

## **A proposal from the Cambridgeshire Repair Cafe Network and Cambridge Carbon Footprint to expand Repair Cafe coverage into Fenland and Huntingdon**

Nicole Barton, Volunteer and Events Co-ordinator

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Repair Cafes are community events that match people who need stuff fixed with people who are passionate about fixing things. The [Cambridgeshire Repair Café Network](#) is part of a global movement of over 2.5k Repair Cafes around the world that tackle our throwaway culture by bringing the circular economy to life in local neighbourhoods.

### **Repair Cafes:**

- Help divert waste from landfill and bring alive key elements of the circular economy. They encourage people to think about their relationship with stuff and resource use differently.
- Bring communities together at inclusive, free, friendly events that help tackle loneliness and isolation. Both for repairees and repairers.
- Help with the cost-of-living crisis. MoneySavingExpert.com listed visiting a repair cafe among the top 3 of 90 tips in their [Cost of Living Help Guide](#)
- Slash carbon emissions by diverting items from waste. Repairing rather than replacing a laptop saves the same CO2e emissions as a return flight from London to Berlin.
- Empower local communities by teaching and sharing new repair skills.

### **Cambridgeshire – leading the way, but not everywhere!**

Cambridgeshire is a global hub for the movement, hosting over 30 individual Cafes. In 2017, the Cambridgeshire Repair Café Network set the record for organising the 'World's Biggest Repair Cafe'. We at CCF have trained over 60 groups and locations through our ['How to Organise A Repair Café in your Community'](#) skill shares. The Cafes are organised by a huge variety of organisations, including PTAs, Parish Councils, Residents Associations, sustainability groups and most recently, a local business. To mark International Repair Day this October, technology consultancy [Sentec](#), a Xylem brand, organised their first Repair Cafe with our support. All Repair Cafes in the Network benefit from the support of the Mackay's hardware store and Drapers Tools who have provided a very extensive toolkit that's free for all to use. The kit helps ensure a consistently high repair rate of 65% - 70%. All repairers are volunteers and all events are free. Our Repair Cafes have drawn significant media interest with Cambridgeshire becoming known as an area doing progressive work to tackle waste and carbon emissions via repair and reuse. Radio One's Newsbeat programme joined us for last Saturday's Café at the Grand Arcade's 'Let's Go Circular' festival. ITV's Tonight programme featured us in their nationally broadcast documentary 'Repair or replace: Britain in a Fix' and a Channel 4 news clip filmed at Fulbourn Repair Café has been viewed over half a million times.

### **We need support to keep up with demand and extend coverage**

To date, the only Local Government funding received has come annually from Cambridge City Council's Sustainable Cities Fund. This is restricted to supporting Cafés in the city, two 'How to...' trainings and an annual whole day [Swap, Collect, Fix-Fests](#) in lower income areas of the city such as Arbury and King's Hedges. The demand from communities to have a Repair Café on their high street is immense. To date, we've had success using a domino model to capacity build, whereby we and a neighbouring village or town supports their neighbour to get them started. The key support that we provide includes access to a bank of experienced repairers who are willing to travel to and mentor new Cafés, an extensive communal toolkit, publicity materials and an event

listing site, admin and booking systems, advice on health and safety and a discounted insurance policy that is fit for purpose.

Many people in the County do not have access to a Repair Café – a large area that includes Huntingdon and surrounds, and Fenland has very few. We recently supported St Ives Repair Café to run their first Café and Wisbech has one. In preparing for this proposal we had conversations with fifteen council officers and community leaders and we know there's huge support to extend our work into Fenland and Huntingdon. See 'Expressions of Support' below.

After speaking with waste officers, business development officers and community groups, we would like to focus on Huntingdon and March but also offer training and communal resources to other communities in the area. This development work needs funding, as though the vast majority of the events are delivered by volunteers, relying too heavily on volunteer support at the 'centre' risks undermining the brilliant capacity building work that underpins and enables a huge voluntary contribution.

### **With funding support we would:**

Employ a Repair Café Outreach Officer for 1.5 days a week (for 12 months) to:

- Set up a 'Circular Economy Working Group' bringing together local government, community groups, waste companies and businesses to 1) focus on increasing repair rates and raising awareness of reuse and recycling in Huntingdon and Fenland and 2) further strengthen the role of Repair Cafes in tackling loneliness, isolation and community cohesion (Repair Cafe Belfast does a lot of cross-sectarian community building work)
- Find two local businesses to partner with on Repair Cafes
- Run two 'How to Organise a Repair Café in your community' skillshares and train at least 8 groups in Hunts and Fenland
- Organise two all day Swap, Collect, Fix-Fests to launch new Repair Cafes in two new locations
- Get 2 new Repair Cafes up and running, one in Huntingdon, one in Fenland, probably March. If needed, we would support them when the funding finishes in whatever way we can.
- Provide some support to the setting up of a Men's Shed to compliment a new Repair Cafe, if the community wanted one.
- Create one new Repair Hub in an area where it will most effectively support nearby Cafes. This Hub will be a point of support for both existing and new Cafes and will: offer help with finding repairers, host an extensive communal toolkit, offer advice and support with publicity, admin and booking systems, health and safety and insurance. Repair Hubs will know their local communities better and be able to identify where they might target activity to support the cost of living crisis and skills development opportunities. The City Repair Cafe is partnering with local charity Abbey People for their next big Cafe/Fix-Fest in February. We will explore offering advice on energy saving at the event - Cambridge Carbon Footprint runs [Open Eco Homes](#) and has been delivering low cost/no cost advice for a long time.
- Tell more powerful stories around regional recycling and reuse successes e.g. the e-waste plant at Thetford, SOEX clothes recycling.

- Research a longer term business and funding model for repair initiatives in Cambridgeshire. On 28<sup>th</sup> October, two [Fix Factories](#) opened at recycling centres in Brent and Camden – these permanent repair initiatives are managed by both professional and volunteer repairers and operate on pay as you feel basis. There is a big emphasis on training and skillshare.

### Expressions of support:

We've been greeted with a huge amount of enthusiasm and support from officers and community groups in scoping this proposal.

- Ann Wardle, Fenland District Councils Business Engagement Manager is happy to make contact with companies she feels might want to engage.
- Wendy Lansdown is the Think Communities Co-ordinator for East Cambs and is very supportive, being herself an organiser of Soham Repair Café in Soham Library. Wendy writes that we have been brilliant at forging partnerships and enabling communities to do stuff, including with libraries. *'In Soham you facilitated a partnership that was initially linked to neighbourhood Cares and due to the strength of the relationships built, that continued despite Neighbourhood Cares coming to an end.'*
- [20Twenty Productions CIC](#) (that aims to 'Improve social mobility for young people through creative learning, social action and wellbeing') in March are interested in talking about how to engage their young people to learn repair skills and work on an environmental project.
- Danette Ohara the Waste Minimisation Support Officer is interested in supporting the Fix-Fests and Repair Cafés and possible collaboration with the new Climate Emergency Centre.
- Jonathan Crisp, County Waste Education Officer would like to collaborate on the Fix-Fests and other public engagement activities.
- Vicky Lacey the Waste Projects Officer for the Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Partnership is very supportive, *'It would be very exciting if they are successful in getting funding to spread this further away from Cambridge into your districts.'* Vicky runs Cottenham Repair Café too.
- Amy Robinson Fenland DC's Environmental Projects Officer is very supportive and believes the libraries in the area are also supportive, should we want to engage with them. She thinks 'Getting It Sorted' and other Recycling Champion groups around the County would be supportive
- Repair Cafes in Peterborough, Cottenham, St Ives, Soham and Burwell are willing to support new Cafes in the Fenland/Huntingdon area. From St Ives. *'St Ives EcoAction would be delighted to support Cambridge Carbon Footprint in its endeavours to spread the benefit to local communities in Huntingdonshire [and Fenland]\* of setting up and running Repair Cafés, or versions of these [including 'Fix Factories' and 'Men's Shed' projects].\* Our first Repair Café in St Ives in October 2022 was a huge success, and we intend to hold more during 2023 and beyond.'*
- [CCORN](#) and Nikki DiGiovanni are supportive and may join in with events, though weekends will be limited.
- From East Cambs Street Scene, 'It is definitely something ECSS would like to get involved with, I am relatively new to the company and am trying to put together our strategy for the

next year and repair cafes are on my list! We have some good active village groups that are eco/sustainability focussed so most I think would be willing to be contacted and supported.'

- Other groups that people believe will be useful/supportive include: Re-imagine at Witchford *'I'm interested in creating some more repair spaces'*, the TAG Bikes Workshop, Huntingdon and Red Barn Creative
- EcoEly are supportive; 'This expansion is a good idea and you can definitely say it's proposal is backed by Eco Ely. Repair cafes are vital for the shift in mindset to a circular economy and are definitely needed locally.'
- The new Huntingdon Env Action Team (HEAT) would be supportive, *'I am one of a small group involved in the early stages of creating Huntingdon Eco Action Team (HEAT). A Repair Café in the Huntingdon area would be a great idea!'* as would W Norfolk Friends of the Earth who have been doing work in Fenland and the Huntingdon Community Action Group too.
- Many people have recommended the Coneygear Centre in Huntingdon as a place to hold a Repair Café. We will make contact. Likewise, the Oxmoor Community Centre.
- The following have been recommended as possible sources of repairers: WI, Rotary Groups, walking groups, Men's Sheds, the March Lions, Golden Age and the March Braza Club.

## Proposed Budget

		Amount	Description
Staff costs			
Repair Cafe Outreach Worker		£7,150	12 months, 1.5 days pw
Management Time		£1,352	12 months 2hrs pw
	SUBTOTAL	£8,502	
Project costs			
Staff travel expenses		£250	
Printing and publicity		£150	
Room rental		£250	
Misc events costs		£200	
Volunteer expenses		£200	
	SUBTOTAL	£1,050	
Other costs			
Office and IT costs		£1,432	(15% of above costs)
	SUBTOTAL	£1432	
TOTAL		£10,984	