

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE ISSUE

Government Minister to launch #VillageHallsWeek in Buckinghamshire

- **Week commencing 22 January declared #VillageHallsWeek by Action with Communities in Rural England**
- **Lord Gardiner of Kimble will launch #VillageHallsWeek by visiting Widmer End, Naphill and Dunsmore Village Halls on Monday 22 January**
- **The visit will be hosted by ACRE Network member Community Impact Bucks**

Lord Gardiner of Kimble, Rural Affairs Minister will launch the first ever #VillageHallsWeek in his home county of Buckinghamshire on Monday 22 January 2018.

ACRE Network member Community Impact Bucks will host the Minister on a visit to 3 village halls in the county. The visit to Widmer End, Naphill and Dunsmore Village Halls will offer Lord Gardiner the opportunity to thank the volunteers involved with these community buildings and encourage others across the country to do similar at their local hall.

Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) and their 38 member organisations are running #VillageHallsWeek to celebrate the diverse network of 10,000 community buildings at the heart of England's rural communities and the volunteers who work tirelessly to keep them open for all.

Lord Gardiner's government department, Defra, provides ACRE with a £700k Rural Community Buildings Loan Fund which ACRE manages, supporting 10,000 village halls with 80,000 volunteers across the country.

Minister for Rural Affairs Lord Gardiner said:

"Whether it is hosting essential services like post offices and doctors' surgeries, or simply creating a social space for local communities, village halls are the beating heart of rural England. That is why I am delighted to kick-start the very first Village Halls Week and celebrate the vital role they play within communities across the country.

"I would like to congratulate all of the volunteers for their tireless work in maintaining and supporting this network and helping our rural areas to prosper."

Nick Phillips, Chief Executive of Community Impact Bucks said:

"As an ACRE Network member, Community Impact Bucks is delighted to be joining with our colleagues across the country to celebrate this first ever #VillageHallsWeek. We have over 120 village halls in Bucks, all run by teams of dedicated volunteers. A thriving village hall is a lifeline to so many in rural communities; hosting everything from social lunches to art classes, yoga to pre-schools. I'm delighted to be able to show Lord Gardiner just some of our local halls and the difference they make to the people who use them."

#VillageHallsWeek (w/c 22 Jan) is an initiative started by ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England), the national voice for the country's largest rural network. Collectively the 38 members of the ACRE Network support 52,000 grassroots organisations in 11,000 rural communities.

/ENDS

Press opportunity:

To access timings for Lord Gardiner's visit and to register your interest in being present at Lord Gardiner's visit please contact Chris Cowcher.

Attachments:

- #VillageHallsWeek briefing paper

Social media accounts:

- #VillageHallsWeek on Twitter via @VillageHalls_Wk
- #VillageHallsWeek on Facebook via @ACRE_National
- #VillageHallsWeek on Instagram via @acrenational

Contact details:

- National #VillageHallsWeek Contact: Chris Cowcher, ACRE Community Manager
c.cowcher@acre.org.uk or 01285 653477

Notes to editors:

- ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England) is the national body for the 38 ACRE Network members. We speak up for rural communities on the national stage and deliver projects that enable our communities to find innovative solutions to the challenges they face
<http://www.acre.org.uk/>