



## New Award for Rural Resilience Press Release

### Contact information:

Louise Kelleher

[louise.kelleher@arc2020.eu](mailto:louise.kelleher@arc2020.eu)

### Release Date

15 October 2024

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Announcing the Michael Dower Award for Rural Resilience

Brussels – In memory of Michael Dower, organisations from across the UK and EU have come together to develop the Michael Dower Award for Rural Resilience. The new award has been established to celebrate and recognise the efforts of communities and individuals dedicated to improving rural life across the continent.

The **Michael Dower Award for Rural Resilience** will honour those who embody these values in their efforts to address the economic, environmental, and social challenges facing rural areas today. The award recognises individuals and communities who take action to build a more sustainable and inclusive future for rural Europe. Additionally, the award will foster the exchange of ideas, practices, and mutual learning among applicants and the wider public, promoting rural resilience beyond local, regional, and national borders. For more information, click [here](#).

Supported by contributions from Michael’s family, friends, and ARC2020, this award aims to continue his mission to strengthen and uplift rural areas across Europe, while fostering collaboration and rebuilding fractured connections.

Hannes Lorenzen, President of ARC2020 said, “Michael was an unusual challenge for politicians. In 1999 we organised together a rural travelling workshop through Estonia and Sweden. He still at the University and advising governments, me inside the European Parliament – had pushed the European Parliament and the European Commission to co-organise and finance this unusual excursion with locals, regional officials, national ministers and EU civil servants. They all saw what was needed, what was possible, and what they were supposed to do. The EU Parliament published our recommendations and the European Commission referred to it as ‘creative approach to EU enlargement’. Michael called this approach ‘punching above our weight’.

“Michael was always curious to learn and to broaden his understanding of people and nature. His life was in a permanent flow of creation, creativity, engagements, and action. Michael’s artistic talents were borderless– he painted flowers and landscapes with deep concentration and great passion; he followed the lines of sea washed wood to create living creatures. And he had the gift to turn complicated political debates into enchanting limericks and poems. The Michael Dower award wishes to value these extraordinary talents by encouraging rural people to take their destiny into their hands.”

The first Michael Dower Award for Rural Resilience will be presented at the next European Rural Parliament in 2025. Further details regarding the date and location will be announced. Applications are open to both individuals and communities, with a deadline of **14 February 2025**.

Michael Dower (1937–2022) was a dynamic leader and passionate advocate for rural communities and sustainable living. His impressive career included roles as the manager of the Peak District National Park, Director General of the Countryside Commission, and a professor at the University of Gloucestershire. He was also a key figure in pan-European rural development.

The award was founded by the ***Countryside and Community Research Institute (CCRI)*** at the University of Gloucestershire (UK) – where Michael Dower worked – and the ***European Association for Innovation in Local Development (AEIDL)***, a Brussels-based, non-profit association that fosters community-led innovation to revitalise local communities across Europe. For all organisations involved in the award, click [here](#).

For more information, including the application process and eligibility criteria, please visit: [www.michaeldoweraward.eu](http://www.michaeldoweraward.eu).

**ENDS**