

Rural Assessment of the draft Derbyshire Sustainable Community Strategy 2009-2014



May 2009

This assessment was undertaken by a panel of practitioners from Derbyshire Rural Community Council, Peak District National Park Authority, Derbyshire Dales Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) and Derbyshire County Council.

The assessment focused on the **priorities** of the strategy. It was beyond the scope of the assessment to consider the impacts of specific activities undertaken by partners to achieve these priorities, which should be subject to more detailed individual rural assessments.

The aims were to:

- Consider the impact of the priorities of the draft Sustainable Community Strategy on rural communities,
- Make recommendations about how the draft strategy could be improved to ensure that the needs of rural communities are met.

Key recommendations

- The strategy encourages partners to 'reduce inequalities'. As a guiding framework for the whole of Derbyshire it should emphasise pockets of deprivation in rural areas not just those communities which have higher and more visible levels of deprivation. All districts have an element of rurality. The needs of vulnerable people in these communities should be properly recognised.
- Partnership activities which will be undertaken to deliver the Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement targets should be subject to individual rural assessments. Guidance and advice on rural proofing should be provided to all Derbyshire Partnership Forum members to assist this process and ensure that the guiding principles of the Sustainable Community Strategy are mainstreamed into service delivery.

More detail of the group discussion is recorded below. All the points have been incorporated into the final strategy.

Derbyshire: Facts and Challenges

Characteristics

This section should reflect the fact that every district in Derbyshire has a rural element. It should also mention the cost of delivering services to isolated rural areas and the need for flexible, creative approaches.

Unique, High Quality Environment

No comments

Central Location

Currently this section suggests that all parts of Derbyshire are well served by the strategic road and rail network. Good transport exists from Chesterfield but the north and west parts of Derbyshire are less well served. This should be reflected.

Industrial Legacy

No comments

Changing Population

No comments

An additional section should be added to outline the external influences on Derbyshire, e.g. the movement of people in Derbyshire to surrounding areas to access services and facilities, media and publicity from surrounding areas which influence people's perceptions of and access to local services.

Tackling Inequalities

It was felt that this section should better reflect the needs of people in rural communities, where pockets of deprivation also exist and are often compounded by rural isolation. There should be more direct and explicit reference to pockets of deprivation in rural areas.

Cohesive Communities and Partnership Principles

No comments

It was agreed that a specific bullet point about the needs of Derbyshire's rural communities should be included in each Thematic Partnership chapter in the section entitled 'Tackling Inequalities - where is the greatest need'. This is important because, as mentioned previously, national statistics do not always highlight the pockets of deprivation which exist in isolated, rural areas. The issues which were identified for rural communities are outlined below.

Safer Communities

- Access to support services (e.g. drugs, alcohol, domestic violence) is more difficult for people living in isolated rural areas
- Road safety

Children and Young People

- No additional issues

Healthier Communities

- Challenge of introducing the personalisation agenda for people in dispersed rural areas where the choice of local services may not be available locally. With a flexible and creative approach the community and voluntary sector can be part of the solution.
- Partnership working is essential to deliver flexible services in rural areas
- Ensure Derbyshire's countryside is utilised to improve health and levels of physical activity

Culture

- Generally the chapter does not reflect the full extent of creative and cultural activities which take place in Derbyshire villages, e.g. Well Dressings, arts, dance and music festivals, sports, churches etc. These events help to bring people together and should be afforded more prominence in the document
- The section on recreation should be more specific to Derbyshire. There is no mention of the assets of the area and the opportunities for recreation provided by the countryside and landscapes

Sustainable Communities

- Protection of the environment in its broadest sense should be included in the 'where are we now?' section
- More emphasis required on the rural economy and developing local businesses which are appropriate to the area. Community benefits could be realised by focusing on creative industries and tourism, although a sustainable approach is required to ensure that local communities are not adversely affected by increases in tourism
- Financial inclusion needs to be more prominent – this is particularly an issue for people in rural areas where essential services such as Post Offices and local shops have closed down. Financial capability, debt advice, access to banking facilities and affordable borrowing must be available for vulnerable people, including those in rural areas
- Better broadband will help to retain businesses. They are attracted to the area but struggle to grow
- Include the importance of agri-environmental schemes in rural areas
- Promote environmental good practice in business
- Access to services
- Expensive homes
- Energy efficiency is more difficult to achieve where planning restrictions apply (e.g. installation of small scale renewables)
- Support rural economy and in particular meet the needs of farmers
- Grass Roots groups such as Transition Movement can help to provide solutions which are appropriate for the area, e.g. Sustainable Youlgreave

General

A reference to the role and contribution of the voluntary and community sector should be included in each chapter.

Further information about Rural Proofing

More information about rural proofing and advice on how to undertake an assessment can be found on the Commission for Rural Communities' website www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk

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