



# NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ACRE

Working with rural communities to improve the quality of life for all



The Hunsbury Hill Centre  
Harksome Hill  
Northampton  
NN4 9QX

Charity No. 1080038

Company No. 3937575

# WHO WE ARE

Welcome to Northamptonshire ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England). We are a countywide, independent charitable organisation working with rural communities in Northamptonshire to improve their quality of life, especially for those disadvantaged by their rurality.

## We know Rural Communities

For over 75 years Northamptonshire ACRE has been supporting rural communities in the county, helping to reduce rural isolation and vulnerability, making life more affordable for those living in rural areas, and assisting in the delivery of improved services for their residents. We support these communities across a wide range of topics from community planning to developing sustainable food projects or running a village hall. Our core work is focused on community engagement and development including helping groups to access funds for local projects, and complements the parish council work done by our colleagues at Northants CALC (County Association of Local Councils): <https://www.northantscalc.com/>.

Working with a wide range of partners including Parish Councils, Village Halls, community groups, Local Authorities and other Voluntary Sector organisations, we campaign to ensure that the interests of people living in rural Northamptonshire are taken into account in policymaking and strategic planning affecting the County.

We are one of 38 Rural Community Councils working across England, which together with our national body, ACRE, make up the 39 members of the **ACRE Network**.

As an active member of the Network, we uphold its shared principles and together we work to improve the lives of people in rural England.



# WHO WE ARE...



We operate from premises we own at The Hunsbury Hill Centre, Northampton, a Grade II listed farm complex on 13 acres of woodland, gardens and grounds.

In addition to our charitable operations, we run a subsidiary trading arm, The Hunsbury Hill Centre Ltd, trading as The Barns at Hunsbury Hill, which operates an events business for weddings, corporate and community events. 100% of the profit generated by the business comes back to the charity to help with our work

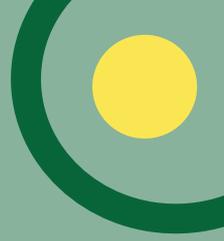
To find out further information about The Barns services, please email [info@hunsburyhillcentre.co.uk](mailto:info@hunsburyhillcentre.co.uk) or call 01604 702444.

## Our Funding

The charity's income is generated from a mixture of funding streams. Through the development of an excellent working relationship with DEFRA, our national body, ACRE, has been able to secure regular funding for all the ACRE Network members. We use this funding to deliver services against DEFRA's 8 national priorities.

Additional income comes from external funders, such as the National Lottery and other grant makers for projects we develop and run, from Government and Unitary Authority contracts, consultancy fees, membership fees and donations. Our income also includes any surplus generated from our trading arm, which is donated to the charity.

**The charity's  
income in 2022-23:  
£399,791**  
used to support our work with  
rural communities



# OUR VISION & AIMS

Northamptonshire ACRE's vision is for all people living or working in rural Northamptonshire to enjoy an environment in which they can lead a healthy and equitable life and not be disadvantaged by their rurality.

## Our Five Year strategic plan has the following aims:

- To deliver the charity's purpose for the public benefit of all rural residents in Northamptonshire
- Support the identification of rural needs and assist communities to develop sustainable solutions.
- Champion green solutions and provide a connection to their wider understanding.
- Encourage and develop a sense of place through community-led engagement.
- Be a valued member of the ACRE network supporting at a national and local level the advocacy of rural matters ensuring rural proofing is embedded in all policies.
- Renovate and develop the historic site of the Hunsbury Hill Farm for the future benefit of all



“We were finding all the new rules so hard to understand before we got help from Northamptonshire ACRE”

# HOW WE HELP

We offer a range of services and support, some examples of which are shown below. Please Note: where we offer a chargeable service there is a discount on the cost if you are a member of Northamptonshire ACRE. Call 01604 765888 or email [acre@northantsacre.org.uk](mailto:acre@northantsacre.org.uk) for more information.



**Community planning:** whether you are thinking of doing a Neighbourhood Plan, Village Design Statement or Parish Plan, we can provide advice, resources and expertise, particularly with supporting the vital community engagement needed for such plans. View our [consultancy costs](#) for the different ways we can support you in any planning you want to carry out. .

**Good Neighbour schemes** are established and run by local volunteers to provide neighbourly support to others who may need help on an occasional or regular basis. So far we have helped over 25 schemes start up and provide ongoing support with policies, templates, regular e-bulletins and meetings. GNS are part of our holistic Rural Wellbeing Service. Contact [claire.yow@northantsacre.org.uk](mailto:claire.yow@northantsacre.org.uk) or [joanna.browning@northantsacre.org.uk](mailto:joanna.browning@northantsacre.org.uk) for more details:



**Green plans:** Many parish councils are very environmentally aware and keen to develop green plans as part of their strategic work for their community. Our Rural Officer has a background in Environmental Land Management and is the perfect person to help you. She can also advise on any biodiversity work in your area including what to plant where - the right plants and trees in the right place! This chargeable service is discounted for members. For more information, please contact Jenni at: [jennifer.hedges@northantsacre.org.uk](mailto:jennifer.hedges@northantsacre.org.uk)

**Resilient Communities training** - our Rural Officer is fully trained as a [Communities Prepared partner](#) to deliver their **free** community resilience programme, giving you the knowledge and confidence to prepare for, respond to, and recover from a range of emergencies. Contact [jennifer.hedges@northantsacre.org.uk](mailto:jennifer.hedges@northantsacre.org.uk) to book training.



# HOW WE HELP...

Sustaining rural life often depends upon the availability of homes people can afford in their community. We champion the need for **affordable housing and community-led housing** and can help with housing need surveys. Contact [acre@northantsacre.org.uk](mailto:acre@northantsacre.org.uk) for more details about how we can support you to deliver more affordable homes.



Are you off-gas? If so, our **bulk oil scheme** is a great way to buy cheaper heating oil. Because we buy heating oil in bulk, we can negotiate a better price for members' orders. Plus we can provide advice and training on making your home or village hall more **energy efficient**. Our Office Manager, [Kerri.marshall-duckett@northantsacre.org.uk](mailto:Kerri.marshall-duckett@northantsacre.org.uk) has more details.

Are you a community group or Parish Council looking to set up a **food-growing project** in your area? Do you want to start a community larder or food box project? We can provide assistance with applying for funding and through the two Sustainable Food Networks (west and north) we are part of, we can link you up with other food growing groups to exchange ideas, resources and knowledge. Email [acre@northantsacre.org.uk](mailto:acre@northantsacre.org.uk)



Community transport providers in Northamptonshire provide a valuable and often essential service to vulnerable people, helping 1000s of people reach doctors and hospital appointments and take them to fetch groceries. Our **Community Transport Directory** is a valuable tool for any parish or village wanting to know which scheme serves their area or how they can go about setting up a new scheme. Contact [acre@northantsacre.org.uk](mailto:acre@northantsacre.org.uk) for a **free** copy of the latest version.

Plus we can help with the following:

- **Rural Wellbeing Service** - alleviating loneliness and isolation
- Digital access and training
- Setting up a community shop/pub or hub
- Friendship visits - with coffee and cake!
- Sustainable energy measures especially for village halls
- Forest schools for families



# BECOME A MEMBER

## Why become a Member of Northamptonshire ACRE?

Becoming a member of Northamptonshire ACRE is an effective and rewarding route to building connections, accessing information and support, and ensuring that rural communities like yours are strong, successful and well-represented. In these uncertain times, it is now more important than ever that the voice of rural communities is heard at all levels of government.

Like our fellow members of the ACRE Network, we support 'rural proofing' as a means of achieving fairer outcomes for everyone in the countryside. No one should be disadvantaged because of where they live. Rural proofing is about making sure that all national and local policies and initiatives are examined closely from a rural perspective to understand their potential impact on these areas. NACRE works with local government bodies and service providers with the aim of rural proofing policy developments and we welcome our members' support in this.

By joining one of our two membership schemes: Parish Council membership and Community Facilities membership, we can help your voice to be heard and you will be sustaining the charity to continue working and rural proofing on your behalf. Together we can ensure that rural communities matter.

Being a member also offers you discounts on many of our chargeable services. The following pages identify the benefits of being a Parish Council or Community Facilities member. If you run a Small or Medium Enterprise we also offer local business membership.

Please Note: If you are not a member of Northamptonshire ACRE we can still help you with any queries you may have, but this would be a chargeable service.

# PARISH COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

As representatives of their community, Parish Councils are in an excellent position to understand the needs and views of the residents they support. And if your Council is a member, we can assist with this work.

As a member of Northamptonshire ACRE, Parish Councils receive:

- 5 hours free telephone & email advice per year
- Discounts on visits from our Rural Team
- Monthly e-bulletins containing the latest funding news and other relevant topics
- Discounts on training and workshops
- Facilitation with the development of community engagement events
- Discounted assistance with business and community plans such as Neighbourhood Plans
- Free access to additional resources and support through our national ACRE Network.

Join us today!  
Find out how to [here](#).

ONLY  
£42 A  
YEAR!

## Parish Councillor Network Meetings

Our popular Councillor network meetings are held regularly throughout the year, bringing Councillors together from all over the county to meet up and share ideas, knowledge and projects. The meetings also allow Councillors to hear from invited speakers on specialist subjects as well as finding out the latest information on topics relevant to rural life. And they are **free to members!**

Contact [acre@northantsacre.org.uk](mailto:acre@northantsacre.org.uk) for the dates of forthcoming meetings.



# COMMUNITY FACILITIES MEMBERSHIP

At Northamptonshire ACRE, we run a great Community Facilities Advisory Service for our members, providing them with quality support and advice to run Northamptonshire's valuable community facilities more effectively. If your organisation manages a community facility - whether a village or church hall, community centre, playing field, park or recreation ground - why not think about becoming a member? You will receive:

- 5 hours free telephone & email advice per year
- FREE electronic copies of National ACRE's invaluable Information Sheets for community buildings
- FREE electronic copies of the bi-monthly Community Facilities Newsletter (with all the latest news affecting community halls and open spaces)
- DISCOUNT on chargeable training on specialist subjects such as trustee roles
- DISCOUNT on the cost of purchasing National ACRE's model legal documents including Model CIO Constitution, Model Trust Deed and Model Hire Agreement
- Regular e-bulletins containing the latest funding news, legal and regulatory changes and other issues of immediate relevance to community facilities
- Access to specialist legal advice from National ACRE's legal advisers



Please contact Frances Harris, our Community Facilities Adviser: [frances.harris@northantsacre.org.uk](mailto:frances.harris@northantsacre.org.uk), or call 01604 765888 for more information about membership.

**ONLY  
£48 A  
YEAR!**

Join us today!  
Find out how to [here](#).

# WHAT PEOPLE SAY



Just wanted to thank you for all the support you have shown us and let you know we have received the Rose of the Shires Award for our community work for which you are one of our wonderful supporters  
HSF community  
larder recipient

“I found the (Parish Councillor network) meeting very useful, thank you”.  
North Northants  
Councillor

“Northamptonshire ACRE provides a superb advice service to village halls and has been essential during Covid in providing advice and guidance. Please continue the good work.”  
NACRE survey 2021

“I am writing on behalf of Wollaston and Bozeat IS KIND to express our deep appreciation for all that you and ACRE have and are doing for our community.

We know from our members that this work and support is hugely appreciated and makes all the difference to people's lives.”



*In praise of our Good Neighbour Scheme, I would like to say how thankful I was to be able to access help when I needed it.  
Whittlebury GNS resident*

## CASE STUDY

A parish council contacted us to explore options for improving village facilities, by creating a community hub. Initially, the plan was to build a new hall on a new site, which would provide sports facilities.

We suggested they form a working group, consult the community and explore options. Based on their findings, the working group decided to build a brand new community hub on the existing village hall site and some adjacent land. We provided guidance on governance and how to structure a new build project involving up to three separate organisations. As the village hall charity will have to embark on major building works, we suggested they consider becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).

The community hub will be owned by the village hall charity and will “host” the community shop. The charity has decided to incorporate and we have provided guidance about becoming a CIO. The project now has planning permission.

# WE KNOW RURAL COMMUNITIES

Many years of working with rural communities have given us a lot of evidence and data about the issues facing rural areas. Some examples of the evidence we collect and use are shown below. They are free to download or to join.

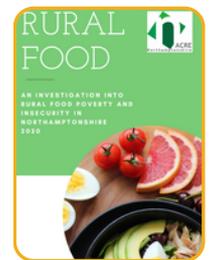
## Northamptonshire Village Survey

Carried out every 10 years our last survey focused on ten key areas helping to build up the picture of rural life in 2021. The aim is to establish local evidence to assist in targeting rural needs. A robust knowledge base is needed to champion rural interests and help policymakers such as Local Authorities and other statutory agencies make provision for rural needs in Northamptonshire today. Find out more [here](#).



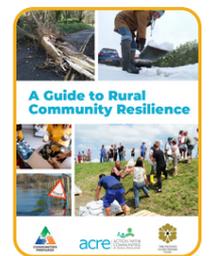
## Rural Food Report

In late 2020 we ran a county-wide survey investigating food insecurity and poverty in rural Northamptonshire. We wanted to establish what the main causes were of rural food poverty in the county and to understand how living in a rural location impacted diet and shopping habits. Results from the survey were collated in this report, and it has been used to support the work we do with our Sustainable Food Partnerships. The report can be download [here](#).



## Guide to Rural Community Resilience

This free guide aims to help communities in rural areas adopt a proactive, rather than reactive, approach to emergencies, in order to be better prepared and help reduce their impact when they do happen. It can be downloaded [here](#) and links in with the free Resilient Communities training we offer.



## Northamptonshire VCSE Assembly

The Assembly is the “collective voice” vehicle that provides the means for VCSE organisations throughout Northamptonshire, to meet and exchange information, ideas, and good practice. NACRE is the chair of the **Rural and Sustainability thematic** and welcomes new members. Contact [info@vcseassembly.org.uk](mailto:info@vcseassembly.org.uk) for more details.

# BECOME A TRUSTEE

- Come and join us at Northamptonshire ACRE and help make a difference to the lives of people in rural Northamptonshire
- Use your passion and knowledge to assist in the management and administration of the charity.
- Enhance your own personal or professional development



Now you have an understanding of our work, why not join us? We are looking for people who have a range of skills: financial, personnel, business knowledge, marketing, and you can be experienced in governance or a first time trustee.

The role is voluntary but reasonable out-of-pocket expenses are reimbursed and relevant ongoing training and support is provided. We hold 4 Board Meetings a year at the Hunsbury Hill Centre.

For more information please contact [acre@northantsacre.org.uk](mailto:acre@northantsacre.org.uk) or tel. 01604 765888



I enjoy being a trustee as it enables me to give something back to this great county

# THE BARNES AT HUNSBURY HILL



The Barns at Hunsbury Hill is the trading name for the Hunsbury Hill Centre Ltd, the trading arm of Northamptonshire ACRE. Our trading arm runs events at the centre such as weddings, corporate and social meetings and wakes. This enables us to bring any surplus funding generated from the trading arm back into the charity and is used to support our work with our members across the county.

We are very lucky to work at the Hunsbury Hill farm site. Our Grade II listed farmhouse and outbuildings are situated on 13 acres of woodlands and gardens overlooking the picturesque rolling countryside of South Northamptonshire. The perfect venue for your event. We can offer a choice of two Barns to suit your needs:

- Our lovely High Barn, which still retains its exposed wooden beams, stonework and wooden floors, can hold up to 90 people theatre style.
- Our smaller Low Barn is the perfect venue for your next company training session, providing room for up to 35 delegates theatre style.
- We also offer a range of food from sandwiches to afternoon tea or even a full 3-course meal!

Whatever the occasion, be it a training event, product launch, annual conference, or team-building day, The Barns at Hunsbury Hill can cater to all your requirements. Email [info@hunsburyhillcentre.co.uk](mailto:info@hunsburyhillcentre.co.uk), tel. 01604 702444 or visit <https://hunsburyhillcentre.co.uk/> for more details.





# CONTACT US



## Northamptonshire ACRE

The Hunsbury Hill Centre  
Harksome Hill  
Northampton  
NN4 9QX

### Contact Us

 01604 765888

 [www.northantsacre.org.uk](http://www.northantsacre.org.uk)

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