

RURAL HOUSING ENABLER

35hrs p/w - £31,000 p/a, fixed term contract until March 2025 – job share will be considered

We are committed to building a culturally diverse workplace and welcome applications from people from diverse backgrounds, particularly from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic candidates and people with disabilities, as they are currently underrepresented within our organisation.

Job details

With funds made available from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and channelled through the ACRE Network (Action with Communities in Rural England), CFO is looking for someone to help us enable more affordable homes to be delivered in rural communities across Oxfordshire – where they are needed.

Working with our Local Authority and Registered Provider (Housing Association) 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 delivery.

Working through the ACRE Network, there is also the opportunity to directly inform national policy and strategy.

Background

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 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 Oxfordshire for many years. The funding now made available by Defra, will enable a service to be developed focussed on rural Oxfordshire and on progressing more affordable home delivery in settlements of 3000 or less by working with communities, Housing Associations, the private sector and the local authority.

The postholder will have the benefit of working alongside CFO's existing Community-Led Housing officer (Collaborative Housing) who works to support community-led affordable homes and the CFO's joint-CEO, who has a background in rural housing enabling.

What we're looking for

We are looking for a creative and organised individual who can lead the Rural Housing Enabler Project across Oxfordshire. You will need to be self-motivated, resilient and be able to multi-task. We are looking for someone who understands the affordable housing development process in a rural context and how to make things.

You will enjoy working with all sorts of people, have good communication skills and be diplomatic, with an ability to take the initiative when needed. Training and support are available for the role – you don't need to be an expert in everything! You also won't be alone – CFO staff work as a team to support one another.

The following are attached:

- Annex A - Job description and person specification
- Annex B - Brief details of conditions of employment
- Annex C - CFO mission and website

How to apply

Applications should be made on the separate application form (including the names and addresses of two referees) and sent to Tom McCulloch at:

- info@communityfirstoxon.org
- For an informal discussion about the post please contact Tom (email above or phone 01865 883488)
- **CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS** – 10 December 2023
- **INTERVIEWS** – Week of 18 December 2023

ANNEX A

JOB DESCRIPTION AND PERSON SPECIFICATION

Rural Housing Enabler

- **Salary:** £31,000 p/a
- **Hours:** 35 hrs p/w
- **Location:** Hybrid working between CFO offices, home and on site
- **Contract length:** until March 2025
- **Accountable to:** Tom McCulloch, co-CEO, CFO

Job purpose

To lead on the Rural Housing Enabler project, identify affordable housing need in Oxfordshire's rural communities, and work with project partners to deliver homes to help meet that need.

Project Aims:

- Increase the pipeline number of rural affordable homes in Oxfordshire.
- Increase the speed of schemes through the pre-development stage.
- Work closely with local communities to help understand local needs and the opportunities to deliver affordable housing, primarily via RP-led approaches (but potentially via 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.
- Keep the information held by CFO on the RHE Project up-to-date and in a form which is user friendly and compliant with our GDPR responsibilities.
- Provide monthly/quarterly monitoring reports, project progress.
- Support, advise and steer communities, and town and parish councillors from their initial interest in providing affordable housing, through scheme inception and 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 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 Housing 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, town and parish councillors, local authorities, where relevant, National Park and Combined Authority officers and councillors, landowners, land agents and Registered Providers.
- Work closely with Local Planning Authority and Local Housing Authority 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 Partnership or Project Advisory 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.

Other Duties

- Behave in accordance with CFO policies and values.
- Ensure work is completed on time and to a high standard.
- Liaise with key stakeholders and ensure they are kept informed of progress.
- Prepare clear, concise and accurate reports.
- Represent CFO at meetings with external partners.
- Comply with CFO monitoring and recording requirements.
- Work co-operatively with other members of staff and partner organisations.
- Take part in organisational and personal training as required.
- 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.

PERSON SPECIFICATION: RURAL HOUSING ENABLER	
Qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideally, a University Degree or professional qualification relevant to housing.
Knowledge, skills and experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent stakeholder engagement and management skills. • 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. • 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 funding mechanisms relating to the delivery of affordable housing, including tendering and procurement. • 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

	<p>person, over the telephone or via Zoom and good written communication.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to write concise reports, case studies, newsletter articles etc. • Self-motivated and able to work under own initiative. • Diplomatic, articulate, enthusiastic, with good communication skills. • Detailed knowledge of the housing sector and the key challenges facing the development of schemes and community engagement. • Good general IT skills (Microsoft Word, Excel, using databases). • 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.
Circumstances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to work from home with good access to broadband. • Ability to travel independently around Oxfordshire to visit groups and organisations • Confidence in working 'on the ground' in a community • Willingness to attend evening and occasional weekend meetings if necessary

ANNEX B

RURAL HOUSING ENABLER - DETAILS OF EMPLOYMENT

- **Employer:** The employer is Community First Oxfordshire (CFO), which is registered as a charity (no. 900560) and as a company limited by guarantee (no. 2461552).
- **Location:** The post will be based at the CFO offices with flexibility of working from home.
- **Hours of Work:** 35 hours per week - **job share will be considered**. The post will involve work commitments outside normal office hours. Time off in lieu of out-of-hours working will be allowed.
- **Salary:** £31, 000 per annum
- **Duration of Employment:** fixed term contract until March 2025.
- **Starting Date:** To be agreed with successful candidate.
- **Pension:** There is a pension scheme available (minimum contribution by employee is 5% of salary to match a 5% contribution by the employer).
- **Travel Expenses:** Expenses for journeys carried out whilst on CFO business will be paid in accordance with CFO's rates and within the budget allocated.
- **Holidays:** The annual leave allowance for a full-time worker is 28 working days in addition to public holidays. The annual leave allowance rises to 33 days after five years of continuous service. If you work part-time you will receive a pro rata entitlement.
- **Equal Opportunities:** CFO has an Equity, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy.
 - Termination of Appointment: all terms of employment are subject to satisfactory performance of duties during a probationary period, which will run for three months from the date of appointment. Thereafter notice periods on either side will be as follows: Under 3-months-service - 1 week; From 3 months up to the end of 8-years-service - 2 months.

- **Membership of Other Bodies:** The appointee may not serve as a member of a local government or public body or any organisation connected with the work of CFO without first obtaining written permission from the CEOs.

ANNEX C - ABOUT COMMUNITY FIRST OXFORDSHIRE

CFO vision and mission

Strong, diverse, inclusive, and thriving communities

Supporting communities to find solutions to their planning, housing, social action, and service needs. Promoting positive change for all.

Further details of our organisation and its work can be viewed on our website:

www.communityfirstoxon.org