HWRCC AGM
19th November 2014

Janet Thornton
Vice Chair, ACRE
What will you find out today?

- Why Rural?
- What is ACRE?
- What we do
- Who we work with
Why Rural?

- 9.5 million people live in rural areas
- In the next 20 years the percentage of people over 85 will double
- <350,000 (35%) of pensioners in rural areas have no access to a car or van
- 55% of rural households, compared with 97% of urban households are within 8k of a hospital
- Nearly one-fifth of England’s rural households are of absolute low income
- Mean house prices in rural areas are 11 times the average salary
- Transport accounts for the highest proportion of spend in service in rural areas
- >50% rural households have access to a regular bus service (95% urban)
What is ACRE?

• National membership body
• Partner to 38 RCCs’ Network

Our Reach:
From rural communities to Whitehall
What ACRE does

• Sustain
• Support
• Speak up
Rural Evidence Project

Data on:

- Deprivation
- Economy
- Access to services
Village Halls Service

- Training for village hall advisers
- Model documents & information sheets
- £700k Rural Community Buildings Loan Fund
- ‘Hallmark’ quality standard scheme
• Exemplar programme
• Endorsed by the Charity Commission
• Good organisational management
• Excellent service delivery
Defra Agreement

• £2.25m in 2013/14

• Enabled further £12.5m investment

• Shaping and influencing policy – nationally and locally
Our Impact in Defra

- Help ensure rural proofing of policies
- 6 monthly detailed reports
- Provide insight on the impact of current policies
- RCPU works with Network Expert groups
Defra Themes

Broadband
Transport & Services
Fuel Poverty and Energy
The Rural Economy
Housing
Working with Government

Evidence/analysis to DECC, DCLG, DoT, DWP

Advisory groups

Select Committees

Commons’ EFRA committee report
Evidence

- Affordable housing
- Future of the Energy Company Obligation
- Library Services
- Changes to the Licensing Act 2003
- EU review of VAT on new community buildings
- Changes to entertainment licensing
Speaking up!

• Bedroom tax
• Rural ‘penalty’ living in the countryside
• ‘Piecemeal’ roll out of Rural Broadband
• Secure the future of land based studies
• Rural bus provision/funding
The Rural Coalition

• Private, public & voluntary sectors
• Supports delivery of a positive vision
• Provides national stage for Network
• Commands Govt. attention
International links

• European Rural Parliament

• Chinese International Poverty Reduction delegation

• Danish Minister for Housing, Urban & Rural Affairs

• Polish delegation for community led planning
The Network’s work

- Digital Inclusion
- Employment & Economy
- Environment
- Energy & Fuel
- Health
- Housing
- Older People
- Community Planning
- Social Enterprise
- Transport
- Village Halls
- Young People
The Acre Network in numbers 2013/14

- 80,000 village hall committees supported
- + 9,828 village hall committee volunteers
- 4,000 Community-Led Plans supported
- 103 Neighbourhood Plans supported
- 900 staff employed across the Network
- 25 oil buying groups bought 13m litres of oil, saving customers £650,000
- supported the work of 16 Rural Housing Enablers
- worked with 6,978 partners
- A combined Network turnover of £31.2 million
- 1,559 new homes completed with Network involvement
- 258,000 journeys made by 500 community transport volunteers
- Reached 52,783 grassroots organisations
- Reached 80,000 people helped by village agent or good neighbour schemes

Litres of tea drunk in village halls each year: 9.6 million
Hours of volunteering at village halls each year: 12 million
£216,462 of loans made through Defra's Rural Community Buildings Loan Fund
www.acre.org.uk

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