



Sustainability Report

2013/14

Membership and guidelines



UN Global Compact and Bribery Act

Acre is a member of the UN Global Compact and actively integrate its universally accepted principles within our strategy and operations. We are strong advocates of human rights and equal opportunities and regularly review our internal policies to address the Bribery Act. www.unglobalcompact.org

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1. Foreword

Acre is more than just a business. As the country's leading sustainability recruitment company, we have a duty to follow the example of our clients and set an example to our candidates, instilling an ethos of corporate responsibility and sustainable behaviour that reverberates through the sector. This is not just good for society and the environment, it also makes good business sense. As we demonstrate in this report, it creates happy, driven employees; it creates the best financial results in Acre's history; it creates innovative new approaches to working; and it helps to win the Recruitment Agency of the Year award. This is the story of our most successful year yet. It also sets out how we intend to build on these achievements to make an even greater difference – and achieve greater success – in future.

2. A note from our director



This year we aim to move a step closer to achieving our dual aspiration of playing a positive role in society whilst benefiting commercially from associated initiatives. This desire is captured in our new mission statement:

"Acre connects professionals with a common purpose; to create social and environmental value and promote good business. We measure our success one individual at a time."

Acre's two stand-out contributions of the past year have been the launch of the Acre365 recognition scheme - which rewards individuals who have made an outstanding environmental or social impact in their first 365 days with an organisation - and the 24 Peaks Challenge, which saw our team raise over £10,000 for Great Ormond Street Hospital by climbing 24 peaks in the Lake District in 24 hours.

Our ambition is to ensure that the "citizen" is not left in the street when he or she walks through the office door. In fact, our values play a headline role in our decision making. Acting responsibly is becoming more important to our business model, and this philosophy is becoming ever more enshrined in our operations as we expand.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Cartland'.

Andrew Cartland
Founder
Acre

“

Acre connects professionals with a common purpose; to create social and environmental value and promote good business. We measure our success one individual at a time.

”

3. About us

Acre is the leading recruitment company focusing on corporate responsibility, sustainability, environment, energy and health & safety functions. Since it was founded in 2003, Acre has built a community of the sharpest sustainable business professionals in the world. This unique network can be deployed in several ways; through executive search for permanent hires aimed at the most challenging projects; contract and fixed-term solutions for organisations looking to source staff for short-term appointments; direct access to interim sustainability professionals through the Acre Bench; and use of our Business Intelligence function to address challenges and opportunities.

Acre was named Recruitment Agency of the year at the 2014 Recruiter Awards, which recognised:

- Acre's innovative approach, including the launch of the [Acre Bench](#)
- Acre's transparency, including use of the third party feedback tool [Feefo](#). We hold ourselves to account and strive to improve by listing ALL feedback that is collected.

Our values

Our six values are critical to how we operate as a business. They drive how we work on a day-to-day basis and are a critical element of our corporate and sustainability strategy.



Entrepreneurship

We value and reward productive work and constantly endeavour to go the extra mile for our clients and the organisation.



Innovation

We embrace new ideas and technology, as well as the innovation and creativity of our employees and the sector as a whole.



Business Protocols

We value both company and individual growth and prize financial success. We always seek to achieve positive results for our clients and have confidence and pride in our ability to do so.



Transparency

We keep our processes simple, transparent and avoid bureaucracy. We deal with people and issues in the most direct manner without hidden agendas. As an organisation we share common goals.



Ethics

We always do our best to ensure that we are ethical in everything that we do. We are honest with each other, our clients and our suppliers - and expect the same in return. We seek to be an agent of positive change and to deliver the highest quality service available in the sector.



Collaboration

We are a team and we all strive to make people at Acre feel valued and appreciated. We have a common goal and celebrate each other's successes together. We want Acre to be the best it can be for our clients, our candidates and our employees.

"This total transparency shows Acre's brave approach in driving up standards in the industry – as well as highlighting the company's passion for recruitment".

The Recruiter Awards 2014



Our aim

As the wider sustainability landscape evolves, Acre is in a strong position to have a positive and meaningful impact on the individuals who work within it. Operating at the heart of the sustainability marketplace, we aim to be a catalyst for positive change through the people we place.

4. Our commitment to sustainable development

Our objective is to create networks that promote positive environmental and social impact and encourage good business. We have endeavoured to embed this in everything we do. We also regularly contribute to the knowledge base of the sustainability sector by providing thought-provoking intelligence and sharing best practices. We are a member of the universally recognised [UN Global Compact](#) and produce an annual Sustainability Report to communicate our progress.

Acre's [award-winning](#) corporate citizenship and philanthropic activity is undertaken under the umbrella of the [Acre Foundation](#). Set up and managed by staff, the Foundation is the vehicle for our fundraising activities and volunteering schemes, and forms a key component of our strategy. To date, the Foundation has raised £31,771. Full details can be found at www.acre-foundation.com

AcreFoundation



5. Progress on 2012/13 commitments

	2012/13 Commitments	Actions
Environmental	Grow our partnership with Wiles Greenworld to ensure we are as efficient as possible	Acre now sources all office supplies from Wiles Greenworld. We will build on this with a formal Green Procurement policy
Investing in our people	Develop a mission statement that encompasses our sustainability objectives and the environmental and social impact of our candidates	Through consultation with Acre employees, our clients and candidates, Acre has developed a new mission statement
	Continue to provide encouragement and support for career development across the team	There have been six promotions, and we have introduced a new mentoring process, a new training programme and ongoing support for further education
Enriching communities	Increase donations on behalf of clients to the Ecoscheme charities through placements, our Christmas card drive and other initiatives	We increased donations by 19% through our Ecoscheme and 98% through our Christmas card drive
	Develop a comprehensive volunteer strategy for the Acre team with a calendar of activities, undertaking a minimum of 150 hours	Acre team members completed 138 hours; falling short of our target but more than tripling our cumulative volunteering hours of the previous year

6. Our sustainable approach

a. The broader sustainability marketplace

Acre places more sustainability professionals in work than any other organisation. We recognise that our success is dependent on a buoyant and maturing sustainability industry and we therefore look to play a part in that development.

Acre focuses on four main themes to create value:

- 1) strengthening networks, collaboration and knowledge sharing;
- 2) increasing transparency;
- 3) ensuring integrity and accountability;
- 4) assisting in professionalising, developing and maturing the sustainability marketplace.



These broader themes translate into a wide range of initiatives:

Thought Leadership

Acre contributes to the sector's knowledge base by equipping clients with intelligence and sharing best practices. For example, [Bench Insights](#) are short pieces of market intelligence created by Acre's Bench Members. Since April 2013 a total of 65 Insights have been published.

With our partners, Acre has developed and published the most comprehensive [CR and Sustainability Salary Survey](#) which builds understanding of the professional CR/Sustainability landscape. It provides information on the salaries and benefits, responsibilities and backgrounds of people working in the sector – both in-house and for external consultancies. This data is open sourced, with participation from sustainability professionals globally. The information benchmarks an industry that is still evolving, allowing professionals to identify with the sector, understand their value and to map the varied backgrounds of their peers.

Acre also invests to provide up-to-date sustainability news, blogs and other helpful information.

The Bench

The Acre Bench enables us to change the traditional recruitment model and drive pioneering transparency, collaboration and knowledge sharing in the sustainability marketplace. Launched in July 2013, it is an online, publicly visible database that profiles Acre's carefully selected and accredited senior interim professionals, allowing free and direct access to clients who can self-select depending on the specific needs of their organisation. This is based upon trust and transparency.

Acre has hosted three successful events to promote collaboration among Bench members, featuring a feedback session, a facilitated networking session and interviews with sustainability experts.

Feefo Feedback

Acre is shaking up the recruitment sector by utilising [Feefo](#), an online customer review and feedback system run by a third party. Feefo publishes feedback from Acre's candidates and clients without any interception by Acre, regardless of whether it is good or bad. This creates total transparency and credibility, and aims to drive up standards and accountability. At time of printing we have 97% positive feedback from both our clients and candidates.

Networks & Events

Women in Sustainability, Safety and Environment (WISSE)

[WISSE](#) was launched in 2011 as a platform for women to network, connect and share best practice. The Acre Salary Survey has shown that women are paid less than men and WISSE is designed to support women in the sustainability sector and progress their careers.

WISSE events in 2014 included:

Date	Event theme
October 2013	Investment insight into sustainability reporting
November 2013	Networking event
March 2014	Pioneering integrated reporting and information sharing
April 2014	Sharing advice on why CR is important to investors
May 2014	Sharing different approaches to delivering H&S and sustainability
July 2014	Approaches to total impact management and measurement

Acre also hosts the largest New Zealanders in Sustainability network event, reaching 120 sustainability professionals, and we sponsor [The Crowd](#), the premier sustainability business network.

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***Great speakers,
a well organised,
excellently
chaired network of
professionals at
the right level. The
time we had was
well managed and
I really like the fact
that Oonagh made
sure everyone had
the opportunity to
contribute.***

Head of Corporate
Sustainability,
BSkyB

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Industry Accreditation - Institute of Corporate Responsibility & Sustainability (ICRS) and Bench Accreditation

Acre's senior management team has provided pro-bono support to the newly founded [Institute of Corporate Responsibility & Sustainability \(ICRS\)](#), sitting on its advisory panel during the pre-launch phase, and on its governance panel. The ICRS aims to support CR and sustainability professionals at all stages of their careers, recognising and promoting high professional standards.

Acre has also developed the [Bench Accreditation](#), a milestone in driving transparency and standards. It aims to help companies make more informed hiring decisions and enable interim professionals to add weight and verification to their credentials. Since July 2014, 20 members have gone through the accreditation process and it is now used as standard for all prospective Bench members.

Acre365 Recognition Programme



Placing talented professionals in roles where they can have a positive social and/or environmental impact is core to Acre's mission. We want to recognise and celebrate the contribution individuals have made via our recognition programme - [Acre365](#). We believe that the impact a person has in the first 12 months in a role is critical to their ability to help build a better organisation. Acre365 seeks to identify agents of change by recognising individuals who have made

real progress on social or environmental issues. Acre365 will also share best-practice and innovation with the wider sustainability community so that others can learn and be inspired.

b. Investing in our people

Acre places upmost importance on the career development and personal growth of our staff. Acre seeks to retain staff through engagement – we are committed to employees' goals, supporting individuals wishing to pursue higher education, and providing regular volunteering, fundraising and teambuilding initiatives. Acre's professional development of its consultants surpasses anything the market has to offer. We achieved an 80% staff retention rate in 2013 - the result of providing a challenging, innovative, inclusive and transparent culture. We believe that investing in people is critical to our success as a profitable business. The 2013/2014 financial results were the best in Acre's history, correlating with this increased investment.

Staff development

2013/2014 was a year of celebration and achievement:

- Six internal promotions
- Development of a new internal recruitment process to identify talented individuals
- Launch of an induction training programme for new starters
- Development and launch of recruitment best practice training and staff coaching scheme
- Development of a new company handbook
- Continued investment in IT solutions to improve productivity

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It's wonderful to see there are so many wonderful people sharing the vision for change through Acre365.

Foundation
Manager, The OVO
Foundation

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Acre has been incredibly supportive of my decision to undertake a Masters in Business Strategy and the Environment. The course content compliments my role and has enhanced my ability to engage with industry experts.

Manager, Acre

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Support for postgraduate study

Acre is committed to supporting our consultants' ambitions for continued learning and development. Financial backing and study leave were offered to three staff members undertaking postgraduate qualifications in the sustainability and environmental field in 2013/2014.

Sabbaticals

We are proud of our team and reward loyalty with sabbatical leave for individuals after four years' service. Two team members had this anniversary in 2013/2014 and their sabbatical leave gave them the opportunity to travel extensively in Europe, Asia and Australia.

Acre Foundation

The Acre Foundation provides not only a vehicle for our corporate citizenship and philanthropy, but also an opportunity for our staff to be involved in sustainability strategy. The Foundation is managed and run by three staff members on a rotating six monthly basis, with a remit to develop its activities, scope and impact. This has given individuals experience in fundraising, corporate partnerships, internal and external communications, and creating and reporting sustainability strategy.

Company handbook and policies

Acre has developed a new company handbook to guide staff, refreshing our policies and practice. 2013/2014 marked the return of our Training Manager from maternity leave with a flexible working pattern, and the departure on maternity leave of one of our managers under an enhanced maternity policy. Acre is an equal opportunity employer and seeks to satisfy the objectives and intentions of relevant legislation and codes of practice pertaining to equal opportunities.

c. Enriching communities through the Acre Foundation

At Acre we believe we should have a positive impact on the communities we operate within. We have taken a strategic approach to our corporate citizenship and philanthropic activity, bringing this together under one roof - the Acre Foundation. 2013/2014 was our most successful for corporate responsibility initiatives and we aim continuously to improve. At the time of publishing Acre has donated a total of 186 hours and raised £32,386.07 for the initiatives we support.

In summary:

- 186 hours volunteered
- £1,914 Kiva donations to entrepreneurs
- £9,915 Ecoscheme donations on behalf of our clients
- £20,557 other donations and fundraising by employees

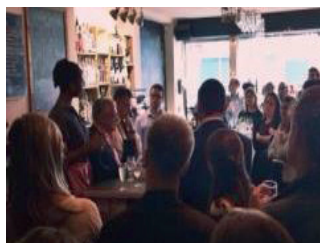
The Acre Fundraising Challenge: 24 Peaks

In 2014 we voted to focus our fundraising efforts on Great Ormond Street Hospital Children's Charity after a staff consultation. The charity is based just around the corner from our office in Holborn, London, and is also close to our hearts: in 2011 the team at GOSH operated on Annabel, our Training Manager's daughter, at birth, saving her life. [Read Annabel's story.](#)

To drive these fundraising efforts, build our corporate identity and engage Acre's employees, we decided to really challenge ourselves. Acre took on the [24 Peaks Challenge](#) in the heart of the Lake District. The hike entails a total ascent of 4263m over a distance of 50.9km - all within 24 hours. Success would depend on dedication and commitment to training, strong willpower and determination, and most importantly teamwork! Over the course of six months, Acre's staff organised a busy fundraising calendar. This included:

- [Acre Comedy Night](#); with Jason Manford headlining and kindly donating his time and wit.
- [Great Acre Clothes Swap](#); a fantastic success in which everyone left with a recycled new wardrobe, as well as reducing textiles sent to landfill and raising money for a good cause.
- [Acre Tournament](#); which involved 100% of the staff, who donated to enter, and compete against one another to predict the final results of the World Cup.
- [Sustainable Wine Tasting event](#); Acre's clients and network joined us in raising money for GOSH and sampling ethically produced wines at the first Fairtrade Café in London. It was a great opportunity to network, enjoy a sustainable event and add to our fundraising total.
- [Gig Night](#); four bands provided a great final celebration of the (completed) hike.

The Acre 24 Peaks Challenge raised £10,604.84 for the Great Ormond Street Hospital Charity. A great success, it helped to build a strong team when a number of new employees had started and gave individuals a chance to lead projects and learn new skills. A small company of 25 people showed they were able to do amazing things - to climb 24 mountains in 23 hours and 35 minutes, to organise an event with a leading British comedian and to raise over £10,000.



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We are delighted that staff from Acre Resources Ltd have raised such a fantastic amount for us... Generous gifts like this mean that we can support research into cures and treatments for childhood diseases which will benefit children all over the world.

Fundraising Exec,
GOSH

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*The London
Wetland Centre
(WWT) is a
beautiful place
to spend the day.
Within the confines
of the city, it
provides a refuge
from the stress and
endless concrete
that can be London
city life.*

Consultant, Acre



Staff Volunteering:

Acre has continued to promote volunteering of staff within our community and has a scheme in place that gives each team member four days' volunteering leave per year. This year, Acre staff volunteered a total of 138 hours, almost tripling our previous cumulative total. We believe that we have valuable skills to offer the community. Volunteering is also an opportunity to widen our skills and build self-worth, team spirit and cohesion. Our volunteering efforts are considered important in attracting and retaining staff who want to be a part of an organisation with a strong social focus.

In 2014 Acre was awarded the inaugural Octavia Foundation Corporate Volunteer of the Year award. Acre has developed a bespoke partnership with the [Octavia Foundation](#) over almost five years in its Gateways to Work programme - aimed at supporting unemployed or socially disadvantaged people in nearby London boroughs. Through the scheme, we provide mentorship to Octavia's clients, helping individuals back into work. Octavia recognised Acre's partnership as having "been nothing short of transformational for a number of clients", with some having "gone onto their dream jobs after an intervention with Acre".

In 2013, a survey of Acre employees indicated a preference to volunteer on environmental projects. Acre sent four teams to the [London Wetland Centre](#), part of the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust. Our volunteering efforts included planting trees, rebuilding fences and islands, and clearing weeds - a long way from our day jobs but a unique opportunity for team-building and employee engagement.

Ecoscheme, Kiva and other causes

Acre's Ecoscheme ties fundraising efforts to our day-to-day work. For each individual that we recruit for our clients, Acre makes a financial donation to selected charities. The Ecoscheme currently comprises the three charities – Octavia, ZSL and CoolEarth - which bring together our commitment to climate change, environment and conservation, society and community. In 2013/2014 Acre donated £2,295 on our clients' behalf, a cumulative total of £9,915.

We also involve our clients through our Charity not Cards initiative: instead of sending them Christmas cards, we asked clients to select a charity in the Ecoscheme and make a donation of £5 on their behalf. This raised a total of £880 in Christmas 2013.

Acre also supports [Kiva](#), a non-profit organisation with a mission to connect people through lending to alleviate poverty. Kiva uses micro-finance to empower budding entrepreneurs in developing countries. Every new employee at Acre is welcomed with a £100 voucher to lend within Kiva. This year we are proud to have contributed a total of £1,200 to a variety of Kiva schemes. One enabled a lady in Malawi to start commercial pig production to pay for her son's university tuition fees.

Comparison of charitable contributions in 2012/13 and 2013/14

	2012/2013	2013/2014	% Increase
Echoscheme	£1,935	£2,295	19%
Charity not Cards	£ 435	£ 880	98%
Kiva	£ 720	£1,200	67%
Time volunteered	1 hour	138 hours	

Other fundraising:

The Acre team are all passionate about a range of their own causes which they proactively support. The Acre Foundation supports these efforts by pledging to match staff fundraising up to a total of £100. This year, our staff took part in everything from baking cakes for the Red Cross Typhoon Haiyan Appeal, to completing a Tough Mudder for Save the Children, raising a total of £600.

d. Environment and our carbon impact

Although recognised as relatively low impact, we continuously strive to improve our environmental performance. Being responsible stewards also generates real business benefits. These include reduced costs through improved efficiencies, engagement with staff who are passionate about the environment, and an opportunity to build knowledge and awareness of issues that our clients and candidates are grappling with (albeit on a smaller level). In the last two years Acre has made substantial capital investment in a new thin client IT infrastructure and database. This helps us to be more effective and energy efficient in delivering on recruitment projects. This year Acre formed a partnership with [Groundwork](#), an EU-funded charity that works with SME's to reduce their environmental impact.

Groundwork calculated the following findings on behalf of Acre:



Acre's carbon footprint, based on the consumption of electricity at our office:

594.72 kg of CO₂ emissions



Waste we have prevented from going into landfill:

1.35 tonnes	67.7 kg	292 kg	37 crates
Paper & Card	Confidential Paper Shredding	Plastic & Metal	Glass



Travel:

- 78% of staff use 100% public transport, cycling and walking to get to work, the other 22% combine car and public transport
- Remote video conferencing is promoted and frequently used to reduce travel by international and local clients and candidates
- Ride to work scheme is used by six employees

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It is a great program to be a part of and thoroughly engaging, particularly once the entrepreneurs start returning funds so you can tell it has made a positive impact.

Consultant,
Acre

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7. Looking ahead: 2014/15

Acre's continued direction is to become more strategic and relevant in our focus on sustainability. We want to develop many of our initiatives and ensure that they are embedded within a joined up sustainability approach. In an effort to ensure that our efforts are making the most of opportunities and reducing risks to our business, Acre conducted a materiality assessment. In November 2014 this survey was sent to a number of Acre clients and candidates to gain their perspective.

The survey highlighted the most important issues as:

- Client satisfaction
- Attracting the best candidates
- Business ethics
- The integration of sustainability into mainstream roles

This demonstrates that we need to do what we do – recruitment – and do it well. This is no surprise and will remain the core focus of our business.

Based on the survey feedback, Business Ethics will be addressed in the year 2014/2015 more formally. Currently it is one of our core company [values](#), and an important part of our culture and hiring strategy, but not measured and managed.

Also of importance to us in the coming year is:

- Attracting and developing the best staff
- Thought leadership in sustainability
- Thought leadership in recruitment
- Diversity, equality of opportunity and equal pay
- Staff who are ambassadors for a sustainable world

Looking ahead - Strategic priorities

We have identified two strategic priorities for our core business to have a significant impact on society:

1. Helping to develop the sustainability marketplace.
2. Developing staff as recruitment experts and sustainability champions.

The first priority is about knowing our market, investing in sustainability marketplace development and understanding that our success is tied to this, and staying ahead of our competition. Secondly, essential to the development of our business is retaining knowledgeable and motivated staff who are invested in Acre's success and that of the sustainability marketplace. This requires giving staff directional and managerial involvement in our corporate responsibility and sustainability strategy.

We will focus on 5 pillars and commitments:

1. The broader sustainability marketplace:

- Launch [Acre365](#) to recognise excellence and expertise in the sustainability market.
- Facilitate a forum to discuss the gender pay gap in our WISSE group and report on this in the CR and Sustainability Salary Survey.
- Expand on our events and thought leadership programme to include a more diverse group
- Continue to provide business intelligence and facilitate discussion around the integration of sustainability into mainstream business roles.

2. Investing in our people

- Build expertise of staff to ensure we act as ambassadors for a sustainable world. Create learning and personal and professional development opportunities through increased volunteering and involvement in Acre's sustainability strategy.
- Continue to provide encouragement and support for career development and aim for continuous improvement in staff retention.

3. Enriching communities through the Acre Foundation

- Increase internal engagement for skill-based volunteering, with 75% of consulting staff taking this opportunity.
- Donate a minimum of 150 volunteer hours to charities over the course of the year.

4. Environmental

- Develop behaviour-change campaigns to educate and motivate employees to act as responsible citizens inside and outside of Acre.
- Recognise positive actions to measure and improve environmental impact and reduce waste.
- Develop an Environmental Policy and a Green Champion checklist to ensure actions and continuous improvement.
- Increase the proportion of renewable energy that makes up our energy consumption.
- Ask Groundwork to fit our taps and toilets with water saving devices.
- Improve internal communications to celebrate environmental impact milestones.
- Formalise a Green Supply Chain and Procurement Policy.

5. Business ethics

- Develop a pillar within our sustainability strategy to formalise and direct business ethics.
- Enhance and unify our commitment to, and internal communication on, business ethics and values.
- Formalise and provide training to all individuals involved in internal recruitment to continue developing an ethical and values-driven decision-making approach.

This past year has seen some great work from the Acre team and we are proud of our achievements. We look forward to the year ahead, and the Acre Foundation team are amped with some exciting initiatives already underway.



Acre connects professionals with a common purpose; to create social and environmental value and promote good business. We measure our success one individual at a time.

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