ANNUAL REVIEW

RURAL ACTION DERBYSHIRE

2024-25



Rural Action
DERBYSHIRE

FROM THE CHAIR



WILLIAM TUDOR JONES
CHAIR

It is my honour to introduce and present the Annual Report for Rural Action Derbyshire.

The last year has brought significant changes in our leadership team. Our Chief Executive Officer, Bev Parker retired after 10 years of amazing service and dedication to be replaced by Emma Simpson. This was after a comprehensive national search and recruitment exercise.

A few months later our Finance Manager, Claire Symonds retired after 5 years of service and commitment to the charity. A strategy of succession planning occurred with the appointment of Debra Weetman. We also conveyed our huge thanks and gratitude to John Haynes, Trustee and Treasurer for 17 years. John was replaced by Robin Grant as a new trustee and qualified accountant with significant commercial finance experience.

> The achievements of the organisation and the projects we provide are significant.



Sadly, due to changes introduced by a trusted provider, we were unable to continue to provide the Oil Buying Scheme – a service that was much appreciated by many people who had no alternative to oil to heat their homes. We work to develop a viable alternative to this which we hope to introduce later this year.

Our projects continue to deliver to, and in many cases exceed commissioner requirements. I and the board of trustees convey our sincere thanks to all Rural Action Derbyshire colleagues and volunteers in their unstinting work to reduce rural inequalities. I convey my gratitude to all our commissioners in the public sector and offer our support in their strategic objectives in whatever way we can.

The achievements of the organisation and the projects we provide are significant and the board will assure and challenge that the charity is run in line with Charity Commission and all other legal requirements.



MEET THE CEO

EMMA SIMPSON
Chief Executive Officer



I was delighted to be appointed Chief Executive of Rural Action Derbyshire in January 2025, following the departure of Beverley Parker.

Bev leaves behind a strong legacy, an organisation with an excellent reputation among funders, partners, and stakeholders. As the Chair notes in his report, our projects often exceed the expectations of commissioners. Bev's steady leadership helped steer RAD through the uncertainties of recent years, and I am fully committed to building on that foundation to ensure the organisation remains at the forefront of tackling rural issues.

The period covered by this report reflects a time of both consolidation and quiet transformation. The RAD team has continued to respond to the complex and evolving needs of rural communities while seeking new opportunities to address entrenched disadvantage.

The challenges facing rural Derbyshire remain significant. The ongoing cost-of-living crisis has had a sustained impact, particularly in areas where poverty is more hidden and dispersed, making it harder to reach with conventional support.

Fuel poverty, digital exclusion, social isolation and limited access to essential services continue to shape the lives of many. Yet this year has once again highlighted the strength and resilience of our rural communities and the value of RAD's practical, locally rooted response.

Throughout this period, our projects have continued to deliver meaningful impact. We have deepened partnerships across the county and strengthened our role as a trusted advocate for Derbyshire's rural voice.



Since stepping into the CEO role, I have been focused on ensuring RAD's long-term sustainability, developing a new strategic plan and securing income that protects our independence and enables us to act where we are most needed.

We are also reaffirming RAD's core values, particularly around collaboration, inclusion, equity, and integrity, so that we remain a relevant, responsive, and compassionate organisation in an ever-changing rural landscape.

I would like to thank our staff, trustees and supporters. Their commitment and passion are what make RAD the organisation it is. I look to the year ahead with optimism and a strong sense of purpose.

Emma

WHAT WE DO

Tackling rural disadvantage head on – because we all deserve to thrive, no matter where we live.



Our Vision

We believe that no-one should be unfairly disadvantaged because they live in a rural area.



Our Mission

To improve quality of life for Derbyshire residents, by empowering people in rural communities to take action to address disadvantage, become more sustainable and increase local control.

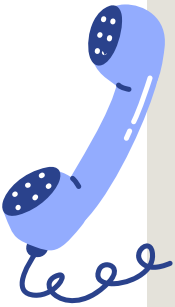


Our Ambition

To address rural disadvantage so that rural communities are sustainable, vibrant and accessible to everyone regardless of age, background or income.

HOW WE DO IT

Rural Action Derbyshire works to ensure no one is unfairly disadvantaged because they live in a rural area. We deliver direct services that support individuals and community groups, raise awareness of rural challenges, and advocate for change. As one of 38 Rural Community Councils, we proudly belong to the ACRE Network.



We provide direct services to help people and groups in rural communities.

Through services like Wheels to Work for transport, Digital Support Derbyshire for digital inclusion, and Feeding Derbyshire to tackle food insecurity, we help individuals and community groups overcome barriers to everyday rural life and build stronger, more connected communities.

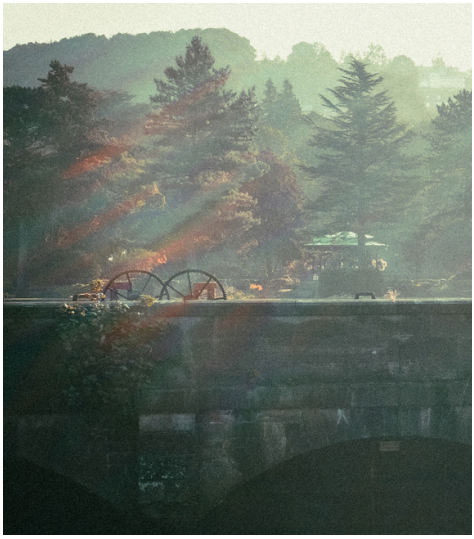


We raise awareness of the issues faced by rural communities

Through initiatives like Communities Against Scams raising awareness of fraud, Rural Housing Enablement highlighting the need for affordable homes, and the Willow Project supporting victims of rural domestic abuse, we shine a light on hidden challenges and advocate for lasting change in rural communities.

WHY
WE DO IT

RAD exists to tackle rural disadvantage, something often hidden behind the picture-perfect countryside. Since our beginnings in 1924 as Derbyshire Rural Community Council, we've seen first-hand how rural life can be isolating and unequal when critical infrastructure is lacking.



over 88k people experience income deprivation

RAD works to challenge this. Living in rural Derbyshire presents unique barriers. Public services are harder to reach, public transport is limited, housing is unaffordable, and digital connectivity lags far behind urban areas.



117%

increase in food bank user in Erewash alone

(new and retained)

Rural disadvantage isn't just about location, it's about opportunity. Without affordable housing, reliable transport and access to digital devices.



Young people struggle to access education, training or jobs; older residents face loneliness as local services vanish. Meanwhile, rising costs and digital exclusion leave many behind, especially those on low incomes or facing hunger or domestic abuse.



physical services, rural communities risk becoming places only a few can afford to live in. That's why we continue to deliver practical support, from food security and domestic abuse response to community development and digital inclusion.

RAD believes Derbyshire's rural communities should be vibrant, inclusive and sustainable for all. Our work is about creating fair access to essential services so everyone, regardless of age, income, or background, can thrive.

FEEDING DERBYSHIRE

Feeding Derbyshire

This year marked strong growth for our pantry network, with a new membership model, expanded resources, and a refreshed website featuring an interactive provider map.

Seven new pantries joined, while member and shopper numbers rose significantly. We hosted webinars and steering group meetings, launched new communications channels, and published our first evaluation and food-provider survey—highlighting the network's vital role in reducing food insecurity and saving shoppers an estimated £1 million.

813 weekly shoppers *(up from 624)*

277 new members

3,785 total membership *(up from 2,953)*

64 providers featured on Interactive map



CASE STUDY

A young mother of four was referred to us in distress, facing possible homelessness due to circumstances beyond her control.

Our support workers offered a listening ear, helped her prepare for meetings with her social worker and housing team, and provided emergency food support. We also attended multi-agency meetings to ensure she felt supported throughout the process.



Her housing situation was successfully resolved, and she now regularly visits and uses the Storehouse when needed.

> "I've had some amazing news – I've been accepted for a house in Shirebrook! I'm just so thankful and grateful. Thank you for your help and support."
>
> Food Project

DERBYSHIRE County Council

WILLOW PROJECT



82 champions trained

across Derbyshire

3 school talks

including one to 20 teachers and governors at Killamarsh School

10 in person and virtual events

(including Bakewell market)

444

listens to podcast

(100 since relaunch)

The Willow Project expanded its reach and deepened its impact across Derbyshire. We trained 82 new champions, delivered talks in schools, and raised awareness at ten events, including Bakewell Market and our 16 Days of Activism launch.

A successful podcast relaunch in March drew over 100 new listens, while a virtual champions meet-up helped shape future support for rural domestic abuse survivors. Engagement continues to grow across all social media platforms.

over 6K people reached on social media

CASE STUDY

A participant really enjoyed the online training.

Usually, they find it tricky to stay focused in virtual sessions, but this one kept them engaged with a mix of videos, useful information, and group discussions.

They felt they learned a lot and gained practical insights they could use day-to-day. The experience was so positive that they're excited to recommend it to their colleagues.



> "I really enjoyed the training. The videos, information, and discussions kept me engaged and learning a lot."

Derbyshire Police and Crime Commissioner
Safer and Stronger Together
Protecting Communities Fighting Crime

WHEELS TO WORK



Wheels to Work streamlined its service with a new online application, cutting enrolment time by two weeks.

Through the Staveley Town Deal, five e-mopeds and ten e-bikes were added, supported by local training and insurance. A stock audit improved efficiency and cut costs, while stronger partnerships boosted repairs and reconditioned-bike sales.

226 total enquiries

29 participants completed the scheme

43 beneficiaries supported *(new and retained)*

19 new riders

2 new e-bike riders

7 bicycles provided

CASE STUDY

JH joined the Wheels to Work scheme in June 2024 and remained on it until February 2025.

He was already working near Via Gellia, Derbyshire, but struggled with the early 6:30 AM start time due to a lack of public transport.

Occasional car shares weren't always reliable, and he risked losing his job. With a valid CBT, JH received additional training and a 125cc moped, eventually saving enough to buy his own bike.



> "I can't thank you and the team enough for all the support—Wheels2Work has made a real difference for me, and I really appreciate everything you do."

DERBYSHIRE County Council

DIGITAL SUPPORT DERBYSHIRE

13 funding projects

£47.6K award to 13 projects

This year, our Digital Project expanded digital access across Derbyshire through small grants, refurbished devices, and tailored support.

We funded 13 community projects, coordinated events and steering groups, and developed an online map of 120 digital inclusion groups. Our new Digital Health Project helped more patients access online services, while training resources and device distribution empowered residents—many for the first time—to get online safely, confidently, and independently.



120 digital inclusion groups on map

1.8K digitally excluded people supported

CASE STUDY

Mr and Mrs B, both in their 80s, came to us with no digital experience after buying a mobile phone they didn't know how to use.

Through one-to-one sessions, we helped them set up email accounts, register with the Good Things Foundation's Learn My Way course, and join our weekly IT group.

They now confidently book holidays online, manage medical appointments using the NHS app, and enjoy online shopping. Mr B has even connected his hearing aid to his phone via Bluetooth.



> "Their transformation has been remarkable, and it's inspiring to see how much they've achieved later in life."
>
> Digital Project

DERBYSHIRE County Council

COMMUNITIES AGAINST SCAMS

Communities Against Scams strengthened local partnerships and raised awareness through events, training, and online resources. By engaging community groups and supporting national campaigns, the project empowers rural communities to protect themselves, build resilience, and safeguard local assets.

16 grassroots awareness days

strengthened local collaboration through **6** quarterly meetings with the PCC

Community buildings remain vital social hubs for rural areas but continue to face post-pandemic challenges.

We offered tailored advice, energy audits, and resources, supporting halls, parish councils, and local charities while sharing regular updates through newsletters and online communications.

at the heart of rural life
Village Halls & Community Buildings Advisory Service

60 new affiliates

25 on-site energy audits

44 e-newsletters sent to **322** CB Stakeholders

FUEL POVERTY & RURAL HARDSHIP FUND

The Rural Hardship Fund continued with support from Marches Energy Agency's Fuel for Food project, launching a new fund in September to help referrals with fuel, essential household items, and other urgent needs across Derbyshire.

we spent

£20.3k

supporting clients

Derbyshire Community OIL BUYING SCHEME

Funded by UK Government

RURAL HOUSING

"Awareness is growing and we are pleased with the progress being made."

Working with Midlands Rural Housing, we engaged parish councils across Derbyshire through surveys, meetings, and outreach to identify local housing needs. Several potential Rural Exception Sites were identified, and collaboration continued through steering groups, consultations and participation in a national housing study.

4 well attended Steering Group meetings

3 potential rural exception sites

HIGHLIGHTS

SUCCESS STORIES FROM THE LAST YEAR:

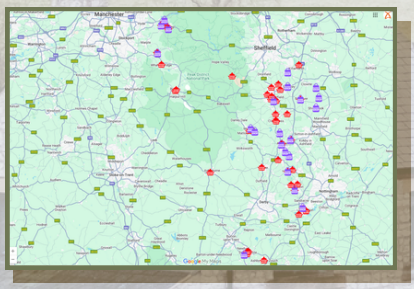
RADZINE MAGAZINE LAUNCHED

We launched RAD's first magazine that focusses on the human stories of our projects. It has been well received, with support and readership increasing with every new issue. It is available as a digital version, and printed copies.



LAUNCH OF FEEDING DERBYSHIRE'S INTERACTIVE MAP

Feeding Derbyshire launched an interactive map to help people easily find local food support and community resources across the county.



WHITE RIBBON DAY 2024

At the National Rural Crime Network Conference, current RAD CEO Emma Simpson called for urgent action on rural domestic abuse, highlighting isolation, scarce support, and the need for collaboration, funding, and prevention.



WHITE RIBBON DAY 2024

STANDING TOGETHER TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

On White Ribbon Day (25 November), Derbyshire came together at Matlock Town Hall to launch the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, led by The Willow Project, part of Rural Action Derbyshire.





Promise to never use, excuse, or remain silent about men's violence against women, reaffirming Derbyshire's shared commitment to creating safer, more respectful communities for all.



Previous CEO Beverley Parker opened the event, followed by powerful talks from Police and Crime Commissioner Nicolle Ndiweni-Roberts and Detective Inspector Adam Gascoigne, calling for collective action to end violence against women and girls. Attendees signed the White-Ribbon-

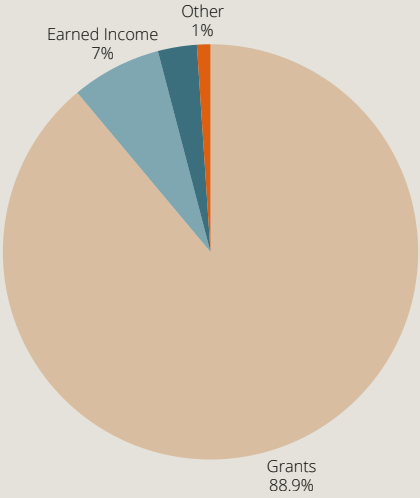


OUR FINANCES

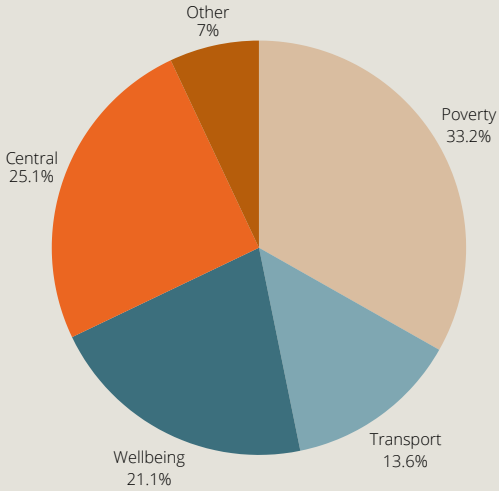
INCOME

Grants* £734,409
Earned Income £55,726
Donations £24,217
Other £15733

£830,086
total income



EXPENDITURE



Poverty £239,976
Central £180,012
Wellbeing £151,056
Transport £97,592
Other £50,481

£717,120
total expenditure

OUR TEAM

Emma Simpson	Chief Executive Officer
Nick Archer	Digital Marketing Assistant
Elisa Bertoncini	Project Coordinator, Feeding Derbyshire
Paula Dealtry	Project Lead, Feeding Derbyshire
Kevin Fleming	Project Coordinator, Wheels to Work
Michelle Grosse	Willow Project Officer (maternity cover)
Laura Mitchell	Engagement Lead
Skye Peat	Willow Project Officer
Rona Rawson	Rural Community Development Officer
Samantha Tock	Digital Support Derbyshire
Helen Ward	Digital Support
Debra Weetman	Finance & Administration Manager
James Wilson	Administrator
Charlotte Winterbottom	Policy & Partnerships Manager

We said farewell to:

Beverley Parker, Claire Symonds, Emily Brailsford, Katherine Bates, Lisa Blakemore, Paula Painter, Leigh Potts & Tilly Alleway.

TRUSTEES

Valerie Broom
Peter Dewhurst - Joint Vice Chair
John Haynes - Treasurer to 31.3.25
Paul Miles
Angela Montacute
Robin Grant - Treasurer from 1.4.25
William Tudor Jones - Chair
Richard Walsh
Amy Wheelton - Joint Vice Chair

FUNDERS 2024-25

Action for Communities in Rural England
Bolsover District Council
Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs
Derbyshire County Council
Derbyshire Dales District Council
Derbyshire Police & Crime Commissioner
Foundation Derbyshire
Joined Up Care
North East Derbyshire District Council
South Derbyshire District Council
SC Johnson

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on YouTube - Rural Action Derbyshire

Feeding Derbyshire

The Willow Project

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Village Halls & Community Buildings Advisory Service

Communities Against Scams

Digital Support Derbyshire

Wheels to Work
#DERBYSHIRE#

acre network member

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