

# The Michael Dower Award for European Rural Resilience





## **Rural Europe is at a crossroads**

Rural communities confront a challenging future. Rural economies must cope with growing urban demands and dwindling natural resources. Rural policies need to adapt to fast changing social, demographic, environmental and market conditions.

## **Rural resilience**

Rural resilience is about people who care about what's happening to rural areas and communities. People who take their destiny into their own hands. People who are passionate about preserving and developing their local countryside and heritage. Farmers and consumers who work together for better farming and food systems. Climate and biodiversity activists, horticulturalists and foresters who

use their skills to combat climate change and the loss of nature and diversity. People who dare to challenge outdated structures and policies to create a more sustainable future. In short: people who take action to make rural Europe a better place to live in.

## **The Award**

The Michael Dower European Rural Resilience Award is intended to foster rural resilience. It is open to all Europeans who care about our common values: democracy, cohesion, solidarity and peace. It will honour and support people, communities, initiatives and alliances across the wider Europe that share these common values, cope with challenges and collaborate in pursuit of a more sustainable future.

# Michael Dower and his legacy

Michael Dower (1937-2022) left a huge impression on those whom he met. He was a successful public servant, running the Peak District National Park and the Countryside Commission, and a professor at the University of Gloucestershire. He was also a phenomenal agent of change - a passionate advocate for rural communities and a sustainable way of living, an inspiring teacher and a man of action.



As a young man, he pioneered what became the British conservation volunteer movement. In his old age, he was planting trees in the Dorset countryside and leading local groups in responding to the climate crisis.



Later in his career, he fell in love with Europe's infinitely varied, and extraordinarily beautiful rural landscapes - and with their people. His personality impressed many across Europe who shared his enthusiasm. He helped to energise a Pan-European rural movement and to set up enduring networks and institutions, many including people he had inspired.

Michael was a European Englishman, believing in European cooperation and Britain's place in Europe. He was appalled by Brexit which he considered to be a fatal error. Michael's friends and colleagues, in Britain and elsewhere in Europe, have come together with his family and his university to launch this award to honour his life and his legacy. We hope that it will help achieve Michael's vision of a better future for Europe's rural peoples and places - and rebuild some of the bridges that have recently been broken.



## How the award will work

The award aims to encourage civic action in rural areas in the wider Europe which:

- ✦ preserves nature and cultural heritage,
- ✦ strengthens democracy and peace, and
- ✦ empowers rural people and their civil society organisations to take their destiny into their own hands.

It will recognise the outstanding work of individuals and organisations in nurturing the protection of Europe's rural heritage, which is to be found throughout its rich and diverse countryside. It will acknowledge their efforts to respond to the growing challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss and rural depopulation.

The prize will be awarded to individuals and civil society organisations in Europe, at bi-annual gatherings of European Rural Parliament – see overleaf.

The criteria for selection will include the successful engagement of communities in rural Europe, the encouragement of democratic governance, accomplishments in pan-European cooperation, and achievement in conflict mediation, social inclusion, capacity building, social innovation and other activities or action which foster and enhance rural well-being.

The kind of work that might be recognised could be practical, or research-based but leading to practical results. It should help to bring about changes in policies or practice, by recognizing, for



example, what a community has done to protect nature or adapt their lives to the pressures of climate change. It could be a publication, a film or video, an exhibition, or a pack of teaching and training material – almost anything that brings about change for the better.

The award is established at the University of Gloucestershire, UK, which will provide secretariat services – see overleaf. It may be supported by public institutions. It may not be used for private purposes or the promotion of private enterprise or political parties.

The award itself will consist of a physical trophy; a citation to be read at the award ceremony; and funds to support the dissemination of lessons learned.

An Award Committee, supported by the University of Gloucestershire, and consisting of the university together with other founders of the award and a representative of Michael Dower's family, will oversee all aspects of the award, including: publicising the award's existence among bodies across Europe; giving guidance on making nominations; ensuring these are made in a transparent way; handling the judging of projects; designing the award and the award ceremony; and publicising news of the winners.



## How you can help

We need funds to support the award. So, we are asking for donations from those who knew Michael and those who care about rural Europe.

In this way we can get a sum of money together that will be used to attract matching grants and other kinds of support from those public institutions in Britain and elsewhere in Europe that share our concern about the crisis facing rural areas and their communities. Your funds will be principally used to support the dissemination of lessons learned from the award-winning project.

## How to make a donation

Send your contributions to:

**University of Gloucestershire  
Charity Account**

**HSBC UK Bank Plc**

Sort Code: **40-14-13**

Account number: **73965767**

IBAN:

**GB33HBUK40141373965767**

SWIFT: **HBUKGB4103B**

Please ensure you include the payment reference **'Michael Dower Award'** so that your funds can be allocated accordingly.

# The University of Gloucestershire and the Countryside and Community Research Institute

Established over 100 years ago initially as a college for training teachers and Clergy, the University of Gloucestershire gained full University status in 2000. With growing campuses in Cheltenham and Gloucester it is a central focus of student life and engaged research and practice across the County. The Countryside and Community Research Institute will celebrate its 35th Anniversary in 2023. It is a collaborative centre of international research excellence, conducting impactful, engaged research on resilient and sustainable rural development in policy and practice, in the UK, the rest of Europe and beyond.

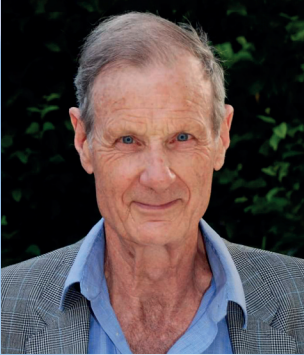
[www.ccri.ac.uk](http://www.ccri.ac.uk)



## The European Rural Parliament

The European Rural Parliament is a process aimed at strengthening the voice of rural communities in Europe, promoting self-help, solidarity, exchange and cooperation between rural communities and enabling rural people to play their full role in addressing the challenges currently affecting Europe. Apart from continuing long-term dialogue and advocacy at local, regional and national level, the ERP comes together every two years in a large-scale transnational meeting.





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