RURAL SCOTLAND

THE
RURAL FORUM
REPORT

The White Paper Consultation

PREFACE

This is a report by Rural Forum on the consultations we were asked to carry out for The Scottish Office as background to the preparation of the Scottish Rural White Paper on Rural Policy. It covers the conferences and workshops we organised in various parts of Scotland over the summer of 1995. It also includes the results of a questionnaire designed by Rural Forum which helped to inform the discussion at the conferences and workshops. This report does not cover the further consultations carried out directly by The Scottish Office with over 900 organisations and individuals throughout Scotland.

In the report we have attempted to summarise the main issues and views expressed at the conferences and workshops. The results were made available to the Government so that they could be taken into account in the preparation of the White Paper. Neither Rural Forum, nor the Government, necessarily agree with the views summarised in this report.

RURAL FORUM

November 1995

CONTENTS

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SECTION 1

The Background

THE RURAL WHITE PAPER

In January 1995 The Secretary of State for Scotland announced that the Scottish Office would undertake a review of the Government's rural policies and the mechanisms for delivering them. He added that this would be published in a White Paper in the autumn of 1995.

There has never been a definitive statement of government policy on rural Scotland. The Rural White Paper follows the publication of the Scottish Office Rural Framework in 1992, and the subsequent establishment of the Rural Focus Group. The Scottish Office Rural Framework adopted a thematic approach to opening debate on rural policy, programmes and mechanisms for their delivery. These themes are: Community Involvement, Diversity, Quality, Local Added Value, Effective Service Delivery, Networks and Communications, Europe and Sustainability. The Rural Focus Group which comprises representatives from The Scottish Office, Government agencies, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the voluntary sector, has continued discussion and examination of policies using this thematic framework.

The consultations and discussions that have taken place during May and June 1995 have been influenced by the Rural Framework Themes although those used in the consultation have varied from those identified in the Scottish Office Rural Framework.

THE SCOTTISH OFFICE REMIT

At the end of April 1995, Rural Forum was commissioned by the Scottish Office to undertake a consultation exercise comprising two elements: four workshop sessions for invited participants and four open seminars. In addition Rural Forum with the University of Dundee Centre for Planning undertook an issues questionnaire to inform the consultations as they proceeded.

RURAL FORUM

Rural Forum is an alliance of 23 non governmental organisations with a broad concern for rural Scotland. These sponsors cover a wide spectrum of interest that include: environmental, agricultural, educational, trade union, church, consumer, gaelic and business organisations. Rural Forum also has in its membership a wide range of local community organisations from all parts of rural Scotland including the areas covered by all the Regional and Island Councils. Furthermore, Rural Forum is supported by 43 of Scotland's rural Local Authorities making up the largest part of COSLA's Rural Affairs Committee.

Rural Forum is therefore ideally placed to draw together a range of views and stimulate debate in all parts of the country.

As a stimulus to that debate Rural Forum has, over the past few years, commissioned and undertaken research into a wide range of issues that provides a unique insight to life in rural Scotland as experienced by those living and working there.

We welcome your comments *on this site. Reviewed 1 October 1996*

SECTION 2

The Process

THE PUBLIC SEMINAR SERIES

A major part of the consultation process was a series of open seminars that took place in June in Inverness, Perth, Inverurie and Lockerbie. The purpose was to identify, at a fairly detailed level, the issues that could be included in the White Paper and the measures to address these effectively. Although it was made clear that a degree of realism was needed, radical ideas were encouraged. Each of the four seminars were widely advertised through direct mail leaflets and the press and radio. The seminars were attended by a total of 242 people, ranging from 91 in Inverness to 39 in Perth. Briefing for the seminars, given to partnerships, is contained in Annex A.

Each of the seminars followed the same programme with an official from the Scottish Office presenting the background to the Rural White Paper. This was followed by a short presentation drawing on Rural Forum's research into rural disadvantage and the questionnaire undertaken by the University of Dundee. The presentations were made by Professor Mark Shucksmith, Dr Stuart Black both of the University of Aberdeen, Allan Watt of the University of Dundee and Dermot Grimson of Rural Forum. The purpose of this presentation was to encourage the participants to consider the issues that had been raised by people living and working in rural Scotland.

The remainder of each seminar was devoted to a series of structured workshop sessions. The first session aimed to develop a future vision for rural Scotland with the second session focusing on current realities and the final session identifying the barriers between current realities and the future vision and ways in which these might be overcome. The result was a long and wide ranging list of ideas and the outcome of each of the workshop sessions for all the seminars is contained in Section 4.

At the end of each seminar each of the workshop groups were invited to report back on the three key measures that should be included in the Rural White Paper. This enabled some feedback to be given on the nature of the discussions

at the different workshop sessions. Each of the workshop sessions had a facilitator and a scribe present to report back on the discussions.

THE WORKSHOP SERIES

The second element of the consultation programme was a series of four workshops that were organised by invitation. The workshops were organised on four distinct themes: Community Involvement, Sustainable Development, Effective Service Delivery and Integration. They were attended by a total of 51 people. Each session was organised to a similar pattern.

The workshops aimed to focus thinking on issues and measures that could realistically be addressed in the White Paper.

The first part of each of the four sessions was devoted to identifying issues and placing them on an axis of importance and feasibility. The second task was to examine how the issues identified as being important, but not feasible, could be made practically achievable. Having thus identified important issues which could be addressed a series of possible measures were then discussed which might be included in the White Paper.

The discussion took place under Chatham House Rules to enable free and frank discussion and reports of each of the sessions are summarised on the same basis in Section 4.

All the workshops were chaired by Deirdre Hutton, Chairman of Rural Forum and facilitated by Professor Greg Lloyd of the Centre for Planning Research at the University of Dundee. A Scottish Office official attended each of the workshops and a wide range of other participants were drawn from different backgrounds and interests.

WRITTEN RESPONSES

In March and April 1995, the University of Dundee Centre for Planning and Rural Forum organised a questionnaire survey to identify the key issues in rural Scotland from a wide range of perspectives.

The questionnaire was sent to 1400 individuals drawn from Rural Forum's membership and other contacts databases. This included local government officials, farmers, staff with environmental voluntary organisation sector, councillors, MPs, officials in government departments and agencies business people and many others. There was a 14% return and responses were analysed at

the University of Dundee.

Written responses were also submitted by participants of the workshops. The results of these and the wider questionnaire are summarised in Section 5.

OTHER CONSULTATIONS

During the consultation period Rural Forum was involved in encouraging wider discussion on matters of concern for the Rural White Paper. In particular local Councils for Voluntary Service in the more remote parts of the country were invited to organise local workshops. Rural Forum also organised with the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, a workshop on ethnic minorities in rural areas. A short report of this is included in Annex B.

SECTION 3

The Seminar Series

The following section summarises the issues raised by the consultation programme. The quotations used are extracts from these responses and are intended to give a flavour of the views expressed. They are not necessarily statements of fact. The sub-headings correspond to three stages followed by people in thinking through the issues, moving from 'visions', to 'realities', to 'barriers'.

VISIONS FOR RURAL SCOTLAND

People's vision for rural Scotland is most clearly articulated in terms of the balance, vibrancy and viability of rural communities. A population structure, balanced between young and old, occupation, class, locals to incomers and different cultures is the desired end-result. There is then a host of other visions which, in the main, contribute to this.

The words used to describe healthy populations and communities include "vibrant", "lively", "viable and "healthy". It is not seen as a static situation but one in which there is "renewal and regeneration" and the potential to be "self-sustaining". An increase of population in more marginal areas and "a reversal of the out-migration trend" is looked for.

Above all, a healthy community would be one "where young people want to live". The retention of young people, or the ability to attract them back, is taken as a basic indicator of viability.

Healthy communities would be "inclusive" and not divided by excessive inequalities. The vision is of greater fairness in economic and other opportunities, rather than cultural homogeneity.

The link between balanced populations and the quality of services is noted: "Communities in rural areas will be a sufficient size to retain and sustain local facilities such as a shop, primary school etc.".

"The over-riding aim must be to create healthy population structures within rural

communities. Incumbent upon this is the provision of economic, social, educational, and cultural opportunities which can sustain a healthy population".

It is recognised that vibrant communities are built on practical foundations and a host of visions on employment, housing, access to services, education and so on are expressed.

ECONOMY

Central to viable communities is a strong local economy. It is recognised that the rural economy is part of larger economic processes, but equally it is seen as having its own distinct features:

"A rural economic base depending on a balanced sustainable economic system, of an appropriate scale for the area, with a large positive balance of payment deriving from value being added to local produce, and import substitution"

"Small scale, locally based and controlled businesses, where income generated remains within the community"

The importance of careful management of the economy is recognised: "... efficient and well thought out policy and practice in traditional industries such as farming, fishing and forestry, with a particular emphasis on exports".

EMPLOYMENT

People are seen as able to live and work in rural areas by virtue of their employment. A strong and diverse economy is seen as going hand in hand with an "increased diversity and quality of employment opportunities".

Such jobs enable communities to hang on to their youth and vitality by "retaining talent".

Distinct characteristics and patterns to rural work are envisaged: "An integrated approach to employment, for example between sectors such as fishing and agriculture"

HOUSING

Clearly, if people are to stay in an area, they need a place to live. Aspirations for homes are summed up by "Appropriate, affordable and available housing in

rural areas". Linked to this vision is a hope that restrictions on the availability of land and what might be done with it could be eased. A certain priority for local people is implied.

ACCESS TO SERVICES

The vision is of "A place where rural communities are given adequate service provision in their own area". The ideal is described in terms of appropriate services, of a suitable standard, that all people can access.

Information exchange is seen as an important service in itself and a key to making other services more accessible. Equally, transport is regarded as a vital element in service delivery. The view is expressed that a rural area with effective services would be "a place where the specific and unique requirements for supported subsidised transport provision are recognised, particularly with reference to island communities where transport creates major obstacles to development".

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

People see education, from pre-school to university level, as central to improving quality of life. This vision extends to training which is seen as bridging education and employment. Education and training would take on more of the particular features and unique characteristics of the areas in which it was based.

"School and life-long learning at the centre of the community"...

"Education will be more readily accessible and a University in the Highlands will be under development" ...

Training will be provided locally with greater flexibility to encourage those in part-time employment ... the quality of training will be high and relevant to those living in rural areas".

"The delivery of training will be undertaken in imaginative ways using high technology, block release and on the job training".

"Build up of local skill-base through training".

DEMOCRACY AND PARTICIPATION

In a future rural Scotland, people wish to see themselves with greater opportunities to participate in shaping their lives. They also wish to be fairly represented. Central to this vision is greater local involvement in the decision making process and a greater ability to manage local resources.

"A more localised, democratic and accountable decision making process ... authentic empowerment of individuals and communities and greater transparency and accountability at the decision making level"...

"Local accountability" ... " Local empowerment" ...

"Authentic community representation and participation"...

" ... greater local control of natural resources".

SUSTAINABILITY

Visions for sustainable development emphasise the link between economy and environment.

"Our dream of Scotland is of a place where careful environmental policy and long term planning has resulted in an enhanced and restored natural environment. ... The (resulting) increase in available resources is at least as important as the purely ecological benefits."

CULTURE

As with the environment, the vision for culture is one in which our existing treasures are protected and enhanced, and a proper set of measures are in place to ensure their long term future.

" ... varied and unique culture ... sound and encouraged to develop".

" ... local identity, diversity and collective self confidence".

"Proper recognition of the role of culture and its economic potential".

CURRENT REALITIES

Inevitably, the realities identified tend to be the problems faced by rural people. Some realities, however, are positive aspects of rural living which may be maintained and enhanced.

Rural Scotland is recognised as having certain features that present particular challenges to policymakers: remoteness, scattered populations which are difficult to service, high transport costs, and so on. There are benefits associated with some of these characteristics. Individuals and communities may have a strong sense of identity. There is a distinct culture and set of traditions. People are self-reliant and have different aspirations. It is a safer and healthier environment to live in.

Nonetheless, most realities reflect a feeling that problems are not being tackled in the best, or most efficient manner, and that opportunities are being missed. There is as much a call for better use of existing resources as for extra support. The sub-section on "integration and co-ordination" summarises peoples' views on the reality of existing management.

POPULATION

In certain areas, there is felt to be excessive "outward migration of people". Particularly of the young and active which leaves rural areas diminished in terms of the economic and social options they offer to those that remain.

People refer to an "exodus of youth" and a "loss of talent". "Young people are leaving island and rural communities because of lack of employment, housing and other opportunities". The result is "ageing populations".

Incomers can bring new blood and enthusiasm, but often have different values from locals. This may be seen as a threat, as in comments referring to the "dilution of indigenous population and lack of understanding of way of life".

People feel that the quality and cohesion of their communities is being threatened by growing divisions; "exclusion" and signs of a "two-tier" society. Differences between "incomers" and "locals" are exacerbated unnecessarily. Exclusion is reinforced by negative trends in a range of areas such as employment, housing and service provision.

In many areas there is a "lack of confidence". A sense of "pessimism" and "cynicism" about the prospects for improvement. People may feel "powerless". There is a "lack of local people willing to act as leaders".

Rural areas close to cities are seen as being particularly vulnerable to the "bleeding of community life to nearby urban centres".

ECONOMY

Rural economies are generally thought of as being in poor health. People refer to "fragile local economies" where "value-adding is not occurring locally". It is felt that "there is a declining manufacturing economy in rural areas and reliance on the service sector is not seen as sustainable".

There is a feeling that the economic approaches being pursued elsewhere are not always the most beneficial for rural areas: "Market forces do not help the rural economy".

Traditional rural industries are seen as threatened. Again attention is drawn to the negative effect of external priorities: "farms are polarising in size to large scale V's small scale initiatives with a problem area for medium sized farms" ... "crofting is in overall decline" ... "the CAP is not helpful to rural Scotland" ... "fishery regulations are destroying Scotland's fishing industry".

Many rural people are caught between higher prices and lower wages. "The generally higher prices in rural areas along with lower wages ensure that less money is available within the local economy. The inability of local shops to compete with larger stores entails that people shop elsewhere and this in turn ensures that prices have to increase further at local level. The higher cost of petrol adds to the cost of transport, of which there is inadequate provision, and rural households often require at least one car as a matter of necessity".

Transport is often seen as one of the most disproportionate costs: "It is cheaper to go to Paris than Stornaway" ... "The cost of transport for the delivery of goods to rural areas and the transporting of goods from rural areas is prohibitive".

EMPLOYMENT

Employment in rural areas was characterised as having limited options and low wages: "Low pay industries are prevalent in rural areas".

There is a perception that many rural areas suffer from high unemployment, that employment opportunities are decreasing, and that stability or certainty in job markets is a thing of the past. Employment demanded a high degree of mobility which prevented people from remaining in an area and contributing to the community.

Peoples' views are of an overly narrow economic base with resulting "over dependence on certain employers and a lack of diversity".

To obtain a sufficient salary, it was felt that many people had to maintain several jobs, adapt to seasonal patterns of employment and move between the formal and informal economy.

HOUSING

The view is expressed that the reality for many people, especially the young or those on low incomes, is that housing is simply not available.

That which is available to those of limited means is frequently below tolerable standards. The options for those unable to buy are curtailed by "less diversity of housing types and tenure" and a "Private rented sector in poor condition".

People perceive a growing problem of rural homelessness and a worrying level of "Hidden homelessness".

Housing difficulties for local people are compounded by houses going for second homes. Attention is drawn to the negative consequences of peoples' homes and working lives being separated: "People live in the community but work elsewhere".

ACCESS TO SERVICES

There is a feeling that services have difficulty in reaching out to rural people and, in turn, rural people are often limited in their ability to meet providers 'half-way'.

Poor co-ordination of services is thought to limit their accessibility. Likewise, inadequate information prevents people from taking up services. A centralisation of service provision is noted which also reduces their extension. Views expressed describe " ... a lack of quality services for rural areas" .. "services are being withdrawn". Often people do not have the information that would tell them what services are available.

People in rural areas with low incomes do not have the ability to buy in services. Nor can they afford to overcome the practical barriers to access. Chief amongst these is child care. Relative to their urban counterparts, rural parents feel that child care services are scant and expensive.

Transport is referred to as a second major hurdle. Those without a private car can find themselves severely limited in their access to services, or heavily reliant

on the goodwill of others. Paradoxically, the difficulties people have in reaching out to services can lead to a situation in which "services are underused".

The lack of in-situ services and a "general lack of choice" is seen as instrumental in forcing people, especially elderly, to move away.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

References are made to: "Inadequate pre and post school education" and "a lack of higher education". A lack of "extra-curricular activities and specialist teachers" is noted. The quality of rural schools is thought to vary considerably between regions.

" ... no positive linkage between training and employment".

"lack of training at a local level".

The above quotes convey a feeling that training provision is generally inadequate or inappropriate. It tends not to train people in the sorts of activities that go on in their area, and is often delivered without sufficient flexibility to be useful to those who have shifting work patterns.

DEMOCRACY AND PARTICIPATION

There is a feeling that "policies are made elsewhere" and that they are applied with little or no sensitivity to rural areas. The communication of decision making to people is poor, an issue felt particularly strongly in relation to the planning system. There is mutual misunderstanding. Organisations are accused of lacking flexibility in their dealings with local people.

Consultations are not felt to be a genuine opportunity for people to become involved: "Local people do not always feel that they have been adequately consulted or enabled to participate".

There is unease about the role of unelected bodies.

Community Councils in particular are seen as a disappointment and a lost opportunity. People refer to difficulties in getting people involved, the lack of a clear role or function, under funding and a generally low profile.

SUSTAINABILITY

The rural environment is thought by many to be moving away from sustainability. People express a "concern about the degeneration of the natural environment". Threats are typically associated with economic activities in rural areas: "Current activities damage ecology and landscape".

CULTURE

Traditional cultural attributes are widely seen as retreating or under threat, for example a "threat to Gaelic language and culture". Cultural activities are seen as the frequent victims of underfunding and unavailability in rural areas:"cultural and artistic activities are poorly supported and scattered".

On the activities and interests of young people, it is felt that there is a "lack of social activities and venues".

INTEGRATION AND CO-ORDINATION

People are primarily concerned with the failure to integrate and co-ordinate amongst agencies. This is most noticeable in relation to social services and transport. The reality of rural policy and implementation is perceived as being without adequate integration or co-ordination.

"Current fragmentation of approach is a poor use of resources to produce an inferior result" ... "it favours competition rather than collaboration".

It is felt that this leads to confusion and misunderstanding. Comments emphasise the "multiplicity of agencies and the confusion this causes the public as well as the difficulties it engenders in terms of communication and accountability".

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS

To move from current realities in rural Scotland to future visions, it is necessary to overcome a number of barriers. Some barriers can be seen to stem from within communities and from essential characteristics of rural areas such as remoteness and sparsity of population. Most relate to the broader context within which communities operate and, in particular, the performance of the institutions who shape this context.

EMPLOYMENT

A "lack of employment opportunities" and the often low quality and wages of existing jobs are seen as important barriers to vibrant and healthy communities. The barriers to job creation tend to be laid at the door of general economic trends which may have a magnified or skewed effect on peripheries. Aspects of national economic policy come in for criticism; "Market forces" and "commercialisation" for example are associated with a withdrawal and centralisation of economic activity. The privatisation programme has resulted in the loss of large numbers of skilled employees, and a loss of such employment opportunities, as BT, Hydro-Electric, Forestry Commission and so on centralise their activities and withdraw from regional and local centres.

In sectors such as agriculture and fisheries, it is recognised that the ability of national government to engage in reform of European common policies is of paramount importance.

The scope to develop alternative economic models, based on local resources, is seen as hampered by an internal lack of "confidence", "vision", "management skills", and "local capital", and external factors such as "inflexible", "unsympathetic" and "restrictive" policies and planning controls.

HOUSING

The ability of people to stay in, or enter, a rural area is severely restricted by the "lack of affordable housing", its limited availability, the lack of choice and poor quality.

The poor condition of the rented housing sector and the poor quality and security of tied housing compound this problem. The "right-to-buy" policy is seen as having a detrimental effect.

A typical view was that: "Solutions to the housing problem are retarded by the high cost of construction in rural areas, the lack of available land and the cost of infrastructural and other services ... There is also a lack of provision of special units to take account of the requirements of care in the community".

TRANSPORT

The high cost and lack of choice in transport presents barriers to the social and economic activities of individuals. The disproportionate amount of the household budget spent on transport reduces spending in other areas.

Transport costs are also a serious constraint on the capacity of rural businesses

to import and export. They have a knock on effect on other prices causing a "rural inflation".

SERVICES

Where this is a lack of affordable child care in rural areas this limits the ability of parents to take part in social and economic life. It is also seen as a serious hindrance to volunteer work and community involvement generally.

The perceived inflexibility of service delivery compromises its ability to meet diverse and changing local needs. The ability of the benefit system is to respond to the flexible, seasonal, pluriactive work patterns prevalent in rural areas is questioned. There is a feeling that more could be done in the way of setting and meeting "targets" and "standards".

The role of existing rural institutions such as schools and post offices in providing, or having the potential to provide, a wide range of services was felt to be worthy of recognition. Barriers to multiple use stemming from over-narrow rules and inflexible budgets would need to be overcome to fulfil this role. Better use of existing community "centres" is seen as vital in overcoming restrictions on peoples' access to services caused by a "lack of information".

Nationally pursued policies such as privatisation are seen to be particularly inappropriate for rural services. The privatisation of utilities and their subsequent performance is seen as contrary to rural interests. Vital public services are left without a "social remit". Similarly, the pursuit of ideas such as "internal markets" and "market testing" are seen as contrary to effective service delivery.

RESOURCES

The limitations placed on funding for rural areas are an obvious constraint, but so to is the way that it is spent; "the main barrier is money" ... "is how to spend the money". In terms of absolute amounts it is felt that an important barrier is the lack of a "level playing field" with rural funding. Behind this is an inadequate understanding of the comparative situations based on equal and sensitive indicators. There is a suspicion that the seriousness of the rural situation is masked by "hidden disadvantage".

To access available resources, people must go through procedures that are themselves seen as a barrier: "The system of funding is deficient with respect to

co-ordination" ... "a multiplicity of sources" ... "there is an obsession with the process rather than the product" ... "Individuals and communities have to allocate considerable time and resources to accessing funding rather than developing an idea or a project".

Limited access to resources is seen as stemming from a "lack of influence and ownership over land and property; for example the sale of forestry assets outwith the area". Greater emphasis is placed on land tenure arrangements as a constraint on the availability and productive use of land-based resources, than as a barrier to good stewardship:

"The land market, tenure and ownership system militates against access to, and availability of, land. This extends to the foreshores, owned and controlled by the Crown Estate Commissioners, and inhibits appropriate development. Land going out of crofting and the inability to create new crofts entails that fewer people have access to land holdings. The requirement to create a new form of landholding system, therefore, becomes desirable".

INTEGRATION AND CO-ORDINATION

The administration of rural areas is not helped by what is seen as a "lack of understanding at the top", a "lack of rural awareness" and a legacy of "top down" decision making.

People and agencies feel hampered by a lack of clarity on the context within which they work. A "clear policy lead from government" is called for. The absence of policy or strategy is perhaps most keenly felt in the area of transport and is perceived as a principal barrier to overcoming the numerous problems associated with this.

A major barrier to the effective formulation and delivery of policy is the "lack of integration and co-operation between and within agencies, both national and local". There is "conflict between organisations; for example tourism and housing ... a lack of communication". "Issues fall between agencies". Grant structures are thought to reflect this "fragmented approach" and militate against integration and diversity at a local level.

Genuine partnerships with a role for diverse interests are undermined by the unequal status of 'community' partners: "The role of the voluntary sector ... is undervalued and underfunded which prevents it from realising its full potential". Community involvement is seen as being too heavily dependent on the goodwill and free time of individuals. Genuine involvement is seen as being conditional

on more support and skills being made available to communities.

The lack of a social remit in some agencies is seen as limiting their ability to engage effectively in rural development. It is felt that there is "Nobody to promote human beings". The political, and especially financial, timetables of organisations can be at odds with rural communities who do not work to a financial year.

LOCAL DEMOCRACY

The prospects for a better understanding of local needs and aspirations, and for more appropriate policies and measures to meet these, are seen as seriously curtailed by the weaknesses of local institutions, and the failure to redress these. This contributes to feelings of "powerlessness", "apathy", "lack of confidence" and "unaccountability".

"Lack of local democracy" ... "No subsidiarity in decision making"... "Policies made elsewhere" ... "Distance from decision makers"

"ineffective methods for community involvement".

"the role of community councillors is not always representative".

SKILLS AND TRAINING

Limited access to training, because of poor provision or under resourcing, and its quality are seen as barriers to improving the skill base in rural areas.

Training that is "not tailored to local conditions" results in skills that don't meet the needs of the local economy. The "loss of local apprenticeships" further compromises the match between training and needs. With increasing emphasis on community involvement and 'bottom up' approaches, training in "community development action and leadership" would enhance important skills.

We welcome your comments on this site. Reviewed 1 October 1996

INTRODUCTION

The workshop sessions focused on identifying key issues for rural areas and their translation into practical measures.

The points raised in the individual workshops showed clear relationships and could be grouped in the following way:

- those that advocate the better use of existing resources, facilities and bodies, such as the co-ordination of policies, the setting up of one stop shops, the reintroduction of regional reports andrural strategies;

- those that require new actions, such as local rural animators, a national rural strategy and a rural aid fund;

- those that require changes to national policy or require additional resources - such as redefining the Public Sector Borrowing Requirements, reforming the right to buy or changing fuel tax policy.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The workshop discussion was wide ranging at first as the participants attempted to define the range of issues associated with community involvement in rural policy formulation and implementation. There was a general feeling that the community were not consulted enough, or indeed effectively, on key issues. The principal findings arising from the discussion were:

Community involvement should not be regarded as a panacea. It contains dangers such as NIMBYism and the loss of the "bigger picture". There were no guarantees that it would be any more effective, efficient or democratic than other means. To be valuable, it was felt that community involvement had to be actively supported, resourced and trained.

Involvement should be seen as a way of building and strengthening

communities. Attention should also be directed towards ensuring that all sections of the community have the opportunity to become involved. Young people in particular seem to be at risk of exclusion.

Involvement is also dependent upon a proper context within which communities can work. One important element of this context would be an integrated set of policies and programmes. Another would be improved partnerships between communities and other agencies.

The prospects for community involvement would be enhanced by counteracting some of the practical and physical problems preventing people from participating. Chief amongst these would be the lack of affordable child care and transport difficulties.

An important question is how to fund local involvement. There is felt to be an over-dependence on the volunteers who are currently the main motivators. Relatively little support would yield much greater benefits from this reservoir of goodwill.

A strong case was put forward for the appointment of local "animators" in rural communities who would have their finger on the pulse of things and understand the needs of rural communities. They would be able to assess opportunities from an integrated perspective. It was felt that councillors could not fulfil this role as a rural specialist (in terms of knowing the systems and networks) was needed to act as a go-between amongst the various groups and bodies involved.

The adoption of participatory approaches in research, appraisal and planning exercises would be a practical step towards greater community involvement in defining issues and appropriate responses.

A particularly important area for community involvement was felt to be the planning system which is currently regarded as inaccessible and not able to reflect local aspirations and priorities. A practical step towards better community involvement would be to improve consultation procedures.

A discussion was held around the Local Enterprise Compay (LEC) system and its activities for local development. The ability of LEC's to act as a genuine mechanism for community involvement was seen to be limited by a number of factors: The LEC boards may be hamstrung by network policy and their credibility undermined by not having elected members. The emphasis on "backing winners"; rather than assisting "access to opportunity" was seen as limiting the range of community interests with which the LEC could work. It

was also felt that there was scope to devolve down to a lower level than the current LECs; to Community Council's for example.

Community involvement needs to be supported by the delivery of good information and advice and the exchange of good practice. Local Authorities are perhaps the most appropriate body to play this role. Along with the delivery of information, there should also be a commitment to receive information from a local level.

Despite the broad recognition of the value of the community involvement process, it is felt that investment in human capital lags far behind that placed in other areas. The incorporation of a more explicit social objective into policy areas such as agriculture, forestry and conservation would provide a basis for building this kind of capacity. Similarly, the adoption of an explicit social remit by bodies such as Scottish Enterprise would lend weight to the processes underlying community involvement.

Concern was expressed that the prevailing values in rural policy making did not correspond well to those held by communities. Perhaps not enough attention or consideration was given to the real values of living and working as policies were drawn up for transport provision or other services.

It is recognised that there are elements of many of the above points already in place. The challenge is seen as how to pick up on these and develop them further.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The workshop discussion had a very wide range of people in attendance from a number of bodies concerned with economic development and the environment. Not surprisingly perhaps, the debate was lively, but it was clear that there were a number of important points which formed the basis of individuals' concern.

The link between economic prosperity and conservation was emphasised. Environmental objectives were felt to be jeopardised by economic stresses.

Given the link between economy and environment, questions are asked about whether we are harnessing our natural assets to best effect. There is concern about the sustainablility of our primary industries and about constraints on peoples' ability to gain access to resources. The view was expressed that our tourism industry is not adequately sympathetic to the environment on which it so closely depends. There is felt to be a lack of clear strategy for green tourism

and a feeling that the key players do not appreciate what was needed. Local tourism strategies are proposed as an important measure to remedy this.

Small to medium sized enterprises are seen as being most compatible with sustainable rural development, but the prospects for these undermined by factors such as financing arrangements and take-overs, that favoured large scale businesses.

There is the view that environmental values need to be more firmly expressed and articulated in rural policy making, giving a higher priority to the rural environment.

There is concern that many of the measures associated with sustainable development require greatest sacrifices from the poorest members of society. The equality of impacts seem not to have been thought out. For example, a transport policy of raising fuel prices would have an additionally detrimental effect on poorer rural residents.

A better understanding of environmental-economic links, particularly in the area of tourism would be an important and feasible measure to pursue. So to would a better knowledge of what comprises wise stewardship of natural resources, perhaps through a collection and dissemination of best practice. Another priority measure is to experiment in approaches and options for sustainable development. Agency-owned land was seen as offering particular opportunities to pilot new approaches.

EFFECTIVE SERVICE DELIVERY

The discussions of this workshop contained a strong emphasis on the social aspects of service delivery.

There was a great concern with the relative lack of take-up of welfare and social benefits in rural areas, as indicated by the recent work into disadvantage in rural communities.

Alternative approaches to addressing this lack of take up were considered at some length, drawing on experience in Tayside. For example, where the home help service is used as a general welfare rights advisory service. This enhances the capacity of "front-line" staff to give and receive a more comprehensive range of information.

Concern was expressed about the effects of local government reorganisation on

specialist services in social work. For example, the consequent effects on local rural residents such as the elderly. the break-up of some regional authorities

Integration was seen as an important key to effective service delivery. Attention was drawn to the value of integrating services across defined areas and rationalising the bodies charged with delivery in that area.

Concern was expressed that bodies such as British Telecom or British Gas do not have an explicit social remit, despite the vital social role that they play. It was felt that the White Paper should explore this issue.

More radical ideas were proposed for example the redefinition of the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement to allow local authorities to become more active in establishing their own housing agencies for the purposes of providing rural housing.

Innovative forms of community transport were felt, in the main, to have failed to provide the kind of service required. The Transport Innovation Grants Scheme was seen as being undermined by not being innovative enough. Transport options should be more firmly based on a clearer understanding of the community to be served.

A key question was how to build on the high level of voluntary and self-help effort seen in all spheres of service delivery which has proved to be flexible and capable of meeting needs.

Attention was drawn to the potential for multi-purpose use of existing buildings such as schools, medical waiting rooms and post offices. Such integrated use is currently constrained by regulation and inflexible budgets. Privatisation is felt to have reduced the scope for multiple-use. The funding of cross-linkages and multi-service centres was seen to be a cost-effective use of resources. It was thought to be valuable to consider the possibility of relaxing planning and building controls in rural areas to permit the shared use of publicly provided premises which may change the financing arrangements and make the provision of such facilities in rural areas more viable.

To ease flows of information, a database to combine and match needs with available services would be a practical tool. This could be linked to a network of local "animators".

INTEGRATION

The workshop discussion on integration was the final one of the series and tended to continue themes developed in earlier debates.

The need for an integrated approach in the White Paper was felt to be paramount and there was a need to ensure that the value system associated with rural Scotland was fully reflected. A shared vision and agreement about ways to deliver this is a vital first step. A statement of specific indicators and targets would be helpful, but these should be developed in local strategies and not be prescribed centrally.

The value of a single co-ordinating body equivalent to the Rural Development Commission was discussed but on balance, thought not to be the best way forward. It would tend to place rural issues in a "ghetto" rather than foster the integration of rural affairs across department and agency activities. More individuals and groups with a multi-sectoral and cross-departmental remit would facilitate integration. An important and practical measure would be to sharpen the activities of the Rural Focus Group and extend this model to a local level.

It is felt that an excessive gap exists between stated policy objectives and the actual results of implementation. A better match between stated priorities and what is actually funded is called for.

There is a need to explore policy instruments (such as former regional reports) which may provide a means for local authorities to put their own rural agenda forward. The new unitary authorities are major providers, with a democratic mandate and are in a good position to play an integrating, strategic role. The need for rural strategies was stressed but the caveat was that these had to operate within a national strategic context. The integration of services across all sectors could be seen as an important part of the decentralisation programme associated with local government reorganisation.

The possibility of a Rural Aid Fund being established was explored as a means of resourcing the implementation of an explicit rural policy.

For "vertical" integration to be effective, the capabilities of voluntary organisations and community groups needed to be recognised and supported. This would enable them to take an equal role in partnerships. This would involve training and resourcing and the removal of barriers to involvement such as inadequate child care and transport.

The effects of external change such as business restructuring has to be accommodated in the policy framework such as the likely effects on small shops

and businesses in rural Scotland. In general, it is felt that rural and local considerations need to be integrated into all policymaking. In too many cases, rural development appears to be about undoing the effects of macro-policy.

It was felt that there were too many agencies operating in different parts of rural policy, and there was a case for a "single stop" approach to be investigated.

We welcome your [comments](#) on this site. Reviewed 1 October 1996

SECTION 5

Written Responses

In March and April 1995, the University of Dundee Centre for Planning, with Rural Forum, organised a questionnaire survey to identify the key issues in rural Scotland from a wide range of perspectives.

The questionnaire was sent to 1400 individuals drawn from Rural Forum's membership and other contacts database. This included local government officials, farmers, staff with environmental Voluntary Organisations, councillors, MP's, officials in government departments and agencies business people and many others. There was a 14% return and these were analysed at the University of Dundee.

Those invited to the workshop sessions were also asked to return, beforehand, a list prioritising issues affecting rural Scotland and measures to address these. These two sources of written evidence are summarised below.

SUMMARY OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

Respondents were asked to rank the principal problem areas facing rural Scotland which they considered should be addressed in the forthcoming White Paper.

The responses suggest that economic issues are perceived to be the most important for the future of rural Scotland. Interestingly, environmental issues are seen as less of a priority. Amongst economic problems, poor job prospects, unemployment and low quality employment are rated as the most severe.

When asked what forms of inward investment would contribute most to rural economies, tourism was rated most highly followed by technology and services. Manufacturing and the use of natural resources trail behind service and financial sectors. These priorities correspond quite well to the actual areas of growth in rural economies, but place a heavier emphasis on tourism and "alternative" practices than do current rural strategies.

Distance and access were seen as the principal difficulties facing rural

businesses. Financial restrictions are also given a high priority, reflecting a general feeling that there is a shortage of investment capital in rural areas. Skills shortages are not ranked highly as a problem. In overcoming distance and access difficulties, the principal transport issue was seen as fuel costs, and threats of rising prices. The importance of rail was stressed, followed by road and ferries.

Respondents were asked whether they considered the relevant appointed government agencies (Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and the associated LECs) devote sufficient policy attention and resources to enhancing the economy of rural Scotland. The responses suggest that just over half the respondents are not convinced that the two principal economic development agencies devote sufficient resources or policy to rural areas.

Amongst social and community problems, priority is placed upon the affordability of housing, poor transport networks and poverty and disadvantage, in that order.

When asked to rank the principal environmental problems which were likely to be significant for the future of rural Scotland, respondents clearly rate shortcomings in our ability to manage environmental issues as more serious than the environmental problems themselves. Unclear government objectives are seen as the greatest problem, followed by too many bodies and too much bureaucracy. Lack of access to resources is ranked third, further emphasising the concern about who is managing the environment and for what reasons. Only a minority of respondents consider Scottish Natural Heritage to be devoting sufficient policy and resources to the Scottish rural environment.

SUMMARY OF WRITTEN RESPONSES OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

Community Involvement

The importance of communities as key participants in rural development is stressed. Participation is not seen as something limited to the implementation of policy or projects, but is seen as extending to an active role in policy development.

Community involvement is not seen as a process for the community alone. The view is that to operate effectively it must be based on partnerships with government and other agencies. It is felt that the voluntary sector is heavily relied upon to work in the area of community involvement, yet has been kept out of shaping things at the strategic policy level. Neither the third sector nor

communities themselves are seen as being sufficiently resourced to play their full role in partnerships. It should be recognised that communities especially have to acquire the support, training, skills and confidence that would enable them to participate effectively. For people to become involved they must feel that it is worthwhile and not an excessive burden.

Partnerships need to be able to operate within a coherent context. It is felt that the task of a rural policy should be to provide such a framework.

Community involvement is seen as being threatened by essentially the same forces that threaten communities: employment and housing problems, forced mobility, inadequate and expensive services and lack of choice. Pressures on the family obstruct peoples involvement in the wider community, as does by increasing social divisions and inequalities, within the community. Community Involvement, therefore is seen as being closely tied to wider social and economic forces.

The potential to enhance community involvement is felt to be curtailed by barriers to genuine participation, not just in partnerships but in the sometimes closed and unaccountable workings of agencies, QUANGOs and local government.

In certain areas it is felt that communities have become detached from local affairs because they have become distanced from the use and management of local resources. Community involvement might therefore involve greater access to resources and the loosening of constraints on how they use them.

Measures identified to further community involvement prioritise a policy commitment towards decentralisation and a commitment to maintaining rural communities. More specifically, it is recommended that community capacity is reinforced through training and resources. It is also felt that agency staff could be trained to work more effectively with communities. Research directed at the community level should increasingly adopt a participatory approach.

An experimental approach to action at community level would be welcomed, with networking between communities to share experiences, enhance learning and boost confidence.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Written responses echo the workshops thinking in recognising the link between economic prosperity and conservation. The main threats to sustainable

development are clearly placed on the social and economic development side, rather than the purely environmental.

Intensive or exploitative patterns of resource use are seen as the principal environmental threats. Agriculture and forestry are named as major sources of pollution and environmental degradation. The nature of subsidies, to primary sectors in particular, is seen as generally acting against the principles of sustainability.

A clearer policy framework to harmonise macro-economic and environmental objectives is called for. A general framework is seen as only part of the solution, the other part being local strategies to reflect local physical and social conditions.

Suggested measures to further sustainable development stress the free-ing up of resources along with improvements in resource management. Restrictive controls and protection are not seen as the way forward.

More specific priority measures include the funding of serious research into how the concept of sustainable development can be turned into practical policy and measures.

Substantial reform of the Common Agricultural Policy and Common Fisheries Policy is seen as necessary if they are to contribute to, rather than contravene, sustainable development.

EFFECTIVE SERVICE DELIVERY

Written submissions prioritise a number of issues on effective service delivery. Services must be accessible which means they must be delivered locally. They must also reflect local needs. Forces encouraging centralisation are not helpful in this respect and people feel that a satisfactory balance of public and private provision is yet to be found. People require access to a number of services and so wish that they be delivered in a co-ordinated manner.

The cost and limited options in transport prevent people from meeting delivers 'half-way" and discriminates strongly against remoter communities and non car owners.

Information is a vital part of delivery and is seen as inadequate and in need of rationalising. The flow of information should be two way with "front-line" mechanisms for delivery of services being geared up to receive feedback on

their provision.

Measures proposed to improve service delivery stress a strengthening and better co-ordination of regional and Scottish Office functions. More local involvement in the design of services and service delivery is seen as important to improve sensitivity to customer needs.

It is suggested that the co-ordination of service delivery could be improved by training for providers, local "one-stop" centres and the use of information technology.

INTEGRATION

Peoples' descriptions of problems facing rural society and the rural economy emphasise how they are interrelated. Interrelated issues need to be met with integrated policies and integrated mechanisms for delivery.

Nor are the issues raised exclusively "rural". It is recognised that an attempt to treat rural Scotland without regard to relationships with urban areas and the wider economy would prevent a comprehensive understanding.

Barriers to integration are seen as coming primarily from the sectoral workings of government departments and agencies. In addition to such "horizontal" disintegration, "vertical" disintegration between the maker and the subjects of policy is recognised. "Top down" approaches are preventing decision-makers from coming to terms with the holistic reality of peoples lives. The lack of connection between European Union policies and local aspirations or strategies is felt keenly.

Lack of integration is seen as undermining the effectiveness of agencies and organisations by creating duplication of effort, unnecessary competition and conflict. People are faced by a confusion of activities and responsibilities.

Tensions between private and public agents are viewed as contrary to attempts at integration. There is a feeling that the diminished role of local authorities prevents them playing a co-ordinating role.

A general measure to enhance integration was to achieve greater community involvement, on the belief that local decisions would reflect better the multi-faceted nature of peoples lives.

The preparation of local strategies would provide a basis for communities to

integrate more effectively with other levels.

SECTION 6

Analysis

DELIVERY MECHANISMS

One of the issues that all consultees were asked to consider were the mechanisms for delivering rural policies and programmes in Scotland. This was in the context of information about the workings of the Rural Focus Group, local government reorganisation and the requirement for the new authorities to prepare decentralisation plans. Although it was difficult to achieve a consensus around the nature of the problems with the existing mechanisms there was general agreement that there were shortcomings at present. In particular the following were identified as requiring attention:

- lack of strategic integration; particularly at the regional level which is increasingly the key delivery level for most government agencies and local authorities.

- integration is made more difficult in the absence of national and regional strategies that the various parties could sign up to. Local people, businesses and other interests also found it difficult to understand what precisely the government were attempting to achieve in rural Scotland because of this lack of a strategic approach and;

- although more resources were seen as one answer to the problem, the discussions focused on the more effective use and targeting of existing resources. For this to be achieved there needed to be more effective delivery mechanisms that incorporated an integrated partnership approach.

A number of ideas emerged as to how mechanisms could be improved at the regional level. Perhaps the most interesting was about the key role that could be played by the local authorities in facilitating regional and local partnerships to prepare appropriate strategies and action plans. There were suggestions that the new authorities should be required to prepare rural strategies for their areas as they are required to produce housing plans. One of the advantages of the local authorities playing a leading role was their interaction with the broad cross

section of rural communities, businesses and other interests. It was agreed that such an approach could also enable local voluntary sector organisations and bodies representing local communities to participate effectively.

There was more difficulty in establishing a consensus about appropriate mechanisms at the national level to establish and deliver rural policy and programmes. While there were some suggestions that a Rural Development Commission should be established for Scotland there was a general feeling that no more organisations should be set up outside existing structures. There was general agreement, however, that the mechanism at the Scottish level needed to focus on integration while achieving delivery through the established organisations particularly at the regional and local levels.

A number of ideas were put forward, building on the existing Rural Focus Group. It has to be emphasised, however, that there was very little understanding of how the Rural Focus Group operated and what, in its present form, it could achieve. It was seen, however, as having the potential to oil the wheels of partnership and integration and establish rural development priorities in terms of areas, activities and client groups. The key to being effective in a co-ordination role was seen as being able to determine strategic priorities, and having the financial muscle to ensure the bodies responsible for delivery worked in partnership on these priorities.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

During the various elements of the consultation, community involvement emerged as one of the areas where progress needed to be made. This was very closely related to the issues of integration, improved mechanisms and partnerships, these being seen as the fundamental requirements to facilitate effective community involvement. The point was made many times that community involvement strategies needed to be devised and applied collectively between the various agencies and authorities. Community involvement could not be left to be taken forward individually by local authorities, government agencies, health boards and so on as this could create confusion, frustration and cynicism.

Another point that was made repeatedly was the need for community involvement to be stimulated, supported and networked, so that to ensure local communities could establish and pursue their own agendas, while at the same time going with the grain of policies and budgets of public authorities. Community involvement also needed to be supported through training, the provision of information and the removal of barriers (for example lack of

childcare). There was also a strong feeling that too much reinvention of the wheel was taking place particularly at the community level. There was frustration that it was difficult to make connections between communities in different parts of the country perhaps experiencing similar problems but coming up with innovative ways of addressing these problems.

The logic of the approach emerging from the discussions on integration was that local authorities could play a leading role in facilitating, if not necessarily organising, effective community involvement across a wide range of agencies. The use of local animators or field workers was discussed and the needs for mechanisms to network these individuals was highlighted.

POLICY REVIEW

The rural economy was seen of fundamental importance to the future of rural Scotland. In particular the need for more high quality employment opportunities for young people and graduates was felt to be most pressing. There was a concern that the enterprise networks were placing too much emphasis on the trickle down of prosperity and employment from the urban centres and that there needed to be a tailored approach to developing the rural economy, realising the many opportunities that exist in rural areas. While there was a concern about the future of traditional industries such as agriculture, forestry and tourism, there were seen to be opportunities to improve income levels. There was frustration that these issues were addressed by the public agencies in a highly sectoral way that did not make the connections and provide the basis to realise the opportunities that exist. There was some concern that Scottish Enterprise did not have a specifically rural strategy and range of rural programmes to address the needs and opportunities in rural areas. This was contrasted with Scottish Homes which had developed tailored rural policies and programmes.

While training was not frequently raised, there were comments that there was a poor match between training provision and employment opportunities. In particular, there was a feeling that training needed to be directed at creating high quality jobs rather than merely a large number of trained individuals.

Perhaps the policy area of greatest concern was service delivery. This covered issues such as health, shopping, local government services and so on. It is very difficult to draw any consensus out of the discussions on service delivery. There were clear differences between the view that people should be taken to the services as opposed to the service being taken to people in rural areas and the debate about locally accessible services and access to high quality services. The latter issue was seen as particularly relevant in the field of health and other basic

services.

Given the range of views expressed the most appropriate approach might be to develop local strategies with the participation of local people on how best service delivery might be improved. There were, however, a number of principles that participants felt should be applied. In particular, equality of service between urban and rural situations. Which applied especially to basic services. It was felt that innovative methods of delivery should be developed and piloted for wider dissemination. The mechanism of rural demonstration areas has been used by Scottish Homes and it would appear to be one way of developing and disseminating good practice more generally on rural development. A wide range of ideas that came forward during the workshops and seminars could be investigated through such rural demonstration areas perhaps facilitated by the local authorities in a co-ordinating role at the local level.

Transport was seen as an important issue that needed to be addressed in rural Scotland. There was a general concern that this issue was not being adequately addressed by existing authorities and agencies. The opportunities to reduce the need to travel by making effective use of new technology and one-stop shops was also highlighted. In particular, ideas were brought forward for using schools, post offices, banks and other local facilities as information points.

While environmental and land use issues did not figure very highly in the discussions there was clearly great value placed upon the quality of the environment and maintaining that quality. There was concern that the environment had deteriorated through inappropriate forestry and agricultural practices encouraged by external factors. It was felt that the future of many rural communities depended upon sustainable development given the reliance on industries such as tourism and agriculture. There was also a view that in Less Favoured Areas farmers and landowners were responsible for looking after the land and the landscape and that this required to be properly funded. There was concern at the difficulties local communities and individuals had in gaining access to the land resource to develop their local economies. There was considerable frustration at the difficulties experienced in many communities in acquiring land for housing or small tourism related developments and a view that this difficulty contributed to continuing decline, loss of young people and often inappropriate land management.

One of the issues most frequently raised was that of rural disadvantage, social exclusion and poverty. There was considerable concern that these issues were being tackled in urban areas but not in rural areas and that resources had to be

made available. There were suggestions that there should be a rural aid fund with priorities established at a Scottish level aimed at both geographical areas and priority client groups such as the young or the elderly. It was also felt that this should be delivered through existing mechanisms co-ordinated at the local level by local authorities. It was also felt that the lack of a social remit on the part of the Scottish Enterprise network placed lowland Scotland at a disadvantage to the Highlands and Islands Enterprise network area.

The planning and development control policies of local authorities were considered by many to inhibit rural development. Positive planning, allowing people to use their homes to run businesses and develop new housing, was considered a key to keeping young people in rural areas in affordable housing and having the opportunity to obtain quality employment. The policies adopted by West Lothian District Council, for example, on lowland crofting were mentioned in this regard.

PRIORITY ISSUES FOR THE RURAL WHITE PAPER

- The consultation raised a large number of issues that might be addressed in the White Paper. There are a number of consistent priorities that emerged through the series of questionnaires, workshops and seminars and these are:

- improved integration at the national and regional levels;

- mechanisms to achieve effective community involvement;

- the need to tackle rural disadvantage with resources targeted at client groups (for example, the young) and possibly geographical areas;

- the need to create more opportunities for local people and businesses to obtain access to the land and natural resources in their locality;

- the preparation of local rural strategies and action plans facilitated by the new unitary local authorities in partnership with public agencies and local communities;

- the need to encourage and facilitate innovation in rural development;

- the creation and support of mechanisms and networks for the issemination of good practice and information;

- a more enabling planning system to help create more, and better, housing and employment opportunities.

ANNEX A

Briefing for the Seminars

1. Rural Forum has been asked by the Scottish Office, Rural Affairs Division to organise a series of four seminars on the proposed Rural White Paper. The seminars will take place in Inverness (5th June), Perth (10th June), Inverurie (15th June) and Lockerbie (16th June). Each of the three seminars will follow the same programme.

> **1030** - Registration and Coffee.
> **1100** - Chairman's welcome and introduction.
> **1110** - Background to the White Paper.
> **1130** - The issues for rural Scotland.
> **1200** - Workshop Session 1 - Future Vision.
> **1250** - Lunch
> **1400** - Workshop Session 2 - Current Realities
> **1450** - Workshop Session 3 - Removing the Barriers between Current Realities and the Vision.
> **1545** - Report Back.
> **1605** - Chairman's concluding remarks

2. The purpose of the seminars is to identify at a fairly detailed level the issues that need to be addressed in the White Paper and the measures that could be included to address these effectively. Although there needs to be realism, radical ideas are to be encouraged even if they are not thought to be entirely realistic in the current political climate.

3. An official from The Scottish Office will present the background to the White Paper including the terms of reference and the timetable. Twenty minutes has been allowed for this with a few minutes at the end for questions on information.

4. The second presentation will be on the issues for rural Scotland and will be presented by Stuart Black (Inverness), Dermot Grimson (Perth), Mark Shucksmith (Inverurie) and Allan Watt (Lockerbie). The purpose of this session is to provide participants with some ideas that have emerged from the work into rural disadvantage and the questionnaire on the Rural White Paper. A twenty minute presentation followed by some general discussion is allowed for in

advance of moving into the workshop sessions.

5. The purpose of the workshops is to identify some of the measures that could be included in the White Paper by first identifying a vision for rural Scotland then the current realities and finally the barriers between the two and how best these barriers might be overcome through the White Paper. One of the dangers is that the workshop sessions focus on particular sectors such as housing or agriculture or the environment. The intention is to focus on rural issues in a more holistic way. One way of emphasising this approach is to identify integrating themes. Four such themes could include:

- Rural disadvantage and access to social, economic and cultural opportunities.

- Sustainable Development.

- Community Involvement and Empowerment.

- Mechanisms to achieve a more integrated approach to rural development.

6. Session 1 should develop a vision for rural Scotland two years after the publication of the White Paper as the participants would like to see it from their different perspectives. There should be scope to develop a range of visions including both the realistic and the idealistic. The output should be a series of ten short statements that make up the vision. Examples of the type of statements that might be envisaged include:

- A place where there are thriving communities with a broad age and social economic profile.

- Rural communities that are more self contained.

- Rural communities that are better connected to adjacent rural and urban communities.

- A place where there is a practical understanding of the relationship between economic needs and effective husbandry of resources.

7. The output from the first session should be ten short statements that make up a vision. The statements need not necessarily be consistent but should reflect the varying points of view in the group. This session will last 50 minutes.

8. The purpose of the session 2 is to identify the key features of the situation in

rural Scotland as it is at present. To some extent it should be possible to draw from the morning presentation and examples might include:

- The loss of indigenous young people and the break-up of the community structure.

- Lack of access to quality employment opportunities on the part of women and highly qualified young people in particular.

- The difficulty that young people have in obtaining a house they can afford so that they can take up local employment opportunities and bring up their families in the area.

- Environmental damage arising from inappropriate forestry and agriculture grants and incentive regimes.

9. This session runs on to session 3 but about 50 minutes should be allowed (less if this is adequate). The output from session 2 should be a list of the ten key features that describe the reality of rural Scotland today.

10. The purpose of the third session is two fold. Firstly, to identify the barriers between the present realities identified in session 2 and the vision identified in session 1. These should be listed and could include issues such as the following:

- Lack of an integrated approach between different statutory bodies in terms of rural development policies and programmes.

- Lack of resources or difficulties in targeting effectively the resources that are available.

- The pattern of landownership and the difficulties of obtaining land for housing or economic development.

11. The final session will be to consider in detail ways in which some of the barriers might be overcome having particular regard to measures that could be included in the Rural White Paper. The group should aim to devise as many measures as possible but take time at the end to identify what they consider to be the three key measures for inclusion in the Rural White Paper. This could include the following:

- The establishment of a rural development agency within or outwith existing structures. (e.g. outwith could include something along the lines of the Rural Development Commission in England which is an entirely

separate agency working directly to the Department of Environment. Examples within existing structures could include a rural enterprise company coming under Scottish Enterprise/Highlands and Islands Enterprise or a partnership grouping along the lines of the Cairngorms Partnership but covering rural Scotland).

- A rural aid fund along the lines of the urban aid fund but targeted through a mix of geographical areas and client groups. This could also be achieved through a rural challenge based on priority areas/client groups along the lines of that already established in Strathclyde Region and operated by the Rural Development Commission in England. Another model is a rural premium based on standard spending assessments and delivered through main stream budgets operated by local authorities and government agencies.

- Scrapping of the right to buy in rural areas where public rented housing is less than a certain percentage of the total stock.

- Establishing local land trusts to fund the acquisition of land needed for development with compulsory powers if necessary.

- A programme to facilitate, stimulate and support community involvement through the appointment of local animateurs and or funding to remove the barriers to key individuals becoming involved at the local level.

12. Flip charts will be available in each of the workshops and the facilitators should ensure that these are written up and handed over to Rural Forum's co-ordinator for each of the meetings. These will be as follows:

Inverness - Di Alexander
Perth - Morag MacNicol
Inverurie - Sue Sadler
Lockerbie - David Rothe

We welcome your [comments](#) on this site. Reviewed 1 October 1996

ANNEX B

Seminar with Ethnic Minorities

The following were identified as the twelve key issues facing ethnic minorities in rural communities:

- Diet: this is a question of isolation from suitable retail outlets and the small size of the local market for particular diets.

- Language and communication: this is also a factor of isolation from larger communities of ethnic minorities but is also about the allocation of resources devoted to the whole issue of language and communication and the needs of particular groups.

- Harassment: the issue in rural areas is that lack of information on the degree of harassment and perhaps denial by the relevant authorities and communities that harassment takes place. The difficulties are exacerbated by isolation from a wider support of community.

- Lack of opportunities to meet and network: there is often the lack of options for places to meet in rural areas which is partly a factor of isolation but also one of the absence of resources directed at the needs of very small numbers from ethnic minorities.

- Isolation: This is a factor that runs through many of the issues is exacerbated by the lack of opportunities to meet and network, the lack of resources and very often a denial that a problem exists amongst the local community and public authorities.

- Informal jobs and housing markets: this is probably a more important issue in rural areas and is difficult to quantify and address because the problem is usually denied.

- Religious and cultural opportunities: these are very limited due to isolation from similar ethnic communities.

- Access to adult education: this is often a problem of lack of demand resulting in no supply and is a feature of the isolation felt by many ethnic

minorities in rural areas.

- Schools curriculum: this is a feature of the relatively small numbers of ethnic minority communities in rural areas but given the opportunity presented by new technology is also associated with denial of the issue by the relevant authorities.

- Peer Pressure: this is particularly a problem for school aged individuals from ethnic minority groups where the pressure to conform to the host culture is very strong. Again, acceptance by the relevant authorities that this is an issue could result in the problem being addressed.

- Problem solving: services exist in the urban areas to help ethnic minorities solve the sorts of problems they face. Such a service does not exist in rural areas. A lack of resources, denial of the problem and isolation are all factors.

- Equal opportunities: There is often a lack of opportunity outwith the economic opportunities provided within the family unit. The issue therefore is not high profile, is not accepted and therefore not addressed.

The general view was that the problems experienced by ethnic minorities in rural areas were no different to those experienced in urban areas. It is important, however, to highlight that these problems are often exacerbated through isolation leading to a lack of acknowledgement on the part of the relevant authorities that problems exist. The measures therefore that are being put in place in urban areas through for example the likes of the Urban Aid Programme are not replicated in rural areas. Furthermore, there is a lack of monitoring and information on the problems faced by ethnic minorities in rural communities.

A number of suggestions were made as to how the problems faced by ethnic minorities might be addressed. These were as follows:

- More information needs to be available in order that the scale of the problem can be measured to persuade the relevant authorities that it needs to be addressed.

- If a Rural Aid Fund or similar fund was established this would provide an opportunity to develop new projects to address some of the issues listed.

- It is important that all parts of the country are covered by the Racial Equality Commission to monitor relevant issues and respond to

complaints, enquiries or specific proposals.