

# The South West ACRE Network of Rural Community Councils



## Annual Review 2006-2007

**Our Vision is for 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.**

**Our Business Plan, "SWAN BUSINESS – A Plan for 2007 – 2010", is available on our website: [www.swan-network.org.uk](http://www.swan-network.org.uk)**

## Chairman's Review of 2006-2007

This has been a very satisfactory year! Our new regional organisation is becoming increasingly involved in both developing regional opportunities and supporting the individual Rural Community Councils in the South West.



In the national arena, SWAN is seen to be one of the most forward looking regional organisations and is steadily gaining in status and involvement.

The future continues to be challenging. We need to respond to the impact of changes in both central and local government policy and funding streams if we are to maintain and enhance our role.



I would like to thank my colleague Trustees and Staff alike for their continued support to SWAN which has enabled the level of achievement over the past year.



John G Hazelwood CBE MA DL  
Chairman of Trustees



**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. During the year in question, these were:

Community Action (West of England):	Rosemary Todd and Vanessa Collier
Cornwall Rural Community Council:	Phil Randall and Mark Richardson
Community Council of Devon:	Peter Dunning and Jay Talbot
Dorset Community Action:	Colin Brady and Jane Raimes
Gloucestershire Rural Community Council:	John Hazelwood and Lesley Archer
Community Council for Somerset:	Philippa Hawks and David Smith
Community First, Wiltshire:	Jane Grant and Philippa Read

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.

## **Activities, Achievements and Performance**

### **Policy and Influencing**

SWAN with its partners in the Government Office South West (GoSW) and the South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA), built on and continued the series of quarterly meetings at which common issues and policy are discussed. In addition SWAN is represented on a number of outside bodies, where, again, it has the opportunity of representing rural issues to the host partners:

- South West Chamber of Rural Enterprise (SWCoRE)
- South West Regional Development Agency Rural Advisory Group (SWRDA)
- South West Forum of Voluntary and Community Organisations (SWF)
- Regional Infrastructure for Social Enterprise (RISE)
- South West Regional Assembly (SWRA)
- Infrastructure Strategy South West Implementation Group (ISSWIG)

This policy and influencing work is supported by funding from DEFRA's Rural Social and Community Programme through GoSW. It began in April 2006 and runs until 31 March 2008. This provides key support for the core administration of SWAN, against a set of agreed objectives and milestones.

### **Modernising Rural Delivery**



Through a contract with SWRDA, SWAN established a series of staff development networks to aid Continuing Professional Development: rural housing, village hall, social inclusion, parish planning, finance &

HR, rural advice and chief executives. RCC Trustees also had a network. Additionally, SWAN received support from SWRDA to stage an Annual Conference on a mutually agreed topic, and in association with the Market and Coastal Towns Association (MCTA) commissioned a firm of consultants in Bristol - BDOR Ltd - to undertake research into parish and town plans and their fit within the formal planning framework. This research was carried over from 2005/2006 into 2006/2007 by mutual agreement with SWRDA, and was finally produced in July 2006 to



widespread acclaim. A very successful conference was held in October 2006. The contract also provided support to the annual SWANUpping event – an internal conference for the member RCCs, their trustees and staff. The two day event held in January 2007, at the Swan Hotel in Wells, attracted over 80 participants, including high level representation from the Government Office South West, SWRDA and the South West Regional Assembly.

### **The Crossmead Project**

During the year this further contract with SWRDA was negotiated, providing some core support for SWAN, but more particularly investing directly in the capacity of the member RCCs to enable them to provide enhanced services to their communities in the field of bid negotiation and Social Enterprise. This contract runs until 31 March 2008.

### **Capacity Building**

The ChangeUp programme from Central Government for building the capacity of “Infrastructure Organisations” continued successfully during the year:

- **Quality Standards** – all the members of SWAN achieved ACRE Quality standard level II by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2006, and three had achieved Quality standard Level III by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007 (the only region in the country to do so)
- **Diversity and Rural BME** –together with our partner Black South West Network (BSWN) SWAN continued the work started the previous year by our Development Officer with the member RCCs to engage more actively in Diversity and Rural BME issues. A very successful Conference was organised in April 2006. A report on the conference is available on the SWAN website: [www.swan-network.org.uk](http://www.swan-network.org.uk). The next phase of work was undertaken under contract by the Olive Tree Association. The final report which examined improving black and minority ethnic (BME) engagement and participation in rural community life in the South West Region was received just after the year end, and its implementation forms a key part of the 2007-2008 Work Programme for SWAN.



## Parish Plan 'Legacy' grants administration

With the cessation of the Vital Villages Programme on 31 March 2005, there were a number of unresolved cases where Grant Aid to Parish Plan groups within communities had been awarded, but the end date not yet reached. Under an Agency Agreement with the Government Office for the South West these were in turn managed 'out' by SWAN. There was a small residue of these grants which passed into the next financial year, but by 31 March 2007, all cases were 'closed' and the files returned to the Government Office for the South West.

## Looking Ahead

- **Sustainable Development**

One of the key issues for the Trustees has been to establish SWAN as a credible and sustainable entity, serving the RCCs and promoting strategic policies at the regional level that will support rural communities.

As well as the contract with the Olive Tree Association on improving BME and Migrant Workers engagement and participation in rural community life, SWAN contracted with Oliver Baines to undertake research and prepare a proposal on the role for RCCs in helping rural communities adapt and counter the effects of Peak Oil and Climate Change. An interim presentation was made at the SWANUpping conference in January.

SWAN also 'bought into' a contract let by Dorset Community Action, which looked at the methodology employed in North Dorset supporting the Community-led Planning initiative.

Continuous activity will be required to underpin these core contracts and negotiate yet more resources for the organisation, particularly now that it has a full-time Regional Director and a part-time Administrator. Targets for this element of fundraising have been set, and any new contracts will always carry an administration fee.



The Trustees wish to see SWAN as the key regional organisation, consulted on and providing information about policy and strategy issues affecting rural communities and their well-being.

To this end, SWAN will be examining opportunities for bidding to other programmes as they arise, such as Capacity Builders; The Big Lottery; LloydsTSB, Carnegie UK Trust and others. It will be doing so for and on

behalf of its members always seeking to outpace work to them, as well as engaging in its own activities.

Finally, during the year, SWAN collated and published a set of 25 Case Studies, based on the work of its member RCCs, across a range of seven issues:



Community-led Planning  
Village Halls / Community Halls  
Social Inclusion  
Rural Affordable Housing  
Community Projects  
Rural Transport, and  
Gap Analysis and Mapping

These have been produced both as a set of 'grouped' and 'individual' pdfs for electronic distribution, and in printed format. They have been distributed widely in the Region to all Members of the House of Lords and of the Commons, as well as the SWRDA; SWRA and GoSW.

- **Internal Review**

The SWAN Board agreed that SWAN should transfer all its assets and liabilities to a company limited by guarantee. The process of incorporation should be complete by the end of September 2007.

- **External factors affecting achievement**

As with any Third Sector organisation – the generic term for the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector currently in use by Government – SWAN is extremely susceptible to external influences, particularly around funding streams attached to work programmes; hence why the Board is very keen to develop further its Risk Strategy.

Looking ahead into 2007 there are two major external influences which will have a crucial impact on the work of SWAN and its member RCCs.

The first will be the change in Prime Minister, timed for the early summer – and potentially therefore a general election within the next twelve months, and secondly, the HM Treasury's Comprehensive Spending Review, now due to be published in the Autumn of 2007. Both these will have a major impact on the style, structure and spending framework for the next three years of Governmental priorities and programmes.

Looking further ahead to 2007 and beyond, the new seven year European Union Funding regime will come into play, with major changes to the Rural Development Programme for England. This may very well present us with new opportunities, but, there are threats also.

The other element that will affect delivery and thus 'achievement' is the capacity of the member RCCs to assimilate any new initiatives and deliver against agreed work programmes. This is why one of the key objectives for SWAN is helping to win resources for RCCs in order to assist this process.

## **In Conclusion...**

As the Chairman has said in his Foreword, it has been a year of significant achievement. On the face of it SWAN is a tiny organisation with only two members of Staff, but in reality, it is a 'family' of seven RCCs bringing together of 200 staff and 100 Trustees. SWAN therefore has a very powerful asset base stretched across the region and able to make contacts in all the Parishes and Towns from Chipping Campden to Penzance which in terms of distance is further than from Chipping Campden to Gretna Green!

Stephen W Wright and Jane Nichols

## **Acknowledgements:**

SWAN gratefully acknowledges the support of its seven member Rural Community Councils; the Government Office for the South West and through them, DEFRA (the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs); SWRDA, the South West Regional Development Agency; Capacity Builders and all those other organisations and Agencies, including the Commission for Rural Communities, who provide help and support in other ways.



Photographs courtesy of Community First, Community Action, Cornwall Rural Community Council and Community Council of Devon

## Financial Report

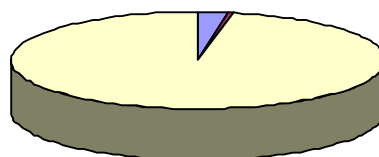
**The results** The charity had an income and expenditure deficit of £3,376 compared with a deficit of £14,512 in 2005. The charity's restricted funds are those for a pre-agreed purpose where the donor has imposed conditions on the use of the funds. The policy for such funds is to adhere to the relevant conditions; temporary timing differences for income received may occur at the reporting date and is the reason for negative balances on some funds.

**Incoming resources** Total incoming resources reduced by £132,349 to £280,599 primarily because SWAN ceased responsibility for administering legacy parish plans.

**Resources expended** Total outgoing resources reduced by £143,485 to £283,935 again primarily due to legacy parish plans.

<b>Incoming resources</b>		<b>£280,559.00</b>
1.	Voluntary income	£ 7,000.00
2.	Investment Income	£ 1,882.00
3.	Incoming resources from charitable activities	£271,677.00

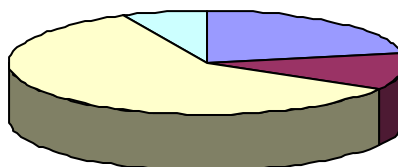
**Incoming Resources**



<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Voluntary Income
<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Investment Income
<input type="checkbox"/>	3. Incoming resources from charitable activities

<b>Source of incoming resources from charitable activities</b>		<b>£271,677.00</b>
1.	DEFRA	£ 60,000.00
2.	Capacity Builders	£ 30,476.00
3.	SWRDA	£162,412.00
4.	Sundry Direct Charitable Income	£ 18,789.00

**Source of incoming resources from charitable activities**



<input type="checkbox"/>	1. DEFRA
<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Capacity Builders
<input type="checkbox"/>	3. SWRDA
<input type="checkbox"/>	4 Sundry Direct Charitable Income

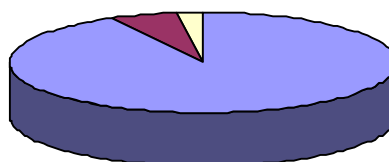
## SWAN Contacts

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Charity registration 1077940

<b>Resources Expended</b>		<b>£283,935.00</b>
1.	Charitable Activities	£261,539.00
2.	Grants for charitable activities	£ 16,427.00
3.	Governance Costs	£ 5,969.00

**Resources Expended**



<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Charitable Activities
<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Grants for charitable activities
<input type="checkbox"/>	3 Governance Costs

## 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 12 October 2007.

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 2006/2007, copies of which can be obtained from SWAN.

Please contact:  
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### Statement of Financial Activities Year Ended 31 March 2007

	2007 £	2006 £
Total incoming resources	280,559	412,908
Total resources expended	283,935	427,420
Net incoming/outgoing resources	(3,376)	(14,512)
Total net transfers between funds	0	0
Total net other recognised gains/(losses)	0	0
Net movement in funds	(3,376)	(14,512)
Fund balances at 1 April 2006	53,368	67,880
Fund balances carried forward at 31 March 2007	49,992	53,368

### Summary Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2007

	2007 £	2006 £
<b>Funds</b>		
Unrestricted Funds	26,079	13,623
Restricted Funds	23,913	39,745
<b>Accumulated Funds</b>	49,992	53,368
<b>Analysis of Net Assets</b>		
<b>Fixed Assets</b>		
Tangible assets	-	1120
Investments	-	-
Total fixed assets	-	1120
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Debtors	59,220	26,893
Cash at bank	47,147	46,925
Total current assets	106,367	73,818
<b>Creditors</b>		
Amounts falling due within one year	56,375	21,570
<b>Net Current Assets</b>	49,992	52,248
<b>Total Assets less Current Liabilities</b>	49,992	53,368
<b>Net Assets</b>	49,992	53,368