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village & community
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PRESS RELEASE

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Take Flight group land at the Art Bank in Shepton Mallet!

Take Flight are a Chard-based, newly formed, community group aiming to provide support, signposting, arts and crafts, information on living on a budget and gardening opportunities to their members.

The group began when CCS (Community Council for Somerset) Village Agent Nicola set up a Talking Café in Chard 7 months ago. The sessions attracted younger, unemployed people who were delighted the Talking Cafe provided a venue to meet up and gain support from the Village Agent and the multiple agencies that are present at Talking Cafes to support people; from health charities and finance to housing, as well as support from each other.

As the people attending the Talking Cafe regularly started to gel and develop, it quickly became apparent that CCS had identified a previously unmet need in the community. Nicola suggested the group form their own community action group, which was embraced, and with Nicolas help they quickly formed an eager and enthusiastic committee. The project name *Take Flight*, references Chard's association with being the "Birthplace of Powered Flight", courtesy of the inventor John Stringfellow.

Village Agent Nicola then arranged funding for *Take Flight* to visit the Art Bank in Shepton Mallet at the beginning of March so the group could draw inspiration and ideas from this innovative community arts project to take back to Chard and incorporate into their own group. They were able to talk to the Art Bank organiser James Barker, and take part in a workshop to make items for the Art Banks "Alice in Rubbish Land" exhibition which will be held in April.

A *Take Flight* member said "We are all feeling really positive and excited about our new venture and looking forward to what the future may hold for us".

James Barker from Shepton Mallet Art Bank were delighted to host them saying: "It was a real joy to spend time with the *Taking Flight* group today - they were all lovely and full of enthusiasm. We are so thrilled they wanted to use our experience of community art to spur on action in their own community. We want to encourage people to visit us and use our amazing facility to encourage Art to flourish in creative projects like this one across Somerset!"

The Village Agent will continue to support the group members and is available to all for advice, signposting and information at the Chard Talking Café, Chard Library, The Lace Mill, Holyrood Street, Chard TA20 2YA, every Monday (not Bank Holidays) 2pm – 4pm.

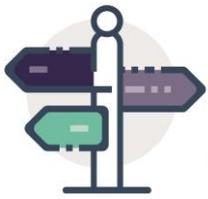
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All CCS Talking Cafes are drop in sessions with no appointment necessary and can be found across Somerset! To keep up to date with where Talking Cafes are held, please go to www.somersetccc.org.uk/talkingcafe

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Issued: 6/3/2019

Editors Notes:

ATTACHED: PICTURES OF THE TAKE FLIGHT GROUP, VILLAGE AGENT NICOLA HARDY AND JAMES BARKER SHEPTON ART BANK

The Community Council for Somerset (CCS)

Registered charity (number 1069260) and part of the Action for Communities in Rural England (ACRE) Network.

Our vision is for vibrant and viable communities with health, happy people and strong, sustainable businesses – the perfect place to live.

We aim to strengthen communities, innovate and encourage enterprise, support and serve people and tackle disadvantage.

We deliver an extensive range of personalised support and services for rural (and urban) communities across Somerset. Our primary focus is on the needs of whole communities rather than narrowly focussed service provision. We aim to build capacity, capability and vision in communities so that they can shape their own futures, address vulnerabilities and make their place the perfect place to live.

CCS trading arm SMART COMMUNITIES has considerable experience and knowledge of how to carry out effective, inclusive and robust community consultation and engagement. This expertise has been invaluable across the county where we have worked with large numbers of communities creating the foundations for their Neighbourhood Plans, community plans and carrying out Housing Needs Surveys, as well as specific community need consultations on specific services and community facilities to help establish local priorities.

This work underpins the Village Agent work motivating communities to respond to local needs by working together to implement their own solutions (such as social groups or local car schemes) and by providing information and signposting to services and support provided by others.

The Somerset Village Agent project is a Big Lottery funded project of CCS and now covers a large part of the county. The Village Agent project continues to grow from strength to strength. The team has better geographical coverage, reaching even more people and providing support in ways appropriate to local people. The project uses paid, part time, highly trained individuals living in the parish 'clusters' they support. They help to bridge the gap between isolated, excluded, vulnerable and lonely individuals and statutory and/or voluntary organisations which offer specific solutions to identified needs.

Village Agents offer with a signposting and referral service difference. **practical, person-centered support and community solutions.**

Village Agents work with all ages dealing with a wide variety of issues, although a considerable number of their clients are elderly and involves social care issues. Helping to solve these problems may, ultimately, help the elderly to remain living independently for longer. Village Agents also have the role of helping to shape services by feeding back to the appropriate body information about gaps in service e.g. transport provision. They can also motivate and support a community to respond to a local need by working together to address issues e.g. by helping them to set up a coffee morning for a group of lonely people or start a volunteer car scheme.

CCS supports people who live and work in Somerset communities. We do this through a range of diverse projects which bring together people who care about local community life in Somerset. We focus our energy on helping you and your community.

See [our work](#) to see what projects are running across Somerset.



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