

A Year of Delivery and Innovation



ORCC is transforming into a leaner more independent organisation with a new name and new direction – see back page for more info.



2014 - 2015: A snapshot of what we have done

300+ community buildings supported

63 Communities assisted with community led planning

60 Community transport groups assisted

14 Communities Groups were helped with Neighbourhood Planning

18 Energy audits completed on community buildings

200 Buildings on the community building website

20 Community shops supported

Over **4900** volunteers were involved



“ORCC have been a great catalyst and support resource for our nascent CLP. The team is accessible, helpful and positive.” - Fringford CLP group

“ORCC’s work in running training workshops on the Neighbourhood Plan process proved invaluable.” - Berinsfield Neighbourhood Development Plan Team

“ORCC’s guidance on the process kick-started activity. What was terrific was the community involvement, people being motivated to get involved in their village and change things.” - South Stoke resident



Cherwell District Council commissioned ORCC to research and write a study on Housing Growth & Community Provision.



Over the last year ORCC organised two community shop networking events with 40 people attending.



ORCC facilitated a public consultation event on the proposed changes to subsidised buses and Dial-A-Ride services.

ORCC is working alongside Vale DC, Sport for Streets and Sovereign Housing to find out what local residents would like to see replace the [vandalised] mural in South Abingdon and views on wider regeneration possibilities.



“Working with ORCC has been a very positive experience. We have been impressed with the quality of advice we have received and the expertise they have bought.” - Long Wittenham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group



*Community First Oxfordshire
Helping communities help themselves
Tel: 01865 883488*



Community Consultation Event

Introduction

During the past year, ORCC has provided the services that communities need: advice on community buildings and shops, rural housing, community-led planning and community transport.

We have also strengthened our work on neighbourhood planning, set up the Red Arrow Community Transport Team and project managed a regeneration project in South Abingdon.

We were commissioned by Cherwell District Council to review social and community provision in the district. This is to ensure that new housing developments include community halls and benefit from community development support.

Oxfordshire County Council appointed us as independent facilitators for the Supported Transport consultation. We wrote a report for HealthWatch on how dementia friendly communities can make a difference if there is better support and recognition of them. And we are working with the Local Enterprise Partnership and LEADER programme to support rural business and enterprise.

We have supported more volunteers in Oxfordshire's communities than ever before. Here is a snapshot of what we have done, how it has worked out and what people said about it.



Preparing for BloxFest 2015

Bulk Oil Buying Scheme

The ORCC bulk oil buying scheme continues to prove popular with:

32 local volunteer co-ordinators

800+ individual members

1.9 million litres oil ordered in 2014-15

Community-Led Planning (CLP)

ORCC has helped a total of 75 communities with their plans: 40 of these have taken forward a plan and 35 were interested in starting one. ORCC's guidance helps galvanise active citizenship and the community planning process enables local people to agree a wide range of proposals. This approach 'helps genuinely 'helps communities help themselves'.

ORCC's input includes helping them think about a community plan and supports them with consultations, surveys, plan writing and key actions. Some have undertaken the full 9-stage process; others have chosen an approach that can be taken forward more speedily. ORCC offers a service tailored to their needs.



Preparing the CLP marquee at Fringford



Filling in an opinion survey

Neighbourhood Planning (NP)

ORCC can help communities produce a Neighbourhood Plan using their own expertise with guidance from the ORCC team (which includes planning experts). ORCC has supported 14 Neighbourhood Planning groups. Our support covers all aspects of an NP project - project planning, sustainability appraisal, consultations, housing and community surveys, drafting NP policies and documents. Our service is underpinned by excellent working relationships with the planning authority.

ORCC training and empowering new community volunteers

ORCC organised a training event in June to highlight the benefits of interactive community consultation techniques. With a growing interest in both Community Led

and Neighbourhood Planning in Oxfordshire, ORCC recognised the need to showcase the benefits that real community engagement can bring. 22 delegates from 14 different towns and villages also heard from 2

enthusiastic and entertaining community activists from Stratton Audley, finding out how they consulted and motivated their community into action.

Health and Ageing

In collaboration with 2 other charities, we managed the Dementia Friendly Communities project in 58 locations and last year, completed a 'lessons learnt' project for HealthWatch. We are members of a group of charities invited by the Clinical Commissioning Group to develop new ideas for supporting elderly people. Our role is to mobilise the community engagement necessary to support an ageing population.



A novel use of an old telephone kiosk in Long Wittenham

Community Buildings

The experience and knowledge of our Community Buildings Adviser appears to be never ending, she will either know or know where to find out anything from fund raising, governance, energy efficiency to food allergy advice and health and safety.

Reducing village hall operating costs

Kennington Village Hall approached ORCC for assistance with rising energy costs. The Village Halls Adviser organised an energy audit, and helped the Village Hall Committee secure further funding to implement the energy efficiency recommendations. As a result, there has been an 18% reduction in electricity costs.

Saving halls money on insurance

Community halls need to reduce costs to keep hiring fees at a reasonable rate. An ORCC solution: produce a list of known insurance companies who specialise in tailored village hall insurance and offer advice when a policy needs renewing. The result: Using ORCC's list to get cost comparison quotes, halls have been saving several hundreds of pounds on annual premiums (ORCC is aware of two halls that have saved £1,000 each).

Partnership working delivers results

ORCC has partnered with Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment to deliver the ENRICH programme. ENRICH enables community buildings to become more sustainable. It reduces carbon emissions, makes buildings more welcoming and reduces running costs. A recent event in Kirtlington village Hall attracted over 50 people. Village hall committees and parish councils spoke about the difference that energy efficiency improvements have made to their buildings.



The Community Hub in Bletchington



A well-used Community mini-bus serving Uffington, Baulking and Woolstone

Community Transport (CT)

ORCC supports over sixty Community Transport schemes in the county. Their 1,200 volunteers make 75,000+ journeys each year, primarily taking older people to medical appointments. We offer Oxfordshire's only comprehensive local support service for CT groups and develop and mentor new CT schemes. We have brokered free volunteer driver parking in OU hospitals and offer umbrella public liability insurance, significantly reducing costs for CT car schemes. We manage the OCTA badge parking permit system and administer the Oxfordshire Community Transport Advisory Group.

"She cannot thank me enough for her monthly lifts. She had not left her house for 3 months before this and it makes me feel great to think that I have made this much difference to someone's quality of life." - Red Arrow Volunteer

We also have access to best practice advice from the Rural Community Council Network in England. The UK Community Transport Association review highlighted that advice and support on good practice and legislation was the most used and needed service for CT schemes.

Practice what you Preach: Red Arrow Volunteer Drivers

We have set up the Red Arrow Team, a community transport scheme that is part of Age UK Circles of Support programme. Our team of 20 drivers prioritise older and more vulnerable people and provide back up to the county's existing community transport schemes.

Village Retail

Horspath Hub: New Post office

To save the historic Horspath Chapel from developers a group of residents formed a charity and registered the building as a Community Asset. They successfully raised enough money to buy the building in August 2013. The plan was always to include the return of the Post Office which shut down two years ago which they achieved and re-opened in November 2014. ORCC has been actively involved from the very beginning with advice and support and this is still on-going.



Horspath Hub official opening April 2014

"This day has been memorable due to the fantastic buzz of the community enjoying their coffee morning and being thrilled to have a Post Office back in their village albeit part time." - Debbie Bradshaw, Field Support Advisor Post Office Ltd

Looking Forward

The village of Piddington Photo: (c) Jack Feltbower

New Name, New Scope, New Direction

ORCC is the oldest of the 38 Rural Community Councils in England. All charities need to adapt to changing times and last year, we reduced costs, built new partnerships and developed new services. In 2015/16, we will make further changes to enable us to thrive in a difficult financial climate.

We have changed our name to 'Community First Oxfordshire'. This follows other Rural Community Councils whose work is not confined to rural areas. We have a new logo and website: CommunityFirstOxon.org

We will be moving to smaller offices. We will continue to provide the services of a rural community council. We will also be developing new projects and services, supported by our team of specialist Associates.

communityfirst
oxfordshire
Helping communities help themselves

We will focus our efforts in four key areas:

Housing and community planning

- Neighbourhood planning
- Community planning
- New housing developments:
 - Social & community infrastructure
 - Community Builders

Community enterprise

- Community halls, shops and pubs
- Village Businesses, enterprise & services
- Community tourism

Health, ageing and transport

- Dementia friendly communities
- Community transport: Red Arrow Team
- Village Companies: domiciliary care

Energy

- Community oil buying scheme - over 800 individual members.
- Bulk buying of gas oil, LPG & cylinders
- Ground / air heat pumps & solar PV



Community First Oxfordshire (left to right): Helen Roper, Fiona Mullins, Tom McCulloch, Lynne Newin, Helen Sandhu, Emily Lewis-Edwards, Jon Bright, Sue Hunt

Our new address, from Tuesday
15th December 2015, will be:

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www.communityfirstoxon.org

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