oxfordshire, directly responding to local needs for transport and plugging gaps in public services.

Because they're community-led, these transport schemes offer a welcoming and accessible service that is a lifeline for many.

'The bus often resembles a social club - the passengers chat and look after each other' *Our Bus Bartons*

'Its an absolute lifeline for people like me in a place like this'
Sheila, community transport user



I'm always waving the flag for community transport
Emily, co-CEO, Community First Oxfordshire



64 Enquiries

164 Octabadges

16 Blue Badges

34 Meetings

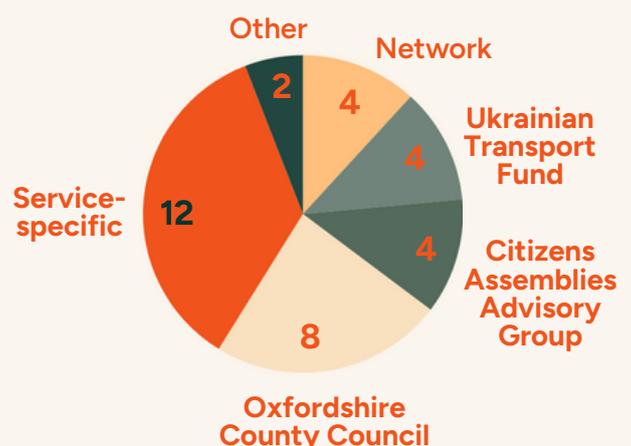
This year, we answered 64 enquiries from schemes on a variety of topics, including hospital parking, funding, volunteers, and good practice. We also supported the Octabadge scheme, with 164 new volunteer drivers signing up to get permission to park at hospitals.

In December, we held a Blue Badge event. This was a very successful day where 16 clients from 5 schemes received their own Blue Badges, enabling transport to appointments. Over the year, we attended 34 meetings with a range of stakeholders to build networks and advocate for community transport. Here's a breakdown of the meetings:

The Community Transport sector continues to face a range of challenges:

- volunteer shortages
- increasing operational costs
- infrequent, short-term funding
- greater demand on services

These challenges require a multiagency response at both local and national levels.



Supporting Town and Parish Councils



Our work with Town and Parish Councils ranges from general support on multiple topics to specific projects such as a Community-led Plan (CLP). This year, we supported CLPs in **Letcombe Regis** and **Dorchester-on-Thames**, as well as offering community engagement advice to **Watlington** and **Buckland Parish Councils**.

Parish and Town Councils are cornerstones of communities. By supporting them to develop community infrastructure and build capacity, we're investing in long-term resident resilience and wellbeing.

What is a CLP?

A Community-led Plan is a structured way of creating a collective vision for a local area and identifying actions to achieve it. A plan might focus on the provision of community facilities, the health of residents, or the accessibility of transport.

Watlington: our support in practice



I am Vice-Chair of Watlington Parish Council and have regular meetings with Lisa Stead [CFO Project Development Manager]. We talk through current projects, issues, and challenges. Lisa lets me know if any other similar projects and connects me to people so that we can share information and learn from each other. Lisa listens to my concerns and genuinely wants to be able to help. If Lisa can't help, then she will often know a person who can and quickly puts me in touch. Sometimes it just helps to talk things through.

Karyn, Vice-Chair Watlington Parish Council



Interest



Knowledge sharing



Networking



Wider project development

Focus: Youth Work

Watlington PC is keen to engage more with young people. Lisa has worked with them to understand different ways to engage with young people locally, using what she's learnt from her own training and partnership projects. She also connected them with her networks, including a Town Council with an existing youth council and organisations such as Oxfordshire Youth.

Talking to Watlington PC has also shaped Lisa's work. Lisa is now exploring the development of cross-council networks and collaborations around youth engagement, as well as shaping an internal youth strategy for CFO.

Faringdon



Faringdon Nature Makers and Climate Champions is a joint project with Wild Oxfordshire, supported by the Vale of White Horse District Council Climate Action Fund.

The project works with those in the community who struggle to access nature or get involved in climate action. We've been working with local people to co-create opportunities to protect the environment.

After getting to know Faringdon and its people better, we ran a series of events, including nature wanders, guided bat walks, and talks on wildlife gardening. Here's a timeline of our work:



Mapping at the Big Green Day



There are all kinds of benefits to health and wellbeing from outdoor activity and connection with nature. We hope that our work in Faringdon sets the groundwork to increase local access to and engagement with nature for the long term.



Swift Trails Event

Heyford Park



The Heyford Park Community Development Project is a joint initiative between Community First Oxfordshire, Heyford Park Parish Council, Cherwell District Council and Dorchester Living.

Major housing development at Heyford Park in Cherwell is ongoing. With the growing population, the key aims of the project (now in its 7th year) are as important now as they were at the outset: bringing together different parts of the community; working with residents to support existing community activity and develop new initiatives to meet resident needs; and helping to create a vibrant, resilient and self-sustaining community.

Our community development worker is out there on the ground, talking to people, brokering connections and relationships, signposting to sources of support, and generally getting stuck in!

Focus: Outreach

Community work means getting out there and talking to people. Residents know their communities best and understand better than we do what their specific challenges and opportunities might be. Yet too often particular voices can dominate. Good outreach means including as many people's lived experiences as possible. Capturing quieter or unheard voices by proactively reaching out is important in building a picture of a community in all its diversity.

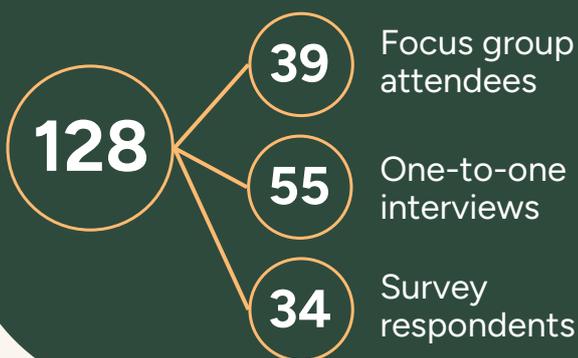
Community Insight Profiles



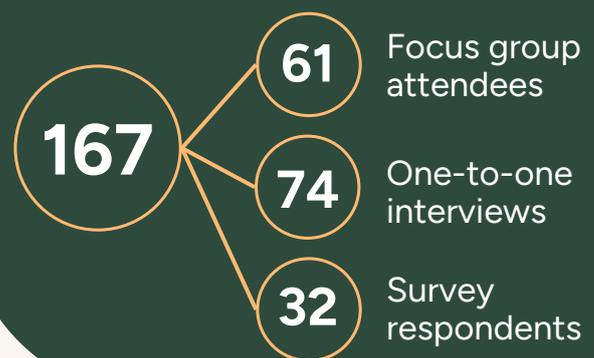
This year, we were commissioned by Oxfordshire County Council Public Health to undertake deep-dive Community Insight Research in Witney and Bicester West. We asked local residents about strengths, assets, and challenges in relation to health and wellbeing, and explored ideas that might help meet identified needs.

This type of community feedback is very important to informing locally-specific health and wellbeing strategies.

Witney outreach



Bicester West outreach



Our research teams reached a range of community groups and individuals, covering different demographics, experiences, and needs. We connected with 36 diverse organisations in Witney and 27 in West Bicester. These included Age UK, primary and secondary schools, community centres, churches, support groups for parents, refugee charities, Citizen's Advice, foodbanks, mental health support groups...

Our reports set out people's experiences and opinions and made many specific recommendations for improving local health and wellbeing which will be used to develop new projects and support funding bids.



Health Projects



Grassroots community groups are important to wellbeing, both supporting immediate needs and addressing the root cause of preventable health conditions. From building confidence to addressing food insecurity, the NHS is increasingly recognising the role of community activity in prevention and addressing health inequalities.

well together



Starting in April 2024, The Well Together programme invests in community-led health and wellbeing activities in 10 priority areas in Oxfordshire. In partnership with OCVA, we delivered funding from the NHS to **128 projects** using a grants plus approach.

Grassroots groups can struggle to access funding, and often need further support - this is why we used a Grants Plus approach (see right). The groups we support range from youth sports clubs to community larders.

What is Grants Plus?

Grants Plus means offering community development support alongside funding. Well Together has four Community Capacity Builders (CCBs) who make the funding more accessible by reaching out to a wider range of groups and supporting applications. Funded groups continue to be supported - CCBs help to problem solve, make connections, and offer resources. They also help groups to measure the impact of their work, which you can explore [here](#):

128

Projects funded

supporting

7250

sessions

14,000

participants

with

Feedback from participants

77% Felt 'very supported'

63% Felt 'much more part of community'

61% Felt 'a great improvement or positive difference in mental health and wellbeing'

Some quotes from group attendees:

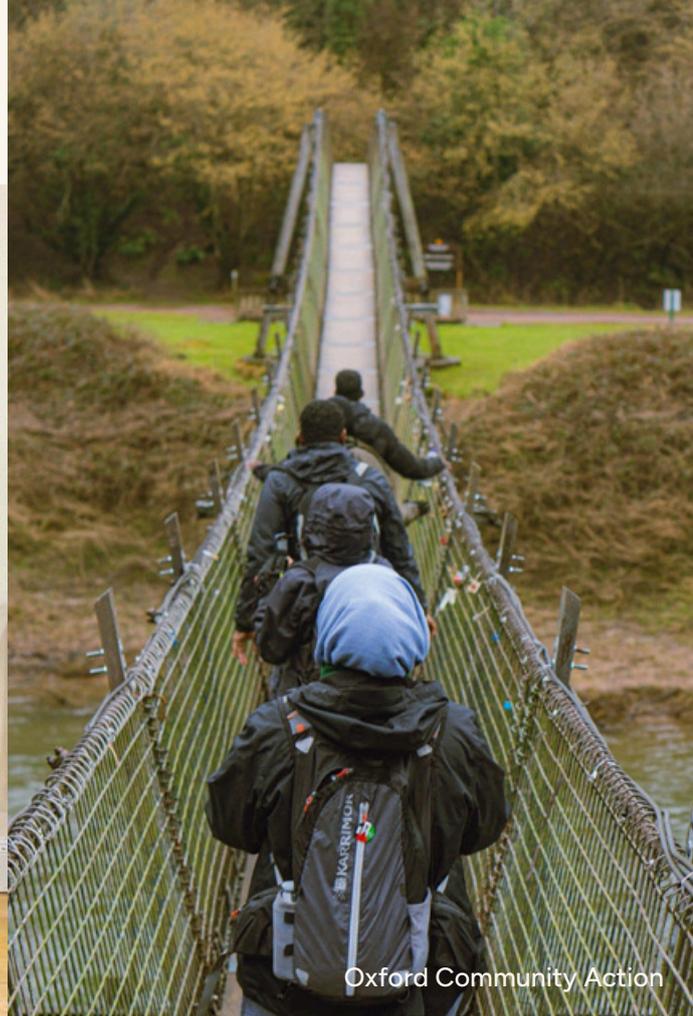
'It is good to talk to many new people, it helps me to build self-esteem and offer a listening ear.'

'Friday is my heaven, meeting all these wonderful ladies.'

'As a father and carer for my autistic son, this is invaluable for his health, independence, and wellbeing.'



Leys CDI event



Oxford Community Action



Iraqi Women Art and War (IWAW)

CONNECTED COMMUNITIES FUND

This year, the Connected Communities Fund (CCF) supported communities to develop activities which ‘support the people of Oxfordshire to live well in their community, remaining fit and healthy for as long as possible’, in line with the countywide vision.

By enabling grassroots initiatives to access flexible funding alongside support, the CCF increased the activities available for older people and adults with additional needs, creating opportunities for socialising and building meaningful connection.



Happy Place

Heyford Makers Shed



Our report picked out key benefits from and challenges to CCF-funded groups. We’ll use these themes to advocate and develop our support for the VCSE sector.

Benefits

- 1.Reducing isolation
- 2.Sustainable & multigenerational
- 3.Targeted support initiatives
- 4.Diverse activities
- 5.Volunteer engagement
- 6.Accessibility & affordability

Challenges

- 1.Volunteer shortages
- 2.Continuity & longevity
- 3.Limited resources for growth
- 4.Loneliness outside of activities

£175k

Distributed

63

Funded projects

1500+

Sessions

Stop Smoking project



Smoking is the leading cause of preventable ill health and death in the UK, with more prevalence in disadvantaged groups. Public Health Oxfordshire commissioned us to run a year long pilot project exploring new ways to connect with people who smoke and offer them support to quit. As a community development organisation, we aim to meet people where they are - this means taking time to do our research and build relations.



Here's a timeline of our work:

Oct -Dec 24

Mapping & meetings



Mapping exercise to identify 'community connectors' - people embedded in community who link us to local people and places.



Meetings held to share our support offer with other agencies, and learn about their work, including Age UK, social prescribers, hospitals, local area coordinators, and our own Well Together Programme.

Dec-Jan 24/5

Internal training



Internal training about smoking, the Stop For Life offer, and the Very Brief Advice approach.

Jan-Aug 25

Outreach



Dudzile recruited as our Outreach Worker. She works within communities, going to the places where people go (like lunch clubs and workplaces), rather than expecting them to come to us.

Feb-Aug 25

Accessing services



Dudzile ensures that the people she reaches know about the free Smokefree Oxon service, and offers to make an online referral on their behalf.

Mar-Aug 25

Ongoing support



Ongoing support / keeping in touch to see how things are going.



Through this work we raise awareness of the Stop Smoking offer with people who may not typically engage with services, and break down barriers.

We learned early on that it can take many visits to build relationships and trust before people feel ready to have a conversation about smoking. Using an asset-based approach, our interactions are positive and non-judgemental, a more effective approach to engage and support people to begin their journey to stop smoking and improve their health and wellbeing.

Placemaking

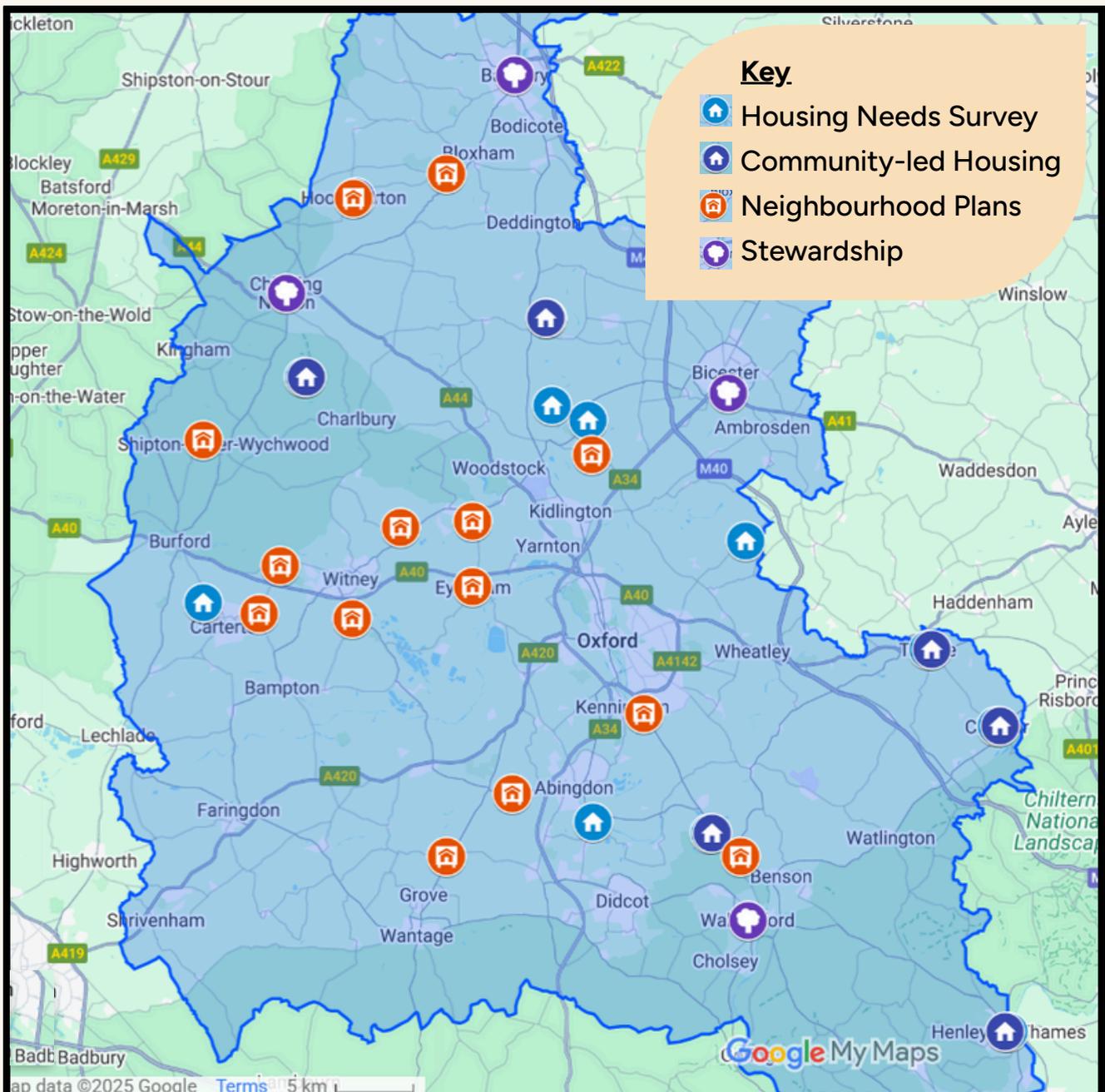
Overview



Placemaking is a collaborative process where communities help create quality places to live, work, play, and learn in. Using the community's knowledge, skills, and lived experience, good placemaking balances the current and future needs of a community. It looks beyond houses, roads, power, and water to social infrastructure—public spaces, facilities, transport, local services, and green spaces. You can read our [Placemaking Charter here](#)

Map of our Placemaking work

Click map for more info and details



Stewardship

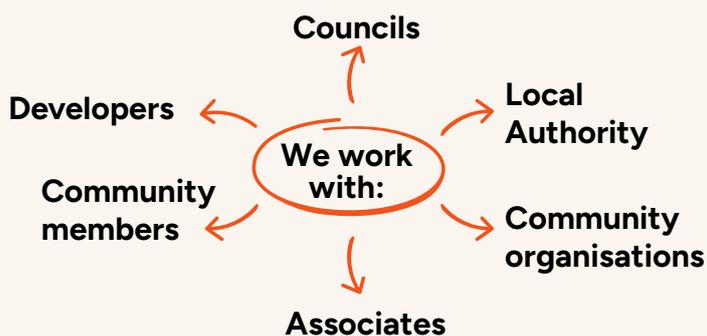


Stewardship is an important tool in grassroots placemaking, encouraging active citizenship and social cohesion.

Our staff help to identify opportunities for the stewardship of community assets in partnership with different groups and organisations. We advise on legislation and process, engage with residents, and bring who's needed to the the discussion table. Last year, we worked on two projects: North West Bicester EcoTown and Graven Hill.

North-West Bicester EcoTown

We set out a roadmap for the creation of a Community Management Organisation to manage community centres and other assets across the North-West Bicester Ecotown development. We assessed structures, finances, and legalities, before highlighting organisational keystones and recommending next steps. We hope this work supports community members to take an active, creative lead in shaping their area.



A Voice for Stewardship

Community-led stewardship is an emerging model in planning. It offers an exciting opportunity to develop places which encourage wellbeing and strong communities while addressing key challenges such as biodiversity and the zero carbon transition.

As one of few organisations working on stewardship in the county, we are keen to spread awareness to communities and policy-makers across Oxfordshire.

What is Stewardship?

'The art of taking care, or managing, something'

Communities have many assets, including green and open spaces, halls, shops, allotments and local facilities. Community-led stewardship recognises local people as the long-term custodians of these assets.

Graven Hill

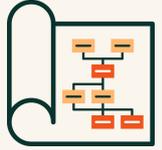
We explored strategies to develop an appropriate and resilient structure for the management of community assets. One option is the creation of a resident-led stewardship organisation (such as a Development Trust) which could manage green space, community buildings, and community-led housing.

Community Engagement

Communities are enthusiastic about stewardship! During the Bicester Ecotown project we worked closely with residents to develop a vision. We built strong relationships, asking the right questions and creating trust. Our aim was to offer inspiration whilst managing expectations.

For Stephen, our stewardship lead: **'Its important to be optimistic but realistic, exploring the art of the possible, really. It's inspiring when people start to see what the benefits might be and say "ah, maybe we can do this after all."** Many people are deeply committed to their community and we're committed to helping them make good things happen!'

Planning



We support town and parish councils, community organisations, and residents to navigate the planning system.

Our aim is to help build knowledge and expertise, allowing communities to engage more effectively with developers and Local Authorities by equipping them with the tools to get the best out of new development, or even propose their own.

We wanted to share the top five issues we've experienced in planning over the last year, and some of the ways we're working with communities to offer solutions:

1. Development pressures

New planning policies set out an increase in housing, putting pressure on communities. We will continue to support people to protect the local character of their place - whether through design codes or planning negotiations - and advocate for developments to include affordable housing.

2. Nature and Climate Emergency

There is growing recognition of the importance of ecosystem services. We build nature recovery, biodiversity, and collaboration between landowners into our work. We are grateful to our partner Wild Oxfordshire, which supports Community First on these matters.

5. Timings

Often, community awareness of a planning issue only arises once a decision is already made. By developing Neighbourhood Plans, we can both pre-empt issues by creating guidelines, and raise local skills in the planning process so the community can engage earlier.

3. Design

The local character of a place is important to people and is frequently raised in our Neighbourhood Planning work. Developers often fail to adequately consider local design and so we support communities to develop design codes which lay out how a developer should undertake their project.

4. Affordable Housing Delivery

Across the country, much less affordable housing is delivered than promised, as developers claim that this housing would make their project unfeasible. We work with landowners, Parish and Town Councils, and community land trusts to implement housing schemes directly, led by communities.



Neighbourhood Plans



We support and strongly advocate for Neighbourhood Plans (NPs). These plans become part of a Council's Local Plan and are a crucial tool in helping communities to influence developments in their area. This year we supported 8 NP groups with consultation strategies and policy research and development.

The NP process can be complex and time-consuming and we offer support from the beginning to the end of a plan process. We take time to get know a place, researching the local context, before helping the steering group to consult residents on range of themes (*see right*). We offer guidance on vision and objectives and then develop the planning policies to meet what's needed. Here's some examples of how we help communities work from general ideas to specific policies:



Aim

To be a happy, resilient, and sustainable rural community

Objective

To protect community facilities & services and encourage proposals to improve their viability

Policy

Developments taking place within Bletchington will be supported by appropriate investment in community infrastructure – both on and off-site

Aim

To promote biodiversity and climate resilience

Objective

To safeguard and enhance existing green infrastructure

Policy

Proposals for new development should retain veteran trees or hedgerows within sufficient space

Best practice

Neighbourhood Planning is an ever-evolving practice. Nationally, we take inspiration from other NPs and policy ideas being developed by groups such as the Town and Country Planning Association. Locally, we are always learning from and drawing upon our networks and expert partners. For example, in the Eynsham NP, we have utilised concepts such as Green Wheels, 15-minute Neighbourhoods, and LETI zero-carbon building standards.

Housing

Rural Housing Enabling & Community-led Housing



Housing is a foundation stone of placemaking. Our Rural Housing Enablers, Fiona and Kay, explain this well: *'My housing career has been built on a belief that an affordable, safe and secure home is fundamental for people to be able to build their lives and contribute to their communities.'* *'If the housing is right, other aspects such as transport, sustainability, economics, biodiversity and community resilience will follow'.*

Housing development can be a slow process with many stakeholders and stages to manage. We support communities throughout, from a Housing Needs Survey to understand the local context to management of the final build.

This year, we've supported 7 housing projects in various stages of their development. We also ran several events to celebrate and showcase community-led and rural housing projects - it's hard work but it can be done! These events are important in setting out the how and the who, while inspiring and encouraging new initiatives.



7

Community housing projects

123

Homes

8

Housing Needs Surveys

Our Rural Housing Enablers are vital to communities developing successful housing projects. From offering advice, to collating information and writing up proposals, they offer invaluable support:

'If the role [of Rural Housing Enabler] hadn't come about, we would have lost our way'.

Thame Community Land Trust member



Steering groups

This year, we created a strategic steering group to oversee our housing work, bringing together Community First, Local Authorities, Housing Associations, and community groups. With different stakeholders in the room, we can share experiences and work better together to coordinate new housing development. As a charity with strong roots in communities, we share knowledge we've gained of community needs, whilst Local Authority members can share their priorities. We also set up a regional forum for Housing Associations, where we share updates on housing projects, pool our knowledge, and explore joint ideas.



Fiona and her colleagues have provided great support in setting-up a new Community Land Trust in Steeple & Middle Aston. Knowing what needs doing next, and anticipating some of the potential pitfalls is a tremendous advantage.

We're working with local landowners to get projects off the ground that will help meet the need for genuinely affordable housing for young people, and smaller homes for older people downsizing. One thing we've already learned is that these projects demand patience as well as the skills we're learning from Fiona and others.

Martin Lipson - SAMA Community Land Trust

Timeline of a housing project: Chadlington



Next steps:

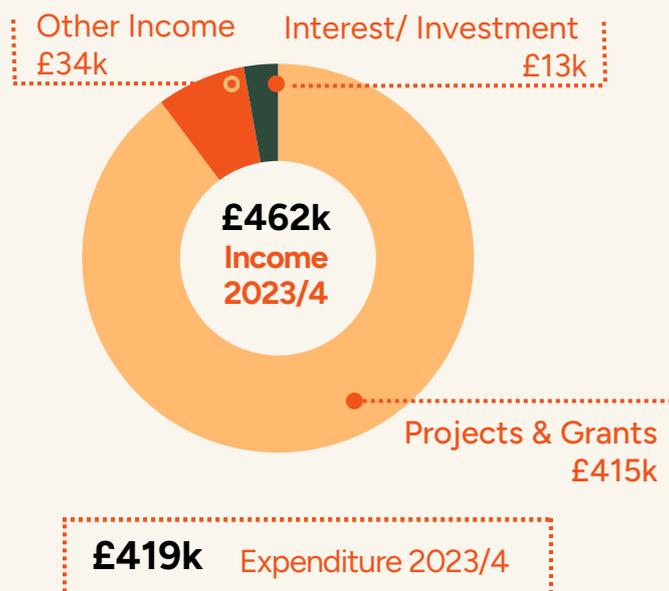
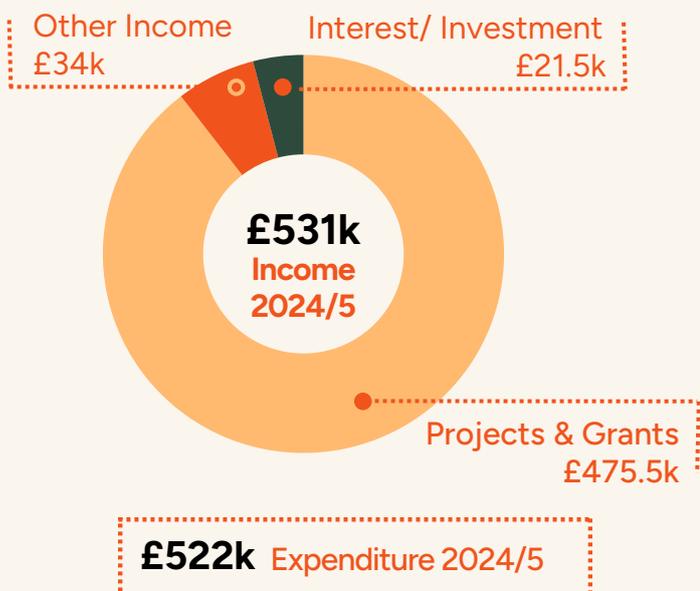
- Identify Housing Association partner
- Identify a site and approach landowners
- Develop a planning application which reflects the housing need
- Continue to update the community
- Await approval of planning permission
- Appoint a contractor to build the homes
- Ensure local people are able to apply for the homes.

'CFO's Fiona Brown has guided us through the whole process, providing excellent advice, assistance and support.'

**Andrew Hutchings -
Chadlington Parish Council
Chair**

Financial Statement

2024/5



Our Staff

Emily Lewis-Edwards
Joint Chief Executive Officer

Tom McCulloch
Joint Chief Executive Officer

Fiona Brown
Collaborative Housing Lead &
Rural Housing Enabler

Stephen McKenna
Community Planning Officer

Marak James
Community Development Worker

Kay Sentance
Rural Housing Enabler

Shahdia Bibi
Senior Administrator

Maryam Grassly
Communications and Impact Lead

Lisa Stead
Project Development
Manager

Tessa Hall
Community Buildings and
Retail Advisor

Taymur Al-Saadi
Community Capacity Builder

Jane Gallagher
Community Capacity Builder

Assia Bibi
Community Capacity Builder

Dolcie Obhiozele
Community Capacity Builder

Clare Dodwell
Community Development
Worker

Dudzile Gambe
Outreach Worker Stop
Smoking

Lorna Mills
Finance Officer/
Oxfordshire Oil Coordinator

Trustees:

Jackie Wilderspin - Chair

Chris Kenneford - Vice
Chair

Malcolm Taylor - Treasurer

Emily Urquhart

Linda Horgan

Jon Bright

Thanks to our Funders and Partners

