



Community empowerment in action

12/13 June 2008 - Keele University, Staffordshire

SPEAKERS

Thursday 12 June

Sylvia Brown, Chief Executive, ACRE



Sylvia Brown is Chief Executive of ACRE, the national body for the Rural Community Council network, which is the primary deliverer of support for rural community action throughout England. She has been closely involved in many national policy initiatives affecting both rural issues and the community sector.

Sylvia works with Defra and the Commission for Rural Communities but is also a member of advisory groups within the Office of the Third Sector and Department of Culture Media and Sport. Key current areas of ACRE's rural advocacy lie with the agendas within Communities and Local Government department and the Office of the Third Sector aimed at empowering communities and supporting community action through the Local Government White Paper.

During some 30 years as a community activist at local and county level, Sylvia was Chair of the Wiltshire Rural Forum for 6 years in the mid 1990s and has been a Parish Councillor since 1988. She became ACRE Chief Executive in 2001 and was awarded the OBE for services to rural communities in January 2007.

Peter Unwin, Director General, Natural Environment Group, Defra



Peter is responsible for Defra's work on agri-environment, biodiversity, marine and fisheries, water, and rural policy. He is Defra's corporate sponsor of the Environment Agency and Natural England.

Peter joined Defra in February 2007, having previously been Director General for Corporate Delivery in the Department for Communities and Local Government.

Peter first joined the Civil Service as a statistician and held posts in the Inland Revenue, Cabinet Office and Ministry of Defence before joining the Department of Environment in 1983. He transferred to policy work and held various posts in local government finance and urban policy before working on the environment and climate change, leading the official delegation to the 1997 Kyoto Conference. He was John Prescott's Private Secretary from 1998 to 2001.

Peter read Maths at Cambridge. He is married with three children and lives in Chislehurst. In his spare time, he enjoys golf, watching sport (supporting Liverpool FC), hill walking, Italy, food and wine.

Gabriel Chanan

Gabriel Chanan directed policy and research at the Community Development Foundation for a number of years and continues to work there part-time. In 2003-4 he carried out influential research for government on measurement of community strengths (*Measures of Community*, CDF) and community involvement in urban development (*Searching for Solid Foundations*, ODPM). He has also carried out pioneering European research on the role of local citizen organisations.

Between 2005 and 2008 Gabriel was seconded to the Home Office and later the Department of Communities and Local Government, working on community participation and empowerment. He has played a leading role in the movement to modernise community development theory (editing *The Community Development Challenge*, CLG, 2006), to create objective indicators of community strengths and to embed commitment to strengthening communities in public policy. He is currently working on how to interpret and implement local authorities' new 'duty to involve' local people and on a number of other projects. He can be contacted at: gabriel.chanan@talktalk.net

Sue Shaw, North East RCC's Regional Co-ordinator, ACRE Trustee



Sue Shaw is a Trustee of ACRE and has been working recently with the three north east RCCs, coordinating RuCANNE [Rural Community Action Network North East]. She is also Chair of CDX [Community Development Exchange] the national network supporting community development practitioners.

Sue lives in Durham City and works as an independent community development facilitator and researcher, focusing on rural community issues.

Tony Rich, Director ,Rich Regeneration/Development Trust Association



Tony Rich is a Planning and Regeneration Consultant specialising in community regeneration, local economic development, asset-based development, social and community enterprise, and using the planning system to regenerate deprived areas. He is currently contracted to the Development Trusts Association to provide strategic advice to local authorities on community asset transfer across England and was commissioned by CLG to write a Risk Management Toolkit on Asset Transfer. He has recently acted as an external adviser to the Big Lottery Fund England Committee on the Community Assets Programme, giving strategic advice and jointly facilitating an induction day. Prior to becoming a freelance planning and regeneration consultant in June 2006, Tony was Programme Manager for Regeneration at the Local Government Association (LGA), the membership organisation for local authorities in England and Wales. While at the LGA Tony led national policy development and lobbying on economic development and regeneration.

Rob Hindle, Founder, Rural Innovation



Rob Hindle is a rural policy consultant. One of the leading specialists in the development, application and appraisal of public policy relating to rural England he works with both statutory and community sectors. Since founding Rural Innovation in 2001 he has worked with a wide range of clients including Defra, ODPM / CLG, IDeA, LGA, CRC, Rural Services Network, Carnegie UK Rural Commission, Nesta, Regional Development Agencies, Regional Assemblies, Government Offices of the Region, Local Authorities, Local Strategic Partnerships, Rural Community Councils and Community Led Planning groups.

Rob has recently completed a report for CRC as part of their review of Rural Proofing, is working with the three Empowering Rural Communities Beacon Councils on the development of a framework to promote community led planning to the statutory sector and was part of the team led by the North West Network of Rural Community Councils which delivered part of the Carnegie UK Rural Trust Empowering Communities programme. rob.hindle@ruralinnovation.co.uk

Celia Collett, Vice Chair, Oxfordshire Rural Community Council



Married with two sons runs a small business with her husband. A District and Parish Councillor, chairman of the local branch of Save the Children Charity, vice-chair to the Board of Trustees Oxfordshire Rural Community Council and member of the Oxfordshire Parish Plan Reference Group. Amongst other things has been a Primary School Governor, a Group Scout Leader and local Sports Park Community Officer. Chaired the Steering Committee for Brightwell-cum-Sotwell's Parish Plan. Has always taken an interest and been involved in local issues and in 2005 was awarded an MBE for services to the community.

Amanda Greenwood, Chief Executive, CDX (Community Development Exchange)



Amanda Greenwood is Chief Executive of CDX, formerly the Standing Conference for Community Development (SCCD). She has been a Community Development worker for over 14 years working in both urban and rural settings and across all sectors. She completed her MA in 2004 with research on social capital and mental health and continues to have an ongoing interest in community development and health inequalities.

Deborah Clarke, ACRE Village Halls Officer



Deborah joined ACRE in 1996 as part of the 21st Century Halls for England, a Millennium Commission Project. Since 2000, she has provided the dedicated Village Hall Information & Advice Service to the ACRE network. Her responsibilities include:

- Working with RCCs and village hall advisers both individually and at regional level within the network
- Representing ACRE and the interests of village halls at national level
- Managing the Village Hall Loan Fund.

Deborah has always lived and worked in rural Gloucestershire and is active in several local activities such as Riding for the Disabled as a volunteer, treasurer and trustee

Penny Velander, Community Planning Officer, New Forest District Council

Penny Velander: Penny is the dedicated community planning officer for New Forest District Council and has been in post for 3 ½ years. Penny's work has two main strands; firstly working across 37 parishes to support and advise those going through the community planning process and secondly working strategically across the district, county and LSP to provide the infrastructure to enable action plan projects to go ahead. Penny previously worked for Hampshire County Council and Community Action Hampshire in the areas of community development, training and policy.

Justin Griggs, Head of Development, NALC



Justin Griggs is the Head of Development at the National Association of Local Councils (NALC), the national representative body for 10,000 community, parish and town councils throughout England and Wales.

Justin has responsibility for improvement, development and capacity building of the first tier of local government through a range of initiatives including the Quality Parishes Scheme and the National Training Strategy for Parish and Town Councils. He has also played a role in developing the services and organisation of the National Association, a key area of activity being the promotion of the role of parish and town councils in community democracy and local service provision.

He has actively represented the interests of parish and town councils at national level on a wide range of policy and development agendas. Recent areas of work have included influencing both the local government white paper and report of the Councillors Commission, supporting the Commission for Rural Communities Participation Inquiry as an expert adviser and liaising with government on the forthcoming white paper on community empowerment.

Originally from South East Kent, Justin joined NALC in January 2000 from Stoke-on-Trent City Council, where he worked on corporate strategy and local government re-organisation prior to unitary status, and then in a further period in democratic services and local government modernisation. Justin has also worked in the private sector with Royal Doulton.

Justin has an honours degree in Business Studies, a postgraduate diploma in Business Administration and is a Member of the Chartered Management Institute.

Justin is 33, lives in Kent and is a keen runner, playing an active role in Plumstead Runners running club in south east London.

Lee McQuade, Beacon Project Officer, West Berkshire Council



Lee graduated from the University of Leeds with a Masters in International Studies in 2006, having already completed an undergraduate degree in Economics at the University of York. He has worked at the Policy and Communication Unit at West Berkshire Council since graduating. He was appointed to oversee the Beacon Project in January 2008.

Mark Harris, Partnerships Manager, West Berkshire Council



Born in Solihull in 1962, Mark attended Nottingham University where he obtained an honours degree in politics and government. Mark joined west midlands police in 1985 as a Management Services trainee. Since then he has held various posts in a number of local authorities including Solihull, Dudley, Redditch and the Cotswolds. His work has been mainly within the corporate centre covering such disciplines as performance management, consultation and research, policy and strategy development, corporate planning and partnership development. He joined West Berkshire Council in 2005 and is currently holds the post of Partnerships Manager, being responsible for, amongst other matters, the LSP, community strategy, parish planning, economic development and the voluntary sector.

He is a lifelong Birmingham City fan and is married and has recently become a father with a new baby girl.

Steve Bendle, Community Finance Solutions

Neil Casey, Collaboration Manager ,National Support Service Collaboration



Neil has nearly 20 years of experience within the voluntary sector , having held senior management positions and been Chief Executive of two national charities. During this time he has been involved in managing two mergers. Neil is now Director of Wild Goose Consulting a company that provides consultancy and interim management support to charities. He has been working with *bassac* in an interim capacity most recently managing their leadership of aspects of the Defra funded Every Action Counts programme. He is now implementing the first phase of *bassac's* lead partner role of the new National Support Service Collaboration workstream, a collaboration between *bassac*, ACRE, IVAR, CFN and CES. The NSS replaces the hubs in supporting the third sector. Neil is vice-chairman of the international charity People In Aid, an umbrella body for over 400 development NGO's which provides support for good practice in HR management within the development sector.

Keith Harrison, Chief Executive, Action with Communities in Rural Kent



Keith Harrison was co-opted to the ACRE board in February 2007. Keith was appointed Chief Executive Officer of Action with Communities in Rural Kent in May 2006. Keith's previous employment experience includes: Management of the Somerset Levels & Moors LEADER+ Programme and Rural Community Fieldworker for Gloucestershire Rural Community Council.

Catherine Johnstone, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Capacitybuilders



Acting Chief Executive, Catherine Johnstone, joined Capacitybuilders in October 2007 as Specialist Advisor.

Previous to this, she was Chief Executive at RAISE, where she had been since January 2004.

Catherine's career has spanned the private, public and voluntary/community sector and includes nursing, training, community care and quality standards. Catherine has previously been the CEO of a voluntary/community infrastructure organisation, NVQ Assessor, Primary Care Group Board member, National Social Enterprise Advisor, Economic Partnership Director and conference speaker.

Friday 13 June

Revd Canon John Brown – Chair



Canon John Brown was appointed Chair of ACRE in 2001. He is also Chairman for the Rural Community Council of Essex, Chairman for the Thames Chase Community Forest Forum, Chairman for Churches Tourism Association, Vice-Chairman for the English Rural Housing Association and Trustee for Volunteering England. Canon John Brown was appointed a Deputy Lieutenant of Essex in 2007.

Cllr Ken Cleary, Chairman of NALC

Ken entered the first tier of local government in 1983 when he was elected to St Helen's MBC and Seneley Green Parish Council. Between 1984 and 1992 Ken was, among many other posts, a member of the Merseyside police authority and chair of the Police Complaints sub committee. Ken also became a member of the Merseyside probation committee. Between 1990 and 1991, Ken was Mayor of St Helen's MBC. In December 2004 Ken became the chairman of the National Association of Local Councils.

Ron Scrutton, Deputy Director, Rural Policy Division

Ron has worked for MAFF/Defra for over 30 years having spent time responsible for horticultural policy, dairy policy and policy on the single farm payment. Before becoming head of rural policy at the end of 2008 he undertook a substantial project on local authority waste funding which informed discussions within the Comprehensive Spending Review.

Frances Rowe, One North East



Frances has worked for One NorthEast, the Regional Development Agency, for 5 years; in 2004 she was promoted to Rural and Environment Manager with responsibility for the rural and environment programme, and team within the Agency. Frances is now Rural Policy and Partnerships Manager with the Agency.

Frances was chair of Northumberland National Park from 1996 to 2001 and a Board member of the Countryside Agency 2000 to 2005. She is a former Marketing and Development Manager of , Northumberland Wildlife Trust, and was assistant director of the Council for National Parks in London.

A career as an agricultural and environmental journalist followed three years at Harper Adams University College – where she qualified in agricultural marketing and business administration. She also has a Certificate in Nature Conservation from the University of Newcastle upon Tyne.

In 2006 Frances was awarded a Winston Churchill Travelling Fellowship to visit the United States, to look at how farmers are reconnecting with their customers and markets.

Pat Holtom, ACRE trustee



Pat has worked extensively in both the public and private sector in rural areas and was Rural Development Officer for Norfolk County Council for seven years developing social, environmental, community, training and economic projects in the Norfolk Rural Priority Areas. She is a Trustee of ACRE and sits on the Marketing and Communications Sub Group. She is currently Vice Chair of the East of England Regional Forum and Chair of Market Towns East. She is Chair of the Local Area Group which developed the successful LEADER bid for the Waveney Valley She is a past rural Board member of the East of England Development Agency and is now working as a freelance consultant specializing in rural issues. In the past, she ran a smallholding, making cheese and yoghurt, keeping goats, sheep, pigs, bees and growing fruit and vegetables. She plays a mean second violin in the Wymondham Symphony Orchestra and remains a keen gardener and an active advocate for the rural economy.

Kathrin Luddecke, Local Area Co-ordinator, Oxfordshire County Council



With a background in policy development, Kathrin Luddecke has experience of on-the-ground community engagement and empowerment, gained in a previous role working in the co-operative sector and now as the county council's lead on community-led planning. She is responsible for facilitating and monitoring constructive dialogue between Oxfordshire communities developing their own plans for the future of their area and council services.

At a strategic level, the county council is working with local partners such as the district councils, PCT and the Oxfordshire RCC to develop an effective and joined-up infrastructure to support community-led planning, for the benefit of communities and public sector agencies alike. Part of that work is to explore best practice approaches to community planning and 'bridging' with local authorities and partnerships across the county, whether in rural parishes, market towns or larger urban areas.

Rebecca Carley, Area Co-ordinator , Oxford City Council



Rebecca Carley has a background in social and co-operative enterprise and the voluntary sector. More recently she has worked in local government, firstly in South Somerset and now in Oxford City Council as an Area Co-ordinator.

Through its area committee approach, Oxford City Council has been steadily building greater dialogue between local people and council services and developing area plans. Amongst other things, Rebecca spends time working with local people and councillors on capacity building and community planning whilst providing a bridge with the statutory agencies and councils and strategic policy.

Sue Chalkley, Hastoe Housing Association

Angela Wilkinson, Humber and Wolds Rural Community Council

Mark Powell, Wheels to Work Project Officer, Community Council of Shropshire



Mark Powell is the Shropshire Wheels to work Project Officer. Wheels to Work is operated by the Community Council of Shropshire and aims to improve access to work by finding solutions to peoples' transport problems.

Mark has been the Project Officer for almost two years and is responsible for interviewing clients and matching them with transport solutions. This includes mentoring and transport planning for clients throughout their time with Wheels to Work. Marks role also includes liaising with potential referral agencies (Job Centre Plus, Connexions, Probation service, Prince's Trust) and promoting the scheme throughout Shropshire. Mark participates in the regional development of Wheels to Work through involvement in the West Midlands Wheel to Work Network.

Matthew Bell, Devon County Council



Matt Bell originally trained as a Product Design Engineer at Glasgow University. Since then he has travelled down the country to London to study for a Masters in Leadership for Sustainable Development with Forum for the Future. Gaining a place on the National Graduate Development Programme for Local Government he has spent the last 4 years working for Devon County Council. Concentrating on the role that communities can take in shaping their own future, including the role of a frontline elected member he has supported many communities across Devon to take control of what happens. During that time, he recognised the need to take all the excellent work of communities' parish plans and market and coastal plans and present them, publicly, so that others could learn from what has been achieved and decision makers would have the information to make better decisions!

David Wood, Rural Action East Regional Co-ordinator



David manages Rural Action East, the regional umbrella organization for the six Rural Community Councils of the East of England (www.RuralActionEast.org.uk). The prime objective of the charity is to provide a rural voice to regional stakeholders and hence, help rural communities to achieve their vision for their communities. This includes giving individuals the skills, confidence and support they need to play a full role in village life and enable fair access to services. David has personally led projects on market town development, community planning, access to ICT support and application of an outcomes approach to projects. Other work by Rural Action East includes support and advice to communities on climate change mitigation (carbon reduction); administration of grants; support for rural playing fields; and training to groups and individuals.

Prior to joining the third sector in 2002, David spent his working life in private industry carrying out a variety of technology and product development and programme management roles in BT.

Outside work, his interests include the usual house and garden maintenance and for excitement, and as often as time permits, motorcycling, sailing and skiing.

Arlene Kersley, Rural Housing Enabler for Berkshire, Community Council for Berkshire



Arlene has been the RHE at the Community Council for Berkshire since September 2005 and has been solely responsible for implementation of the project there. As RHE Arlene has conducted 18 housing need surveys to date and is progressing rural exception schemes in 4 villages. Arlene has taken on a number of strategic roles since joining CCB; as the RHE representative on the Housing Corporation Rural Housing Advisory Group, the RHE representative on the SEERA (South East England Regional Assembly) Housing Forum, and was an RHE Mentor on the IDeA Rural Excellence Programme.

Previously Arlene worked within the Housing Advice Team of a Local Authority on a Home Office funded project managing the living conditions of Asylum Seekers. Prior to that she worked in the Private Sector and in her early career worked in the finance sector on mortgage backed securities. Arlene has a BA in Political Science.

Crispin Moor, Commission for Rural Communities, ACRE trustee



Crispin is the Whitehall Director of the Commission for Rural Communities. His key responsibilities are to serve as a member of the Commission Management Board; to lead the CRC's engagement with Whitehall Departments and with Parliament; and to ensure the overall quality of our advice to and engagement with Whitehall and Parliament.

Crispin has also worked for the CRC as its Director of Rural Expertise. Prior to that he headed teams working on local governance and housing within the Countryside Agency. Earlier in his career Crispin worked on rural policy at the Local Government Association, including periods of secondment to Defra and to the (then) DETR.

Crispin was co-opted to the ACRE board in January 2007.

Stephen Wright, South West ACRE Network



Stephen Wright is currently the Regional Director of SWAN – the South West ACRE Network of Rural Community Councils which embraces all seven RCCs in the South west Region.

He has worked in the Voluntary and Community Sector for nearly thirty years, previously with the Devon Trust of Nature Conservation, the Community Council of Staffordshire and until June 2006, for 22 and half years as Director of the Gloucestershire Rural Community Council. He has also played a very active role in Parish and Town Councils, having been County Secretary to the Associations in both Staffordshire and Gloucestershire, and with two other colleagues, the instigator of what has now become the Nationally recognised qualification for Parish and Town Council Clerks for which he received his MBE in 1999.

Currently, he sits on the South West Regional Assembly as one of four elected members from the Voluntary and Community Sector in the Region, having recently stood successfully for re-election. As such he is a member of the Regional Planning Committee. Stephen is also a Board member of the South West Forum for the VCS (which he helped found in the 1990's) and of RISE the Regional Infrastructure for Social Enterprise, which grew out of an RCC initiative under round 2 of the Single Regeneration Budget programme, the first ever AL VCS SRB Project in the country.