

ANNUAL REVIEW



2019/20



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INTRODUCTION

GARETH LUGAR-MAWSON, CHAIR OF TRUSTEES

Welcome to NACRE's Annual Review. I hope that you find it interesting, It goes without saying that 2020 has been an unusual and difficult year, and I'm delighted to say that all at NACRE have risen to the many challenges it presented.

The Good Neighbour Scheme helped around 7,512 individuals and we were very fortunate to have received very generous funding of over £272,000 from the National Lottery to continue with it for the next 3years. We were also fortunate to have received Government funding of £40,000 to continue with our core work of helping the rural communities in Northamptonshire.

I was impressed at the public spirit shown by many in Northamptonshire during the 2 lock-downs. Food poverty was a great concern in both of them, and there were many magnificent and imaginative schemes, both large and small, run by dedicated volunteers to help those affected by it during those 2 periods. My heartfelt thanks to all who helped.

Our Village Hall support service really blossomed this year with 24 new Halls joining the scheme, bringing the total to over 130 members. If your Village Hall has not already joined, may I urge you to do so? At £40 a year it's a bargain.

The Hunsbury Hill Centre renovation project is well underway and we hope to have the grounds and woodlands open for allotments and a Community Orchard in 2021.



My thanks to the Working Party overseeing this exciting project.

I would like to thank everyone of our dedicated and enthusiastic staff for all they did throughout the year, which was well over and above the call of duty. My thanks also to my fellow trustees for their strong commitment to, and support of, NACRE's work in the County.

We are always looking for new members of our Board of Trustees. If you think that you could help with our work by becoming a trustee, please contact Elaine O'Leary, our Chief Executive, or myself. Our contact details are at the end of this Review.

We hope that 2021 will be a far better one for everyone. When we come to review 2020, we will see the terrible scars of a global pandemic, but we will also see the value of selflessness, genuine charity, and the importance and strength of local communities.

I assure you that NACRE will always be there to help all of the communities in Northamptonshire.

HIGHLIGHTS

What a year it has been.

Northamptonshire ACRE has adapted to the challenges thrown up by the coronavirus pandemic and has continued supporting rural communities, with our partners, in what has been a unprecedented year.



Good Neighbours Scheme

We were delighted when in November 2019 we were awarded over £272,000 from the National Lottery Community Fund to establish further Good Neighbour schemes in Northamptonshire. The new funding from The National Lottery Community Fund, which distributes money raised by National Lottery players for good causes and is the largest community funder in the UK, will enable NACRE to employ two Good Neighbour Fieldworkers to assist 30 rural communities across North Northamptonshire in setting up schemes over the next 3 years.



Northamptonshire's COVID-19 Champions

We may have had to postpone the Northamptonshire Village Awards but that will not stop us celebrating Northamptonshire's COVID-19 Community Champions. We had a fantastic response of 78 entries from numerous individuals and groups. All of our entries will be published in a booklet and certificates will be awarded at our celebration evening to be held in May 2021.



Hunsbury Hill Project

We have begun an ambitious undertaking, the Hunsbury Hill Farm Project, which will see the charity restore and renovate our lovely Grade II listed farmhouse, outbuildings and woodlands. Our aim is to develop the site to make it more useful for the charity and the communities it serves; to serve the immediate communities of East and West Hunsbury; to act as a beacon for rural communities wishing to explore how to develop and augment their assets; and to enhance the events organised by The Barns at Hunsbury Hill.



Northamptonshire ACRE's Support Map

We offered our support and advice to hundreds of neighbourhood support groups. Creating a support map of Northamptonshire, featuring nearly 200 groups and getting 13000 views, the map is still being used to connect people in need with local support networks.

OUR STORY SO FAR



OUR MISSION

Our mission is to support rural communities in Northamptonshire to help themselves, to value diversity and to work together in creating a vibrant, sustainable future for their residents.

OUR AIMS

- To encourage and support community development through community engagement and rural action
- To support the identification of rural needs and help address them.
- To raise awareness of rural issues, advocate and influence policy
- To support the provision of affordable, accessible rural services and housing
- To work in partnership with others, encouraging co-operation and influencing allocation of resources
- To monitor our performance and provide value for money to our funders and members.

Trustees of Northamptonshire ACRE.

OUR PURPOSE

Northamptonshire ACRE is an independent charity that works with rural communities across the county to improve the quality of life for all, especially the disadvantaged.

We are one of 38 local community development agencies that with our national body, ACRE, form the ACRE Network (#ACRENetwork). Like them we are here to ensure rural communities receive fair and equal treatment in all areas.

CELEBRATING OUR
75TH
BIRTHDAY
IN
2021

GOOD NEIGHBOURS SCHEMES

WHAT WE ACHIEVED

There are now **27** live Good Neighbours Schemes in Northamptonshire, working with **1848** volunteers and helping approximately **7512** people.

Parish councils sung the praises of the well respected schemes who really stepped up during the pandemic to provide villages with a ready made support networks. They didn't stop at prescription collections, shopping and befriending with many going above and beyond, finding lost dogs, cheering the isolated with cake and even teaching a young dad how to cook a roast chicken!



OUR PLANS

Our lottery funded project is ongoing, new Good Neighbour Schemes can access funding for set up costs as well as free advice and support, training and membership to a friendly network of other schemes as well as a bank of tried and tested resources.

If your community has an informal neighbourhood group, they could become part of our wider network of groups and access free advice and support as well as funding.



7512

PEOPLE
HAVE BEEN HELPED BY OUR

1848
VOLUNTEERS

POP UP COVID SUPPORT

WHAT WE ACHIEVED

During the first few weeks of the pandemic we responded quickly, making contact with pop up community groups and offering free support and advice as well as a COVID support pack and network meetings.

Between March and July we supported 217 groups across Northamptonshire who went on to respond to approximately 43400 requests for help.

Creating a support map of Northamptonshire, featuring nearly 200 groups and getting 13000 views, the map is still being used to connect people in need with local support networks.

We worked with the County Council on their resilience cell, working with them to ensure that the rural voice was heard and that community groups were represented.



OUR PLANS

We will continue to support these groups for as long as needed and encourage them to join our Good Neighbours Network to ensure that their legacy is continued.



WE SUPPORTED

217

POP UP COVID-19 GROUPS



VILLAGE HALLS

WHAT WE ACHIEVED

Over the 12 month period, Northamptonshire ACRE's community facilities advisory service had over 800 interactions with 157 organisations from 127 Northamptonshire villages. Of those interactions, just over half were wholly or partly COVID-19 related. Help covered matters such as governing documents, land issues, insurance, health and safety, funding, policies, trustee liability, incorporation and planning new build projects.

Of the 157 organisations helped, the majority (111) were community building charities followed by parish councils (24). Other organisations included playing field and recreation ground charities (10), parochial church councils, and pocket park and recreation ground charities. This underscores just how dependent Northamptonshire's diverse range of community facilities is on volunteer time.

Over 50 organisations have taken part in 6 hours' in-person and digital training and networking events covering trustee roles, insurance and re-opening community facilities following lockdown. The village halls advisory service is delivered mainly through our Community Facilities Membership Scheme which is open to community building and playing field charities.

OUR PLANS

After an extremely difficult six-plus months for community building charities, we are planning to help hall committees meet the challenges of a further period of uncertainty. Many halls are facing a bleak winter. But with recent news of an effective vaccine, community building volunteers (many of whom are in the vulnerable category) will be hoping for a return to near normality at some point next year. Until then we will continue to provide them with guidance about financial support (the new Local Restrictions Grant Scheme) and help with interpreting frequently changing Covid-19 restrictions as they apply to public buildings.



818
INTERACTIONS WITH
157 ORGANISATIONS
FROM
127 VILLAGES

Allied Westminster, a specialist insurance provider for village halls, is a principal supporter of the ACRE Network Village Halls Advisory Service



VILLAGE HALLS

CASE STUDIES

Community Hub

We've been helping a village hall committee with ambitious plans to build a community hub on its existing site to replace the old village hall building. The community hub, which will be owned by the village hall charity, will host the community shop. We've provided advice about how to structure the project involving up to three separate organisations with the village hall charity in the driving seat. To help mitigate the risks, the charity has decided to incorporate and we have provided guidance about becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, which is a relatively new corporate structure for charities.

New Hall

Over the last 5 years we've been helping a hall committee with another very ambitious new build project. They consulted the community who supported a plan to build a new hall on a new site rather than refurbish the existing building. We've been helping the committee with the process of becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. We've also provided guidance to ensure the trustees act in accordance with charity law and their governing document when disposing of charity land. Covid-19 has unfortunately delayed matters as the public meeting would otherwise have taken place last spring.

Land ownership

A hall committee contacted us for help with their lease from the parish council which was about to come to an end. The trustees wanted advice about how to extend it. After checking the governing document, it was clear that the land was owned by the charity and not the parish council - a relatively common misconception. The parish council was Custodian Trustee and merely held legal title so there was no need for a lease. We explained the position to the charity trustees (and the parish council) and advised them to ensure the land registry entry correctly states that the parish council holds legal title on behalf of village hall charity.



RURAL TRANSPORT

WHAT WE ACHIEVED

Community transport schemes provide an important lifeline to many people living in a rural location with no access to a regular bus network. They reduce isolation and food insecurity as well as ensuring that people are able to access vital healthcare.

Our Transport Directory went out to **180** organisations, communities and parishes as well as every GP, Clinic and hospital in Northamptonshire.

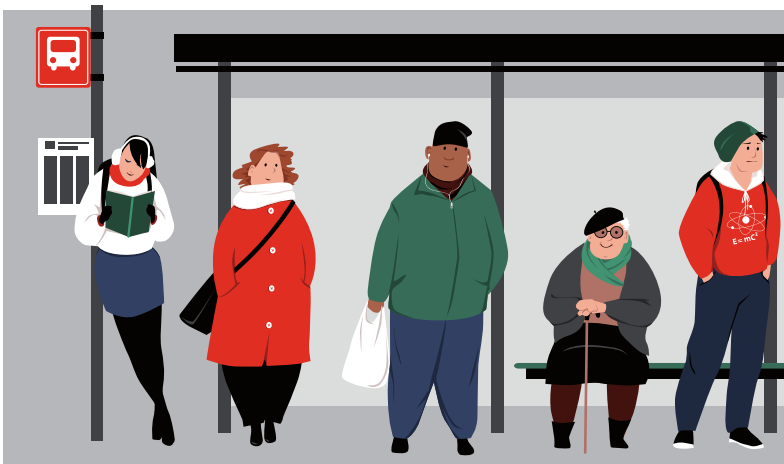
The comprehensive directory included **23** community run transport schemes covering **299** communities in Northamptonshire.

We also offer a comprehensive toolkit for any group wishing to set up a community transport scheme. Contact acre@northantsacre.org.uk for more details.



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
COMMUNITY TRANSPORT
DIRECTORY 2020

Phone: 01604 765888
Email: acre@northantsacre.org.uk
Web: www.northantsacre.org.uk



OUR TRANSPORT
DIRECTORY
COVERED
299
COMMUNITIES

FUEL POVERTY



WHAT WE ACHIEVED

NACRE's community bulk oil buying scheme was set up in 2011 with the aim of:

- 1) helping to lower the cost of heating oil for residents in villages who are off gas, especially those in fuel poverty and
- 2) reducing oil delivery miles.

By bulk buying 1,000's of litres at a time each month, we are able to bargain a much better rate per litre from the oil delivery companies and can group deliveries together to reduce mileage.

- In 2019/20, on 750 litres of heating oil, we saved our customers an average of 10% compared to the market price offered
- And we ordered 308,220 litres of heating oil.

Our online ordering system, Olive, allows customers to order their oil when needed and automatically informs them of the price we have negotiated for their order. But we still have the personal touch for those who prefer to call us!

"MY HUSBAND AND I HAVE BEEN ORDERING OIL FROM NACRE FOR MANY YEARS. I'VE FOUND IT VERY EASY TO ORDER OVER THE PHONE AND IT'S REWARDING TO THINK THAT SOMEONE IS LOOKING AFTER ME. I'M VERY HAPPY WITH THE SERVICE AND WILL BE USING IT IN THE FUTURE". - MRS PAYNE

OUR PLANS

NACRE's bulk oil buying scheme continues to expand with new developments, including a Direct Debit prepayment scheme and an emergency order every Friday for vulnerable customers. We are also exploring the idea of setting up a fuel bank for heating oil to support those in fuel poverty.

For information on our community oil buying scheme see <https://bit.ly/3kHe52N>



91%

OF RESPONDANTS
TO OUR
CUSTOMER SURVEY

**WOULD RECOMMEND OUR
BULK OIL BUYING SCHEME**

FOOD POVERTY



WHAT WE ACHIEVED

In the Autumn our rural food survey found:

58% of respondents did not know where they could get help if they found themselves in food poverty.

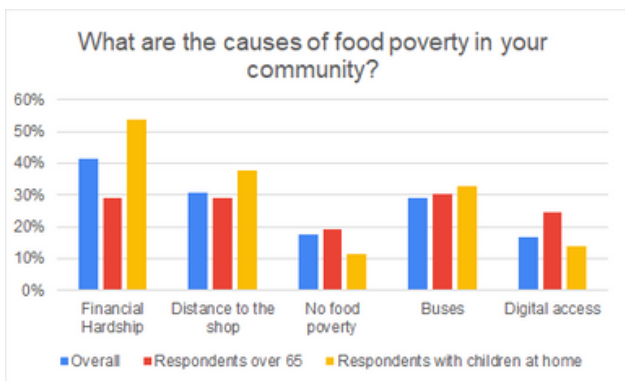
There were clear indications that food poverty was exacerbated by a lack of rural services.

The full report is available from our website <https://www.northantsacre.org.uk/rural-food>.

OUR PLANS

We will continue to work with our partners to end food poverty and insecurity in this county.

We have created a rural food map available on our website to promote our rural food businesses and promote shopping locally: <https://www.northantsacre.org.uk/rural-food>.



58%
OF RESPONDANTS
DID NOT KNOW
WHERE THEY COULD GET
HELP IF NEEDED



PARISH COUNCILS

WHAT WE ACHIEVED

Parish Councils do a vital job for their community in difficult times and we are glad to be there to support them. Over the year, we have advised our members on a wide range of topics. Some of the areas covered:

- How to obtain better street lighting
- Providing a toolkit to set up a community transport scheme
- Suggesting suitable broadband options and funding for four rural businesses
- Developing a local asset into a community shop/hub
- Advising two villages on ways to improve their biodiversity
- Assisting with community engagement for a neighbourhood plan

And we have run 4 Parish Councillor network sessions around affordable housing, biodiversity and community resilience.

"I FOUND THE COFFEE MORNING VERY USEFUL, IT WAS NICE TO GET TOGETHER AND HEAR WHAT IS GOING ON IN OTHER PARISHES AND GAIN SOME CONTACTS. THANK YOU". SNC PARISH COUNCILLOR

OUR PLANS

We will continue to run our network meetings (and welcome suggestions for topics from our members), to develop our green offering for parishes, increase our support for setting up community hubs and continue to help our members in their work with their community.



168
COUNCILLORS

126 COMMUNITIES

4 NETWORK MEETINGS

WORKING WITH OUR PARTNERS

WHAT WE ACHIEVED

In 2020 we worked with **253** partners and engaged with **1374** people in rural communities. Attending countless meetings we worked to ensure that rural communities were represented!

We appeared on local radio 5 times, ensuring the rural voice was heard on important topics including rural food poverty and isolation in the elderly.



As one of 39 members of the ACRE network, we work together to gather evidence and intelligence on rural matters and use this to influence national policy on rural issues, from housing, health and transport to broadband, services and fuel poverty. The Network's responses to national policies, such as the latest proposals for the planning system, can be found on the ACRE site: <https://acre.org.uk/>

OUR PLANS

Northamptonshire ACRE will continue to work with partners who, like us, want to see a fair deal for our county's rural communities. And as part of the ACRE Network, we will continue to be a strong voice for our rural members, ensuring that any future national and local policies are fully rural proofed.



IN 2020

WE WORKED WITH

253

PARTNERS



HUNSBURY HILL CENTRE

WHAT WE ACHIEVED

Northamptonshire ACRE owns and is based at The Hunsbury Hill Centre, a Grade II listed farmstead built in 1770 by Edward Bouverie who owned Delapre Abbey. Originally a working farm, the site consists of a large farmhouse, a number of barns and outbuildings and 13 acres of woods and grounds. Although we make regular improvements to the buildings and land, our most ambitious project to restore and renovate the site has just started. You can read more about this on the next page.

NACRE also owns and runs a trading arm at the centre, The Barns at Hunsbury Hill. The Barns is responsible for events at the venue such as weddings, parties and corporate meetings. Any surplus revenue from these events comes back into the charity to help us with our work supporting members in rural areas. You can find out more about The Barns here: <https://bit.ly/3pNck37>

Last year we had 80 weddings at the centre but sadly due to the coronavirus pandemic, we have not been able to hold any this year. We are keeping our fingers crossed for next year when we have 70 weddings booked already!

To know more about holding an event at The Barns, please contact Sarah:
Sarah.Clarke@HunsburyHillCentre.co.uk

OUR PLANS

In light of what has happened this year, we are hoping that all the events booked for 2021 will be able to take place as planned. And we look forward to seeing couples, who have had to move their wedding from this year, be able to have their special day next year!



70
WEDDINGS BOOKED
FOR
2021



FARM PROJECT

WHAT WE ACHIEVED

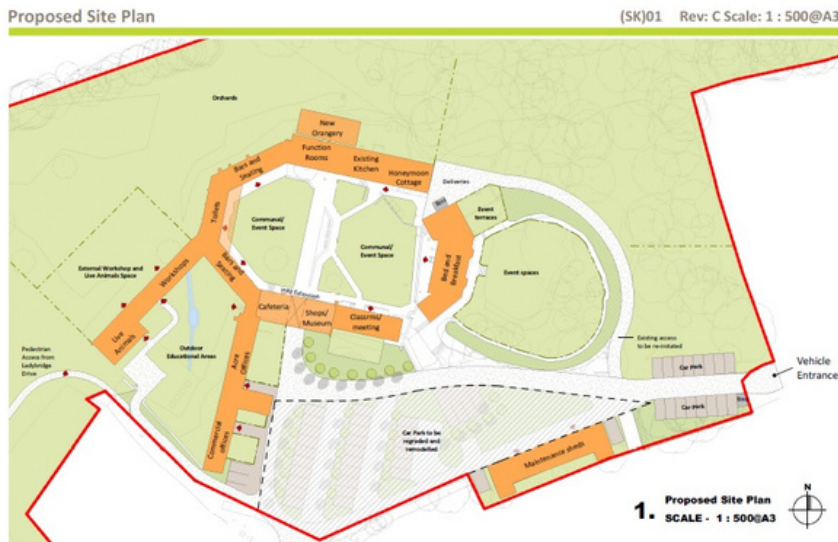
The Hunsbury Hill Farm project is the most ambitious thing the charity has ever taken on. We want to restore and renovate the site so that it becomes a beacon of rural excellence for our members, a valued resource for the local community and a green exemplar.

Some of the key tasks so far:

- We have set up a working party
- Collected historical evidence of the site
- Taken on an architect firm - GSSArchitects
- Agreed the Mission Statement and vision for the project
- Developed an Expression of Interest to the National Lottery Heritage Fund
- Prepared to hold a Community Festival - now to be held in July 2021
- Developed a proposed site plan for the work

OUR PLANS

We wait to hear that our EOI has been accepted. If this is confirmed we will be applying for a development grant from the National Heritage Lottery for the next stage of work. During this time we will continue with our green development at the centre. And hold our Community Festival!



The Hunsbury Hill Centre, Northampton
Northamptonshire ACRE

COMMUNITY FESTIVAL

SUNDAY 18TH JULY 2021

HUNSBURY HILL CENTRE

2020/21 DIARY



EVENT	DATE	DETAILS
The Farm Project Q&A Event	An opportunity to find out more about the Hunsbury Hill Farm Project	13th January 2021 - 2 online sessions
Village Halls Week 2021	Week beginning 25th January 2021	25 January Launch Event
Champions Celebration Evening	An evening celebrating our COVID-19 Community Champions	May 2021
75th Birthday Celebration & Community Festival	A family event to celebrate with the Community	18th July 2021
Community Facilities Training	Safeguarding for Community Buildings	Early 2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT IN OUR PROGRAMS



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