



Annual Review 2010



Supported By

SERCC Funders 2009/10



GOVERNMENT OFFICE FOR THE SOUTH EAST



And the eight Rural Community Action Network Members of the South East



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Chairs Report



I took over as SERCC Chair at the AGM in October 2009, and am supported by a very able group of trustees who bring extensive knowledge and expertise to SERCC's work. We will need all this expertise, as we move into the new financial year in a time of even greater uncertainty than we have had in the two preceding years. We are awaiting the impacts that will arise from a new Coalition Government, faced with meeting the challenges of the recession and a budget deficit which will inevitably mean public funding cutbacks. The incoming government is advocating the removal, or reduction of the role of statutory regional strategic organisations and a move to the shaping of policy and delivery of services at a local level. We do not yet know how all these changes will impact on SERCC and the RCCs, but they will bring both challenges and opportunities.

Meanwhile, SERCC and the Rural Community Action Network across the South East continue to be proactive champions for the mainstreaming of services to rural communities and are confident that the resilience of rural people, with their strong community spirit and capacity for addressing challenges through community effort and volunteering, will help to see them through.

The SERCC business plans for this last year and for the coming year put significant effort into developing new models for income generation and diversification. SERCC's member RCCs have

worked together over the last year, to identify new opportunities to access funding. We will utilise our skills, knowledge and experience and our unique 'reach' into rural communities to provide new income streams to support those rural communities.

Finally I would like to acknowledge the tremendous support we have received from our members and partners which has been so essential to our joint achievements.

Glyn Thomas

SERCC Chair

October 2009 to March 2010

Chief Executives Report



Welcome to SERCC's review of the last twelve months. During this time SERCC has maintained its profile and position as the champion of rural communities across the South East and our portfolio of projects has increased.

We have continued to use the Oxfordshire Centre for Social Inclusion evidence we commissioned on rural deprivation, www.rural-evidence.org.uk to highlight the fact that a very significant number of the region's vulnerable and disadvantaged people live in rural areas and that failing to support them with equable or alternative models of services because they are 'hard to reach', is beginning to border on culpable neglect on the part of some statutory service providers.

We have raised the issue of poor broadband provision in rural areas and that despite the increasing importance of the internet and a good broadband connection to everyday life, many of our rural areas are consigned to operating in a 'digital desert', again disadvantaging hundreds of thousands of rural people. We wait to see how the new government will support increased roll out of broadband to our rural communities.

We also launched our Community Led Planning web based database www.clp-se.org.uk containing details of all the Community Led Plan Actions completed in the South East. This makes a significant contribution to the evidence base of

the needs of rural people across the region.

Going forward, we have identified with our members, 10 Rural Policy and Delivery Priorities which we and they will champion across all layers and departments of government in the coming year. These priorities cover those areas where we feel the needs of rural communities may be forgotten or overlooked, or where the rural dimension of an issue requires particular attention. At a time when all public sector services will be under review, SERCC and the RCCs want to ensure that the rural voice is heard and these rural priorities in particular are understood by policy and decision makers alike.

These Rural Priorities, all of which are essential for the future of rural areas in both social and economic terms are :-

- Recognition of rural deprivation
- Access to services in rural areas
- The Rural Economy – with a focus on growth
- Rural broadband provision
- Affordable rural housing
- Addressing fuel poverty
- Services for the ageing population
- A future for rural young people
- Support for community buildings and assets
- Rural public and community transport

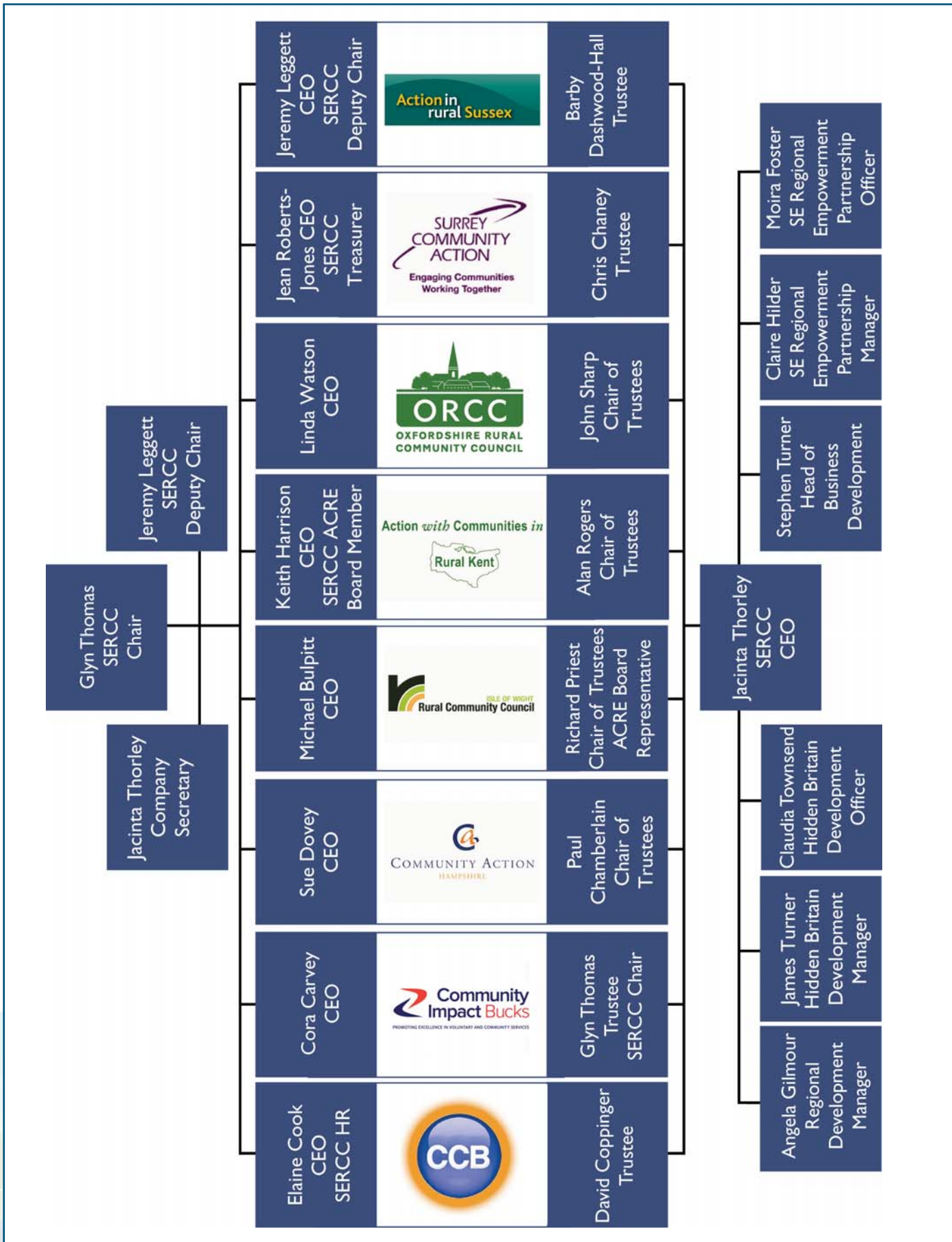
Much of the overarching context for future action and policy decisions will be provided by Climate Change and resilience, we will address all of the above priorities in this context.

None of the work showcased in this review would have been possible without the hard work and dedication of SERCC's highly skilled and valued team, and my thanks go to them for all they do.

Jacinta Thorley

SERCC CEO

Governance



Governance



SERCC is the regional umbrella organisation of the eight Rural Community Action Network Members across the South East and was established in 2002 as a charity and company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales.

Rural Community Action Network Members (RCANs) are independent, county-based, rural community development charities, providing support and advice to rural community organisations and individuals. They are the major rural VCS stakeholder in a range of local, regional and national funding and support initiatives in the delivery of public services. They also provide infrastructure support to rural voluntary and community groups in both generic and specialist arenas.

The work of SERCC has two major themes::

- Advocacy - to increase the voice for rural communities in the SE and influence policies that affect their quality of life.
- Capacity building of the RCANs by providing impetus for and facilitating RCANs working together, to build their quality, productivity and professional skills, to enable them to better support rural communities.

16 SERCC Trustees are appointed from the

member RCANs, with one RCAN Trustee and the CEO from each charity. Board meetings are held quarterly. On appointment new Trustees are assisted in familiarising themselves with the charity and the context within which it operates through an induction pack and Annual Strategy Awayday.

Visits and training opportunities on good governance are offered throughout the year through the SERCC network. Internal governance, management and administrative systems are set up in accordance with the ACRE Good Practice Quality Standards.



Policy & Advocacy

In 2009/10 we said we would:

Develop SERCC's role as advocate for rural communities across the South East by -

- Positively influencing the development of policies and delivery programmes that impact on rural communities and bring about changes for the benefit of those communities.
- Raising awareness in statutory agencies of the challenges in maintaining sustainable rural communities and increasing the rural evidence base.
- Raising awareness of levels of rural social exclusion in the SE Region.
- Continuing to build strong partnerships with other regional and national organisations involved in the support and development of rural communities.



RCAN Regional Networking



- With the Community Buildings Advisers and our national network ACRE, we launched the web based Community Building Database for the region, to support the rural evidence base.
- Supported all the SE RCCs towards achieving the ACRE Quality Standard Levels Two and Three and ISO 9001.
- Peer Reviewed other RCCs in other English regions to help them achieve the ACRE Quality Standards

In 2009/10 we said we would:

- Continue to develop a regional perspective and collaborative approach to the operation of our county RCANs so as to enhance their operation and effectiveness.
- Maintain support to the SERCC Staff Networks and support the professional development of staff and the ACRE Quality Performance of the SERCC network.
- To continue to promote the work of the RCANs and their unique role as rural community development charities.

During the year we have :

- Held 28 quarterly meetings for the SE RCAN staff networks of Trustees, CEOs, Deputy CEOs, Rural Housing Enablers, Community Development Workers, Community Building Advisers & Accessibility and Transport Officers.
- Held training courses for staff and trustees on rural issues relating to Community Led Planning, Housing, Eco Building, Transport and Climate Change
- Supported ACRE in its updating of the Community Led Planning Toolkit



Hidden Britain



In 2009/10 we said we would:

Continue to support community development and promote regeneration in rural communities across the region through the continued development of the existing 10 projects and support 15 new Hidden Britain centres across the South East. The project works to ensure social and economic growth in rural communities through small tourism projects.

During the year we have:

- Been so successful, that this project has achieved a further three years funding through the Rural Development Programme for England in order to deliver the programme in 25 further communities and to work towards financial independence from public funding as a social enterprise.
- Continued to support the projects already in place and also helped to engage 15 new areas, by assisting them to
 - a. Identify local need
 - b. Form local networks and partnerships
 - c. Support them in the development of business plans and the preparation of funding bids
 - d. Support them in the implementation of their projects finding new markets for local businesses and underpinning village sustainability.

- Compiled detailed case studies on each project to share best practice.
- Produced Toolkits and guidance to support new communities who might wish to undertake similar projects.
- Developed the Hidden Britain SE website further to provide a vehicle for the toolkit and to help disseminate best practice case studies. www.hiddenbritainse.org.uk
- Networked widely to build the profile of the project as best practice model for responsible tourism development.
- Created a toolkit for incorporating tourism into the Community Led Planning Process
- Comissioned a thorough critique and evaluation of the project by the International Centre for Responsible Tourism (ICRT), which concluded the project was:

“delivering a high quality and effective service that meets the needs of rural communities and businesses pursuing destination development. In particular, its’ community development approach is proving very effective at engaging and building the capacity of these communities and rural businesses to use tourism as a vehicle for local economic development.”



SE Regional Empowerment Partnership



The South East Regional Empowerment Partnership (SEREP) was new work for SERCC in 2009-10. The REP already existed but was given a new focus by the Department for Communities and Local Government and SERCC was asked to act as the Accountable Body. The Partnerships remit is:

- To act as the hub for collecting, disseminating and encouraging good practice on empowerment in the region
- To support Local Authorities to increase the number of people who they worked with to help local people influence local services

During the year the partnership gave grants to 11 Voluntary and Community organisations including 4 RCCs, across 12 projects, to test models of empowerment in a variety of communities across the region. Some of the projects are outlined below:

- My Life, My Choice, based in Oxfordshire, helped to train people with learning disabilities to become 'champions' in key areas of their lives: such as health, housing, transport, justice etc. and to get their champions voice heard on behalf of people with learning disabilities.
- Worker's Educational Association in Brighton and Hove focused on providing a bridge between English language courses and active citizenship education to enable residents from diverse communities to work together.

- The SpeakUp Forum was funded to deliver a project aimed at strengthening BME empowerment and representation within East Sussex.
- Community Action Hampshire worked at improving the participation of young people in the CLP process.

The South East REP's Targeted Support for Empowerment and Participation Improvement (TSEPI) investment was provided for 9 Local Authorities and focused on empowering young people between 16 and 25, people with disabilities and diverse ethnic communities.

The outcomes of SEREP's Targeted Support for Empowerment and Participation Improvement investment and the dialogue it has engendered between Local Authorities and their communities has been inspiring. Case studies are available on www.serep.org.uk

Further work will be done in 2010-11 to share more widely what has been learned from the pilots, to develop support materials for Local Authority Officers and Councillors and to leave a legacy portfolio which can underpin further development after 2011.



Older People's Bursary Awards

SERCC were invited by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), to act as the Accountable Body for a small bursary fund of £40,000 which the EHRC wished to use, to raise the voice of older people across the region - particularly those from harder to reach and more excluded groups including those in rural areas.

Of the 23 organisations receiving funding:-

- All made efforts to increase the numbers of people from rural areas who they engaged
- Six set up completely new older peoples forums with people from the 'hard to reach' groups.
- Three undertook pieces of work with groups of people with Alzheimer's or dementia, both demonstrating to them what the services are they could receive, but also helping them to articulate their needs and engaging LAs and PCTs in understanding the support needs of those with dementia.
- Six groups set out specifically to increase the numbers on their forums from underrepresented groups and made good progress in achieving this.
- Four groups undertook pieces of research on the needs of older people, using focus groups of older people to inform the work. Two of these were linked to wider pieces of research from academic institutions (The University of Portsmouth and the British Society of Gerontologists) or Local Authorities which are still ongoing, but all will be influential in shaping local services for older people and an increased dialogue between older peoples groups and statutory organisations.
- Age Concern West Sussex produced a piece of 'evidence' about 'what is it like to be old.' They used seven older peoples groups in Sussex and got them to contribute to displays on what old age means to them. These will be



used with a variety of audiences in Sussex to raise the voice of older people across the county and inform the work of both statutory and voluntary sectors and some cross generational activity.

- Young at Heart used the money to get some chairs which could be used by older people with disabilities so that they could attend meetings. They then organised speakers from the local Older Peoples Forum and twelve new members joined. Speakers from the local Community Trust and the Tenants Residents committee also came and a positive dialogue ensued about support available to older people and the needs of the group.
- The Isle of Wight Older Voices group undertook a Participatory Appraisal approach to gathering information about older people's financial concerns and will use this as evidence in dialogue with statutory organisations to influence their decision making.
- The regional group SENS made contact with groups that presently had no links with the regional body and organised a series of meetings to increase the membership of underrepresented groups.

SERCC Organisational Development

In 2009/10 we said we would:

Continue to deliver SERCC Projects, develop SERCC as an organisation and secure funding to sustain its work.

During the Year we have :

Focused very strongly on becoming more economically sustainable and diversifying our income base. The SE RCCs have been supported with this project through a Capacitybuilders 'Improving Reach' grant. The Business Development project is ongoing work which will bear fruit over the next two years and is exploring opportunities for the eight RCCs and SERCC to tender for work collaboratively.

We negotiated funding for 2009/10 from:

- Defra through the ACRE RCAN national contract
- ACRE for the Rural Infrastructure England project
- SEEDA to undertake Rural Proofing of SE Legislation
- We continued to receive funding from our eight SE RCC members

We contributed to our sustainability by receiving funding for the delivery of several projects including;

- SEEDA RDPE - Hidden Britain Rural Tourism Project
- Acting as Accountable Body for CLG's SE Regional Empowerment Programme
- Acting as Accountable Body for CLG's SE Targeted Support Programme
- Acting as Accountable Body for the EHRC small grant programme for older people's groups.
- The Capacitybuilders "Improving Reach" programme for the SE RCC Business Development Project
- Defra for acting as Secretariat for the Rural Forum South East

SERCC members, attended two Strategy Development days in October 2009, to assess and evaluate the support SERCC provides. The feedback from this event has been used to develop the Business Plan and influenced the continuous improvement of the organisation.

The Year Ahead

In the light of emerging government policy and new regional structures, we will continue to meet our aims as outlined in the 2009 – 2012 Business Plan

- To positively affect the development of policies and delivery programmes that impact on rural communities and to effect changes for the benefit of those communities, particularly in relation to the ten Rural Priorities.
- To monitor the outcomes of rural mainstreaming
- To raise the awareness of rural communities about the increasing environmental impact of Climate Change and to support them in sustainable development that will mitigate these impacts.
- To raise awareness of rural social exclusion and to work to advocate for this issue to become a priority for policy makers and service providers across the region.
- To develop SERCCs role as advocate for rural communities across the SE and to be recognised as the principal regional organisation in the SE for all issues relating to rural communities and their quality of life.
- To support the continued work of the Hidden Britain Rural Tourism project across the SE.
- To act as the Accountable Body, to support the SE Regional Empowerment Partnership and the Targeted Support Programme

Notes on Financial Summary

The financial summary is for information only and may not contain sufficient details to allow a full understanding of the financial affairs of the South East Rural Community Councils (SERCC)

For further information, the full audited accounts should be consulted. Copies can be obtained from SERCC.

Board Members Statement

The Board Members confirm that the financial information in this Annual Review represents a summary extracted from the Annual Financial Statements of SERCC, as approved by the Board on 8 October 2010. These statements have been audited by HPCA LTD, Registered Auditors. The 2010 financial statements will be submitted to both the Charity Commission and the Registrar of Companies following the Annual General Meeting.

Report of the Independent Auditors to the Trustees of the South East Rural Community Councils

We have audited the financial statements for the year ended 31st March 2010

Respective responsibilities of trustees and reporting accountants.

The trustees' (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) responsibilities for preparing the Report of the Trustees and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice) and for being satisfied that the financial statements give a true and fair view are set out on page eight of the audited accounts.

Our responsibility is to audit the financial statements in accordance with relevant legal and regulatory requirements and International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland).

We report to you our opinion as to whether the

financial statements give a true and fair view, are properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice and are prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 2006. We also report to you whether, in our opinion the information given in the Report of the Trustees is consistent with those financial statements.

Basis of Audit Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland) issued by the Auditing Practices Board. An audit includes examination, on a test basis, of evidence relevant to the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. It also includes an assessment of the significant estimates and judgments made by the trustees in the preparation of the financial statements, and of whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the charitable company's circumstances, consistently applied and adequately disclosed.

We have undertaken the audit in accordance with the requirements of APB Ethical Standards including APB Ethical Standard - Provisions Available to Small Entities, in the circumstances set out in note 20 to the financial statements.

In our opinion the summary financial statement is consistent with the full annual financial statements of South East Rural Community Councils for the year ended 31 March 2010 and complies with the applicable requirements of section 427 of the Companies Act 2006, and the regulations made thereunder.

HPCA Limited
Chartered Accountants
Kingsway House
123 Goldsworth Road
Woking
Surrey
GU21 6LR

Financial Report

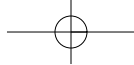
Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31st March 2010

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2010 Total Funds £	2009 Total Funds £
Incoming Resources				
Incoming resources from generated funds				
Activities for generating funds	84,348	14,000	98,348	52,712
Investment income	-	-	-	3,002
Incoming resources from charitable activities				
Projects and grants	-	712,599	712,599	167,543
Total incoming resources	83,348	726,599	810,947	223,257
Resources Expended				
Charitable activities				
SERCC Core running costs	31,947	-	31,947	64,332
Projects and grants	8,135	740,121	748,256	164,965
Governance Costs	9484	-	9484	5932
Total resources expended	49,556	740,121	789,687	235,229
Net Incoming/(Outgoing) Resources before transfers				
	34,782	(13,522)	21,260	(11,972)
Gross transfers between funds				
	(339)	339	-	-
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources	34,443	13,183	21,260	(11,972)
Reconciliation of Funds				
Total funds brought forward	78,717	30,486	109,203	121,175
Total Funds Carried Forward	113,160	17,303	130,463	109,203

Balance Sheet

Balance Sheet At 31st March 2010

	2010 £	2009 £
Fixed Assets		
Tangible Assets	1,841	494
Current Assets		
Debtors: amounts falling due within one year	9,475	15,965
Cash at bank	<u>173,938</u>	<u>117,304</u>
	183,413	133,269
Creditors		
Amounts falling due within one year	(54,791)	(24,560)
	<u>128,622</u>	<u>108,709</u>
Net Current Assets		
	130,463	109,203
Net Assets	<u>130,463</u>	<u>109,203</u>
Funds		
Unrestricted funds	113,160	78,717
Restricted Funds	<u>17,303</u>	<u>30,486</u>
Total Funds	130,463	109,203

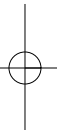
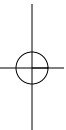


Credits

Photo Credits

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www.sercc.org.uk
www.serep.org.uk
www.hiddenbritainse.org.uk
www.rfse.org.uk
www.acre.org.uk

What does SERCC Provide?

SERCC Stakeholders including GOSE, SEEDA, Capacitybuilders, ACRE and Climate South East stated that SERCC provided:

- Support and Leadership for Regional implementation
- A Strategic Friend/Critic
- Knowledge, evidence and local intelligence
- An effective partner for Project Management and Delivery
- Rural Voice - one point of contact with a Regional perspective
- Information on how to best engage and support Rural Communities

The SERCC Board and Network Staff from the 8 SE Rural Community Action Charities stated that SERCC provided:

- Intelligence & Information with updates on policy and Government issues and prompts to respond to key issues
- Access to regional information and opportunities for growth via sub groups and initiatives such as the Hidden Britain Rural Tourism and the SE Business Development project.
- Lobbying & influence at Regional level which we could not otherwise achieve; from an organisation which punches above its weight
- A strong voice for the SE RCANs in the ACRE RCAN Network and the ability to evidence co-working
- Sharing of good practice in RCANs and collaboration on regional information that can be benchmarked i.e. Community Led Plan Case Studies, and the web based databases for Community Led Plan Actions and Community Buildings
- Signposting, mentoring and networking



South East Rural Community Councils

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