



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS And Observers

### Minutes of Board Meeting

22<sup>nd</sup> February 2017

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#### PRESENT:

Gareth Lugar-Mawson (Chair)      David Powell (Director)      Ken Christy (Director)  
George Hook (Director)

#### IN ATTENDANCE:

Elaine O'Leary (Manager)      Linda Hook (Rural Wellbeing Fieldworker)  
Sarah Clarke (Centre Co-ordinator)      James Davidson (Caretaker)  
Dawn Howard (Rural Wellbeing Fieldworker)      Frances Harris (Community Facilities Advisor)  
Rebecca Breakwell (Rural Officer)      Fabienne Fraser-Allen (DDC)

#### 1. APOLOGIES:

Catherine Lomax (DDC & NCALC)

#### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

GH & EOL declared an interest in the Hunsbury Hill Centre Limited.

GH declared an interest in the Rural Wellbeing Project as he is married to Linda Hook, our Rural Wellbeing Fieldworker.

#### 3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING:

##### a) Acceptance of Minutes:

The minutes of the Board Meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2017 were approved as a true and accurate record.

**Approved**

##### b) Matters Arising (not included on the agenda):

**Workplace Pensions;** EOL explained that we are going ahead with the Peoples' Pension, we are due to receive a presentation from them to explain the details of the pension scheme to the staff members in March. The pensions are due to start from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017.

**Good Neighbours;** EOL explained that Mouton's Parish Clerk was unable to present at the AGM, Emma Parry of Daventry District Council presented instead.

**Playground Training Sessions;** FH explained that she is hoping to run at least one more this year.

**Fairfield's School Bookings;** SC explained that the bookings this year have gone well, they are very happy with the service that we provide them with and it is hoped that they will continue using the Low Barn in the next school year.

#### 4. MANAGER'S SIX WEEKLY REPORT

EOL presented report covering the new Rural Officer – Rebecca Breakwell, Defra reporting 2016-2017, an update on projects and prospective projects. A copy of the report is included below;

##### 1. Welcome

I would like to welcome Rebecca Breakwell as our new Rural Officer. Rebecca started in October 2016 and will be responsible for delivering services and support around anything that may impact on the quality of life within a village whether community planning, broadband, transport, local services or affordable housing. Rebecca has an extensive background in planning having run her own limited company specialising in planning and development for the last ten years before moving to Northamptonshire. This is proving very useful as she will be running a number of Neighbourhood Plan workshops this year (chargeable) that will encourage awareness in groups of the benefits of doing an NP and how NACRE can help in this process.

Rebecca is also a qualified solicitor having specialised in wills and probate previously. She is already looking at how she can use her skills as a solicitor by putting together a financial affairs package for older people.

We also have a new volunteer, David Wall who joined us in January. David has a background in philosophy but is currently seeking something different in the voluntary sector. He has busy updating information about our Parish Council members and has been able to add a huge amount of extremely useful data about each parish including whether they are doing a Neighbourhood Plan, what services exist in the village, details of their website and newsletters, key agencies/organisations in the area and what events they have scheduled over the coming year. David has also contributed a number of articles to our e-bulletins and Village Viewpoint magazine.

## 2. New logo for NACRE

Late last year we decided the charity needed a bit of freshening up. Our old logo was very dated and difficult to print out so a new logo was commissioned from Abandoned Art Studio. The new logo is shown here and will now be used on all marketing materials. It will also be used on our new website that is currently being completed. The choice was a unanimous decision and is a definite improvement on our old logo!



## 3. Defra reporting 2016-17

As discussed in a previous report, Defra is funding the ACRE Network of rural community councils for the current financial year. We are required to report to Defra on a quarterly basis, although due to the late agreement about the funding, the first report covered the 6 months from April to September and the second covered the third quarter.

Defra requires ACRE and the individual Rural Community Councils (RCCs) to engage with strategic stakeholders and local partnerships to support community led activity and develop solutions to rural challenges, and there are 8 key programme priorities that we report against:

- Broadband, digital skills and digital inclusion
- Mobile infrastructure and services
- Rural services
- Rural transport
- Community energy
- Affordable housing
- Neighbourhood planning
- Rural community buildings

Both reports have been sent to ACRE who collates the data from all Rural Community Councils and provides an overarching report to Defra. ACRE also uses the information to produce their annual report on 'Making a Difference' about the Network. The six month report is available on request.

EOL was asked to email a copy of the 6 month report to all Board members.

**ACTION EOL**

## 4. ACRE Network Development Plan

Last year it was strongly felt by all the RCCs that we needed an overarching document to define how the ACRE Network and its members should adapt to the changing political landscape in order to meet the challenges affecting rural areas and thrive. It was agreed a **Network Development Plan (NDP)** was required. This Plan would identify the key priorities facing rural areas over the next few years (and therefore each RCC); it would be the blueprint for how the Network would meet these priorities and be sustainable; it would also identify how the Network would achieve transformational change so that we are less dependent on central government funding in future as required by Defra.

The process started in November 2015 with the setting up of a Steering Group, consisting of 8 - 9 RCC Chief Execs and representatives from national ACRE.

### Set up of Network Steering Group:

At the ACRE Network Conference in 2015 the member Rural Community Councils (RCCs) agreed to reaffirm a collective focus on end beneficiaries, namely:-

***'All people living in rural areas of England but especially those who are at risk of isolation and disadvantage and for whom rurality brings an additional challenge and cost to their daily lives.'***

At the conference, delegates authorised the setting up of a Network Steering Group, of which Northants ACRE is one of the 10 members. The Steering Group has a remit to work on behalf of all ACRE members to:

1. advance a series of key strategic activities of importance to the Network;
2. oversee Network-wide change and development;
3. provide ACRE with an effective member based sounding board for its work at a national level;

### Network Concordat:

One of the activities carried out last year by the Steering Group was to develop a Concordat that defines the ACRE Network. This Concordat would clarify what the 38 RCCs and ACRE stand for and could be used in all funding bids, partnerships and publicity. This Concordat was signed by all 38 RCCs and national ACRE at the November 2016 ACRE Network Conference. A copy is available to request.

### Network Development Plan:

As part of the Network—wide change, the Steering Group also began the process of developing a **Network Development Plan (NDP)**. This Plan will set out the objectives and actions the Network i.e. the 38 RCCs, will pursue over the lifetime of the Plan. The Concordat signs up every RCC to being involved in and committed to the Development Plan.

The process for the Plan was endorsed at the 2016 ACRE conference in November and it was agreed the development of the Plan should be driven from within the Network. Consequently a small team of three RCC Chief Execs have been leading this work with the support of ACRE. They have interviewed all RCC Chief Execs and the Chairs of their Boards over January and February, with the information to be fed into a draft NDP that will be reviewed by the Steering Group on 13<sup>th</sup> March. Once the draft NDP has been finalised, it will go to all RCCs for comment. The aim is to sign the Plan off at the Chief Exec conference in May.

### Key priorities identified at conference:

At the November 2016 conference a series of workshops were held to look at what the key drivers for rural areas are likely to be over the next few years. We identified 6 delivery priorities:

1. **Access to essential services** - including Communities taking ownership of physical assets and developing social enterprises to deliver services
2. **Connectivity and use** - includes mobile coverage, telehealth and assisted technology and web wisdom
3. **Replacement for Leader**
4. **Affordable housing** and especially community led housing
5. **Health and social care** – possibly the key priority as it affects so many other areas and a person's health and social wellbeing can be impacted by any of the other 5 priorities.
6. **Traction and influence across public agencies** – with the aim that the Network is seen as an innovative solution/provider to problems and central to policy making around rural consideration.

The NDP will need to ensure it includes how the Network could meet these key priorities in relation to rural areas over the next 1 – 5 years. This is an important piece of work that the Network is carrying out and will be of value for all RCCs and their partners.

## **5. ACRE Business Plan:**

Alongside the Network developing its own Plan, national ACRE is also in the process of developing a Business Plan that will define its role both in relation to the Network / ACRE members and nationally. As part of this work, ACRE has hired a consultancy company to contact each RCC on an individual basis and carry out a telephone interview, with the results feeding into the Business Plan. The interview is

aimed at finding out what the members feel are ACRE's key functions, what its core activities should be, how ACRE will interact with the Network and what its core offerings to Government, statutory bodies and partners should be.

A series of questions have been sent to all RCCs and the interviews are taking place over the next month. The questions have been sent to the trustees and staff for comment.

#### **ACTION TRUSTEES AND STAFF**

ACRE hope to have a draft business Plan in place by the end of March.

### **6. Northamptonshire ACRE AGM**

The 2016 Northamptonshire ACRE AGM was held on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> November at the Hunsbury Hill Centre. We had some excellent speakers covering a range of subjects from insuring a village hall to how to become a Good Neighbour community, all helped along with some great music from acoustic trio Whalebone. The trustees would like to thank all the presenters including:

- William Dallimore, Interim LEADER Project Manager for North and West Northants LEADER speaking about the latest round of LEADER funding for rural businesses
- James Wells, Consultant at Insure Your Village Hall
- Dawn Howard, Northamptonshire ACRE who gave an update on the Rural Wellbeing Service
- Emma Parry, Daventry District Council who spoke about the Good Neighbour schemes the council is setting up with parishes in their District in conjunction with NACRE
- Sarah Ibberson, Whalebone on how they can help village halls to fund raise
- Rebecca Breakwell, Northamptonshire ACRE talking about neighbourhood plans and what's in it for a village.

We would also like to thank Sir John Robinson Bt DL for kindly standing in for our President, David Laing and opening the AGM. All the slides are on our website and can be downloaded here: <http://northantsacre.org.uk/>

### **7. Well for Life Roadshows**

We were approached by First for Wellbeing, the Community Interest Company, set up by Northants County Council, Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (NHFT) and Northamptonshire University, who wanted us to work with them on some Village Wellbeing days in the Daventry District. The idea behind the CIC is to work together with public, private and voluntary sectors to improve and streamline existing services, and to create new and innovative ways to help people live the best life they possibly can. Their website is accessible at: <https://www.firstforwellbeing.co.uk/> for more information.

In conjunction with First for Wellbeing and Daventry District Council, we will be running 4 'Well for Life' Roadshows across the district between April and September. These are free events taking place in village halls for local residents where they can find out how they can improve their health and wellbeing by accessing the many services available to them but which so many rural residents are not aware of. There will be lots of promotional stands and gifts, activities to take part in and refreshments etc. I have attached a poster showing the dates and locations. Please feel free to share with anyone you think may be interested.

EOL explained that the first Roadshow is taking place in Ravensthorpe on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2017 and if these Roadshows are successful then it is hoped that we can roll them out across the County.

### **8. Funding Bids**

EOL stated that she is currently working on the following Bids;

- Financial Matters
- Suicide Awareness Training for farmers and the racing community
- Making Mrs Burman's cottage habitable for community groups to use
- Heritage Lottery Bid to improve the woodlands and hovels for community use
- Woodcraft Folk assistance

GLM asked who carries the insurance risk with the Woodcraft folk using the site.

EOL explained that they are covered by their own insurance.

## 5. HHC EVENTS UPDATE

*See Staff Update - Sarah Clarke.*

## 6. STAFF UPDATE

### 1. Frances Harris – Community Facilities Advisor

Village Hall enquiries are ongoing and include long term help for Bozeat Parish Council and PCC with the conversion of a church hall into a community hall by means of a Charity Commission Albemarle Scheme.

I am also hoping to hold a number of training sessions and workshops over the next year on: harnessing social media (with assistance from Rebecca and Elaine); PAT (Portable Appliance Testing); and playground inspections. These will be aimed mainly at our village hall and parish council members.

The 2017 ACRE training event for village halls advisers is being organised by the East of England region. It will take place in April. With my colleagues in neighbouring RCCs (including Lincolnshire and Derbyshire) I will help to plan the agenda. As there is reduced sponsorship this year, the event will only run for a day and a half and there may be a small charge for attending.

AON funding – none of the RCCs have received funding from AON for 2016/17 as we usually do. There has been a change of staff at high level in AON and no more information is known at moment but Deborah at ACRE is hoping to have more details by May.

GLM asked how much the funding usually is.  
FH stated that last year this was £915.42.

### 2. Rebecca Breakwell – Rural Officer

Neighbourhood Plans – devise and organise NACRE Neighbourhood Plan Day scheduled for Thursday 25th May 2017 in the High Barn. Venue, speakers, workshop topics and booking form organised. Notification of it sent to all Parish Councils and interested attendees are contacting us. These will be chargeable workshops.

RB explained that we have recently sent out the first communication regarding the Neighbourhood Plan Day and we have 12 delegates booked already.

RB explained that she is working closely with Silverstone to show them the benefits of a Neighbourhood Plan for their village.

Updating Community Transport Directory. Updating format, checking details and inserting new contact details and any new schemes.

Working with Daventry District Council to make contact and set up Good Neighbour Schemes. I have revised the ACRE Good Neighbour Toolkit and we have looked at other areas' toolkits to collate good practice ideas and templates. We have a launch of the GN scheme to interested parishes in Daventry on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> March from 2 – 4pm at the Council Offices in Daventry. The first village to set up a scheme is Moulton and they will go live with it at the beginning of April, when their new Community Centre opens.

Devised a short talk/presentation for giving to rural residents thinking about their financial affairs such as Lasting Powers of Attorney, making a Will, raising awareness of financial abuse and frauds such as postal and e-mail scams. We are applying to Santander Foundation Discovery grant to cover the costs.

LH asked RB to work together on this in some way as it is an idea she has had that could coincide with the Rural Wellbeing Service.

RB is working on evidence to support suicide awareness and prevention training to offer to the farming and racing community. There are high suicide rates in this industry that many people are not aware of. Looking at several options for funding including Awards for All.

GH suggested that Weatherbys Bank in Wellingborough may be interested in helping as their customers are mainly related to racing in some way.

FFA suggested that NFU may be able to assist with funding on this.

### **3. Linda Hook & Dawn Howard – Rural Wellbeing Service**

LH mentioned that it has been almost 2 years since the Rural Wellbeing Service began

The RIC diary has been done for March to May apart from finalising parking areas for the RIC. Once complete it will be put onto the NACRE website: <http://northantsacre.org.uk/rural-wellbeing-service/information-bus-timetable/>

KC asked when they will be visiting South Northants.

LH explained that they are due to be in Kislingbury, Bugbrooke, Milton Malsor and Pattishall over the near future.

An IT project proposal is underway to present to Irthlingborough Town Council in March for classes for “Silver Surfers” in the daytime and mixed ability classes in the evening.

Easton on the Hill’s Good Neighbours are hoping to start a new Seniors club shortly.

EOL explained that they have been looking at ideas for the sustainability of the project going forward.

The official Smart Meters promotion that was funded by Smart Energy GB came to an end at the end of December 2016 but we will continue to promote it. NACRE received £1850 as part of our involvement for promoting Smart Meters. It seems Smart Energy GB is interested in partnering with ACRE and the network again for a 2017 promotion. They would like to develop a project that builds on what we archived in 2016 and that targets off mains gas consumers again. One possible option is to work with Village Halls on their energy needs. ACRE is putting together a proposal for Smart Energy GB.

### **4. Sarah Clarke – HHC update**

The wedding fayre in September went extremely well, we had a bit of rain to start with but it soon brightened up. The fayre was busy from approximately 11.45am (it was due to start at 12pm) until around 2.45pm, during this time I was constantly speaking to prospective customers.

There were a lot of new customers that had not been to the venue before, we had 5 on the spot provisional bookings for 2018 and I had 4 emails by Monday morning from people asking for private appointments to discuss their requirements in more detail after seeing the venue for the first time at the wedding fayre. Having spoken to the suppliers afterwards it is clear that our wedding fayres generally are busier than most that they attend in the area.

57 weddings are booked for 2017 plus a number of parties and other social bookings.

KC asked what the capacity is for 2017 weddings.

SC explained that there are several Fridays available throughout the year, a Friday package has been put together for 2017 in order to entice people to book.

At the present time, there are 35 weddings booked for 2018. This is the highest number of booked weddings at this equivalent time of year for the following year that we have had.

New heating has been installed in the High Barn.

The High Barn floor is due to be varnished at the end of February ready for the first wedding on 3<sup>rd</sup> March.

PAT testing has been carried out on all electrical appliances on site and copies of the certificates sent to the insurers.

With regards to insurance, Towergate are preparing their annual quote for 2017/18 but we have also asked another broker to come in and give us a second quote.

EOL explained that we have been speaking with The Last Hurdle regarding our Social Media and we will be signing a 3 month contract (£385.00 plus VAT per month) with them from April 2017 to see if this will help to increase both social and corporate bookings.

SC stated that this would replace the Yell.com advertising.

KC asked that the number of corporate bookings for 2017-2018 be available at the next meeting.

**ACTION SC**

## **5. James Davidson – Maintenance**

James has removed all the copper piping in the High Barn that was used for the old heaters. This is stored in a locked area and will be sold for scrap. The old heaters were in poor condition when they were removed and only applicable for scrap.

He has filled all the gaps where the High Barn ceiling meets the roof with lime mortar, filled all the holes where the copper piping had been inserted, made good any gaps around the skirting boards and stopped draughts around the double doors. It already feels much warmer in the Barn!

James has been redecorating the Low Barn with silk paint for easier cleaning and this is nearly complete. The gloss paint on the skirting board and the toilets need to be finished.

Repainted woodwork/skirting boards in the High Barn.

Replaced all the guttering around the Low Barn as the previous guttering was of such poor quality (put on when the Low Barn was rebuilt) that when it rained it caused the guttering to bend and overflow.

## **6. Olive – our online oil buying system**

Membership to the **Olive** online oil buying system is increasing. The last order deadline was 8<sup>th</sup> February and we are anticipating a profit of approximately £300 due to the high levels of oil ordered this month. Details about the **Olive** system can be accessed at: <https://nacre.myolive.co.uk/registration/register>

The **olive** system can be accessed at <https://nacre.myolive.co.uk/registration/register>.

DP asked whether there are still signal issues with the smart meters.

EOL explained that this is an ongoing problem with villages that have a small amount or no signal. There is an option for villages to come together and install mobile Wi-Fi; this has been done in Tove Valley in the past.

## **7. FUTURE SUPPORT OF THE BEST VILLAGE COMPETITION**

GLM explained that David Scudamore has asked for a meeting with him on Monday of next week with the view of NACRE taking over the administration of the Best Village Competition.

GLM asked if everyone was ok with this.

EOL agreed that it would be good to regain control of the competition giving us more scope to advertise and hopefully increase the village participation.

GLM stated that Hollowell's have funded the competition since Calor lost interest and it appears that they will continue to fund the competition.

## **8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

LH asked how much community consultation there would be as part of the Heritage Lottery Bid.

EOL explained that this would be a large part of the process.

## **FUTURE MEETINGS:**

17th May 2017 (Away Day, 10am)

9<sup>th</sup> August 2017 (10am)

15th November 2017 (10am)