

# Blackdown Hills Parish Network

## REPAIR CAFÉS

### *Guidance for Blackdown Hills Parish Councils*

#### **What Is a Repair Café**

A Repair Café is a community initiative that brings together people with skills to repair items, and those who want items repaired. People can bring their broken or damaged item(s) for repair, and volunteers attempt to fix them. A Repair Café can be an enjoyable social community event, whilst helping to reduce waste and consumption.



The 'Repair Café in the Blackdown Hills' meets bi-monthly in Hemyock Village Hall

#### **What Can Be Repaired?**

All sorts of items can be repaired, although repairs to small electrical goods and clothes tend to be the most popular. But experience of existing Cafés shows there are plenty of other possibilities – including furniture, upholstery, IT equipment, old cameras and slide equipment, textiles (sewing, knitting, darning), garden equipment, wooden items, pottery, toys, and jewellery. One of our local Repair Cafes offers book repairs and rebinding. Although not strictly a repair some Cafés offer tool and knife sharpening (always very popular), welding, and cobbling.

A Repair Café could also add in occasional or seasonal themed sessions such as: a garden seed/plant swap, bike repairs, and Christmas lights/decorations repairs.

If items come in that require longer than the Repair Café's time to repair, individual volunteers might offer to take them away and repair them in their own time – that would be an agreement between the volunteer and the bringer.

A Repair Café may also want to consider making things for sale, as well as repairing items (bird boxes have proved popular in one local Repair Cafe).

## **Existing Repair Cafés in and around the Blackdown Hills**

In the Blackdown Hills:

Broadhembury Green Repair Café  
The Repair Café in the Blackdown Hills (at Hemyock)  
Otterford Repair Café  
Uffculme Repair Cafe

And close-by:

Chard Community Hub  
Greener Hatch Beauchamp  
Honiton Repair café

Ilminster Share & Repair  
Taunton Repair Café  
Wellington Repair Cafe

Details of all appear on the respective County Council websites and can be googled.

## **Thinking of Starting a Repair Café in your Village/Parish?**

Anyone can set up a Repair Café with their own branding and logo, and some groups prefer to do just that. However, the majority of Repair Cafés in the UK are linked to the Repair Café Foundation. *(Background - the international Repair Cafe movement started in Amsterdam and now there are well over a thousand Repair Cafes around the world).*



The Repair Café Foundation can provide a digital starter kit in return for a donation. The kit includes a manual of practical tips to assist in setting up a Repair Café, templates for posters and flyers as well as forms to cover liability and collect feedback from people who visit your Repair Café. For more information visit <https://repaircafe.org/en/>.

The manual covers: finding a suitable site, locating the expertise to make repairs, choosing tools and repair materials, generating publicity to attract visitors, and getting financial backing. It also deals with ensuring continuity and safety and improving your local Repair Café through evaluation.

## **Planning Your Repair Café**

There are lots of things to think about when planning to set up a Repair Café. The sections below run through the main topics briefly, but you will find more detailed information in the Repair Café Foundation's manual in the digital starter kit.

### Venue

You need an accessible venue, along with plenty of tables to work on, floor space (be sure to take some tarpaulins or similar, to protect the floor), and sockets for electricals.

Venues are usually just borrowed or hired for the Café session, but it may be possible to negotiate the use of some storage space to keep tools, spare bits and pieces, fabrics etc.

The venue must have its own current Public Liability insurance and should have a first aid kit (if not, take one with you).

Ensure you have access to the venue's main fuse box when the Café is open, just in case a faulty appliance trips the fuse board. *Note: using RCDs (residual current devices) should prevent faulty electrical appliances tripping a fuse in the venue.*

It's also desirable for the venue to have:

- WiFi so repairers can search the internet for spare parts/information.
- Good natural light or else desk lamps.
- Outside space for use if you are asked to repair outdoor equipment such as lawn mowers.



Hard at work at the Repair Café in the Blackdown Hills (Hemyock)

## Dates/Frequency

Locally, most Repair Cafés are held between three and six times a year. In some surrounding towns Cafés may be held more frequently.

Saturdays seem to be the most popular day, although at least one local Repair Café is held on Sundays.

## People

Running a Repair Cafe needs a co-ordinator, a set of volunteers with various repair skills, a volunteer to meet and greet, and volunteers to organise and serve refreshments.

The co-ordinator has the busiest job as they do most of the preparatory work – liaising with 'partner organisations' (eg the Village Hall Committee for a venue, County and District Councils/Councillors who may offer financial and/or practical support), recruiting volunteers and maintaining contact with everyone, and generally keeping an eye on everything that has been done and that still needs doing.

Voluntary repairers are, of course, key to a Repair Café. You will probably want a few people happy to tackle sewing repairs and small electricals as well as people with a

range of other repair skills. Be sure to recruit a core of volunteer repairers before launching your Café.

You will also need someone to greet visitors as they arrive, see what sort of repair is needed, check it is practical in the time available and direct them to the right repair station. They also inform visitors of the house rules and ask them to fill in a registration form. When visitors leave the receptionist collects the registration form and notes whether or not the repair was successful.

And volunteers to organise and serve refreshments. This can provide (usually free) refreshments for all volunteers, as well as serve visitors who will have time for a chat whilst awaiting their repair(s).

It is important to brief all your volunteers immediately prior to each session to ensure that each person knows exactly what will happen and what is expected of them. Listen to volunteers' suggestions or comments and thank them afterwards.

### Publicity

Good publicity is essential, particularly as a Repair Café is getting established. Try to get the word out widely through:

- Posters and flyers (noticeboards, village halls, local shops and pubs, GP surgeries)
- Local newsletters and social media promotion.
- Your mailing list
- Word of mouth

### Legal issues and paperwork

We believe that **Public Liability Insurance** (PLI) for the Repair Café is essential. The venue should have its own PLI but do check what this covers - it will cover things for which the owner of the venue is responsible, but almost certainly will not cover all the risks involved in running a Repair Café.

A comprehensive **Risk Assessment** should be drawn up and reviewed prior to each Café, and it is recommended that a **qualified first aider** is present throughout the Café's opening hours. *Your insurer may require one or both of these.*

Visitors should be asked to read and sign a form with **Disclaimers and House Rules** on arrival – before any repairs are carried out. This will explain there are no promises and no guarantees, but if something can be saved the repairers will give it their best efforts.

Volunteers must provide emergency contact details. You will need to make sure all personal data is collected and held in compliance with the GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation).

For any electrical repairs you should have a PAT tester and some volunteers who have attended a PAT tester accredited training course. Small electrical items can be PAT tested before and after any repair is carried out.

## Getting Started

If you decide you would like to start a Repair Café you will need to meet potential volunteers to discuss how the Café could run, potential venues and available skill sets.

It is helpful to start by filling out volunteer forms/emergency contacts. Remember data protection and how you're storing information. You may want to share emails and form an email or WhatsApp group.

You will then need to define what you can fix and what you can't as a group and promote accordingly.

## Finance

### Expenditure

Setting up a Repair Café does not require that much funding, but you will probably need a few hundred pounds to:

- Purchase some equipment, most volunteers bring their own tools and equipment, but you may need to fill in a few gaps and will probably need to buy a PAT tester.
- Train one or more people to do PAT testing.
- Buy some consumables.
- Purchase Public Liability insurance. (one example - Blackfriars Insurance Brokers were offering an annual policy for c£220 in 2022 - [www.blackfriarsinsurance.co.uk](http://www.blackfriarsinsurance.co.uk))

Runnings costs vary but you will need to cover:

- Venue hire (although some Cafes have negotiated to use a venue for free). Be sure to make early contact with your Village Hall Committee to ask if hire can be free: if not you could suggest the Repair Café volunteers will carry out repairs in the hall in lieu of a hire charge.
- Cafés usually provide free refreshments for volunteers as well as the cost of any materials bought and used at the café, and possibly offer volunteers travel expenses.
- Refreshments need to be bought before they can be sold! (*Although some Cafés ask for prior donation of savouries and cakes for sale*).

### Income

Some suggestions on who to approach for grants and donations:

- County and District Councils (eg we know that previously Devon County Council has provided grants from its locality fund, and paid for a PAT testing kit).
- Parish Councils (we know of one Parish Council which bought the Repair Café Foundation digital starter kit for an embryo Repair Café),
- local businesses,
- some of the larger national chains (eg supermarkets).

And, of course, the local Village Hall Committee to request free or subsidised hire.

Repair Cafes are usually free to enter, but generally request a voluntary contribution for any repairs. Have a donation box visible and clearly labelled with a card letting people know the Repair Café needs funds to operate.

Sales of refreshments will also help raise funds.

**The Blackdown Hills Parish Network can help!**

Several members of our Steering Group have experience of setting up a Repair Café. Please contact us if you would like any advice..

