Understanding Rural Issues

A guide for Local Strategic Partnerships

"Rural England faces probably some of the most profound changes in its history. Against this backcloth I have been impressed by the capacity of rural people to respond to these challenges. Theirs is a story of local enterprise, community strength and resilience, but also one of frustration against the constraints and barriers they feel hamper them and what they see as urban-centric decisions".

Dr Stuart Burgess - The Rural Advocate, Commission for Rural Communities

GOVERNMENT OFFICE FOR THE NORTH WEST

defra
Department for Environment
Food and Rural Affairs

Lancashire County Council

Who should read this publication and why?

Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and their partners all have a role in driving delivery of Sustainable Community Strategies; bringing together at a local level the different parts of the public, private, community and voluntary sectors; allowing different initiatives and services to support one another so that they can work together more effectively and deliver joined up solutions for both urban and rural communities.

"The needs of rural people are the same as those of people living in inner cities and suburban areas. The Government seeks the same positive outcomes for rural people as for those living in non-rural areas. We seek equity and fairness for rural people. For that reason, those needs will be largely addressed by the same parts of the public sector - although the challenges posed by geography and demography create the need for some careful and specific thinking about delivery of outcomes for rural communities and businesses",

Government's response to the Committee on the Potential of England's Rural Economy, 2008.
UK Parliament - EFRA England's rural economy

Rural communities can bring economic, social and environmental benefits to local areas. However, because of the scale and the dispersed nature of rural areas -

"The hidden and scattered nature of rural deprivation means it can be all too easily overlooked, masked by apparent affluence and the averaging of statistics"
Dr Stuart Burgess, The Rural Advocate, Commission for Rural Communities, 2007
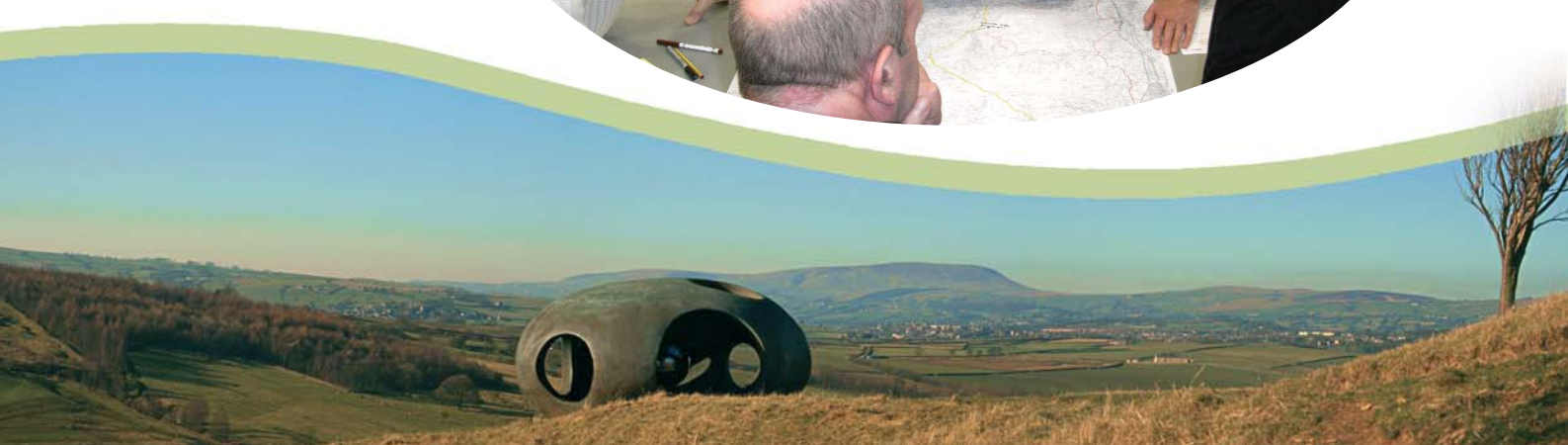
As LSPs and their partners begin to work within the new performance framework, the Comprehensive Area Assessment, the contribution that rural areas can make, positive or negative, to the performance of a locality is more significant than ever.

This brochure is designed as a signposting guide to help LSPs and their partners to access information and support in order to help them promote the sustainability of their rural communities.

For further information go to:

Commission for Rural Communities 'Report of the Rural Advocate 2007'
www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/publications/ruraladvocatereport

Local Government White paper 'Strong and Prosperous Communities'
www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/strongprosperous

Lyons Inquiry into local Government
www.lyonsinquiry.org.uk

Defra Rural Affairs
www.defra.gov.uk/rural/index.htm

Local Strategic Partnerships
www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/page.asp?id=531

Rural Realities

"Rural England is undergoing immense change. Last year over 105,000 more people moved from urban to rural areas than moved the other way. While the quality of life for the rural majority is good, there remains a sizeable minority whose lives are blighted by disadvantage, poverty and exclusion. "This is a problem that is barely recognized and often not addressed"

Dr Stuart Burgess, Rural Advocate, Commission for Rural Communities.

The 'State of the Rural North West 2008' Report by SQW, focuses on the economic performance of rural areas, and also explores social and environmental issues and the inter-play between the three.

The rural North West has a total population of 1.3 million which accounts for around one fifth of all residents in the North West. However, the 65+ age group is over-represented compared to England and the region, and the proportion broadly increases with increased levels of rurality and remoteness.

The rural North West is performing strongly in labour market terms with high levels of economic activity and employment. Average earnings across rural Local Authority Districts are well above the regional average. However, there are major mismatches in residential and workplace earnings in accessible rural areas, compounded by high levels of out-commuting from these areas of managers and professionals to urban employment centres.

To use Defra terminology, whilst many 'Significant Rural' districts make a notable contribution to the regional economy, some 'Rural 80' districts are lagging behind and residents are at risk of falling into (often working) poverty. Rural areas close to cities tend to perform well in terms of earnings (due to the commuting effect), but the differential between resident and workplace earnings in these rural areas is huge compared to rural areas that are more self-contained.

For more information go to:

SQW - State of the Rural North West Report – September 2008
www.gos.gov.uk/497468/docs/276882/ExecutiveSummary2008

Matthew Taylor Review on Rural Economy and Affordable Housing
www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planning/planningpolicyimplementation/
reformplanningsystem/matthewtaylorreview/

The Government Response to the Taylor Review of Rural Economy and Affordable Housing
www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/responsematthewtaylor

The clear message emerging from the evidence in this report is that there is not one homogenous 'Rural North West'. The picture is complicated, with economic, social and environmental performance varying considerably across rural areas within the region.

Factors causing these differences include the nature and quality of jobs, the nature and competitiveness of businesses, commuting effects and access to markets – and these differences are often consistent with long-established specialisms and place-specific.

The report provides a short overview of key messages emerging from the evidence base, and points (where possible) to variations across different types of rural area. However, to avoid misleading generalisations, it is important to bear in mind that underpinning these headlines is a good deal of local variation.

For further information go to:

Commission for Rural Communities 'State of the Countryside Report 2008'
www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/files/The%20State%20of%20the%20Countryside1.pdf

Commission for Rural Communities 'Report of the Rural Advocate 2007'
www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/publications/ruraladvocatereport

England's rural areas: steps to release their economic potential - Summary
State of the Rural North West Report
www.gos.gov.uk/gonw/EnvironmentRural/RegionalRuralPolicy/StateoftheRuralNorthWest

Rural Focus Report - Local Authorities
www.defra.gov.uk/evidence/statistics/rural/rural-focus/go.htm

Rural Evidence Research Centre
www.rerc.ac.uk/

Access to Rural Services

Services are the basis of any community – access to shops, healthcare, activities – create and enhance a feeling of belonging and a sustainable future for the area. Rural communities especially, 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.

Governmental policy encourages the drive for localism and citizen engagement and empowerment and a minimum standard of service provision for all citizens could be described as one which enables people to:

- Live comfortably (access to food, financial services, utilities – electricity/gas/water)
- Be healthy (medical, social services and recreation)
- Learn and develop (primary, secondary, FE, HE)
- Be supported (advice and information, legal services and benefits)
- Earn a living (child care, employment and training options)
- Build social networks (social and civic opportunity)

A key principle underpinning service delivery should be that all citizens, wherever they live, have an equal right to access the services that they need for a socially and economically full life.

Clearly the concept of equity of access cannot mean that it is possible for all citizens to enjoy the same opportunities because this is simply not financially supportable. The rural premium – the higher cost of delivering services to rural communities is well understood and can play a role in limiting local service access. This presents a bigger challenge to service deliverers and the need for innovative solutions to meet the needs of rural communities.

Often the availability of public transport within rural areas is seen as mitigating the impacts of service change or withdrawal. This 'People to the Services' solution does not consider the ability of transport services to respond effectively to new demands or consider the disproportionate social inclusion impacts within rural communities i.e. those without personal transport suffer disproportionately.

Overall rural areas are more similar than dissimilar to the urban areas and the majority of mainstream public service delivery in the NW is to urban and rural areas i.e. public service catchments cover both urban and rural areas. The key issue for service providers is to understand the special and specific circumstances of both urban and rural communities and tailor services and delivery mechanisms appropriately to the needs of their communities.

For Further information go to:

How fair is Access to Services in the Rural North West
www.lancashire.gov.uk/environment/ruralpathfinder/manifesto/eb_intro.asp

Lancashire County Council Social Inclusion Unit
www.lancashire.gov.uk/environment/ltp/ltp_web/section_11191606393.asp

Task Group 4 Report - This report has been commissioned by the Regional Rural Steering Group to investigate rural service accessibility in the North West - Website:
www.lancashire.gov.uk/corporate/web/view.asp?siteid=4156&pageid=20599&e=e

Rural Services Data Series
http://www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/projects/ruralservicesseriesdata/overview

Rural Proofing

What is rural proofing?

Rural proofing is a commitment by the Government to ensure that all its domestic policies take account of rural circumstances and needs and first came to the forefront in the Government Rural White Paper in 2000.   It is a mandatory part of the policy making process, which means that, as policies are developed, policy makers should systematically:

- consider whether their policy is likely to have a different impact in rural areas, because of particular rural circumstances or needs;
- make a proper assessment of those impacts, if they are likely to be significant.
- adjust the policy, where appropriate, with solutions to meet rural needs and circumstances.

Rural proofing applies to all policies, programmes and initiatives and it applies to both the design and delivery stages. It is a formal part of the Government's policy making Impact Assessment guidance.

The LGA report 'Think rural when making decisions - 19 May 2004' said:

'Meeting the needs of rural people and thinking through what could potentially affect those who work and live in the countryside is vital for local authorities' and advised Local Authorities to:

'THINK RURAL WHEN TAKING DECISIONS'

Work in this field has come to the fore once again with the Commission for Rural Communities developing - 'A strengthened approach for 'Rural Proofing' government policies' (May 2009)

They have also produced a refreshed and strengthened Rural Proofing Toolkit to help policymakers ensure policies take account of rural circumstances and needs.

The refreshed tool kit:

- builds on learning from use of the previous model
- includes more specific practical advice concerning the needs of rural areas
- emphasises that 'sparsity' and 'rurality' are essential considerations of good policy making
- highlights examples of effective rural proofing within government

Individual government departments have a responsibility to ensure policies and delivery arrangements consider people in both rural and urban areas, so the guidance covers a broad range of policy areas.

Useful Links:

Rural White Paper 2000 - Our Countryside the Future
www.defra.gov.uk/rural/pdfs/ruralwp/rural.pdf
Rural Proofing Toolkit (CRC)
www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/publications/crc97ruralproofingtoolkit

Commission for Rural Communities
www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/projects/ruralproofing/overview

Lancashire Rural Pathfinder - Evidence Base (2005-2008)
www.lancashire.gov.uk/environment/ruralpathfinder/manifesto/eb_intro.asp

Strong & Sustainable Communities – what does this mean?

Secretary of State, The Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP, reiterates the Government's commitment to its strategic objective to promote Strong Rural Communities in his letters to Stuart Burgess, Chairman of Commission for Rural Communities

'…so what does Strong Rural Communities actually boil down to? In short, it comes down to achieving for Rural England what we want to achieve for all England: thriving, vibrant, sustainable communities which will improve the quality of everyone's life. It comes down to ensuring equity and fairness for rural communities. Strong rural communities are places where people want to live now and in the future; places to meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to the environment, and contribute to a high quality of life, are safe and inclusive, are well planned, built and run and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all…………….

'Places where people want to live – and that are sustainable – do not happen by chance. They are the product of visionary thinking and commitment by highly skilled civic and national leaders, developers and professionals, with the full engagement and support of local partners and communities'.

Delivering sustainable rural communities can be seen as a part of the 'Place shaping' responsibility of local government and all the local partners in the public, voluntary and business sectors. It is about creating attractive, prosperous, vibrant, safe and strong communities where people want to live, work and do business.

For more information go to

Rural businesses vital to economy
www.defra.gov.uk/news/2009/090205a.htm

Toolkit for sustainable rural community
www.ruraltoolkit.org.uk

Planning for Sustainable Communities - a new Agenda
www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/publications/
crc45planningforsustainableruralcommunitiesanewagenda

Information about the (Action with Communities in Rural England) ACRE toolkit can be found using the following link
www.acre.org.uk/communityengagement_parishplans_toolkit.html

(Action with communities in Cumbria) ACT's toolkit and our new Sustainable Communities Workbook are both downloadable from
www.cumbriaaction.org.uk/community_plans/plan/community_planning_tools

North West Development Agency publication Building on Potential In our Rural Areas
www.nwda.co.uk/publications/people-and-jobs/building-on-potential-in-our-r.aspx

How to identify your rural areas

The Local Authority Classification

was introduced in 2005. Many Statistics are only available at Local Authority level and in order to differentiate between Rural and Urban for these statistics it was necessary to classify the LAs based on their rurality.

The LA Classification is a 'spectrum', or graded system and it is based on settlement type. It was updated in April 2009 to reflect Local Government reorganization and the creation of several new Unitary Authorities.

The LA Classification gives 6 Urban/Rural Classifications, defined as follows:

1 Major Urban	Districts with either 100,000 people or 50 percent of their population in urban areas with a population of more than 750,000.
2 Large Urban	Districts with either 50,000 people or 50 percent of their population in one of 17 urban areas with a population between 250,000 and 750,000.
3 Other Urban	Districts with less than 26 percent of their population in rural settlements and larger market towns.
4 Significant Rural	Districts with more than 26 percent of their population in rural settlements and larger market towns.
5 Rural - 50	Districts with at least 50 percent but less than 80 percent of their population in rural settlements and larger market towns.
6 Rural - 80	Districts with at least 80 percent of their population in rural settlements and larger market towns.

A spreadsheet containing the classifications by each region is also available on the Defra website at: www.defra.gov.uk/evidence/statistics/rural/documents/rural-defn/LAClassification-dataset-post0409.xls

LA Classification Dataset post April 2009 - [XLS 170 KB] [added April 2009]. This Local Authority dataset enables each region and each Local Authority District to be classified under the 6 urban/rural classifications. The North West is made up of the following classifications:

Cheshire	Significant Rural
Cumbria	Predominantly Rural
Lancashire	Significant Rural
Greater Manchester	Predominantly Urban
Merseyside	Predominantly Urban

Defra Rural Atlas

Map of the NW Region showing the rural/urban classification (of local authorities)
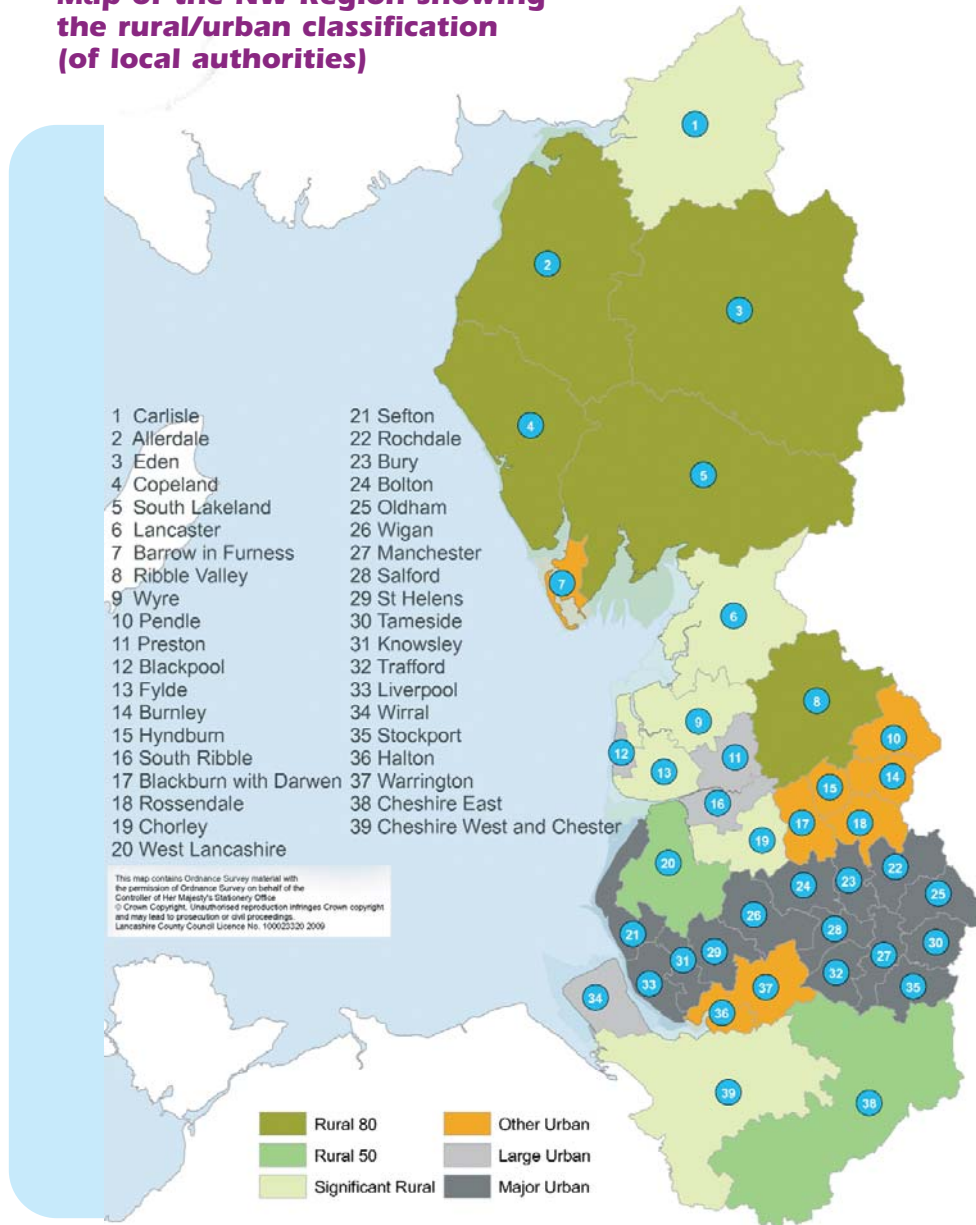
The Defra Rural Atlas

The Rural Atlas provides over 100 off-the-shelf maps, to view and/or download (in .jpg format), covering the most popular themes in Rural Policy. The maps are grouped either into **Geography** or **Subject** then organised into sub-regions or categories as detailed left.

1 Carlisle
2 Allerdale
3 Eden
4 Copeland
5 South Lakeland
6 Lancaster
7 Barrow in Furness
8 Ribble Valley
9 Wyre
10 Pendle
11 Preston
12 Blackpool
13 Fylde
14 Burnley
15 Hyndburn
16 South Ribble
17 Blackburn with Darwen
18 Rossendale
19 Chorley
20 West Lancashire
21 Sefton
22 Rochdale
23 Bury
24 Bolton
25 Oldham
26 Wigan
27 Manchester
28 Salford
29 St Helens
30 Tameside
31 Knowsley
32 Trafford
33 Liverpool
34 Wirral
35 Stockport
36 Halton
37 Warrington
38 Cheshire East
39 Cheshire West and Chester

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Legend:
- Rural 80
- Rural 50
- Significant Rural
- Other Urban
- Large Urban
- Major Urban

For maps of the Rural Definitions and Classifications, refer to Defra Rural Atlas
www.defra.gov.uk/evidence/statistics/rural/rural-atlas/atlas-menu.htm

For more information on Geographies, Census and Administrative Areas
www.defra.gov.uk/evidence/statistics/rural/oas.htm

Defra's Rural Definition

The Rural Definition

The Rural Definition was introduced in 2004 - This 'spectrum', or graded system, adopts a settlement-based approach which gives a clearer picture below Local Authority level and allows for greater clarity when working with lower geographies. It is available for England and Wales at:

- Census Output Area (COA or OA)
- Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA)
- Middle Super Output Areas (MSOA)
- Ward

Output areas are classified by morphology and context:
Morphology

- Urban (over 10,000)
- Rural town
- Village
- Dispersed (village, hamlets and isolated dwellings)

And context

- Sparse, Less sparse

This gives 8 Urban/Rural Classifications (2 urban and 6 rural):

Urban (Sparse)
Urban (Less Sparse)
Town (Less Sparse)
Town (Sparse)
Village (Less Sparse)
Village (Sparse)
Dispersed (Less Sparse)
Dispersed (Sparse)

Defra Rural Evidence Hub

The Defra Rural Evidence Hub gives access to a wealth of Rural Evidence for policy makers; the people on the ground who are delivering rural strategy; and anyone else with an interest in rural economies and communities. It offers both interactive querying and mapping facilities and 'off the shelf' Information in the form of reports and maps, the rural atlas, definitions and descriptions.

Further information can be found at:

Defra Rural Statistics and Evidence hub
www.defra.gov.uk/rural/research/index.htm

Rural Definition and Local Authority Classification – Introduction
www.defra.gov.uk/evidence/statistics/rural/rural-definition.htm

Rural/Urban Definition and the Local Authority (LA) classification - Guidance notes
www.defra.gov.uk/evidence/statistics/rural/documents/rural-defn/rural-stats-guidance.pdff

Rural Focus Reports

The **Rural Focus Reports** are detailed rural statistics based on the office for National Statistics 2001 Census data and the Commission for Rural Communities Access to Services data. They give a rural view showing trends of what is happening in each area. Reports are available for the following administrative geographies.

- Government Office Regions
  www.defra.gov.uk/rural/ruralstats/rural_focus/rural_focus_go.htm
- Local Authorities
  www.defra.gov.uk/evidence/statistics/rural/rural-focus/la.htm
  www.defra.gov.uk/evidence/statistics/rural/oas.htm
- Lower Super Output Area (LSOA)
  www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/

For more information contact:
Rural Statistics Unit
Environment and Rural Group
Defra Room 311
Foss House, Kings Pool
1-2 Peasholme Green,
York Y01 7PX
Tel: 01904 456 543   GTN: 5137 6543
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'Rural concerns are no different from urban worries - on health, jobs, transport, crime and education, but the way these are addressed may need different approaches'.

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