



Chairman's Report 2021

Reflecting back on the last 12 months I can't quite believe how far Chopwell Regeneration Group have come and how much we have achieved, together.

And when I say "we" I mean so many, many people in the community working together as part of Chopwell Regeneration Group, and many organisations who have supported us with vital funding and advice.



The Bank

This year The Bank has been our main focus and we have:

- raised the balance of funds needed so that Gateshead Council could lease us The Bank building for free for 35 years. This included the Around the World in 80 days challenge which over 100 people took part in. The total monies we raised for the bank project are over £250,000;
- signed the lease;
- worked with an architect to design the building and bring it up to today's building standards;
- obtained planning permission for the works;
- worked with Big River Bakery to produce a business plan for The Bank;
- run an independent tender process to appoint the main contractor;
- completed the building works;
- had the building fully decorated (with help from volunteers);
- obtained funding for and installed kitchen equipment;
- run a tender process and appointed IT contractors to get fibre broadband and WiFi to the building;
- become finalists in the Bright Ideas in Health awards in the 'Making Healthier, Happier Places and Spaces- Innovation in the Built Environment' category;
- let out all the available rooms upstairs to local businesses;



and most importantly of all for me....

- begun to hire staff.



Other projects

The Bank is not all we have worked on this year. In addition:

- the Chopwell Community Allotment team have made further improvements at the allotment which is kindly leased to us for free by Chopwell Officials Club, and the Dads and Lads team have now produced the first Chopwell Honey from Chopwell hives which will be sold at The Bank;
- we partnered with Digital Voice for the Chopwell Memories Project;
- we have made further progress in our role on the Chopwell and Blackhall Mill partnership working towards long term change for our two villages;
- we have continued to produce and hand-deliver the Chopwell Regeneration Group newsletter;
- we now have over 1,500 members of our very active Facebook page;
- we have organised the putting up of Christmas lights and trees throughout the village;



- we have updated and improved the chopwell.org website including an amazing gallery of over 2,000 photos;

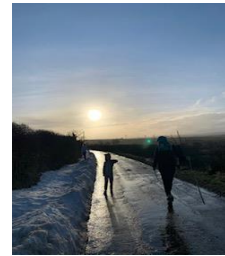
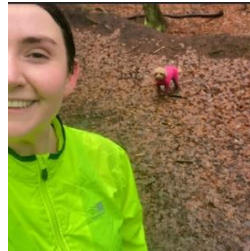
- we obtained over 300 signatures for the petition about the bus services for Chopwell; and

- we have continued to hold regular public meetings so anyone who wants to share their thoughts and ideas can have their say.



How have we done this?

We are a community organisation and our achievements come from hundreds of people in our village getting involved because they want to see change for the better in Chopwell, a place we are proud to live.



There are just too many people to thank individually for everything they have done but I hope each one of you know how much you have helped. No single person could have done this on their own. I will just say a huge thank you to all our trustees past and present for all their hard work. All trustees are volunteers who spend an enormous amount of time and receive no payment or benefits for anything they do.



Governance

An independent review of our board structure and governance was carried out by Connected Voice recently. It was reassuring that the conclusion was that there is a large degree of confidence among trustees about how CRG is managed and that there is a high level of integrity. There is a strong feeling that our charity lives its values and allows everyone to have their say.

There were some suggestions for improvements such as having an equality, diversity and inclusion policy and a formal complaints procedure. The trustees have taken these suggestions on board.



So what is coming in 2022?

Our main focus will continue to be The Bank and, we now can finally start having events, activities and training as well as opening the community fridge and cafe.

Keep your eyes open as there will hopefully be something for everyone to get involved in at The Bank.

We really want to do other projects too though.

Personally, I would like to have another Brighten Up Chopwell month and get some activities happening at the Community Orchard too as well as another Makers' Market.

We also really need to organise some fundraising activities too so perhaps another virtual trek event?

However it's what we as a community decide to get together and make happen, not what I want to do!

Whatever we do decide to organise in 2022 - I know it will be good fun and make a real difference. Looking forward to it!

Thank you.

Jodie

Jodie Barwick-Bell
Chairman, Chopwell Regeneration CIO
November 2021

