

Community Action

The Rural Community Council for the West of England

ACCESS TO RURAL SERVICES WITHIN BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET

Report commissioned by



**Bath & North East
Somerset Council**



Version 5.0

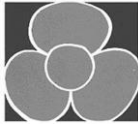
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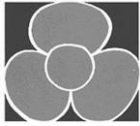
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Disclaimer statement

Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information supplied herein, the Community Action cannot be held responsible for any errors or omissions. Unless otherwise indicated, opinions expressed herein are those of Community Action and do not necessarily represent the views of Bath & North East Somerset Council.

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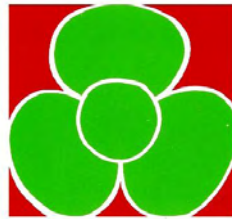
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ACCESS TO RURAL SERVICES

WITHIN

BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET



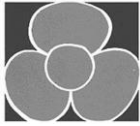
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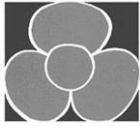
The Rural Community Council for the West of England

March 2009

Prepared by

Richard Snelling, Dick Whittington, Chris Head and Beverley Crocker





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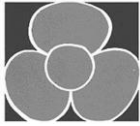
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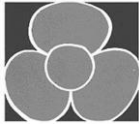
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report has been commissioned by Bath & North East Somerset Council (B&NES) and developed by Community Action, the Rural Community Council for the West of England, in order to understand and address the main issues affecting rural communities in Bath & North East Somerset when accessing services.

This report sets out findings and recommendations based on the research in order to inform the decisions and direction that service providers in rural areas and communities should take, both on the ground and at the strategic level.

Shops, healthcare, financial, transport, information technology, education, childcare, housing and leisure activities are all services that as citizens we expect to have available to us. These services are the basis for any community, rural or urban, but within a rural context it is the access to these services that present a complex set of issues

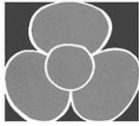
Rural communities have experienced significant social change over the last couple of decades. Very often villages do not offer adequate services for the local community to access, which forces people to travel out of their community to access services such as doctor's surgeries, schools, shops and post offices. For many, private transport, either a car or taxi, is the only way of accessing these services. The increased costs of accessing services together with the increased costs of housing has led to rural living becoming less and less affordable, and for some completely unaffordable.

This is particularly a problem for older people, families with young children and young people.

The study found B&NES Council is highly regarded by support organisations, as is the Local Strategic Partnership and Community Groups, and the needs of disadvantaged people are recognised within their plans. It was understood that there are large finance constraints but this should not stop strategies being followed through rigorously with existing and innovative solutions to ensure access to services issues are overcome.

The findings of this report demonstrate that rural communities and disadvantaged groups in B&NES have restricted access to services, but that there are straightforward and tested methods to address this issue.

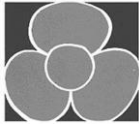
We would also suggest that cross cutting initiatives are taken, for example having transport and service provision planned together. The following are the key recommendations we are making based on the evidence and our findings:



- **Community Engagement**, through Parish and Community Led Planning, promotion of community-owned solutions and the use of Village Agents within the community as a way of providing information and guidance relating to access to services.
- **Parish Council Capability**, empower the local community by overhaul capability of parish councils, make them more aware of local needs and equipping through training Councillors and clerks
- **Physical Geography**, address the perceived remoteness and lack of engagement from certain services in the Chew Valley area
- **Transport**, recognising the limitations of public transport and adopt genuine collaborative approach by strengthening community transport and local community car schemes and manage the resource with an umbrella approach
- **Community Hubs**, adopt the principle of local hubs in every parish, providing general access and information, retail, post office and libraries. Schools, pubs and churches in addition to village halls would help to support these hubs.
- **Health**, ensure PCT (and other NHS providers) recognise rural health access issues, and act accordingly by integrating support for community transport or simply ensuring that appointments meet travel realities. In addition there could be linkages with the Hub approach
- **Food**, establish local food network, with a brief to encourage greater supply and use of local produce through hubs and promote allotments and local productive land use
- **Housing**, actively work for the provision of small scale affordable housing schemes freeing existing stock and ensuring diversity of the community
- **Data and Targets**, Avoid using targets based on IMD's which disincentives action in rural areas, drill down as far as possible
- **Monitoring**, an update report should be made assessing and reviewing access to services in B&NES regularly, also benchmarking and measuring.
- **Rural Proofing**, the council and other statutory services should ensure all future strategies, initiatives and projects are rural proofed by taking into account rural conditions and circumstances.

We believe co-ordinated action needs to be taken to support rural communities and those disadvantaged to access services. Although transport is considered the major access to services issue to tackle it is clear that the problems are wider than this and must be tackled in combination.

These approaches should start with empowering local governance, precede to the partnership approaches being planned and delivered at local and strategic levels, and have suitable funding and resources allocated to them.



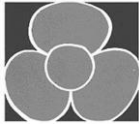
When access to services options are considered and co-ordinated to address rural communities needs they should take into account the Sustainable Community Strategy being developed by the Local Strategic Partnership.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

This report outlines that local solutions will be most effective in meeting a local need to access to services and partnership approaches will be most effective in meeting the gaps in provision. This will require devolution of decision making and resources to parish level, and communication and work across parish boundaries. The leadership on both local and strategic levels will need to be addressed with B&NES Council encouraging this with incentives.

It will also need the Council and its Local Strategic Partnership associates to take a dual approach in supporting ground -up initiatives and also taking action through strategic mechanisms such as the B&NES Local Area Agreement.

The following report brings together the issues and barriers affecting rural communities and those disadvantaged when accessing services, providing research and evidence for this and potential solutions to tackle them. It also demonstrates some new approaches and examples of good practice providing local solutions towards access to services.



INTRODUCTION

This research set out to answer questions concerning rural communities' access to services: What services exist? Where are the gaps in service provision? What services are needed? What are the potential solutions to these needs? Who needs to be involved to make a difference?

An investigation was made into the need for services and gaps in provision, for rural/urban fringe communities and more remote rural parishes in B&NES, highlighting where people have problems reaching or accessing services. The research covered services available to people and businesses from major public/private service providers to less formal local community services.

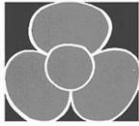
This enabled the study to identify opportunities for improving access and delivery of rural services, and provide a range of cost effective options that B&NES Council, Local Strategic Partnership service providers, and other support organisations can decide on and direct resources to. These can be implemented together through the B&NES Local Area Agreement framework, sub-regional or regional initiatives, or on a contract, commissioned or partnership basis.

This report has taken into account that providing access to services in rural areas presents many difficult challenges, especially with changing demographics and resources. The research, findings and recommendations have therefore focused on the key needs of rural communities and those considered disadvantaged.

Those considered disadvantaged we have defined as groups or individuals who have the most problems accessing services in rural areas because they are isolated, vulnerable or deprived. Many people fall into these categories, for example young, elderly, long term ill, long term unemployed, lone parents, parents with dependent children, and other people who find their quality of life restricted.

The research addressed the issues using the following evidence:

- Searching published information and data
- Examining Unmet needs and local studies
- Undertaking interviews with key stakeholders
- Exploring opportunities and best practice from other areas



BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Bath & North East Somerset's Vision & Priorities

To help shape the district in the future the Council and their partners on the Local Strategic Partnership have agreed a set of visions and priorities for the area that we are all working towards:

1. A distinctive place that has:
 - *Outstanding built and natural environment*
 - *A dynamic economy*
 - *Connectivity-*
 - *World class arts and culture*

2. With vibrant sustainable communities
 - *That are active, lively and inclusive –*
 - *Where people feel safe, take responsibility and make a contribution, -*
 - *That are carbon neutral,*
 - *Where the disadvantaged are supported*
 - *Where the vulnerable are protected*
 - *Where people feel proud to live*

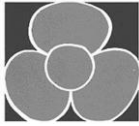
3. Where everyone fulfils their potential by having an equal opportunity to:
 - *Learn and develop skills*
 - *Enjoy a healthy lifestyle*
 - *Influence the future of their area*
 - *Contribute to the economy and society*

Bath & North East Somerset Council's core values for moving towards this vision are: quality, value with customer focus.

5. Bath & North East Somerset Council Priorities

The vision for Bath & North East Somerset Council will drive local plans and policies and ensure that the future of Bath & North East Somerset is a sustainable one. Underpinning the vision, are the Council's improvement priorities for the next three years:

- *Improving transport and the public realm*
- *Building communities where people feel safe and secure*
- *Addressing the causes and effects of climate change*
- *Improving the availability of affordable housing*
- *Promoting the independence of older people*
- *Improving the life chances of disadvantaged children and young people*
- *Improving school buildings*
- *Sustainable growth*



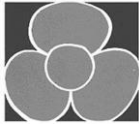
Issues

There are a number of key drivers that affect the access to services in the rural areas of B&NES, many of these may appear to contradict each other and offer a bewildering array of choices or options for individuals, policy makers and service providers.

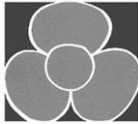
The issues which need to be considered can be identified as;

- Rurality and remoteness (what does this mean for a Policy maker or citizen?)
- Urban Fringe (a unique set of issues arise from the proximity to the cities of Bath & Bristol)
- Changing demographics (an aging population nationally)
- Recession (the impacts of the current economic downturn are only just being felt and this needs to be monitored)
- Impact of Sub regional and regional growth (the demand for housing and employment will create new towns and communities)
- Skills training and retention of workers (are young people and graduates likely to stay in rural areas?)
- Migrant workers and low GVA¹ economy (land based economy and shifting patterns of employment)
- Hidden or masked deprivation & poverty (relative affluence and prosperity hides real and often extreme poverty and deprivation)
- Information and data gathering (reliance on aggregated data or non geographical information)
- Centralisation of services (or mainstreaming)
- The choice agenda (the ability for service users to select providers both public and private, particularly in healthcare and education)
- Narrowing the gap (reducing the range of the extremes for example house prices and income)
- Climate change (the impacts of carbon reduction requirements against transportation and lifestyle choices)
- Transportation and connectivity (issues around physical and virtual connections between people and communities)
- Information technology (the availability of broadband, fibre optics, access to equipment and training to use it)
- Value for money service delivery (the combined impacts of the Gershon Review and the move towards tendering & commissioning by public services)

¹ Gross Value Added (GVA) measures the contribution to the economy of each individual producer, industry or sector in the United Kingdom <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?ID=254>

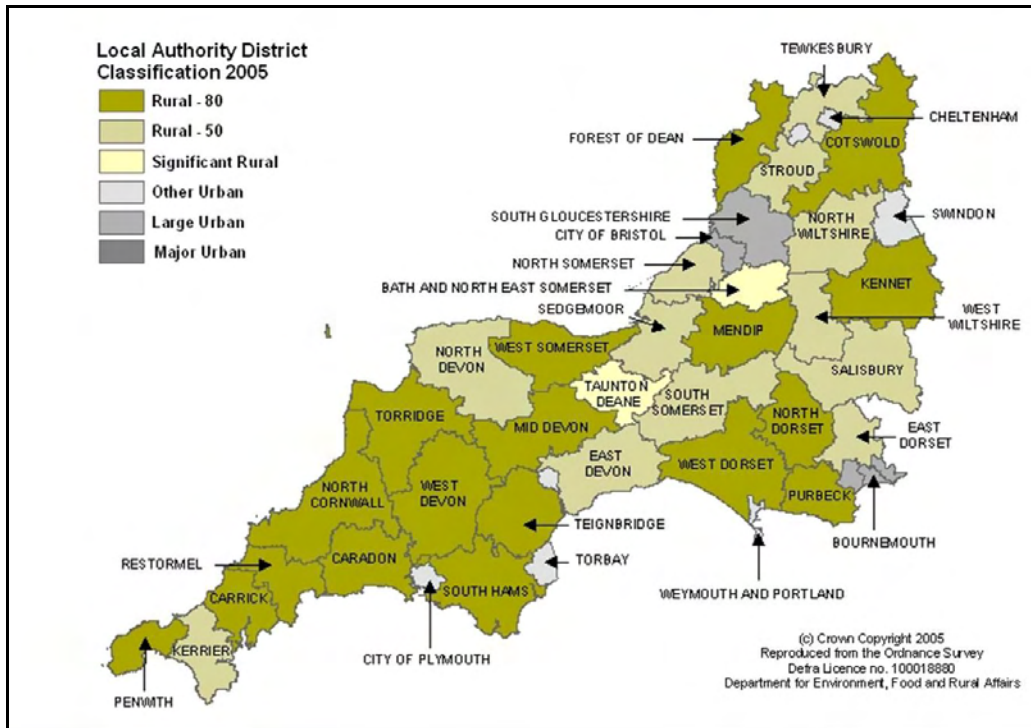


- Increasing role of the Third sector in delivery of services (Central government policy particularly in NHS)

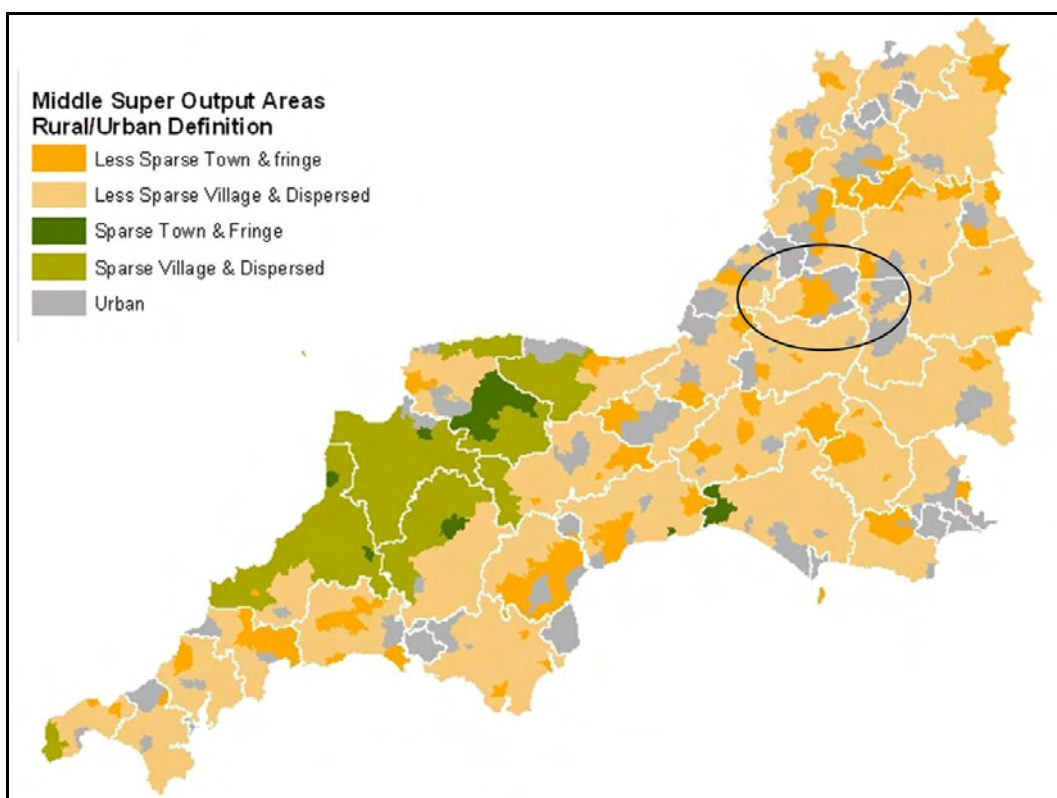


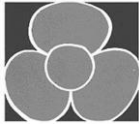
Geography & Physical context

As a unitary authority B&NES is classified as 'Significant Rural' by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).



The area is also considered to have 'less sparse town and fringe' and 'less sparse village and dispersed' by the Middle Super Output Areas rural / urban definitions.





Bath & North East Somerset can be divided into three distinct geographical rural classifications;

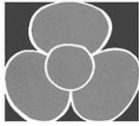
1. Less sparse village & dispersed – Chew Valley and western 1/3 of authority
2. Less sparse town & fringe – central 1/3
3. Urban – Eastern 1/3 incorporating Bath, Midsomer Norton, Radstock & Keynsham

As most parishes in B&NES are not considered remote and many exist close to urban areas we have simply defined a rural community as those outside of the towns and cities. Most communities on the rural/urban fringe would consider themselves rural but access their services in urban areas (this is often because people obtain services where they work).

Many of the more remote rural communities are linked in the same way, and are increasingly accessing services in urban areas.

In addition the main conflicting geographical and connectivity issues for the rural communities in B&NES are that:

- The City of Bristol is the dominant economic driver; but
- The City of Bath is the 'focus' for unitary activities.



METHODOLOGY

In order to understand the issues facing rural communities when accessing services, especially by those who are considered isolated, vulnerable or deprived, we undertook the following research processes to establish their needs and gaps in provision and develop potential service solutions.

“... the notion that rural England as a whole is better off than urban England (on average) has continued to mask the significant levels of disadvantage that exist. The difference from urban areas is that its dispersal pattern is often very difficult to pinpoint in official data, and this translates into weaknesses in policy instruments for tackling disadvantage”

(Commission for Rural Communities, 2008)

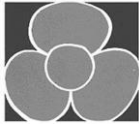
As rural areas have lower population densities and fragmented population compositions identifying quality of life issues and needs tends to be difficult when using the Multiple Indices of Deprivation which are recorded on a district basis. We therefore decided to use them only as a guide, as many pockets of deprivation are missed and some which are on the urban fringe are not considered as rural.

A review of existing reports and data was undertaken. Available information included;

- Wansdyke Parliamentary Constituency Census 2001 and Access to Services Focus on Rural Areas (DEFRA 2004)
- Bath & North East Somerset Census 2001 and Access to Services Focus on Rural Areas (DEFRA 2004)
- Rural Services Data Series: Availability of Services 2007 - South West (Commission for Rural Communities 2008)
- Lower Super Output Area Profile: Bath & North East Somerset (Intelligence West 2008)
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (B&NES PCT 2008)
- B&NES Unmet Needs Survey (Community Action 2004)
- Chew Valley Transport Needs Assessment (Community Action 2005)

We decided to research two parishes on the rural/urban fringe (one outside Bristol and one outside Bath) and six parishes considered more rural but with links to local urban areas (three in the Chew Valley and three in the Somer Valley). To do this we used the Parish Unmet Needs Study, Community Transport Surveys and Parish Plans developed or assisted by Community Action RCC.

We investigated Council Connect data and information, and also Indices of Multiple Deprivation on deprivation, Mosaic on demographic needs, and residents' perception of need.



We also consulted the following stakeholders who understand the issues and needs of rural communities and requirements of service providers with regards to accessing services, and will need to be involved on the ground and strategically to implement action. These were Parish Clerks and Chairs, District Councillors, VCS representatives, Unitary Authority management and officers. See Appendices for questions asked.

Community Action & the role of the Rural Community Councils

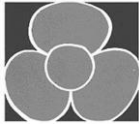
Community Action is the Rural Community Council for the West of England and our work is to improve the quality of life of local communities, particularly of disadvantaged people in rural areas. We have a vision of thriving, diverse and sustainable communities throughout the area we serve. As an infrastructure organisation we support and encourage community-led action and strong local governance, work with groups and communities to increase long-term sustainability of local community life and we influence policies and services in order to achieve equity for particularly for rural communities.

Community Action's small team of professional development officers and support staff are managed and directed by a voluntary Board of Trustees. Our staff and volunteers have a wealth of knowledge and experience which enables them to help communities directly. Our Chief Executive networks with local and regional decision-makers to strategically influence rural policy.

Evidence Based Findings

Detailed interviews have been carried out with;

- Action for Pensioners
- Cllr Neil Butters, Bathavon South Ward
- Farmborough Parish Clerk
- Marksbury Parish Clerk
- Monkton Combe
- Norton Malreward Parish Clerk
- Publow Parish Clerk
- Freshford Parish Clerk
- Chew Magna Surgery
- B&NS PCT, St Martins
- Community Action RCC
- Avon Local Council Association
- B&NES CVS
- B&NES Council Connect
- Somer Valley Partnership

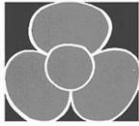


Parish Plans

Community Action has also summarised the eight Parish Plans completed within B&NES and these have shown the following key themes;

Parish Plan Key Theme	Number of Actions identified in the Parish Plan action plan
Roads, Transport and Travel	63
Sport Recreation & Community	56
Natural Environment	34
Economy	26
Communication	25
Planning Design & Land use	24
Young People	21
Health	9
Housing	6
Services	5
Crime & Safety	5
Education & Childcare	2
TOTAL No of Issues	276

Parish plans have been undertaken in Bathford, Camerton, Chew Magna, Compton Martin, Dunkerton, Freshford, Keynsham and Wellow



WHICH RURAL GROUPS ARE DISADVANTAGED?

This research has identified that the population of rural B&NES can be sub-divided into a number of groups, each of which has their own set of distinctive issues relating to their own access to services. There is however a common theme found to be running through all groups related to transportation and in particular access to private transport.

This problem is often compounded by infrequent public transport and long distances to local services. Those most disadvantaged from accessing services in B&NES are the following groups of people:

Elderly People

According to the State of the Countryside report, Manthorpe 2008, 40% of older people in rural areas report difficulty in accessing services, such as health and social care, post offices, transport, and amenities.

In the B&NES Parish Unmet Needs Study 2004, we found that in Camerton 21.2% are Pensioner only households.

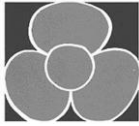
Many people were worried about elderly people accessing services when they can no longer drive or upon the death of a spouse who drives. We found this to be a growing group who often find themselves isolated and rely on family and neighbours to help them. In 2002 the Office of National Statistics found that amongst those over 75, only 57% of men and 34% of women have access to a car.

When this is combined with relying on a state pension those living alone or as elderly couples tend to more socially excluded and struggle to access services properly. The Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion found 16% of all those receiving the Pension Credit Guarantee Element in England live in rural areas; and in 2006 the Department of Work and Pensions found 20% of older people in sparse rural areas compared to 17% in urban areas live in households with income below 60% of the median, before housing costs.

In 2007 the Office of National Statistics found that only 35% of those aged 65-74 years old and 10% of those 75+ use the internet.

Many of these elderly people do not request or access services and often only come to notice when their situation worsens, consequently there are many hidden pockets of disadvantage. This isolation was noted as a real problem that is not generally understood by Parish Councils.

Action for Pensioners and Age Concern are elderly people's main advocates, but often have problems reaching vulnerable people. In some cases they never leave home because of a lack services. Transport was highlighted as a major problem, and also availability and accessibility to village halls.



With our study finding that more people are retiring to B&NES rural areas it is clear that pressure on transport, health and social services, and other services will increase.

Young People

We found that young people, especially mid to late teenagers are having problems accessing further education, training, employment (including Saturday jobs), evening entertainment, advice and other services. As a result there are many young people in B&NES who find themselves isolated

The problem of limited opportunities together with a lack of affordable housing is contributing to young people moving away from rural communities in B&NES.

In the Voicebox 2006 study availability of activities for teenagers was perceived as 'poor' in the Englishcombe Parish, and 'not so good' in the Bathavon South and most central rural parishes.

Parents without a car

Those who are housebound in particular women without access to a car during the day can become isolated, especially mothers with pre-school children.

In Camerton there are an above average number of households with dependent children, recorded as 31% by the Parish Unmet Needs Study in 2004.

Lone Parents

In Camerton lone parents increased from 1% in 1991 to 8% in 2004 as part of its population, this is above average and combined with the access to services issues highlighted in this report many find themselves isolated.

People out of Work

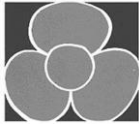
Access to Job Centres, job interviews and potential employment are limited for people in rural areas without private transport.

Long Term Ill

In Camerton the long term illness went up by 6.5% to 13.2% of the population from 1991 to 2004.

People with Mental Health and Disability issues

This group has particular problems accessing services. According to the Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion, 15% of all Disability Allowance claimants in England live in rural areas. Access to services is proving problematic for those with limited mobility.



Carers

Those who are carers and especially young carers often struggle to get away from the home to access services. In Camerton 6.1% of the population is providing unpaid care.

From information we have received we are aware that unpaid care is very high in parts of the area but detailed information is lacking.

Low Income

Many people on low or irregular incomes and those underemployed or unemployed live in rural areas, as the Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion identified, finding that 17% of all households earning less than 60% of the median income in England live in rural areas.

Many people are detached from the labour market and accessing services due to disability, being carers, being ill, long term unemployed or lacking transport.

New Residents

Those who do not have knowledge of the communities and local resources, such as elderly or ethnic minorities moving into an area often have problems accessing services, including travellers and refugees, and homeless people.

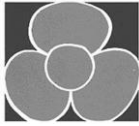
A number of instances were highlighted during the interviews where the RSL had relocated urban families into vacant rural accommodation and this has presented a number of issues both for the established community and the new resident

Analysis by Area

Those rural areas with the most need to have access to services identified by the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) were Clandown and Englishcombe districts; by the Perception of Need (PoN) study were Timsbury, High Littleton, Bathavon especially South and Mendip fringe districts; by Mosaic were Chew Valley, Bathampton, Stanton Drew and Farmborough. By both IMD and PoN findings Peasedown St. John and Paulton were identified; and by IMD and Mosaic the Corston area.

From studies those areas experiencing barriers to accessing services were along the Mendip boundary, the Radstock area, Bathavon and Saltford, and Peasedown St John. The IMD statistics would suggest services need to be extended outside of Bath and Keynsham, and between Bath and Radstock, particularly the districts of Bathavon South and North, Englishcombe and Corston.

An increasing population in rural areas will put further strains on access to services, for example in Camerton from the 1991 census to the 2004 Parish Unmet Needs Study the population grew by 16% and saw an increase of households by 25%.



Access to services is important in order to meet people's needs and maintain the quality of life in rural areas, particularly for those who are socially and economically marginalised by living in geographically, communication or resource isolated areas. Many services such as schools, shops and Post Offices play vital social and community roles, and support isolated, vulnerable or deprived people. However, from the evidence rural communities do not like to make a fuss as services and facilities disappear and often suffer in silence and manage.

CASE STUDY

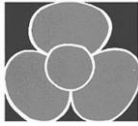
Blisland Multi Use Community Facility

This project has created a new multi-purpose centre in place of a rusting shipping container that was used for years by the villagers. It includes a post office, village shop, GP consulting room, internet café and three small business units.



This is a community-led project to build an amenity centre in the village of Blisland. It will boost the economy of the village and surrounding parishes through the provision of local workspace, community services and facilities. The centre provides a consultation suite, reception area, ICT access, Post Office and shop and 90 sqm of workspace, all of which is available to local individuals, groups and businesses. The villagers themselves raised tens of thousands of pounds towards the project.

<http://www.plunkett.co.uk/whatwedo/rcs/shopdirectory.cfm/shop/225>



SERVICE NEEDS

When assessing basic Access to Services there are a number of primary and secondary services that must be considered. These are a range of basic needs, which everyone is likely to need to access on a regular or occasional basis:

1 Access to Health Services

GP Surgeries are based in the towns and a small number of villages – in B&NES as a whole there are 40 surgeries and branch surgeries, of which just 6 are based in rural communities.

Other routine health facilities such as **chemists, pharmacies, OT, clinics, opticians** and **dentists** are generally much less widely distributed.

In many cases public transport is either not available or highly inconvenient – rural bus services are generally infrequent and health surgeries may not take account of them when making appointments. This was highlighted in the Camerton Parish Plan where residents found it difficult to make appointments despite three buses a day to nearby Timsbury. Camerton's nearest dentist is in Peasedown St. John but no service exists between these neighbouring parishes.

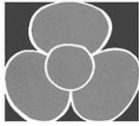
Council sponsored Dial a Ride type services probably lack the flexibility to provide an individual service for appointments, but there are some very worthwhile community car scheme initiatives, generally community led and entirely voluntary. Freshford developed a Link car scheme, which is part of Wiltshire Link, to get people to appointments. In appropriate cases, General Practitioners will visit people's homes, and GP Surgeries such as Chew Magna are keen to be pro-active in meeting their patients' needs, eg by supplying a free prescription delivery service.

2 Access to Shops and Post Offices

There has been a marked decrease in markets, shops and pubs in rural areas as they struggle to maintain customer levels and economic viability. Post Office closures were accelerated by the government's rationalisation programme last year. Loss of these services poses a real problem for many, especially for older people living in communities where public transport is limited or absent.

As well as a range of goods and services, village shops offer a social outlet and informal information point which is much appreciated, and central to the idea of community.

Some local communities have sought to plug the gap through their own endeavours. Community run shops are well established in Bathford and Wellow, East Harptree opened recently, and Freshford plans to open a brand new community shop later this year. Other communities may follow – one



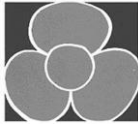
of Camerton’s Action Plans is to consider developing a co-operative or social enterprise shop with post office services, while Compton Dando is planning to introduce a shop within village pub.

However, many commercially run shops are struggling, particularly where post offices have closed, as in Farmborough.

Currently around **half of rural parishes** in B&NES have a village shop providing general goods, while 40% have a post office (three of these a very limited outreach service only). See table below for details.

Branch	Post Office comments	Village Shop?
Batheaston		several
Bathford	closed summer 08	community
Bathampton		yes
Freshford - outreach	Mon, Fri am only	community (planned)
Marshfield		several
Farmborough	closed summer 08	yes - may close
Timsbury		yes
Hinton Charterhouse		yes
Peasedown St John		several
Wellow - outreach	2 hours on Tues & Thurs am or	community
Corston		yes
Newton St Loe	closed summer 08	none
Marksbury	closed summer 08	none
Clandown	closed summer 08	yes
Saltford		several
Pensford		yes
Clutton		yes
Bishop Sutton		yes
Hallatrow - outreach	Mon, Thur am only	none
High Littleton		yes
Paulton		yes
East Harptree	closed summer 08	community
West Harptree		yes
Compton Martin		none
Chew Magna		several
Villages with shops but no (recent) post office		
Farrington Gurney		farm shop
Chew Stoke		yes

Post Office closures have the greatest impact on isolated, vulnerable and deprived people living in rural areas, and also on home workers and small businesses. Post Offices are particularly thin on the ground in the Chew Valley and the Bathavon wards, where in many cases there is little public transport to alternative facilities.



Banks in rural parts of B&NES are few and far between – most communities have tended to rely on post offices for simple financial transactions, so closures are causing added problems especially for small local businesses and disadvantaged groups. There is a general lack of cash withdrawal facilities across B&NES rural areas, something which was highlighted in the Camerton Parish Plan.

There appears to be little prospect of changing Post Office policy, let alone reversing the tide on bank branches, but some shops and/or communities are seeking to ameliorate the impact by providing simple postal services by other means – eg **Paypoint** for bills, cash back or ATMs, and standard mail acceptance. There is scope to build on this.

3 Access to Employment

Those considered disadvantaged within rural communities often have more barriers to work. In Camerton, for example, there is above average unemployment, and of the 53% of people economically active 26% work full time and 12% in part time.

Accessing work using alternative transport to a car is difficult for most rural communities. For example, despite six buses going through Camerton the first bus to Midsomer Norton (the 768 Bath to Hinton Blewitt return) does not arrive until 9.07am and reach its destination until 9.38am which is not suitable for work. With the long distance to Bath the consequence is that only 0.7% travel to work on bus.

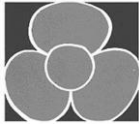
Another barrier to work can be poor availability of job centres and the support they offer. In the B&NES Voicebox 2007 survey job centre availability was rated as poor for Stanton Drew; poor at Temple Cloud and Hinton Blewitt, Chew Valley North, Timsbury and Paulton districts, and Peasedown St John. The last three districts mentioned are also highlighted on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation.

Many people in rural areas find access to training, business advice and marketing difficult. This is a particular issue for younger people, who are much less likely to have their own transport, and in the current environment may be particularly restricted in job opportunities.

The economic potential of rural communities is often overlooked despite large numbers of small businesses and homeworkers.

4 Access to Education & Training

Through the earlier new Valley Transport needs assessment and from feedback received during the preparation of this report it has become evident that young people need more support to reach education, training and work – Public and Community Transport generally do not cater



for their needs, and there is no local “Wheels to Work” project as per other rural parts of the South West.

There is limited access to pre-schools and after school clubs – facilities which can provide important education and social In Camerton and Farmborough there are pre-schools which is vital to the community. These initiatives should be supported as there structure is weak and funding poor.

Primary schools are dispersed and often small, with only have limited extra services, mainly for children and parents not the wider community. For example in Camerton and Farmborough some adult education is provided by the school but only to parents.

Through the IMD survey areas finding particular barriers to education and training according to the Mosaic study include Publow and Whitchurch, Farmborough and Timsbury, and Clutton.

5 Access to Youth & Children Services

School and youth provision is affected by changing demographics. Provision has not always moved with demographics, some communities face problems with youth annoyance, and drugs and alcohol.

According to the Voicebox 13 Survey activities for teenagers were rated very poor in many parts of the area, including Bathavon, Peasedown and Farmborough as well as parts of the Chew Valley and Mendip .

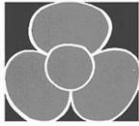
6 Access to Leisure Activities & Meeting Places

In many of our interviews the importance of Village Halls as community facilities was highlighted. A typical example is Wellow Village Hall. The building needs modernisation, but it is much used by a number of local groups, such as Wellow Amateur Dramatics Society (WADS), Wellow and District Horticultural Society, the Magic Box pre-school, etc. In Camerton however, the Village Hall was said to be underused, and the Parish Plan is suggesting the need for new activities for senior citizens and youth groups. The latter was felt necessary to give teenagers an alternative outlet to anti-social behaviour, alcohol and drugs. The absence of evening transport to larger centres means that communities need to do more to develop their own facilities.

The Council’s Voicebox survey suggests that cultural activities and facilities are very restricted in Peasedown, Paulton and Farrington Gurney, down the A37 to Publow, Whitchurch and Stanton Drew, and parts of the Chew Valley.

7 Communication with Service Providers

Many services have problems maintaining co-ordinated action to tackle access to services issues due to staff turnover, with different project officers and approaches being taken. Social Service professionals for example can



find it difficult to connect with vulnerable people in rural areas – apart from transport issues, older or isolated people may not appreciate what support is available, while support workers find it very difficult to identify or connect with those who need support.

CASE STUDY

Village Agents

Gloucestershire's Village Agent programme is helping to ensure the elderly and other potentially vulnerable people are kept in touch with service providers. Locally based community workers maintain a programme of home visits, working on behalf of a range of service providers such as Health, Fire and Social Services. The programme provided a real lifeline earlier this year when many small communities were cut off by the heavy snowfalls.

8 Access to Local Governance

B&NES Council maintains good contact with Parish Council clusters through their Parish Liaison Groups where issues are flagged up with parishes and required action recorded, but the B&NES Overview and Scrutiny Committee identified a significant gap in terms of information and influence

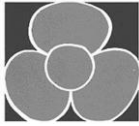
Influence on service providers by rural communities is poor due the influence of Bath and Bristol, and the lack of powers, confidence and skills within Parish Councils. Parish Councils lack political weight to influence the Council and service providers, and need their District Councillors to do this, responsibility for addressing access to services issues within a parish are not being co-ordinated to plan long term for people's needs.

Infrastructure organisations provide an essential support to social services in rural areas. Charities such as Age Concern and the Citizens Advice Bureau work across the rural area, but often find it difficult to get to what are often small but significant pockets of rural isolation in even the more affluent parishes.

9 Access to Information & Computer Services

Many rural communities have little access to local information, often with only a notice board, such as Farmborough, or limited information in a shop or Post Office, such as Hinton Charterhouse.

Some provide good information services, such as Freshford where they have notice boards with timetables and more, a village website, the Parish Magazine and Parish Council Bulletin, and word of mouth. Action for Pensioners and Age Concern provide good information for the elderly,



however, it is difficult to get in touch with vulnerable people. They have found Parish Magazines most helpful.

Sometimes the issue may be technological – apart from Broadband access and general communication issues, Camerton’s Parish Plan reported that 41% of people had problems with television reception and 34% with radio reception.

10 Transport Services

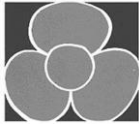
The great majority of rural residents rely on the car to access services, and in many communities those without their own transport are at a major disadvantage. Centralization and closure of local services and the gradual reduction in public transport provision have made matters far worse than they would have been say twenty years ago, when most communities were far more “self-contained” than they are today. Not surprisingly, this was highlighted as a particular problem by organisations representing elderly people – even getting to local services such as village halls or local shops could be very difficult for people away from the village centre. Simply reviewing services available on a parish basis can give a false picture – for example, Marksbury has a thriving petrol station and supermarket located on the A39/A368 junction. However, it is some half mile from the village centre, and very difficult to access for pedestrians.

The length of bus routes often makes buses travelling through rural areas to late to reach work. Even though most rural parts of B&NES have some access to public transport, issues highlighted regarding frequency and reliability makes access to shopping, banking, Post Office and health services difficult. Few services run in the evenings or at weekends, severely curtailing leisure and educational activities for people without their own transport. In some cases, bus services do not provide a connection to local services – for example, residents of Pensford and Whitchurch complain that although there is a relatively good service into Bristol, it doesn’t go to the city centre, and bypasses nearer centres such as ASDA in Whitchurch.

The situation is exacerbated by the loss of radial services to places like Keynsham.

In Camerton’s Travel Needs Assessment it was highlighted that bus service reductions meant that buses were not frequent enough for work or shopping, and there was little or nothing for evenings and weekends. Wellow also complained of loss of services, but with a suggestion that a shuttle service could be established to make use of the Park and Ride at Old Down a few miles away.

Other issues that research in Camerton highlighted was that buses were not advertised well enough (Camerton Parish Travel Needs Assessment), and that



not having bus shelters discourages people especially when buses are not punctual (Camerton Parish Plan).

Dial a Ride schemes have been introduced in much of the rural area, but the sparsity of population in areas like the Chew Valley means that only a small minority of transport disadvantaged residents are benefiting. **Community car** schemes play a valuable role in helping vulnerable residents access vital services, but provision is patchy, even by comparison with neighbouring North Somerset.

Locally the SWAN advisory service deals with social service referrals, providing support including volunteer-run transport to help people access services + community car scheme. It is not generally funded to provide transport to health related services

A common theme from both previous research and our recent interviews is the concern from older residents about future prospects. Many rural residents have cars but are getting older and may not be able to drive for much longer, so it seems that this could be a major problem in the future.

11 Affordable Housing

There are real issues for people trying to obtain suitable housing in rural areas, and also maintaining housing to a reasonable liveable standard.

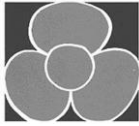
Many elderly people find themselves living in accommodation which is old which are not suited to older living in design and facilities.

With the growth of people moving out of urban areas into rural areas prices have risen as people retire or they become commuter hot spots. It has been become harder for many to remain in rural communities, especially young people, and find affordable housing to rent or buy. This has been further emphasised by the Right to Buy and planning restrictions on new build. Also new housing construction is often not welcome by local residents as services do not necessarily increase putting pressure on them and the location's character may change.

Falls in house prices have not improved affordability, while the number of affordable housing completions funded with social housing grant in rural settlements (ie less than 10,000 population) has fallen by 7% over the past year.

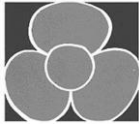
12 Community Engagement

The geography of B&NES means that many rural communities do not naturally connect with institutions and service providers based in Bath, and partly as a result lack a rural voice representing their needs. Many communities are more related and connected to neighbouring Authorities such as Bristol.



The provision of community facilities is often scarce, making community engagement and development difficult. Where facilities such as community halls do exist they are generally considered by community representatives to be inclusive, although geographic or other factors may question this in some cases. This can be addressed by encouraging hall committees to undertake the publicly recognised Hallmark Scheme

While many small communities with few services are able to cope for the present, the evidence demonstrates that given the age profile and reliance on cars that severe problems will most certainly appear in the future.



RECOMMENDATIONS

While we have some specific recommendations on measures to improve access to services at local level, perhaps more important is high level recognition of the importance of this issue, appreciation that there are pockets of real (and growing) disadvantage even in our more affluent communities, and a commitment to creating the climate for local people creating local solutions, flexible partnership working and building long term capacity within communities.

Given the inevitable pressures on budgets, we believe a partnership approach is essential – not just between statutory and VCS providers, but with the communities they serve. While top level ownership is essential, and should be driven through the LSP, empowerment and devolution of delivery is key to making things happen.

1. STRATEGIC DIRECTION

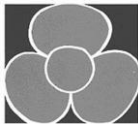
Through the **Local Strategic Partnership** and the agreed vision and priorities for the area, B&NES Council should ensure that there is a fundamental understanding of rural access issues, and an overall approach to rural delivery ad embedded into the Sustainable Community Strategy.

Rural proofing should be an integral part of Policy and Strategy – Community Action can help here in its role as champion of rural interests. There is an opportunity for the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committee to formalise its approach to rural issues in tandem with the LSP – a specific **Rural Action Group** involving an Elected member could oversee and co-ordinate the development of rural service initiatives and would be a useful way of bringing focus to the agenda and involving people with a commitment to the issue. Above all, the rural access issues should be seen as an essential part of the overall Sustainable Community Strategy – no services, no community, no sustainability!

2. PARTNERSHIP APPROACH

We believe a partnership approach is essential given the scattered nature of communities and the difficulty of applying a single model solution. We also need to recognise that it is the isolated and vulnerable minority who most need help in accessing services, so the partnership needs to represent their interests.

This can be achieved by working together at area level, but ensuring close engagement with individual rural communities, to reflect varying needs, aspirations and capabilities. One model to counter balance the over centralisation of large service providers and ensure access to services, is for Parish Councils to be empowered (and skilled) to take more responsibility for the needs of their communities.



B&NES Council should take strategic leadership in this approach and be the catalyst for solutions; they already have good contact with Parish Councils through their Parish Liaison Groups. This will require both B&NES Council and Parish Councils to show leadership and innovation. These were roles outlined in the 2006 Local Government White Paper and taken forward as the Duty to Involve (Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007).

This approach could be formalised for example as a B&NES **Rural Delivery Pathfinder Programme** where all services look at innovation in rural service delivery, and test opportunities for joined up approaches and local priority setting. This would bring agency partners together and require them to concentrate on the access concerns raised by rural communities; it could be facilitated by Parish Councils and use the Parish Planning process or a Pathfinder Research Programme.

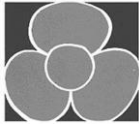
The Regional Development Agency has also ear marked a minimum of £105 million from the RDPE funding to be spent on the ‘Leader’ approach. This may be another approach to use, and is designed to enable local community and business involvement in rural development in specific areas, delivered via broad public–private partnerships called Local Actions Groups (LAGs). In many cases, local authorities are the leading partners, bringing their experience of community engagement and community-led regeneration, and ensuring that community ambitions are recognised in Local Area Agreements and other intervention plans.

3 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Our evidence is that the most effective local action on access to services in rural communities comes through the engagement and initiative of the communities themselves. Community Led Planning (Parish Plans) is a proven way of involving people at grass roots level and creating a plan of action to strengthen community services. The LSP should recognise the strength of this approach, and ensure that all service providers are engaged in advising on and helping to deliver actions. Ward Councillors through their Duty to Involve, can have a vital role in championing the process and helping to spread good ideas – something that extending the elected members **discretionary budgets** might further encourage.

4 LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Our experience suggests that many Parish Councils either do not fully appreciate the access issues facing some residents, or don’t believe that they have the authority and competence to deal. In our view, this is missing a real opportunity, and the Council should therefore work with ALCA to give Parish Councils more responsibility for engaging their communities and tackling issues either directly or through supporting local activists. As outlined in the 2006 Local Government White Paper on Community Empowerment, which also allows the power of well-being in order to use locally raised precepts to improve local conditions, such as providing broadband or funding a community owned shop.



There should also be action to ensure Parish Councils attain **Quality Parish Council** status in order to delegate further functions and encourage more funding. A B&NES Community Chest fund could also be provided to support local service initiatives.

Again, there is an opportunity for District Councillors to encourage the process by bringing clusters of parishes together to work with B&NES Council or other service providers, and influence the Local Strategic Partnership and Local Area Agreement.

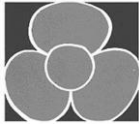
As Parish Councils are allowed to raise funds through the precept there is an opportunity for this devolution of decision making and resources to Parish Councils. This will require them to work closely with service providers, voluntary community groups and other parish councils, often with one parish acting as a service hub to a cluster of parishes. As progress is made this should be publicised in order to encourage others to engage and gain the benefits of this approach.

5 LOCAL SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

In general, we do not believe in a “one size fits all” approach – both because communities are intrinsically different, and because a programme of engagement and empowerment should encourage innovation and diversity. One of the strengths of this approach is the opportunity for developing good practice, and for attracting new resources (both internal to the community and external to the area). The ideas below can therefore be seen as today’s menu, to be considered and tried as appropriate to the needs of the community (or communities) involved. Where statutory or other service providers are involved, we should seek their involvement and support for developing and (where necessary) trialling the approach.

There are already some good initiatives, in B&NES or elsewhere, which could be usefully developed. A fuller description contained in Appendix 1 shows the initiatives and ideas clustered by service area and tabulated against the following headings:

- Community Engagement
- Governance
- Transport
- Community Hubs
- Health
- Food
- Housing
- Data and Targets
- National Indicator Set or LAA

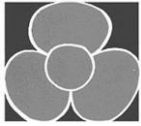


6 ACTIONS

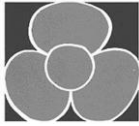
We suggest that the LSP should endorse some early actions to demonstrate that access to services in rural areas IS a serious issue, and **can** be addressed within planned resources. Ideas for early action could include:

- Work with existing Parish Plans to ensure early implementation of service ideas , and increase impact by team working action plans on a cluster basis.
- Adopt partnership approach to support Village Agent initiative, to be piloted by Community Action later this year and already successfully working in Gloucestershire.
- Develop umbrella approach to community transport provision in the Chew Valley, building on work already started, and including possible feeder service to A37/A38 services
- Work with selected village and community shops to develop their role as a community hub and information service
- Arrange programme of workshops with community leaders (eg Parish Councils) to address access issues at local level a means of both to encourage good governance for Parish Councils and signalling their increased role in rural access issues.

By working in partnership both locally and across the rural Bath & North East Somerset area, we suggest that a programme of service improvements can be created delivering multiple benefits against a range of measures. The key is to unlock the potential of rural communities to provide the energy and innovation to create local solutions, within an overall framework which is recognised and supported by Local Strategic Partners and other service providers as creating mutual benefit in the delivery of strategies, targets and aspirations.



APPENDICIES



1 B&NES Vision & Priorities

We are working towards:

1. A distinctive place that has:

- Outstanding built and natural environment
- A dynamic economy
- Connectivity-
- World class arts and culture

2. With vibrant sustainable communities

- That are active, lively and inclusive –
- Where people feel safe, take responsibility and make a contribution, -
- That are carbon neutral,
- Where the disadvantaged are supported
- Where the vulnerable are protected
- Where people feel proud to live

3. Where everyone fulfils their potential by having an equal opportunity to:

- Learn and develop skills
- Enjoy a healthy lifestyle
- Influence the future of their area
- Contribute to the economy and society

Bath & North East Somerset Council's core values for moving towards this vision are: quality, value with customer focus.

5. Our Priorities

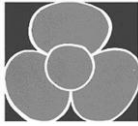
The vision for Bath & North East Somerset Council will drive local plans and policies and ensure that the future of Bath & North East Somerset is a sustainable one. Underpinning the vision, are the Council's improvement priorities for the next three years:

- Improving transport and the public realm
- Building communities where people feel safe and secure
- Addressing the causes and effects of climate change
- Improving the availability of affordable housing
- Promoting the independence of older people
- Improving the life chances of disadvantaged children and young people
- Improving school buildings
- Sustainable growth

Policy and Partnership's priority outcomes

Safer and Strong Communities, in support of the Council's vision of a distinctive place with vibrant and sustainable communities

- Reducing fear of crime & anti-social behaviour



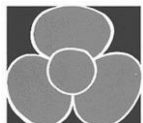
- Help for victims of crime
- Improved reporting of hate crime
- Reducing re-offending
- Reducing domestic violence and abuse (including repeat incidents)
- Public services better engaged with local communities
- More cohesive communities
- A thriving Third Sector, which includes voluntary and community sector, some social enterprises

Equalities, in support of the Council's vision of a distinctive place where everyone fulfils their potential

- Commissioned services to support and challenge the Council to meet its legal duties to promote equality on grounds of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age and religion/belief.

Sustainability,

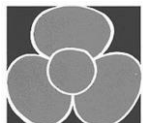
- tackling the causes and effects of climate change
- committed to reducing the carbon emissions of the Council and the other public sector organisations in the area
- to develop our leadership role in helping communities across the district to reduce their carbon emissions.
- how we can ensure that the area can cope with the unavoidable climate change that is occurring and will continue into the future as a result of the carbon emissions from the past.
- Specifically, we are keen to see delivery on this agenda through work that not only meets these urgent climate change objectives, but which is closely tied to improving well-being
- contributing to the development of more sustainable communities, in the broadest sense.
- link with existing community organisations on this agenda and to find ways to engage with households in ways that will really help people to live more sustainable lives



2. IDEAS, OPPORTUNITIES, INITIATIVES AND EXAMPLES OF ACCESS TO SERVICES

In our discussion with rural communities, our colleagues in the Voluntary & Community Sector, LSP Partners, Council officers and colleagues from other Rural Community Councils, we have identified a number of ideas, often at a very small or local level which have a number of cross cutting themes. We have shown how these ideas can be linked across services provided and some examples either from the area or from around the country.

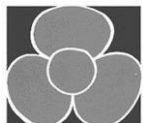
1 No.	Access To Health Services, Dental Services, Mental Health & Adult Social Care	Community Engagement	Governance	Transport	Community Hubs	Health	Food	Housing	Data and Targets	NI or LAA set
1.1	Bus timetables and routes could be discussed by working groups to synchronise with clinics appointment systems, with surgeries providing parish priority windows for visits - in effect grouping appointments for more remote communities.	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	
1.2	Health clinics could be set up for a day at a local school, village hall or shop. A community could highlight a health issue of concern and advice sessions could be held accordingly, for example a youth club might request an advice session on drug and alcohol abuse.	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
1.3	A General Practitioner home visit service could be set up.			✓		✓				
1.4	In order to access local health, dental, mental health and adult social care services Community Transport options could be geared to these by rural communities to take regard of National Health Service and local care groups priorities and timetables.			✓		✓				
1.5	Where a local solution can be found this should be encouraged and supported by service providers. One option could be developing a Community Care group or social enterprise, which could also offer a mini bus service and outreach care; this could involve a cluster group of parishes pulling together objectives from their Parish Plans.	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	
1.6	Another option may be setting up a 'Good Neighbour' scheme ensuring isolated, vulnerable and deprived people in a rural parish are not being missed by service providers and are able to discuss problems.	✓				✓				



1 No.	Access To Health Services, Dental Services, Mental Health & Adult Social Care	Community Engagement	Governance	Transport	Community Hubs	Health	Food	Housing	Data and Targets	NI or LAA set
1.7	A local health and mental health information service could be developed with internet, telephone and leaflet services, which could be connected to related services to provide wider care in rural area.	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓	
1.8	In most cases the more services can be promoted the greater their take up. A co-ordinated campaign should therefore be organised between services targeting different groups within rural communities, particularly those considered isolated, vulnerable and deprived.	✓		✓		✓				
1.9	Ensuring the Primary Care Trust and other health and care providers recognise rural health access issues, and act accordingly - for example providing support for community transport or simply ensuring that appointments meet travel realities.			✓		✓			✓	

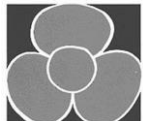
In Wellow there is a regular health clinic set up in the Village Hall, this should be researched with the Primary Care Trust as an option to expand. In Freshford there is a General Practitioner home visit system; this should be researched with the Primary Care Trust as an option to expand. The Freshford Link car scheme has done this and could be copied where appropriate, with advice from Wiltshire Link. An example of this is the Bell View Project, a social enterprise care company set up in Belford, Northumberland – as outlined in the Rural Services Review by DEFRA in 2006. Access to local health provision these options should focus on Bathavon North and South, parishes between Keynsham and Timsbury around the A37, and most areas from Chew Valley to the Mendip fringe except Chew Magna and West Harptree.

Further data needs to be researched at the Output Area level for this, in order to find and address areas of disadvantage, such as in Publow where unpaid care has been shown to be very high in parts. The South West ACRE Network is planning to obtain South West data for Rural Community Councils to use.



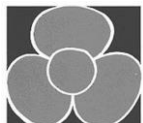
2 No.	Access To Shopping Opportunities, Village Shops & Local Retail	Community Engagement	Governance	Transport	Community Hubs	Health	Food	Housing	Data and Targets	NI or LAA set
2.1	Many local communities are overcoming their lack of shopping opportunities by developing new enterprises, with support and funding. This sustainable village shop model should be used as a social and information hub as well as retail outlet,	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
2.2	Village shops grants and advice services must be maintained.	✓	✓				✓			
2.3	A local food network could be established or re-established, with a brief to encourage the greater supply and use of local produce, with this being available through local retail outlets.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
2.4	This may support a local allotment project and further access to local produce.	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		
2.5	Others have decided to develop local community transport schemes in order to reach villages, towns and cities for shopping opportunities – see Access to Transport below.	✓		✓			✓			
2.6	By supporting and promoting computer and broadband access in communities such as using schools and into homes many more disadvantaged people in rural areas will be able to make use of on-line shopping.	✓		✓	✓				✓	
2.7	'picking up points' for shopping could also be introduced to villages.	✓		✓	✓		✓			
2.8	A 'Good Neighbour' scheme could support this or ensure disadvantaged people are catered for	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	
2.9	Where possible Post Office services should be supported in village shops they are often reliant on each other to be viable.	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	
2.10	shops provide local jobs and volunteering opportunities.	✓		✓					✓	

There are examples to follow such as Wellow Village Shop and Bathford's Co-operative Community Shop; and more recently East Harptree Village shop with many facilities and local support, which levered in £30,000 of investment – see Case Studies in Appendix 2 There are many commercial shops operating effectively in such places as Chew Magna and Timsbury, and Clandown where major investment has been made. Their expertise should be drawn on to support other rural shopping opportunities. Link up with Radstock Co-Operative



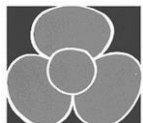
3 No.	Access To Post Office Services	Community Engagement	Governance	Transport	Community Hubs	Health	Food	Housing	Data and Targets	NI or LAA set
3.1	The provision of Post Offices should be supported as far as allowed in terms of PO network policy, but particularly where they are part of a sustainable village facility, for example a shop.	✓		✓	✓				✓	
3.2	When new Village Shops and local retailing initiatives are explored or developed they should include the provision of Post Office and cash services,	✓		✓	✓		✓			
3.3	Visiting sub-Post offices could also be encouraged to set up at village halls or shops, for example this occurs in Wellow and Freshford	✓		✓	✓					
3.4	In order to access Post Office and other services rural communities should investigate Community Transport options – see Access to Transport below.	✓		✓						
3.5	In order to support a range of community services agency partnerships must be developed and in this case another option could be to offer greater access to computers and broadband through schools to use the Post Office website.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
3.6	A co-ordinated campaign should therefore be organised between services targeting different groups within rural communities, particularly those considered isolated, vulnerable and deprived.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
3.7	When Post Office services are publicised they should include locations, open times and transport options and times in order to access them; these could be on the Council Connect website, in home information packs and on information boards.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

When the need for Post Office services are identified in Parish Plans options for delivery should be explored, for example in Camerton they are proposing to include Post Office services when they explore developing a co-operative or social enterprise Community Shop. Those areas where options should be applied are: Bathavon parishes especially South, after this the Englishcombe district, and Farrington Gurney, and then rural parishes in Corston and Farmborough, and Publow and Whitchurch, also Chew Valley North, Temple Cloud and Hinton Blewitt. Those areas where options should be applied are: Bathavon parishes especially South, after this the Englishcombe district, and Farrington Gurney, and then rural parishes in Corston and Farmborough, and Publow and Whitchurch, also Chew Valley North, Temple Cloud and Hinton Blewitt.



4	ACCESS TO BANKING & PROFESSIONAL SERVICES	Community Engagement	Governance	Transport	Community Hubs	Health	Food	Housing	Data and Targets	NI or LAA set
4.1	Any existing or proposed Village Shop, local retail or Post Office option should include some banking and cash facilities, and information about these and local professional services.				✓		✓			
4.2	Both businesses and disadvantaged people should be assisted with and informed by publicity about local internet access either at community hubs such as schools or in the home.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
4.3	Business and social enterprise support should be brought in to inform and assist enterprises to access local banking and professional services properly.		✓		✓					
4.4	Credit Unions, Local Exchange & Trading Schemes should be evaluated and supported	✓	✓				✓		✓	

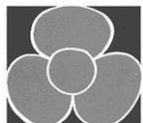
5	ACCESS TO BUSINESS & SOCIAL ENTERPRISE SUPPORT	Community Engagement	Governance	Transport	Community Hubs	Health	Food	Housing	Data and Targets	NI or LAA set
5.1	A single entry point enterprise support system should be developed for businesses and communities to access information, signposting and services, with an internet-based portal.		✓						✓	
5.2	SWRDA funded projects and other funding should be used for a B&NES business and social enterprise development programme.	✓	✓						✓	
5.3	Comprehensive training, business advice and marketing needs to be organised to go into rural areas.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
5.4	Working from home by teleworking and using internet needs more support.			✓	✓			✓		
5.5	Planning decisions should promote small business projects.	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
5.6	Live-work units need to be developed	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
5.7	The economic potential of rural areas needs to be fully promoted.			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	



This could link up to the new Business Link regional Knowledge Banks. It could also bring initiatives together with business champions, service providers, voluntary and community sector services and others. This service would also support locally suggested initiatives, such as Nurseries, Play Schools, Dial a Rides, Village Shops, and others.

An example of this is Peak Directions developed by the Peak District Rural Delivery Pathfinder – see www.peakdirections.co.uk

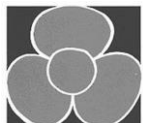
6 No.	Access To Work & Business	Community Engagement	Governance	Transport	Community Hubs	Health	Food	Housing	Data and Targets	NI or LAA set
6.1	In order to assist disadvantaged people to reach work Bus Services could be restructured to ensure at least one bus travelling through rural settlements reaches each town or city by 8.45am.			✓					✓	
6.2	Community Transport options could also be geared to this by rural communities.	✓		✓						
6.3	Car Share schemes could be used, with B&NES Council and Job Centre Plus providing an information, advice and matching service.	✓		✓						
6.4	Wheels to Work schemes could be investigated providing scooters for young people – see Access to Transport			✓					✓	
6.5	Local community pre-schools, breakfast clubs, after school and holiday activity clubs could be further supported by B&NES Council, in order to free parents to go to full time work.	✓			✓		✓			
6.6	Using schools as computer and broadband access centres could assist home workers, job searches, training and business advice.	✓			✓					
6.7	Setting up cluster community crèches for similar reasons could be investigated.	✓			✓	✓				
6.8	Training, business and marketing advice needs to be co-ordinated to provide information and support in rural areas, this could be a single entry point enterprise support pathfinder		✓		✓				✓	
6.9	Job Centre Plus could also supply information to Council Connect and other support		✓						✓	



6 No.	Access To Work & Business	Community Engagement	Governance	Transport	Community Hubs	Health	Food	Housing	Data and Targets	NI or LAA set
	organisations with information on jobs, training and business advice.									
6.10	Village shops and flexible local retailing initiatives could be given greater support to develop in order to provide jobs and training either full time, part time or volunteering.	✓	✓		✓					
6.11	Parish Councils and local businesses could organise a Business Support Centre for their parish, setting up a Parish Council Grant Sub-Committee to seek funds for business opportunities, and also setting up a Business Club to engage local businesses.	✓	✓							
6.12	Parish websites and local notice boards should become promotional tools for local businesses and work.	✓	✓							
6.13	The Local Development Framework should enable planners to actively support these and other business options, such as the Live Work units as in South Gloucestershire.			✓				✓	✓	

The economic potential of rural areas needs to be promoted more strongly, making customers and businesses more aware of activity and opportunities. An example would be promoting to remote rural communities Camerton’s high number of homeworkers as a viable business alternative where access to transport is poor.

An example of setting up a business and service like these is Earlybirds Nursery co-operative which saved the local nursery. It also provides an after school club and holiday club in Shirebrook, Derbyshire, with help from DEFRA and the Plunkett Foundation.

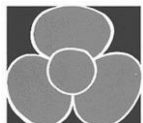


7 No.	Access To Education & Skills	Community Engagement	Governance	Transport	Community Hubs	Health	Food	Housing	Data and Targets	NI or LAA set
7.1	Schools could be used as extended adult learning an education centres, and not just for parents.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
7.2	They should also address wider topics and allow access to computers and broadband.	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	
7.3	This could build on the Extended Schools Programme and government finance for after school and holiday childcare.	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
7.4	Learning opportunities should be advertised locally, for example with Council Connect.								✓	
7.5	Community Transport options should be available to allow people to attend classes.			✓	✓				✓	

A local college could become the leading provider of rural based further and higher education, for example Midsomer Norton College.

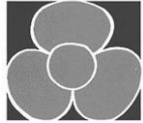
The Wellow Parish Plan for example is proposing local groups and adult education classes at St. Julian’s Primary School. In Batheaston, for example, opportunities developed by the scheme include computer skills and language courses for members of the community.

In Camerton and Farmborough there are pre-schools, these should be supported as there structure is weak and funding poor – see Access to Business Support also VCS and Community Support.



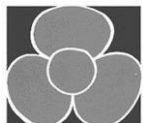
The Community Learning Development project is funded by the Learning and Skills Council and the European Social Fund. It speaks to people returning to learning to identify the training and activities they want.

8 No.	Access To Leisure Activities & Meeting Places, Youth & Children Services	Community Engagement	Governance	Transport	Community Hubs	Health	Food	Housing	Data and Targets	NI or LAA set
8.1	transfer community buildings from public to community ownership under community asset transfer	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
8.2	The principle of community hubs in every parish could be adopted, providing general access and information. This could be a village hall providing 'open mornings'; and visiting services, for example General Practitioners, benefits advice and others.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
8.3	The use of schools should be widened as community buildings.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
8.4	Village halls could develop a specialised service for them and other parishes to use, such as a local cinema or doctors surgery set up.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
8.5	Village halls could be used as extended adult learning centres, not just for parents, and covering wider topics, for example for lone parents requiring training. This could mean using them as computer and broadband centres.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
8.6	Park / open spaces upgrades could be supported with play equipment and teen shelter	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
8.7	The social role of village pubs needs to be recognised and supported, and even supported with a mini bus service.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
8.8	PCSO' s should be aware of evening activities in parishes, in order to support them and discourage more anti-social behaviour	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
8.9	Parish Councils could have a Community Project or Club Development representative	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
8.10	Village halls could act as a health clinic opportunity to the community, and also provide drug and alcohol abuse advice sessions at Youth Clubs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
8.11	All activities should be comprehensively promoted on notice boards and websites, new notice boards should be encouraged.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
8.12	For smaller and more isolated settlements mobile solutions should be looked at, for example the Mobile Library or one-off small minibus or van	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	



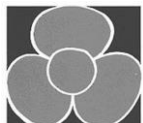
A large project example is the North West Development Agency's investment of £1.8 million to help deliver the Lancashire Rural Pathfinder project. This funding was awarded to the Lancashire Economic Partnership for 'Pathfinder in Practice', a pilot project to improve access to local services by developing Community Resource Centers (CRCs) or small scale service hubs in ten rural areas across the county. In addition to this, a Rural Premium Fund is helping to encourage a variety of key service providers, including Primary Care Trusts, social services, tourist information and children's centers, to locate to the CRCs.

9 No.	Access to Community Support	Community Engagement	Governance	Transport	Community Hubs	Health	Food	Housing	Data and Targets	NI or LAA set
9.1	Parish Planning needs to be accelerated, supported and funded with Parish Plan development grants and support.	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	
9.2	Many communities want more PCSO patrols	✓	✓		✓				✓	
9.3	Parishes should have an updated register of skills and interests which can be tapped into.	✓	✓						✓	
9.4	All services should be publicised and this should be co-ordinated in parishes. Council Connect could be the hub for this.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
9.5	Information boards and services need to be developed in each parish covering all service providers and services, from Primary Care Trust care to petrol forecourts.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
9.6	All Parish Councils should consider developing resident information packs, with support from service providers. Information should be targeted to isolated, vulnerable and deprived persons in the communities, for example youth information.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
9.7	Also with Community Chest grants and mainstreaming support for implementation, and a simpler process and focus on access to services.	✓	✓	✓	✓					



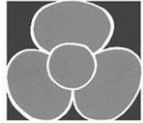
10	Access to Voluntary Community Sector Support	Community Engagement	Governance	Transport	Community Hubs	Health	Food	Housing	Data and Targets	NI or LAA set
10.1	Community Led Plans should be supported and encouraged as a way of developing community cohesion	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
10.2	As the VCS in rural areas are often small and run by volunteers with small incomes, and are fragmented as a sector, difficult for funders to support, they need strong infrastructure support.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
10.3	All Voluntary Community Sector infrastructure organisations need major backing to support rural communities and those considered disadvantaged	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
10.4	Local VCS groups can often be better linked with their Parish Council than with VCS infrastructure and do not undertake partnership working, this means a strong relationship is required between VCS infrastructure organisations and Parish Councils to meet access to services needs.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	

11	Access to Service Providers, Council Connect & Service Information	Community Engagement	Governance	Transport	Community Hubs	Health	Food	Housing	Data and Targets	NI or LAA set
11.1	'In depth' work handovers need to be developed for B&NES staff and officers taking on roles, so they have a real grasp of the continuing issues being tackled by rural communities and co-ordinate action accordingly.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
11.2	Ensure every meeting in rural areas is promoted strongly, made accessible to everyone in the rural area, and takes real regard of the sustainable communities agenda.	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	
11.3	Service providers should join B&NES Council at Parish Liaison Group meetings.	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	
11.4	Council Connect could develop accessible information hubs in rural areas.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	



11 No.	Access to Service Providers, Council Connect & Service Information	Community Engagement	Governance	Transport	Community Hubs	Health	Food	Housing	Data and Targets	NI or LAA set
11.5	Council Connect could be represented on the Mobile Libraries	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
11.6	Service providers could have 'drop in' days at Village Halls, for example Citizen's Advice Bureau, PCSO's, advice on care, benefits, travel and more.	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
11.7	Parish magazines should be used as a vehicle to highlight services.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
11.8	Service providers should use community notice boards more fully, or provide them.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
11.9	Service providers could work together on annual resident packs with practical service information.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
11.10	Service providers should develop easily accessible websites.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	

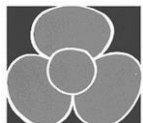
12 No.	Access to Information, Computer Services & Broadband Access	Community Engagement	Governance	Transport	Community Hubs	Health	Food	Housing	Data and Targets	NI or LAA set
12.1	One Stop Information Shop could be developed as part of the Community Hub	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
12.2	Community hubs such as Village Halls could hold 'Information Days'.	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
12.3	Community notice boards should be developed, with more boards and services information at community hubs.	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
12.4	Parish websites should be developed on and encouraged to hold information on all local services available.	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
12.5	Parish magazines and Parish Council Bulletins should be used as a vehicle to highlight services.	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
12.6	Service information could be given to Parish Clerks	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
12.7	Parish resident information packs could be created.	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
12.8	'Good Neighbour' schemes could assist information dissemination.	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
12.9	Bus stops could be developed as information points with boards holding information on	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	



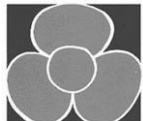
12 No.	Access to Information, Computer Services & Broadband Access	Community Engagement	Governance	Transport	Community Hubs	Health	Food	Housing	Data and Targets	NI or LAA set
	different services									
12.10	The Mobile Libraries, schools and village shops with facilities should be used to access information, by paper or internet	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
12.11	Broadband installation could be subsidised, as part of widening Council Connect and in areas with bad dongle, radio and TV reception	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

In Camerton they are looking into a One Stop Information Shop. Their Parish Plan implementation team are also looking into more access to Citizens Advice Bureau services, and greater communication through Residents Packs and Notice Boards.

A social networking site designed to support the development of rural Northumberland has been launched. It is hoped it will become an interactive resource for anyone who works or lives in Northumberland. The Rural Voices Network was originally set up by Northumberland County Council after the outbreak of Foot and Mouth in 2001. Northumberland Strategic Partnership has invested £40,000 to redevelop the site which allows users to share news and events and take part in online discussions.



13 No.	Access to Transport Services, Community Transport & Bus Services	Community Engagement	Governance	Transport	Community Hubs	Health	Food	Housing	Data and Targets	NI or LAA set
13.1	Local transport solutions need to be found in order for rural people to reach major conurbations where work, leisure, shopping, Post Office, cash point, pub, health clinic, dentist, chemist, optician and hospital services exist.	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
13.2	Community 'self help' transport projects should be investigated, addressing access for isolated, vulnerable and deprived people in the parish.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
13.3	Many communities have been organising their own transport with Dial a Ride and Car Share schemes, these should be supported by the Council and Community Action in order to offer advice, signpost people and promote schemes.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
13.4	Supported Social Car Share Schemes could be supported by B&NES council and Job Centre Plus by providing an information, advice and matching service.	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
13.5	Wheels to Work schemes could provide scooters for young people.	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
13.6	Community Transport services should be put under community ownership and money released to them.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
13.7	Service providers and communities need to form working groups to discuss bus routes, especially with regard to morning and evening services, and also some Saturday services.	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
13.8	In order to tackle the state of highways we are suggesting introducing trained Lengthsmen as introduced by four Parish Councils in Mendip, with support from Somerset County Council, in order to maintain verges and roadways.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
13.9	Many communities have said they are not aware of rural transport provision and this should be addressed with wider promotion.	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
13.10	In some areas 'quiet lanes' should be set up and also local footpath groups for maintenance.	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
13.11	Lack of bus shelters is prohibitive to the community using public transport, so solutions should be investigated.	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	



Those areas on the rural / urban fringe such as Publow and Whitchurch need new transport options into urban centres. There is interest in a shuttle service from villages like Wellow to Odd Down Park and Ride.

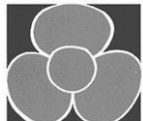
SWAN Car Scheme and Dragon Flyer minibus and car Club

Praise should be passed on to B&NES Council for maintaining its gritting policy.

There is a Community Car Scheme in Winford, North Somerset and a Link car scheme in Freshford, organised by a voluntary community groups to meet health appointments.

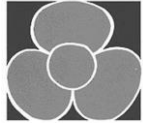
Wheels2Work scheme – Community First, Wiltshire RCC

14 No.	Access To Affordable & Liveable Housing	Community Engagement	Governance	Transport	Community Hubs	Health	Food	Housing	Data and Targets	NI or LAA set
14.1	Support for Affordable Housing projects is needed, with B&NES Council planning assistance and Somer Housing part ownership and renting initiatives, community support and facilitation, including elderly housing.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
14.2	Assistance needs to be given to organisations supporting elderly people to ensure they are accessing every available service and scheme to keep their accommodation liveable. This may be grants for boiler repairs or organisations providing free stair lifts.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
14.3	A Rural Housing Enabler should be introduced to tackle this problem.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

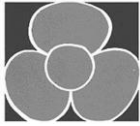


15 No.	Business & Social Enterprise Support	Community Engagement	Governance	Transport	Community Hubs	Health	Food	Housing	Data and Targets	NI or LAA set
15.1	A single entry point enterprise support system could be developed for businesses and communities to access information, signposting and services, with an internet-based portal	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
15.2	SWRDA funded projects and other funding should be used for a B&NES business and social enterprise development programme.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
15.3	Social enterprise support – community focus schemes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
15.4	Comprehensive training, business advice and marketing needs to be organised to go into rural areas.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
15.5	Working from home by teleworking and using internet needs more support.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

An example of this is Peak Directions developed by the Peak District Rural Delivery Pathfinder – see www.peakdirections.co.uk



16 No.	Access To Services - Further Research Required	Community Engagement	Governance	Transport	Community Hubs	Health	Food	Housing	Data and Targets	NI or LAA set
16.1	Research is required on the data sets of output areas rather than super output areas, these are at a smaller parish level and give greater chance of identifying pockets of deprivation. They should be identified and used in the future. The ONS website should be used for this, through the Neighbourhood Statistics, using postcode for areas, and covering typically 175 households. This will help identify and target pockets of rural disadvantage and possible problems.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
16.2	The Council Connect system needs to be investigated further to discover the type and location of enquiries.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
16.3	This means avoiding targets based on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, which disincentives action in rural areas.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
16.4	Mapping and pulling together of data is required regarding services on the ground, transport, communication and demographics, to give real evidence for policies, strategies and service planning and delivery.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	



3. CASE STUDIES

Community run shops

Bathford

As a rural / urban fringe parish with many communities, Bathford have preserved and developed a community run shop which is supported and used, despite relative short distance to Batheaston. Mixed population inc some social housing, c 1000 residents. Improvements funded by Store is Core, including taking on redundant space when PO closed summer 08. Also installed free to use cash m/c as part of RBS Nat West initiative, supported by Community Action.

Wellow

As a parish on the urban fringe but with many remote communities, Wellow developed a small village shop, it has limited space and range, and location its is a bit off centre, but supported by enthusiastic band of volunteers (inc our Chair of Trustees). It provides an access to services and a community focus.

East Harptree

As a more remote rural parish which had lost its village shop East Harptree opened its community shop on Sunday 18th January 2009 in a blaze of publicity! It has a good site and strong support, acting as a community focus (despite good shop available one mile away in West Harptree). Access to Services includes Broadband and coffee shop for socializing. It aims to focus on ethical / environmental/local produce – this is a potential benefit of such shops.

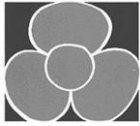
Freshford

As a more remote rural parish, Freshford have an ambitious new-build project due to open very soon. Adjacent to Village Hall the idea is to consolidate community centre focus (parish is split into 3 or 4 smaller hamlets). It is potentially a high profile project, but may rely on a few extremely well connected and resourced locals, so not necessarily replicable elsewhere without a lot of support.

Commercial shops

Clandown

As a rural / urban fringe parish with many communities, its local shop has undertaken a major investment in full refit costing over £35k, funded largely by compensation from the Post Office closure (supported by grant from CA). The aim is to preserve customer footfall and offer extra services post-closure, even though it is less than a mile from Radstock, but has somewhat cut off by terrain.



Community buildings

Long Ashton

As a rural / urban fringe parish with many communities, Long Ashton Community Centre in North Somerset, comprises four buildings and is operated by the Long Ashton Community Association (LACA). Last year they decided to employ a part-time Manager who works office hours and through their successful marketing of the hall there have been four new user groups set up in the space of a year ranging from toddler group, mini music makers to clubs for the elderly and an art club. They have a web-site and are about to produce a newsletter specifically for user groups. In the autumn a large refurbishment project was completed in their main hall and kitchen -the money largely coming from Section 106 money as well as fund-raising initiatives. The hall complex is host to a 'Village Fun Day' every summer which draws in a wide range of people from the community.

The Community Centre achieved Hallmark Quality Standard in 2007

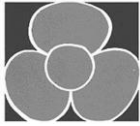
Their manager has said:

"We have 33 user groups. Some of them meet weekly, others monthly, one is fortnightly and some are seasonal – e.g. Sports groups and Local History.

New user groups in the last year are the Churches Cafe (once a month on a Saturday morning), Women Who Craft (once a fortnight), Little Kickers (a weekly pre-school football group) and Junior Football Club (Friday evenings). Due to start are an extra art class (at the end of this month, run by an existing art teacher) and Rugby tots (pre-school rugby). You may also want to know that 2 groups have folded recently – the children's French Club (this now meets in someone's house due to lower numbers) and Tumbletots (they booked for 9am-2pm on Thursdays and have been here for a number of years – it is just the local franchise that has ended.)

At the moment, I have not got to the stage where I have undertaken any active recruitment. 5 new groups in a year just seem to have come about. I think this may be partially due to having me in post and there is someone at the end of a phone at set hours to speak to. (Also people can come in and see me.) Little Kickers and Rugby Tots are national franchising organisations. The guy who is going to do Rugby tots lives in Long Ashton and the Little Kickers local organiser comes from Nailsea (it turned out I knew him through social events at Kin's work!). The Women Who Craft group has been started by the lady who already does a Card Making group once a month on a Saturday. So to sum up I'd say 3 new groups have come out of existing groups, two are national franchises being run by fairly local people and the last one wanted somewhere warmer to play in winter time (junior football)!

I hope to start on designing a website very soon."



Ridgewood

Ridgewood Community Association in Yate, South Gloucestershire, is one of a number of community buildings in Yate. It is an old building (a former cottage hospital) and it caters for two large pre-school groups, an art group, a number of older people's clubs as well as providing rooms for courses and seminars etc. Such an old building is difficult to maintain but this has proved no deterrent and it is a community building with a welcoming entrance hall and good signage. There is a paid manager in post who works office hours and she organizes lots of one-off fund-raising events – some of which support local and national charities (e.g. Children in Need Appeal). Ridgewood was the first community building to achieve all three levels of Hallmark Quality Standard Scheme.

Bishop Sutton

Bishop Sutton Village Hall in B&NES is run entirely by volunteers and they offer a wide range of activities- including sport such as badminton, in their main hall and pre-school groups. Their hall plays host to the community police who set up a regular surgery and the youth bus makes stops there. An exciting project currently in progress is the installation of an array of photo-voltaic solar panels on the south-facing roof of the hall. This would generate electricity directly which is then fed back to the National Grid. It has been calculated that such an array could produce about 7,000 Kwh per annum (equating to about 75% of their consumption.)

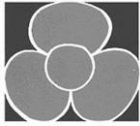
Parish Plans

Bathford

As a rural / urban fringe parish with many communities, Bathford decided to take a co-ordinated approach to develop their community over the next 10 years. There were many access to services issues affecting the parish despite their proximity to Bath. In many ways this and their ageing population were resulting in growing issues. They had a comprehensive consultation and developed an excellent Action Plan which most service providers and funders had found suitable evidence to take on their concerns. They have had many successes since then, such developing a 'hearing loop' in the Village Hall and even getting the flight path moved away.

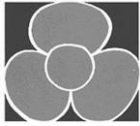
Wellow

As a parish on the urban fringe but with many remote communities, Wellow has many issues to contend with and decided to use a Parish Plan to tackle them. They have found it a useful exercise in understanding community concerns and wishes, and developing a coherent strategy to address them. Many people in the community had not realised how important existing facilities were and the plan has galvanised the community to develop its services.



Camerton

As a more remote rural parish, Camerton has just completed its plan in order to tackle the lack of facilities and services in the area. Many of its actions are focused on helping the isolated, vulnerable and deprived people in the community. Actions are already being undertaken with B&NES Council and other service providers, it only remains for the Parish Council to get behind the plan in order to address the access to services issues highlighted.



4. QUESTIONNAIRES

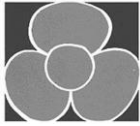
Community survey

1. What services are available in the Parish? *(use our menu of key services and facilities as a checklist, but invite others)*
2. Are they inclusive? *(i.e. does everyone know about them, are they open to them, can they get to them)*
3. What do you think are the key access issues?
4. Where do people go for health appointments, and how do they get there?
5. Do you have a central point where people can get information, seek advice, etc? *(e.g. shop / PO / Village Hall may play this role informally)*
6. Are there parts of the Parish which are more inaccessible? *(e.g. small hamlets without transport)*
7. Are you aware of any vulnerable or isolated people who have access problems? *(e.g. elderly / young / lone parents / ill / mental health / disabled)*
Or groups of such? *(e.g. sheltered housing)*
8. To what extent do you think B&NES Council gives appropriate regard to rural access issues, and what more do you think they could do?

Other comment *(i.e. other barriers and solutions to access, e.g. transport, broadband, deliveries, employment, promotion of services)*

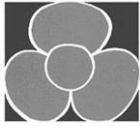
Strategic survey

1. What services do you provide to people in rural areas?
2. Do you see any differences in needs between rural and urban dwellers?
3. Do you see any differences in how rural dwellers find and access services?
4. Are you aware of any services having difficulties reaching people in rural areas? *(i.e. problems informing and providing open access to remote communities)*
Do you have any qualitative or quantitative evidence to demonstrate this?
5. Are you involved in any initiatives to improve access to these services, particularly to rural communities? *(e.g. targeting vulnerable people, specific groups or geographical areas)*



6. Are there issues here which you think should be on the LSP's action plan?
7. To what extent do you feel Access to Services in rural areas is on the LSP's radar?
8. Do you feel services in B&NES are giving appropriate regard to rural specific needs / access issues? (e.g. are policies rural proofed)

Other comment - *What more can be done to identify and address the needs of rural communities?*



5. RURAL PROOFING GUIDANCE

The Commission for Rural Communities

STEP ONE: THE POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Most departments have tailored guidance covering how policy should be developed. What follows is a recap of the general stages, highlighting where 'thinking rural' will be most useful.

- What are the objectives of the proposed policy?
- What are its intended impacts or outcomes?
- Which areas, groups or organisations are supposed to benefit?
- What is the current situation and why is it not delivering the outcomes required?

How will you move from the current situation to where you want to be? What's the rationale for intervention? How will you deliver what is needed? Are all realistic options being appraised?

Where answers reveal a potentially different impact for rural areas/people, or uncertainty, investigate further. Evidence-based decisions are key to good policy-making. Use Step Two (below) to help to rural proof your policy and consider what evidence you may need.

Where the impact in rural areas will be significantly different, explore how to adjust policy options to produce the desired outcomes in rural areas or avoid/mitigate any undesirable impacts. This exercise may also highlight opportunities to maximise positive impacts in rural areas.

Seek advice, as necessary, including from the Commission for Rural Communities and other rural stakeholders and experts.

On implementation, monitor change - evaluate the impact the policy is having, using appropriate data collection, and assess what is, or isn't being achieved.

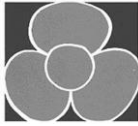
STEP TWO: RURAL PROOFING POLICY DEVELOPMENT

In order to consider the themes, questions and prompts below, the availability of a strong and credible evidence base is essential. Such evidence could include:

- Existing research, surveys or analysis that includes a rural dimension
- Specially commissioned data and research
- Use of the ONS Rural and Urban Areas definition to interpret data sets.

Service provision and availability

The current recession is likely to affect many programme budgets. When you are considering methods of reducing budget spend, services delivered to rural communities should not be perceived as a source of 'quick-fix' budget savings.



Rural communities are particularly vulnerable to service cuts as they are already reliant on a limited number and have reduced access to alternatives. Therefore, the CRC urges careful consideration of rural circumstances, and the options listed below, prior to any budget cuts being made.

Will the policy affect the availability of public and private services? Will it result in closures or centralisation? Will this have a disproportionate effect in rural areas (where services are already more limited)?

Will the policy rely on existing service outlets, such as schools, libraries and GP surgeries? How will you ensure rural residents can access services in areas where such outlets are few and far between?

Will the policy rely on the private sector or a public-private partnership? Will the smaller and scattered nature of rural populations provide a sufficient market to attract the private sector? Will there be similar opportunities for choice and competition? Does the private sector in rural areas have a capacity to deliver?

Delivery costs

Will the cost of delivery be higher in rural areas where clients are more widely dispersed and economies of scale can be harder to achieve? Will longer travel times or distances add to the cost of service provision? Will services need to operate out of smaller outlets, so losing economies of scale?

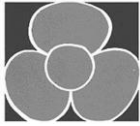
Will the policy rely on local institutions for delivery? Will the policy be as effective in rural areas, where private, public and voluntary sector organisations tend to be smaller and may have less capacity to build partnerships? If funds or services are to be allocated via a bidding process, will small organisations be able to compete fairly?

Accessibility and infrastructure

Will the policy affect travel needs or the ease/cost of travel? Will the impact be different in sparsely populated or remote rural areas where, typically, journey times are longer, public transport is poor, and alternative travel options are limited or expensive, especially for low income groups?

Does the policy rely on infrastructure (e.g. broadband ICT, main roads, utilities) for delivery? How will the policy work in rural areas, where the existing infrastructure is typically weaker (e.g. roads, broadband quality), some infrastructures don't exist (cable TV, mains gas supply) and the upgrading of infrastructure may be difficult or expensive?

Will delivery of the policy be challenging at the 'edges' of administrative areas? Many rural people live in the borderlands of regions/local authorities and sometimes find it easier to cross an administrative boundary to access services.



Particular effort may be needed to make sure that a policy does not disadvantage border communities.

Is the policy dependant on new buildings or development sites? Where will these go in rural areas, given that there are fewer brownfield sites, more planning restrictions, and certain locations where development may be unacceptable?

Communications

Does the policy rely on communicating information to clients? How will clients access information in rural areas, where there are fewer (formal) places to obtain advice and information?

Economies

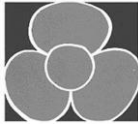
Will the policy impact on rural businesses, including the self employed? Will it have a different effect on smaller businesses (which employ a greater proportion of the workforce in rural areas) or those sectors which are typically more significant in rural areas? Will the higher proportion of self-employed people in rural areas be affected by the policy (including women running part time businesses)?

Will the policy affect land-based industries and, perhaps, rural economies and environments? How will the policy affect agriculture and/or local mining, extraction and water industries (which have a particular importance in many rural areas)? Will there be a knock-on effect on the environment? What might the impacts be for businesses which rely on a high-quality environment – such as farming, tourism, leisure, renewable energy and food production?

Will the policy affect people on low wages or in part-time or seasonal employment? Wages tend to be lower on average in rural areas and a higher proportion of the workforce relies on part-time or seasonal employment. Will the proposal affect wage levels or access to quality employment? Will it affect the type of businesses that tend to pay low wages or offer seasonal/part time work (e.g. agriculture, tourism)?

Disadvantage

Will the policy target disadvantaged people or places? How will this work in rural areas where disadvantage is rarely concentrated? Do the indicators being used to identify deprivation take account of uniquely rural challenges, such as access to services, job opportunities, low earnings, transport and the affordability of housing?



STEP THREE: POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

Like many aspects of good policy development, rural proofing is an ongoing process. Once a policy initiative has been implemented, it is important that any evaluation mechanism includes the rural perspective.

Implementation

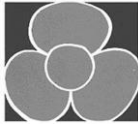
Implementation is a key part of any policy process. Unless properly implemented, a policy is unlikely to achieve the outcomes intended.

It is at implementation that the decisions made during the policy design and delivery stages make their impact felt. This is also when issues that are particular to rural areas can arise. Traditionally, the implementation phase is when tweaks are made to accommodate rural needs and challenges. But good, and early, rural proofing should result in fewer flaws surfacing at this point - because the needs of rural locations and communities have been taken into account already.

Evaluation

Evaluation has become a key part of contemporary policy making. Once a policy or programme is in place, it is important to provide evidence of its effectiveness and it is equally important to make rural communities part of the evaluation process. An evaluation which ignores the effects of a policy on people in rural areas will fail to show if a mainstream policy is truly effective.

www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk



6. IMPROVING ACCESS TO SERVICES FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES GUIDE

A seven step approach towards building, assessing or reviewing an access solution. This approach can be applied by any organization or group, to assess, analyse and consider a particular access to service issue to determine the most appropriate solution in order to address the need.

1. What is the problem?

- Who are the people you want to get to?
- What is the service you want to improve their access to?
- Why is the failure of these users to access particular service a 'bad thing'?
- What are the implications or consequences?

2. Why does the problem need addressing by a particular sector?

- Has this problem been identified as important (i.e. Parish Plan, Community Strategy)?
- What evidence shows that the problem exists?
- What are the consequences if problem is not addressed?
- Why will it not get fixed without this sector's intervention?

3. Explain the sort of places you are dealing with.

- What sort of places are you dealing with?
- What sort of places do people use to access services in your area?
- Which description from choices in Step Three best fits?

4. Getting to grips with the problem.

- Where and how are they used to accessing this service?
- Do they want to access this service or is this something that you want them to do for another reason?
- Where is the best place to bring the service and people together? How easy is it for them to move about? How easy is it to get the service to this place?

Information needed to work out a solution.

- People
- Place
- Service

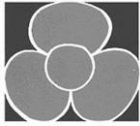
5. The three key questions.

- What is on your 'must have' list?
- What existing services could help?
- What and who can you learn from?

Options for solutions.

6. Challenge the options.

- Is the solution Efficient and Cost Effective?



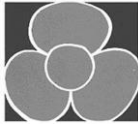
Is the solution Customer Focused?

Is the solution Sustainable?

Is the solution Future Proofed?

7. The best solution.

Yorkshire and Humber Assembly. 2008.



7. TELFORD RURAL ACCESS GRANTS

As part of the Rural Access to Services Programme, a sum of money has been made available to allow rural groups, organisations, businesses or parish councils to apply for funding in order to make their own access to services improvements. The total funding which is set aside for Rural Access Grants is as follows

2006/07 - £6,250

2007/08 - £7,000

2008/09 - £8,000

The funding available is **capital funding only** and this should be taken into account when making applications. If a project requires any revenue funding this should be sourced from elsewhere and included as your match funding.

Who can apply for Rural Access Grants?

Any business, parish council, community group, organisation or registered charity located within the rural area of the Borough of Telford and Wrekin can apply for grant funding. If you are unsure if your area is classified as rural, please contact the Rural Access Officer on 01952 384608

How much funding can be applied for?

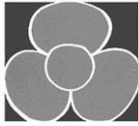
Grant funding up to a maximum of £1,000 can be applied for, however applicants are expected to provide an additional minimum of 25% match funding. Of the 25% match funding up to 10% can be 'in kind' to cover volunteers time, the remaining 15% must be cash funding. Please remember that any money applied for through the Rural Access Grants scheme is capital funding only.

What can Rural Access Grant funding be used for?

Rural Access Grants must be used to make improvements to peoples access to services. This can be by way of getting people to services, or alternatively getting services to people. Of particular importance is the need to improve peoples access to places of employment in the rural area.

The Rural Access to Services Programme has a number of aims, of which applications for funding must meet at least one of the aims below

1. Work with members of the Local Accessibility Partnership to identify, address and improve issues of accessibility throughout the rural area of Telford and Wrekin
2. Work in partnership through the Local Accessibility Partnership to provide services in rurally isolated areas, and/or improve accessibility to services using transport solutions
3. Through the use of innovative schemes, such as Wheels to Work and journey sharing, provide improved accessibility for rural employees to

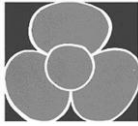


reach their place of work, and provide rural businesses with an accessible workforce

4. Work with partners to improve accessibility to areas of interest for residents and visitors
5. Provide solutions which enhance opportunities for people throughout the rural area, which are sustainable beyond the funding term of the Rural Access to Services Programme
6. Through the use of marketing, publicity and other projects, increase peoples access to information about RASP schemes, thereby increasing sustainability in the longer term.

Your application may or may not have a transport aspect, but it should be clear how your project will improve access to services. Please contact the Rural Access Officer on 01952 384608 if you wish to discuss a proposed project prior to submitting an application.

<http://www.telford.gov.uk/Transport+streets+and+parking/Transport+planning/Rural+Access+Grants.htm>



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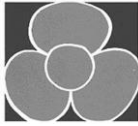
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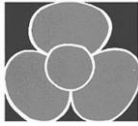
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North Harbour Consulting. 2007.

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B&NES Council. 2004



9. ABBREVIATIONS

	<i>Full Name</i>	<i>Web Address</i>
ACRE	Action with Rural Communities in England	www.acre.org.uk
ALCA	Avon Local Council Association	www.avonlca.org.uk
B&NES	Bath & North East Somerset Council	www.bathnes.gov.uk
CAA	Comprehensive Area Assessment	
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy	
CRC	Commission for Rural Communities	www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government	www.communities.gov.uk
DEFRA	Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	www.defra.gov.uk
GOSW	Government Office for the South West	www.gosw.gov.uk
GVA	Gross value added	
ICT	Information and Communications Technology	
IMD	Indices of multiple deprivation	
LAA	Local Area Agreement	
LDF	Local Development Framework	
LSC	Learning Skills Council	
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership	
MAA	Multi Area Agreement	
MRD	Modernising Rural Delivery	
ONS	Office for National Statistics	www.statistics.gov.uk
PCT	Primary Care Trust	
RCC	Rural Community Councils	
RDPE	Rural Development Programme for England	
RSCP	Rural Social and Community Programme	
RSS	Regional Spatial Strategy	
SOA	Super output area	
SWAN	South West ACRE Network of RCC	www.swan-network.org.uk
SWRDA	South West Regional Development Agency	www.southwestrda.org.uk
SWRA	South West Regional Assembly	www.southwest-ra.gov.uk
SWRAF	South West Rural Affairs Forum	
SW-REG	South West Rural Enterprise Gateway	www.regsw.org.uk
VCS	Voluntary and Community Sector	
WOE	West of England Partnership	www.westofengland.org



10. FURTHER READING

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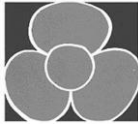
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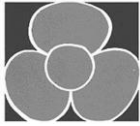
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