



BOARD OF DIRECTORS And Observers

Minutes of Board Meeting

9th August 2017

PRESENT:

Gareth Lugar-Mawson (Chair) Ken Christy (Director) Cameron Waldron (Director)
David Scudamore (Director) Richard Hollingum (Director)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Elaine O'Leary (Chief Executive) Linda Hook (Rural Wellbeing Fieldworker)
Sarah Clarke (Centre Co-ordinator) James Davidson (Site Caretaker)
Dawn Howard (Rural Wellbeing Fieldworker) Frances Harris (Community Facilities Advisor)
Rufia Ashraf (Rural Wellbeing Administrator)

1. APOLOGIES:

George Hook (Director) Fabienne Fraser-Allen (Director) Bernard Lock (Director)
Catherine Lomax (DDC & NCALC) Hugh Fenton (CVS)
Rebecca Breakwell (Rural Officer)

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

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

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING:

a) Acceptance of Minutes:

The minutes of the Board Meeting held on 17th May 2017 were approved as a true and accurate record.
Proposed by GLM, Seconded by RH.

Approved

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

c)

• **Best Village Competition:**

DS requested a change to the wording of the Best Village Competition section on the minutes from 17th May 2017.

Action SC – completed

• **Well for Life Roadshows:**

EOL explained that the turnout at the last roadshow was not very good, however, it is hoped that the next one in Moulton will be better.

• **Good Neighbour Schemes:**

EOL explained that RB spoke of the Good Neighbour Schemes on the radio last week and there has been a lot of interest in the Schemes since then.

4. CONSIDERATION OF APPOINTMENT OF CAMERON WALDRON AS NEW TRUSTEE TO NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ACRE BOARD:

GLM explained that this would be dealt with in the Board Only meeting.

5. MANAGER'S SIX WEEKLY REPORT

EOL presented report covering Defra reporting 2017-2018, an update on the ACRE Network Development Plan and potential funding bids. A copy of the report is included below, any questions and comments have been added in red;

• **Defra funding and reporting 2017-2018**

As mentioned in a previous management report, Defra is continuing to fund the ACRE Network of rural community councils for the current financial year (2017-18) and for the remainder of Parliament. The amount allocated to each RCC is 93% of what was received last year, which means that in 2017/18 NACRE will receive £47,340, issued quarterly. We have just received the first quarter funding of £11,835.

The agreement between Defra and the network and ACRE is subject to each RCC demonstrating its commitment to continuous improvement, Network performance and a willingness to transform and modernise. Each member has to sign up to that requirement

Defra's 8 work programme priorities that we have to report against are:

- Digital infrastructure
- Digital skills and inclusion
- Rural life opportunities: (childcare, education, health, skills)
- Social infrastructure: ensuring that community assets incorporating social and economic infrastructure, pubs, shops and Post Offices continue to be hubs of rural communities.
- Rural transport
- Renewable energy generation: exploring opportunities for renewable energy generation in rural areas to reduce energy costs and provide a potential source of income.
- Housing and planning.

The first quarter report for April to June 2017 has just been provided to ACRE who collates all the reports for Defra. Copies are available if anyone would like one, please let me know.

DS asked if the subscription had changed.

EOL explained that the way the subscription works has changed, the DEFRA funding is no longer linked to the subscription we pay to ACRE. The RCC's have worked closely with ACRE over the past year or so and a concordat has been signed by all of the RCC's agreeing to work together and pay £4,200 per year. Richard Quallington worked very hard to secure the DEFRA funding. The ACRE business plan will look at how ACRE is funded by the Network, this could be a yearly fee or chargeable services.

EOL stated that DEFRA would like us to be less reliant on the funding we receive from them, the aim is to become self-sustainable.

- **Network Development Plan**

The final draft of the Network Development Plan has been produced by 3 RCC Chief Execs following extensive meetings with RCC Chief Execs and Chairs earlier in the year. The draft plan was discussed at the recent ACRE Network Steering group meeting in July, which I attended. I have attached the minutes from the meeting. Please note these are confidential to the charity and Network.

The NDP was partly developed in response to Defra's request to see the Network undergoing transformational change (which everyone is already doing!) and also because having signed the Concordat last year, all 38 RCCs agreed we need to have a plan to take the Network forward for the future.

The draft plan sets out three transformational change priorities for the Network, identifies how these will be achieved and sets out a series of actions that ACRE would lead on at a national level on behalf of the Network. These national actions for ACRE are:

1. Producing Terms of Reference that clarify and agree ACRE's role as a national charity, the function of its Board and staff, how it would deliver support to the whole Network including standing ready to support individual members if local circumstances suggest this would be beneficial and enable the development of national programmes to benefit all RCCs.
2. ACRE should lead on developing stronger national relationships at government level including a plan to make this happen.
3. ACRE should lead on a post-Brexit related policy, making this a focus for its national relationship role.
4. ACRE could facilitate a discussion on models of collaboration particularly ones that will enable collaboration between the Network and external and government organisations.

5. The Network needs a new quality standard for deliver with rural communities. ACRE can begin the process of exploring funding and accreditation options.
6. Promoting of a brand for the Network. Use and registration of a logo using the words '**The Rural Community Network**' and ACRE to liaise with rural community networks in other parts of the UK over the potential for a UK wide use of the term.
7. ACRE should develop a national relationship management role including considering a quarterly rolling PR cycle to identify themes for communications activity, where members can volunteer case studies and examples.
8. ACRE should pro-actively monitor the Network and broker a mentoring/support service to RCCs.

This draft Network Development Plan is due to go to the national ACRE conference in November for ratification by the members. It was also agreed that a new Network Development Group (NDG) is required to take on ownership of the NDP and its implementation. The Network Steering Group will be phased out and replaced by the NDG, which will consist of elected members from the RCCs. EOL has just finished writing the Terms of Reference for the Network Development Group.

Please note that info on the NDP is still confidential and should not be shared outside of the charity or Network.

DS asked whether we still have a Quality Standard from ACRE. EOL explained that the old one is no longer relevant and ACRE is looking to set up a new one. EOL stated that we should be part of a nationally recognised Quality Standard in order to be able to apply for funding from more sources. We may need to look at a national standard such as ISO 9001 or PQASSO.

Action EOL

- **ACRE Business Plan:**

As mentioned in the previous Board meeting, ACRE has been developing its own business plan to define its role both in relation to the Network / ACRE members and nationally. This work has been carried out by a consultancy company. Sarah Fishbourne, from the consultancy company has produced a summary of the feedback from all the RCCs who were interviewed by phone. A copy was sent to the trustees before the last meeting.

The summary of feedback was reviewed at the CEO event on 25th May and suggestions made for changes/additional content. The aim is for this to feed into ACRE Business Plan, which is due to go to the ACRE Board at the end of July.

We have just paid the first half of the ACRE payment for the six months from April to September 2017.

- **Commsortia**

Commsortia is the consortium of voluntary, community and social enterprises that has come together as a group in order to bid for large scale tenders and grants. This is the information from their website:

Commsortia is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee, set up to facilitate Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) groups coming together to deliver larger and more complex services and contracts. We provide a means to combine the member organisations' expertise, knowledge and experience to deliver high-quality services for local communities

In order to join we had to complete an application form, send details of last year's accounts, three months of bank statements and copies of the following policies:

- Equality and Diversity recently updated by an external HR company
- Environmental Policy
- Children and vulnerable adults protection policy
- Confidential information policy
- Health and safety policy that was recently updated by an external HR company.

One of the main reasons for wanting to join [Commsortia](#) is that they have been awarded the First for Wellbeing [social wellbeing service](#) to deliver. I spoke to the Commsortia project manager about how NACRE could be part of this delivery particularly as they need to ensure they also deliver the service in rural communities, our area of expertise. He recognised that we would be an asset as we are likely to be the only VCSO that is predominantly in the villages.

I am really pleased to say that our application has been accepted and we are now a member of Commsortia. If you check the members page on the website, our logo is on there along with a description of what we do. The next stage is to speak to the project manager again to see how we can bid for part of the funding from the First for Wellbeing fund. They are still allocating the funds.

If any trustee is interested in working with me on a Commsortia bid, I would be delighted to hear from you.

- **Funding Bids**

We have two bids to complete to Awards for All that cover a) Suicide Awareness training (approx £5k) and Financial Affairs (approx. £5k). This project is about encouraging people, especially older ones, to write a will and helping them to understand all the legal ramifications of not doing so.

As mentioned previously the application to Sainsbury's 'Waste Less, Save More' grant for £50k to roll out the Olio app in East Northants and to link it in to other food saving initiatives, was unsuccessful but I am working with the Funding Officer in East Northants who is looking at alternative funders.

At the moment I am working on developing a bid to the Comic Relief Ageing Initiatives fund. The aim of the initiative is for organisations to enable disadvantaged older people to design, deliver and take part in opportunities to contribute to their communities. This provides between £40k - £80k for projects over 3 years but because it is across the UK it will only fund between 15 – 20 projects. I think most of them will be based in urban areas so hopefully our bid will be slightly different being aimed specifically at rural areas. Closing date is 29th August.

Any ideas for the project would be welcome.

- **Marketing**

The new leaflets for the Village Hall Advisory service and Neighbourhood Plans have been produced and will be available at the meeting for trustees to take away and promote. A new NACRE leaflet is going to the printers this week.

There will be a short demo at the meeting of the new NACRE website that has been developed. The final payment has been made and it will now go live. FH, RB, RA and EOL will be responsible for maintaining the NACRE website.

- **Other News:**

We may potentially be working with Moulton College over the coming months on developing the woods, starting with a woodland management plan. They contacted me a few weeks ago to see if I knew of any landowners in the area who had some woodland that they might be willing to let the college use for training purposes. I replied we had 8.5 acres that they might be interested in talking to us about!

Andrew Ritchie, an Arboricultural Lecturer, visited the site recently and was very positive about what they could do (coppicing, outdoor school room, haloing trees to open up the growth underneath etc). He is going to contact the tree officer at Northampton Borough Council (who put the TPO on our woodlands) to try and establish how we can move forward and hopefully get us all working together to restore/ manage the woodland and allow for a more positive environment for the local community to enjoy.

If any trustee is interested in helping with this project let me know.

6. STAFF UPDATE:

Please see a copy of the staff report below, any questions and comments have been added in red.

Frances Harris – Community Facilities Advisor

- Village hall enquiries – ongoing. The last few months have been busy, which is unusual for the time of year.
- Social media workshop held on 15th June. Good attendance (about 15) from village halls and parish councils and extremely positive feedback. Given the encouraging response, Rebecca and I will be holding another one on 4th October, for which we will charge. £45 for non-member and £35 for members.
- PAT training to take place on 19th September aimed at parish councils and village halls. Training to be delivered by Quick Test, a professional PAT training company. We have 6 places booked so far and just need another 2 to ensure the training goes ahead. I continue to market the event. *[EOL – this was a free workshop that used the remaining money in the Community Website fund to pay for Frances and Rebecca's time, publicity and running of the workshop. That funding is now finished; hence future workshops will be chargeable].*
- South Northants Council Funding Fair in June. Rebecca and I attended and dealt with many enquiries. The Chair of Naseby Village Hall was kind enough to endorse Northants ACRE in her keynote speech which launched the Fair and this generated a lot of visits to our stand.

• Situation with AON:

Aon and Allied Westminster have authorised ACRE to issue the following *(in italics)*:

Background

- *Aon has decided to cease its involvement in the Village Hall market in line with changes to its UK strategy;*
- *Aon will not be offering renewal terms to Village Hall clients for any policies that renew on or after 1 October 2017;*
- *These changes have no impact on any existing insurance policy clients have arranged through Aon, as current policies will remain in place until their expiry date;*
- *Aon has made arrangements for Village Halls to be provided with a renewal invitation from Allied Westminster (Insurance Services) Ltd, another insurance broker and a leading provider of village hall insurance;*
- *Allied Westminster is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority;*

Communication with Village Halls

- *Aon will be sending a letter today (28 July 2017) which clients will receive tomorrow, informing them of the changes;*
- *Clients have the opportunity to opt-out of Aon transferring their data to Allied Westminster and should call Aon if they wish to do so;*
- *Allied Westminster will be writing to Village Hall clients to introduce themselves in September / October;*

Aon Commitment

- *Aon is committed to fulfilling its obligations to the RCCs as part of ceasing its involvement in this market.*

Any queries you receive from Village Halls in relation to the letter from Aon should be addressed to the contact identified within that communication.

Rebecca Breakwell – Rural Officer

Two successful Neighbourhood Plan events have been held which I organised – representatives from 17 parishes attended the Neighbourhood Plan day held in May with some parishes sending multiple delegates. Topics covered in May were Why make a Neighbourhood Plan?, Bio Diversity in Neighbourhood Plans presented by our own NACRE Trustee Richard Hollingum, Historic Characterisation in Neighbourhood Plans and Funding and Community Involvement.

RH stated that he attended this workshop and it was very good.

The second event was in July and was in conjunction with Historic England regarding Heritage Impact Appraisals and the historic identity of neighbourhoods. Representatives from sixteen parishes attended and delegates found the information very useful. At both events the opportunity to network is key for NACRE members and non-members because Northamptonshire is such a large county and the opportunities are few. Any events where NACRE can bring representatives from parishes together seems to be greatly beneficial as often it is refreshing to hear that communities are at the same stage of a process and are battling with the same issues.

EOL stated that we have received good feedback from both events.

Further Neighbourhood Plan events are scheduled including 12 October 2017 which will focus on a community developing a comprehensive and wide-ranging evidence base that lies behind the production of a robust Neighbourhood Plan. By trying to give parishes the confidence to initiate a Neighbourhood Plan and showing that NACRE has the right connections to assist with the production of a Plan it is hoped they will trust NACRE to assist them throughout the process but developing the trust and making the connections takes time and effort hence the series of relevant, informative and good quality events.

I recently helped Frances by co-presenting at NACRE's Harnessing Social Media for your Village Hall workshop. There is some very good feedback from delegates that attended the workshop.

I continue to work with villages in developing their Good Neighbour Schemes – we have recently identified two people in Long Buckby who wish to share the Scheme Co-ordinator role and I am working alongside them using the ACRE Good Neighbour Scheme Toolkit to start the scheme and apply for funding. I am working with a further ten villages and supporting the volunteers in the villages who are trying to get Good Neighbour Schemes up and running.

I am involved with meetings that the Partnership Officer at Daventry District Council is currently having as regards a new post of Elderly Persons Support Worker based within the district to identify and help to refer vulnerable people within villages. For NACRE it is hoped that this in some way can assist the work of the Good Neighbour Schemes. Similar to this, I am involved with the proposal to create a Rural Crime Co-ordinator which Northamptonshire Police is leading on.

I am assisting Paulerspury Parish Council with a Community Governance Review that they are subject to by the Boundary Commission and Duddington and Fineshade Parish Council have asked for my help in looking at the possibility of a split within their parish and the consequences of that together with any other options that may be open to them.

EOL explained that Community Governance is becoming increasingly popular and there are charges in place for this along with other new charges listed in the VVPT. EOL also explained that we are currently in talks with the local Councils regarding Housing Needs Surveys.

Linda Hook, Dawn Howard & Rufia Ashraf – Rural Wellbeing Service

As reported in a previous board meeting, the Rural Wellbeing Service has now presented to South Northants Parish Clerks forum (26th May) and the South Northants Health & Wellbeing forum (20th June). Both presentations were well attended and received positive feedback from attendee's.

Linda also met with South Northants Collaborative Care Team in Towcester.

Linda will be attending the Blisworth Canal festival with the RIC on the 12th August – this is also a very well attended event with people coming from all over the county to visit the show, and an opportunity to promote the service to members of the public.

A Good Neighbour Volunteer away day was organised on the 27th July. - We took a minibus of the volunteers, joined by NACRE staff members to Deene Park, in East Northants. We had a guided tour of the house, heard some interesting tales of former occupants and even had a home cooked lunch in the

old kitchen. A fantastic day was had by all and it was a great opportunity to get to know the volunteers more, and the weather even behaved itself!

The Chatterbox club, in Easton on the Hill, is now up and running with monthly meets planned for the upcoming year – Thanks to our good neighbours Linda and Robert. Whilst our two other clubs – the Gentleman's club in Brigstock and the Fettledeane club in Irlingborough, are also still continuing to grow.

The information bus has continued on its round of Northamptonshire, 2 days a week, returning to locations where it was felt that more time was needed to make headway into the village. Pytchley and Bugbrooke for example. The new diary, covering September to the end of November is in the planning stage. Which will be finalised and circulated soon!

Sarah Clarke – HHC update

We have completed 34 weddings successfully so far. We have 27 still to complete this year. Unfortunately, we have a last minute cancellation last month; this was paid for in full.

We have 60 confirmed weddings for 2018 at the moment, the most we have ever had by the end of July for the following year is 54. We also have 11 confirmed bookings for 2019.

We have a wedding fayre booked on Sunday 17th September between 12pm and 3pm. Corporate bookings and enquiries have slowed due to the summer holidays but we expect them to pick up in September.

We have created a new corporate leaflet; I have left some on the table for you to take a look at. If you would like some to take away with you, please let me know and I will arrange this for you today.

New signs for the front entrance have been ordered, please see examples below;



James Davidson – Maintenance

I have been carrying out the regular maintenance tasks: grass cutting, washing down and preparing site for weddings, litter picks, jet washing paths, weeding and deadheading of flowers. I have potted up all the hanging baskets and pots around the site and put plants in the front flower beds and generally prepared the site for the Northampton in Bloom visit that took place last week.

I have also put down bark chippings round roses and paths, painted all wooden outdoor furniture, put sand and cement in between cobbles around High Barn so that they are safer, fixed the draught proofing and ladies toilet dryer in the High Barn and cleared gutters. I do regular maintenance checks of the different areas of the farmhouse and barns as stated in the Maintenance Plan.

I have gone through the structural survey reports to see what items need doing immediately and whether I can do the work. I can do the majority of the immediate items and the list is with Elaine. EOL to send a copy of the report to Board members.

Action EOL

There is the usual setting up for corporate meetings and helping office staff with DIY. I have also taken the board room table apart and fixed it so that it's sturdier. I am just sanding it down at the moment before staining it and varnishing.

Berrywood hospital have started to visit the site with some patients so I have prepared the quad area and allotment section so they can grow their own veg and plants.

7. BEST VILLAGE COMPETITION:

Some Initial Thoughts on Possible Ways Forward – David Scudamore:

- Have had a preliminary discussion with Elaine.
- BVC benefits NACRE through promoting the organization and publicizing it's services, fostering community cohesion & advising villages on good practice.
- It should be noted BVC funding (£4,000 PA) currently secure for foreseeable future & mainly operated by volunteers.
- Starting point is that we are talking of 3 to 4 weeks work per annum.
- Need to progress this matter urgently as Barron has said that he intends to finish as Co-ordinator this year.
- I am looking to reduce my role & step down in maximum of 2 years. I would not wish to take on additional work as a result of Barron's departure.
- There seem to be 3 roles associated with NACRE's operation of BVC :-
 - A) At least one NACRE Board member with a brief to look over BVC on behalf of the Board & link to Hollowells.
 - B) A member of NACRE staff to have day-to-day responsibility for BVC, it's development, promotion, answering difficult questions, radio, the Presentation Evening, chairing BVC Judges meetings etc.
 - C) A reliable person who can take some responsibility, answer questions, guide & recruit judges, prepare press releases, update application forms, update judges guidelines, prepare photos for Presentation Evening etc etc. This role would be better provided by an NACRE member of staff (as in the past) but clearly could be a volunteer and might be able to be combined with Role B.
- In discussions with Elaine it seems there might be potential for a volunteer already with NACRE to carry out some of the more routine work. EOL explained that David Wall, our volunteer, could do some of the routine administration and someone like Rebecca could promote the competition
- We have a Role Description for the Co-ordinator which needs updating depending on how we see this role. Perhaps we need to decide now whether to send the Role Description to the volunteer agencies to test the 'market' bearing in mind Barron's forthcoming departure. - DMS 8th August 2017.

DS thanked staff for their help with the Presentation Evening and for their presentations.

GLM explained that staff time will need to be paid for.

A brief discussion took place regarding the length of forms and detail required to complete the application. DS explained that there will be a review meeting in September/October, there is a possibility of the forms being changed at this time.

KC asked if the forms could be forwarded to him.

Action SC - completed

EOL and DS will arrange a meeting to discuss the logistics of this in more detail.

Action EOL & DS

KC thanked the staff for their hard work on behalf of the Board.

• FUTURE MEETING DATES:

Wednesday 6th December 2017 (**AGM**) – 10am in the Low Barn