

# Cambridgeshire ACRE Strategy 2019 – 2024

Towards our 100<sup>th</sup> Year: Building stronger rural communities



# **We're Cambridgeshire ACRE, the County's rural development charity**

## **Introduction to this Strategy**

This Strategy provides our members and partners with an overview of our long-term plans and establishes our priorities for serving the needs of rural communities over the next five years. To develop this strategy, we have reviewed both rural and other policies relating to Cambridgeshire; completed a SWOT and partner analysis; held two workshops; and consulted on a draft with members and partners. We will have a business plan that accompanies this Strategy and provides us with our annual targets, timescales and a outcome monitoring framework which we will use to report our progress to our members and partners at our Annual General Meeting each year.

## **Our vision**

Thriving rural communities across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

## **Our mission**

To drive positive change and work with others to improve the lives of those that live and work in rural communities.

## **Our network**

We are a member of the ACRE Network of 38 local development charities that influence on rural issues and deliver rural projects across England. We work together to evidence need, to inform, and to influence at a national level, speaking up as the voice of rural communities across England. As a member, we have signed a Concordat that sets out the objectives and principles we share.

Our objectives are to:

- Improve the lives of people living and working in rural communities
- Support and encourage community-led action and strong local governance
- Increase long-term sustainability of local community life
- Influence policies and services so as to help address market failures associated with rurality.

Our principles are:

- To act as a champion and facilitator for sustainable rural communities
- Use community development principles to empower people to understand and address the issues that they and their communities face.

## **Our beneficiaries and geography**

Our programmes and projects are primarily designed to support people living in rural Cambridgeshire and Peterborough especially those most at risk of disadvantage caused by poor access to services and advice, homelessness, poor educational attainment, poor health outcomes, geographic isolation, social mobility or increasing poverty levels.

Whilst we work primarily within the County, our reputation and expertise has meant that we are sometimes required to work outside this area.

## **Our approach**

Our independence means we can lead innovative rural development programmes. We can respond to local needs and demands, whilst understanding the impact of Government policy and strategy on local communities.

We raise funds through securing grants, generating contract revenue and charging fees for consultancy work.

We play a strong role in leading and supporting partnerships between public, private and community sector, aligning our efforts and achieving grant investment which has a positive impact for local communities. We continually look for new partnership opportunities that will benefit rural communities.

## **Our people**

We have 250 members who guide our future direction and provide us with purpose. These are all concerned with their own rural community's local needs and priorities. Members are provided with a full range of advice and information services that enable them to successfully manage community facilities and run local community groups and activities effectively.

Our members elect our trustee board who share the ultimate responsibility for governing the charity and directing how it is managed and run. We look to recruit the best trustees that bring business and community expertise.

We maintain a staff team that has the knowledge, skills and expertise to deliver our work to a consistently high standard. We provide a positive working environment, use of up-to date-technology, home-working and a performance management scheme that rewards high performing team members.

We recognise that involving volunteers, who bring additional time and skill, in our work strengthens our projects and programmes. We provide a range of volunteering opportunities including peer support schemes and direct volunteering roles in local communities.

## Between 2019 and 2024, our strategic aims will be:

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### To help grow the rural economy

#### We will:

- Lead community-led development that increases people's life chances and ensures that, as things change, new investment opportunities are realised .
- Provide support services that help to strengthen rural businesses, encouraging support networks that bring people together.
- Monitor future developments with the Local Industrial Strategy / Shared Prosperity Fund / Market Town Masterplans to ensure future investment into Cambridgeshire is appropriate for our rural communities.
- Tackle the challenges faced by businesses, communities and individuals by poor digital connectivity.

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### To improve the health and wellbeing of rural communities

#### We will:

- Expand the programmes that tackle poor social mobility, poor educational attainment and increasing poverty levels.
- Strengthen support given to youth organisations and young people so that they can get a good start in life.
- Develop and deliver community wellbeing services to reduce pressure on health provision and clinical commissioners.
- Act to help people isolated in rural areas because of issues such as age, health, income, mobility or homelessness.

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### To support community-run assets and services

#### We will:

- Expand the Community Buildings Advice Service ensuring that high quality specialist support is available to all communities.
- Strengthen the support given to Parish Councils enabling them to play a crucial leadership role in maintaining assets and developing new services required by their communities.
- Strengthen the support given to rural communities to help them tackle digital skills gaps and to adopt new digital technologies to help them thrive.

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### To support communities to plan for their own futures and undertake community-led housing development

#### We will:

- Support communities to plan for their own futures through undertaking and delivering high quality and well evidenced Neighbourhood Plans.
- Strengthen community-led housing advice through working with partners to deliver a financially viable Community-Led Housing Hub for the East of England.
- Support the Cambridgeshire Rural Housing Partnership to deliver affordable homes on rural exception sites.



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### To enhance the natural environment and create a greener Cambridgeshire

**We will:**

- Increase our work with partners to make Cambridgeshire an exemplar for landscape scale restoration of the natural environment.
- Develop innovative approaches to involving and engaging communities into protecting and enhancing Cambridgeshire's natural assets.
- Strengthen our work to support communities with climate change resilient practices, including reducing waste, consumption of non-renewable resources and raising flood awareness.

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### To grow our consultancy work

**We will:**

- Be an active member of the ACRE LLP Consultancy offering our staff expertise and knowledge to rural partners, communities and businesses across England.
- Expand our consultancy work in Cambridgeshire offering our rural expertise to partners, community and voluntary sector groups so they can successfully progress their own ambitions.

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### To be a strong and valued organisation



**We will:**

- Improve our communications and organisational profile.
- Recruit, maintain and invest in the best people to shape and deliver our programmes and consultancy work.
- Increase our collaboration with organisations that share our objectives and through working together can help us increase the effectiveness of our work.
- Recruit, maintain and invest in the best people as our trustees to govern the organisation.
- Increase the profile of volunteers in our work and the work that they do.
- Ensure all aspects of the organisation's governance are delivered to a high standard through use of the Charity Governance Code for Smaller Charities.
- Strengthen the voice and engagement of our members and rural communities within our work.
- Support ACRE with national policy work to improve rural services, the economy and environment.



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