

STRONGER COMMUNITIES ARE MORE RESILIENT IN CRISES

WHY WORK TOGETHER AT COMMUNITY LEVEL?

If you already live in Bishop's Castle this is probably already obvious to you!

On one hand, National- or County-level policies and actions can be good, but are often slow, full of red tape, underfunded, and maybe not suited to the circumstances right here on the ground in this locality.

On the other hand, it can be rewarding and also quite effective if you take personal actions to help yourself and your family to be better prepared for bad things that might happen in future. We have an **accompanying brochure called "Simple Steps"** which can help you plan.

But we all know that **working as a team** and sharing resources, ideas, skills, and work with other people can help get things done **much more quickly, more effectively, and at a bigger scale**, than doing them alone. And if you already have **a bond of trust** with the people around you – your community – then **the team will work even better**. And you can quickly agree what is needed locally, who can best help, and what are good ways to sort it in the local context.

A big city may have a lot of physical resources, but these days "communities" there are often built around special interests (like chess or football), or the workplace. In some parts of cities, and especially in rural towns or districts, communities are typically built around place. **Communities of place** are usually very powerful, because:

- People have already learned how to get on together outside of the narrow space of a hobby or workplace. Trust does not stop when the football game ends or work closes: it goes deeper than that
- People often have more varied backgrounds, skills, and resources: farmers, firemen, handymen, plumbers, IT specialists, etc.
- The shared experience is all about the environment where you live: where you feel safest.

There are challenging times ahead as a result of climate change, regional conflicts, resource shortages, and rapid changes in technology. We may have to experience things, and start behaving, in ways that we have not had to for decades, or maybe never have. As we face these challenges we are going to need the focus, speed, and power of local-community action. **All pulling together in local place.**

WHAT COULD WE FOCUS ON, AND HOW?

"Resilience" is about the ability to adapt quickly to changing circumstances and threats, and to respond to them and bounce back. It is an important part of Bishop's Castle's Climate Action Plan (a partnership between the Town Council and Lightfoot's Climate Action Group). We describe some example projects and objectives for resilience below.

Because the strength of the community is so critical to team success, we start with **building the strength of the community**, and building community assets (like gathering places, workshops, etc)

For each type of focus we describe, there will be some short-term projects and some long-term ones. There will be some that just need people to "go do it", and some that need a team to first assess what the need is and then plan how to deal with it. It may make sense for you to split effort into different sub-teams to suit the different timescales, or the different types of activity that suit different people. But try to have an overall plan, and a person or people who are working across the sub-teams, and also across the different types of focus (e.g. across food supply and flood: they CAN be related)

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COMMUNITY-LEVEL ACTIVITIES YOU CAN GET INVOLVED IN

Community social strength and community assets

Build community networks and plans, and build/improve assets owned by the community

1. Make places for people to gather, share, have fun: halls, workshops, cafes, parks, leisure areas
2. Support local celebrations, events, festivals: bring people together, especially with food
3. Talk about, and show by example, that we all chip in and help others (e.g. with the activities below)
4. Strengthen local democracy, e.g. Citizens' assemblies, Flat Pack democracy:
<https://assemblyproject.blog/2025/03/15/an-independent-revolution/>
5. Help with community emergency & resilience plans, and an emergency notice board and mailing list (with paper back-up)

Food supply and food security

Focus on local food production and supply and support Sustainable Food Places

https://www.sustainablefoodplaces.org/resources/Civil_Food_Resilience_in_practice.pdf

1. Set up a community cafe and/or shared eating space: see e.g. <https://thehanginggardens.org/> <https://thelongtableonline.com/>. These bring people together and build relationships
2. Encourage small local food growers – e.g. Hare Hill Farm, Wern Farm, and help them find a market.
3. Set up a community growing club or farm, encourage people to use unused allotments
4. Ask local schools, institutions, and clubs to buy locally- produced food
5. Help with a community Food Hub or emergency food supply pantry: also for medical supplies
6. Enable land access via the Right to Grow framework.
7. Create a local Food Resilience Strategy. See Bishop's Castle's here <https://lightfootenterprises.org/food-forward-bc/#foodstrategy>

Energy: electricity, oil, gas, heating

Find out and help others around you see how to reduce energy use, and to generate more themselves

1. Focus on energy conservation rather than consumption: talk about and spread energy-saving habits
2. Support local energy agency initiatives in home retrofit, battery, and solar
3. Start or support community-owned wind turbine, solar panels on rooftops, batteries & charging points
4. Distribute “stay warm” and “stay cool” advice sheets, and build community warm- or cool-hubs
5. Install cooling canopies, identify cooling sanctuaries in buildings and where there are few trees

Water quality, water use, & flood prevention

Support more-environmentally-friendly water use, farming, and better drainage management

1. Support campaigns to reduce high household water use in e.g. showers and toilets
2. Send public area rain runoff to water butts, soakaways and SUDS, not drains.
3. Set up a team to spot public drainage problems and help report and clear blockages
4. Create a local storm plan – especially for tree falls, based on community action + local authority
5. Understand local sources of water pollution, work respectfully with the polluters to improve practices
6. install composting toilets close to e.g. Village Halls – especially for use during water emergencies

Nature and Climate change

Encourage Parish & Town Councils to adopt Environment policies, and establish local Nature Recovery plans based on the Local nature Recovery Strategy, e.g. **see workbook**

<https://middlemarchescommunitylandtrust.org.uk/nature-recovery-town-parish-councils/>

1. Create a team to help explain the social and economic value of looking after our environment
2. Encourage rewilding and better habitat creation/ restoration, including in private gardens: e.g. Going Wild in Bishop's Castle
3. Nature-sensitive verge restoration & hedge management, including along waterways, ditches
4. Start a micro nursery for trees, encourage tree-planting. Set up and contribute to a local seed-bank

Transport resilience

1. Use public transport where possible to keep it going, and encourage community car sharing
2. Share ideas and information about transport routes that stay working in e.g. flood and deep snow
3. Encourage Council investment in better public transport, e.g. aligning buses with trains times

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HOW COMMUNITIES AND COUNCILS CAN WORK TOGETHER

Question	Answers
What are the strengths that Communities can bring to resilience?	In general: • Social connections & cohesion: collectively aligned action and mind-set • Solution-focused work: communities get things done • Creativity, fuelled by detailed knowledge of local resources, needs & assets • Determination and a strong sense of ownership In & around Bishop's Castle, many well-established initiatives include, e.g.:- • Community Land Trusts for low-cost accommodation & community spaces • Many nature & habitat restoration groups and projects e.g. Going Wild • A Food strategy and resilience partnership, and an active Food Bank • Several allotment groups, and smallholder initiatives, a Seed Bank • Climate Action Group with a Climate Action Plan, also air, river, and soil quality; • Energy-efficiency initiatives, a planned 2 MW community-owned wind turbine • Enterprise House, Dial-A-Ride, Walter's Repair Workshop • Many social networks and clubs bringing people together, e.g. WI
What assets and capabilities can Shropshire and local Town Councils bring to resilience?	• Access to funding pots, e.g. unspent CIL fund in Shropshire • (Some) control over taxes and levies: e.g. a visitor levy. Precept funding • Control over planning and regulations: these need to recognise the climate and other emergencies, and move more quickly and flexibly • Oversight of key infrastructures and resources like water, transport, food, emergency services, energy, social support, housing: work with Communities to create short-and long-term resilience plans
How can communities work together with the Councils?	In general: • In view of these new and life-threatening crises, we hope Councils can commit to new ways of approaching things, with:- ○ a stronger recognition of the value of community-led initiatives ○ attitudes of creativity, flexibility, collaboration, and resource-sharing ○ common-sense, and emergency thinking, applied to regulations Specifically communities need: • Councils' trust and backing: communities already successfully do things on the ground! • Prioritisation of community-led resilience activities: Councils will get more for their money and time from initiatives that have community participation • Grants and funds, especially capital funding • Access to underused Council-owned land, buildings, tools and other assets
How can we improve funding?	1. Devolved resilience budgets & governance arrangements 2. Encourage villages to form clusters and develop community resilience plans 3. Set up of Community Land Trusts to support asset transfer to communities – especially bringing back redundant buildings into use, 4. Community fundraising can galvanise Councils to give additional funding