


AUTHOR:	BRCC	
TITLE:	BRCC delivery of CBC Community and Voluntary Infrastructure Support Grant	
DATE:	September 10th, 2018	
PURPOSE:	To highlight what BRCC has achieved with the Infrastructure Grant and outline the anticipated impacts of a cessation in funding	

Background to BRCC

Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity (BRCC) is the leading community development agency working across Bedfordshire, with a proven track record built up over 65 years. BRCC also serves as the Rural Community Council (RCC) for Bedfordshire, one of 38 RCCs in England working together under the national umbrella body, ACRE - Action for Communities in Rural England.

For more information about BRCC visit <http://bedsrcc.org.uk/>; for more information about ACRE visit: <http://www.acre.org.uk/>

BRCC has 3 main service areas: Rural Transport, Rural Development and Supporting Communities. CBC's Community and Voluntary Infrastructure Support Grant has principally been delivered by the Supporting Communities Team.

Supporting Communities Team

BRCC's Supporting Communities Team has a long and proven track record of making a difference across Central Bedfordshire in a number of work areas, including:

- Good Neighbour/ Village Care Schemes
- Green Infrastructure – planning, creation and management
- Community-led Planning - including Neighbourhood Planning
- Village Halls/ Community Buildings
- Rural Housing
- *Community Agents – in some communities*

The CBC Community and Voluntary Infrastructure Support Grant has enabled us to expand our work in a number of these areas. The funding has also enabled us to invest staff time in the development of new initiatives and funding bids. One such example is the Greensand Country Landscape Partnership, primarily within Central Bedfordshire and co-hosted by BRCC and the Greensand Trust. This ambitious project has brought over £3m of funding into the local area, delivering a wide range of benefits.

What we have achieved with the CBC Community and Voluntary Infrastructure Support Grant

The main Outcomes that BRCC was commissioned to achieve and have been working on since April 2016 are:

- Outcome 3 - Communities doing more for themselves
- Outcome 4 - Communities delivering local services
- Outcome 5 - Community enablers and active citizens help people to access support as and when they need it
- Outcome 6 - Maximise the use of physical assets to support local communities, to create multi-functional community spaces / hubs managed by, with and on behalf of local communities
- Outcome 7 - People feel they can influence decisions in their area

Additionally, BRCC has also achieved against:

- Outcome 1 - Increase in the number of people volunteering
- Outcome 2 - Increase in the amount of volunteering individuals do

Much of our work overlaps a number of these Outcomes. Progress against these Outcomes is summarised against the most relevant Outcome below:

Outcome 3 - Communities doing more for themselves

BRCC has

- Promoted national campaigns and initiatives to community groups and organisations, incl Town & Parish Councils
- Provided a DBS service enabling groups to recruit 950 approved volunteers
- Attended Town & Parish Council meetings to promote our services and provide information and advice
- Supported the creation of 11 new community groups (incl the recruitment of volunteers for 8 new Health Walk Groups and 3 new Good Neighbour Groups)

Outcome 4 - Communities delivering local services

BRCC has

- Facilitated 275 journeys for community groups through the Community Transport brokerage, using volunteer drivers

Outcome 5 - Community enablers and active citizens help people to access support as and when they need it

BRCC has

- Equipped Community Mobilisers (BRCC staff) and Community Connectors (volunteers/ Good Neighbour groups) signposting local residents to the right sources of information and advice, including linking them to other community based activities

Additionally, BRCC has Community Agents working in Potton, Biggleswade, Eversholt & Shefford, providing more in-depth support for accessing services and activities to those in the community most at risk of isolation. This support is now further enhanced through a team of Community Wellbeing Champions undertaking Social Prescribing across Central Bedfordshire.

Outcome 6 - Maximise the use of physical assets to support local communities, to create multi-functional community spaces / hubs managed by, with and on behalf of local communities

BRCC has

- Responded to over 100 enquiries from 76 individual community building management groups. Produced detailed reports for community buildings in Wixams, Cranfield, Marston Moretaine; and ongoing information and advice to Potton Hall for All
- Involved individuals and community groups in the planning, creation and care of x4 Green Wheels and x10 green spaces (including Ivel Valley Conservation Volunteers, Friends of Biggleswade Green Wheel, ACORN, TEASEL and the Friends of Fairfield Orchards)

Outcome 7 - People feel they can influence decisions in their area

BRCC has

- Supported the production of 25 community-led plans, including Neighbourhood Plans and Green Infrastructure Plans
- Undertaken x5 Housing Needs surveys
- Coordinated community group comments on planning applications

Although not directly allocated for delivery by BRCC, we have also contributed to Outcomes 1 and 2:

Outcome 1 - Increase in the number of people volunteering

Outcome 2 - Increase in the amount of volunteering individuals do

Across our Good Neighbour, Health Walk and Conservation Volunteering groups, BRCC equips and supports over 1,000 volunteers (with volunteer input ranging from occasional Good Neighbour tasks to a day a week in conservation groups).

In Central Bedfordshire we have 38 Good Neighbour / Village care Schemes with over 900 volunteers; undertaking an average of over 15,000 tasks for 2,700 clients, pa.

Anticipated impacts of a cessation in funding this work

In the current year, the CBC Infrastructure Grant funding that BRCC has received for its own work (ie, not passed on to partner CVS partners), equates to approx. 0.5 FTE. This is a reduced level from previous years, but as seen in the earlier sections of this paper, has enabled us to deliver significant outcomes. We believe that for a relatively modest financial investment, BRCC has achieved benefits and outcomes of far greater value than the simple cash value of the funding received.

We acknowledge that the CBC Community and Voluntary Infrastructure Support Grant is not the only source of funding that some of these areas of work receive. A loss of this funding source will not lead to us stopping work on all of these initiatives - however, the impacts of receiving no funding from CBC for these areas of work are anticipated to be:

- The loss of a specialist Community Building support service to the communities of Central Bedfordshire (including access to additional information and advice from ACRE). Central Bedfordshire would become one of the only LA areas in England to not have this service provided by an ACRE-affiliated organisation.
- The loss of staff capacity to work with new communities/ housing developments to ensure new community buildings/ assets, meet local needs and are managed appropriately.
- A reduction in the number of community groups being given support.
- A reduction in the number of new community groups being established.
- A reduction in the number of volunteers recruited and supported to deliver projects and services in their communities (Good Neighbours, Health Walk Leaders, Conservation Volunteers, Community Connectors, etc).
- A reduction in the number of local residents being supported by community groups and volunteers.
- A reduction in community / volunteer transport provision and/ or increased costs for passengers.
- A reduction in community-led planning activities (promotion and support of Neighbourhood Planning, Green Infrastructure Planning, etc).
- A reduction in community health (fewer health walks/ volunteer leaders/ walkers; less conservation volunteering opportunities).
- BRCC will also have reduced ability to develop projects and secure external funding into Central Bedfordshire.

Due to the nature and breadth of the grant-funded work undertaken by BRCC, assigning true financial values to benefits and impacts is not possible. However, we believe that our work brings significant financial savings and social benefits for Central Bedfordshire, increasing the quality of life of local residents.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss future funding options for the above areas of work with Central Bedfordshire Council.

Tracy Cowan
Chief Executive

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Supporting Communities Manager