

Spring 2019

BUZZ...



Produced by Shropshire Rural Communities Charity

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Over £2.4k raised to help people in Shropshire stay warmer this winter



A Shropshire RCC campaign to help people living in fuel poverty has raised over £2,400. The Warmer Winter Appeal encourages those who receive the Winter Fuel Allowance, but don't need it, to donate it.

The funds raised are then given out as grants for emergency fuel and energy saving improvements in the homes of people living across Shropshire. The campaign has raised almost £20,000 and helped 130 households in the county since it began in 2011.

Julia Baron, Chief Executive of Shropshire RCC, said: "Many people in Shropshire receive this benefit and may not really need it, while for others, rising fuel costs is a source of great anxiety. We asked people who wouldn't miss their payments to donate all, or part, of them so they can be used to help people who are struggling to stay warm this winter, and were delighted with the response."

Shropshire has the fourth-highest level of fuel poverty in England, with over 19,000

fuel-poor households. A large number of homes in the county are also 'off gas' so fuel choice is limited and can be expensive.

Julia added: "One of the rewards of giving to this fund is that it is making a direct impact on someone's life close to home and helping someone local to you."

One of the many people to benefit from the fund is Susan, 67, from Newport.

Susan and her husband lived in private rented accommodation which had no heating in the bedroom. Requests to the landlord to rectify this were refused. Susan suffers from enduring mental health problems and physical difficulties, affecting her sleep and resulting in her struggling to eat. She lost a dramatic amount of weight, and with limited mobility she felt the cold acutely and was unable to get warm, especially at night.

A grant of £250 from the Warmer Winter fund enabled Susan to purchase a storage heater for the bedroom, helping her to stay comfortable and warm in her own home.

Buzz is changing

Issue 1 of Buzz was published in April 1986.

Its articles included the shortlist for the grant scheme 'Village Ventures', a callout for volunteers (some things never change!) and the launch of the Shropshire Village Halls Quiz, which is still going strong today!

Since then, our newsletter has changed in shape and size, featuring news and updates on us as an organisation and covering issues we think are important to our members.

After 33 years, this is the final print edition of Buzz.

It isn't disappearing completely however, just evolving into an online format that will go to people's inboxes rather than post boxes.

A new email newsletter will give us the chance to keep in touch with you more regularly, sharing things that are happening here and now, rather than a few months ago. It will also allow us to signpost, and directly link to, opportunities like grants funding, which you can immediately access.

To sign up to Buzz online, visit www.shropshire-rcc.org.uk and enter your details at the bottom of the homepage.



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Project receives £60k boost from national loneliness fund



Shropshire RCC has received over £60,000 from a fund set up by the Government to help tackle loneliness.

We are the only organisation in the county, and one of just 126 across England, to be awarded a grant from the Building Connections Fund.

The £11.5 million pot was created in partnership between the Government, Big Lottery Fund and the Co-op Foundation.

It is the first ever Government fund dedicated to reducing loneliness in England and will target people from all age groups and backgrounds.

Shropshire RCC's £63,570 grant is being used to expand its Care and Share initiative, which provides support groups for people with dementia and the loved ones who care for them.

The meet ups offer 'mutual support' - partners take turns to have a break while their loved ones are safe and happy in the company of the rest of the group.

Newly-appointed Project Officer Nickie Long said: "Loneliness can affect people

from all walks of life, but living in a rural county like Shropshire can make it that much harder to stay connected to your community, particularly if you are in poor health, have a disability or are caring for someone.

"This grant from the Building Connections Fund will allow us to expand Care and Share across Shropshire, giving people who are isolated due to their circumstances the chance to be part of a friendly and welcoming community, and feel less alone."

Our Wise and Well team currently manages Care and Share groups in Albrighton and Market Drayton.

Nickie is working to expand the initiative to a further five locations over the next two years.

Two new groups - in Church Stretton and Much Wenlock - are welcoming new members this spring.

If you or someone you know would be interested in attending, please contact 01743 237888 or email Nickie.long@shropshire-rcc.org.uk

New partnership to deliver wellbeing support



Shropshire RCC is delighted to announce that we are joining forces with a number of local organisations to deliver services which support people's wellbeing and independence. The partnership, funded by Shropshire Council, is being led by Age UK Telford & Wrekin and also includes The Mayfair Centre, North Shrewsbury Friendly Neighbours, Oswestry Qube and Royal Voluntary Service.

Shropshire RCC runs a variety of projects which help people to continue living independently. Our Good Neighbours schemes connect local people with volunteers who can give them a helping hand with day-to-day tasks, or just pop in for a cup of tea and a chat to keep them from feeling lonely.

We organise inclusive initiatives in the community which promote staying active and exercising, including Boccia - a Paralympic sport which involves players trying to score points by propelling balls to land close to a target ball.

We also travel round the county throughout the year hosting events which provide information and advice on a range of health and wellbeing matters.

Other services delivered by the partnership include practical help at home, a telephone buddy system and volunteer befriending.

Julia Baron, Chief Executive of Shropshire RCC, said: "We are excited to be part of this consortium and are looking forward to exploring what opportunities working in partnership will offer to the people we support."

Heather Osborne, Chief Executive of Age UK Shropshire Telford & Wrekin said: "As voluntary and community sector organisations, we have always worked closely together, but this partnership provides the opportunity for us to take this to the next level, working together to provide, develop and improve services which will help people across Shropshire improve their wellbeing."

Sir Algernon retires as Shropshire RCC patron

It was with mixed feelings that we said “Goodbye” to Sir Algernon Heber-Percy, our Lord Lieutenant and Patron of Shropshire RCC for the past 22 years, when he retired earlier this year.

Since I joined the RCC in 1999, Sir Algernon has been present at all the key milestones. He arranged for the Princess Royal to open our new building in 2007, he hosted two RCC birthday parties, and a thank you for our volunteers at his home at Hodnet Hall, and he officially unveiled the top floor of our building when we had raised enough funds to convert it.

Behind the scenes he has given wise counsel many times, and two of our very excellent Trustees have found their way to us through his introduction.

We will miss you Sir Algernon, but wish you all the best for well-earned retirement.

*Julia Baron, Chief Executive,
of Shropshire RCC*



Thank you to everyone who attended our 2018 AGM last November.

We were delighted that Hugh Strickland was re-appointed our chairman and formally welcomed two new trustees – Susie King and Mark Thorn.

The (now former) High Sheriff of Shropshire, Rhoderick Swire, attended to present cheques to grant recipients, and spoke about his

involvement with the Shropshire Community Fund, which you can read about in more detail on page 13.

Finally, guest speaker Susan Elan Jones, MP for Clwyd South, shared her experiences on the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Charities and Volunteering, and took questions from the floor on various issues.

Our 2019 AGM will be held towards the end of this year – details to be announced at a later date.

South Shropshire chapel feeling

A 12th century chapel in south Shropshire has received a grant to provide an innovative solution to a basic necessity missing from the building – toilets!

The chapel in Heath, near Boulden, hosts services and community activities for nearby houses and surrounding villages. At almost 1,000 years old, it also attracts a large number of visitors keen to view its architecture.

With the help of some temporary toilets, the chapel successfully hosted a party celebrating the Royal Wedding last year. Recognising the opportunity to put on more events, and with the nearest facilities three miles away, local residents applied for a grant from the Millichope Fund to install an eco-self-composting toilet behind the building. Managed by Shropshire RCC, the fund was established by the Millichope Foundation to support village halls and



community buildings in the county. Matched funding of up-to £500 is given out for key equipment, resources and energy-saving measures which will enhance a building's use and make it more sustainable.

Heath Chapel's toilet has now been set up for the congregation and visitors, and includes a tongue-in-cheek sign asking users for either a 1p or £1 donation – depending on use!

Acting church warden Jill Perks submitted the application. She said:

“The chapel has a large number of visitors throughout the year, as well as its monthly congregation, and the new toilet has already been used and appreciated as the only facility close by. We are very grateful to the Millichope Foundation who made this possible.”

The Millichope Fund is one of a number administered by Shropshire RCC to support local groups and charities in the county.



flush after eco toilet funding

Julia Baron, Chief Executive of Shropshire RCC, said: "Shropshire has a rich history of voluntary and charitable work, of communities doing things for themselves. But even the smallest groups need some money to carry out their activities, and funding opportunities from government and local authorities have reduced

significantly in recent times. We manage a number of grants with a wide range of criteria, so I encourage local community groups to visit our website or contact us to find out if they're eligible to apply for something."

A list of funds Shropshire RCC manages can be viewed at www.shropshire-rcc.org.uk

Recent grant successes for local village halls

There have been some big grant application successes for village halls across Shropshire in the last few months, including from national funders, which we know can be very competitive. Congratulations to the below halls and best of luck with your upcoming projects!

Beckbury Village Hall

Amount received: £10,000

Funder: The National Lottery Community Fund

Project: Village hall rewiring

Wistanstow Parish Council

Amount received: £10,000

Funder: The National Lottery Community Fund

Project: Play equipment at village hall

Wattlesborough Village Hall

Amount received: £7,925

Funder: The National Lottery Community Fund

Project: Moveable stage purchase for hosting events

Hope Village Hall

Amount received: £4,102

Funder: The National Lottery Community Fund

Project: New heating system installation

Everest Hall, Llanfairwaterdine

Amount received: £4,000

Funder: The National Lottery Community Fund and Millichope Community Buildings Fund

Project: Window replacements

Church and Chetwynd Aston Village Hall

Amount received: £4,800

Funder: The National Lottery Community Fund

Project: Soundproofing

Horsehay Village Hall

Amount received: £15,403

Funder: Telford 50 Legacy Fund

Project: Kitchen refurbishment

Ellerdine Village Hall

Amount received: £30,000

Funder: Garfield Weston Anniversary Fund

Project: Toilet refurbishment, including new, accessible WC

Ashton Carbonell Village Hall

Amount received: £60,000

Funder: Garfield Weston Anniversary Fund

Project: Meeting and sports viewing room build

Woore Victory Hall

Amount received: £303

Funder: Millichope Community Buildings Fund

Project: Kitchen appliances update

Willey & District Village Hall

Amount received: £500

Funder: Millichope Community Buildings Fund

Project: Roof refurbishment

Has your village hall been successful with a recent grant application?

If so, please let us know by emailing

enquiries@shropshire-rcc.org.uk

Shropshire RCC chairman completes Longmynd 50 challenge

Last October Shropshire RCC's chairman and his son battled against wind, rain and high terrain to raise over £1,800 for charity.

Hugh Strickland, a partner at Shrewsbury law firm Aaron & Partners, along with his 18-year-old son Johnny, tackled a gruelling 50 mile hike through the Shropshire hills, overcoming eight summits and climbing over 8,000 feet.

The duo undertook the challenge to raise money for the RCC's Shropshire Community Fund, which provides grants to help community organisations deliver their activities (find out more on page 13).

Whilst leading Aaron & Partners' banking and finance work for corporate clients, Hugh has also chaired the RCC for over three years. He said: "Small volunteer-led groups in the area are the backbone of the Shropshire community.

"From organising activities for vulnerable people to looking after local heritage

sights, these groups are often run by volunteers and rely on support to keep them running, often struggling to compete against much larger organisations.

"That's why I'm so proud to be a part of Shropshire RCC. Johnny and I were really pleased to raise awareness and vital funds for such a wonderful organisation and we're enormously grateful for those who very kindly really helped us to keep going – especially through the night-time hours."

Around 540 fundraisers took part in the challenge, with 120 forced to withdraw before completing the trek.

The pair completed the hike in under 14 hours and crossed the finish line at 3am.

Hugh's son Johnny was also awarded the Junior Staff for being the fastest 18-20-year-old to complete the challenge and will have his name engraved on the Staff.



Our quest to find more Whitchurch 'Good Neighbours'



Development Officer Lisa Darkin did a great job spreading the word about Good Neighbours across the Whitchurch community.

At the time, she said: "Hazel does fantastic work visiting three people who are currently housebound, but we know there are others in Whitchurch who would really benefit from a Good Neighbour. The types of tasks our volunteers do are all pretty simple – collecting shopping, changing a light bulb, popping round for a cup of tea – but they make a massive difference to the people they're helping."

The callout was featured in the local press and on BBC Radio Shropshire.

Hazel, from Whitchurch, also shared her experiences to encourage more people to volunteer. She has been part of Good Neighbours since last summer and joined the

Last November we put a callout for people in Whitchurch to join Hazel, our sole volunteer for a community group which supports those who are housebound or lonely.

'Good Neighbours' groups are formed by local people who want to offer a helping hand to those in their community.

The scheme in Whitchurch was set up by us after we identified a need for befriending support in the area, but we only had one person to deliver it – Hazel Davidson.

We were desperate to find more people who could spare some free time to spend with local people to prevent them from becoming isolated or lonely.

scheme following the death of her mother, whom she cared for.

Hazel said: "I have noticed the difference my visits make to those I see - we talk about local life and share stories. I know I'm making a real impact, plus it makes me feel good and we always leave one another with a smile and a wave."

Since then, we are delighted that the number of Whitchurch Good Neighbours volunteers has grown to six!

We are always interested in hearing from people who have some spare time to support our projects, so if you are interested in volunteering please contact 01743 360641 or email enquiries@shropshire-rcc.org.uk

County Boccia champions crowned

The final of the 2018 Shropshire Boccia Tournament was held last October, with team Clun Castle winning the title.



Area heats ran across the county in the lead up to the final, which took place at Shrewsbury College on 25 October.

Alveley Incredibles finished in second place, and a tie for third resulted in a play-off and a win for the Fernhill Frollickers, leaving last year's Silver medallists - the Fabulous Musketeers - with fourth place. Fifth place finishers were Fifty Shades of Boccia.

Boccia is a popular Paralympic sport which involves players trying to score points by propelling balls to land close to a target ball. Shropshire RCC organises the annual tournament to encourage people to socialise and keep active in their communities.

For more information about where to play Boccia in Shropshire, please contact Susie Hancock on 01743 360641.

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Community fund for the county launched



Last November the High Sheriff of Shropshire launched an initiative to support small community groups and charities in the county.

The Shropshire Community Fund was established to help a variety of organisations across Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin.

The fund is being grown as an endowment so the interest from can be shared in small grants for years to come.

It is managed by Shropshire RCC and builds on the work we currently do helping charities and voluntary groups access funding available.

Rhoderick Swire, who handed over his duties as High Sheriff of Shropshire in March this year, committed his time in office to shine a light on the smaller organisations that may be struggling to survive.

He said: "The demands and pressures on small charities have risen significantly, and funding available to help them deliver their work has not kept pace.

"Shropshire is a very special county with a proud history covering thousands of years. But we must look to the future and ensure

that our people are looked after."

There are an estimated 2,300 community groups and voluntary organisations in Shropshire. Around 80% have an income of less than £60,000 a year and almost half run on less than £10,000 a year.

Julia Baron, Chief Executive of Shropshire RCC, said: "Small groups are the bedrock of community life in Shropshire. They organise activities for people who may be lonely or isolated. They look after the local environment and heritage sights, provide entertainment for local residents and ensure that village halls and community buildings stay viable.

"They are run by incredibly hard working people who are often volunteers. They may be almost invisible, but would be a massive loss to the communities they help if they disappear."

For more information on the Shropshire Community Fund, visit www.shropshire-rcc.org.uk



From left to right: Shropshire RCC Chairman Hugh Strickland, Shropshire RCC CEO Julia Baron, Georgina Swire and Former High Sheriff of Shropshire Rhoderick Swire

PHOTO COURTESY OF SHROPSHIRE MAGAZINE

About us

Shropshire Rural Communities Charity (RCC) is committed to making life better for everyone living in Shropshire.

We help people improve their prospects with access to work and volunteering opportunities, and give a helping hand to those in need through small grants. We support people to stay active and

connected to their community and to maintain their health and independence so they live life to the full.

We work with local meeting places and groups to build thriving communities and we partner with organisations and policy makers to make sure the people of Shropshire have a fair voice.

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Our smoothie bike is a stationary cycle that harnesses the cyclist's pedaling energy to power a blender that is attached to the bike. Fruit is put into the blender jug and a delicious, healthy drink is produced by the cyclist.

The smoothie bike is always a hit at school and village fairs and a fantastic way to fundraise at your event.



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