

Annual Review 2018 - 2019





Together, we reach
52,000
 grassroots organisations
 & **11,000**
 rural communities



We have
38
 members

Welcome

Richard Quallington
 Executive Director

Thank you for taking the time to read this Annual Review, which aims to demonstrate the clear link between our 38 county based members working on the ground with rural communities, and our own activity nationally on policy in support of that local delivery.

It is a symbiotic and fundamental relationship linked in common purpose to improve the wellbeing of England's rural communities.

Travelling around the country, I am constantly inspired by the diversity of activity carried out by our members with those communities, a small snapshot of which is included in this Review. Whilst identifying ACRE's role in sharing, supporting and spreading best practice, the Review also highlights our growing commitment to advocate for



those living in rural areas; informing and influencing nationally, often in partnership with others.

It is heartening that Defra, our sponsoring department within Government, continues to recognise the added value provided by the ACRE Network. Defra's investment inspires others, both locally and nationally, to follow suit; enabling us to continue to build on our collective strengths, including our knowledge, understanding and experience of 'what works' in rural communities. This track record and the ACRE Network's ongoing commitment to renewal and modernisation, ensures that it will be well placed to help these communities to adapt to the challenges and opportunities they face.



Rural Health & Care

Everyone should be able to live happily and healthily in the place they call home, but rurality can bring an extra risk of isolation and disadvantage.

A lack of services such as health care, transport or appropriate housing can make rural life impossible for those who are most vulnerable.

ACRE and our members have had a special focus on mental and physical health this year and have worked on projects such as 'LaceUp' with Sport England, aimed at getting communities active. We also held our first 'Loneliness Forum' working with Defra to provide training for professionals and community organisations.

Many of our members run Good Neighbour Schemes, Village Agents, suicide prevention schemes and Men in Sheds. Locally, the ACRE Network has played a huge part in supporting vulnerable members of the community and in helping the NHS and social care services reach out to rural communities.

The Issue

To provide the best possible service on a tight budget the NHS continues to centralise its services; this means that services are concentrated in more populated areas. This limits access for many rural people, especially those who are vulnerable; on low incomes, without transport or with few family and friends to help them. In addition, the extra travel cost of providing social care in rural areas ends up limiting the help people get.



The Impact

People living in rural areas don't receive the same level of NHS or social care support as people in urban areas. Smaller hospitals serving rural areas are often in special measures, can't recruit staff or are facing closure. People receiving packages of social care in rural areas often get less help and little contact because travel time isn't properly accounted for or resourced.

Policy & Asks

We believe a creative approach to rural health and care is needed. The relationships between regional centres, local 'health hubs', general practice and social care must be planned and organised differently in rural areas. The preferred approach to delivering adult social care in rural areas should be through small and social enterprise providers.



Case Study

Miss D was referred to her local Village Agent when a neighbour who took her shopping felt she had memory problems. Miss D would forget what day it was and ask to go shopping daily. She did not have any family support, and her friends were concerned.

The Agent visited and found that Miss D was an independent lady who liked to do things her own way. She did admit having difficulty knowing what day of the week it was and was delighted at the Agent's suggestion of obtaining a special digital clock giving the day of the week, which the Agent had researched online. She chose a radio-controlled one, which never needs adjusting, and ordered it by phone with the Agent's help. When the clock arrived, the Agent visited again and set it up for her.

Miss D also agreed to have a 'Message in a Wallet' containing her personal details in case of emergency. In helping her fill it in, the Agent was able to discuss her next of kin details. It transpired that Miss D has two nieces and the Agent was able to get in touch with them. One niece is now in regular contact and Miss D's friends feel better knowing that there is family they can contact with any concerns.



TUESDAY
Morning
11:08 A.M.



Rural Health & Care

acre
network

Stats 2018 - 2019

The ACRE Network has supported:



18,833

people suffering
with their
physical
or **mental health**

87%



of our members support
wellbeing schemes including:

94



Training events



924

Home visits

- ✓ Good Neighbours
- ✓ Men in Sheds
- ✓ Suicide Prevention
- ✓ Loneliness Support
- ✓ Village Agents



Keeping Communities Connected

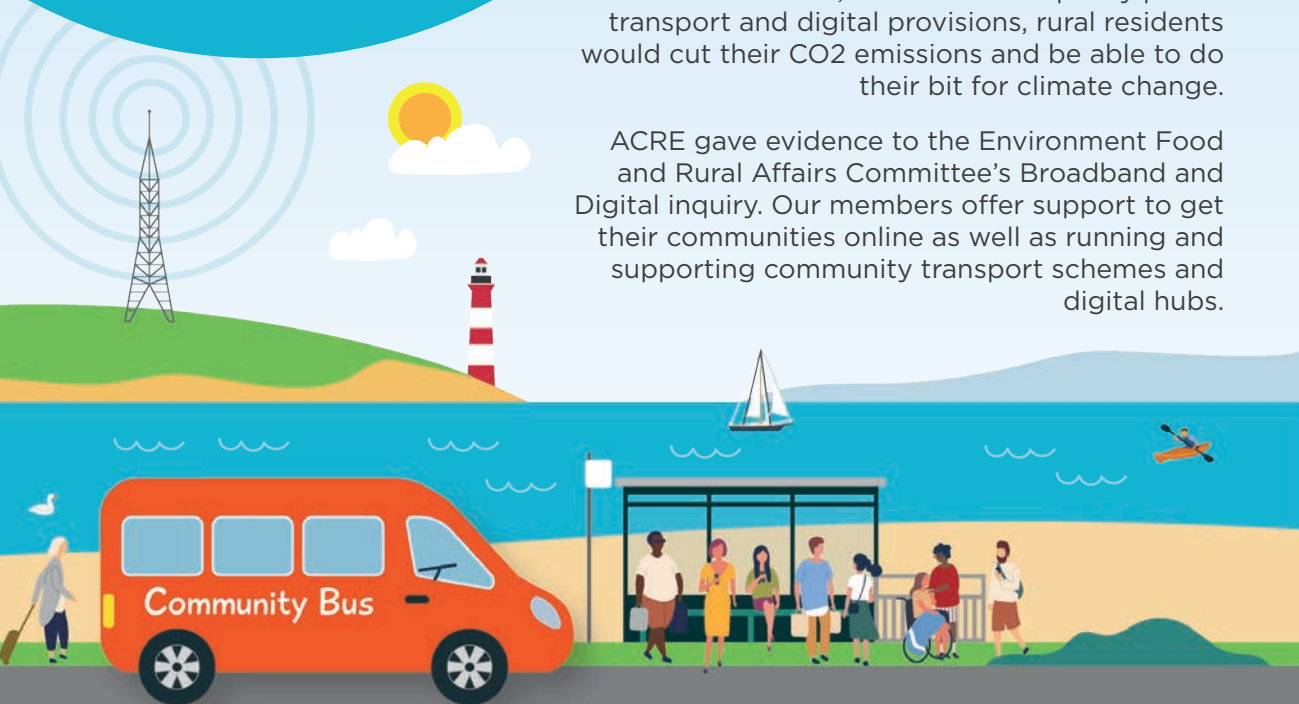


All communities need to be accessible, and rural communities are no exception. Infrastructure such as public transport or mobile and broadband technology keep us connected to each other.

For rural people, access is particularly important because of losses to their vital local services such as shops, banks, schools and healthcare facilities. But getting connected isn't just about practical things; it's also about emotional health.

Poor access to services can leave rural people feeling a bit 'castaway' leading to isolation and loneliness. Yet the solution benefits us all - regardless of where we live. Statistics show that rural residents drive more miles, so with better quality public transport and digital provisions, rural residents would cut their CO2 emissions and be able to do their bit for climate change.

ACRE gave evidence to the Environment Food and Rural Affairs Committee's Broadband and Digital inquiry. Our members offer support to get their communities online as well as running and supporting community transport schemes and digital hubs.



The Issue

In rural areas, people often have to travel to services or access them online; but subsidised bus services are one of the first things to go when local government makes cuts or connectivity providers (mobile, broadband and telecoms companies) prioritise urban areas, as they can make more money where they have more customers.

The Impact

Rural people struggle to access basic services such as healthcare, employment, Job Centres, and education.

Poor accessibility puts off new businesses, which impacts the rural economy. The most vulnerable are young people, whose urban counterparts often have free and plentiful transport, and people who don't wish to, or cannot, drive such as older people or those with disabilities.

Without excellent, affordable connectivity rural people are unable to:



Policy & Asks

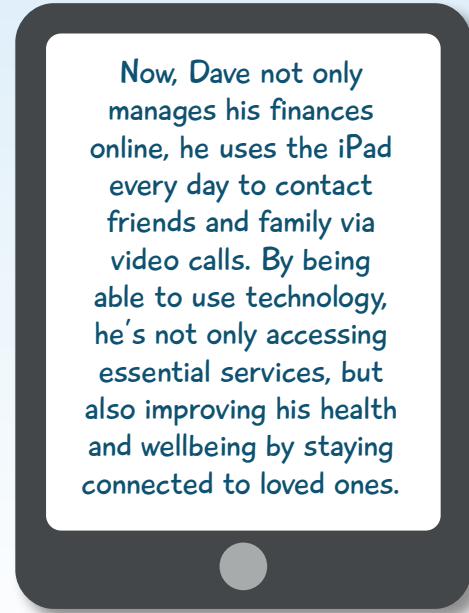
Public services for rural people should be planned and resourced so that nobody is unreasonably disadvantaged by where they live. With new digitally enabled services, government must become more creative in how it uses its regulatory powers. By doing so, it will be able to ensure that economies of scale achieved in urban areas benefit the whole population in both urban and rural communities.

Case Study



ACRE Network member Cornwall Rural Community Charity (CRCC), runs a project called 'Aged Veterans' which supports individuals who have served in the forces. CRCC's Get F+IT project (Finance and IT) helps Veterans develop their IT skills and get their finances in order while improving their confidence and safety online.

Dave was signposted to CRCC after qualifying for a Royal Naval Association initiative for isolated veterans. He'd been provided with an iPad and he and his wife (also his carer) attended a session. At first Dave was reluctant, he didn't see the point and was worried about online safety. But as he continued to attend the IT sessions his confidence increased, and he used his iPad more. CRCC was able to assist him, showing him how the device could help in his everyday life.



Now, Dave not only manages his finances online, he uses the iPad every day to contact friends and family via video calls. By being able to use technology, he's not only accessing essential services, but also improving his health and wellbeing by staying connected to loved ones.

Keeping Communities Connected

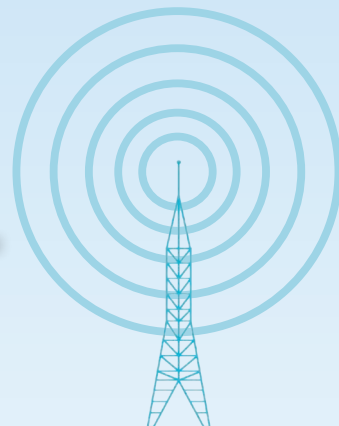
47%

of our members have supported digital training in their communities



2,233
People

have been
**Digitally
Skilled**



37%

of our members support community transport schemes



148,551

people have been helped by
**ACRE Network
community
transport schemes**



ACRE has responded or submitted evidence to:

2

**Verbal
Evidence
Inquiries**

4

**Government
Consultations**

Rural Housing

To ensure rural communities continue to thrive they need a varied supply of housing. ACRE supports appropriate development in rural areas, especially the provision of affordable housing.

Drawing on our unique rural expertise we advise government on how to shape policy that delivers rural affordable housing.

Complementing this, our members provide direct hands-on support to communities, helping them identify their housing needs and take action to meet it by working with councils, housing associations or building and owning their own Community Led Housing schemes.

The Issue



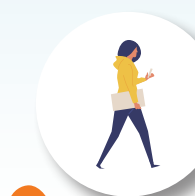
Earnings in rural areas are lower than those in urban areas. But house prices are higher.

Rural households on a low local income would need 9 times their income to buy the cheapest homes in the local housing market.

Add in the fact that only 8% of village housing is social housing and the real picture of housing need starts to emerge.

The Impact

The number of working age residents in rural areas is declining. Young people move away for education and stay away for employment and housing. Local businesses lose custom; and can't retain a workforce. The result? The social and economic fabric of rural communities is at breaking point.



Policy & Asks

Affordable housing should be provided at a cost that is truly affordable to those dependent on low incomes working in the local economy.

Government should ensure that Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) require an on-site affordable housing contribution in communities of less than 3000 people and from sites of 10 or fewer houses.

Government funding should reflect the higher costs associated with the delivery of small affordable housing schemes in rural areas.

Statutory protections that ensure affordable homes remain in the social housing sector should not be eroded.

Case Study

A successful rural exception project started in 2011 when the ACRE member in Gloucestershire (GRCC) was asked by Minsterworth Parish Council to undertake a survey that would identify local people's housing needs.



With the combined support of a local landowner, Minsterworth Parish Council, Minsterworth Village Hall Trust, Rooftop Housing Group, Tewkesbury Borough Council and GRCC the project finally completed in Summer 2018.

14 affordable homes were built for local people to rent or buy and on 9 April 2019 the official opening was marked with the unveiling of a plaque by The Princess Royal.



Community Action in Gloucestershire



Rural Housing



Stats 2018 - 2019

The ACRE Network has supported the delivery of:



The ACRE Network has:



Responded or submitted
evidence to:



ACRE Staff Time Invested:



Working Together

ACRE has a vibrant history of collaborating with others on research, guidance, training, publications, campaigns and joint funding bids.

Working with Defra

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has invested more than £8m in the ACRE Network over the past four years in recognition of our unique ability to engage with both national and local government and rural grassroots organisations and communities.

Under the Agreement, Defra provided the ACRE Network with a total grant of £1,862,000 for the year 2018/19. Over 95% was distributed to the 38 local ACRE Network members, who on average received £46,737 each.

Loneliness Forum with Defra

Defra asked ACRE to arrange a rural stakeholder forum in March 2019 to advise and support the work of government departments and help with the local communication of initiatives and good practice. The event was well supported with over 56 people attending.



ACRE welcomed 80 attendees to the ACRE AGM & Conference with the theme:

“Can rural communities survive without public investment?”



ACRE AGM & Conference

We were pleased to host speakers Tim Goodship at Defra, Claire Saunders Director of The Prince's Countryside Fund and Professor Mark Shucksmith OBE of Newcastle University. The afternoon closed with a panel discussion featuring Harriet English Head of Engagement for the Plunkett Foundation, Crispin Truman OBE, CEO of CPRE and Jo Laverick CEO of ACRE Network member Durham Community Action.

The event was kindly sponsored by Allied Westminster.

Working with Europe

ACRE led a project that was part of the European Rural Parliament, ROAD (Rural Opinion Advocacy & Development) programme. The project was launched at the Scottish Rural Parliament in November 2018 and explored how the UK & Ireland can maintain links with European rural communities after Brexit. ACRE worked with PLANED, Irish Rural Link, Irish Local Development Network (ILDN), Rural Community Network NI and Scottish Rural Action, all of whom will attend the European Rural Parliament in Asturias.



A New Partnership with NCVO

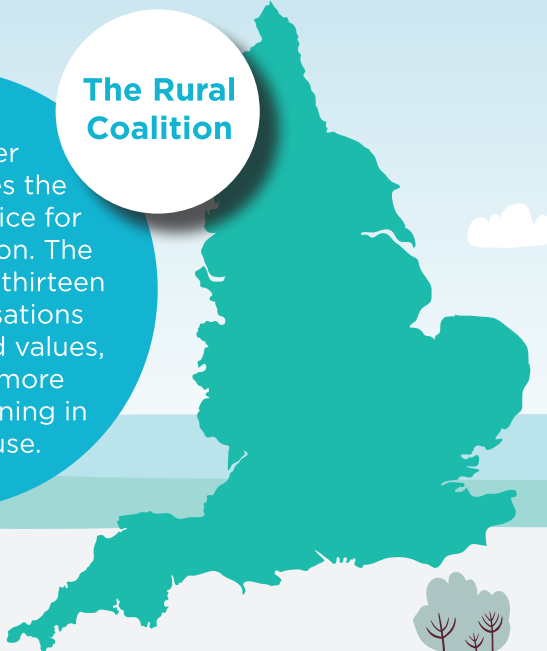
In December 2018 we announced a new strategic partnership with the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO). Whilst ACRE remains independent and fully accountable to our members, this means we can enhance our resources and support for rural communities. As part of the partnership, all ACRE members have full access to NCVO membership benefits free-of-charge. We hope to bring an authentic rural perspective to the partnership.

Working for a Rural Strategy

We worked with the Rural Services Network (RSN), the Plunkett Foundation and the Rural Coalition to call for a rural strategy. As part of this initiative several roadshows were organised around the country.

ACRE is a member of and provides the secretariat service for the Rural Coalition. The Rural Coalition is thirteen national organisations with many shared values, seeking to be more influential by joining in common cause.

The Rural Coalition



Sport England

.....



In 2018 ACRE was successful in securing funds from Sport England for a project called LaceUp. LaceUp aimed to increase leisure activities and community exercise in rural communities.

The one year pilot project funded by Sport England and managed by ACRE promoted cost effective physical activity and engagement in sport and healthy lifestyles in rural communities. Projects in Cumbria and Wiltshire were able to apply for up to £10,000 to support the local health and wellbeing of rural residents and increase physical activity locally.

End Fuel Poverty



ACRE is a member of the End Fuel Poverty Coalition which is a broad coalition of anti-poverty, environmental, health, trade union and consumer organisations working to eradicate fuel poverty.



Village Halls

There are 10,000 village halls in England; with a total asset value of more than £3 billion, they're the largest network of community-owned facilities in rural England.

Did you know that as well as being charitable and community owned, they are all managed by volunteers?

We estimate there are 80,000 volunteers running village halls, and our unique services support them through our network of specialist advisers. Allied Westminster is the principle supporter of ACRE's advice service for village halls.

It's important to us that village halls thrive because they are the corner stones of rural communities. Providing an essential space for everything from fitness classes to important life events such as christenings and birthdays; they also fill gaps in services often hosting post offices, shops, pre-schools and pop-up pubs.

What we love most about village halls is their ability to bring people together, playing a huge part in tackling loneliness. We are encouraged to see village halls evolving; some are digital hubs and some halls are increasingly supporting innovative energy solutions such as car charging points or leading the way by installing solar panels and ground source heat pumps; setting an example in their communities.



Annual Training Event 2018

Every year ACRE facilitates a members training event for village and community hall advisers.

In April 2018 we held the 19th training event in Peterborough. Advisors from 33 counties attended to share and improve their knowledge and skills. They brushed up on GDPR, Fire Risk Assessment, Health and Safety and Constitutional structures with sessions from The Charity Commission and Bates Wells Solicitors. ACRE is grateful to HAGs, Booking Spaces, Cameo Curtains, Utility Aid, Defib Store and Community Re-Paint for supporting the event.

Sponsored by Norris and Fisher and Ansvr.



Village Halls Week is an annual and national celebration of rural community spaces and the people whose time and dedication keep them going.

Village Halls Week 2019



Organised by ACRE and our members, the campaign runs in January and sees a huge variety of events happening across England.

Village Halls Week ran for the first time in 2018 and received overwhelming support from rural communities.

The response from our members and rural communities alike was so positive we decided to run Village Halls Week again in 2019 and here's what happened....

15 events held.

The launch took place in Cambridgeshire with Cambridgeshire ACRE who held an event celebrating the history of village halls. Sponsored by Allied Westminster



Stand-up poet Kate Fox was commissioned by our friends at the National Rural Touring Forum to write a brilliant piece which amusingly captures the range of events you might find at your local village hall



Ian McMillan, renowned poet and broadcaster, celebrated village halls in his own spectacular way by introducing his audience to a special collection of peculiar posters and notes from the village halls where he has performed. The event was held by Community Action Northumberland and was a fantastic way to say thank you for all their members' hard work. Last year Ian wrote 'A Tea Pot as Big as the Moon' a poem especially commissioned for Village Halls Week. Sponsored by Allied Westminster.



Village Halls Week 2019



Children's author and illustrator Steve Anthony held an event for GRCC in Chedworth Village Hall where he did a workshop with the children of Chedworth school. Sponsored by Booking Spaces

booking spaces



Village Halls Week also saw support from advocates of combatting loneliness The British Red Cross and Lincolnshire Co-op. Both wrote blogs in support of village halls as a key tool for combating social isolation in rural communities. Village Halls Week and many of its members were also featured in a blog by Zurich for charities.



Networking and training events were held in: Cheshire, Cumbria, Derbyshire, Durham, Northampton, Northumberland, Staffordshire, Tees Valley and Yorkshire.

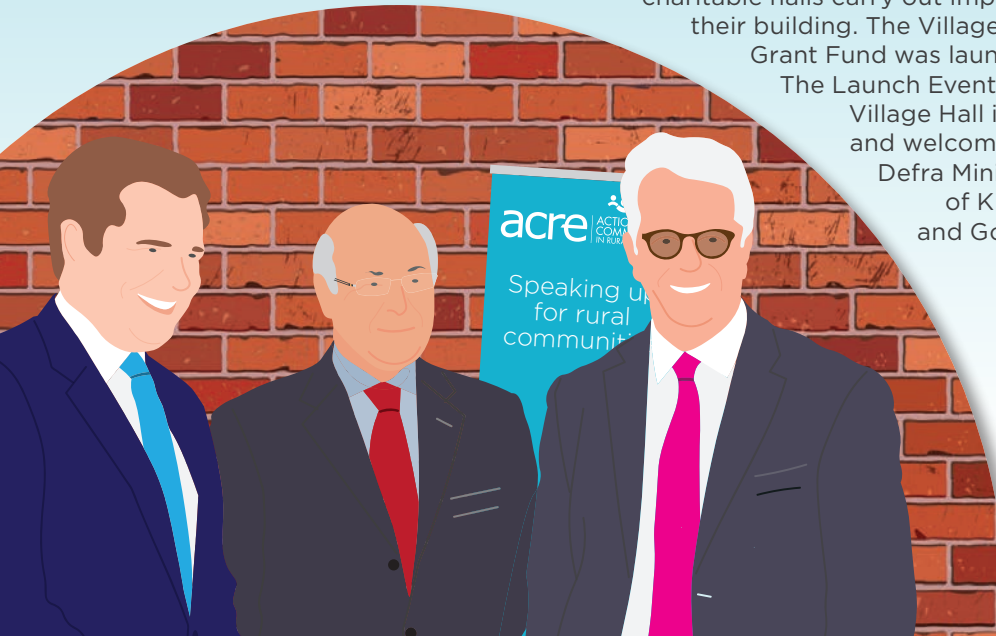
The Village Hall Improvement Grant Fund - A powerful example of what partnership working can achieve.

Small village hall charities are not VAT registered. This means that a £200,000 refurbishment project incurs an extra £40,000 in non-reclaimable VAT - Ouch! A tax on voluntary effort which is widely felt to be unfair. Because of this, the ACRE Network has spent years lobbying MPs and collating evidence and key arguments.

In September 2018 ACRE submitted a budget representation, supported by evidence from many village hall committees, urging The Government to pledge £3 million in the Budget to refund the VAT paid by village halls on improvement work.

After a lot of hard work, ACRE was delighted when we were asked to deliver a £3 million grant programme to help charitable halls carry out improvement works to their building. The Village Hall Improvement Grant Fund was launched in April 2019.

The Launch Event was held at Oxton Village Hall in Nottinghamshire and welcomed the presence of Defra Minister Lord Gardiner of Kimble and local MP and Government Minister Robert Jenrick.



*Image left to right:
Robert Jenrick MP,
Lord Gardiner
of Kimble, Chair
of ACRE David
Emerson, CBE*

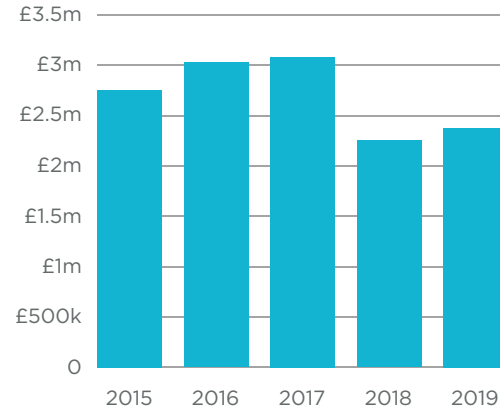
Final Word

Our Trustees' investment over the past few years has seen ACRE and our members gathering stronger, more authentic evidence, both of what is happening to, and what needs to happen for, rural communities. Our unique resource, combining a network of staff, trustees and local village organisations with their experience and insight across the diversity of rural England, has enabled us to develop policies covering housing, access, communications and especially health and social care.

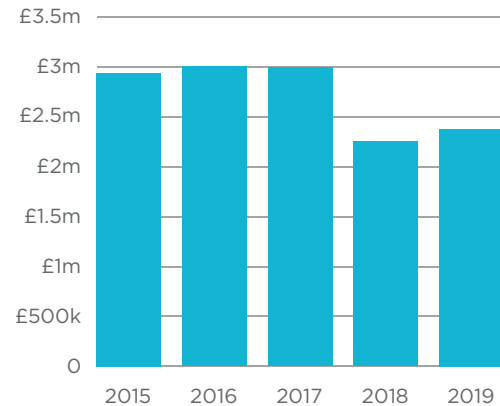
We have taken every opportunity to put these forward, whether by responding to formal consultations, working with Government or giving evidence to Select Committees in both the Commons and the Lords. We see clearly that the strength of our firmly evidenced arguments is having an impact, and this has led to our views being sought more frequently across new policy and thematic areas, enabling us to make the case for those of our beneficiaries most disadvantaged by rurality. Rural communities are the critical component that sustains the rural environment. It is the increasing confidence in our knowledge and understanding of these communities that will, I believe, enable us to pursue our mission of articulating their views and priorities even more effectively, whatever the political, economic and environmental changes may bring.

David Emerson, CBE
ACRE Chair

Income: 5 year trend



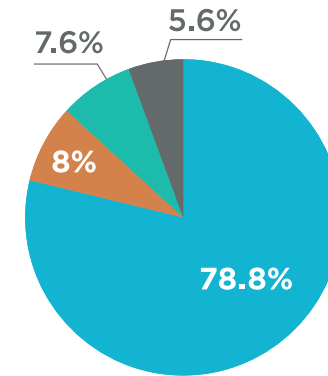
Expenditure: 5 year trend



ACRE Income & Expenditure 18/19

Income:
£2,368,644

- Defra
- Sport England
- Other
- Membership

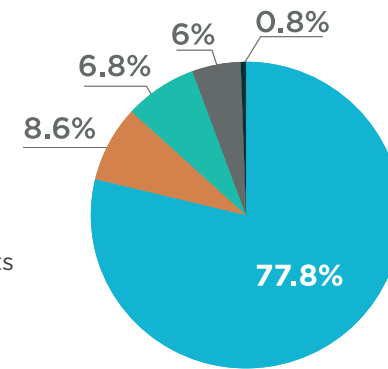


Breakdown of Other

- Nationwide Foundation (2.8%)
- Allied Westminster (1.5%)
- RCBLF (0.8%)
- Conferences (0.8%)
- Donations & Interest (0.5%)
- Other Income (0.5%)
- VHIG (0.4%)
- European Rural Parliament (0.4%)

Expenditure:
£2,350,216

- Grants to Members
- Staff Costs
- Sport England Grants
- Charitable Activities
- Other



Breakdown of Other

- Governance (0.5%)
- Office Costs (0.2%)
- Generating Income (0.1%)

ACRE would like to thank
the following organisations
for their support:



booking spaces



ACRE
Corinium Suite, Unit 9,
Cirencester Office Park,
Tetbury Road,
Cirencester,
Gloucestershire,
GL7 6JJ

T: 01285 653477
E: contact@acre.org.uk

acre.org.uk

Registered Charity No: 1061568 | Company Limited by
Guarantee No: 3336101 | VAT No: 477763003