

Role Profile and Person Specification for Rural Housing Enabler

Job Title	Rural Housing Enabler
Salary	Salary: £36,294 p/a.
Hours	4 days p/w – 28 hrs. 28 flexible hours per week, mainly weekdays but will include evening meetings with Parish Councils and community groups.
Annual leave	140 hours per year (25 days FTE)
Location	Home working and on site
Managed by	Executive Director West of England Rural Network
Management responsibilities	A Rural Housing Project Administrator has been appointed for 14 hours per week to support this role and will report to the RHE
Start Date	Immediate
Term	Fixed term until 31 March 2025

PROJECT BACKGROUND:

With funds made available from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and channeled through the ACRE Network (Action with Communities in Rural England), WERN is looking for someone to help us enable more affordable homes to be delivered in rural communities across B&NES, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire where they are needed.

Working with our Local Authorities and Registered Provider partners, the postholder will form innovative partnerships with Parish Councils, the private sector, and others to increase the pipeline of rural affordable housing schemes and support potential delivery. Working through the ACRE Network, there is also the opportunity to directly inform national policy and strategy in addition to having a supportive peer network.

As part of the Government's 'Unleashing Rural Opportunity' strategy in July 2023, it announced funding for a network of Rural Housing Enablers (RHEs) across England until March 2025. The Strategy recognises that the country's economic growth and



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Working with Action for Communities in Rural England (ACRE) across South Gloucestershire, Bath & North East Somerset, North Somerset and Bristol

sustainability is dependent on a thriving rural economy, and key to achieving this goal is the availability of a range of housing for those who live and work in rural communities.

In the past, Rural Housing Enablers have played a critical role in responding to this challenge. Theirs is a multifaceted role reflecting the complexity of developing rural affordable housing. They build community support and encourage constructive engagement, evidence communities' housing needs, help identify sites, and bring all the key partners to the table.

There has been no dedicated RHE service in B&NES, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire for many years. The funding now made available by Defra, will enable a service to be developed focused on rural communities and on progressing more affordable home delivery in settlements of 3,000 or less by working with communities, Housing Associations, the private sector and the local authority.

JOB DESCRIPTION AND PERSON SPECIFICATION

Job purpose:

The post holder will lead on the Rural Housing Enabler project, identify affordable housing need in B&NES, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire's rural communities, and work with project partners to develop schemes and ultimately deliver homes to help meet that need.

Project Aims:

- Increase the pipeline number of rural affordable homes in West of England.
- Increase the number of schemes progressing to pre-development stage.
- Work closely with local communities to help understand local needs and the opportunities to deliver affordable housing via Registered Provider led approaches and other community-led approaches.
- Improve the awareness of housing issues in rural areas and the services available from the Rural Housing Enabler project.
- Contribute towards the local, regional, and national knowledge base and policy relating to the provision of rural affordable housing.

Responsibilities:

- Undertake activities as described in the Work Programme that support the achievement of the aims of the project.
- Actively promote the project through communities, partners, and other organisations.
- Record information relevant to the RHE Project up-to-date and in a form, which is user friendly and compliant with WERN GDPR responsibilities.
- Provide monthly/quarterly monitoring reports, project progress.
- Support, advise and steer communities and Parish Councilors from their initial interest in providing affordable housing, through scheme inception and ultimately pre-development phases to completion.

- Assist communities identify the nature and extent of affordable local housing need in their community, including where appropriate through a Housing Needs Survey.
- Support rural communities to choose a delivery option that best suits their capacity and in the knowledge of the availability of local technical support.
- Assist communities identify a deliverable site for development of affordable housing and/or secure affordable housing as part of market led schemes.
- Work with communities to build and maintain support for the scheme, ensuring the community is meaningfully engaged throughout the pre-development process, including potentially during scheme design.
- Build collaborative partnerships with key partners to provide a clear pathway to a successful planning application and delivery. Partners may include, but are not limited to, local communities, parish councils, housing association staff, officers from the Local Authority (including in their role as providers of affordable housing) and the Local Planning authority and local developers.
- Act as an honest broker between the different parties, providing informed and impartial advice.
- Support Neighbourhood and Community Plan groups implement their proposals and policies for delivering rural affordable housing.
- Create a supportive policy and political environment for rural affordable housing by providing training and advice to key stakeholders. This is likely to include training for local communities, parish councillors, local authorities, AONB Officers and Combined Authority officers, landowners, land agents and Registered Providers.
- Work closely with the Local Planning Authorities and Local Authority housing officers to develop policy and strategies and share practical initiatives and good practice to support the delivery of rural affordable housing.
- Provide regular pipeline monitoring reports, aligned to funding requirements, and as required by the Rural Housing Forum to inform prioritisation of RHE activity.
- Facilitate the Project Advisory Forum to effectively unlock local barriers at strategic or scheme level to ensure schemes progress to build and completion.

General Duties

1. Behave in accordance with WERN policies and values.
2. Ensure work is completed on time and to a high standard.
3. Liaise with key stakeholders and ensure they are kept informed of progress.
4. Prepare clear, concise and accurate reports.
5. Represent WERN at meetings with external partners.
6. Comply with WERN and ACRE monitoring and recording requirements.
7. Work co-operatively with other members of staff and partner organisations.
8. Take part in organisational and personal training as required.
9. Undertake such other duties as consistent with the purpose and level of this post as may from time to time reasonably be required by your line manager.

Rural Housing Enabler Person Specification

<i>Qualifications</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideally, a University Degree or professional qualification relevant to housing. • Professional qualification or relevant training and CPD
<i>Experience</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of working in the field of housing delivery and working with local authority planning and housing teams. • Experience of the development process related to housing. • Detailed knowledge of the housing sector and the key challenges facing the development of schemes and community engagement. • Excellent stakeholder engagement and management skills. • Excellent online skills including the ability to use Teams, Zoom and other teleconferencing packages. • Experience of supporting a board/advisory group, board development and governance. • Experience of working with diverse communities of place, interest and character.
<i>Knowledge</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of funding mechanisms relating to the delivery of affordable housing, including tendering and procurement. • Ability to form and maintain appropriate professional relationships with Parish Councils and other VCS organisations, communities, public sector employees, elected members and other appropriate agencies. • Knowledge of rural exception site policy and legislation
<i>Personal Skills</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good general IT skills (Microsoft Word, Excel, TEAMS, using databases and online surveys) • Ability to develop and progress the skills, knowledge and confidence of individuals and groups. • Ability to manage own priorities, time and workload to agreed deadlines, budget and quality standards. • Excellent communication skills in particular verbal communication giving advice in person, over the telephone or via Zoom and good written communication. • Ability to write concise reports, case studies, newsletter articles • Self-motivated and able to work under own initiative. • Diplomatic, articulate, enthusiastic, with good communication skills.
<i>Other</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to work from home with good access to broadband. • Ability to travel independently around B&NES, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire to visit groups and organisations • Confidence in working 'on the ground' in a community • Willingness to attend evening and occasional weekend meetings if necessary