

# Rural Housing Enabler Programme

RSN National Rural Conference

Max Banfield  
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# RHE Programme overview

- ACRE leads the Defra-funded programme, working in partnership 34 members enabling the development of rural affordable housing through RHEs
- RHEs are independent specialists in initiating and progressing rural housing development, driven by community engagement and housing need
- RHEs act as brokers bringing together community leaders, registered providers, landowners and planners
- Working with communities at all stages of development RHEs can help cultivate change in perception towards the impact of new housing

# Programme outcomes to date

The programme commenced in April 2022. since then RHE work has led to:

**227**

Developments in progress throughout the country

**2,100+**

Potential new affordable homes either planned or being built

**30**

Steering groups established nationally

# Programme outcomes to date

An independent evaluation by CCRI/EAP analysed the economic impact of the programme, determining that:

**£3.30** social value results from every £1 spent over 3 years.

Value is categorised into 3 main groups of outcomes:

- Empowering the community to act by building confidence
- Increasing trust between the different actors
- Addressing local needs



# Impact on communities

Lucie is a resident of a small affordable housing scheme delivered with RHE involvement on a Rural Exception Site.

Lucie lived in the village with her parents until adulthood, when she moved with her partner to a flat away from the village. The couple have since had young children and have had to move several times between private rentals, including when a landlord decided to sell early in their lease. These frequent moves have been disruptive and stressful, as well as expensive – with repeated letting agent fees, deposits and moving costs.

The completion of the rural affordable housing scheme gave Lucie and her family the opportunity for a secure tenancy and an affordable rent, as well as the chance to live in the village where they have strong roots, but which would be otherwise unaffordable: **‘if we were paying the private rent, we wouldn’t be able to afford to live here’.**

Lucie and her partner both work, and having their families close by is a big help in balancing work and childcare. In turn, they can provide help to older family members. They really value their children experiencing the same village life that they did growing up, including attending the local school.

The family feel settled and stable, finds living costs more manageable, and feel less anxious about their future: **‘I would never have dreamed I would have been able to live here ... It’s an amazing opportunity, and I felt, and do still feel, very lucky’.**

# Barriers to development

RHEs face multiple obstacles in establishing and progressing rural affordable housing schemes. These include:

- Registered providers being reluctant to invest in rural exception sites, as the low volume of housing means profitability is lower than in urban developments
- Reduced funding for local authorities means less resourcing in planning, leading to increased delays and rejections
- Low housing supply, with landowners holding out for increased land value resulting from government housing targets

# Priorities for programme development



## **Increased awareness and understanding**

RHEs and the impact of rural affordable housing needs more exposure



## **Involvement of registered providers and Landowners**

RP's and landowners are an essential part of the process, but can be reluctant to engage



## **Connecting local work with national strategy**

In order to be successful locally, RHEs need to link in with national activity



## **Diversified sources of funding**

RHEs need funding that is secure, diverse and long-term

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