

Company no. 3336101
Charity no. 1061568

**Action with Communities in Rural
England**

Report and Audited Financial Statements

31 March 2024

Action with Communities in Rural England

Reference and administrative details

For the year ended 31 March 2024

Status	The organisation is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 19 March 1997 and registered as a charity on 26 March 1997.	
Governing document	The company was established under a Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its Articles of Association.	
Company number	3336101	
Charity number	1061568	
Registered office and operational address	2 The Quadrangle Banbury Road Woodstock Oxfordshire OX20 1LH	
Honorary officers	James Blake Susan Dovey Gavin Parker	Chair Vice Chair Vice Chair
	A full list of the trustees serving during the year and up to the date of this report can be found on page 18.	
Executive director	Richard Quallington	until 28 May 2024
Chief executive	Corinne Pluchino	from 29 May 2024
Company secretary	Corinne Pluchino	
Bankers	Lloyds plc 14 Castle Street Cirencester Gloucestershire GL7 1QJ	
Solicitors	Stone King LLP 13 Queen Square Bath BA1 2HJ	
Auditors	Godfrey Wilson Limited Chartered accountants and statutory auditors 5th Floor Mariner House 62 Prince Street Bristol BS1 4QD	

Action with Communities in Rural England

Report of the trustees

For the year ended 31 March 2024

The directors present their report and the audited financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Introduction

The reference and administrative information set out on page 1 forms part of this report. The financial statements comply with current statutory requirements, the Memorandum and Articles of Association and the Statement of Recommended Practice - Accounting and Reporting by Charities: SORP applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with FRS 102.

Mission, objectives and activities

ACRE's objects are *to promote any charitable purpose to improve the conditions of life of people and communities in rural areas in England and Wales. More specifically ACRE's mission is to work with its 38 members and other key stakeholders to evidence and address need, to inform and to influence at a national level, speaking up as the voice of rural communities across England. ACRE's beneficiaries are at the heart of all its work specifically; all people living in rural areas of England, but especially those who are at risk of isolation and disadvantage and for whom rurality brings additional challenge and cost to their daily lives.*

ACRE reviews its strategic priorities, aims and objectives on a regular basis as part of the business planning cycle. The current three-year corporate plan 2022-25 comes to an end in March 2025 and a new strategy will be developed during 2024-25 in readiness for the start of the new financial year.

Vision

ACRE's vision is *'Rural Communities that are thriving, inclusive and sustainable and which have the services needed to ensure equity for all residents', and 'rural places that are fully engaged in the UK's future policies and ambitions'.*

This vision is underpinned by behaviours which support the following values:-

- Responsive – responding and listening to the needs of members and beneficiaries;
- Innovative – testing and developing new approaches;
- Collaborative – working with others to achieve results for our members and beneficiaries;
- Empowering – enabling members and rural communities to take action;
- Solution focused – achieving results that make a difference.

Objectives

ACRE's core objective is to promote a healthy, informed, vibrant and sustainable rural community sector that is well equipped to address local need whilst being able also to influence and benefit from policies and initiatives at national, sub-national and local level. Specifically as the 39th member of the ACRE Network, ACRE's main purpose is to:-

- Gather evidence and conduct research to improve the outcomes for rural communities;
- Articulate a voice for rural communities at the national level;
- Influence decisions that impact on rural communities;
- Deliver programmes through our members which directly improve the lives of our end beneficiaries, and which increase the resilience of rural communities.

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As the national body of the ACRE Network, ACRE also supports its member organisations to build their capacity in order to serve and respond to the needs of rural communities.

Our funders and sponsors

The greater extent of our work this year was only made possible with the help and support of our funders and sponsors. We are extremely grateful to the following for their financial support during the year:-

- ACRE members
- Department for the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra)
- Norris and Fisher
- Hallmaster
- Utility Aid
- Stagg Architects and sponsors of the Net Zero Design Guide: Baxi, Herschel, Heatable, Utility Aid, Fakro Selctaglaze and Zolb EV.

Activities

ACRE's day to day activities during the year were focused on seven specific workstreams as further elaborated in the operational plan, namely:-

1. Research and intelligence;
2. Policy, voice and national influencing;
3. Engaging and collaborating with key national partners;
4. National programme development, delivery and service improvement;
5. Developing and strengthening the ACRE Network and supporting its members;
6. Governance and leadership of ACRE and the national network;
7. Management and corporate services.

How our activities deliver public benefit

ACRE's charitable activities are to alleviate rural disadvantage in rural communities throughout England through its activities and achievements, a sample of which are set out below.

Achievements and performance

During **2023-24**, ACRE continued to develop its strategy for advocacy on behalf of its end beneficiaries in three major directions:

- Securing ongoing recognition of the value delivered by the ACRE investment agreement with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) by ensuring effective delivery and by highlighting impact;
- Positioning ACRE members as primary agents of change in rural communities;
- Capitalising on the ACRE Network's reach into rural communities, and its expertise in ensuring rural communities and particularly those most disadvantaged by rurality benefit from national policy initiatives.

The Trustees would like to take this opportunity to thank the ACRE team for their continued commitment, hard work and energy throughout the year which enabled the organisation to achieve so much.

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1. In pursuance of its role in speaking up for rural communities, ACRE continued its engagement in a wide range of national advisory and steering groups aimed at influencing public policy towards either rural or civil society issues including: The Rural Coalition; The Civil Society Group; Defra's Rural Insights Forum; The Rural Housing Network; Post Office Advisory Group; End Fuel Poverty Coalition; and Rural England CIC. In addition, we were pleased to be invited to be part of the Advisory Board that has assisted Government with the allocation of £100m to support voluntary organisations affected by rapid increases in the cost of living.
2. During 2023-24 we took two substantial initiatives to update both the way we go about speaking up for rural communities and also to prepare for rural areas being a focus for policy making both before and after an anticipated General Election:-
 - a) For the first time we can quantitatively report here the work that has been done to raise the rural voice in these consultations as well as recording where we have had both successes and disappointments. During the year we responded to **32 Government consultations** or calls for evidence where we judged there to be a significant potential impact on rural communities. We noted but did not respond to 13 where the importance of the issue was not sufficiently clear. It can sometimes seem that time spent reactively on Government initiatives is hard to justify, however, by tracking what we are doing through our intranet it becomes clear that well evidenced responses tend to lead to follow up from the Department concerned and a consequent increase in influence.
 - b) We carried out a **review of all our 'asks' on behalf of rural communities** and based this on our network's understanding of the pressures and external influences acting on people and communities in rural areas. This was brought together in a document 'No Rural Community Left Behind', published in Spring 2024, which brought together over 30 recommendations for an incoming Government. The document has been shared with a wide range of stakeholders and will continue to shape our conversations with the new government.
 - c) The review has resulted in a new focus on four specific policy areas:
 - i. **Promotion of community-led action.** Opportunities to promote the principle of driving resources and support down to the most local level in rural areas have been few over the past year, and in many cases the argument has to be made 'upstream' of direct policy. However, whenever it has been possible to do so we have pressed the case for this being the best way to engage communities in finding solutions to local requirements. We have responded and given evidence to this end through:
 - The Hewitt review of Integrated Care Boards and Systems, a very important local issue for many of our members who are actively delivering initiatives in this area.
 - Development of policy towards Dormant Assets and Community Wealth Funds.
 - Response to the Domestic Abuse Commissioners annual report and, apparent, limited recognition of rural aspects of this difficult issue.

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- Treatment for VAT of energy saving materials used in community buildings (a major success in the 2024 Budget).
- Potential disadvantaging impact on people in rural areas of a proposed 'digital £'.
- Re-appraisal of the Index of Multiple Deprivation and potential revised guidance to ensure rural impacts of disadvantage are not under-weighted.
- Ensuring a rural civil society input to the voluntary sector's own collective campaigning through NCVO and the wider Civil Society Group.

II. **Improved investment in rural communities, especially housing and infrastructure.**

The ACRE Network is heavily involved at an operational level in both affordable housing and essential community infrastructure such as Village Halls. Our advice and evidence to policy makers in this area therefore draws substantially on this practical knowledge. There have been a good deal of important and complex policy issues arising in this area this year:

- We responded to the extensive and complex consultation on the future of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and linked policies. At all times our focus is on making it more possible for rural communities to add affordable housing that will help protect the future prospects of the community.
- As with the NPPF, the proposed replacement of the Community Infrastructure Levy was a large and complex set of proposals. We took the view that what was proposed could not be introduced towards the end of a Parliament without the risk of major unintended consequences.
- In a flurry of planning related consultations, the Government also consulted on major changes to the planning system under the title 'Plan making reforms'. We responded in a way consistent with our approach to the NPPF.
- We responded to proposed changes to the census and the population/migration statistics drawn from it. Overall, we believed it was not wise for the current generation in the ONS to take the decision to end the Census in its current form.
- We responded to a review of the Broadband Universal Service Obligation, a major issue for many small rural communities.
- Although it also comes under the heading of 'rural proofing', we have consistently pressed the case within the Smarter Regulation initiative that too strong a focus on growth as an overriding objective for regulation can have unintended consequences where the role of regulation is to mitigate potential market failure.

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- III. **Rural proofing.** Inevitably a good deal of the policy work in which ACRE is engaged comes under the heading of 'rural proofing'. In our policy review we have made the case for a much stronger Government sponsored approach – throughout Whitehall and local government – to rural proofing. However, until this comes fully into being, we and other rural organisations are inevitably seeking to fill this gap. Over the last year our partnership with Defra and other members of the Rural Coalition has strengthened this part of the charity's activities.
- Working with NCVO we pressed both Government, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) to broaden the remit of the FCA and CMA to give them a stronger role where rural areas are disadvantaged by the workings of the market.
 - We responded to DHSC's consultation on delivery of secondary health services covered by the Major Conditions Strategy. The trend to consolidate and centralise services continues to work against people living in rural areas.
 - We briefed the Network on the key points of the Autumn Statement and its implications for rural areas.
 - An extension to funding of Early Years childcare places was announced in the 2023 Budget and details consulted over later in the year. This consultation took place during the summer school holidays and we both pressed for an extension and for greater thought to be given to arrangements for childcare in multi-use buildings.
 - Ofcom has carried out several consultations on the mail system, including the Universal Service Obligation (USO), some of which has been carried through into 2024-5. We have sought regulation to be used in order to create a big enough protected postal market to cross-subsidise the USO in rural areas.
 - The FCA has consulted on new arrangements, underpinned by new legislation, to ensure access to cash. Whilst this is important and we have supported their plans, it is only part of the disappearance of access to banking in rural areas and we have continued to lobby on this wherever the opportunity presents itself.
 - One of our most potentially valuable partnership within the voluntary sector is with Citizens Advice. We have commented on their work plan for 2024-5 and sought to assist them in prioritising issues of particular concern to rural communities.
- IV. **A just transition to Net-Zero.** Many of our responses to other rural policy concerns are informed by a forward-looking view that all Government decision should be contributing to helping people who live in rural areas transition to decarbonisation. We see this as an issue for all parts of Government to enable services to be delivered in a less centralised way and this understanding is woven in to our approach to all other policy. The specific opportunities are, therefore, few. We have responded to:

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- Proposals for developing partnerships with local communities for onshore wind and solar electricity generation.
- The Net Zero Review carried out by Chris Skidmore MP for the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero.
- Proposals for changes to energy standing charges and the impact this may have on disadvantaged rural households in the transition to decarbonisation.
- Long term rural input to the Review of Energy Market Arrangements.

ACRE has also engaged in a range of other policy discussions of importance to rural communities. For example, early in the year the Government published a draft Bill in response to concerns that public premises are not adequately prepared for acts of terrorism. This was given the name "Martyn's Law", in honour of one of the victims of the Manchester Arena bombing in 2017. We worked actively with the Home Office, the Home Affairs Select Committee, the Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership, proponents of the Bill and our members with the aim of ensuring any legislation would be proportionate to terrorism risks for Village Halls. By April 2024 the Bill had not been introduced, but all political parties had indicated their support for it in the new Parliament and we are remaining fully engaged as the new Government takes the proposals forward.

We have also been in discussions with the Environment Agency and other partners about how best to support farming and rural communities more widely to build resilience in response to the increasing challenges of climate change, with a particular focus on flooding. We expect this to continue after the General Election as we develop a plan of action and ways of working together.

3. In addition to overseeing the delivery of the **ACRE Network Agreement with Defra** which enables ACRE's 37 members (38 upon the registration of Kent ACRE) to focus practical support on rural communities across rural England, the organisation worked hard to maximise and improve the reporting and performance requirements contained in the current three-year funding agreement with Defra during the second year of its operation. The change from annual agreements to the current three-year agreement enables ACRE members to plan with greater certainty for the support of end beneficiaries and rural communities for this extended period.
4. ACRE continued to improve the **monitoring and evidence** gathering that supports and underpins the ACRE Network Agreement with Defra. With enhanced reporting, the continuing development of a bank of case studies and examples of best practice to evidence impact, ACRE has been able to demonstrate more clearly to Defra the value of the Agreement. Throughout the year, ACRE members have continued to support rural communities in addressing the challenges resulting from the cost-of-living crisis. ACRE has continued to develop closer links with the Defra team to ensure that grassroots intelligence from ACRE Members is used to inform decision making within Defra and other government departments.

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- ACRE administers the **Rural Community Buildings Loan Fund** of £700,000 on behalf of Defra, which provides financial support to village hall management committees to improve facilities for their communities. During 2023-24, 29 loans were live during the year, total capital repaid in the year was £75,392 and within this amount two loans were paid off in full. A total of three loans paid out in the year totalling £70,857. Total value of loans outstanding at year end was £294,751.
5. ACRE's **Village Hall Information and Advice Service** provided support for ACRE members during the year via the online platform, website and online meetings. Support has been offered to new advisers and ACRE members have been encouraged to reinstate regional meetings via Zoom. The agreement with Bates Wells Solicitors has provided legal support for halls at reduced cost. A focus for the year has been to review and revise CIO documentation in line with changes to the Charity Act and experiences of advisers. This is ongoing work. Maintaining relationships with our corporate sponsors, Utility Aid and Norris & Fisher, has been vital for the continuation of our service. Livestream events, video footage and support for Village Halls Week has been achieved as a result. Hallmaster also joined as a sponsor for Village Halls Week 2024. Our work, over the latter part of the year, involved promoting the Platinum Jubilee Village Halls Fund and the organisation of the face-to-face training event for hall advisers. We were delighted with the decision to bring village halls in line with domestic properties and award zero VAT on energy saving materials until March 2027. We had campaigned for this change for some time.
- **The Platinum Jubilee Village Halls Fund** met its targets for the year. Over 1,400 Stage 1 applications were received, 649 of those were invited to Stage 2. Two hundred and thirty-three applications were received and 113 grants totalling £1,689,535 were paid out. In February 2024 a small grants fund was launched and a further £5 million announced in the spring budget but this was subsequently put on hold due to the General Election.
6. During the year ACRE secured the support of **The National Archives** to assess the quality and value of material and records held by and loaned to ACRE collated over the past century, which can inform and give wider context to the current challenges and issues facing rural communities. ACRE is greatly indebted to the Network alumni and other supporters who have spent much time in facilitating this project. The archivists report and recommendations will be finalised during 2024-25. The **Halls for All** project, a publication charting 100 years of professional support for village halls, continues. A publisher has been identified with a publication date anticipated early in 2025.
7. During the year ACRE was commissioned by Defra to deliver a £2.5m package of funding to support a network of independent **Rural Housing Enablers (RHEs)** to work with communities to develop affordable housing schemes. Thirty four ACRE members, 90% of the membership, submitted proposals and are taking part in the programme. ACRE oversees the management and evaluation of the programme and the professional support for the network of RHEs. The advisors will help identify suitable development opportunities in communities, and support site owners and community representatives to navigate the planning system and create developments in rural areas that meet the needs of local people.

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8. Throughout the year **ACRE supported its members** by providing, guidance and advice and one to one strategic support for individual members facing specific challenges. Following the closure of its member in Kent, ACRE has been supporting a strategic review to consider how best to deliver ACRE Network services to communities in Kent in future. The results of this work indicated that there was both a need and a head of steam locally for the establishment of new organisation to focus on supporting rural communities locally with practical services whilst also acting as an advocate on their behalf with the key statutory and other stakeholders operating across the county. A 'founding' board of trustees has been established and discussions are ongoing with the local strategic partners over the details of the business plan and funding for the new entity. Charity Commission registration is being finalised in the late spring and the new organisation will shortly be able to deliver ACRE Network services in Kent.
 - A [second survey of ACRE members](#) was undertaken, documenting their size, reach into rural communities, services offered, as well as their perception of local priorities and corporate risks. We learnt that members levered in approximately £40 million worth of investment into rural communities, provided over 30 different services to approximately 28,000 voluntary and community groups. The most common support being provided to rural community groups was for the smooth running of village halls, followed by health & wellbeing initiatives, community consultation & engagement and fundraising. The survey provides useful intelligence which ACRE is using to improve support and representation of members. It was encouraging to note from the survey that the ACRE Network remains robust, despite the very real financial and operational challenges of recent years.
 - With the now well-established practice of remote working, we further developed the use of the **digital platform Basecamp** to support collaboration across the Network and continued with the regular online monthly meeting of ACRE Member Chief Executives, established to improve communication and to promote mutual support. This year we also introduced twice yearly ACRE Member Chairs meetings, and have set up a Basecamp group to allow for mutual networking and support amongst ACRE Member Chairs and trustees.
9. **Online engagement has improved.** Our mailing list grew by 87% over the course of the year with 1,912 active subscribers at the end of March 2024. During this time, we circulated 13 press releases and six blogs which were opened on average by 58% of subscribers, up from 46% in the preceding 12 months. Our social media following has also increased, most notably on LinkedIn where it has almost doubled. We now have nearly 7,400 followers across all our social accounts. The ACRE website has been continually updated with new content throughout the year and has received about 6,000 visits per month, most of which have been to village halls content.
10. We held our annual ['Village Halls Week'](#) for the seventh year, but this year in March rather than January, in response to feedback from network colleagues. The chosen theme was 'go green', celebrating the things rural community buildings can do to promote environmental custodianship in their communities, from making their building more energy efficient to supporting environmental groups and initiatives locally. ACRE developed new re-usable branding for the campaign, produced a physical and digital campaign pack to help village hall management committees get involved, held a livestream to mark the beginning of the week, posted topical blogs, and shared relevant content from halls on social media.

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- We also published a new [Net Zero Design Guide](#) during the week, detailing how village halls can retrofit their buildings with energy efficiency in mind. The guidance was written for us by Stagg Architects and featured five halls who had already embarked on this journey. £29,500 in sponsorship was secured towards the production of the guidance from companies offering specialist products or services featured in the publication.
 - Over four hundred and thirty halls registered an interest in the campaign, of which 313 said they were planning on holding an open day/ event. It is not possible to say how many local events took place, however we spotted numerous posts from village halls throughout the week which demonstrated that those taking place were well attended. The largest event appears to have been a collaboration between Community Action Isle of Wight and the National Trust, held at Mottistone Manor Gardens, which was reported to have attracted over 600 visitors. In terms of online engagement, approximately 2,500 people visited the campaign homepage nearly 8,000 times since in the first three months of 2023 and posts on Facebook alone reached an estimated 14,500 people. In terms of media engagement, there were local reports published online in Cumbria, Devon, Derbyshire, Northumberland and Yorkshire. There were also BBC radio features in Wiltshire, Yorkshire and in the Tees Valley.
11. In May 2023, we published a public policy [briefing](#) which detailed how the cost-of-living crisis was being felt in the countryside. Drawing on available data, as well as examples from ACRE members, it sought to demonstrate how the pressures related to rising fuel prices, housing costs and limited access to services were having a cumulative and profound impact on lower income households.
12. We developed a comprehensive proposal for **developing the national village halls service** in response to feedback from network colleagues. The proposed plan sets out the additional resource and expertise ACRE needs to secure to research, develop, prototype, test and roll out new digital infrastructure that would improve the geographical consistency and quality of service halls can expect to receive, as well as making the service more financially sustainable.

As this overview highlights, 2023-24 has seen ACRE continue to adapt its delivery to embrace a more online and digital way of operating. Working with the challenges of limited staff capacity, a growing portfolio of activities and increasing demand for ACRE's services continues to test and also confirm the resilience, creativity and flexibility of the highly motivated staff team and specialist associates. They have continued to embrace new ways of working and, despite the challenges, have achieved an extensive range of laudable outcomes.

In common with other organisations ACRE has continued to feel the impact of a tight financial climate coupled with increasing and well documented inflationary and cost of living pressures. This continues to set a challenging and uncertain operating environment in England for infrastructure charities such as ACRE.

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Despite this uncertainty, engagement with Government has continued to grow and the future of the Defra agreement longer-term is looking positive. An in-depth, independent, evaluation commissioned by Defra of the ACRE Network agreement is indicating that the work delivered by ACRE members is highly valued on the ground and that the current delivery mechanism is both efficient and cost effective. The current 'in principle' multiyear Defra funding agreement enables both ACRE and its members to continue to plan both for the future support for rural communities, and the internal transformational change needed to ensure that the services and support available are relevant and sustainable in to the future.

Given this context strong governance and effective succession planning is critical, and the ACRE Board placed increased focus on both of these areas during the year. A review of governance against the Charity Governance Code concluded that governance arrangements were robust, but could be further strengthened by implementing a number of measures that have been brought together in a Governance Action Plan. This is now being implemented.

On succession planning, the Board set up a dedicated sub group which has focused on ensuring a smooth transition in leadership at both Executive and non-Executive level. As part of this, three new Member trustees were recruited, replacing a number of long serving trustees who had come to the end of their terms. We would like to thank them for their dedicated contributions.

The group also oversaw the transition to a new Chief Executive as Richard Quallington, ACRE's Executive Director, stepped down in May 2024 after nine years dedicated service to the organisation and the wider network. Richard worked tirelessly in support of ACRE's mission, always putting the needs, concerns and interests of rural communities at the heart of ACRE's work, and ably led the organisation through the challenges of Covid and the cost of living crisis, building ACRE's reputation with its members, with partners and with Government. The Board would like to thank Richard for his immense contribution to ACRE and the wider ACRE network.

Corinne Pluchino has been appointed as ACRE's new Chief Executive after a rigorous external selection process and joined ACRE in May after a smooth transition. She has over 25 years' experience of campaigning, communications and bringing coalitions together to deliver change and has worked in the private and third sectors, most recently as Chief Executive at Campaign for National Parks and Director of Fundraising, Marketing and Communications at WWT, the charity for wetlands and wildlife. Corinne has worked on many issues impacting rural communities, from healthcare, transport and development to agricultural transition and nature restoration.

Financial review

Basis of preparation

- The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charities.
- Incoming resources are recognised once the charity has entitlement to the resources, it is certain the resources will be received, and the monetary value of the incoming resources can be measured with sufficient reliability.
- Resources expended – liabilities are recognised as resources expended as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to the expenditure. All expenditure is accounted

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for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all costs related to the category.

- Grants payable are payments made to third parties in furtherance of the charitable objectives of the charity.

The directors report a net increase/surplus in total resources of £158,744 (31 March 2023 a net reduction of £391,686). The closing fund balances at the 31 March 2024 were £613,211.

The statement of financial activities (SOFA) shows that the total incoming resources for the year were £4,657,150 compared with £1,988,270 for the previous year.

During the year ACRE received £4,105,784 restricted income and £551,366 unrestricted income. A list of the restricted funds is included in note 18. All incoming resources for the year have been secured specifically to advance the charity's strategic objectives.

Reserves policy

The directors consider that the level of unrestricted reserves should be sufficient to invest in essential capacity during short-term funding shortfalls, allow time for reorganisation in the event of a longer-term downturn in income, protect ongoing work programmes and allow ACRE to meet its legal requirements. The target level for unrestricted reserves is £171,081 which is the equivalent of three months of the charity's general expenditure budget plus an allocation to allow for longer-term liabilities and contingencies and an additional element to support ACRE's research and development objectives and transformational change. Directors confirm that ACRE is in compliance with the agreed reserves policy.

The directors can also designate other unrestricted funds to ensure that ACRE can continue to operate effectively, meeting its anticipated liabilities and the development needs of the wider ACRE Network as it continues to focus on enhancing outcomes for end beneficiaries.

At 31 March 2024, the total reserves were:	£613,211
Restricted funds:	£128,178
Designated funds:	£22,000
General funds:	£463,033

Principal funding sources

The majority of ACRE's funding for 2023-24 came from 'a grant in aid' agreement from Defra: over 95% of which was directly allocated to local organisations to deliver work at a county level. The main other source of income was derived from membership fees paid by the ACRE members. This funding was used to support ACRE's key themes of activity.

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Plans for future periods

Key objectives for 2024-25

ACRE will begin work on its new strategy for 2025-30 which will include a fundamental review of the environment we are working in, including the key economic, social and cultural trends that are impacting rural communities, and set out a clear theory of change and resource plan for the future. A key part of this process will be to engage the ACRE Network and other stakeholders as we develop our thinking to ensure that we include a variety of perspectives and can maximise our impact for our beneficiaries.

ACRE trustees will continue to build on the governance review undertaken during last year by implementing and reviewing the resulting Governance Action Plan. Continuing the emphasis on effective succession planning, The Board will be refreshing its membership using external recruitment over the summer months to fill three vacancies for independent trustees in preparation for the AGM in the autumn. We will be seeking to increase the diversity of our board members in terms of their lived experience and professional expertise.

In the meantime in 2024-25 our existing corporate plan will continue to set the strategic framework for the organisation whilst the annually reviewed operational plan will drive forward its delivery. Our role will continue to be focused on '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'. We anticipate that ACRE's work will continue to concentrate on:-

- Gathering evidence and conducting research to improve outcomes for rural communities;
- Articulating a voice for rural communities at a national level;
- Influencing decisions that impact on rural communities;
- Delivering programmes through our members which directly improve the lives of our beneficiaries, and which increase the resilience of rural communities.

During the year ACRE will continue to assess the impact that government policy and wider economic, social and environmental trends might have on its end beneficiaries in rural communities and how its own role in relation to supporting the work of members might need to evolve and change as a result. This has already included preparing for the General Election and conducting a detailed assessment of all the main party manifestos as well as the new Government's early announcements. We will continue to engage with the new Government and Parliament and support our members to work with their constituency MPs, as well as working with a wide range of partners, to address the needs of rural communities and especially those most disadvantaged by rurality.

ACRE will move to the next stage in a review of the delivery of its national village and community halls service and will bring forward plans for the future resourcing and development of that service. We will conduct a network wide survey to ascertain the challenges and opportunities facing members of the ACRE Network and will also aim to build and enhance the long-established rural housing enabling work undertaken by members and others to increase the supply of affordable homes in communities across rural England.

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Funds held as custodians

Defra investment in the ACRE Network

A further year of investment to enable the ACRE Network to deliver support to rural communities within the key Defra priority themes was secured. The investment in support of rural communities through ACRE members amounted to £1,633,651 during the year. ACRE, as the national umbrella body of The ACRE Network, was the accountable body for these funds.

ANPAC

ACRE has held funds on behalf of the National Parks Residents Association (ANPAC) for use only as designated by them. The Association did not draw down from this fund during 2023-24.

Rural Communities Buildings Loan Fund

ACRE administers the Rural Communities Buildings Loan Fund on behalf of Defra. This fund previously known as the Village Hall Loan Fund has been in existence since the 1930s.

Rural Coalition

ACRE undertakes the secretariat for the Rural Coalition. The funds from the Rural Coalition are carried forward to activity planned for 2024-25 and are included as a conduit funding creditor as detailed in note 19.

Platinum Jubilee Grant Fund

ACRE administers the Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Grant Fund on behalf of Defra.

Structure, governance and management

Organisational structure

Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) is a company limited by guarantee (number 3336101) with a Board of Directors elected at general meetings by its 37 members (38 upon the registration of Kent ACRE), and in accordance with the Articles of Association adopted on 18 June 2014 and amended on 29 November 2016 and 27 November 2018.

Governance

The Board of Directors is responsible for the governance and the management of ACRE. The ACRE Board consists of not less than six but (unless otherwise determined by ordinary resolution) shall not be subject to any maximum. The chair is elected at the AGM by the members. All directors have an induction into the organisation. In line with ACRE's governing documents the board is refreshed on a regular and systematic basis with members serving a maximum of seven years without a break of at least one year.

During the year all directors gave of their time voluntarily and received no benefits from the charity. Any expenses reclaimed from the charity and any instances where directors have received benefit from the charity for specific services, as permitted under clauses 4 (2) and 4 (3), are set out in notes 6 and 21 to the accounts.

Action with Communities in Rural England

Report of the trustees

For the year ended 31 March 2024

Management

The staffing structure at ACRE has focused on retaining capacity to support the operational and leadership requirements of the organisation; a flatter more empowering management structure remains in place as is appropriate for a small staff team. The Chief Executive retains responsibility for operational decisions and for delivering the organisation's strategic objectives and operational plan. There are currently no plans to expand the team appreciably in the foreseeable future although there are issues of succession for some roles in the short to medium term.

Risk management

The directors are committed to a regular review of the major strategic, business and operational risks which ACRE faces, with a view to ensuring that appropriate systems and procedures are in place to minimise these risks. In particular the risk of government reducing or ceasing its funded relationship with the ACRE Network is considered carefully by the ACRE board on a regular basis during the year and mitigating actions including; identifying and exploring alternative sources of funding and developing new partnership arrangements with key stakeholders; the establishment and development of Cirican (the ACRE Network's consultancy arm) have been investigated and continue to be pursued as part of the organisation's ongoing plans. This and other risks to the fulfilment of ACRE's strategic priorities are kept under constant review by the directors via the risk register which is reviewed periodically.

The financial challenges originally occasioned by the pandemic have substantially given way to the current cost of living difficulties, inflationary pressures, and a very tight financial climate. Trustees have kept, and continue to keep, these additional pressures under constant review, especially so in relation to managing the risk to ACRE of staff turnover resulting in loss of capacity and skills to support the organisation and its work. However, the current remuneration policy and ongoing grant funding from Defra and other funders, combined with the current healthy level of unrestricted reserves, provides a reasonable level of confidence and reassurance that any challenges will have a manageable impact on the organisation's performance and longer-term financial position.

Register of interests

All Board members complete an annual declaration of interests in compliance with the Conflict of Interest Policy. This is updated as required during the year. Board members are required to declare any related interest in decisions at the start of all Board meetings, or thereafter if relevant topics arise.

Related parties and connected organisations

ACRE receives membership subscriptions from its members. In addition, ACRE works with members on joint initiatives. During 2023-24 a total of £1,633,651 was committed to members through the Defra/ACRE Investment Programme.

Whilst some of the directors elected are also directors or chief executives of ACRE members, within an ACRE context they have no influence over business transactions between members and ACRE.

Remuneration Policy

ACRE recognises that the delivery of its mission and strategic priorities is largely dependent upon the skills, knowledge and experience of its staff. It is therefore committed to ensuring that the staff are provided with appropriate remuneration to encourage and enhance performance and, in a fair and responsible manner, are rewarded for their contributions to the success of the charity. The salaries of ACRE staff are reviewed on an annual basis in the light of inflationary pressures. Directors consider

Action with Communities in Rural England

Report of the trustees

For the year ended 31 March 2024

this information alongside the affordability for ACRE to inform and adjust salaries and remuneration accordingly.

Where appropriate, ACRE employs freelance contractors to undertake specific activities for the organisation. These include policy and research, programme development, training, marketing and governance support. Directors ensure that whilst the associated remuneration is sufficient to attract individuals with the skills, experience and competencies required, rewards are also benchmarked against sector averages for similar activity and levels of responsibility.

Grant-making policy

ACRE administers grants on behalf of other charitable trusts and government organisations that further the charity's objectives. The grant-making processes are agreed with the funders from the outset. Grants are paid on respective merits and follow transparent and rational processes. ACRE's unrestricted funds are not used for grant-making purposes, unless by resolution by the directors. Arrangements are in place to segregate grant-making decisions ensuring conflicts of interests are avoided in the governance of ACRE.

Fund raising policy

ACRE does not engage in any direct fundraising from members of the public and does not employ fundraisers. However, the directors are aware of the fundraising requirements and the code of fundraising practice and ensure that the charity is compliant with the code in all its fund-raising activities.

ACRE members at 31 March 2024

ACTion with Communities in Cumbria	Cornwall Rural Community Charity
Action Hampshire	Devon Communities Together
Action in rural Sussex	Dorset Community Action
Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity	Durham Community Action
Cambridgeshire ACRE	GRCC Community Action in Gloucestershire
Cheshire Community Action	Humber & Wolds Rural Action
Community Action Isle of Wight	Northamptonshire ACRE
Community Action Norfolk	Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire
Community Action Northumberland	Rural Action Derbyshire
Community Action Suffolk	Rural Community Council of Essex
Community Council for Somerset	Rural Community Council (Leicestershire & Rutland)
Community Development Action Hertfordshire	Community Resource (Shropshire)
Community First in Herefordshire and Worcestershire	Support Staffordshire
Community First Oxfordshire	Surrey Community Action
Community First, Wiltshire	Tees Valley Rural Action
Community First Yorkshire	Warwickshire Rural Community Council
Community Futures, Lancashire	West of England Rural Network
Community Impact Bucks	YMCA Lincolnshire (incorporating Community Lincs)
Connecting Communities in Berkshire	

Action with Communities in Rural England

Report of the trustees

For the year ended 31 March 2024

Statement of Directors' responsibilities

The directors (who are also directors of Action with Communities in Rural England for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the directors' report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the directors are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in operation.

The directors are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

In so far as the directors are aware:

- there is no relevant audit information of which the charitable company's auditors are unaware; and
- the directors have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditors are aware of that information.

The directors are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the charitable company's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

Action with Communities in Rural England

Report of the trustees

For the year ended 31 March 2024

The Directors

Directors, who are also directors under company law, who served during the year and up to the date of this report were as follows:

		Number of Board meetings attended during the year;
Ivan Annibal	Joined February 2017	3/5
Louise Beaton OBE	Joined February 2017	5/5
James Blake	Chair – Elected November 2022	5/5
Charles Coates	Joined November 2017	5/5
Jane Colthup	Joined February 2024	1/1
Elaine Cook	Retired September 2023	1/2
Nigel Curry	Retired November 2023	2/4
Sue Dovey	Joined November 2018 Elected Vice-Chair November 2023	4/5
Dominic Driver	Vice Chair - Retired November 2023	4/4
Garry Jones	Joined November 2023	1/1
Sarah Morland	Joined February 2024	1/1
Gavin Parker	Joined February 2023 Elected Vice Chair November 2023	5/5
Doff Pollard	Retired November 2023	2/4
Janet Thornton MBE	Vice Chair – Retired November 2023	2/4
Jim Webster	Joined November 2018	3/5.

Members of the charitable company guarantee to contribute an amount not exceeding £10 to the assets of the charitable company in the event of winding up. The total number of such guarantees at 31 March 2024 was 38 (2023: 37). The Directors have no beneficial interest in the charitable company.

Action with Communities in Rural England

Report of the trustees

For the year ended 31 March 2024

Auditors

Following a market testing exercise in 2022 Godfrey Wilson Ltd was reappointed as the charitable company's auditors.

The report of the Directors has been prepared in accordance with the special provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies' regime.

Approved by the Directors on 7 October 2024 and signed on their behalf by



James Blake – Chair

Independent auditors' report

To the members of

Action with Communities in Rural England

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Action with Communities in Rural England (the 'charity') for the year ended 31 March 2024 which comprise the statement of financial activities, balance sheet, statement of cash flows and the related notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102: The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion, the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charity's affairs as at 31 March 2024 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charity in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and the provisions available for small entities, in the circumstances set out in note 6 to the financial statements, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

Independent auditors' report

To the members of

Action with Communities in Rural England

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the trustees' report, which includes the directors' report prepared for the purposes of company law, for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the directors' report included within the trustees' report have been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the charity and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the directors' report included within the trustees' report. We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit; or
- the trustees were not entitled to prepare the financial statements in accordance with the small companies regime and take advantage of the small companies' exemptions in preparing the trustees' report and from the requirement to prepare a strategic report.

Responsibilities of the trustees

As explained more fully in the trustees' responsibilities statement set out in the trustees' report, the trustees (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charity or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Independent auditors' report

To the members of

Action with Communities in Rural England

Our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The procedures we carried out and the extent to which they are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud, are detailed below:

(1) We obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory framework that the charity operates in, and assessed the risk of non-compliance with applicable laws and regulations. Throughout the audit, we remained alert to possible indications of non-compliance.

(2) We reviewed the charity's policies and procedures in relation to:

- Identifying, evaluating and complying with laws and regulations, and whether they were aware of any instances of non-compliance;
- Detecting and responding to the risk of fraud, and whether they were aware of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud; and
- Designing and implementing internal controls to mitigate the risk of non-compliance with laws and regulations, including fraud.

(3) We inspected the minutes of trustee meetings.

(4) We enquired about any non-routine communication with regulators and reviewed any reports made to them.

(5) We reviewed the financial statement disclosures and assessed their compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

(6) We performed analytical procedures to identify any unusual or unexpected transactions or balances that may indicate a risk of material fraud or error.

(7) We assessed the risk of fraud through management override of controls and carried out procedures to address this risk. Our procedures included:

- Testing the appropriateness of journal entries;
- Assessing judgements and accounting estimates for potential bias;
- Reviewing related party transactions; and
- Testing transactions that are unusual or outside the normal course of business.

Because of the inherent limitations of an audit, there is a risk that we will not detect all irregularities, including those leading to a material misstatement in the financial statements or non-compliance with regulation. Irregularities that arise due to fraud can be even harder to detect than those that arise from error as they may involve deliberate concealment or collusion.

Independent auditors' report

To the members of

Action with Communities in Rural England

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charity's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charity's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Alison Godfrey

Date: 8 October 2024

Alison Godfrey FCA
(Senior Statutory Auditor)

For and on behalf of:

GODFREY WILSON LIMITED

Chartered accountants and statutory auditors

5th Floor Mariner House

62 Prince Street

Bristol

BS1 4QD

Action with Communities in Rural England

Statement of financial activities (incorporating an income and expenditure account)

For the year ended 31 March 2024

	Note	Restricted £	Unrestricted £	2024 Total £	2023 Total £
Income from:					
Donations and legacies		-	22	22	320
Charitable activities:					
<i>Charitable activities</i>	3	4,105,784	537,949	4,643,733	1,986,466
<i>Services and sales</i>		-	940	940	333
Investments		-	12,455	12,455	1,151
Total income		<u>4,105,784</u>	<u>551,366</u>	<u>4,657,150</u>	<u>1,988,270</u>
Expenditure on:					
Raising funds		-	4,050	4,050	7,722
Charitable activities:					
<i>Charitable activities</i>		3,994,165	498,731	4,492,896	2,370,563
<i>Services and sales</i>		-	1,460	1,460	1,671
Total expenditure	5	<u>3,994,165</u>	<u>504,241</u>	<u>4,498,406</u>	<u>2,379,956</u>
Net income / (expenditure)		111,619	47,125	158,744	(391,686)
Transfers between funds		<u>204</u>	<u>(204)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Net movement in funds	6	111,823	46,921	158,744	(391,686)
Reconciliation of funds:					
Total funds brought forward		<u>16,355</u>	<u>438,112</u>	<u>454,467</u>	<u>846,153</u>
Total funds carried forward		<u><u>128,178</u></u>	<u><u>485,033</u></u>	<u><u>613,211</u></u>	<u><u>454,467</u></u>

All of the above results are derived from continuing activities. There were no other recognised gains or losses other than those stated above. Movements in funds are disclosed in note 18 to the accounts.

Action with Communities in Rural England

Balance sheet

As at 31 March 2024

	Note	£	2024 £	2023 £
Fixed assets				
Tangible assets	9		693	1,290
Mixed motive investments	10		3,000	3,000
			3,693	4,290
Current assets				
Debtors	11	431,833		302,485
Cash at bank and in hand		1,129,195		915,509
		1,561,028		1,217,994
Liabilities				
Creditors: amounts falling due within 1 year	12	(951,510)		(767,817)
Net current assets			609,518	450,177
Net assets	17		613,211	454,467
Funds	18			
Restricted funds			128,178	16,355
Unrestricted funds:				
<i>Designated funds</i>			22,000	17,000
<i>General funds</i>			463,033	421,112
Total charity funds			613,211	454,467

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the special provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies' regime.

Approved by the trustees on 7 October 2024 and signed on their behalf by



James Blake - Chair

Action with Communities in Rural England

Statement of cash flows

For the year ended 31 March 2024

	2024	2023
	£	£
Cash used in operating activities:		
Net movement in funds	158,744	(391,686)
Adjustments for:		
Depreciation charges	597	463
Dividends, interest and rents from investments	(12,455)	(1,151)
Decrease / (increase) in debtors	(133,883)	7,191
Increase / (decrease) in creditors	183,693	(6,191)
Net cash provided by / (used in) operating activities	196,696	(391,374)
Cash flows from investing activities:		
Dividends, interest and rents from investments	12,455	1,151
Purchase of tangible fixed assets	-	(1,386)
Net cash provided by / (used in) investing activities	12,455	(235)
Cash flows from financing activities:		
Cash outflows from Rural Community Buildings Loan Fund loans issued	(70,857)	(70,868)
Cash inflows from Rural Community Buildings Loan Fund loans repaid	75,392	74,623
Net cash provided in financing activities	4,535	3,755
Increase / (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents in the year	213,686	(387,854)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year	915,509	1,303,363
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year	1,129,195	915,509

The charity has not provided an analysis of changes in net debt as it does not have any long term financing arrangements.

Action with Communities in Rural England

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2024

1. Accounting policies

a) General information and basis of preparation

Action with Communities in Rural England is a charitable company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales. The registered office address is 2 The Quadrangle, Banbury Road, Woodstock, Oxfordshire, OX20 1LH.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities in preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019) - (Charities SORP (FRS 102)), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Companies Act 2006.

Action with Communities in Rural England meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy note.

b) Going concern basis of accounting

The accounts have been prepared on the assumption that the charity is able to continue as a going concern, which the trustees consider appropriate having regard to the current level of unrestricted reserves. There are no material uncertainties about the charity's ability to continue as a going concern.

c) Income

Income is recognised when the charity has entitlement to the funds, any performance conditions attached to the item of income have been met, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount can be measured reliably.

Income from the government and other grants, whether 'capital' grants or 'revenue' grants, is recognised when the charity has entitlement to the funds, any performance conditions attached to the grants have been met, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount can be measured reliably and is not deferred.

Income received in advance of provision of services is deferred until criteria for income recognition are met.

d) Donated services and facilities

Donated professional services and donated facilities are recognised as income when the charity has control over the item, any conditions associated with the donated item have been met, the receipt of economic benefit from the use by the charity of the item, is probable and the economic benefit can be measured reliably. In accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102), general volunteer time is not recognised.

On receipt, donated professional services and donated facilities are recognised on the basis of the value of the gift to the charity which is the amount the charity would have been willing to pay to obtain services or facilities of equivalent economic benefit on the open market; a corresponding amount is then recognised in expenditure in the period of receipt.

Action with Communities in Rural England

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2024

e) Interest receivable

Interest on funds held on deposit is included when receivable and the amount can be measured reliably by the charity: this is normally upon notification of the interest paid or payable by the bank.

f) Funds accounting

Unrestricted funds are available to spend on activities that further any of the purposes of the charity. Designated funds are unrestricted funds of the charity which the trustees have decided at their discretion to set aside to use for a specific purpose. Restricted funds are donations which the donor has specified are to be solely used for particular areas of the charity's work or for specific projects being undertaken by the charity.

g) Expenditure and irrecoverable VAT

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to make a payment to a third party, it is probable that settlement will be required and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably.

Irrecoverable VAT is charged as a cost against the activity for which the expenditure was incurred.

h) Allocation of support and governance costs

Support costs are those functions that assist the work of the charity but do not directly undertake charitable activities. Governance costs are the costs associated with the governance arrangements of the charity, including the costs of complying with constitutional and statutory requirements and any costs associated with the strategic management of the charity's activities. These costs have been allocated based on an estimate of staff time attributable to each activity as follows:

	2024	2023
Raising funds	1.0%	2.2%
Charitable activities	83.6%	82.1%
Services and sales	0.3%	0.5%
Governance costs	15.1%	15.2%

i) Tangible fixed assets

Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write down the cost of each asset to its estimated residual value over its expected useful life. The depreciation rates in use are as follows:

Fixtures and fittings	3 years straight line
-----------------------	-----------------------

Items of equipment are capitalised where the purchase price exceeds £500.

j) Mixed motive investments

Mixed motive investments represent the charitable company's partner interest in Cirican LLP, which the trustees consider to have the dual objective of both financial return and furtherance of charitable objects. The investment is carried at fair value through the income and expenditure account. The LLP is an unquoted investment vehicle and a degree of judgement is required in assessing the fair value. At initial recognition the fair value is deemed to be the transaction amount. A review for impairment is carried out annually.

Action with Communities in Rural England

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2024

k) Debtors

Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount due after any trade discount offered. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid net of any trade discounts due.

l) Cash at bank and in hand

Cash at bank and cash in hand includes cash and short term highly liquid investments with a short maturity of three months or less from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

m) Creditors

Creditors and provisions are recognised where the charity has a present obligation resulting from a past event that will probably result in the transfer of funds to a third party and the amount due to settle the obligation can be measured or estimated reliably. Creditors and provisions are normally recognised at their settlement amount after allowing for any trade discounts due.

n) Conduit funding

Conduit funds are monies received for third parties and do not belong to the charity. The incoming funds and outgoing payments are excluded from the Statement of Financial Activities. Any conduit funds in hand at the year end are shown as creditors in the accounts.

o) Financial instruments

The charitable company only has financial assets and financial liabilities of a kind that qualify as basic financial instruments. Basic financial instruments are initially recognised at transaction value and subsequently measured at their settlement value with the exception of bank loans which are subsequently recognised at amortised cost using the effective interest method.

p) Pension costs

The company operates a defined contribution pension scheme for its employees. There are no further liabilities other than that already recognised in the SoFA.

q) Operating leases

Rental charges are charged on a straight line basis over the lease term.

r) Grants payable

Grants which have been authorised and paid are included as expenditure in the SoFA. Grants which have been authorised but not yet paid are accrued in the balance sheet and are included within creditors.

s) Accounting estimates and key judgements

In the application of the charity's accounting policies, the trustees are required to make judgements, estimates and assumptions about the carrying values of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and underlying assumptions are based on historical experience and other factors that are considered to be relevant. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

The estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised if the revision affects only that period, or in the period of the revision and future periods if the revision affects both current and future periods.

Action with Communities in Rural England

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2024

s) Accounting estimates and key judgements (continued)

The key sources of estimation uncertainty that have a significant effect on the amounts recognised in the financial statements are described below:

Mixed motive investments

As described in note 1(j) to the financial statements, mixed motive investments are carried at their fair value. However, the current investment is an unquoted investment vehicle and a degree of judgement is required in assessing its fair value.

2. Prior period comparatives: statement of financial activities

	Restricted	Unrestricted	2023 Total
	£	£	£
Income from:			
Donations and legacies	-	320	320
Charitable activities:			
<i>Charitable activities</i>	1,645,076	341,390	1,986,466
<i>Services and sales</i>	-	333	333
Investments	-	1,151	1,151
Total income	1,645,076	343,194	1,988,270
Expenditure on:			
Raising funds	-	7,722	7,722
Charitable activities:			
<i>Charitable activities</i>	1,998,120	372,443	2,370,563
<i>Services and sales</i>	-	1,671	1,671
Total expenditure	1,998,120	381,836	2,379,956
Net expenditure	(353,044)	(38,642)	(391,686)
Transfers between funds	(1,304)	1,304	-
Net movement in funds	(354,348)	(37,338)	(391,686)

Action with Communities in Rural England

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2024

3. Income from charitable activities

	Restricted £	Unrestricted £	2024 Total £
Defra - ACRE network agreeemnt	1,633,000	79,000	1,712,000
Defra - Platinum Jubilee Village Hall	1,696,356	98,844	1,795,200
Defra - Rural Housing Enabler	767,428	90,803	858,231
Rural communities buildings loan fund	-	20,000	20,000
Tudor Trust	5,000	-	5,000
Coyler-Fergusson	4,000	-	4,000
Village Hall Design Guide on Energy Efficiency	-	29,500	29,500
Utility Aid	-	10,000	10,000
Norris & Fisher	-	10,000	10,000
Conferences	-	15,170	15,170
Hallmaster	-	2,000	2,000
Membership	-	182,632	182,632
Total income from charitable activities	4,105,784	537,949	4,643,733

3. Income from charitable activities

Prior period comparative

	Restricted £	Unrestricted £	2023 Total £
Defra - ACRE network agreeemnt	1,633,000	79,000	1,712,000
Rural communities buildings loan fund	-	20,000	20,000
Big Lottery Digital Infrastructure	8,333	-	8,333
Utility Aid	-	10,000	10,000
Norris & Fisher	-	5,000	5,000
Ansvar	-	5,000	5,000
Conferences	-	10,771	10,771
Tennyson Insurance (Zurich)	-	7,500	7,500
Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Fund (DEFRA)	-	28,274	28,274
Interest from VHIG account	43	-	43
DEFRA Health & Social Care	-	2,500	2,500
Rural Coalition	3,700	-	3,700
Membership	-	173,345	173,345
Total income from charitable activities	1,645,076	341,390	1,986,466

Action with Communities in Rural England

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2024

4. Government grants

The charitable company received government grants during the year, defined as funding from the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA), to fund charitable activities. The total value of these grants is shown below. There were no unfulfilled conditions or contingencies attaching to these grants in the current or prior year.

	2024	2023
	£	£
Defra - ACRE network agreeemnt	1,712,000	1,712,000
Defra - Platinum Jubilee Village Hall	1,795,200	-
Defra - Rural Housing Enabler	858,231	-
National Lottery Community Fund	<u>-</u>	<u>8,333</u>
	<u><u>4,365,431</u></u>	<u><u>1,720,333</u></u>

Action with Communities in Rural England

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2024

5. Total expenditure

Charitable activities

	Raising funds £	Charitable activities £	Services and sales £	Governance costs £	Support costs £	2024 Total £
Staff costs (note 7)	1,816	162,316	475	29,224	75,855	269,686
Direct costs	23	145,677	465	39,536	29,429	215,130
DEFRA grant to ACRE network (note 16)	-	1,633,651	-	-	-	1,633,651
Platinum Jubilee Village Hall grants (note 16)	-	1,689,535	-	-	-	1,689,535
Rural housing enabler grants (note 16)	-	655,789	-	-	-	655,789
Rural Coalition expenditure	-	9,689	-	-	-	9,689
Overheads	227	18,947	-	714	5,038	24,926
Sub-total	2,066	4,315,604	940	69,474	110,322	4,498,406
Allocation of support costs	1,034	92,383	270	16,635	(110,322)	-
Allocation of governance costs	950	84,909	250	(86,109)	-	-
Total expenditure	4,050	4,492,896	1,460	-	-	4,498,406

Action with Communities in Rural England

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2024

5. Total expenditure Prior period comparative	<i>Charitable activities</i>					2023 Total £
	Raising funds £	Charitable activities £	Services and sales £	Governance costs £	Support costs £	
Staff costs (note 7)	3,882	142,668	962	26,410	60,392	234,314
Direct costs	-	95,236	96	18,886	26,144	140,362
DEFRA grant to ACRE network (note 16)	-	1,632,675	-	-	-	1,632,675
Village hall improvement grants (note 16)	-	346,741	-	-	-	346,741
Rural coalition expenditure	-	3,686	-	-	-	3,686
Overheads	428	15,971	4	1,232	4,543	22,178
Sub-total	4,310	2,236,977	1,062	46,528	91,079	2,379,956
Allocation of support costs	2,031	74,812	410	13,826	(91,079)	-
Allocation of governance costs	1,381	58,774	199	(60,354)	-	-
Total expenditure	7,722	2,370,563	1,671	-	-	2,379,956

Action with Communities in Rural England

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2024

6. Net movement in funds

This is stated after charging:

	2024 £	2023 £
Depreciation	597	463
Operating lease payments:		
▪ Property	12,490	12,262
▪ Other	1,215	1,677
Trustees' remuneration	2,700	1,140
Trustees' expenses	7,500	5,133
Auditors' / Independent examiner's remuneration:		
▪ Statutory audit (excluding VAT)	<u>6,700</u>	<u>4,950</u>

In common with other charities of our size and nature we use our auditors to assist with the preparation of the financial statements.

Trustees' expenses represents the payment or reimbursement of travel and subsistence costs totalling £7,500 (2023: £5,133) incurred by 13 (2023: 12) trustees relating to attendance at meetings of the trustees.

Trustees' remuneration is detailed in note 21 to the accounts.

7. Staff costs and numbers

Staff costs were as follows:

	2024 £	2023 £
Salaries and wages	123,080	112,408
Social security costs	12,800	12,360
Pension costs	9,109	8,318
Freelance staff	<u>124,697</u>	<u>101,228</u>
	<u>269,686</u>	<u>234,314</u>

No employee earned more than £60,000 during the year.

Total employee benefits including pension contributions and freelance staff costs paid to key management personnel during the year totalled £101,987 (2023: £85,251).

	2024 No.	2023 No.
Average head count:	<u>3.3</u>	<u>3.0</u>

8. Taxation

The charity is exempt from corporation tax as all its income is charitable and is applied for charitable purposes.

Action with Communities in Rural England

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2024

9. Tangible fixed assets

	Computer equipment £
Cost	
At 1 April 2023	6,220
Additions in year	-
Disposals	-
	<hr/>
At 31 March 2024	6,220
Depreciation	
At 1 April 2023	4,930
Charge for the year	597
On disposals	-
	<hr/>
At 31 March 2024	5,527
Net book value	
At 31 March 2024	693
	<hr/> <hr/>
At 31 March 2023	1,290
	<hr/> <hr/>

10. Mixed motive investments

	2024 £	2023 £
Investment in Cirican LLP	3,000	3,000
	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>

During 2020, ACRE made an investment of £3,000 into Cirican LLP. The objective of Cirican is to enable ACRE and those members who are involved in Cirican to tender for larger national research contracts that play to the members' skills and experience, for both financial return and furtherance of charitable purposes.

Action with Communities in Rural England

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2024

11. Debtors

	2024 £	2023 £
Trade debtors	12,596	-
Loans to rural community buildings under loan scheme (note 14)	294,751	299,295
Prepayments	2,339	1,760
Accrued income	97,192	-
VAT debtor	2,863	-
Other debtors	22,092	1,430
	<u>431,833</u>	<u>302,485</u>

Amounts due after more than one year included in:

Loans to rural community buildings under loan scheme	<u>189,543</u>	<u>231,638</u>
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12. Creditors: amounts due within 1 year

	2024 £	2023 £
Rural community buildings loan fund (note 14)	700,000	700,000
Trade creditors	36,984	34,354
Taxation and social security	6,066	5,201
Other creditors	6,433	562
Accruals	16,958	12,550
Conduit funding (note 19)	5,740	-
Deferred income (note 15)	12,192	15,150
Grant commitments (note 13)	167,137	-
	<u>951,510</u>	<u>767,817</u>

13. Grant commitments

	2024 £	2023 £
Grant commitments at 1 April	-	42,980
Grant commitments made (note 16)	3,978,975	1,979,416
Grants disbursed	3,811,838	(2,022,396)
	<u>167,137</u>	<u>-</u>

Action with Communities in Rural England

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2024

14. Rural community buildings loan fund

Rural community building loan fund administered by ACRE on behalf of DEFRA:

	2024 £	2023 £
Funds advanced by DEFRA at 1 April 2023 (note 12)	<u>700,000</u>	<u>700,000</u>
Loans to rural community buildings:		
Outstanding at 1 April	299,295	303,050
Loaned during the year	70,857	70,869
Repaid during the year	<u>(75,401)</u>	<u>(74,624)</u>
Outstanding loans at 31 March (note 11)	<u>294,751</u>	<u>299,295</u>
Bank deposit on hand at 31 March 2024 less interest payable to DEFRA	<u>405,249</u>	<u>400,705</u>

15. Deferred income

	2024 £	2023 £
At 1 April 2023	15,150	2,500
Deferred during the year	12,192	(2,500)
Released during the year	<u>(15,150)</u>	<u>15,150</u>
At 31 March 2024	<u>12,192</u>	<u>15,150</u>

Deferred income relates to Village Hall Advisors training event and Corporate Sponsorship income received in advance.

Action with Communities in Rural England

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2024

16. Grants payable

During the year, ACRE made the following grants to institutions:

	2024	2023
	£	£
DEFRA grants to ACRE network		
Action Hampshire	44,675	44,675
Action in Rural Sussex	47,395	47,395
Action with Communities in Cumbria	49,265	49,265
Action with Communities in Rural Kent	-	37,148
Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity	35,840	35,840
Cambridgeshire ACRE	44,180	44,180
Cheshire Community Action	39,500	39,500
Connecting Communities in Berkshire	34,840	34,840
Community Action Isle of Wight	33,840	33,840
Community Action Norfolk	50,995	50,995
Community Action Northumberland	42,405	42,405
Community Action Suffolk	45,310	45,310
Community Council for Somerset	44,060	44,060
Community Development Action Hertfordshire	38,065	38,065
Community First in Herefordshire and Worcestershire	43,930	43,930
Community First Oxfordshire	39,640	39,640
Community First, Wiltshire	41,095	41,095
Community First Yorkshire	69,720	69,720
Community Futures, Lancashire	44,240	44,240
Community Impact Bucks	39,000	39,000
Lincolnshire YMCA Ltd (Community Lincs)	49,030	49,030
Cornwall Rural Community Charity	45,670	45,670
Devon Communities Together	53,145	53,145
Dorset Community Action	41,255	41,255
Durham Community Action	42,585	42,585
GRCC Community Action in Gloucestershire	39,220	39,220
Humber & Wolds Rural Action	41,965	41,965
Northamptonshire ACRE	40,280	40,280
Rural Action Derbyshire	44,200	44,200
Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire	40,580	40,580
Rural Community Council (Leicestershire & Rutland)	41,200	41,200
Rural Community Council of Essex	46,875	46,875
Community Resource (Shropshire)	40,135	40,135
Support Staffordshire	42,405	42,405
Surrey Community Action	38,735	38,735
Tees Valley Rural Action	34,235	34,235
WRCC (Warwickshire Rural Community Council)	37,635	37,635
West of England Rural Network	36,325	36,325
Resource for the continuation of support for Kent rural communities	50,181	12,057
	<u>1,633,651</u>	<u>1,632,675</u>

Action with Communities in Rural England

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2024

16. Grants payable (continued)

	2024	2023
	£	£
Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Grants		
Adastra (Hassocks CA)	10,278	-
Aldenham Memorial Hall, Hertfordshire	8,461	-
Allerthorpe, Humber & Wolds	10,000	-
Amberley with North Stoke Church Hall, Sussex	7,500	-
Ampleforth Village Hall, Yorkshire	8,509	-
Appleton Thorn, Cheshire	8,178	-
Armathwaite, Cumbria	8,949	-
Ashill Village Hall, Somerset	11,226	-
Bedwyn Village Hall, Wiltshire	25,000	-
Billbrook, Suffolk	10,545	-
Bishopstone, Buckinghamshire	22,007	-
Bomere Heath, Shropshire	8,498	-
Bradden Village Hall, Northamptonshire	5,000	-
Bratton Church Institute, Wiltshire	7,500	-
Burton in Lonsdale	19,315	-
Bythorn Village Hall, Cambridgeshire	16,500	-
Cambo Village Hall, Northumberland	10,078	-
Caryford, Somerset	75,000	-
Cassington Village Hall, Oxfordshire	4,722	-
Castle Acre VH, Norfolk	9,000	-
Chittlehamholt Village Hall, Devon	7,804	-
Church Eaton Village Institute, Staffordshire	4,839	-
Copythorne, Hampshire	7,966	-
Cornworthy Village Hall, Devon	10,000	-
Crantock, Cornwall	17,289	-
Danby Village Hall, Yorkshire	9,600	-
Donisthorpe, Leicestershire	75,000	-
Dormansland, Surrey	15,000	-
Dorstone Village Hall, Herefordshire	8,500	-
Duxford VH, Cambridgeshire	15,640	-
Eversley VH, Hampshire	7,500	-
Falfield Village Hall, South Gloucestershire	23,860	-
Ferring, Sussex	9,495	-
Fishburn Youth & Community Centre	25,000	-
Goldhanger Village Hall, Essex	8,400	-
Great Denham, Bedfordshire	11,289	-
Great Finborough, Suffolk	8,000	-
Great Horwood Village Hall, Buckinghamshire	40,349	-
Guarford Village Hall	7,680	-
Haddenham, Buckinghamshire	16,989	-
Hanna's Field Charity, Essex	8,000	-
Hartland Parish Hall, Devon	7,937	-
Hickling Barn, Norfolk	13,668	-
Hinderclay, Suffolk	7,500	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Sub total	653,571	-

Action with Communities in Rural England

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2024

16. Grants payable (continued)

	2024	2023
	£	£
Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Grants (continued)		
Sub total brought forward	653,571	-
Hollym, Humber & Wolds	10,704	-
Holme CC, Yorkshire	23,550	-
Hutton Roof Village Hall, Cumbria	30,632	-
Hyde, Hampshire	19,000	-
Jevington, Sussex	12,441	-
Kilburn, Yorkshire	20,855	-
Lady Alice Memorial Hall, Somerset	19,440	-
Lambeage Village Hall, Cornwall	32,000	-
Lanreath Village Hall, Cornwall	9,921	-
Little Thetford, Cambridgeshire	18,500	-
Litton Village Hall, Somerset	7,610	-
Longworth Village Hall, Oxfordshire	8,541	-
Lord Thurlow Hall, Suffolk	8,163	-
Lover CC, Wiltshire	10,600	-
Lower Withington Village Hall, Cheshire	10,218	-
Lyonshall Village Hall	10,000	-
Maker with Rame, Cornwall	9,192	-
Mariansleigh, Devon	8,283	-
Mawnan Smith Memorial Hall, Cornwall	7,500	-
Medbourne Memorial Hall, Leicestershire	12,000	-
Menheniot Village Hall, Cornwall	39,173	-
Meshaw Village Hall, Devon	26,558	-
Newton Valence, Hampshire	32,000	-
Peak Forest Reading Room, Derbyshire	8,000	-
Quarnford & Healthylee Memorial Hall, Staffordshire	10,374	-
Rifle Hall Trust, Suffolk	15,202	-
Ruishton, Somerset	10,311	-
Sawbridgeworth, Hertfordshire	72,000	-
Seaton Sluice, Northumberland	8,292	-
Sessay Village Hall, Yorkshire	32,265	-
Settle, Yorkshire	18,000	-
Shapwick Village Hall, Somerset	16,000	-
Shedfield Reading Room, Hampshire	12,000	-
Shenstone, Staffordshire	9,213	-
Shillingford & Petton, Devon	15,971	-
Shrivenham Village Hall, Oxfordshire	20,000	-
Snape Village Hall, Yorkshire	7,500	-
St Mabyn Peace Memorial Hall, Cornwall	21,000	-
St. George's Parish Centre, Somerset	8,951	-
St. Newlyn East Mem Hall, Cornwall	15,916	-
St. Paulinus Centre, Kent	7,267	-
Stevington Community Hub, Bedfordshire	19,525	-
Sub total	1,368,239	-

Action with Communities in Rural England

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2024

16. Grants payable (continued)

	2024	2023
	£	£
Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Grants (continued)		
Sub total brought forward	1,368,239	-
Stewkley VH, Buckinghamshire	23,506	-
Sunnyside, Kent	9,123	-
Takeley Silver Jubilee Hall, Essex	20,000	-
Toppin Memorial Hall (John Castlehow), Cumbria	33,600	-
Troon Village Hall, Cornwall	40,500	-
Walton Village Hall, Yorkshire	28,850	-
Weston Sub Edge, Gloucestershire	12,500	-
Whimble Village Hall, Devon	12,824	-
Whitley, Yorkshire	14,120	-
Whixley Village Hall, Yorkshire	23,000	-
Wilshaw Village Hall, Yorkshire	13,407	-
Withersfield, Suffolk	9,451	-
Wootton Village Hall, N.Lincolnshire	3,266	-
Wormingford, Essex	12,776	-
Worminghall, Buckinghamshire	18,000	-
Wretham, Norfolk	23,238	-
Yarlington, Somerset	15,000	-
Yeolmbridge, Cornwall	8,135	-
	<u>1,689,535</u>	<u>-</u>

Action with Communities in Rural England

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2024

16. Grants payable (continued)

	2024	2023
	£	£
Rural Housing Enabler Fund		
ACRE member in:		
Bedfordshire	23,844	-
Berkshire	35,251	-
Buckinghamshire	19,610	-
Cambridgeshire	35,225	-
Cheshire	33,530	-
Cornwall	6,000	-
Cumbria	31,425	-
Derbyshire	6,128	-
Devon	35,670	-
Dorset	26,969	-
Durham	23,994	-
Essex	17,533	-
Gloucestershire	35,598	-
Hampshire	39,046	-
Herefordshire	5,000	-
Hertfordshire	3,457	-
Humber & Wolds	2,687	-
Isle of Wight	25,006	-
Lancashire	17,405	-
Leicestershire	6,015	-
Norfolk	6,580	-
Northamptonshire	16,662	-
Northumberland	25,750	-
Oxfordshire	34,506	-
Shropshire	6,046	-
Somerset	5,216	-
Staffordshire	12,351	-
Suffolk	11,227	-
Surrey	6,498	-
Sussex	35,670	-
Warwickshire	4,358	-
WERN	34,412	-
Yorkshire	27,120	-
	<u>655,789</u>	<u>-</u>

Action with Communities in Rural England

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2024

16. Grants payable (continued)

	2024 £	2023 £
Village hall improvement grants		
Bradworthy Parish Memorial Hall	-	10,670
Brampton Abbots Village Hall	-	16,844
Fritenden Memorial Hall	-	31,699
Huish Champflower Village Hall	-	30,440
Oxhill Village Hall	-	36,670
South Kilworth Village Hall	-	19,976
Teign Valley Community Centre	-	40,700
Welton Parish Memorial Hall	-	16,743
Refunded to Defra	-	142,999
	<u>-</u>	<u>346,741</u>

17. Analysis of net assets between funds

	Restricted funds £	Designated funds £	General funds £	Total funds £
Tangible fixed assets	-	-	693	693
Mixed motive investments	-	3,000	-	3,000
Current assets	316,747	19,000	1,225,281	1,561,028
Current liabilities	<u>(188,569)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(762,941)</u>	<u>(951,510)</u>
Net assets at 31 March 2024	<u>128,178</u>	<u>22,000</u>	<u>463,033</u>	<u>613,211</u>
Prior period comparative	£	£	£	£
Tangible fixed assets	-	-	1,290	1,290
Investments	-	3,000	-	3,000
Current assets	16,355	14,000	1,187,639	1,217,994
Current liabilities	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(767,817)</u>	<u>(767,817)</u>
Net assets at 31 March 2023	<u>16,355</u>	<u>17,000</u>	<u>421,112</u>	<u>454,467</u>

Action with Communities in Rural England

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2024

18. Movements in funds

	At 1 April 2023 £	Income £	Expenditure £	Transfers between funds £	At 31 March 2024 £
Restricted funds					
Tudor Trust	(1,000)	5,000	(2,500)	-	1,500
Big Lottery Safeguarding	3,961	-	-	-	3,961
DEFRA rural communities	447	1,633,000	(1,633,651)	204	-
DEFRA PJVH fund	-	1,696,356	(1,689,536)	-	6,820
DEFRA RHE fund	-	767,428	(655,789)	-	111,639
Coyler Ferguson Kent ACRE	-	4,000	(3,000)	-	1,000
National Parks Residents Association	2,787	-	-	-	2,787
National Village Halls Forum	471	-	-	-	471
Rural Coalition	9,689	-	(9,689)	-	-
Total restricted funds	16,355	4,105,784	(3,994,165)	204	128,178
Unrestricted funds					
<i>Designated funds:</i>					
ACRE Network review	4,000	-	-	-	4,000
ACRE Network members	10,000	-	-	5,000	15,000
LLP Consultancy (Cirican)	3,000	-	-	-	3,000
<i>Total designated funds</i>	<i>17,000</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>5,000</i>	<i>22,000</i>
General funds	421,112	551,366	(504,241)	(5,204)	463,033
Total unrestricted funds	438,112	551,366	(504,241)	(204)	485,033
Total funds	454,467	4,657,150	(4,498,406)	-	613,211

Purposes of restricted funds

Tudor Trust	ACRE received the initial 50% of the year long grant for the purpose of reviewing the purpose of the Village Hall services provided throughout the ACRE Network and identify areas for expansion.
Big Lottery Safeguarding	The National Lottery Community Fund provided funds for a project that will promote good safeguarding practice to village and community halls throughout England. ACRE used the 38 ACRE Network members' contacts and reach into rural communities to signpost and share resources. Advice and examples of best practice have been shared helping hall committees to better understand their responsibilities, put in place proportionate policies and procedures, and have confidence to deal with safeguarding issues as they arise.

Action with Communities in Rural England

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2024

18. Movements in funds (continued)

Purposes of restricted funds (continued)

DEFRA rural communities The investment delivers support to the end beneficiaries of the ACRE Network, ensuring that rural communities have the technical support and advice needed to survive and thrive. The grant is distributed through ACRE to its 38 members, full details are available on the ACRE website.

DEFRA PJVH fund DEFRA Platinum Jubilee Village Hall (PJVH) fund is a grant fund provided by DEFRA to support the modernisation and improvement of rural community buildings.

DEFRA RHE fund DEFRA Rural Housing Enabler (RHE) fund is a £2.5m programme funded by DEFRA creating a new network of Rural Housing Enablers (RHEs). RHEs are specialists who help rural communities consider the need for affordable housing locally.

Coyler Ferguson Kent ACRE Coyler Ferguson grant is a grant provided to support the establishment of Kent ACRE, specifically for legal fees to support the CIO.

National Parks Residents Association ACRE holds funds on behalf of the National Parks Residents Association for use only as designated by the Association.

National Village Halls Forum The National Village Halls Forum closed and a decision was taken to pay funds remaining in the bank account to ACRE for hosting and support work undertaken by the new Village and Community Halls Network.

Rural Coalition ACRE undertakes the secretariat for the Rural Coalition. The funds from the membership were distributed as agreed by members. In the 2023/24 accounts the Rural Coalition funds have been treated as conduit funding (note 19).

Purposes of designated funds

ACRE Network review The ACRE Board designated funds to support the research, review and modernisation of its services.

ACRE Network members The ACRE Board designated funds to support a strategic review of ACRE member services in order to identify the best and most sustainable way of safeguarding such services for end beneficiaries in the future. This has been increased with a transfer from general funds this year.

LLP Consultancy (Cirican) The ACRE Board designated funds to underpin 'Cirican' the ACRE Network Consultancy vehicle, established to capitalise on members' extensive experience and understanding of rural issues, and to generate an income stream to advance ACRE's charitable aim of supporting rural communities.

Action with Communities in Rural England

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2024

18. Movements in funds (continued)

Prior period comparative

	At 1 April 2022 £	Income £	Expenditure £	Transfers between funds £	At 31 March 2023 £
Restricted funds					
Tudor Trust	5,000	-	(6,000)	-	(1,000)
LACE UP (Sport England)	-	-	-	-	-
Big Lottery Safeguarding	3,961	-	-	-	3,961
DEFRA rural communities	122	1,633,000	(1,632,675)	-	447
National Parks Residents Association	2,787	-	-	-	2,787
Village Hall Improvement Grants	348,212	43	(346,741)	(1,514)	-
Big Lottery Digital Infrastructure	475	8,333	(9,018)	210	-
National Village Halls Forum	471	-	-	-	471
Rural Coalition	9,675	3,700	(3,686)	-	9,689
Total restricted funds	370,703	1,645,076	(1,998,120)	(1,304)	16,355
Unrestricted funds					
<i>Designated funds:</i>					
ACRE Network review	4,000	-	-	-	4,000
ACRE Network members	15,000	-	(5,000)	-	10,000
LLP Consultancy (Cirican)	3,000	-	-	-	3,000
<i>Total designated funds</i>	<i>22,000</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>(5,000)</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>17,000</i>
General funds	453,450	343,194	(376,836)	1,304	421,112
Total unrestricted funds	475,450	343,194	(381,836)	1,304	438,112
Total funds	846,153	1,988,270	(2,379,956)	-	454,467

19. Conduit funding

	2024 £	2023 £
Funds held at 1 April	-	-
Amounts received	5,500	-
Adjustment to correct closing balance	240	-
Funds held at 31 March	5,740	-

ACRE receives and disburses funds on behalf of The Rural Coalition. This has previously been presented as a restricted fund. The balance held at the 31 March 2024 is included in other creditors.

Action with Communities in Rural England

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2024

20. Operating lease commitments

The charity had operating leases at the year end with total future minimum lease payments as follows:

	Property		Equipment	
	2024	2023	2024	2023
	£	£	£	£
Amount falling due:				
Within 1 year	6,245	6,245	1,215	1,387
Within 1 - 5 years	-	-	1,519	1,271
	<u>6,245</u>	<u>6,245</u>	<u>2,734</u>	<u>2,658</u>

21. Related party transactions

During the current and prior year, ACRE distributed DEFRA grants to its member organisations. A full list of these is included in note 16.

During the year, Louise Beaton, a charity trustee, received £2,700 for consultancy services and related travel costs were reimbursed (2023: £1,140). Ivan Annibal, a charity trustee, is the managing director of Rose Regeneration, the company completing the quarterly surveys of the DEFRA network grant, the company received £17,000 (2023: £17,000).

Cirican LLP is a commercial research partnership of which ACRE is a member. ACRE invested £3,000 in the partnership in 2021. There were no balances outstanding at year end.