

# The South West ACRE Network of Rural Community Councils



## Annual Review 2005-2006

**Our vision is a vibrant, inclusive, diverse region, and our mission is to be an effective focus for knowledge and expertise on rural issues.**



**Our aims are appropriate policy development, effective representation and advocacy, a vibrant voluntary and community sector, thriving rural community councils, and high quality services.**

**Our job is to support rural community councils in their important work.**



### Chairman's Review of 2005-2006

I am very pleased to be able to report the level of progress which has been made over the last year. SWAN has continued to build on its membership competencies and to enhance its profile and policy involvement across the region.

Our new Regional Director, Stephen Wright, has already enhanced the role of the organisation by his involvement and expertise and we look forward to making increasingly rapid progress into our future role.



We must however also pay due regard to the role of Oliver Baines and Caroline Vernon-Jackson. Caroline for her brief stay with us when she moved a great deal of work forward, and Oliver for so very helpfully bridging the gap between Caroline's departure and Stephen's arrival.



We are all conscious that rural communities are at increasing risk by the urbanisation of national policy. We need to continue to respond to these challenges in a positive manner whilst dealing with individual problems. I would like to pay tribute to the work being carried out by both our staff and our membership and trustees whose future enthusiasm and commitment are essential for maintaining our role and progress. Thank you all for your help.



John G. Hazelwood  
Chairman SWAN



**SWAN** comprises of all seven Rural Community Councils (RCCs) in the South west, listed alphabetically below. Each RCC has two representatives on the Board, usually the Chairman and Chief Executive:

- **CORNWALL:** Cornwall Rural Community Council: Phil Randall and Mark Richardson
- **DEVON:** Community Council of Devon: Peter Dunning and Jay Talbot
- **DORSET:** Dorset Community Action: Jane Raimes and Colin Brady
- **GLOUCESTERSHIRE:** Gloucestershire Rural Community Council: John Hazelwood and Lesley Archer
- **SOMERSET:** Community Council for Somerset: Philippa Hawks and David Smith
- **WEST of ENGLAND:** Community Action: Sue Gawler and Vanessa Collier
- **WILTSHIRE:** Community First: Michael Jones and Ken Grimes

The role of Chairman is currently held by John Hazelwood, in his capacity as the elected representative from SWAN on the ACRE Board of Trustees.

Stephen Wright resigned as Director of the Gloucestershire Rural Community Council and moved to his new role as Regional Director of SWAN in July 2006. His position as a Trustee, representing GRCC, was taken over by their new Chief Executive Lesley Archer.



The SWAN Board including Stephen Wright and Jane Nichols (SWAN Administrator). Jay Talbot and Jane Raimes were not present.

## Key Achievements

Important relationships have continued to be developed with our many partners from government, public agencies and the voluntary and community sector. During the year the quarterly meetings between representatives of SWAN and senior representatives of the Government Office for the South West (GoSW) and the South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA) have continued to be productive and informative. They together with, Black

South West Network, South west Forum and the Market and Coastal Towns Association, have been key partners with SWAN in delivering its work.

Funding from the Home Office (via GoSW through the ChangeUp programme) Lloyds TSB and the Gulbenkian Foundation helped SWAN to develop areas of work in four themes:

## **Influencing**

Significant contracts for the future support of the SWAN network were agreed with both Government Office South West (GOSW) and South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA). For further information see page .

## **BME and Diversity**

All seven RCCs trained staff, and a proportion of Trustees in Diversity issues. This was key because it opened people's eyes to the broader implications of diversity so negating the old cliché, "well of course it doesn't apply to us as we have no ethnic minorities here!" The training also raised the increasingly important issue of migrant workers from EU countries.

A hugely successful conference on Rural Diversity and BME issues was held at Taunton racecourse on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2006. Frontline and infrastructure organisations, as well as individuals, were well represented from across sectors and the region. The Conference had a major impact on frontline organisations. A report on the conference is now available on the SWAN website:  
[www.swan-network.org.uk](http://www.swan-network.org.uk).



## **Quality Standards**

All seven RCCs attained ACRE Quality Standard Level Two within the time-scale appointed i.e. 31 March 2006, the only regional grouping to achieve this. The ACRE Quality Standard is the given standard recognised by Defra for RCCs. This now puts the South West well ahead of the game nationally. South West RCCs will all now be aiming to achieve Level 3 by 31 March 2007.

One of the successes arising from this element has been the sharing of best practice between RCCs on quality and policies.

## Workforce Development

Three RCCs: Devon, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire have developed, with the aid of an HR consultant, a standard of *work based competencies* from which to draw forward annual appraisals for staff. This has been a step change in the ability of more accurately assessing the skills needs and development of staff across the RCC work force. This will be cascaded to the other RCCs.

## South West Regional Development Agency

SWAN has one current contract with SWRDA

- **Modernising Rural Delivery**

This is a 16 month programme of funding of £100,000 which commenced in January 2006 and runs until March 2007. The elements of the programme include research, networking and professional development for RCC staff and trustees. A series of events will take place over the coming months including:

- The delivery of a major research document on Community Planning which will be the focus of a conference in the Autumn 2006 involving participants from parish plan groups to government ministers. The Report can be found on the SWAN website at: [www.swan-network.org.uk](http://www.swan-network.org.uk)
- 8 networks have been set up involving specialist areas of RCC work. All have met at least once during the year, and each will meet a further 3 times over the coming months. External organisations will also be involved to share information, best practice etc
- The annual SWANapping conference was held in January 2006 when over fifty participants – both Trustees and Staff members - contributed to the discussions. External speakers included Colin Molton, Deputy Chief Executive of the SWRDA and, John Mills, Director of the Rural Communities Division of DEFRA. Both were challenging in their comments, but supportive of the role of the RCCs. In addition, SWANapping gives the RCCs a chance to review the past year and set the key priorities for SWAN for the coming months.

## Looking Ahead

2006/07 has begun very positively for SWAN and the network of RCCs. A number of contracts have been secured which will enable the network to develop its role further, as well as providing opportunities for the strengthening the infrastructure.

## **Government Office for the South West**

A two year contract providing £60,000 per year was awarded to SWAN as core funding. This will help to support the work of the two members of staff employed by SWAN; Stephen W. Wright, Regional Director and Jane Nichols, Administrator, through until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008.

Amongst the milestones for the delivery of this work is to expand the role and influence of SWAN in working with colleague organisations including the South West Forum and Black South West Network. SWAN will be particularly focussing on developing relations with key partners and identifying and developing appropriate funding opportunities for the network including bids to Capacity Builders, the Big Lottery and potentially, the Carnegie UK Trust.

## **South West Regional Development Agency**

A further contract with the SWRDA is currently being negotiated.

- **Rural Renaissance: The “Crossmead Project”**

Following on from Colin Molton’s discussions with SWAN at the 2006 SWANUpping event, the network has been given the great opportunity to help support the delivery of the Rural Renaissance and Modernising Rural Delivery programmes in the south west. Activities will include advice for groups seeking funding, training for staff in project appraisal and publicising the programme. A total of £248,000 will be split between the seven RCCs and SWAN, to fund the project.

## **Capacity Builders**

SWAN made a successful bid to Capacity Builders as part of the ChangeUp continuation programme for work during 2006-2007. The total sum awarded was £19,344.39 which will be split £9,000 each, between two of the themes developed under ChangeUp: Rural BME and Marginalised Groups and Performance Improvement. The focus of the two areas will be respectively: Improving BME engagement in rural community activities and organisations, and all 7 RCCs attaining Level 3 of ACRE Quality Standards by 31 March 2007. The remainder will be taken as a Management Fee by SWAN.

A further Bid to Capacity Builders has been lodged for additional work around Performance Improvement, Continuing Professional Development of Staff in the RCCs and to develop a more comprehensive Policy Briefing service to members has been developed with the South West Market and Coastal Towns Association and the emerging South West Conference of County Associations of Local Councils. The outcome is awaited.

A third bid currently being developed with the Black South West Network (BSWN), SWAN and South West Equalities is looking to bolster yet again the core BME hubs in the region, and the forthcoming regional dimension of the Commission for Equality and Human Rights. We would also anticipate further resources for RCCs and their work in this field.

In all these bids, SWAN is seeking to ensure that it is working with the relevant partners to aid communication and engagement and reduce duplication.

## **Towards the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007**

SWAN will be working closely with Action for Communities in Rural England (ACRE), the national body for rural community councils, to develop an evidence base to feed into the HM Treasury review of the Government's spending for the three years from 2008. This will be a crucial period for all rural programmes as they currently cease at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008. Arising from this work, SWAN will be producing a Briefing pack of how RCCs in the South West work to deliver Government's objectives.

## **Internal Review**

During the coming months SWAN will also be reviewing its internal organisation. Areas of focus will include review of the constitution, consideration of Incorporation, review of the role of the SWAN secretariat. The aim is to make SWAN as effective and sustainable as possible in its support of the 7 RCCs.

## **In Conclusion...**

2005 – 2006 has been an excellent year of consolidation and opportunity. The resignation of the Regional Manager, Caroline Vernon-Jackson, early in the year could have meant a disastrous hiatus in the delivery of SWAN' Work Programme. However, and fortuitously, the resignation of Oliver Baines as Chief Executive of the Cornwall RCC meant that SWAN was able to immediately engage his services on a part-time basis until a permanent successor could be found. During this time, SWAN was indeed fortunate to have as its Administrator Jane Nichols, who gave stability and continuity. It was also fortunate in being able to call upon colleagues within the RCCs – both Trustees and Staff, to take particular roles and maintain progress.

In acknowledging the above, the Trustees also wish to place on record their grateful thanks to the colleagues with whom we have worked from within the Government Office for the South West – acknowledging especially the role played by Tim Render, Director for Sustainability and Rural Affairs; from South West Regional Development Agency, Colin Molton, Deputy Chief Executive and his Rural Team, and from DEFRA, especially John Mills, Director of the Rural Communities Division. To them, their colleagues and all those with whom we have engaged, we express our grateful thanks.

## Financial Report

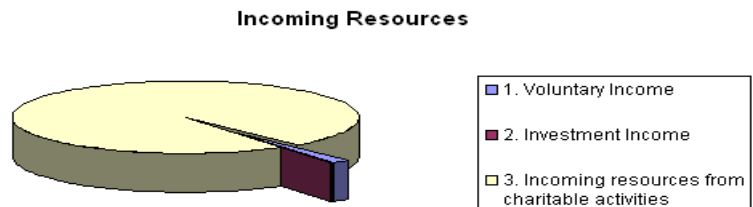
**The results** The charity had an income and expenditure deficit of £14,512 compared with a surplus of £41,144 in 2005. The charity's restricted funds are those for a pre-agreed purpose where the donor has imposed conditions on the use of the funds. The policy for such funds is to adhere to the relevant conditions; temporary timing differences from income received may occur at the reporting date and is the reason for negative balances on some funds.

**Incoming resources** Total incoming resources increased by £318,292 to £412,908.

**Resources expended** Total outgoing resources increased by £365,766 to £427,420. The significant items contributing to this increase were:

- Direct charitable expenditure increased by £150,431 to £201,339
- Direct charitable expenditure on grants (legacy parish plans) of £221,600 was a new item

<b>Incoming Resources</b>	<b>£412,908</b>
1. Voluntary Income	£7,000
2. Investment Income	£953
3. Incoming resources from charitable activities	£404,955



<b>Source of incoming resources from charitable activities</b>	<b>£404,955</b>
1. DEFRA	£378,185
2. SWRDA	£26,770



## SWAN Contacts

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<b>Resources Expended</b>	<b>£427,420.00</b>
1. Charitable Activities	£210,339
2. Grants for charitable activities	£221,600
3. Governance costs	£4,481



## Summary of Results

### Summary of Financial Information

The summarised statements set out below have been extracted from the full consolidated annual financial statements and have been prepared in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice – Charities Accounting and Reporting (SORP 2005), which were approved by the trustees and signed on its behalf on 13 October 2006.

The full financial statements have been:

- audited and the auditor's opinion was unqualified
- submitted to the Charity Commission

These summarised financial statements may not contain sufficient information to allow for a full understanding of the financial affairs of the charity.

For further information, the full financial statements: the auditor's report on those financial statements, and the Trustees' report should be consulted.

All this information is contained in the Trustees' Annual Report and Accounts 2005/2006, copies of which can be obtained from SWAN.

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### Statement of Financial Activities Year Ended 31 March 2006

	2006 £	2005 £
Total incoming resources	412,908	94,616
Total resources expended	427,420	61,654
Net incoming/outgoing resources	(14,512)	41,144
Total net transfers between funds	0	0
Total net other recognised gains/(losses)	0	0
Net movement in funds	(14,512)	41,144
Fund balances at 1 April 2005	67,880	26,736
Fund balances carried forward at 31 March 2006	53,368	67,880

### Summary Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2006

	2006 £	2005 £
<b>Funds</b> (see note below)		
Unrestricted Funds	13,623	14,389
Restricted Funds	39,745	53,491
<b>Accumulated Funds</b>	53,368	67,880
<b>Analysis of Net Assets</b>		
<b>Fixed Assets</b>		
Tangible assets	1120	-
Investments	-	-
Total fixed assets	1120	-
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Debtors	26,893	0
Cash at bank	46,925	69,521
Total current assets	73,818	69,521
<b>Creditors</b>		
Amounts falling due within one year	21,570	1,641
<b>Net Current Assets</b>	52,248	67,880
<b>Total Assets less Current Liabilities</b>	53,368	67,880
<b>Net Assets</b>	53,368	67,880