

# Programme Manager

## Rural Housing Enabler Programme

### Recruitment Pack

February 2025



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## Welcome to ACRE



Thank you for your interest in the role of Rural Housing Enabler (RHE) Programme Manager at Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE). It's a time of great opportunities and challenges for rural communities, and I hope you will wish to join our team so we can make a positive and lasting difference together.

Rural areas are often perceived as being idyllic places to live and work, but in reality the picture is much more complex. They are experiencing a period of enormous economic, social and environmental change. Ten million people live in rural areas, but these communities are often poorly understood. They have inequitable access to affordable housing, essential infrastructure, services and employment and public policy often does not take the features of rural areas into account.

The election of a new Government has resulted in a huge range of new policy proposals, not least a renewed commitment to the development of more affordable homes in rural communities across England. This is an exciting opportunity. There is an urgent need to close the gap between local needs and the housing available. For example, did you know that houses in rural areas are less affordable for the bottom 25% of earners than in urban areas? Or that rural homelessness has increased by over 25% since 2021/22?

The Rural Housing Enabler Programme was announced in 2023. Funded by Defra, it seeks to make a positive impact on the lack of affordable homes in rural communities through a network of Rural Housing Enablers based with ACRE members at a county level. Having completed its launch phase, the programme is now preparing for the next stage of activity. The RHE Programme Manager is responsible for overseeing the programme, working with our colleagues across England, and building strategic relationships at a national level that will strengthen delivery on the ground.

I joined ACRE last spring and have been hugely impressed by the team's expertise and culture of mutual support. You will be building on the success and learning from the first 18 months of the RHE Programme. You will have the opportunity to increase its impact further, build new partnerships, and develop communications to promote the programme and its achievements.

I hope you will be inspired to join us and look forward to reading your application.

With best wishes,

*Corinne Pluchino*

Chief Executive

## Programme Manager – RHE Programme: Introduction

**Would you like to make a positive impact for rural communities across England? Can you help us deliver this exciting and much needed programme to assist rural communities secure more affordable housing?**

### About Us

Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) champions thriving, sustainable and inclusive rural communities that have the services they need and the resources to secure equitable outcomes for everyone. We are the only national charity speaking up for everyone in rural areas and work closely with our 38 member organisations who support local communities across England. Together we campaign for change, enable local action, and improve support for people most in need. We work with government and other national partners to explore the issues affecting rural communities and identify solutions so that no one is disadvantaged by where they live.

### About the Role

We are seeking an experienced programme manager to continue the delivery of a programme of Rural Housing Enablers (RHEs) across England. RHEs are professionals attached to members of the ACRE Network who help communities to address their need for affordable housing locally and who broker relationships with planners, landowners, and developers to identify suitable sites for development. The Programme was launched in 2023 and you will build on the work of the last eighteen months, operating predominantly at a national level, and focusing on the overall management and delivery of the programme and on its longer-term development. Reporting to the Chief Executive, you will also manage a part-time Programme Officer and advise and support the wider team and our member bodies.

### About You

You will have a track record of leading and managing a programme involving multiple partners and the skills to support a network of RHEs. You will be confident in working with government officials, other stakeholders and colleagues within the ACRE Network. You will have strong numeracy and literacy skills and experience of providing both financial and narrative performance and monitoring reports. You will be skilled and experienced in partnership working and in facilitating the best performance in others, partners and contractors alike. You will enjoy getting the job done and be used to dealing with multiple priorities at one time as well as spotting new opportunities and in driving change to

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improve programme efficiency and effectiveness. You will have direct experience of living in a rural community or have a strong empathy with our cause.

This role is a great opportunity for an experienced programme manager to make a real impact for rural communities and work with central government on a national programme. You will be joining a small, focused and energetic organisation while being part of a unique national network. If you share our vision and ambition, please get in touch.

### **Working at ACRE**

The ACRE team is largely home based. Most of the team meet once a week in our office in Woodstock, Oxfordshire, and we all get together for a full day's meeting once a month. We offer flexible working, a contributory pension scheme (7.5% employer contribution), life cover (2x salary) and a generous annual leave allowance of up to 30 days a year. We are keen to support professional development and give team members the chance to broaden their skills and experiences.

We are an equal opportunities employer and are committed to achieving the highest standards of diversity, equity and inclusion. We welcome applications from people of all backgrounds, beliefs, traditions and ways of life. Please note you will be asked to provide evidence of your eligibility to work in the UK prior to interview selection.

### **To apply:**

Please submit your CV and a covering letter of two pages maximum, summarising your interest in the role and your experience relative to the person specification, to Sue Kirkman at [s.kirkman@acre.org.uk](mailto:s.kirkman@acre.org.uk)

- **Closing date for applications: 9am on Monday 31 March.**
- **Interviews: In person at ACRE in Woodstock on Friday 11 April.**

Please confirm in your application that you are available on this interview date.

If you would like an informal discussion to learn more about the role, please email Sue Kirkman on [s.kirkman@acre.org.uk](mailto:s.kirkman@acre.org.uk) to arrange a call with Richard Quallington on 10, 12 or 24 March. Thank you.

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## Programme Manager: - Rural Housing Enabler Programme

### Job Description

**Type of role:** Full time (37.5 hours per week) for an initial one-year contract. The contract may be extended if future funding is confirmed. Given the nature of the role the postholder may be required to attend some events outside normal working hours.

**Location:** Home / hybrid working. Our office is in Woodstock, Oxfordshire. We are happy to discuss working arrangements with candidates. Given the nature of the role the postholder is expected to travel to occasional events across England.

**Reporting to:** Chief Executive

**Supervisory responsibilities:** Programme Officer - Rural Housing Enabler Programme

**Salary:** c£41K per annum plus benefits

#### Main purpose of the role:

To be responsible for the central management and delivery of the Defra funded RHE programme which is delivered at local level by 34 participating ACRE member organisations located across England. The role will be responsible for ongoing liaison and regular reporting to Defra and working with ACRE members, RHEs and key national stakeholders to achieve the agreed outcomes and outputs of the programme. The role will lead on marshalling all the programme's resources to greatest effect and on securing the future development and sustainability of the programme.

Reporting to the Chief Executive, the postholder will also work closely with colleagues in the ACRE team, as well as ACRE members, and other stakeholders with an interest in advancing the delivery of affordable rural housing across England.

#### Responsibilities

1. To undertake overall management and delivery of the Defra funded RHE programme, ensuring adherence to the agreement and compliance with the reporting cycle agreed with Defra.
2. To oversee the collection and analysis of all financial, other monitoring data and fraud checks and the authorisation of grant payments.

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3. To manage the RHE Programme budget, including overseeing the allocation of funding to our 34 participating members and providing regular updates for Defra.
  4. To write and disseminate detailed quarterly reports drawing from, analysing and interpreting data, to show the programme's progress against agreed metrics and other material as required.
  5. To be the main point of contact for Defra, ACRE members and other stakeholders in relation to the programme and manage and respond to requests for advice, information, support and guidance in relation to rural affordable housing.
  6. To support and advise ACRE members in the delivery of the programme on the ground, including organising and delivering online and face to face training sessions and attending open days and site visits.
  7. To specify the brief, appoint and manage external suppliers and consultants commissioned to provide specialist support for the programme, including the communications and marketing resource and the training and mentoring programme for RHEs.
  8. To line manage, coach and support the RHE Programme Officer and oversee his/her professional development.
  9. To provide the secretariat for and support the work of the Programme's National Advisory Group.
  10. To represent ACRE and its members in discussions with policy makers, officials and other stakeholders related to the RHE Programme, including the Rural Housing Network.
  11. To lead on activities to support the longer-term development of the RHE programme, such as exploring possible future funding streams at national and local level.
  12. To engage and work in partnership with key stakeholders at a national level that might help to promote and support delivery locally and explore opportunities for speeding up the delivery of affordable rural housing across England.
  13. To lead on the exploration of buying consortia and other initiatives that create financial efficiencies and reduce duplication of effort.
  14. To prepare and implement an exit strategy for the programme should government funding cease to be available for the work beyond April 2026.
  15. To undertake other tasks, as required by the CEO, that are in keeping with the nature of the post.

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## Joining the ACRE Team

ACRE champions vibrant, sustainable, and inclusive rural communities by finding innovative solutions to their unique challenges. We're a small charity with a big impact. We work closely with government, national partners and our network of 38 county-wide members across England to ensure that no-one in rural areas is disadvantaged by where they live. We offer flexible working, a contributory pension scheme, life cover and a generous annual leave allowance of up to 30 days a year. We are keen to support professional development and give team members the chance to broaden their skills and experiences.

## Person Specification

### Knowledge and Experience – essential

1. Extensive experience of programme management of a multi-million-pound programme, ideally at a national level within a central government or public sector context.
2. A track record in delivering programmes with multiple participating bodies across many locations, including, achieving outcomes, monitoring key deliverables and addressing performance issues.
3. Experienced in financial and budgetary management and analysis with multiple partners.
4. Experience of producing detailed written reports drawing from, analysing and interpreting data to summarise the results.
5. Understanding of the rural affordable housing development process and the barriers that impede progress.
6. Experience of stakeholder engagement and in developing new, productive partnerships at a national level.
7. A track record of research, creative thinking and problem solving in a programme delivery context.
8. Knowledge of the national policy agenda and the issues affecting rural communities.
9. Confident in working and influencing at a senior level and managing multiple stakeholders simultaneously.
10. Experience of line management and coaching and helping others to develop professionally.

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11. Experienced in managing external consultants and contractors to deliver high quality work on time and on budget.

### **Knowledge and Experience – desirable**

1. Experience of working specifically in and with rural communities in a facilitative capacity.
2. Experience of working in the not-for-profit sector.
3. Experience of working in a small organisation.
4. Knowledge of housing and/or planning legislation.
5. Understanding of the RHE role in facilitating and bringing forward rural affordable housing schemes.
6. Experience of training and supporting others.

### **Personal qualities**

1. A passion for supporting rural communities and particularly the most disadvantaged.
2. An energetic self-starter who is proactive and self-disciplined.
3. Excellent interpersonal skills and an effective motivator of others.
4. A team player who is collaborative, inclusive and approachable.
5. Well organised, resilient and flexible with the ability to differentiate between competing priorities.
6. Analytical skills with the ability to identify opportunities and risks.
7. Excellent written and presentation skills.
8. Proficient budgetary and financial management skills.
9. Willingness to develop expertise in new areas.
10. Politically astute and an ability to identify and respond to opportunities at pace.