



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ACRE

THE HUNSBURY HILL CENTRE • HARKSOME HILL • NORTHAMPTON • NN4 9QX

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Honorary President Mr James Saunders Watson, HM Lord-Lieutenant of Northamptonshire

Northamptonshire ACRE's 75th Anniversary week

26th July 2021

Chairman's Opening Remarks

Northamptonshire ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England) is a countywide, independent charitable organisation working with rural communities to improve their quality of life, especially for the disadvantaged.

Our motto is: ***"Working with rural communities to improve the quality of life for all"***

We were originally designated as a Rural Community Council (RCC) by the Attlee Government on 26 July 1946, with the aim of supporting the rural communities of Northamptonshire. In March 2000, we changed our name to Northamptonshire ACRE, but remained designated as a Rural Community Council.

For the past 30 years or so we have been headquartered at the Hunsbury Hill Centre on the western outskirts of Northampton. These are a unique group of buildings forming part of a late 18th century model farm.

We are one of 38 Rural Community Councils working across England, making up the ACRE network. Our national body, ACRE, works at the strategic level with government bodies to ensure the needs and voices of rural communities are listened to and included in any new legislation.

Like the other RCCs across England, we are a community development organisation, supporting Parish Councils, Village Halls and community groups to help them thrive, be inclusive and economically active.

We are governed by a board of unpaid volunteer trustees and have small salaried staff headed by our Chief Executive, Elaine O'Leary.

Our income comes from Government grants, donations from supporters, fees for undertaking projects on behalf of government, local government and other charitable bodies and the income generated by our very successful subsidiary business, The Hunsbury Hill Centre Ltd, which runs our buildings and grounds as a very successful wedding and events venue.

Our work covers a range of topics from affordable rural housing, rural transport, community planning, village and community hall support, to assisting groups set up a community shop or pub. For many years we have run the Northamptonshire Village of the Year competition (now the Northamptonshire Best Village competition).

Over the last 18 months much of our focus and work has been on 3 areas:

• NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ACTION WITH COMMUNITIES IN RURAL ENGLAND •

ONE OF 39 MEMBERS OF THE ACRE NETWORK

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- ✓ Setting up and supporting Good Neighbour schemes;
- ✓ Support for our many village hall and community centre members; and
- ✓ The issue of rural food insecurity in the county.

This week, we are proud to be celebrating 75 years of supporting the rural communities of Northamptonshire.

To highlight our work both over the past 75 years as well as today, and to look at what the future holds for our rural communities, we are holding a series of free online talks throughout the week. These are open to anyone who has an interest in rural affairs, irrespective of whether they live in a village or a more urban area.

The programme of events for the week is available to download at <https://www.northantsacre.org.uk/celebrating-75-years-service-rural-communities> with the opening speech being by Lord Benyon, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for DEFRA who will be talking about Northamptonshire ACRE's work.

75 years of supporting Northamptonshire's rural communities is a great milestone to have reached and we at NACRE are very proud of the work that the charity has carried out over those years. The programme that has been put together for our 75th anniversary week reflects the diverse range of services and support we offer and I hope everyone attending enjoys the sessions as much as we enjoy being part of Northamptonshire ACRE.



Gareth Lugar-Mawson

Chair of Trustees, Northamptonshire ACRE