

2023/24



**Rural Action**  
DERBYSHIRE

Celebrating 100 years supporting  
rural communities in Derbyshire

1924 - 2024

ANNUAL  
REVIEW

# FROM THE CHAIR

Angela Montecute

**I am delighted to present the annual report for Rural Action Derbyshire, celebrating a year of remarkable achievements and unwavering dedication. Despite the challenges, our charity has made significant strides in supporting and enriching the lives of rural communities across Derbyshire.**

This year has been exceptionally busy and successful, thanks to the collective efforts of our incredible staff, volunteers, and trustees. Their commitment and hard work have been instrumental in driving our mission forward, and I extend my heartfelt gratitude to each one of them.



“

***Despite being well positioned and punching above our weight, the negative aspect for RAD of the current economic landscape is that we are facing huge growth in the need for our services.***

”

Our projects have continued to make a substantial impact. Through Rural community development, we have empowered local volunteers managing village halls and community buildings, ensuring these vital spaces thrive.

The Feeding Derbyshire initiative has tackled food poverty head-on, managing community pantries and supporting school holiday activities and food programmes, providing essential nourishment to those in need.

Digital inclusion remains a cornerstone of our work, with refurbished devices and training helping individuals navigate the digital world confidently. The Willow Project has been crucial in raising awareness of domestic abuse in rural areas, equipping communities with the knowledge to identify and address this critical issue. The Rural Hardship Fund has provided emergency support to those facing dire circumstances, offering a lifeline when it was needed most.

Our Wheels to Work scheme has enabled 74 beneficiaries to access mopeds and bikes, facilitating better employment and educational opportunities. Additionally, our Fuel Poverty / Oil Buying project has successfully purchased 443,000 litres of oil, ensuring members can heat their homes affordably.

These achievements are a testament to the dedication and passion of our team. I am incredibly proud of what we have accomplished together and am confident that our continued efforts will drive further positive change in the years to come.

*Angela Monecute*



Some of the RAD team

## CONTENTS

- 2 From The CEO
- 3 Some Of Our Staff
- 4 Some Of Our Trustees
- 5 Why We Do It
- 6 Key Figures
- 7 The Year in Numbers
- 8 Highlights
- 9 How We Help
- 10 Wheels To Work
- 12 Digital Support Derbyshire
- 14 Feeding Derbyshire
- 16 Oil Buying Scheme
- 17 Rural Hardship Fund
- 18 The Willow Project
- 20 Village Halls
- 22 New Projects
- 23 Find Us on Social Media
- 24 Funders 2023-24
- 25 Staff & Trustees

Rural Action Derbyshire is a Charitable Company  
Limited by Guarantee. Registered in England  
Company No: 3320404

Registered Charity No: 1061531

Town Hall, Bank Road, Matlock, Derbyshire DE4 3NN  
01629 592970 | [info@ruralactionderbyshire.org.uk](mailto:info@ruralactionderbyshire.org.uk)

# FROM THE CEO

Beverley Parker

**RAD focuses its efforts on projects which make the most difference to vulnerable people, especially those living in the more rural areas of Derbyshire. All of us have continued to experience the inflated cost of living, particularly affecting food, housing and energy costs.**



As we know, people living in rural areas tend to spend more on these essential costs due to lack of choice, high travel costs and limited availability of affordable homes. More families are being pushed into relative poverty as a result.

RAD responds to the needs of the community in several ways; we have a strong focus on fuel and food poverty and have made a real difference to community pantry members who collectively saved approximately £900,000 compared to supermarket prices.

We have distributed over £16,000 in hardship grants to people struggling on a low income. Members buying oil through our oil buying have collectively saved almost £37,000.

Like many charities we are keen to demonstrate the added value of our work. From these three projects alone, we have saved Derbyshire residents almost a million pounds, enabling them to eat better, heat their homes and stay well. In our report we also describe our other projects which contribute to keeping people safe, connected and enabling communities and people to thrive.

This exceptional performance is due to the dedication and enthusiasm of RAD staff and the support of our Board, our funders, and our partners. As we enter our centenary year, we will reflect on the varied challenges for rural communities over the last one hundred years, and look forward to continuing to make a real difference for those who need it most.

“

We reflect on the varied challenges for rural communities over the last one hundred years, and look forward to continuing to make a real difference for those who need it most.

”

*Beverley Parker*

# MEET SOME OF OUR TEAM



## EMMA SIMPSON

*Head of Communications & Administration*

Meet Emma, who rejoined RAD in September 2014 after a break in Guernsey. As a senior management team member, she manages the oil buying scheme and spearheads marketing efforts. Passionate about addressing fuel poverty in rural areas, Emma also has a rich background as a riding instructor and ski resort manager.



## NICK ARCHER

*Digital Marketing Assistant*

Nick is a writer and photographer who joined Rural Action Derbyshire in 2023 as Digital Marketing Assistant, using his creative skills to promote the charity's projects. Passionate about street and art photography, Nick also loves film, cinema, and staying active outdoors. He is a proud ally and advocates for diversity, equality, and inclusivity.



## SAM TOOCK

*Project Coordinator - Digital Support Derbyshire*

Sam joined RAD in April 2023 as Project Coordinator for Digital Support Derbyshire. Originally from Yorkshire, she has lived and worked across the UK, primarily in the voluntary sector with organisations like Age UK and Mind. Now settled in Derbyshire since 2005, Sam enjoys countryside walks, yoga, pilates, and caring for her rescue cats.

# OUR TRUSTEES



## ROGER BENNETT

Roger joined Rural Action Derbyshire as a Trustee in March 2022 after a career in children's social work, which he retired from in 2020. He went on to volunteer for FareShare Midlands, delivering surplus food to schools and food banks. He later became their lead trustee for safeguarding, focusing on the well-being of vulnerable adult volunteers.

His experience at FareShare and knowledge of food insecurity is valuable for our Feeding Derbyshire work.

Roger is also a White Ribbon Ambassador, to challenge behaviour and change the culture that leads to abuse and violence against women.

## AMY WHEELTON

Amy joined Rural Action Derbyshire as a trustee in 2020, bringing her deep roots as a farmer from rural South Derbyshire. As a District Councillor since May 2019, she advocates for the local farming community and champions sustainable technologies. Passionate about preserving rural life, Amy loves working the land and exploring the countryside with her dogs.



## PAUL MILES

Paul joined RAD as a trustee in 2024, bringing extensive experience as a professional software solution designer. First involved with RAD in 2015, he developed a smart oil tank sensor and website for our Oil Buying Scheme. We're excited to have his expertise onboard!





## WHY WE DO IT

### 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.

### OUR COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY

---

We have joined 19 other charities across Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and South Yorkshire to form the Anti Racist Alliance. Through this, we have agreed to a set of Anti Racist principles, and have pledged to go beyond a zero tolerance approach to racism and to commit to positive action to become and remain a proactive anti-racist organisation.

# 5 KEY ISSUES



## High Energy Costs

Households living in rural areas had the highest fuel poverty rate of 15.5 per cent, and the largest fuel poverty gap at £778 in 2023.

*Annual Fuel Poverty Statistics in England, 2024 (2023 data)*



## Rising Food Prices

We have been tracking the cost of the Basic Basket since April 2022. Since then, the basket of food has increased in price by 23.9%

*The Food Foundation Food Prices Tracker - February 2024*



## Poor Public Transport

From 2011 to 2023, England saw a 20% reduction in bus service provision leaving rural regions in a precarious position.

*Rural Services Network, February 2024*



## Affordable Rural Housing

Between 2020 and 2023, housing waiting lists in rural areas grew by 20%, indicating a significant increase in demand for affordable housing.

*English Rural Housing Association*



## Digital Divide

Overall Internet usage has reduced since 2022. This is being driven by reduced usage in individuals over the age of 60.

*Lloyds Bank 2023 Consumer Digital Index*

# YEAR IN NUMBERS

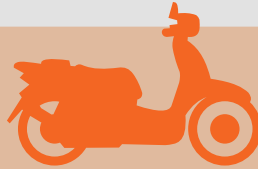
1st April 2023 - 31st March 2024

## Key Figures



173

Willow Project  
Podcasts



74

Wheels to Work  
Beneficiaries



443,154

Litres of Oil  
Ordered



108

Village Hall  
Affiliates Helped



559

Helped with  
Digital Skills

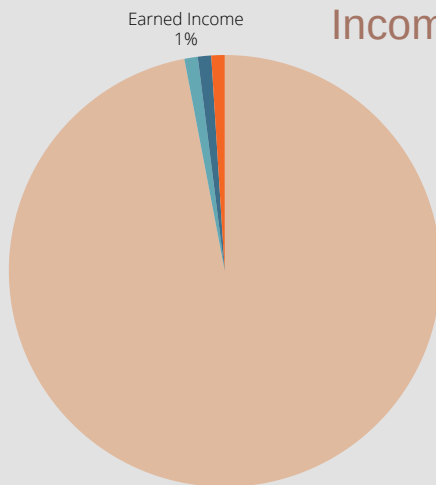


2,953

Food Network  
Members

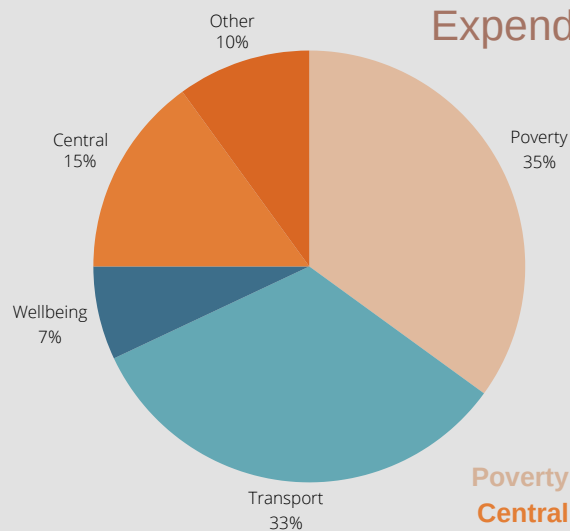
## Finances

Income



Grants\* £603,627  
 Earned Income £6,641  
 Donations £4,648  
 Other £9,228

Expenditure



Poverty £271,114  
 Central £123,116  
 Wellbeing £53,245  
 Transport £259,088  
 Other £77,544

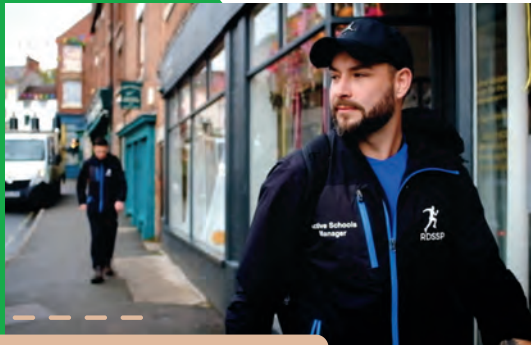
\* Including Project Income & Funding Agreements

# OUR HIGHLIGHTS

This Years High Points

## 'THE WALK' FILM

A team of teachers from the Rural Derbyshire Schools Sports Partnership did an incredible charity walk to raise funds for Food Banks, that we filmed and turned into an inspiring documentary.



## RURAL WOMENS DAY

Our Rural Womens Day event in March celebrated all of the many achievements and contributions of women in rural communities, featuring inspiring speakers, and opportunity for collaboration.



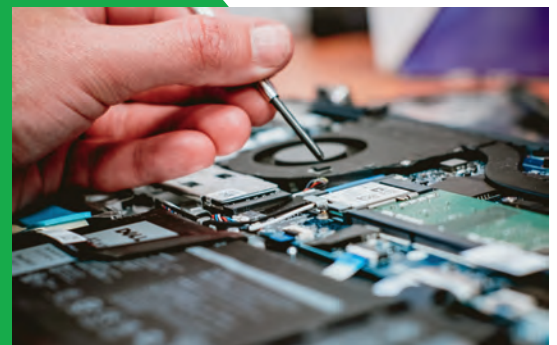
## THE AFFILIATION SCHEME LAUNCHED

The scheme offers tailored advice and resources for those managing village halls and community buildings, aiming to enhance community engagement, and strengthen local connections.



## PC REFURB PILOT A SUCCESS

The PC Refurb scheme successfully provides donated digital devices to those in need, enhancing access to technology and bridging the digital divide in our communities.



# HOW WE HELP

We're small, but we're making a big difference

## BECOME A MEMBER

- It's FREE to join
- Be the first to hear about campaigns, appeals, news and events
- Give us feedback on our services
- Vote at our AGM
- Stand for election as a Trustee/Director



## BECOME A SUBSCRIBER

Subscribe to our newsletter to keep up-to-date with all of our amazing work - with regular emails sent directly to your inbox.

## MAKE A DONATION

Help to fund our vital work with one-off or regular donations. Every pledge goes directly towards helping our work, and donations can even be made to a specific project that you wish to support.



To donate or for more information visit [ruralactionderbyshire.org.uk](http://ruralactionderbyshire.org.uk) or scan here





## Tough Times

Lack of rail and bus provision between key destinations, and no subsidies in rural areas, means access to work, apprenticeships and training is significantly more expensive than in urban areas.

This makes rural residents more reliant on cars. The Department for Transport found that 50% of rural people live in areas with the poorest accessibility to services.

“The lack of reliable rail and bus services, combined with the absence of travel subsidies, makes accessing employment, apprenticeships, and training opportunities significantly more expensive”

Wheels to Work breaks down barriers through providing bicycles, e-bikes and mopeds for those in need in Derbyshire. Over the past year, we have supported 19 new starters on mopeds, 2 on e-bikes, and 13 with bicycles.

**19** Moped Users

**2** E-Bike Users

**13** Bicycle users

Plus **40** existing users  
carried over previous period

Wheels to Work is tackling this issue by providing bicycles, e-bikes, and mopeds to people who would otherwise struggle to get to work, education or training. By offering these affordable travel options, the project helps break down the barriers that many rural residents face.

Anyone who lives in Derbyshire, has a work, training or college place and is over the age of 16 can apply.

[www.wheelstowork.org](http://www.wheelstowork.org)

“

A beneficiary of the scheme has said, 'When I joined, I had nothing — now I have my provisional license and a job. This scheme is incredible and essential for those with limited transport, helping with work, training, and mental health.'

”



## Looking Ahead

As Wheels to Work celebrates its 20th year of operation, the organisation is gearing up for an exciting new chapter.

Plans are underway to introduce an all-electric scheme in Staveley and surrounding areas, adding electric mopeds to the growing fleet. This initiative marks a significant step toward more sustainable, accessible transportation solutions for rural communities.





## A Deep Divide

Whether it's accessing your bank account, chatting to friends or family, or getting the supermarket shop delivered to your door, we are living in an increasingly digital world.

Poor access to reliable broadband, and a lack of information on how to get started with technology continue to act as barriers to accessing the opportunities the internet can provide. In fact, some residents in Derbyshire have still never used the internet.

Digital Support Derbyshire aims to reduce the county's digital divide by creating a network dedicated to helping people connect safely with their communities. This network consists of individuals committed in some way to tackling this divide, including Digital Champions, who have received training to provide the necessary guidance to get more people online.

We have delivered pilot projects with PCrefurb and Workpays. The first with PCrefurb has enabled donated devices to be refurbished and given to groups and individuals, enhancing online access. The second with Workpays has raised awareness about digital exclusion through training. We are also delighted to have secured future funding for this project from Derbyshire County Council Public Health and the NHS.

**107** projects  
on our map

**559** People  
helped

**37** Digital  
Champions

**DIGITAL  
INCLUSION**

# JOIN THE TEAM



## BECOME A TRUSTEE

Help to shape the future of Rural Action  
Derbyshire - join our team of friendly,  
passionate trustees.

Find out more at [ruralactionderbyshire.org.uk](http://ruralactionderbyshire.org.uk) or contact  
[info@ruralactionderbyshire.org.uk](mailto:info@ruralactionderbyshire.org.uk)





“ This challenge is even more pressing in rural communities, where there is often a lack of budget supermarkets and cheaper alternatives ”

# FEEDING DERBYSHIRE

## Keeping Costs Down

With the cost of groceries continuing to rise, an increasing number of people have been forced to rely on food projects to get emergency food support. This challenge is even more pressing in rural communities, where there is often a lack of budget supermarkets and cheaper alternative

**3250** Network Members

**624** Weekly Shoppers

**149** Volunteers

**£265k** Saved per quarter

Our Feeding Derbyshire team continue to develop the Affordable Food Network, which consists of 8 community pantries across the county. These are community-run, member-based stores selling nutritious food and groceries for a fraction of the cost of a supermarket shop.

We have worked with the network to support a rapidly growing membership, currently there are 2,953 members in total. The network continues to grow, and 3 more pantries are set to join the network imminently.



Our team have established a partnership with Chesterfield Football Club for food poverty initiatives, starting with donation boxes at the stadium. They have also developed a food supply pilot to address supply and cost issues, securing funding from Feeding Britain and SC Johnson.

Crucially our team have been awarded the tender to continue delivering Feeding Derbyshire for 2024-2026.





# RURAL FUEL POVERTY

## Derbyshire Community OIL BUYING SCHEME

### Better Together

Rising energy bills have affected people across the country and continue to be challenging for the 67,000 Derbyshire households living off the mains gas grid - with as many as 40% of properties in the Derbyshire Dales relying on oil, coal, or liquid petroleum gas (LPG) to warm their homes.

For those off mains gas and using oil, prices are not regulated, making it impossible for some households to budget. While there may be no formal methods for protecting off-gas households, RAD's collective bargaining power through our Community Oil Buying Scheme helps to keep costs at more manageable levels.

**839** members

**443,154**  
litres of oil ordered

**£36,963**  
saved by members

Last year, we saved our 800 members an average of 8 pence per litre on their heating oil by negotiating with suppliers. A total of 159 new members joined the scheme, and we ordered 443,154 litres of oil for them, collectively saving around £37,000.

# RURAL HARDHSIP FUND

## Help When Needed

### Emergency cost of living support for rural Derbyshire households.

We run a Rural Hardship Fund to help people in rural areas of Derbyshire who are suffering extreme hardship. RAD helped with household costs through its Rural Hardship Fund. This helps those who are in financial hardship and need help with critical expenses. If a car, fridge, cooker or washing machine breaks down for instance, many people will struggle to find the money to get it repaired or replaced.

Of the Hardship Fund applications received, 73 were successful. The items ranged from food, coal and energy costs to furniture and white goods. We also had 6 successful Oil Bank applications. We know from the feedback received that this work enables people to stay well and warm. It also reduces the anxiety and worry which impacts on our beneficiaries physical and mental health.

## Looking Ahead

Thanks to further funding for 2024-25 from **Fuel for Food**, we will be able to support off-gas households with heating support, and essential household expenses for anyone in rural Derbyshire in hardship, referred by a registered support agency.

“

I'm extremely grateful for the grant from Rural Action Derbyshire, which allowed me to buy a refurbished fridge-freezer and washing machine. After leaving an abusive relationship and sofa-surfing for six months, this support has helped me move forward and settle into my new flat.

”





# THE WILLOW PROJECT

## A Difficult Conversation

"I found it so hard to find anyone in the village to talk to. They are all perfectly nice people on the surface, but after he shouted at me in the pub that night it was like everyone took a step back from me."

In rural areas, this abuse can last 25% longer than in urban areas, as many victims are isolated and cut off from support services, and are living in "traditional, patriarchal communities that control and subjugate women", according to the National Rural Crime Network.

“ In rural areas, abuse can last 25% longer than in urban areas, as many victims are isolated ”

**173** people trained

**22** Talks & Events

**29** Podcasts

Our domestic abuse awareness training informs participants of the signs of the abuse and provides advice on how to help those who may be in need. In the past year, we have trained 173 people across the county. In addition, we have delivered 11 talks and attended 11 events. We have also produced 29 podcast episodes on various topics, including male victims and incels.

Further to this, we have a network of Willow Project Champions, who raise awareness of issues around domestic abuse in their local areas. The Champions engaged in 15 activities, from public events to group meetings.

Don't Go It Alone

# Become a Community Oil Buying Member

If you rely on oil to heat your home and you live in Derbyshire, you can join the scheme.



We order oil every two weeks.



No membership fee, no obligation.



Spread the cost of your heating oil by setting up a direct debit.

The more members that join the scheme and the more oil we order the more buying power we have to negotiate.

**Together, we can help fight the cost of living.**

[ruralactionderbyshire.org.uk/oil](http://ruralactionderbyshire.org.uk/oil)

Derbyshire Community  
**OIL BUYING  
SCHEME**



## Specialist Advice

**To enable communities to take more control, protect and develop community assets and build resilience and community spirit.**

For over a century, community buildings have acted as vital social hubs for rural people. Research by ACRE has found that in 60% of villages, community halls are the only place for people to meet in the area. Yet these hubs are still facing challenges, with volunteer committee members finding it difficult to deal with the financial and operational challenges such as high energy costs, new fire safety regulations, governance and volunteer recruitment.

We provided tailored advice to individual community buildings assisting them with their specific issues and concerns. Advice and support were also provided to other organisations, such as Parish Councils, district Community Voluntary Services, and other local charities.

Our monthly newsletter and e-bulletins were distributed to over 300 Village Halls and Community Buildings stakeholders.

**100** Years of Service

**300** Stakeholders

**108** Halls received tailored support





# AFFILIATION SCHEME

Join today and get the help you need.

**For a small annual subscription, your hall can become part of our Affiliation Scheme.**

Get access to expert help navigating legislation and compliance for your community building or village hall.

Years of specialist support at your fingertips.

[r.rawson@ruralactionderbyshire.org.uk](mailto:r.rawson@ruralactionderbyshire.org.uk)

**07708 872 398**

**Rona Rawson**



# NEW PROJECTS FOR 2024



## Rural Housing

Thanks to funding from Defra, Rural Action Derbyshire is working on a new project to address the pressing issue of affordable housing in rural areas.

Working with Midlands Rural Housing we are building a network of partners to help identify housing needs in parts of rural Derbyshire. We will be connecting with Parish Councils, District Council housing and planning departments, rural communities, Peak District Rural Housing Association, and others to better understand the housing need and find solutions.

We hope to identify potential Rural Exception Sites and collaborate with planners and housebuilders to develop suitable schemes in small villages. Stay updated by signing up for our e-bulletin for news and progress updates.

## Scams Awareness

Communities Against Scams is a new initiative, funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner and partnering with Derbyshire Police and "Claude the Fraud" to raise awareness and tackle scams in local areas.

Through the "Sock it to the Scammers" campaign, we aim to raise awareness, provide education and empower residents to identify and report fraudulent activity. By fostering collaboration and spreading knowledge, we strive to build safer, more resilient communities and ensure everyone is equipped to stand up against scammers.



Claude The Fraud





# MAIN FUNDERS

2023-24

Action for Communities in Rural England  
Bolsover District Council  
British Gas Energy Trust  
Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs  
Derbyshire County Council  
Derbyshire Dales District Council  
Derbyshire Police & Crime Commissioner  
Feeding Britain  
Foundation Derbyshire  
National Rural Crime Network  
NHS Charities Together  
North East Derbyshire District Council  
South Derbyshire District Council  
Streetgames



And many thanks for the numerous donations we received over the year from individuals and business from around Derbyshire.

# THE TEAM

## Staff

<b>Beverley Parker</b>	Chief Executive Officer	
<b>Tilly Alleway</b>	Project Officer, The Willow Project.....	Started 13.5.24
<b>Nick Archer</b>	Digital Marketing Assistant.....	Started 9.5.23
<b>Kath Bates</b>	Project Coordinator.....	Started 7.8.24
<b>Lisa Blakemore</b>	Project Coordinator, Feeding Derbyshire	
<b>Emily Brailsford</b>	Project Officer, The Willow Project.....	Left 15.3.24
<b>Paula Dealtry</b>	Project Coordinator, Feeding Derbyshire	
<b>Kevin Fleming</b>	Project Coordinator, Wheels to Work	
<b>Becky Newton</b>	Project Coordinator, Wheels to Work.....	Left left 3.8.23
<b>Paula Painter</b>	Events & Engagement Coordinator.....	Started 2.10.23
<b>Leigh Potts</b>	Business Development & Partnership Manager.....	Left 21.1.23
<b>Iona Peat</b>	Marketing Assistant.....	Left 31.3.23
<b>Joanne Peck</b>	Project Coordinator, Digital Support Derbyshire.....	Left 18.8.23
<b>Rona Rawson</b>	Rural Community Development Officer.....	Joined 9.5.23
<b>Emma Simpson</b>	Communication & Administration Manager	
<b>Claire Symonds</b>	Head of Finance	
<b>Samantha Tock</b>	Project Coordinator, Digital Support Derbyshire	
<b>Helen Ward</b>	Project Lead, Digital Inclusion & Scams Awareness...	Started 7.9.24
<b>Debra Weetman</b>	Finance Assistant.....	Started 30.10.23
<b>George White</b>	Marketing Executive.....	Left 18.5.23
<b>Charlotte Winterbottom</b>	Policy & Partnerships Manager	



## Trustees

**Roger Bennett**

**Fiona Brookes** - Until 11.4.24

**Valerie Broom**

**Peter Dewhurst**- Joined 19.2.24

**John Haynes** - Treasurer

**Paul Miles** - Joined 19.2.24

**Robin Grant** - Joined 30.7.24

**Angela Montacute** - Chair

**Simon Taylor** - Resigned 30.7.24

**William Tudor Jones** - Vice Chair

**Richard Walsh**

**Amy Wheelton**

# Rural Action DERBYSHIRE

Celebrating 100 years supporting  
rural communities in Derbyshire

1924 - 2024



Feeding Derbyshire



THE WILLOW PROJECT



Village Halls & Community  
Buildings Advisory Service



Supporting 100 projects supporting  
rural communities in Derbyshire  
1924 - 2024



DIGITAL SUPPORT  
DERBYSHIRE



Protecting Communities  
Fighting Crime

Rural Action Derbyshire is a Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee, Registered in England

Company No: 3320404 | Registered Charity No: 1061531

Town Hall, Bank Road, Matlock, Derbyshire DE4 3NN | 01629 592970 | info@ruralactionderbyshire.org.uk