



## Friendly Connected Communities Event

**A practical introduction to Asset (Strength) Based Approaches for organisations**

Marlene Reid Centre

12<sup>th</sup> November 2024, 6pm

### *Background:*

The Friendly Connected Communities (FCC) Event was organised in partnership between the Marlene Reid Centre (MRC) and the Leicestershire County Council Communities Team. Its key aim was to introduce the Friendly Connected Communities approach to local organisations, provide a real-life example of this in practice (through the MRC) and to provide a networking workshop opportunity for local organisations to explore applying the approach.

The event was split into several parts:

- A tour of the Marlene Reid Centre to highlight the work they do and how they do it highlighting how the FCC approach has supported this.
- Short presentations:
  - The FCC Approach and what this means.
  - Marlene Reid Centre and their practical application of the approach
- A facilitated interactive workshop including a networking session where organisations could explore working together in a friendly connected way to achieve goals and aspirations.

### *Representation:*

13 organisations with an interest were represented. These included:

1. Marlene Reid Centre
2. National Forest Company
3. Loughborough University Students
4. Clockwise Credit union
5. Healthwatch Leics
6. Coalville Can
7. Think FC
8. Harborough Town Hub CIC & Harboroughwoodland.com
9. CASE
10. Coleorton Parish council
11. Leicestershire County Council
12. Canal and River Trust
13. U3A



## *Workshop:*

The focus of the workshop was to identify, what 'assets' the group collectively have, and see how they can support each other to achieve their community objectives. The interactive workshop was split into four key areas;

- Assets within the group
- Aims and Aspirations of the groups/ individuals,
- Opportunities/ Connections
- Examples of best practice of how organisations are already working in a friendly connected way.

There were some key themes emerging relating to opportunities, including:

- Climate/Green Agenda
- Community Buildings/spaces
- Young People Engagement
- Ongoing Networking and making connections

## Post It Exercise Write Up

### *1) What are your strengths:*

#### **Management experience**

- Partnership working
- Risk Management
- Project management x2
- Big Picture Vision
- Solutions focussed

#### **Professional Skills**

- Money management
- Financially inclusive
- Financial Support
- Local knowledge
- People focussed
- Great team who work well together
- Engagement 'skills'
- Risk Management
- Project management x2
- Experience and community co-op sector
- Ambition x2
- Experience and community co-op sector
- Big Picture vision
- Partnership working
- Funding bids x2
- Savings and loans
- Budget accounts
- Diverse organisation membership
- Asset Management background
- Global networking experience
- Committed
- Problem solving
- Happy to ask questions
- Positivity
- Local knowledge
- Water resource management



- Flexible approach
- Community/people focussed x2
- Change and process management
- Solutions focussed
- Climate change knowledge and management
- Respond to community needs for green spaces

### **Physical/financial capacity available/ space/community resources**

- Unrestricted by budget boundaries
- Community Grants
- Experience and community co-op sector
- Physical space to meet (CCAN)
- Big meeting space (MRC)
- Member owned co-operative (Not for profit banking)
- No politics
- Awareness of existing opportunities

### **Soft personal skills**

- Reflective
- Inquisitive
- Starter finisher
- Organised x4
- Creativity/Creative thinking x4
- People focus
- Driven x5
- Creative thinking/Ideas
- Tolerant
- Enthusiasm (for change) x3
- 121 conversations
- Supporting the underdog
- Ambition x2
- Big Picture vision
- Quiet
- Making Connections x3
- Local knowledge
- Comfortable mixing
- Connections (locally and wider) x5
- Introvert
- Solutions focussed
- Happy for others to take credit
- Will speak up or step up

## *2) What are you hoping to achieve? Group Aims and Aspirations:*

### **Personal development**

- Be more strategic
- Learn how to get younger people more engaged
- Aspire to do a good job
- Move to Hugglescote
- Secure future for retirement

### **Sharing information, resources, and spaces**

- Create space to think and compare
- Regional Community Self Help Network (Harborough Woodland)
- Sharing Best Practice to support County Councils & RMA's (Harborough woodland/town hub)



- Peppers of Melton require volunteers for Mondays for listening with an empathetic ear, make tea, serve biscuits. Tuesday requires volunteers for crafts
- Bring together diverse groups for cross culture collaboration/Sharing
- Make more connections with “less heard” communities and share their experiences (HealthWatch)

### **Developing strategic priorities**

- Regional Flood Action Plan – Community led as it's our risk
- Learn how to get younger people more engaged
- Have a full complement of councillors
- Peppers of Melton require volunteers for Mondays for listening with an empathetic ear, make tea, serve biscuits. Tuesday requires volunteers for crafts
- Increase Membership (Ethical investors and financially excluded) (Clockwise Credit Union)
- Create a 5-year development plan
- Bring more adults together in a space that is inclusive and empowering

### **Align and collaborate on local networking events**

- Create the ideal social/community space that works for as many people as possible
- Link up with other organisations to help more people
- Design a community space specifically for 18-25 yr olds
- Provide communal spaces for single person household (Prevent isolation)
- Fruitful
- Bring together diverse groups for cross culture collaboration/Sharing
- Make more connections with “less heard” communities and share their experiences (HealthWatch)
- Bring more adults together in a space that is inclusive and empowering
- Community Magic

### **Capital/Building development capacity and share ownership**

- Jigsaw library
- Christmas Tree Festival
- Take on a new (Bakery) building Coalville Can
- Complete the purchase on CAN HQ
- To have a community building in/for Ashby e.g. Townhall 200+ capacity
- Community ownership of local buildings/spaces
- Local knowledge
- CIC



### *How can we do this together? (Making connections in a “friendly way”):*

- Development/support more networking events. Hold more of these networking events regularly
  - Online but better face to face (John Pilgrim)
- “More meetings like this”
- Use WhatsApp to create a group to share immediate knowledge and thoughts
- Use LinkedIn to build personal and business/network connection to expand
- Get together and share
- Find non-competitive groups and organisations you can work with and start the ball rolling

### *What examples do you have of Friendly Connected Communities in action?*

#### **Connecting with local businesses or businesses that have a local presence**

- Support local businesses by using/buying their premises/goods/services (Ashby u3a)
- Support local businesses who provide volunteers at corporate work party events (Canal and River Trust)

#### **Training/Try before you buy!**

- Offer a free “try before you buy” attendance to non-members (u3a)
- We train volunteers on a wide range of skills associated with the canals and rivers (Canal and River Trust)
- Coalville Community Workshop Tool library and repairs

#### **Sponsorships/bring together professional organisations to share spaces and knowledge**

- Healthwatch being part of VAL and staff collaborate and share knowledge, connection and run events together (Healthwatch Leicester and Leicestershire)
- Have/publicise inclusive etc. policies on our website (Ashby u3a and Packington Village Hall)
- Sponsor / support a village duck race and a “big breakfast” each year (Packington Village Hall)
- Introduced the friendly bench in our environment in Rugby in 2020 (first in Warwickshire) It has been a great asset and we have run activities there and people meet and make connections (Jill Dwyer)
- Invite a range of speakers and organisations to describe their work/knowledge to members (u3a)
- Attend coffee mornings and well-being events run by community organisations to listen to local people (Healthwatch)
- Attend local community/council run events with stand (Ashby u3a)

*Next Steps and Recommendations:*

Feedback from the event suggested that people valued the opportunity for networking and wanted to build on this to keep connections going. People want to have more face-to-face sessions, and they prefer daytime/afternoon. Daytime sessions are also preferred for online sessions.

To build on the opportunities to network and support organisation to apply the FCC approach within their settings with the support of the Communities Team at Leicestershire Council