

Charity Commission endorses ACRE Standard

The Charity Commission, the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales, has endorsed the Standard of good practice of the charity Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) as part of the Commission's Quality Standards Endorsement Programme.

ACRE (registered charity no.1061568) is the national umbrella body for the Rural Community Action Network, which comprises the separately registered charities, Rural Community Councils (RCCs). The Good Practice Quality Standard defines good practice for the Network and provides challenging assessments of how well RCCs are run.

The Commission has worked closely with ACRE and shared its experience to help develop the Standard, which was formally endorsed in its third edition. The Commission's endorsement process assesses whether the charity's quality standards are consistent with the Commission's guidance *Hallmarks of an Effective Charity* and whether the accreditation process meets the requirements of the Commission's Terms of Endorsement.

Andrew Hind, Chief Executive of the Charity Commission, said:

'I am very pleased that the Commission is able to endorse the ACRE Good Practice Quality Standard. The Standard is a good example of how charities have embraced the importance of best practice in all aspects of their work. We are committed to working with the sector to make charities more effective and by sharing our expertise with standard-setting charities such as ACRE we are able to support the good practice of small and medium-sized charities working at regional levels.'

Sylvia Brown, Chief Executive of ACRE said:

'I am delighted that the ACRE Standard has been formally endorsed by the Charity Commission. ACRE's work over the past decade on implementing a high quality standards system for Rural Community Action Network members is underpinned by a robust and continuing Peer Review process. The ACRE standards have been adopted throughout the network and all RCAN members can demonstrate significant improvements both in managing their organisations and in the delivery of services to the rural communities they serve. Endorsement by the Charity Commission is an acknowledgement that the current ACRE standards provide a rigorous and comprehensive test of our members' commitment to legal compliance, quality and improvement, in line with the regulator's Hallmarks of an Effective Charity.'

The ACRE Good Practice Quality Standard joins a number of similar schemes established by and for the sector which have been supported by the Commission. For more information see the *Charity Commission Partnership Strategy* at <http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/spr/partner.asp>.

Ends.

For further information on this story please contact Christina Manicom on 0207 674 2342

Notes to Editors

1. The Charity Commission is the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales. See www.charitycommission.gov.uk for further information or call our contact centre on 0845 300 0218.

2. Our mission is: to ensure charities' legal compliance, enhance charities' accountability, encourage charities' effectiveness and impact and to promote the public interest in charity.

3. ACRE is the national rural community development charity. It is the national body for the Rural Community Action Network (RCAN), which operates at national, regional and local level in support of rural communities across the country.

4. RCAN covers the whole of rural England through the work of 38 member organisations, eight regional bodies and ACRE. Network members link national, regional and local policy with community action at the grass roots. The local member organisations are all independent charities, largely county-based.

5. Development of the ACRE Standard and Peer Review process was assisted by funding from Defra in 2004.

6. The ACRE Standard covers 9 areas of good practice in organisational management and service delivery, with three levels of achievement. Rural Community Action Network (RCAN) members have made significant progress in implementing the ACRE Standard and many have now attained the highest level (Level 3).

7. Accreditation is confirmed by a robust process of external Peer Review. ACRE has 28 trained Peer Reviewers and the ACRE Peer Review training is accredited by the National Open College Network at A-level standard.

8. Further information about the ACRE Standard, the Peer Review process and the results of RCAN Peer Reviews can be found on the ACRE website at: http://www.acre.org.uk/improvingperformance_pip.html or by contacting Colette Williams, ACRE's Head of Network Standards & Development on 01285 653477 or c.williams@acre.org.uk