

# ANNUAL REVIEW 2018/19



Making a difference to lives in Shropshire

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# Who we are

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

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

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.

## Our history

Shropshire RCC is part of a national network of similar organisations with a long and proud history of supporting rural communities throughout England.

The first RCC was set up in Oxfordshire in 1920, in the days before the Welfare State operated. A booming economy led to a migration of agricultural workers and younger people to the cities in favour of better-paid factory work, and rural social life went into decline.

Oxfordshire RCC provided support with projects around community cohesion, education, retraining and rehabilitation. On the strength of its success, a number of RCCs were established.

Shropshire RCC held its inaugural meeting 4 November 1960 with the aim of **bringing people in communities together and finding practical solutions to rural problems** – functions we still carry out today.

# Chairman and CEO's report



This past year is the 59th in Shropshire RCC's history, and as we come up to our Diamond anniversary we have been reflecting on the organisation's achievements and milestones.

Wheels2Work, our vehicle loan and transport advice programme for those needing help accessing work, is coming up to its 25th anniversary, and for 15 years our volunteers have been supporting people to adjust to life with hearing aids by offering advice and guidance.

Celebrating the legacy and history of Shropshire RCC is important - it reminds us why the organisation was established, how many people we've helped and why we're still here today.

It could be an older person being able to communicate again with a fully functioning hearing aid; a young person on the ladder to independence with a transport loan to get them to their first job; or a carer feeling supported in a social group of people who understand their daily challenges.

However, as we look ahead we know we can't deliver direct support to everyone in Shropshire who might benefit. We need to work in partnership with others, or to provide them with the funding they need to deliver services through their own staff and volunteers.

To this end we relaunched our Community Fund this year with the support of the High Sheriff, Rhoddy Swire. We will seek to grow this significantly over the next few years so that we can continue to improve the lives of people in Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin.

**Hugh Strickland**  
Chairman

**Julia Baron**  
CEO

## Our highlights in 2018/19

96

the age of the oldest person who received advice at one of our Wise and Well events

79

the number of people who competed in the 2018 Shropshire Boccia Tournament

80

the number of people supported by Wheels2Work

125

the number of enquiries to our community building support service

70

the number of grants distributed to individuals in need and community groups in Shropshire

415

the number of visits made by volunteers supporting people with Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards

1,212,720

the amount of litres of oil brokered through our community fuel buying scheme

3,953

the number of people advised by the Hearing Loss Support Service

£2,325

the amount raised to give out as Winter Warmth grants

8,926

the number of hours donated by volunteers to support our work

# Combatting rural isolation

**In 2018/19 we continued to deliver and support a range of schemes which help to tackle rural isolation in Shropshire.**

We received a grant of over £60,000 to expand our Care and Share groups from the Building Connections Fund, created in partnership between the Government, National Lottery Community Fund and the Co-op Foundation. Care and Share provides support to people with dementia and the loved ones who care for them. Members of our original groups in Market Drayton and Albrighton continued to meet once a fortnight, and locations were identified as part of the expansion plans made possible because of the new funding.

Our work to support people to live more independently continued through the hearing loss peer support services, which helped just under 4,000 people in 2018/19. New hearing aid wearers were able to attend our volunteer-run drop-in clinics or have a session at home. The majority of volunteers are hearing aid wearers themselves and offered support and advice to people adjusting to their aids.

Our Wise and Well team continued to help people to stay fit, well and connected through talks about issues including health and physical activities, as well as organising activities to keep people active in their community. Functional Fitness 'MOTs', which demonstrate the value of keeping active and ageing well, were hosted around the county for those aged over 65 who were nervous of falling.

The team also supported volunteer groups running Good Neighbour schemes, Musketeers and Maidens (a support group for adults with learning disabilities) and a county-wide network of Boccia groups.

# Our impact

## A Care and Share member on what the group means to her

Blanche has recently started attending Care and Share with her husband, who has dementia. She said: "Support groups are usually for the carer or the cared for. This is the only one I've come across that caters for both at the same time."

Members regularly take part in activities including memory games, reminiscing, gentle exercise, crafts, listening to speakers and importantly, socialising with each other.

The opportunity to make friends and share experiences with other carers has been one of the main benefits for Blanche. Her friendships with other members of the group who are carers has grown over the last couple of months.

She said: "It's such a comfort to speak to someone who is going through the same thing; someone who understands. It's vital. Care and Share is a lifeline for me."



# Tackling rural poverty

**Our aims to develop, maintain and expand innovative practical solutions that tackle rural poverty and bring economic benefits to people in Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin continued in 2018/19.**

Our Wheels2Work project received almost 200 referrals from across the county and supported 80 people looking for help getting to work. The scheme provides transport advice and offers short-term loans of mopeds and electric bikes - assisting people to move from benefits to work, start a career and support themselves.

Our community fuel buying scheme, which we've been running since September 2011, continued to help reduce the cost of heating oil for people living in 'off gas' areas of the county. By buying oil as part of a community, the price can be negotiated to a level where everyone gets a discount, which particularly benefits the more vulnerable members of the community. During the year we brokered the purchase of 1,212,720 litres of oil, saving over £36,000 for Shropshire residents.

For the past eight years we have also invited those who receive Winter Fuels payments to donate them for us to use for people who are experiencing fuel poverty. This year we received just under £2,000 (before Gift Aid) for redistribution to individuals in grants of up to £250. We worked with housing associations and charities to identify those who would benefit from the support.

In 2018/19 we ran two switching advisory sessions for Big Energy Saving Week and were able to highlight over £1,250 in savings for people who brought their bills. We also helped Smart Energy GB raise awareness of the benefits of smart meters for low income families and organised a number of events and information stands at food banks and supermarkets.

# Our impact

## New job and new start for Wheels2Work client

After Maria was made redundant, she was relieved to secure a new job as a supervisor at a nursery. The problem? It was based in a village outside Oswestry, and Maria didn't drive.

She said: "To get a bus to work would have taken almost two hours. And a taxi ride would have been £15 one-way."

Maria heard about Wheels2Work through a friend and contacted Shropshire RCC when she was offered her job. We were able to set up with a loan so that an electric bike was available for her first day.

Borrowing the bike has given Maria the chance to pay for driving lessons and save up for her own car. And her message for anyone thinking of joining the scheme? "Go for it. It will change your life!"



# Helping communities to help themselves

**In 2018/19 we continued to help communities to help themselves through a range of initiatives.**

We offered small grants to groups to support their work through funds we have available, either from the yield from our endowed funds or through grant schemes we operate on behalf of others.

We continued to provide a telephone and email support service to community buildings through our volunteer advisor. In 2018/19 we dealt with 125 enquiries from 76 different village halls and community buildings. We also provided funding advice and a 'grant finder' service, particularly for our members.

We supported a number of groups to use community-led planning principles to undertake consultation and build support for their community ventures. Our Neighbourhood Planning consultancy continued to grow to include the whole process, from vital community consultation right through the writing of the vision, objectives and the actual planning policies. We assisted groups with their funding applications, project management and realistic timeline planning.

We organised three training events: one for new Trustees about their responsibilities, 'Writing Successful Bids' and a new course about raising funds from legacies, all of which were fully subscribed.

Shropshire RCC continued to act as Custodian Trustee for Grindley Brook Recreation Rooms, near Whitchurch. We anticipate being able to distribute the residual assets from the charity as grants to support village halls in the area during 2019.

# Our impact

## Community comes together to revive village space

The Twemlows Community Energy Fund provides funding to voluntary and community groups for projects including encouraging energy efficiency, environmental education and conservation projects.

A group of people from Ash Parva, Whitchurch, wanted to enhance the communal space in the village and provide a habitat for local wildlife and pond life. They applied to the Twemlows Fund to restore the pond at the centre of the village, which had not held water for several years.

An award of £1,000 was made to support with the cost of clearing the pond and improve its ability to hold water.

Paul Dutton, chairman of the organising committee, said: "We're delighted with the results of the restoration project. The pond area is now an attractive space for the community to use and a welcoming environment for local wildlife. This was all possible in thanks to the hard work of local residents and the support from the Twemlows Fund and Shropshire RCC."



# Financials 2018/19

## Where our money comes from

	2018/19	2017/18	
Donations and membership	<b>88,668</b>	365,313 <sup>1</sup>	
Grants	<b>296,263</b>	275,547	
Other charitable activities	<b>78,816</b>	98,986	
Other trading activities	<b>34,081</b>	31,539	
Investments	<b>25,154</b>	67,023 <sup>2</sup>	
Other incoming resources	<b>4,675</b>	4,213	
<b>Total income</b>	<b>527,657</b>	842,621	

The charity's investments made in year net gains of £65,397 (2017/18: £4,618) increasing our 2018-19 net income to £36,056.

Our 2018-19 income excludes the 8,926 volunteer hours generously donated by 170 volunteers to support the work of our charity. (2017/18: 7,195 hours)

## How we spend our money

	2018/19	2017/18	
Rural Isolation	<b>216,105</b>	225,099	
Rural Poverty	<b>113,064</b>	137,031	
Helping Communities	<b>104,214</b>	90,126	
Strengthening our Organisation	<b>52,702</b>	21,916	
Raising funds	<b>53,234</b>	46,475	
Governance	<b>17,679</b>	17,553	
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>556,998</b>	538,200	

Our charitable expenditure includes £33,890 grant payments to community groups and individuals in need in Shropshire (2017/18: £13,993)

1. 2017/18 donation income included an extra-ordinary £315K donation from the Community Foundation for Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin to our grant giving Endowment following the closure of that charity.

2. 2017/18 investments included an extra-ordinary interest payment of £38,713 from Natwest.

Our continuing challenge is to replace lost public sector income with sustainable income sources. During the last three years we have sustained income for our charitable work at around £500,000 per year through support from charitable trusts, community fundraising, fundraising events and trading - including maximising the rental and hire income from sub-letting office space in our premises.

## Summary of our Funds

	2018/19					2017/18
	Designated Funds	General Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total Funds	Total Funds
Freehold property	<sup>1</sup> -	634,093	-	-	<b>634,093</b>	650,214
Other Tangible Fixed Assets	-	3,903	1,122	-	<b>5,025</b>	7,812
Investments	136,726	271,934	-	782,953	<b>1,191,613</b>	1,067,860
Current Assets	171,033	144,792	126,674	3,479	<b>445,978</b>	509,726
Current Creditors	<sup>1</sup> -	(64,630)	(9,948)	-	<b>(74,578)</b>	(51,061)
Long-term creditors	<sup>1</sup> -	(232,566)	-	-	<b>(232,566)</b>	(251,042)
<b>Total 2018/19</b>	<b>307,759</b>	<b>757,526</b>	<b>117,848</b>	<b>786,432</b>	<b>1,969,565</b>	<b>1,933,509</b>
<b>Total 2017/18</b>	<b>314,959</b>	<b>793,006</b>	<b>684,991</b>	<b>140,553</b>	<b>1,933,509</b>	

1. The charity has a 25 year mortgage secured against its property. At the 31st March 2019 the value of the outstanding loan was £248,910.

To protect the charity from serious disruption to its charitable work it is the policy of the Board to build up free reserves as part of its strategic planning. At 31st March 2019 the charity's free reserves were £118,408 (2018: £134,981)

We would like to say a special thank you to those individuals who have donated, sponsored or raised funds for our charitable services, including those individuals who donated their winter fuel payments to our "Winter Warmth" grant fund for individuals in fuel poverty.

# Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following organisations whose grants, donations, fundraising, sponsorship or “gifts in kind” have financed our work this year:

Aaron & Partners LLP	NHS Shropshire Clinical Commissioning Group
Baron Davenport's Charity	NHS Telford & Wrekin Clinical Commissioning Group
ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England)	Nock Deighton
Big Lottery Building Connections Fund	PB Dumbell Charitable Trust
Building Better Opportunities Programme funded through the European Social Fund and the Big Lottery Fund	Shrewsbury Colleges Group
Community Energy Twemlows Fund	Shrewsbury School Community Choir
Community Foundation for Shropshire & Telford	Shrewsbury & Telford Hospitals NHS Trust
Co-operative Local Community Fund	Shropshire Council
Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs/Action with Communities in Rural England	Shropshire Masonic Charitable Association
EFG Harris Allday	Shropshire & West Midlands Agricultural Society
Hilton-Jones Charitable Trust	Shropshire Town & Rural Housing
Lord Leverhulme Charitable Trust	Sight Loss Shropshire
Meres & Mosses Housing Association	Sir John Sumner's Trust
Millichope Foundation	Smart Energy GB
Much Wenlock Forester Charitable Trust	Tanners Wine Merchants
National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux	The Kelton Charitable Trust
National Energy Action	Three Parishes Community Chest
	Westcroft Trust

We would also like to thank our members, supporters, donors, staff and volunteers for their support throughout the year.

# How you can help

**Become a member** - By joining Shropshire RCC you will help us to continue delivering our vital work for communities across the county.

As a member you will receive all the latest news, updates and information relating to our work and have access to knowledge and expertise in helping communities become more sustainable economically, socially and environmentally.

**Volunteer for us** - From hearing aid support to bike maintenance, we have a diverse range of activities that volunteers can get involved in.

**Raise funds for us** - If you like what we do and want to help by organising event, get in touch! We can offer advice plus provide you with publicity materials such as posters and flyers to help you to promote it.

**Make a donation** - By making a one-off or regular donation, your generosity can help some of the most disadvantaged people in Shropshire to enjoy an improved quality of life.

**Hire our equipment** - We offer a loan service on office equipment to community groups and voluntary organisations. We also have a collection of vintage crockery available for hire, plus a smoothie bike – a great addition to any fundraising event!

For more information on how you can help, please contact us on 01743 360641, email [enquiries@shropshire-rcc.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@shropshire-rcc.org.uk) or visit [www.shropshire-rcc.org.uk](http://www.shropshire-rcc.org.uk)



# Making a difference to lives in Shropshire

4 The Creative Quarter, Shrewsbury Business Park, Shrewsbury, SY2 6LG

Tel: 01743 360641

Email: [enquiries@shropshire-rcc.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@shropshire-rcc.org.uk)

Website: [www.shropshire-rcc.org.uk](http://www.shropshire-rcc.org.uk)

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