

# A Business Plan for the Purchase & Operation of Freeland Methodist Church (‘The Chapel’) as a Community Hub

Updated  
12 February 2026



Freeland  
Community Hub

Charitable Community Benefit Society, FCA Reg. No. 9627

[www.freelandcbs.community](http://www.freelandcbs.community)

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## Executive Summary

**Project overview:** Freeland Community Hub Charitable Community Benefit Society (FCH) aims to acquire, restore, and operate the historic Freeland Methodist Church ("The Chapel") as a community hub. The first phase will feature a café, combined with a flexible community space. Depending on how the project evolves, FCH may develop additional community services (recognising the strong interest of a shop among community members) in a later phase of the project.

**The building:** FCH has commissioned and reviewed building and structural surveys that make recommendations about remedial work; these costs are included in the refurbishment plans and overall budget.

**Community support:** Extensive village consultation shows strong support, with 70% favouring a café/shop model and 65% supporting a café/community space. Over 100 individuals expressed willingness to volunteer and/or expressed interest in offering pledges of financial support.

**Governance:** FCH operates as a Charitable Community Benefit Society under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014, governed by an elected Board with expertise in company formation, project management, finance, legal and community development.

**Meeting community need:** The Chapel will directly address key local issues identified in community feedback, including older adult isolation, parent isolation and addressing a current lack of youth provision – with potential for evening workshops, creative activities, and a safe, welcoming venue.

**Community benefit:** This project will restore a historic building with significant heritage value constructed in 1805, provide employment opportunities, and work alongside existing businesses to provide a flexible, family friendly community space for events, workshops, and social activities.

**Operating model:** FCH will tenant The Chapel to a café operator, ensuring community ownership while enabling the tenant to focus on running a successful business. Rental income will fund building maintenance and generate a small surplus for wider community benefit. To support long-term sustainability, the lease will include a flexible rent mechanism linked to the café's profitability—ensuring FCH and the tenant share in its success.

**The tenant:** FCH will appoint a skilled, community-minded tenant to run a vibrant café, combining commercial expertise with a commitment to local benefit. The tenant will support the project's aims, complement village businesses, and help sustain village life.

**Funding:** The capital required to purchase and refurbish The Chapel is currently estimated at £379,000, comprising: £200,000 in community shares and donations; £69,000 in secured grants; and £110,000 in further grants.

**Progress since previous version of business plan (issued June 2025):** Project received £198,000 pledges and grants to contribute to the purchase and renovation of the building. FCH's offer, which was below asking price, was accepted in August 2025. The Committee/Board has met every few weeks since June 2025, working on areas including initial grant applications, renewing change of use permissions, completing an energy assessment, and engaging an Architect, Solicitor and Accountant.

**Next steps:** Share Offer launch (February 2026), Chapel purchase bid submission, grant applications, tenant selection, building acquisition, refurbishment (throughout 2026), and opening (Spring 2027).

# 1. Introduction

## Background

Freeland Methodist Church on Wroslyn Road, Freeland—known to Freeland residents as ‘The Chapel’—has been at the heart of the community and Freeland’s historic centre since 1807, making it the oldest Methodist place of worship on the Circuit. The building has been unavailable to the public since 2017 when The Chapel was closed for public worship.

The Chapel currently has planning permission from West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) for Class E (“Shop and Café”) and F2 (“Local Community Use”). Following closure, the Methodist Circuit twice applied for change-of-use planning permission to convert the building into a house, but both requests were denied by West Oxford District Council (WODC), with the second refusal unsuccessfully appealed. In his final report, the Planning Inspector wrote:

*“The community hub, shop and especially café would offer opportunity to retain a more spacious interior. With an emphasis on serving local people, the hub would also have a community use similar to the way that the chapel use served the village.”*

It was with these principles in mind that Freeland Community Benefit Society (FCBS) originally formed in 2018 with the intention of buying the building and renovating it as a community hub for the benefit of all Freeland residents. With the applications for change-of-use delaying the sale, The Chapel was only placed on the market in March 2025. The agent, Abbey Properties, invited closed bids by 11 July 2025 with a guide price of £175,000. FCBS’s bid of £165,065 for the Chapel was accepted in August 2025. This figure was carefully derived from the level of pledges received, alongside a detailed review of the owner’s valuation methodology.

## Charitable Community Benefit Society: Transition from FCBS to FCH

Following advice from The Plunkett Foundation, FCBS sought to obtain charitable status in order to strengthen its ability to attract grant funding, business donations and gift-aided contributions. As FCBS’s rules did not permit the addition of charitable status, the Committee established a new Charitable Community Benefit Society, Freeland Community Hub CBS (FCH), transferring all assets and activities over in February 2026.

FCH continues the activities initiated by FCBS and now provides the formal governance framework, with key decisions and responsibilities transferred from FCBS to FCH. For clarity, references in this document treat FCH as having assumed responsibility for historic decisions previously taken by FCBS.

FCH’s status as a Charitable CBS (registered under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014 with the Financial Conduct Authority (no. 9627 with effect from 10 October 2025), and with HMRC as an exempt charity (no. ZD49515) means it exists for the benefit of its members and the wider community.

CBSs can raise capital by issuing community shares, which are typically purchased by individuals, businesses, or organisations who wish to support the Society’s objectives: for example, running community facilities, cafés, shops or other local services. Shareholders become members of the CBS but unlike traditional companies, each member has one vote regardless of how many shares they hold—the ‘one-member, one-vote’ principle.

Members support the Society's mission and participate in its governance (e.g. electing the FCH Board). If the enterprise generates sufficient reserves the FCH Board may be able to pay modest interest payments to shareholders, although any profits will usually be reinvested for community benefit. Unlike co-operatives, CBSs are not primarily member-serving; their primary purpose must be to serve the broader public and community interest. Appendix 2 provides a more detailed description of Community Benefit Societies, and Appendix 3, of Community Benefit Society shares.

### **Benefits and Limitations of Charitable Status**

The following benefits from gaining Charitable status have been identified:

#### **Tax exemptions**

- Exemption from Corporation Tax, Income Tax and Capital Gains Tax on most income and gains, provided they are used solely for charitable purposes.
- Rental income from land and property is usually exempt where applied to charitable purposes.

#### **Gift Aid and fundraising advantages**

- Ability to claim Gift Aid on eligible donations from UK taxpayers within four years; this reclaims basic-rate Income Tax and therefore increases the donation by 25%.
- Access to the Small Donations Scheme, allowing a 25% top-up on small cash/contactless donations even without donor declarations (subject to limits).
- Charitable status increases credibility with donors, grant funders and public bodies, even where formal grant eligibility may still be limited.

#### **VAT reliefs (partial)**

- Although charities are not exempt from VAT, there are zero-rate or reduced-rate VAT reliefs on certain goods and services, including:
  - Fuel and power for charitable buildings
  - Advertising
  - Some goods supplied to disabled people

This may become relevant if FCH deregisters from VAT at any point.

#### **Property-related reliefs**

- Eligibility for mandatory business rates relief, meaning no more than 20% of normal non-domestic rates where property is used for charitable purposes.
- Stamp Duty Land Tax (SDLT) usually not payable when buying property or taking a lease for charitable use.
- Ability to receive bank and building society interest gross, without tax deducted at source

The following constraints are placed on a CBS that has charitable status:

#### **Use-of-funds restrictions**

- Tax exemptions apply only where income and gains are used exclusively for charitable purposes. Non-charitable expenditure can trigger tax liabilities
- Trading income may be taxable, depending on the nature of the activity and how closely it relates to the charity's purposes. Corporation Tax will however be offset by Structures and Building Allowance, as set out in the Profit and Loss table in Section 6 of this document.

### **Administrative obligations**

- HMRC may require the charity to submit tax returns, even where no tax is due.
- Gift Aid claims must be made accurately and within strict time limits.
- Changes to officers or bank details must be formally notified to HMRC.

### **Grant access not guaranteed**

- Charitable status alone does not guarantee eligibility for all grant programmes. Some funders apply additional criteria (e.g. deprivation indices, geography, or asset ownership), which may still exclude the organisation.

It should also be noted that the process is irreversible, the Charitable status cannot be rescinded.

### **The FCH Board**

FCH's Board is responsible for all strategic and operational decisions required to run The Chapel. The Board members have significant experience of project management, leasing, contract tendering, contract management, equity funding, company formation, accounting, public relations and communication, and running community groups and charities. FCH is therefore confident it can effectively and efficiently manage the building and any third parties or tenants who become involved.

The FCH Board is advised by the Plunkett Foundation, a UK-based charity that supports communities in establishing and managing community-owned businesses.

FCH has engaged Andrew Shaw (Shaw and Co) as the Solicitor for the conveyancing work for the building purchase. It has also engaged David Cadwallader & Co for accounting services, this was recommended by Plunkett Foundation.

Short biographies of the current Board members are provided in Appendix 1.

## 2. Partnership with the Community

### Consultation with local businesses and partners

The Chapel is located in the heart of the village close to the Oxfordshire Yeoman Pub, Freeland Nurseries, the Village Hall, St Mary's Church, and the recreational playing field (see Figure 1). FCH plans to develop The Chapel as a community hub, complementing rather than competing with local businesses.

When notified of FCH's plans, Trevor Johnson, owner of the Pub, said: *"We are really pleased the group overseeing the bid is committed to making sure the plan for The Chapel benefits the village as a whole, as well as the pub and other businesses."*



Figure 1: Location of key Freeland services

Robert Crocker, Chair of the Village Hall Management Committee and local farmer, said: *"There's a huge opportunity for The Chapel to meet needs that the village hall facilities currently can't accommodate. Examples would be exhibitions, and community events which struggle to find availability in the hall."*

Tim Webster, owner of Freeland Nurseries, has also expressed support for the project, seeing its potential to complement their busy and unique business located in the old walled garden of Freeland House.

In addition to local businesses and elected officials, FCH has received a supportive response from Eynsham Park Estate and Blenheim Estate.

### Consultation with local councillors

Local councillors are strongly supportive of FCH's plans. The Chair of Freeland Parish Council Peter Foster, Councillors for West Oxfordshire District Council Lidia Arciszewska and Roger Faulkner, and Councillor for Oxfordshire County Council Liam Walker have all expressed strong support for FCH's work to secure The Chapel for community benefit.

### Consultation with the village

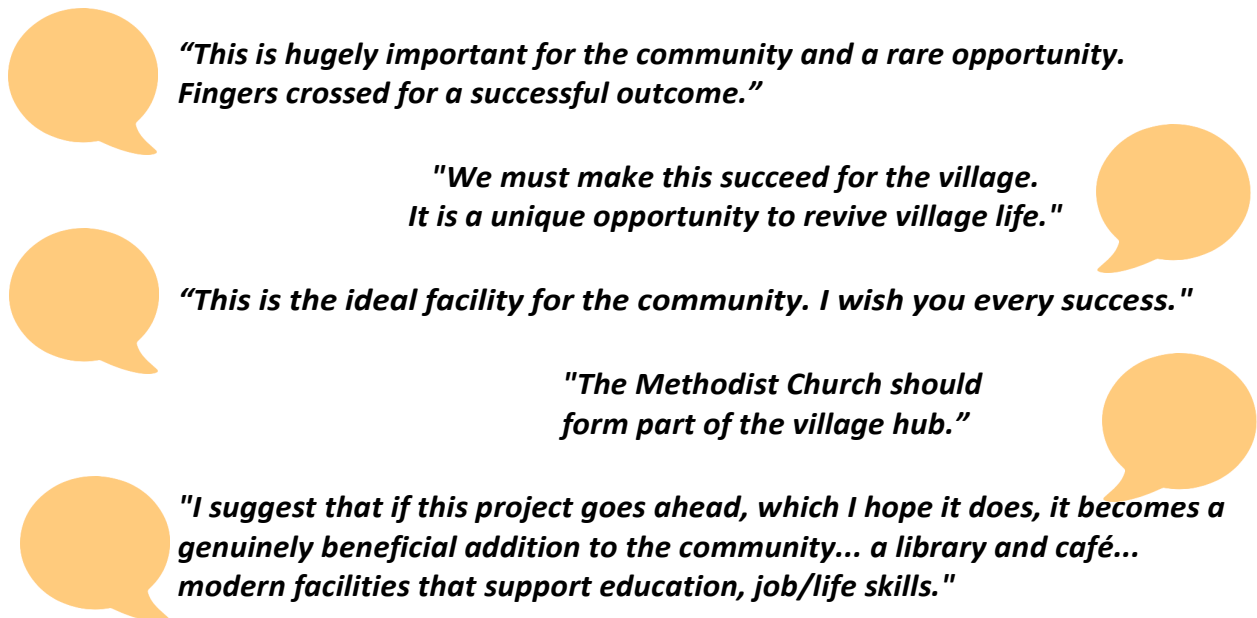
To gauge support for the project within Freeland, FCH prepared a questionnaire in March 2025, which was hand-delivered to all households in the village. Residents were able to complete and return the physical copy or respond online.

A total of 227 responses were received (from 211 households), representing a significant proportion of the village's 550 households. Almost 95% of all participants supported the proposal to acquire The Chapel and utilise it for community purposes, with three-quarters

of these supporting a combined shop and café, and nearly two-thirds, a café coupled with a flexible community space.

Financial support for the project was also encouraging. Around two-thirds expressed interest in purchasing community shares as a means of providing capital investment, with three-quarters of respondents indicating they would be willing to support a modest increase in Freeland Parish Council precept (the portion of Council Tax specifically allocated to fund services provided by the parish council), should that prove necessary **(NB, the FCH Board has since agreed this option will not be pursued)**.

The consultation also identified a strong willingness within the community to contribute time and effort. Some 113 individuals indicated they would be willing to help with aspects of the project's development or operation and 114 respondents requested a pledge pack, thus expressing interest to become involved in supporting the project financially. A number of comments expressed in the questionnaire are shown in *Figure 2* below.



*Figure 2: Quotes taken from responses to the community questionnaire*

## 3. A Vision for The Chapel

### Operating model

In considering which operating model should be adopted for The Chapel, speed, risk and flexibility are key considerations.

While the desire for a shop remains strong within the community, the fixtures and fittings of a retail premises render it less suitable for community meetings and events. There is also the question of risk: shops require high levels of management whether volunteer- or tenant-run operations, so there are general complications such as staff rotas and long term tenancy expectations, and specific considerations for Freeland—including the viability of a shop given changing buying habits, the linear geography of the village, and the proximity of the well-stocked and well-supported Co-op in Long Hanborough.

The need to move at speed also dictates the importance of an operating model that is sufficiently viable and sustainable to engender confidence among potential investors and supporters. For these reasons, the FCH Board identified a combined café and community space with a tenant running the café as optimal at this initial stage.

### The Chapel as a tenanted café / community space

The Chapel has significant potential to operate successfully as a café and community space. Its layout, visibility, and proximity to key village assets and services make it well-suited for repurposing into a vibrant, flexible space.

As well as this model providing a clear pathway to meet community and viability goals, it retains flexibility to evolve the model in future years. Importantly, the tenant's 'offer' must complement that of the Oxfordshire Yeoman pub opposite; therefore, after discussion with the Pub, FCH can confirm the Pub is a viable option and both entities are optimistic that agreement can be reached on how to operate the facility in a way that benefits both the Pub and the community. Failing this, the tenant must be an entity sympathetic to and willing to collaborate with the Pub. The FCH Board would retain control over tenant choice, ensuring compatibility.

This model provides a clear pathway to meeting both community objectives and long-term viability, while retaining flexibility to evolve in future years. A tenant selection process has been undertaken to test market interest and suitability. Through this process, the Oxfordshire Yeoman pub opposite has been identified as a viable option, subject to agreement.

Any tenant's offer must complement, rather than compete with, the Oxfordshire Yeoman. Following discussions with the Pub, both parties are optimistic that a mutually beneficial operating arrangement can be agreed which supports the Pub and delivers clear community benefit. Should this not be achievable, any alternative tenant would be required to demonstrate a willingness to collaborate constructively with the Pub.

Final selection of the tenant will remain with the FCH Board, ensuring alignment with the objectives of FCH and compatibility with the wider village offer.

## **An evolving model**

A café and community space are the beginning of a long-term, flexible community project that can grow with Freeland's needs. Its function as a community meeting point offers the opportunity to improve wellbeing and community cohesion as well as supporting local groups, art and music through evening community use.

As the proposition develops, there is potential to expand the physical space through a modest extension, allowing FCH to accommodate a wider range of uses or additional services such as a shop. This flexibility allows the project to evolve over time, ensuring it remains relevant, sustainable and rooted in the needs of the local community.

## **Heritage value**

This project would restore an important historic building—the oldest Methodist Church in the Witney Circuit, established shortly after John Wesley's death in 1791—to a use which is consistent with Methodist values. Freeland is unusual in having a Nonconformist chapel before the construction of its Anglican church St Mary's, making this building a unique part of village and regional heritage. Restoring it will not only preserve this rare legacy but also encourage further appreciation and investment in local history.

## **Meeting Community Need**

In 2022, Freeland Parish Council conducted a community survey to understand how residents felt the village should evolve over the next 10 years. There were clear concerns about lack of amenities and social isolation, which are laid out in more detail in Appendix 4. The Chapel will directly address key local issues identified in this community feedback:

- Older adult isolation – by offering accessible daytime space, clubs, and social activities.
- Parent isolation – through a family-friendly café, toddler groups, and opportunities to connect during school hours.
- Lack of youth provision – with potential for evening workshops, creative activities, and a safe, welcoming venue.

The flexible layout of the building allows it to serve different groups throughout the day and week, becoming a shared space for all ages and stages of life.

## **Economic development**

This project will create new jobs especially for younger people in the village seeking work experience or older people looking for part time work, supports existing local businesses by increasing footfall, and establishes Freeland's only shared workspace to boost enterprise and collaboration.

## **Daytime hot-desking and family-friendly space**

Freeland needs a welcoming daytime space that offers daytime flexibility for individuals, families, and informal groups. The Village Hall is geared more toward scheduled events rather than relaxed stays, co-working or spontaneous gatherings. The Chapel would offer comfortable, well-equipped hot-desking space and a welcoming environment for parents with young children.

## Community activities

Outside of café hours, the space would come alive with community-led events and social programming. The village questionnaire indicated that as well as support for use as a meeting space, there was strong endorsement for use as a gallery, library, music workshop or performance space.

Smaller than the Village Hall and bigger than the Newell Room, all of the above uses complement the Hall's functionality, especially in allowing longer term installations such as exhibitions. The Chapel can also expand the current meeting room capacity offered by the Hall, accommodating regular midweek events such as workshops or small clubs. The evening availability will maximise the use of the space, and while financial contributions from these activities will provide a minimal contribution to the overall business model, it will ensure the space meets the social and cultural needs of a wide cross-section of the community.

## 4. Purchase and Renovating The Chapel

### Structural and Building Surveys

FCH commissioned a building survey with Historic Building Advisory Service. The survey was completed in May 2025 and provided a detailed analysis of the condition of the building, including a few areas requiring work. These works have been included in the cost estimates outlined in Section 6.

Given the Stonesfield slate roof, FCH also felt it was a prudent step to commission a Structural Building Survey with Stantec. Again, this report has been used to inform the refurbishment cost estimates. These surveys were funded from reserves donated in 2018 to establish the original FCBS, which have been carried over.

### Purchasing The Chapel

The Chapel was marketed by Abbey Properties for offers in the region of £175,000, and required bids by 11 July 2025. FCH's bid balanced careful use of the funds pledged towards the community and other investment in share capital and anticipated from grants, with a realistic assessment of the building's commercial value. FCH has been in regular contact with the vendor since its offer of £165,065 was accepted, to update them of progress to purchase the building.

### Refurbishing The Chapel

Following the completion of comprehensive building and structural surveys, and consultation with local architects and builders, FCH has developed a detailed and strategic refurbishment plan.

A competitive tender process was undertaken to appoint an architect, with proposals sought from local firms. As a result, Maya Ellis of Studio 13 Architects, based in Yarnton, was selected to provide specialist architectural support. Her role includes the development of a masterplan, liaison with the West Oxfordshire District Council Conservation Officer, and preparation of the documentation required to tender the works. There is also the option to extend her appointment to include full project management of the refurbishment.

In parallel, FCH has allocated funding for professional fees, fundraising costs, and utility expenses throughout the refurbishment period. These provisions have underpinned the development of a carefully considered and realistic budget, ensuring that resources are managed responsibly, efficiently, and with full transparency.

### Environmental sustainability

Freeland Community Hub Community Benefit Society (FCH-CBS) is committed to making the renovation and long-term operation of the former Methodist Chapel as low-carbon and sustainable as is realistically achievable within the constraints of a Grade II listed building and limited community resources.

## Cost of Purchase and Refurbishment

The total budget for purchasing and refurbishing the property is £379,000 – see *Table 1*.

*Table 1: FCH budget for acquiring, refurbishing and setting up The Chapel*

<b>Capital Costs</b> (non-itemised due to commercial sensitivity)	£
Building purchase	£165,065
Stamp duty (zero) and searches	£500
Refurbishment	£160,000
Purchase and renovation contingency	£20,000
<b>Total Capital costs</b>	<b>£345,600</b>
<b>Start-up Costs</b>	
Architect, surveyor, legal, etc	£15,000
Pre-trading utility and other bills	£10,000
Start-up cost contingency	£8,400
<b>Total Start-up costs</b>	<b>£33,400</b>
<b>Total Capital and Start-up costs</b>	<b>£379,000</b>

This ambition is informed by a detailed Low Carbon Hub free energy and carbon assessment completed in December 2025, which provides a clear, evidence-based framework for reducing energy demand, cutting carbon emissions and improving comfort for users. The assessment is being used directly to inform the architects’ renovation proposals, ensuring that sustainability is embedded from the outset rather than treated as an add-on. The report identifies a strong “fabric-first” approach as the most cost-effective and appropriate strategy for the building, prioritising measures such as roof, floor and internal wall insulation, draught reduction, secondary glazing, and a full upgrade to efficient LED lighting. Together, these measures have the potential to reduce the building’s operational energy use by around 45%, while also improving thermal comfort and usability for a wide range of community activities.

FCH-CBS recognises that not all low-carbon measures can be delivered at once. Its approach will therefore be phased and pragmatic, focusing first on interventions that are affordable, compatible with the building’s listed status, and deliver the greatest carbon savings per pound spent. More capital-intensive options, such as heat pumps, and battery storage, will be explored where planning constraints and funding allow, and designed so they can be added in future without rework. The assessment also highlights opportunities to align future systems with evolving energy tariffs and smart controls, helping to minimise running costs over the long term.

Overall, FCH-CBS sees the energy assessment not just as a technical report, but as a practical roadmap for creating a resilient, low-carbon community hub. By balancing ambition with affordability, and by integrating sustainability into the core design and operation of the building, the project aims to demonstrate how historic community buildings can play a meaningful role in the transition to a low-carbon future while remaining financially viable and welcoming for local people. FCH is grateful to the Low Carbon Hub for funding this technical assessment, which has enabled access expert advice at no cost to the project.

## 5. Funding Sources

### Funding Sources Overview

FCH aims to raise a total of £379,000 startup funding from a combination of shares, donations and grant funding. Together, these partnerships will be critical in securing the full start-up capital required to acquire and refurbish The Chapel for community use – see *Table 2a*. A timeline towards The Chapel’s purchase and refurbishment is contained in Appendix 5.

*Table 2a: FCH breakdown of funding sources*

	<b>Minimum</b>
Community Shares and Donations	£200,000
Grants confirmed	£69,000
Further fundraising	£110,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£379,000</b>

### Community shares and donations

It is anticipated that £200,000 will be needed from the Community through Share purchase and donations. A total of £165,000 has been pledged through the community share offer, which was run in June and July 2025 ahead of the 11 July 2025 deadline to submit a bid for the Chapel. This exceeded the original fundraising target of £120,000, demonstrating strong local support for the project.

HMRC has confirmed that FCH-CBS has charitable tax status and is therefore eligible to claim Gift Aid on donations. Gift Aid does not apply to community share purchases.

To maximise the value of contributions to FCH-CBS, members may wish to consider combining a modest share purchase with a Gift Aided donation. For example:

- Original pledge: £1,000
- Share purchase: one share per family member (e.g. 2 × £10 = £20)
- Donation: remaining £980, with Gift Aid adding further 25% (£245)

As FCH-CBS operates on a one member, one vote basis, this approach maintains full membership rights while increasing the financial benefit to the society. In this example, the total value to FCH-CBS would be:

- £1,245, comprising £20 of share capital and £1,225 from the Gift Aided donation (£980 × 125%).

For higher-rate taxpayers, additional personal tax relief may be claimed on the Gift Aided portion, further reducing the net cost of the donation.

This example is provided for illustrative purposes only and does not constitute financial advice. It is intended to show how a combination of community shares and donations can increase the overall value of support to FCH-CBS.

It should also be noted that, in the event that the assets of FCH-CBS are ever sold, shareholders rank as creditors, whereas donations are not repayable and do not carry any right to reimbursement.

With gift aided donations and additional pledges now that the village has a clearer vision for the future of the Chapel, FCH forecasts that Community Shares and donations will generate £200,000.

### Share issue

FCH launches the share issue on Thursday 12 February for a six week period, ending Thursday 26 March 2026.

### Grants and further fundraising

So far, £69,000 of grant support has been raised. This has been provided by a combination of the Parish Council, Councillor’s discretionary funds, Trusts and S106.

£110,000 is still required to deliver the Phase 1 renovation of the Chapel. This work will enable the building to open as a Café and Community Hub, fully compliant with current building regulations and health and safety requirements, and capable of operating sustainably from the outset.

FCH recognises that many grant programmes are targeted at areas of higher social deprivation. As a result, several major funding streams—most notably the Architectural Heritage Fund and the Co-op Share Booster Fund—are not accessible to this project. Consequently, FCH-CBS is relying more heavily on self-funding, community investment, and a smaller pool of eligible grant-making bodies.

FCH-CBS is actively engaging with a range of grant funders and local stakeholders to assemble the Phase 1 funding package. These include:

- Freeland Parish Council
- West Oxfordshire District Council’s “WestHive” Community Grant Programme
- Low Carbon Hub
- The National Lottery Heritage Fund

The following table highlights how FCH expects to generate the funds to complete the phase 1 renovations:

*Table 2b: FCH breakdown of fundraising*

	<b>Minimum</b>
Low Carbon Hub	£5,000
WestHive	£22,000
National Lottery Heritage Fund	£30,000
Community fundraising	£10,500
Parish Council support	£20,000
Further Grant support	£22,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>£110,000</b>

## 6. Commercials

### Financial forecasts

The following tables show FCH's financial forecasts. Year 0 represents the time in which FCH will purchase the property and incur the start-up costs to get ready for launch. In Year 1, FCH starts to earn rental income and will also have grants available to pay for operating costs.

The rental income means FCH will be able to dedicate 30% of taxable profits to activities for community benefit, to be decided by the membership. By the end of Year 2, FCH will have enough cash – if it stops activities for community benefit – to cover more than a year's worth of costs, should it lose its rental income.

Should FCH hit a problem such as losing a tenant at any point, it can reduce community spend temporarily and use the substantial cash reserves to pay essential costs until a new tenant is found.

Note, Community shares and donations are not shown as operating income or expense in the profit and loss table. These are shown in the cash flow and balance sheet.

### Financial forecasts – Profit and Loss

£s	Year	0	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Income</b>							
	Rental from tenancy	-	5,500	5,720	5,949	6,187	6,434
	Rental from hall hire and fundraising	-	2,500	2,600	2,704	2,812	2,925
	Grant income	33,400	2,000	2,080	2,163	2,250	2,340
	<b>Total income</b>	<b>33,400</b>	<b>10,000</b>	<b>10,400</b>	<b>10,816</b>	<b>11,249</b>	<b>11,699</b>
<b>Operating Expenses</b>							
	Start-up costs	- 33,400					
	Repairs and maintenance	-	2,000	2,080	2,163	2,250	2,340
	Legal and Professional fees	-	1,000	1,040	1,082	1,125	1,170
	Insurance	-	1,000	1,040	1,082	1,125	1,170
	Other expenses	-	500	520	541	562	585
	<b>Total operating expenditure</b>	<b>- 33,400</b>	<b>4,500</b>	<b>4,680</b>	<b>4,867</b>	<b>5,062</b>	<b>5,264</b>
	<b>EBITDA</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>5,500</b>	<b>5,720</b>	<b>5,949</b>	<b>6,187</b>	<b>6,434</b>
<b>Non-operating costs</b>							
	Community activities	-	-	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000
	Interest due to Shareholders	-	-	-	-	-	-
	<b>Taxable profit</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>5,500</b>	<b>3,720</b>	<b>3,949</b>	<b>4,187</b>	<b>4,434</b>
	Corporation tax (19%)	-	1,045	707	750	795	843
	Structures and Buildings Allowance	-	1,045	707	750	795	843
	<b>Net profit</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>5,500</b>	<b>3,720</b>	<b>3,949</b>	<b>4,187</b>	<b>4,434</b>

## Financial forecasts – Cashflow

Year	0	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Beginning Cash</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>28,912</b>	<b>58,042</b>	<b>86,407</b>	<b>115,011</b>
<b>Cash from Operations</b>						
Net profit	0	5,500	3,720	3,949	4,187	4,434
Change in Balance sheet		23,412	25,410	24,416	28,417	26,417
<b>Total</b>		<b>28,912</b>	<b>29,130</b>	<b>28,365</b>	<b>30,603</b>	<b>30,852</b>
<b>Cash from Investing</b>						
Capital expenditure	-	214,000				
Acquisitions	-	165,000				
<b>Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>379,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Cash from Financing</b>						
Loan	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grants	179,000	-	-	-	-	-
Donations (inc Gift Aid)	75,000	-	-	-	-	-
Community shares	125,000	0	0	0	2,000	2,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>379,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,000</b>	<b>2,000</b>
<b>Ending Cash</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>28,912</b>	<b>58,042</b>	<b>86,407</b>	<b>115,011</b>	<b>143,863</b>

## Financial forecasts – Balance Sheet

Year end	0	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Assets</b>						
Cash	0	28,912	58,042	86,407	115,011	143,863
Account Receivable		2,750	1,430	1,487	1,547	1,609
Fixtures & Fittings	30,000	24,000	18,000	12,000	6,000	-
Building	165,000	165,000	165,000	165,000	165,000	165,000
Improvements	184,000	165,600	147,200	128,800	110,400	92,000
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>379,000</b>	<b>386,262</b>	<b>389,672</b>	<b>393,695</b>	<b>397,958</b>	<b>402,471</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>						
Accounts Payable		717	746	776	807	839
CIT Control Account		1,045	707	750	795	843
Capital Grant	254,000	254,000	254,000	254,000	254,000	254,000
Long term Debt	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>254,000</b>	<b>255,762</b>	<b>255,452</b>	<b>255,526</b>	<b>255,602</b>	<b>255,681</b>
<b>Equity</b>						
Called up share capital	125,000	125,000	125,000	125,000	125,000	125,000
Share inflows					3,000	3,000
Share outflows				-	3,000	3,000
Retained earnings	0	5,500	9,220	13,169	17,356	21,790
<b>Total Equity</b>	<b>125,000</b>	<b>130,500</b>	<b>134,220</b>	<b>138,169</b>	<b>142,356</b>	<b>146,790</b>
<b>Total Assets less Liabilities</b>	<b>125,000</b>	<b>130,500</b>	<b>134,220</b>	<b>138,169</b>	<b>142,356</b>	<b>146,790</b>

### **Financial risk**

It is important to point out to shareholders that the Society has limited liability. This means the most a member can lose is the amount invested, though FCH believes even this is highly unlikely. Investors are not liable for any costs such as repairs, or paying debts by the tenant or the society.

FCH has considered the risks of lower rent, gaps between tenants and higher interest rates in its minimum share raise scenario and are confident the project is financially viable under this scenario.

## 7. Operating Model and Tenancy Approach

The success of The Chapel as a community hub will depend on a strong financial foundation that balances commercial viability with community benefit. Following detailed discussions, the FCH Board settled on a tenancy model it believes combines long-term sustainability, effective risk management, and meaningful community value for investors in FCH.

### Building maintenance and capital investment

FCH is likely to assume responsibility for refurbishment alongside the long-term maintenance of The Chapel building. This both increases the likelihood of securing a strong tenant and ensures long-term protection of the asset. FCH expects maintenance costs to vary significantly over time, with costs being limited in the initial years due to the refurbishments planned.

A key objective for FCH will be to build sufficient capital reserves to absorb planned and unplanned costs that could occur in future years. This will mean that FCH expects to generate around £21,000 of funds within five years of starting operations. FCH anticipates applying for further grants for works as needed. This approach ensures the long-term stewardship of the building remains with the community while enabling the tenant to focus on operating a successful café business without the distraction or burden of significant capital outlays.

### Rent structure

The rental model is designed to provide financial sustainability both for FCH and the tenant. Rental income will cover FCH's maintenance obligations and generate a modest surplus to enable share sales and support wider community objectives, consistent with the society's community benefit purpose.

FCH's preferred model is for the tenant to not be responsible for funding refurbishment or structural improvements, and will bear only the agreed rent as their financial obligation during the lease period. It is believed that this structure will encourage tenants who have entrepreneurial ideals but lack the financial resources to provide risk capital for building purchase or renovation. To promote long-term sustainability, the lease will include mechanisms to adjust rent levels according to the underlying profitability of the business, ensuring both tenant and FCH share appropriately in the café's success.

### Rental income from the café

The FCH Board researched rental values for commercial property in West Oxfordshire and talked to two business owners running cafés in the locality. FCH's financial model assumes that the café offers food and hot and cold drinks across the week from Monday to Sunday. The financial model assumes a monthly rent of £500-600, generating an annual income of £5,000-£6,200 from the café. This rental income will be further supplemented by fund-raising activities and evening community rental income to provide FCH with the funds necessary to meet its obligations. FCH expects these further activities to generate £2,000-3,000 of income per year. A simple business model for a café is contained in Appendix 6.

## Tenant profile

The selection of the tenant is central to the success of the venture. As indicated previously, FCH will therefore aim to recruit an experienced, motivated tenant with the necessary entrepreneurial skills, operational expertise, and customer focus to build and sustain a vibrant café business. In addition to commercial competence, the tenant will be expected to share FCH's commitment to community benefit, actively supporting the broader aims of the project and contributing to the long-term vitality of village life.

## Governance and division of responsibilities

FCH's approach is designed to retain community ownership and control of The Chapel, while ensuring that the day-to-day café operation is led by individuals with the necessary commercial skills. It offers a robust, low-risk operational model that aligns with both the financial and community benefit objectives of FCH. Nonetheless, the FCH Board has considered the risk and mitigations. These are contained in Appendix 7.

## 8. Next Steps

FCH is pursuing agreements in principle from local businesses for financial support, and is identifying specific grant opportunities in order to confirm eligibility and establish time-scales and parameters.

The Share Offer launches on 12 February 2026, with donations opening for payment at the same time. Those who have pledged share purchases or donations are now invited to fulfil their commitments by transferring the amounts in question to FCH and completing the required application. Both payment details and application form (with guidance) can be found on the FCH website <https://freelandcbs.community>, along with details of how to submit either by email to [finance@freelandhub.org.uk](mailto:finance@freelandhub.org.uk), or by hand or post to 9 Blenheim Lane, Freeland. Please transfer contributions **before 26 March 2026**. Please see the Appendices for more information about owning Community Benefit Society Shares, and for timelines.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1: FCH Governance

### The Board members

The seven-person Board was voted into place when FCH was constituted. Members of the Board are voluntary, receive no remuneration and have no personal financial interest in the project beyond the amount they may invest themselves.

**Amy Jackson** has lived in Freeland for over 20 years. She's committed to improving the social vibrancy of the village through her time as parish councillor, campaigning for appropriate development in Freeland, and supporting the funding of local amenities. In her day job, Amy runs a communications consultancy specialising in rural issues and uses her social science PhD to conduct quantitative and qualitative research.

**Andy Murray** lives in Freeland with his wife Aliya and son Alistair who recently started University. He has retired as a Project Engineer in the Oil and Gas industry starting out with eighteen years spent with Esso Petroleum Company followed by engineering company assignments in crude oil production and pipeline projects. He is also involved in the Allotment Association and Village Speedwatch.

**Colin Smith (Vice Chair)** has lived in Freeland for 50 years since coming to work in the IT department at the Regional Health Authority. He and his wife have two sons, both of whom were educated at Freeland Primary school and Bartholomew secondary school in Eynsham. In addition to his involvement with FCH, he is chair of the Freeland Energy Group—part of the Eynsham CAPZero project aiming to make Freeland and other local villages carbon neutral by 2050.

**Jane Duff (Vice Chair)** has lived in Freeland for over eight years now and currently edit the Freeland Grapevine. She has run her own music teaching business for over 50 years and is passionate about preserving a high quality of life for all Freeland residents.

**Mike Foster** and his family have lived in Freeland since 1998. He was a school governor at Bartholomew School in Eynsham then Chair of the Eynsham Partnership Academy Trust. He worked as a mental health nurse in the NHS and was Deputy Director of Nursing at Oxford Health NHS Trust before retirement. Since then, he has been able to pursue his interest in smallholding, including keeping a small flock of rare breed Portland sheep.

**Philip Huxley (Secretary)** has lived in Freeland since 1992. Both his children were educated at Freeland Primary school and Bartholomew secondary school in Eynsham. Philip worked in the pharmaceutical and biotech industries for over 40 years, most recently as Vice President, Oncology for a company developing anti-cancer therapies. In addition to managing science, Philip's professional life has included equity financing, company formation, asset sale, business development and project management.

**Tom Harden (Chair)** lives in Freeland with his wife Alice and two children, both born in the village with the oldest now at Bartholomew. He runs a small commercial strategy consultancy advising board directors and investors, and has worked with 120 clients over 15 years, including a number of hospitality businesses. He is also involved in Freeland's micro bakery, serving the village fresh bread on Fridays since 2020.

## Officers

FCH is delighted that Lee-Ann Lambert has recently joined FCH-CBS as its Treasurer. Lee-Ann is an officer of FCH-CBS.

**Lee-Ann Lambert (Treasurer)** has lived locally in Bladon and now Long Hanborough for the past 10 years with her two daughters, who attend Freeland Primary School and Bartholomew Secondary School. She is passionate about giving back to the community and supporting others, including providing COVID support in the villages. In addition to her role on the FCH Committee, she also serves on the Freeland Primary School Committee. Professionally, she has a background in Financial and Commercial Accounting and Project Management, primarily within the Diagnostic Imaging industry. Lee-Ann is an Accounting Technician and a member of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants.

## Appointing Trustees

As a Charitable Community Benefit Society, FCH is required to be governed by a board of trustees who hold ultimate responsibility for its strategic direction, financial stewardship, and compliance with charity law and regulatory requirements.

Appointing a strong and diverse trustee board will therefore be a priority in the next phase of development. FCH intends to undertake an open and transparent recruitment process, seeking individuals with complementary skills in areas such as heritage, community engagement, finance, property, legal governance, and project delivery. This will involve advertising locally and through relevant networks, engaging with existing supporters and stakeholders, and conducting a fair selection process based on clear role descriptions and competencies.

## Appendix 2: Community Benefit Societies

**Legal Structure:** The proposed enterprise will operate as a *Community Benefit Society (CBS)*, registered under the *Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014* and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA).

**Purpose:** The primary purpose of a CBS is to operate for the benefit of the wider community. All activities and surplus funds will be directed towards achieving community benefits, rather than maximising financial returns for individual investors.

**Membership and Governance:** A CBS is owned by its members—individuals or organisations who purchase community shares. Membership operates on a *one-member, one-vote* basis, ensuring democratic control regardless of the size of shareholding. Members play an active role in governance, including the election of the board and key decisions at general meetings.

**Raising Capital:** A CBS raises capital primarily through the issue of *community shares*. These are withdrawable shares designed for community investment, typically offering a modest return. Share capital remains at risk, but provides an opportunity for members of the community to directly support the venture.

**Profit Distribution and Reinvestment:** CBS profits are used to sustain and develop the enterprise, reinvest in the community, and—where appropriate—pay limited interest to community shareholders. The CBS structure ensures that surpluses are not distributed as dividends but retained for the benefit of the community.

**Asset Lock:** An asset lock may apply to restrict the distribution of assets, ensuring that any retained value is applied to community purposes even in the event of dissolution.

**Distinctiveness:** A CBS differs from a co-operative (which serves members) and from a Community Interest Company (which operates under company law). The CBS model is specifically designed to ensure that community benefit is the overriding purpose.

## Appendix 3: Community Benefit Society Shares

This appendix outlines key features of the investment offered to members of Freeland Community Hub Community Benefit Society (FCH-CBS), and explains how these differ from conventional equity investments. The structure reflects both the Society's legal obligations and its overriding commitment to community benefit.

### Asset Lock and Capital Protection

Community Benefit Societies are governed by the *Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014*<sup>1</sup> (CCBSA 2014). Under this legislation, the assets of the Society are held for the benefit of the community. The Society is subject to an asset lock, which means:

- Investors cannot sell or transfer their shares on an open market.
- When an investor withdraws their shares (subject to the Society's discretion and financial position), they receive no more than the original amount invested — there is no scope for capital appreciation.
- In the event that the Society is wound up, any residual assets (after repayment of share capital and liabilities) must be applied for the benefit of the community, and cannot be distributed to members.

This asset lock ensures that all capital raised serves the long-term interests of the community and prevents the private accumulation of capital gains by investors.

### Withdrawable shares

- Shares may be withdrawn by members who have held them for a minimum period of three years.
- The FCH Board will specify a maximum total withdrawal for each financial year.
- Withdrawals will be made in the order in which they were received up to a maximum total withdrawal specified by the FCH Board for the financial year.
- All withdrawals must be funded from trading profits, reserves or new share capital raised from members and are at the discretion of the FCH Board having regard to the need to maintain prudent reserves and the Society's commitment to community benefit.
- The FCH Board may suspend the right to withdraw shares (wholly or partially), indefinitely or for a fixed period.

### Interest Payments

While community benefit societies may pay interest on share capital, any such payments are strictly limited both by law and by the Society's governing rules:

- Interest on share capital is not a reward for investment risk or capital growth, but a modest compensation for the use of capital.

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<sup>1</sup> Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014 (CCBSA 2014)

- FCH may (but is under no obligation to) pay interest to shareholders subject to the following:
  - Payment of interest must be from trading profits and is at the discretion of the FCH Board having regard to the long-term interest of the Society, the need to maintain prudent reserves, and the Society's commitment to community benefit.
  - The primary obligation of FCH is to apply its profits to community benefit, and only after fulfilling this duty may it make interest payments to investors.
- In practice, this means that any interest offered is likely to be modest and typically aligned with rates offered by ethical or social investment schemes.
- The primary obligation of FCH is to apply its profits to community benefit, and only after fulfilling this duty may it make interest payments to investors.

The society's rules govern the specific provisions for interest payments, including the FCH Board's discretion to declare or withhold interest based on the financial position of the society in any given year.

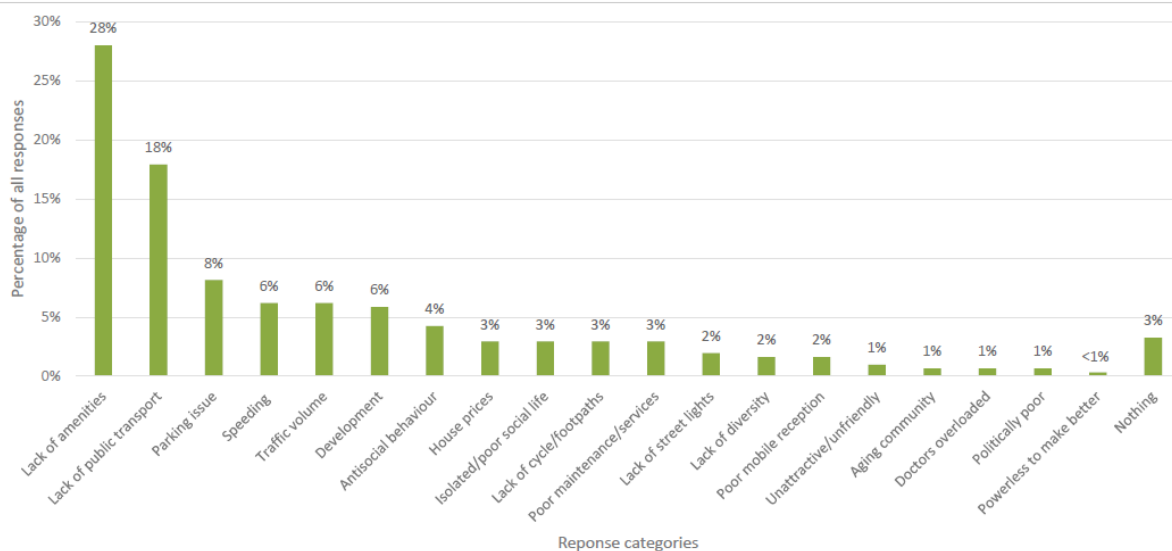
## Appendix 4: Community Need

In 2022, Freeland Paish Council conducted a survey of residents to understand what they liked and disliked about Freeland at that time, and what their hopes and fears for the village were over the next 10 years. Around 150 people participated, with the following findings:

- Older age groups (65 and over) were significantly more likely to mention the problem of isolation and loneliness in the village
- Young people (under 25) and parents of teenagers were more likely to mention how little there is to do in the village
- All age groups talked of frustration with lack of public transport, which can further compound loneliness, boredom or lack of social opportunity experienced as a result of poor village amenities.

Other summary results are reproduced in the charts below. These indicate unhappiness over lack of amenities (*Figure 3*), support for a café, shop or other facility (*Figure 4*), and concern about the risk of losing existing amenities (*Figure 5*). The aim of the café/ community space is to not just provide groups in need with social opportunities, but to complement existing services such as the pub and nursery, and increase their long term viability. The full survey results can be obtained from Freeland Parish Council.

### Q18: Please tell us up to three things you like least about Freeland - free text



*Figure 3: Categorised free text responses to a question asking what participants like least about Freeland*

**Q20: Please tell us up to three things you are looking forward to most about the future, in relation to Freeland or more broadly - free text**

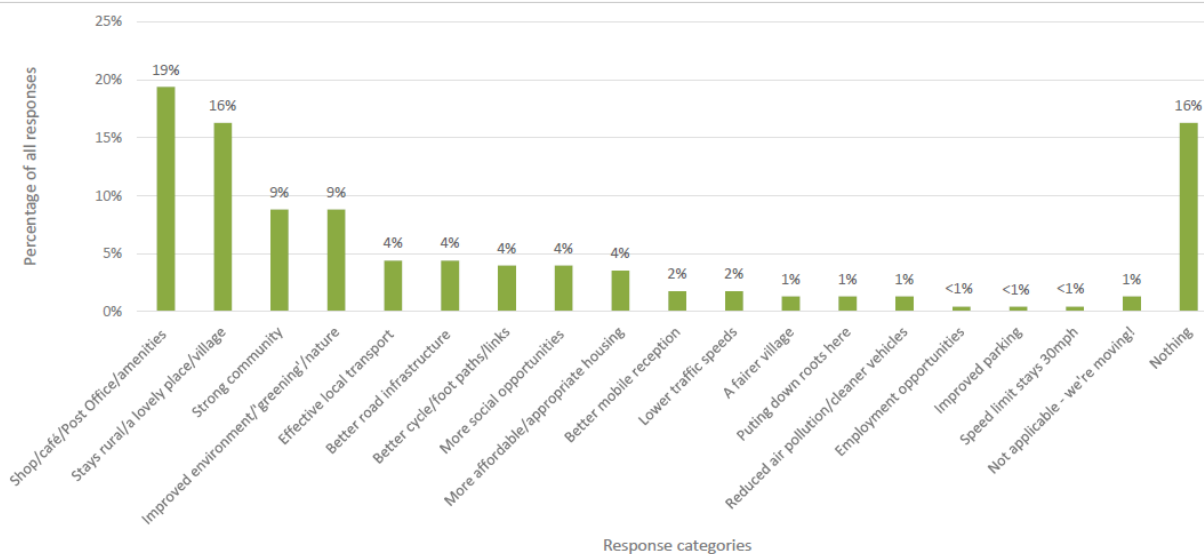


Figure 4: Categorised free text responses to a question asking what participants are most looking forward to about the future

**Q21: How upset or concerned would you be about the following potential situations?**

Answered: 137 Skipped: 12

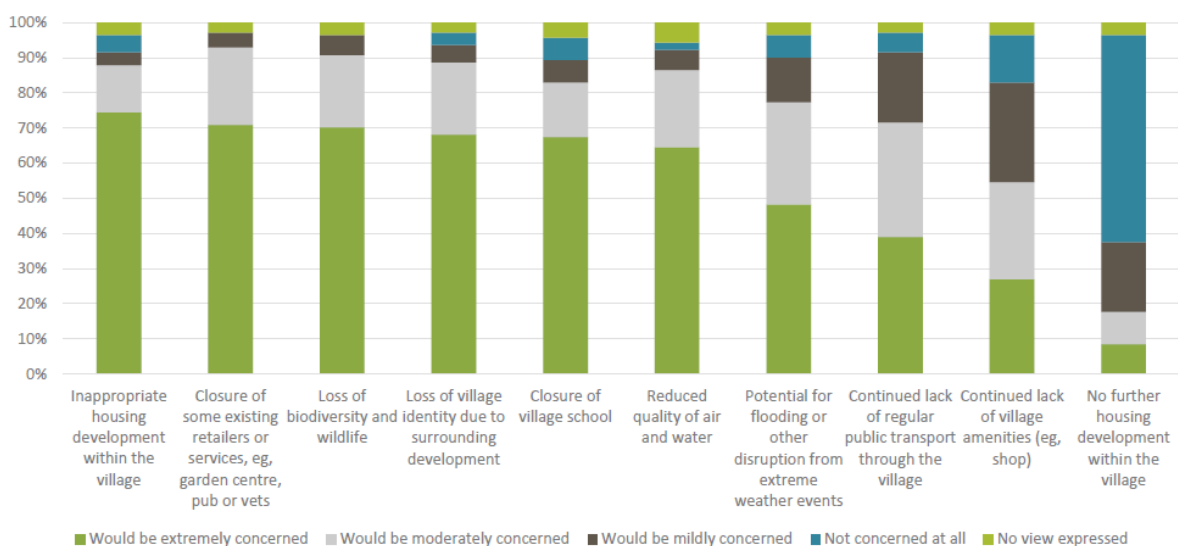


Figure 5: Level of concern about different scenarios in the village; note the closure of existing village services generated the most moderate or extreme concern of all offered

## Appendix 5: Timelines

### Phase 1: Bid preparation

<i>Planning and preparation for bid</i>	<i>March-May 2025</i>
<i>Community consultation</i>	<i>May 2025</i>
<i>Business planning and grants secured in principle</i>	<i>April-June 2025</i>
<i>Pledge offers secured from community</i>	<i>June 2025</i>
<i>Tenant in principle secured</i>	<i>June 2025</i>
<i>Bid submission</i>	<i>July 2025</i>

### Phase 2: Awaiting decision/preparing for purchase

<i>Share offer preparation</i>	<i>2H-2025</i>
<i>Grant applications proper</i>	<i>2H-2025</i>
<i>Bid notification</i>	<i>August 2025</i>

### Phase 3: Purchase agreed/awaiting completion

<i>Gain Charitable Status</i>	<i>September-December 2025</i>
<i>Engage Architect following tendering process</i>	<i>December 2025</i>
<i>Re-secure Change of Use with WODC</i>	<i>January 2026</i>
<i>Share offer issue</i>	<i>February 2026</i>
<i>Grants secured</i>	<i>September 2025- ongoing</i>
<i>Purchase completion/Building acquisition</i>	<i>April 2026</i>

### Phase 4: Renovation and set up

<i>Listed Building Consent for refurbishment</i>	<i>May 2026</i>
<i>Tenant secured/agreement in place</i>	<i>June 2026</i>
<i>Renovation/refurbishment</i>	<i>July – Feb 2026</i>
<i>The Chapel opening</i>	<i>Spring 2027</i>

## Appendix 6: Simple Business Model for Café

Having consulted with other café owners FCH has produced this simple business model to highlight the viability of the café operating model.

Table 3: Financial breakdown of a modest café operation

	Base performance	Medium performance	Stretch performance	Notes
Covers per day	50	60	70	
Covers per month	1,500	1,800	2,400	
Average Spend/customer	£6/cover	£6/cover	£8/cover	Blend of Coffee and Cake, and Sandwich spend
Gross Turnover/month	£9,000	£10,800	£19,200	
<b>Net Turnover/month</b>	<b>£7,500</b>	<b>£9,000</b>	<b>£16,000</b>	
Cost of sales/month	£2,250	£2,700	£4,800	30% of turnover
Staff costs/month	£3,000	£3,600	£6,400	40% of turnover
Utilities costs/month	£600	£600	£800	
Other costs/month	£640	£700	£760	Inc cleaning, transaction fees, insurance, rates
Rent/month	£500	£600	£1,000	Rent modelled to increase with café revenue.
<b>Total expenditure/month</b>	<b>£6,690</b>	<b>£8,200</b>	<b>£14,160</b>	
Profit/month	£510	£800	£2,240	Profit generated by the café tenant

## Appendix 7: Risk Analysis

FCH has undertaken a risk analysis for the project which is summarised in *Table 4* below.

*Table 4: A summary of the anticipated risks and planned mitigations*

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Mitigation/action</b>
Insufficient funds	FCH is unable to purchase and renovate the building	Abandon project and reimburse any funds received
Unable to purchase property	FCH is unable to purchase and renovate the building	Abandon project and reimburse any funds received
Planning permission or Listed Building Consent not granted	Renovation or intended use not possible	Early engagement with planners and conservation officers; phased and minimal intervention design; revise scope if required
Grant funding does not come through	Reduced scope or delay to works	Limit scope of works; prioritise essential repairs; phase non-critical elements
Unable to appoint and keep good tenants	Having the right tenant is critical to the success of the project	FCH will evaluate the suitability of prospective tenants using a balanced scorecard approach. They will need to have previous experience and a sound business plan. As a further option, The Chapel could be run as a community venture with a manager and staff hired directly. FCH has already received offers from people with the necessary skills to do this.
Gaps between tenants	Negative impact on cashflow	FCH will implement regular reviews with the tenant and two-way feedback. FCH will work closely with the tenant to anticipate any problems early and identify/support action plans to help maintain and grow their business.  FCH will assist the tenant where possible with marketing, voluntary help (e.g. stop-gap cover for staff, grounds maintenance, etc).  FCH will impose a reasonable notice period and have a plan ready in the event that the tenant does give notice. FCH is exploring tenant insurance.

Unexpected repair costs	Higher than anticipated expenditure	FCH has carried out building and structural surveys prior to the purchase of the building. It will allow a reasonable contingency in its refurbishment budget.
Slow progress leads to reduced community engagement	Loss of confidence and support	Clear communications; visible milestones; regular updates; engagement events
The business is not viable	No rental income can be achieved	If—despite a sound business plan, vigorous and sustained marketing, and the support of members and other customers—the business does not develop as anticipated, then FCH would be forced to close the café, sell the assets and repay the original investors, with any residual assets to be used for the benefit of the community. This is clearly not an outcome FCH seeks, nor one it thinks is likely, but this possible course of action should give investors some security that in the event of the enterprise being unsuccessful, they will recover some or all of their investment.

## Appendix 8: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### About the Project

#### Q1: What is FCH trying to do?

**A:** FCH's vision is to restore the historic Freeland Methodist Church and bring it back into community use as *The Chapel*, a community asset. In the short term, FCH will aim to create a daytime café and flexible community space, with the potential to expand into a shop or other services based on local demand in time. The building will remain in community ownership.

#### Q2: Who is leading this project?

**A:** The project is led by Freeland Community Hub Community Benefit Society (FCH-CBS), a not-for-profit, community-led organisation formed to acquire, restore, and repurpose the Freeland Methodist Church for the benefit of the local community.

#### Q3: Does FCH have the skills and experience to run this project?

**A:** There are over 100 community pubs/cafés around the country. The FCH Board has a lot of relevant experience and it is being advised by specialists, including existing hospitality business owners. It is also being supported through advice and financial support by sector specialists including Plunkett UK, Shaw & Co (Solicitor), David Cadwallader (Accountants) < Studi 13 (Architects).

### Why This Matters

#### Q4: Why does this matter to the community?

**A:** There is strong community support to retain the building for communal use rather than see it lost to private residential development (which has already been refused twice, the second time under appeal). Survey responses indicate 75% of residents support a café/shop model, and 65% support a café/community space. The building has deep historic significance and is the oldest Methodist chapel in the Witney circuit.

### Purchase & Completion

#### Q5: What happens if the purchase cannot be completed?

**A:** The project depends on agreeing a legal contract for the purchase. This risk is considered low, but if agreement cannot be reached, the purchase would not proceed and the project would stop at that point. No renovation work would begin until the purchase is completed. Monies raised would be returned after unavoidable costs, in line with the terms of the share offer.

### Fundraising, Shares & Grants

#### Q6: How will the building be funded?

**A:** FCH is pursuing a combination of community share investments, donations, grant funding, and Parish Council support, though not through raising the parish precept. FCH

has also commissioned building and structural surveys to support credible funding applications. Grant funding is competitive and cannot be guaranteed. If some funding does not come through, the scope of renovation works may be reduced or phased, with essential and safety-critical works prioritised.

**Q7: What happens if you don't raise the funds?**

**A:** FCH will continue to explore phased development, and it is structuring the share offer and grants to be conditional if the project does not proceed. The aim is to proceed responsibly, with clear communication at every stage.

**Q8: Are community shares guaranteed?**

**A:** No. Community shares are risk capital, not savings. People should only invest what they can afford to lose. The society has been carefully planned to manage risk, but returns are not guaranteed.

**Q9: Can investors ask for their money back?**

**A:** Community shares are withdrawable only when the society can afford it and subject to board approval. They are intended as long-term investment in a community asset, not short-term deposits.

**Planning & Listed Building Consent**

**Q10: What if planning permission or Listed Building Consent is refused?**

**A:** The chapel is a listed building, so changes must respect its historic character. If permission or consent is refused for certain works, the project will be adapted. Essential repairs and compliant uses will be prioritised, and non-essential elements delayed or removed.

**Q11: Is there a risk the project won't succeed?**

**A:** Like any community venture, there are risks. However, FCH has taken steps to mitigate these, including:

- Securing the correct planning use
- Completing professional surveys
- Consulting widely with the community
- Engaging early with grant funders and stakeholders
- Preparing a detailed business plan with contingency planning

The project also recognises risks associated with listed building consent, construction costs, and longer-than-expected timescales, all of which are factored into a phased and flexible delivery approach.

## Building Condition & Renovation

### Q12: What if the building needs more work than expected?

**A:** Professional surveys, and input from FCH's Architect, reduces this risk, but unforeseen issues can arise. If additional works are identified, the project will be re-phased and non-essential works delayed until funding allows.

## Tenancy & Use of the Building

### Q13: How will the building be run?

**A:** The proposed operating model includes securing a tenant with hospitality experience to manage the café. The community space will be managed by a volunteer-led committee. FCH also retains the flexibility to adjust this model over time—including volunteer-run options or expansion to other uses. Appropriate building and public liability insurance will be in place to cover community and third-party use.

### Q14: How will the tenant be selected?

**A:** The FCH Board will put together a set of requirements to ensure the tenant is the best fit for the community. Applicants will be interviewed and business plans assessed against FCH criteria, with due diligence undertaken. The Society's members will approve the final selection. A viable option has been identified in the Oxfordshire Yeoman Pub, so that the café complements existing social provision. Failing that, the tenancy must complement rather than conflict with the pub. **If a tenant arrangement does not work in practice, FCH retains the ability to review and change the tenancy.**

### Q15: Will the tenant offer any benefits to members?

**A:** As part of the tenant selection process, FCH will ask what benefits tenants would consider offering to members. These must be balanced against the need for a profitable and sustainable business.

### Q16: Will the building be available for community groups?

**A:** Yes. Community use is a core part of the proposal, subject to safety, licensing, and operational requirements.

## Governance & Legal Structure

### Q17: What is the legal status of FCH?

**A:** FCH is a Community Benefit Society registered with the Financial Conduct Authority. This ensures the building will be held for the long-term benefit of the community and cannot be sold for private profit. FCH has an asset lock, meaning any future sale must be for community benefit, not private gain.

### Q18: Who makes decisions about how the building is run?

**A:** FCH is democratically run. Members elect the board at the AGM, and the board manages the society in line with its rules and community benefit objectives.

## Getting Involved

### Q19: Can local people get involved?

**A:** Absolutely. FCH welcomes involvement of all kinds—from volunteering time or skills to investing in the community share offer and donating. There will be many opportunities to shape and support the project as it develops.

### Q20: What are the long-term goals?

**A:** In the longer term, FCH hopes to:

- Extend the building to enhance usability
- Consider community retail options
- Host arts, music, and wellbeing activities
- Support other local ventures aligned with its mission

**These ambitions will be delivered progressively and remain dependent on community need, funding availability, and operational sustainability.**

Please contact the FCH Board with any queries – we would be delighted to hear from you.  
FCH Chair, Tom Harden is available on 07809 147261 or Board members can be contacted  
via [freelandvillagehub@gmail.com](mailto:freelandvillagehub@gmail.com)

Enquiries can also be submitted via the contact page of FCH's website:  
<https://freelandcbs.community/>

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**Freeland  
Community Hub**

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