



**Connecting Communities  
in Berkshire**

**Helping Berkshire communities thrive**

# **IMPACT REPORT 2024 - 25**

[www.ccberks.org.uk](http://www.ccberks.org.uk)

[admin@ccberks.org.uk](mailto:admin@ccberks.org.uk)

**CHARITY NUMBER: 1056367**

# Welcome From Our Chair

## Mark Nevitt



I am delighted to present another strong year of performance by CCB, delivering vital support to rural communities in Berkshire - support that CCB is uniquely positioned to provide.

Across all CCB's key strands of activity, the team has delivered meaningful benefits to a wide range of communities.

Our work **addressing fuel poverty** continues to support low-income families by helping them reduce gas and electricity costs and manage the growing burden of water bills. The **Affordable Rural Housing Enabling Project**, launched in 2024, has quickly become firmly established and widely welcomed. Our **Community Buildings Advice Service** and **21st Century Halls team** continue to support the development of sustainable, future-ready community spaces, and our community training and activity programmes remain active and impactful.

Looking ahead, and as I indicated last year, CCB is investing further in community engagement to inform the next phase of services. These will be designed to meet rural needs - either delivered directly by CCB or enabled through our unique position to facilitate outreach by key partners.

While CCB's financial position remains strong, the charity is still reliant on core funding from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), particularly for the continued delivery of the Affordable Rural Housing Programme. My thanks go to Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) for their support in securing another year's funding, with the hope this will transition into a new three-year commitment from 2026.

Finally, my sincere thanks to the team, whose dedication to the cause is unwavering, and to my fellow trustees, who generously give their time to guide and support CCB.



# Note From Our CEO

**Tim Parry**

I'd like to echo Mark's thanks to the wider CCB Team—**both staff and Trustees—whose continued efforts have enabled the achievements outlined in this report.** Space here is limited, so I encourage anyone interested in learning more about our work to reach out to a member of the Team.

**Our focus remains firmly on partnerships and collaboration** - connecting with other organisations to strengthen and extend outreach service delivery.

For example, we're working closely with the **Volunteer Centre West Berkshire** to foster a more integrated relationship between West Berkshire Council and the local voluntary and community sector.

We are also engaging with colleagues in **Bracknell Forest and Wokingham Borough** to support emerging community strategies and to collaborate on shared carbon net-zero goals. Community development principles remain at the heart of our work.

**We're investing in greater capacity to engage more effectively with villages and rural towns across Berkshire,** helping to shape the future of our service delivery.

The coming years may bring significant changes across the region, and CCB will continue to work closely with our peers in the Berkshire voluntary sector to ensure the needs of the sector—and more importantly, **our beneficiaries are not overlooked in the process of public sector reform.**



# Celebrating 50 years of Community Impact

Last year marked a significant milestone for our charity as we celebrated 50 years of supporting rural communities across Berkshire.

Since our formation in 1973 as the Berkshire Community Service Council, we have remained committed to strengthening communities, championing local voices, and delivering practical support in response to changing needs. From our first Countryside Liaison Officer to today's wide-ranging project work, we have adapted to meet the evolving challenges and opportunities faced by our county.

Over five decades, our work has touched every corner of Berkshire. Some of our most valued achievements include:

- **Improving rural resilience**, from flood planning in Swallowfield to delivering community safety projects in the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead.



- **Championing local needs**, with 48 Parish Plans developed across West Berkshire and support for community-led affordable housing resulting in homes being built for communities such as in Woolhampton.
- **Addressing fuel poverty**, through long-term energy advice programmes and collective initiatives like our Oil Buying Group, which has saved members over £56,000 in the last five years alone.
- **Investing in places and people**, supporting village hall upgrades, establishing community orchards, and creating opportunities for learning, volunteering, and connection.
- **Innovating in community development**, from pioneering digital training delivery to launching mobile learning hubs like CLIVE bus and hosting funding fairs and conferences that empowered local groups.
- **Fostering inclusion and wellbeing**, through targeted support for carers, Traveller communities, Asian women, and those experiencing isolation.

We were proud to mark our anniversary with a celebration in July 2024 at Victory Hall in Farley Hill, where we were joined by partners, trustees, volunteers, and staff — past and present — to reflect on our journey and achievements.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to our purpose: to inspire action at a community level that improves people's quality of life in Berkshire.



# 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Halls

## Sustainable, resilient, and thriving community spaces

The past 12 months marked the third year of our five-year 21st Century Community Halls project, funded by The National Lottery Community Fund. The project supports Berkshire's network of village halls and community buildings — helping to ensure they remain fit for purpose, environmentally sustainable, and vibrant centres of local life for the next 100 years.

We work directly with hall committees to build long-term resilience by improving energy efficiency, reducing environmental impact, strengthening financial sustainability, and deepening community engagement.

In 2024, we welcomed David Jennings as our new Project Development Officer. Alongside Kate Meads, our Community Buildings Advisor, they have carried out 56 initial hall reviews across Berkshire.








Following the visit, each hall receives a comprehensive report summarising findings and tailored recommendations. Committees — often made up entirely of volunteers — use these reports to develop practical, phased action plans. Ongoing support is available through regular calls and visits, helping halls tackle challenges, access funding, and make informed decisions.

## Looking Ahead

In March 2025, we began working with our learning partner, the National Innovation Centre for Rural Enterprise (NICRE). NICRE is helping us build an impact measurement framework for the project and has already begun gathering feedback from participating halls.

## Community Hall Consultations

We've conducted **56 in-person hall reviews** across Berkshire, guided by a **120+ question assessment** across 7 categories:

-  Building & Organisation
-  Sustainability
-  Environment
-  Fabric of the Building
-  Energy
-  Accessibility
-  Next Steps

Each hall receives a detailed report + action plan.

We support volunteers with ongoing advice, funding help, and check-ins.



## WHAT WE'RE HEARING

### Real voices from halls making a difference



#### Energy & Environment

"We've saved money on energy – great for the environment and our bottom line."

"Thanks to a free energy audit, we've added loft insulation, upgraded to LEDs, and started exploring solar PV."

#### Health, Safety & Quick Wins

"Some quick wins were implemented straight away, especially around health & safety."

"Others – like switching to LED lighting – are now in future refurbishment plans."



#### Support & Guidance

"The support has been incredibly useful and adds real value to how we manage the charity."

"We've received and continue to benefit from valuable support from CCB."



#### Community Engagement

"The hall is engaging with the community in new ways."

"We want to be the 'go-to' venue for our local community – especially younger people."



Snapshot Halls Engaged so far:

**16%**



**are owned and managed by parish or town councils**

Snapshot Halls Engaged so far:

**81%**



**of halls audited are registered charities**

# Case Study: Acland Memorial Hall



## Engagement with the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Hall Project

Acland Memorial Hall is a standout example of a venue that has fully embraced the 21st Century Community Halls consultation process. Following the initial review visit, the management committee acted quickly, implementing all identified short-term ‘quick win’ improvements. They now have funding secured for medium-term works — including a major upgrade to the entrance lobby, toilets, cloakroom, disabled access, and baby changing areas — and are actively planning for long-term enhancements such as roof insulation, solar PV installation, and battery storage.

The initial consultation helped trustees identify two key challenges:

- Rising fuel costs associated with heating and lighting the building
- The ongoing need to keep the hall fit for purpose

The committee used the resulting report to develop a structured improvement plan, phased into short, medium, and long-term actions.

## Impact of the Audit and ongoing support

- Environmental Practices: Introduced a dedicated recycling system for plastic bottles, paper, and tins
- Building Fabric: Replaced high-level glazing where needed and completed an asbestos survey, with a management plan now in place
- Energy Efficiency: Implemented a lower default heating temperature, upgraded lighting to LED with Passive Infrared sensors and timed overnight shut-off, and introduced a 'switch-off' policy for users.

A community consultation process was also undertaken to inform and support the next phase of work. The survey — available both online and on paper — was shared through email, social media, and promoted in person at several pop-up cafés organised by the committee. It gathered input from current users, hirers, and members of the wider community helping to demonstrate community support for the funding bid, including from the Platinum Jubilee Village Halls fund.





# Activate Village Halls: Moving Together and Reducing Isolation in Rural West Berkshire



Funded by a grant from Berkshire Community Foundation and delivered by our partner Moveability, we brought 78 seated exercise classes to three rural venues - Chieveley, Hermitage, and Lambourn - reaching 141 older adults and carers. Thanks to this funding, we sustained and expanded a vital service that supports physical health, mental wellbeing, and community connection.

## Stronger, healthier and more connected

Our classes help tackle rural isolation, mental health challenges, and limited access to services. By removing barriers to participation and prioritising comfort and confidence, we've created welcoming spaces where people feel they belong.

- Chieveley: Class sizes grew to an average of 25, often reaching 30.
- Hermitage: Attendance held steady at 22 per session.
- Lambourn: A core group of 17 now attend regularly
- We also welcomed 26 new participants, expanding our reach and impact.

**“Debbie really takes the time to make the class available to all abilities. It’s good for the body and mind... and the tea and chat afterwards was lovely too.”**

**Sharon Scott, daughter of participant Sandra**

## Looking ahead

With new funding from SNG supporting Lambourn, Moveability is able to keep working to keep this class going. CCB and MOVEability will continue to work together to seek funding to support other classes in Berkshire. These classes help older adults stay mobile, independent and connected but they can't be sustained without long-term investment.



BERKSHIRE  
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FOUNDATION



# Supporting and Strengthening Berkshire's Village Halls

The **Community Buildings Advice Service (CBAS)** continues to be a vital support hub for trustees and management committees running local halls and community spaces across Berkshire. This year, CBAS reached its highest-ever membership, **with 82 village halls and community buildings** subscribing to receive guidance, training, and up-to-date information.

From April 2024 to March 2025, the service responded to **133 online support requests**, conducted **18 in-person visits**, and provided a wide range of targeted communications — including newsletters, funding bulletins, and a refreshed list of recommended suppliers.



## Training Highlight: Charity Risk Workshop, January 2025

Feedback from participants reflected the value of practical advice and peer learning opportunities. The workshop equipped trustees with tools to identify and mitigate risks and improve governance.







**celebrating,  
encouraging  
& supporting  
volunteers**  
17-23 March 2025



**Village  
Halls  
Week**

As part of the national **Village Halls Week** celebrations, we hosted a celebration lunch at Farley Hill Victory Hall. The event brought together trustees and committee members from across the county in an informal setting to share ideas and experiences.

**“This was a fantastic event. I had the chance to meet several members of Village Hall Committees I hadn’t met with before. It was really valuable to have an informal setting to chat, build connections, and most importantly, express heartfelt thanks to the many trustees who dedicate their time and energy to keeping our community spaces running.”**

— Kate Meads, Community Buildings Advisor

## Investing in Expertise

In support of ongoing work to help halls improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions, Kate Meads, CBAS Advisor, completed a Level 2 qualification in **Understanding Low-Carbon Technologies**. This additional expertise is already helping trustees make informed decisions about energy-saving measures and future-proofing their buildings.



## Capacity Building Through Training

Six bespoke training courses were developed and delivered this year, supporting **91 trustees** across the following key areas:

- Fundraising
- Community Engagement
- Risk Management
- Trustee Roles and Responsibilities
- Business Planning
- Website Development

These sessions were well-received and designed to build confidence and capability among volunteers managing community facilities.



## Looking Ahead: Priorities for 2025–26

Over the next year, CBAS will continue to grow and develop its offer, with three key ambitions:

### Expanding Reach

Supporting more management committees, especially those facing challenges related to governance, trustee recruitment, or venue management.

### Relevant and Timely Training

Delivering targeted training to address emerging needs, including upcoming responsibilities under Martyn's Law, and managing risks such as asbestos and legionella.

### Supporting Quality and Compliance

Helping halls work towards the recognised Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE's) Hallmark Quality Standards, ensuring legal compliance, strong governance, and safe, sustainable operations.



# Energy and Water Saving Support for Families

## Reducing household costs and building resilience in low-income communities

This project provided vital advice and support to low-income families across Berkshire — in both urban and rural areas — to help reduce home energy and water costs. It also trained frontline professionals and volunteers to extend the project's reach and ensure that families facing financial pressure could access timely, trusted guidance.



Many families supported by the project were experiencing severe cost-of-living pressures, often struggling to meet the costs of energy, water, and other essentials. This project played an important role in reducing financial strain, improving wellbeing, and helping households take greater control of their utility use and bills.

**132**



**families were supported face-to-face over 21 community drop-in sessions**

**58**



**families were referred for bespoke one-to-one advice, often provided over multiple telephone sessions.**

**93**



**frontline workers were trained to support families with utility costs over 8 training sessions**

**2364**



**families received advice or support**

The project made a measurable difference to the lives of families across Berkshire by:

- **Maximising household income**

Many families were unaware of eligibility for water company discount schemes. Accessing these created year-on-year savings on essential bills.

- **Promoting behaviour change**

Bespoke advice helped families understand the real costs of daily energy and water use, enabling informed decisions and small changes that delivered meaningful savings.

- **Building confidence and resilience**

Families were supported to resolve issues with energy suppliers and better understand their bills. Many reported being more confident in managing utilities independently.

- **Reducing energy debt**

We helped families in arrears understand how to set up realistic, affordable repayment plans and avoid further escalation of debt.

- **Improving wellbeing**

Many beneficiaries reported reduced anxiety as a result of tackling their utility issues and gaining control over their energy and water use.

## Project Impact



### Training & Cascaded Support

Training frontline workers ensured that advice could reach families who may not otherwise access specialist support. Over the year:

- 93 professionals and volunteers were trained
- Practitioners reported they would cascade advice to an estimated 2,174 families
- Learning and tools were also shared with over 420 colleagues within support organisations

This training has helped embed energy and water-saving support within wider community outreach services, improving the sustainability of the project's impact.



## Case Study: Hannah's Story



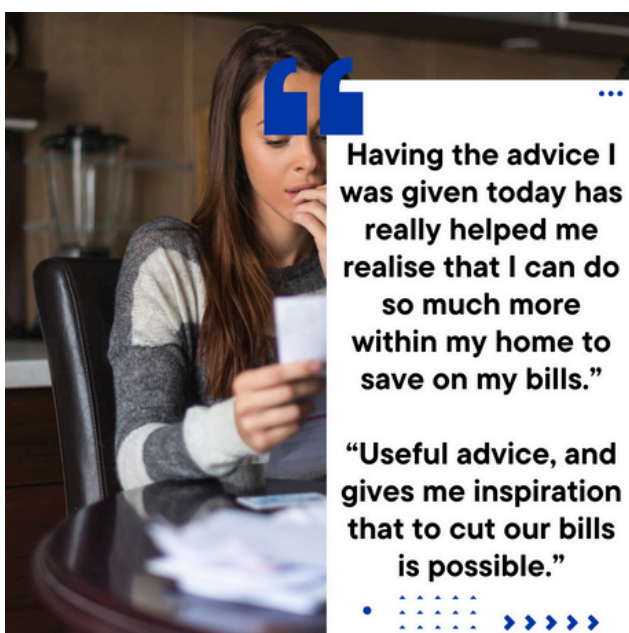
Hannah contacted the service for help after receiving a high energy bill linked to a faulty smart meter. She was struggling to resolve the issue and feared falling into more debt.

Over a four-month period, she received regular telephone support from our Energy Advice Project Manager, Helen Dean, who helped her understand the problem, contact her supplier, and advocate for a fair resolution.

As a result of this support, Hannah's supplier cancelled the incorrect bill, issued a new account, and set up a more manageable payment plan. Today, she is successfully managing her account with confidence.

**“Before the advice I was always disturbed and wasn't sure how to go about it, taking into consideration my poor financial condition. Now, I finally got my meter and bills sorted out. This has brought so much relief.”**

## Feedback from Families and Practitioners



# Community Learning: Building Knowledge, Strengthening Communities



Over the past year, we have continued to grow our learning and development offer for both our members and the wider community across Berkshire. These training sessions are closely aligned with our project work and areas of expertise, ensuring we provide relevant, practical support to those who need it most.

We would like to thank the Adult Community Learning team at West Berkshire Council for their continued support and recognition of the value of our work. Their partnership helps us deliver high-quality training that empowers individuals and strengthens local communities.

## Dementia Awareness Training

In April, we delivered a well-received session at Pangbourne Village Hall in partnership with Age UK Berkshire and the Alzheimer's Society. The training explored common misconceptions about dementia, provided guidance on how to support people living with the condition, and offered tips on making homes and community spaces more dementia-friendly.

**“I found the information about the difference between factual and emotional memories especially helpful. The training also helped increase my understanding of the huge variances in how those experiencing dementia may act and behave.”**

— *Learner feedback*





## Supporting Community Buildings and Trustees

Much of our training is designed to support those involved in running village halls and community buildings. This year, we delivered several targeted online sessions, including:

- Fundraising and Grant Applications – How to successfully apply to funding providers to improve your community hall.
- Trusteeship Training – An introduction to the roles and responsibilities of new or prospective trustees.



## Energy Awareness for Low-income Families



In Autumn 2024, we ran two online training courses for people supporting low-income families across Berkshire. The sessions provided up-to-date advice on saving money on energy bills and accessing support for utility debt. A total of 42 learners attended.

These courses were rated **‘Excellent’ by 87%** of participants and **‘Good’ by the remaining 13%**, with 100% agreeing that the content and teaching were of a high standard.

## Looking Ahead

Our commitment to building knowledge and resilience in Berkshire’s communities remains as strong as ever. Whether it’s helping trustees navigate their roles, enabling volunteers to better support others, or providing practical tools for everyday challenges, our learning opportunities are designed to make a lasting impact.

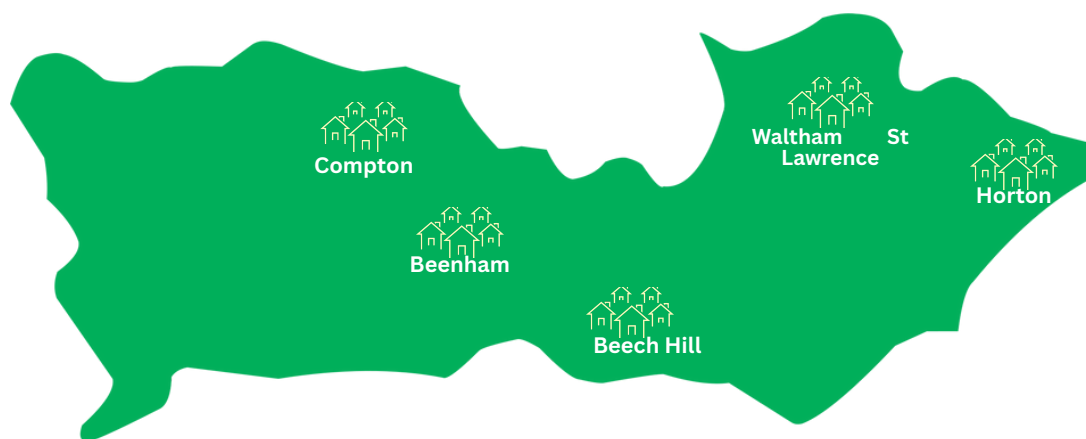
We’re excited to continue this journey of community empowerment in the year ahead.

# Rural Affordable Housing

In March 2025, we began our second year of delivery, building on the successes and learning from the first year. After a nearly seven-year break from being able to provide support for rural affordable housing, there was a lot of work to do in raising awareness of the service among rural parishes and local authorities, and getting to grips with what the affordable rural housing crisis really looks like in Berkshire.



We were fortunate to find keen supporters for our work including Reading West and Mid Berkshire MP Olivia Bailey, who led a debate in Westminster Hall in February on Rural Affordable Housing and mentioned our housing service. But it's the commitment and tenacity of communities and parish councils that is key to seeing rural affordable housing initiatives come to fruition.



Since April 2024, we have worked closely with Parish Councils in five rural Berkshire parishes to identify local affordable housing needs. In several parishes, we are now exploring potential sites and housing providers for rural exception site developments. Parishes we have worked with on Housing Needs Surveys include Beech Hill, Beenham, Compton, Waltham St Lawrence, and Horton. The housing needs and circumstances of each parish are unique. Still, all are affected by issues around land availability, pressures on housing lists and a desire for any new homes to meet local needs.

# Looking Ahead

Conversations with residents and parish councils have highlighted how the national housing crisis is being felt in rural areas. Not only do rural communities have fewer affordable homes than urban areas, but those that do become available are often allocated to households on high-priority lists who may not have a connection to the parish through work, family, or current residence.

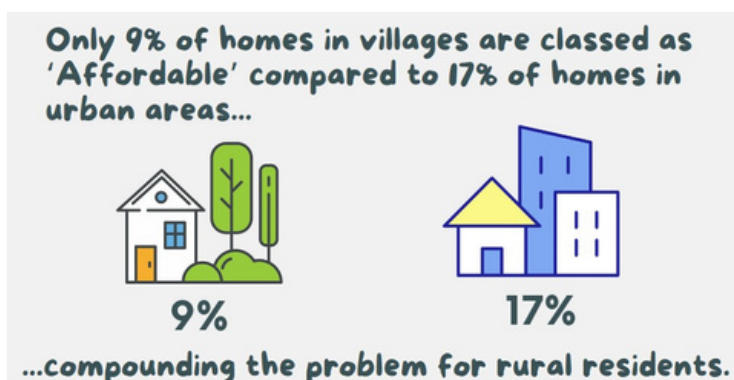
The knock-on effect can be a disconnect between affordable renters and homeowners or long-term renting residents, and disillusionment from parishioners who need affordable housing locally but do not meet current eligibility criteria.

Despite anxieties national housing targets and local authority housebuilding plans, all of the parishes surveyed in 2024 are supportive of small schemes for people with a local connection.



## Priorities in 2025

- Continue Housing Needs Surveys and support parishes progressing toward affordable housing.
- Use census data to map housing need across Berkshire to identify areas of greatest need.
- Share insights with parish councils to inform decisions.
- Advocate for local connection policies on new and existing affordable rural homes.
- Gather feedback from tenants on Berkshire RES sites to understand impact.
- Continue to work regionally to improve access to affordable rural housing with the Rural Thames Valley Partnership.





# The CCB Oil Club: Supporting Off-Grid Households

**Helping rural communities save money on heating while exploring greener energy options**

Since 2012, CCB has managed the CCB Oil Club, supporting households in rural Berkshire who are off the gas grid and reliant on oil for heating. The club helps members save money and time by coordinating bulk-buy orders and negotiating competitive prices.



## Impact in 2024–2025

Over the past year:

- 79 households were members of the Oil Club
- Members saved a combined total of £7,073 on their heating oil
- The average saving was 3.79 pence per litre

These savings make a meaningful difference to households managing rising energy costs, particularly in more isolated or hard-to-reach areas.

## Looking Ahead

In the year ahead, CCB plans to develop a new initiative — the Rural Energy Club — to support off-grid households who are interested in transitioning away from oil heating towards more sustainable and renewable energy sources. This will include exploring options for lower-carbon technologies and supporting residents to understand the alternatives available.





# Thank You to our Funders

Allied Westminster  
Berkshire Community Foundation  
Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs  
Easyfundraising  
The Englefield Charitable Trust  
(Via The Good Exchange)  
The Grocers Charity  
Lemon Booking  
Morleys (Bicester) Ltd  
Norris & Fisher  
Newbury Community Resource Centre  
(computer equipment donation)  
Oil Fuel Poverty Solutions  
Reading Voluntary Action  
Sabina Sutherland Charitable Trust  
Sound Reduction Systems Ltd  
The National Lottery Community Fund  
West Berkshire Council  
Yattendon & Frilsham Fete



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member

# Thank You to our Members

## Members

### Community Buildings Advice Service

Acland Memorial Hall, Cold Ash

Aldermaston Parish Hall

Aldworth Village Hall

Arborfield Village Hall

Ashampstead Jubilee Hall

Austen Leigh & Baldwin Institute

Basildon Village Hall

Beech Hill Memorial Hall

Beedon Village Hall

Berkshire Scouts

Binfield Memorial Hall

Binfield Parish Council

Bracknell Town Council

Bradfield Village Hall

Brightwalton Village Hall

Brimpton Village Hall

Burghfield Parish Council

California Association

Chaddleworth Village Hall

Charvil Village Hall

Cheapside Village Hall

Chieveley Village Hall & Recreation Centre

Colnbrook Village Hall

Compton Parish Council

Compton Village Hall & The Wikins Centre

Cookham Dean Village Hall

Cornerstone Wokingham

Croft Hall, Hungerford

Crowthorne Parish Council

Curridge Woman's Institute

East Garston Village Hall

Englefield Village Hall

Eton Wick Village Hall

Finchampstead Memorial Hall

Frilsham Clubroom

Gilchrist Hall, Littlewick Green

Grazeley Village Hall

Great Shefford Village Hall

Hampstead Norreys Village Hall

Hamstead Marshall Village Hall

Hermitage Village Hall

Holyport War Memorial Hall

Hurst Village Halls

Knowl Hill Village Hall

Leckhampstead Village Hall

Midgham Village Hall

Morrell Room Streatley

Mortimer Community Centre

Padworth Village Hall

Pangbourne Village Hall

Pearson Hall, Sonning

Peasemore Parish Council

Pinder Hall, Cookham

Purley Memorial Hall



# Thank You to our Members

## Members

### Community Buildings Advice Service

Purley on Thames Parish Council  
Shaw-cum-Donnington Village Hall  
Speen Parish Hall  
Spencers Wood Village Hall  
Stanford Dingley Parish Council  
St Pauls Parish Room  
Sulhampstead & Ufton Nervet Village Hall  
Sunningdale Village Hall  
Sutton Hall  
Swallowfield Parish Hall  
Thatcham Parish Hall  
Thatcham Town Council  
The John Cumber Hall  
The York Club  
Tidmarsh Village Hall  
Tilehurst Village Hall  
Town & Manor of Hungerford  
Twyford District Youth & Community Building  
Victory Hall, Farley Hill  
Victory Room Bucklebury  
Wargrave Parish Council  
West Ilsley Village Hall  
Wokingham without Parish Council  
Woolhampton Village Hall  
Wraysbury Village Halls

### Standard CCB Members

Beedon Parish Council  
Carebus Transport Group  
East Garston Parish Council  
Enborne Parish Council  
Garth Pearce  
Hungerford Town Council  
Keep Mobile  
Grenville Annetts  
Shaw-cum-Donnington Parish Council  
Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council  
Theale Village Hall  
Twyford Parish Council  
Warfield Parish Council  
West Ilsley Parish Council  
Wokingham Town Council

**Support our Work by  
Becoming a Member**







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## Contact Us

**Phone:** 0118 961 2000

**Email:** [admin@ccberks.org.uk](mailto:admin@ccberks.org.uk)

**Website:** [www.ccberks.org.uk](http://www.ccberks.org.uk)

**Address:** Wyvols Court, Basingstoke  
Road, Swallowfield,  
Berkshire, RG7 1WY

## CCB Team

[Tim.Parry@ccberks.org.uk](mailto:Tim.Parry@ccberks.org.uk)  
Chief Executive

[Gemma.Matthews@ccberks.org.uk](mailto:Gemma.Matthews@ccberks.org.uk)  
Office & Communications Manager

[Maria.Kelly@ccberks.org.uk](mailto:Maria.Kelly@ccberks.org.uk)  
Rural Housing Enabler

[Kate.Meads@ccberks.org.uk](mailto:Kate.Meads@ccberks.org.uk)  
Community Buildings Advisor

[Helen.Dean@ccberks.org.uk](mailto:Helen.Dean@ccberks.org.uk)  
Energy Advice Project Manager

[David.Jennings@ccberks.org.uk](mailto:David.Jennings@ccberks.org.uk)  
Project Development Officer

## Trustees 2024-25

Mark Nevett, Chair

Cathy Salzedo, Hon. Treasurer

Peter Thorn

Sarah Morland

Libby Herbert

Pam Beddoes

Alex Hedges (retired 2024)

David Oram (co-opted March 2025)