

Part 1

a living countryside

We want to see a living countryside, with thriving rural communities, and access to high quality public services

2. a new standard for rural services
3. vital village services
4. modern rural services
5. an affordable home
6. flexible local transport

a new standard for rural services



2.1. Setting out what rural people can expect

2.1.1. Basic information about what people can expect from services is a fundamental need, but it is often hard to find out what level of service is on offer – leading some people in remote areas to think they may be out of reach.

- We are making clear for the first time how we will deliver equitable access to the everyday public services which rural people need;
- We will ensure that existing access to services is monitored and maintained, and a range of measures in this paper sets out how it will improve.

2.1.2. The table on pages 19–22 sets out minimum standards and targets covering access to and the delivery of public services in rural areas. This Rural Services Standard shows how we are working towards giving people living in the country more choice about how they access the services they need, and better understanding of what they can expect to get. It sets out new, upgraded and existing commitments to rural access to services, where they are additional or different to national commitments, or especially significant to people living in rural areas. It explains how national or local entitlements to services apply in rural areas, and refers to charters of rights to services.

2.1.3. The standards will be updated as our modernisation of our public services proceeds and we improve access to services in rural areas.

- We will **review this Rural Services Standard annually** through the Cabinet Committee on Rural Affairs, in the light of advice from the Countryside Agency and the national and regional panels of rural stakeholders as described in Chapter 13.

The Rural Services Standard

Explanation and key



Presumption against closures:

Protecting the existing network of schools and post offices is essential to the viability of local rural communities. We have strengthened our policy of presumption against the closure of schools. We have also strengthened our commitment to avoiding closure of post offices. Their unparalleled reach into rural settlements will be exploited through better community access to schools and the development of post offices as access points for a wide range of government services.



Indicators of access levels:

We don't have firm access standards for these, but by committing ourselves to monitor levels of access using surveys, we will be able to identify problems and set targets for improvement to deliver more equitable outcomes for access to public transport, social services and other services. Rural dwellers may access some types of services less than urban dwellers, for a variety of reasons including convenience of access. Information on levels of access will help identify these reasons and (where necessary) develop responses.



Geographic access standards:

Sometimes a benchmark standard can usefully be set, giving the maximum distance or time which people should be expected to travel to reach a service outlet.



Response time targets:

For some services having a speedy response is critical. We are introducing new national target response times for ambulances. These targets will be monitored and reported on.



Telephone services:

Information and advice over the telephone can often replace the need to travel to consult service providers or perform basic transactions.



On line access:

Access over the internet will increasingly be used to provide convenient information and advice in rural areas, under our commitment to make all public services available on line by 2005. The provision of information and communication technology (ICT) access points through schools, libraries and (in the future) post offices will provide assisted and convenient access in rural areas.



Help with fares:

Financial help is made available to users of services such as job centres who are especially disadvantaged.

| Service | Service provider | Requirement, indicator, standard or target |
|---|--|--|
| General | All |  <p>All Government services to be available on line by 2005. This will be particularly helpful in rural areas, and a series of initiatives will enable all people to learn to use the internet, such as putting all public libraries on line, and the development of post offices as internet learning and access points. Access will also be provided through local authority information kiosks.</p> |
| Education | | |
| Access to Primary and Secondary Schools | LEAs |  <p>Presumption against closure of rural schools; published guidance requires that the need to preserve access to a local school for rural communities is taken into account in considering closure proposals.</p>  <p>Local education authorities (LEAs) must provide free transport if they consider it necessary to enable a pupil to attend school, and they may help other pupils with their fares. Free transport is always necessary for a pupil of compulsory school age (5-16) who attends the nearest suitable school if it is beyond the statutory walking distance of two miles for children under eight years and three for children aged eight and above. This ensures that education for compulsory school age pupils is accessible to rural communities.</p> |
| Schools' access to learning material | LEAs |  <p>All schools to be linked to the National Grid for Learning by 2002 – especially important for small rural schools.</p> |
| Further Education Colleges | |  <p>Entitlement to assistance with access/travel costs (from FE Access Fund). Childcare and residential costs may also be supported.</p> |
| Childcare | LEAs, local authorities, private and voluntary sectors |  <p>The Countryside Agency is developing an indicator of likely need against formal public and private sector childcare provision. This information will enable more equitable access standards to be developed.</p>  <p>Online information on childcare providers and vacancies in your area is available from the childcare website at: http://212.53.85.14/</p> |
| Post offices | The Post Office |  <p>Formal requirement on the Post Office to maintain the rural network of post offices and to prevent any avoidable closures of rural post offices.</p>  <p>Introduction of Horizon network will enable all post offices to provide on-line banking services, greatly increasing access to financial services and providing access to universal banking facilities through post offices.</p>  <p>The Postal Services Act for the first time makes legal provision for a universal delivery service, at a uniform national price, to all addresses.</p> |
| Transport | | |
| Access to bus services | Local authorities |  <p>We have set a target for the proportion of the rural population living within about 10 minutes' walk of an hourly or better bus service to increase from 37% to 50% by 2010, with an intermediate milestone of 42% by 2004.</p> |

| Service | Service provider | Requirement, indicator, standard or target |
|--|---|---|
| Rural rail services | Train operating companies |  <p>The level of franchised passenger services on rural lines is protected by the Passenger Service Requirement (PSR). The Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) has announced that a requirement of replacement franchises will be to meet at least the existing PSR. This means that people living in rural areas will have the security of knowing that their trains are protected: operators can run more trains, but they cannot run less than set out in the PSR.</p> |
| Libraries | Local Authorities |  <p>National standards for library services, to be introduced in April 2001, are likely to cover access (ie location and opening hours) to mobile as well as branch libraries.</p> |
| | |  <p>All public libraries to be on-line by 2002 with trained staff to support public use of information and communications technology (ICT).</p> |
| ICT Learning Centres | Various |  <p>Network of 700 learning centres in England aimed at improving access to ICT and ICT-based learning for adults in disadvantaged communities. Rural needs recognised in guidance.</p> |
| Health/care services | | |
| Access to GP and other primary care services | Health Authorities Primary Care Groups (PCG) and Primary Care Trusts (PCT) |  <p>Guaranteed access to a primary care professional within 24 hours and to a doctor within 48 hours, to be achieved nationally by 2004. The Countryside Agency will monitor average population distance from GPs and dentists.</p> |
| Access to advice about healthcare | Health Authorities |  <p>NHS Direct provides nurse based health advice by phone 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Service now available countrywide. It is also available online at www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk.</p> |
| | |  <p>100% pre-booking of outpatient appointments and inpatient admissions by 2005.</p> |
| Social care | LA Social Services Departments |  <p>The national charter <i>Better Care, Higher Standards</i>, a joint initiative between the Department of Health and DETR, tells anyone who needs care or support over the longer term what they can expect from local housing, health and social services and what to do if things go wrong. Local charters published in June 2000 set out standards and targets to be achieved through joint working between local authorities (housing and social services) and health authorities, in partnership with users and carers.</p> <p>The local charters will be regularly monitored to improve service delivery.</p> |
| | |  <p>The Department of Health publish a wide range of indicators on social services, such as numbers in receipt of intensive home care, and of older people (aged 65 or over) helped to live at home: these will enable us to review rural levels of support, by comparing boroughs and shire counties which broadly represent 'urban' and 'rural' local authorities.</p> |

| Service | Service provider | | Requirement, indicator, standard or target |
|--------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Emergency services | | | |
| Ambulance services | NHS Ambulance Trusts |  | The NHS ambulance service is setting targets to respond to life threatening calls within 8 minutes in 75% of cases by March 2001 and to other 999 ambulance calls in rural areas within 19 minutes in 95% of cases (compared with 14 minutes in urban areas) |
| Police | Police Forces |  | Each police force sets target times for responding to urgent incidents in rural areas, under Best Value. These are monitored as a key element in police performance and published by Police Authorities. |
| Fire | Fire Brigades |  | The national standards of fire cover are based on set response times according to the category of fire risk. In most rural areas the standard is to reach a fire within 20 minutes. The fire service maintains a high level of performance in meeting the standards (96% on average in 1998-99). |
| Community legal service | | | |
| | Local authorities, Legal Services Commission (LSC), Citizen's Advice Bureaux etc. |  | The LSC is forming community legal services partnerships (CLSPs) to deliver local networks of legal services, based on local needs. Target is for 90% of the population to be covered by spring 2002. |
| | |  | CLSPs will use innovative methods such as the online directory Just Ask! and kiosks to deliver better access in rural areas. |
| Access to courts | | | |
| | Courts Service, Magistrates Courts Committees (MCCs) |  | We are reducing the need for travel to courts by exploiting IT: piloting the use of video-conferencing, including facilities for witnesses to give evidence in Crown Court trials; and providing information through touch screen kiosks for county courts. |
| Access to benefits | | | |
| Benefit Agency Offices | Benefits Agency |  | Claimants can claim travel costs of attending benefit offices (on those occasions where a visit is unavoidable the guideline is that customers should incur travelling costs of no more than 80 pence per week). |
| Online Information | Benefits Agency |  | The Department of Social Security (DSS) web-site contains general and technical information on BA benefits and services, and allows customers to correspond by e-mail. Localised web-sites are being developed in 9 pilot areas. Local authority information kiosks will also provide – in partnership with the BA – online information from the DSS website. |
| Benefit payment | Benefits Agency | | We have pledged that all benefit recipients who wish to do so will continue to be able to access their benefits in cash at a post office counter both before and after the changeover to payment by automated credit transfer. |

| Service | Service provider | | Requirement, indicator, standard or target |
|------------------------|--------------------|---|---|
| Employment | | | |
| Job centres | Employment Service |  | Job Centre vacancies available via Employment Service Direct for the cost of a local phone call. |
| Online information | Employment Service |  | From this autumn vacancy information will be available on the internet and via computerised job points at conveniently located public places. ICT Learning Centres will give access to Employment Service Direct and the Employment Service (ES) Learning and Workbank. This will increase the availability of access to jobsearch facilities and help for those people in isolated rural areas. |
| New Deal Schemes | Employment Service |  | Commitment to providing customers with individual help to overcome transport difficulties in accessing employment opportunities. New Deal for Lone Parents scheme also provides help in locating and paying for childcare . |
| Action Teams for Jobs | Employment Service |  | Action Teams for Jobs in some areas of labour market disadvantage (such as Cornwall) will work closely with local employers and tackle transport to jobs issues . This could include help with individual fares or involvement in new community transport services. |
| Job seeker's Allowance | Employment Service |  | Special arrangements apply for people with poor public transport access to job centres, allowing them to attend less frequently . Round trip or one way public transport travel time thresholds apply. In the case of journeys involving being away from home for 8 hours, advisory interviews are arranged in the claimant's home area. |
| | |  | Financial help available to meet public transport costs of travelling to interviews |

vital village services



The issues

- Around a third of all villages have no shop and the loss of banks, garages and pubs in rural areas has continued. To remain viable, village enterprise needs to exploit new technology, offer a wider range of services and share facilities.
- People in villages increasingly rely on travelling to meet their everyday needs. Loss of services can threaten the viability of communities and affects some severely – particularly the low paid and unemployed, young people and the elderly.

The future – what we want to see

- Diversified, village community-backed enterprise offering a wide range of products and services, using new technology and good business skills.
- Public service providers retaining and improving essential village services which are well-used and at the heart of the community. Using new technology, post offices will offer local access to banking and a wide range of services.
- Community initiative to share use of village facilities, such as the church, school, hall or pub, and to re-establish basic services.

Summary of measures

- Extension of mandatory rate relief for village shops, pubs and garages which offer community benefit – subject to consultation;
- reduced rate of VAT on repairs and maintenance for listed churches – subject to EC approval;
- A new £15m Community Service Fund to help safeguard or re-establish community backed basic services in small settlements;
- Maintaining the Post Office network;
- New services available at village post offices including banking;
- Further safeguards against the closure of village schools;
- Increased funding for rural schools and access to internet for all rural schools by 2002;
- New childcare and early education provision in rural communities.

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3.1. Introduction

We want villages to be active, living communities, where people are also able to meet their essential needs and with opportunities for both old and young.

3.2. Supporting basic local services

3.2.1. The most basic community service for most rural communities is the **local shop (often combined with a post office)**. We want to support the retention of shops in small settlements, offering a wider range of products and services – and combining with post offices, garages, pubs and other facilities.

“There’s too much temptation to get in the car and go to Sainsbury’s or Somerfields”

“We’ll use it every now and again. It’s good for when we run out and we think it’s not worth going into town and you don’t mind the price you pay down at the shop”

Trends in village services

- The decline in village shops was steady in the 1970s but has slowed since then – the number of parishes with a permanent shop (of any kind) fell by 1% to 58% between 1991 and 1997.
- On average 77 schools closed a year in the 1970s; between 1983 and 1997 around 30 schools a year were closing. Last year the number was 2.
- A *NFWI survey* in 1999 showed the number of villages with a post office had declined from 85% to 75% since 1950. But much of the decline was in the last 10 years.

“Use it or lose it applies, it’s only at the last minute when it was closing up the whole village seems to be able to get together and do something about keeping it open”

Case study – revived village shop

The revival of the shop in the village of Harting, Hampshire was a partnership arrangement between the Harting village shop association and the shopkeeper who pays a rent for shop and living accommodation. The shop has gone from strength to strength providing services such as fresh on-site baking, specialist foods and local produce.



Harting Village shop, Hampshire – supported by the local community
Credit: Harting and District Village Shop Association

Village shops

3.2.2. That means encouraging new and co-operative ways of providing the services people want, and removing any constraints which stand in the way of community action to address these needs. It also means reviewing the financial support that is available, and ensuring that it is effective. The **village shop rate relief scheme** offers mandatory 50% rate relief to sole shops and post offices in settlements under 3,000 in designated rural areas with a rateable value of less than £6,000. Local authorities can also give support to a wider range of rural businesses in small settlements. We propose to extend that support:

- We are consulting in our Green Paper *Modernising Local Government Finance* on an **expansion of the village shop rate relief scheme**. This would offer mandatory rate relief to 2nd or 3rd food shops;
- We are enabling the Countryside Agency to **expand their support for village shops** to help retailers become more viable.

Village retail partnership

Large retailers can play a vital role in sustaining village services either through trading partnerships with small shops, business support or by making goods available via remote ordering on internet links at community service points.

Sainsbury's SAVE scheme which allows village stores to stock selected own brand produce, is being expanded – to 200 stores by end 2000. Somerfields Village Link offers free delivery of groceries and fresh produce to village stores – initially within 10 minutes of a Somerfield main store – but this will be expanded later. Other larger retailers are helping by seconding an experienced manager to work with small rural enterprises sharing business expertise and acting as a mentor.

Pubs, garages and other rural businesses

3.2.3. It is not just shops which provide a vital community role in small settlements – pubs, garages and other businesses can all play a valuable role, by providing a range of other services alongside their main business such as cashback facilities, internet access or acting as a collection or ordering point for more distant businesses.

- We are consulting in our Green Paper *Modernising Local Government Finance* on **extending rate relief to pubs and garages which offer community facilities**. We have proposed that mandatory 50% rate relief would be given in settlements of less than 3,000 population in designated rural areas to:
 - any **singly owned pub** which is the sole remaining retail outlet in the village or is the sole pub and provides a defined community facility or service (eg cash machine, cashback facility, meeting room for local community or public information and communication technology access point) and which has a rateable value of less than £6,000.
 - **singly owned garages** offering community benefits such as a cash machine or cashback facility in a village where there is no post office and with a rateable value of less than £6,000. Small garages in rural areas offer a wide range of other benefits to the community, and in the light of our consultation, we will look at whether all singly owned garages in this category should get relief.

Community service points – village internet access

We will promote the concept of 'community service points', offering ICT access at local level in rural areas. Different organisations, from the Post Office to schools and parish councils, will help deliver a comprehensive network of outlets offering internet access – rural local authorities will have a particular interest in delivering local internet access and many are already establishing networks. An example is: **Linnet Local**, set up by Lincolnshire Libraries Authority with other partners and funders, has put computer-based library facilities in pubs, post offices, village shops, village halls, church halls, doctors' surgeries, a hospital and an opticians. Each Linnet Local is a fully functional PC with internet access to training, community and other information.



Linnet Local in the Fox & Hounds, Willington-by-Stow
Credit: Lincolnshire County Council

3.2.4. Joint use of a wide range of premises – from the village hall to the pub – can help deliver community facilities at village level. The role of the **churches** – often the last remaining public building in many rural communities – has been highlighted under the £7.5m initiative ‘Rural Churches in Community Service’ which has received a £2.5m lottery grant and which aims to complete 100 projects by the end of the year, providing new facilities in churches of different denominations for activities such as:

- Mother and Toddler groups
- Playgroups
- After school and holiday clubs
- Youth drop-ins
- Drop-ins for older people
- Luncheon clubs
- Day care centres (for frail older people)
- Employment and training advice
- Training
- School use for curriculum studies, music, performance, PE
- Library services
- Alcoholics Anonymous groups

There are 9,000 parish churches in rural areas which are listed buildings for which the repair costs are largely borne by the congregation

- We are acting to support the community role of churches in rural areas. In the Pre-Budget Report 2000, we have announced that we will seek European Commission agreement to our proposal to **reduce the rate of VAT (from 17½% to 5%) payable for repairs and maintenance on listed buildings which are also places of worship.**

Community operated services

3.2.5. Communities have often taken the lead in safeguarding or re-establishing basic services in villages and small settlements – community based shops, social facilities, basic banking. We want to encourage and support this.

- We will establish a **new Community Service Fund of £15m over three years**, operated by the Countryside Agency, to help communities sustain or re-establish basic village services. This will be open to a wide range of organisations including parish councils, churches and community groups.

3.3. Maintaining and modernising the rural post office network

3.3.1. Post offices are the most visible, and often the only, commercial outlets in many rural communities. 99% of people in rural areas live within three miles of a post office. But the network has been slowly declining, and changes will occur in some areas of existing post office work, such as from the switch to bank credit transfer of benefits payments and new means of delivering public services. We have, however, given a commitment that any pension or benefit recipient who wants to collect their payment in cash at a post office counter will continue to be able to do so, in full and weekly. We have also asked the Post Office to develop new business opportunities, and pledged to underpin the rural network and support its modernisation by firm commitments about its future, in close consultation with the National Federation of Subpostmasters. For example, the Post Office is piloting a scheme in 1,000 offices in the south west in which customers can nominate their local office as a **collection point** for parcels, packages and items needing a signature.

“They’re closing the banks slowly. ... But then the post office is tending to take a lot on. And while the post office is available in these little rural areas – I think that’s very important again, that there is a post office.”

- **We have accepted all 24 of the recommendations** in the Performance and Innovation Unit (PIU) report *Counter Revolution: Modernising the Post Office Network*;
- Ring-fenced funding was set aside in the Spending Review for **new investment of £270m over the next three years** to start the implementation of the PIU recommendations for maintaining, modernising and improving the post office network in both urban and rural areas. **We have also made clear that we are prepared to add significantly to this investment over the next few years, subject to satisfactory business plans and pilot trials.**
- We are placing **a formal requirement on the Post Office to maintain the rural network**, and to prevent any avoidable closures of rural post offices. In the first instance this requirement will apply up to 2006;
- The **Postal Services Commission will monitor and report annually** to Government on the shape of the rural network, the services offered and whether these meet the needs of rural communities.

New business for the Post Office

The pilot will give older people, families and children a specially tailored information and transactions service in their local post offices, not only by face to face access across the counter, but also using internet kiosks, web phones, telephone links, help-lines and surgeries. These will provide new health services, and general community and educational information. There will be a package of training for sub-postmasters. Depending on the results of the pilot, we will consider the case for full roll-out which could offer a comprehensive range of other services such as:

- Application for education courses and grants;
- Ordering a library card and books;
- Business services such as notifying job vacancies to the Employment Service, and tax, employee and VAT returns;
- Notification of property crimes and payment of parking and court fines;
- Community consultation and voter registration;
- Registration of births, marriages and deaths;
- Application for travel passes, stakeholder pension and other services for older people.

New business for the Post Office

3.3.2. To allow post offices to develop new business we have acted to ensure that by April 2001 all rural post offices will have networked IT capabilities. This will allow them to introduce a wide range of new or improved services, including banking and financial services. Access to other services can be greatly improved if a broader range of transactions can be delivered through post offices.

- We have enabled the Post Office to pilot programmes from Spring 2001 to develop post offices as **one stop shops for access to a wide range of central and local government services** and related voluntary sector activities and as Internet learning and access points (see box). People should be able to rely on their local post office as a major source of information and independent advice for a vast range of needs – including access to electronic government services for those without internet access. The **England pilot** will operate at 283 post offices throughout the county of Leicestershire.



Over the counter service
Credit: The Post Office

"They've just given us a cashpoint, which is a life-saver, we didn't have one, and then we've had one now for like about the last 8 months."

Post offices and banking

3.3.3. Banking and other financial services are a key area of development for the Post Office, using the investment in the new computer network as a platform for 'universal banking' and other banking services. Telephone and internet banking and cashpoints can substitute for some services but many people still want to carry out their banking person to person. There are more rural post offices

than rural branches of all the banks combined, so post offices are well placed to provide banking services; access to banking in rural areas is improving as more banks turn to the post office to provide their customers with convenient access. The Post Office are developing plans, in discussion with the banks and government, to reduce financial exclusion and to extend access to banking services to those currently without bank accounts, either through a Post Office-based simple banking facility or new basic accounts introduced by the banks and accessible at post offices. **The Government is strongly supporting the Post Office in this work and has made clear that it is prepared to provide funding for 'universal banking' on the basis of a robust business case.** The Post Office's IT capability will, in addition, allow it to extend its existing network banking arrangements with Lloyds TSB, Barclays, Alliance & Leicester Girobank and the Co-operative Bank to others.

3.4. Supporting local schools

"I think that's where a strong sense of community is in there, and if you've got children going through the school system then it's a focus for parents – and you meet a lot of parents that way, you get to know a lot of people."

3.4.1. Local schools are at the heart of many rural communities, and a school closure in a rural area can have effects well beyond the schooling of the community's children. This is why we have included in our statutory guidance to local School Organisation Committees and Adjudicators a presumption against closure of rural schools. We have thereby dramatically reduced the closure of village schools. Between 1983 and 1997 around 30 schools a year were closing. Last year the number was two.

Action to support village schools

3.4.2. But that on its own would not be enough. We are determined to ensure that rural schools not only survive but are able to continue to produce high quality education. We are therefore taking action to ensure their long term viability. This includes:

- From September 2000 **we have introduced further safeguards against the closure of a site of a multi-sited school.** Where sites are a mile or more apart they will be afforded the same level of protection as a single sited school. Where necessary this should give very small schools the confidence to be able to co-operate in order to increase their effectiveness and long term viability;
- **£80m is being made available between 1999-2001 under the Administrative Support Fund for Small Schools** to reduce the burden of basic administration placed on teachers, deputies and heads in those schools;

- **Additional funding of £20m** is available over 2000-2001 to encourage small schools to pilot innovative ways of working collaboratively with others to overcome difficulties due to small size; more money will be available under a new merged fund from April 2001;
- The extra money for schools announced in the last Budget will give **an extra grant of £3,000 for every primary school with less than 100 pupils** this year and £6,000 from April 2001;
- And we need to create **a fairer financial regime for schools.** The Green Paper 'Modernising Local Government Finance' included proposals for reforming education funding.

Case study – federated schools

The primary schools of Ebrington and St James in Gloucestershire were federated in 1981. It is an example of a successful federation of two schools of different characters. Both schools serve the full age range, but one is in a village with just three classes and the other is in a town with five classes.



Ebrington and St James' Schools
Credit: St James' and Ebrington C of E Primary Schools (Federated)

3.4.3. Information and communications technology has a vital role in extending access to learning and teaching opportunities, opens up a whole range of possibilities, including: access to study support and discussion groups for teachers and pupils who, for reasons of distance, cannot otherwise link into training or after school hours activities; availability of school ICT facilities for use by the community; and opportunities for fully interactive distance learning, which the roll out of broadband technologies to rural schools will bring.

- We will connect all schools to the National Grid for Learning by 2002.

Shared and community use of school facilities

3.4.4. This can enlarge opportunity for the whole community through providing facilities not otherwise available including: sports facilities, after school clubs, neighbourhood learning centres, libraries, play schools and nurseries and lunch clubs for pensioners. Schemes of this kind can make a big contribution in many locations and help people from all backgrounds. They may be particularly helpful to children from poorer backgrounds who are disproportionately affected by travel problems in rural areas. They are more likely to be dependent on the school bus for travel to and from school, and therefore find it difficult to participate in both formal and informal after-school activities. Those who are most likely to benefit from homework clubs, access to computers and leisure activities are least likely to be able to take part unless the service is provided close to their homes.

“And what I found when I was at school at Sherborne was the schools were excellent, but so much of it required you to stay after school, and I couldn’t get home because there was no bus back, and so I could never participate in any of those things.”

- To encourage more LEAs and schools to become involved in **community use of schools**, we have published guidance *Raising Standards, Opening Doors*. This sets out the many advantages in opening up schools for wider use, and also shows how some of the potential practical difficulties can be overcome. We have provided funding of £20m over four years for innovative community based projects from the Adult and Community Learning Fund.

Case study – Community use of schools

Examples include:

South Northamptonshire Adult Education – provides basic and study support skills training for disadvantaged parents through five village schools.

Barrow Primary School in Lancashire provides activities for pupils until 5.30pm and then from 6 to 9pm, any pupil or ex-pupil (up to age 18) can come to the school and use the computer or library to do homework or play games. Some parents also attend.

3.5. Better access to childcare and early education

3.5.1. Access to convenient childcare is essential for families with young children. Not only does this offer children the opportunity to interact with others and prepares them for school, but it also gives those looking after children, usually women, the opportunity to take up employment, training or educational activities which can be of long term benefit to the whole family, and indeed to the community as a whole.



Somerset Rural Youth – after school homework in mobile unit
Credit: The Countryside Agency – Nick Smith

The National Childcare Strategy

3.5.2. *The National Childcare Strategy* aims to provide good quality affordable accessible childcare in every community across the country. £470m, including £170m raised from the National Lottery and distributed through the New Opportunities Fund, was allocated to support childcare provision in 1999–03. On 9 October 2000, we announced a threefold increase in the annual investment in childcare from £66m in 2000–01 to over £200m by 2003–04. In 1999–00 Early Years Development

and Childcare Partnerships reported the creation of 140,000 new childcare places.¹ These included 1,246 new places created in Cornwall, 1,276 in Durham, 992 in Lincolnshire and 2,271 in Devon.

Case studies – childcare

Projects funded in rural areas include:

Suffolk ACRE Ltd, awarded £25,000 to create 28 before school places, 28 after school places and 28 holiday childcare places for children aged three to five years in two rural communities.

Northumberland Out of School Initiative, awarded £329,000 to provide an additional 1,176 before and after school and holiday places in 16 locations throughout the county suitable for children up to 13 years. The project will benefit children living in isolated rural areas and those with special needs.

- **The target for 2000-01 is 128,000 new childcare places.** To help overcome difficulties in rural areas, the Countryside Agency and DfEE have launched the **Rural Children and Young People's Forum** which will help shape policy and practice on childcare to meet rural circumstances.

Early education

3.5.3. Rural areas will benefit from our commitment to provide all four year olds with an early education place if their parent wishes, while provision for three year olds is being expanded with co-ordination between maintained, private and voluntary sectors through Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships, aiming for an option of a place for all by 2004. The pilot Early Excellence Centres are providing models of good practice in integrated approaches to high quality early education, childcare, and family support. They include schemes in rural areas.

Case study – Early Excellence Centre (EEC)

The ACE (Activities, Childcare and Education)

Centre in Chipping Norton offers services including a nursery school, day nursery, family centre, after school club, holiday playscheme, adult education, outreach programme, IT resource centre and private classes and clubs. The outreach worker is supporting pre-schools locally (which are often very small, informal, dependent on volunteers and unable to access statutory support and training) with support, training, and access to the ACE Centre's high quality outdoor play area. Early evidence on the impact of EEC shows that such outreach work is having a positive effect in helping to improve the quality of early years services, particularly in the private and voluntary sectors.

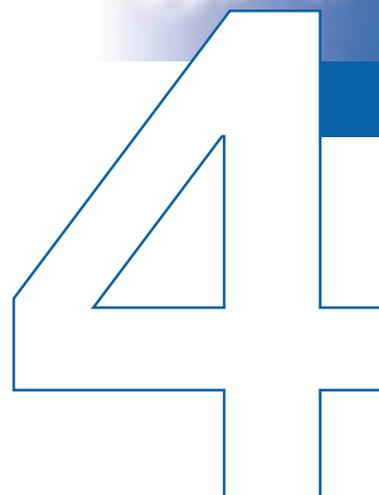


The ACE Centre in Chipping Norton
Credit: The Countryside Agency

"Yetminster's a very sought after village because it's a hub village for the others around it. We've got the school, we've got the surgery, there's the stores, the hairdresser, the butcher, grocer. We've got the stop-me rail – you literally put your hand out and the train stops for you."

¹ These have provided childcare for more than 244,000 children and, taking into account turnover, have added more than 74,000 to the stock of childcare places across England.

modern rural services



The issues

- Quality of life for people in rural areas is generally good, but deprivation exists for people at all stages of life. Isolation poses special challenges for delivering rural services, especially to older people and those without cars, and can make it difficult to access employment.
- As services have become more specialist and diverse they have relocated away from rural communities, making access more difficult. On the other hand, new technology is making it easier to transmit information, bringing new solutions to bear on the problems of isolation. But people also need to be helped to adjust to these changes.
- There is increasing concern about levels of property crime and related issues, including drugs and youth offending. Crime and the fear of crime, especially for the elderly and those living in isolated places, damage quality of life.

The future – what we want to see

- Clear helpful information from service providers on access levels for all services in rural areas.
- A new deal on services which ensures that rural communities benefit from increased investment in public services and which tackles deprivation and social exclusion for all groups, including the jobless.
- Service delivery tailored to suit the needs of rural communities, exploiting ICT and new technology in areas such as health and education. A bigger role for service users and communities in designing solutions.
- Public facilities located to take account of their impact on user travel costs and on access for rural users. Service providers increasingly joining together to deliver a range of services from a single building.

Summary of measures

- Modernised family doctor facilities will improve access to services for most people in rural areas, with over 100 new primary care one-stop shops or mobile service delivery units by 2004;
- More help for elderly people in rural areas to stay at home;
- More resources to give more rapid rural ambulance response;
- Extension of education maintenance allowances for 16-18 year olds;
- More resources for the most deprived rural areas to improve service delivery to poorer people;
- More resources for rural policing – an extra £15m in 2000–01 and £30m in 2001–02.

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4.1. Introduction

4.1.1. The problems of rural communities – isolation, lack of information, high travel costs – and of service providers in rural areas – sparsity, extra costs, scattered clients – are two sides of the same coin. Our new approach to delivering rural services will:

- **Tailor services to rural needs** and conditions, using new technology where it can help;
- **Work flexibly**, across organisations and making use of shared facilities;
- **Understand the needs of users** and plan services to their convenience;

4.1.2. Better services are key to tackling rural deprivation and exclusion, often linked to a severe lack of access to the most basic services or social and economic opportunity. The measures we are taking on health, education and social care will help address this. We aim to ensure that people no longer fall between the cracks: unable to access work or training because of poor public transport; feeling that they are outside the geographical reach of the social services; without a dentist, library or advice centre within easy reach. We want to be sure that the needs of people living in the countryside are consistently and equitably taken into account in the planning of services – whether provided by central Government, national agencies, local government, regionally based bodies or the private sector. The very fact that there will be a published set of targets and standards covering rural access to services (as set out in chapter 2), will focus attention on rural needs.

4.1.3. Not all services will be available in all towns and all villages (although the new initiatives set out in chapter 3 will help). But the ease of access to services is a crucial dimension for planning services in rural areas. It may be helpful to see how we envisage new rural services will be delivered. Services may be delivered to the home, eg by phone/internet, to the village service point (eg the post office) or to the nearby market town (see table below).

Table 4.1: improving rural services – home, village and market town

| In the home | In the village | In the market town |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health advice by phone – ‘NHS Direct’ (4.2.4) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new range of services at the ICT linked Post Office including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – business services – banking – pensions and travel passes – health and education applications (3.3.2 – 3) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved primary healthcare using telelinks and ICT to specialist centres (4.2.6) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Services – ‘Care Direct’ (4.2.9) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-establishing shops and other community services (3.2.2 – 5) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICT learning centres (4.4.10) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and employment services online and by telephone (ch.2 and 4.3 – 4) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community use of school facilities (3.4.4) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better transport links – bus and rail (Chapter 6) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Car share and community transport schemes run by parish councils (6.3.5) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More childcare places (3.5.1 – 2) • Better bus links to market towns and more flexible local transport (6.3 – 6.4) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved ICT and business support (7.5 and 7.6) • Strengthened role as retail and business centre (7.2 and 7.3) |

4.1.4 In reaching decisions on locations of service outlets, it is important that service providers take account not only of the consequences for their own costs, but also of the consequences for their users and other providers – for example additional transport journeys to reach a more distant centre.

- **We will ensure that rural needs are taken into account when policies are developed** (see chapter 13) and improve the guidance on how to do this. DETR has commissioned research on how external costs such as those relating to rural access can be taken into account in assessing policy options. As a result of this work, a best practice guide will be published next year and made widely available.

4.2. Health and social services

4.2.1. The challenge for health services in rural areas is to provide good quality accessible care to an often scattered population, and to ensure that people living in the country with particular needs have the same opportunities to benefit from targeted help as those living in towns. We are committed to the provision of comprehensive, high quality health care for all those who need it, regardless of ability to pay or where they live, and to ensuring greater consistency of access across the country.

4.2.2. The aim of the *NHS Plan* is to transform the health system so that it produces faster, fairer services that deliver better health and tackles health inequalities. Expenditure on the NHS will grow by one third in real terms in just five years. New investment – and new solutions tackling the problems of isolation – will deliver real improvements for people in rural areas through:

- Care and advice to people at home, and close by in modernised GP surgeries, primary care centres or through mobile service units;
- New primary care centres and new intermediate care facilities to bring care closer to the patient;
- Round the clock medical care for minor ailments and accidents will be available for all within convenient travelling distance;
- More accessible high quality specialist care in modern hospital settings;
- A more responsive pharmacy service.

4.2.3. The NHS Plan sets out the main national priorities. Patients should have fair access and high standards of care **wherever they live**. At national level the Department of Health will set national standards in the priority areas. *National Service Frameworks (NSF)* which set national standards for key conditions and diseases have already been produced covering mental health and coronary heart disease. A *National Cancer Plan* was published in September 2000, the NSF for older people will be published in autumn 2000 and the NSF for diabetes in 2001. Further NSFs will be developed on a rolling basis over the period of the *NHS Plan*.

Better access to health services in rural areas

"I had to go down and see a specialist and had to go to Poole and we had to leave here at 7.30 in the morning for the appointment, and when I got there it was only 3 minutes but even so it seemed such a... – when you could go just 5 miles to Yeovil."

4.2.4. We are committed to improving services for rural areas through access to quick, authoritative health advice. A single phone call to **NHS Direct** provides a one-stop gateway to healthcare, to give patients more choice, advice on care at home, getting further treatment, or dealing with an emergency.

- **The 24-hour NHS Direct telephone advice service now covers the whole of England.** In time NHS Direct will also be able to offer the option of ordering prescriptions and arrange for delivery to the patient's door with a single phone call, even in remote areas.

4.2.5. We published a programme for modernising pharmacy in the NHS in September *Pharmacy in the Future: Implementing the NHS Plan*. Measures that will improve access for those in rural areas include electronic prescribing by 'e-pharmacies': by 2004 your doctor will be able to send your prescription over the NHS net to a pharmacy of your choice – for example, one which will deliver medicines to your door.



Falmouth Minor Injury Unit consults the A & E Department of the Royal Cornwall Hospital via the telemedicine system
Credit: Roger Dovey

4.2.6. Primary care services are being redesigned to offer faster, more convenient access to a wider range of services. These changes will bring many treatments closer to the patient and improve access to primary care services outside normal working hours and provide quicker and easier access in rural areas. Many more GPs will be working from modern multi-purpose premises alongside nurses, pharmacists, dentists, therapists, opticians, midwives and social care staff. These will include provision for video and telelinks to hospital specialists to help in diagnosis and test results, and direct local booking of operations and outpatients' appointments. An increasing number of consultants will take outpatient sessions in these centres, working alongside GP specialists.

- Capital investment of up to £100m under the NHS Plan in rural areas to provide over 100 one-stop primary care centres or mobile service units will provide **better access to services for the majority of rural people.**

4.2.7. Many of the new resources for dentistry are going to health authorities with a rural population, including over half of the new Dental Access Centres and about three quarters of this year's £4m Dental Care Development Fund (see *Modernising NHS Dentistry – Implementing the NHS Plan*).

- **NHS dentistry will be made available to everyone who needs it, no matter where they live, by September 2001.**

4.2.8. Many rural areas have a higher than average proportion of **older people**. The NHS Plan sets out a major package of investment to improve standards of care for older people. By 2004 the Government will be making available annually an additional £1.4bn for older people's health and social care services, of which £900m will be invested in **intermediate care**. This will promote independence and improve quality of care for older people, for example through specially designated hospital wards run by nurse consultants, and step down facilities in the community, including a new role for cottage hospitals. It will also include improved care services in the home.

- **The NHS Plan will mean more patients recovering from operations in a smaller hospital setting close to home, such as in a community or cottage hospital.**



Coquetdale Cottage Hospital, Northumberland
Credit: The Countryside Agency, Liane Bradbrook

- Rural areas will benefit from the Government's **hospital building and modernisation** programme creating 7,000 extra beds in hospitals and intermediate care facilities and over 100 new hospitals by 2010.
- Booked appointments will allow people to go for treatment at a time when it is more easy and convenient for them to do so, enabling them to plan travel arrangements in good time if they have to travel far.

- New **ambulance response time targets** will apply from March 2001 (see table in Chapter 3) reducing risks to people in rural areas. The target of 8 minutes for life threatening (category A) calls is supported by additional funding for emergency ambulance services in areas where population density is low. And increasingly ambulance services are working with the fire and police services and with community volunteer schemes to deliver basic life support in an emergency, such as a fire or a road accident. For example in Essex, there are now increasing numbers of schemes using volunteers trained in basic life support and defibrillation to improve emergency health care in rural areas.

Health Improvement Programmes (HImPs) are the local strategies for improving health and healthcare in each Health Authority through the NHS and its partner agencies. They combine a range of nationally and locally set targets, including distinctively rural health needs – for example of elderly people living remotely who have difficulty accessing GP and hospital services. In Northumberland, one of the challenges identified in the Health Improvement Programme is that of getting services to people living in isolated and dispersed communities within rural areas. Young People's Drop In Centres have been developed in schools serving large rural catchment areas to address health, education and other social exclusion issues. Schools have been selected because they are at the centre of existing transport networks.

Social services

4.2.9. Social services provided by local authorities in rural areas have a vital role in helping vulnerable people such as the elderly and disabled in their own homes and communities as was shown in the first comprehensive inspection of community care in rural areas *Care in the Country* published in 1999. They provide access to day care centres and home support such as home helps. We are working to improve access to a consistent standard up and down the country. There will be clearer responsibilities for local government to show how well they are serving local people, and a clearer role for central government to take action where standards are not being met.

Health Action Zones (HAZs) are multi-agency programmes in 26 deprived areas involving NHS, local government, the voluntary and private sectors and community groups, to tackle major health problems such as coronary heart disease, cancer and mental health. They also represent a new approach to public health, linking regeneration, employment, education, housing and anti-poverty initiatives. Rural or part rural HAZs include North Cumbria, Hull and East Riding, Northumberland and Cornwall and the Scilly Isles. North Cumbria's Health Improvement Programme and Health Action Zone focuses on poverty, deprivation, rural issues and isolation as key determinants of health inequalities. £160,000 was allocated in 1999 – 2000 for innovative services for people living in rural areas in the county such as training a network of volunteers to develop new rural transport services, supplementing the services already available.

New initiatives for addressing stress and mental illness, which are as prevalent in rural areas as elsewhere, and where the suicide rate is higher, partly reflecting the higher suicide rate among farmers. The Department of Health is funding the mental health charity MIND to carry out a project called RURAL MINDS to develop training and education for those providing emotional support in isolated rural communities and to help people living in the country to feel that support and understanding of their problems are close at hand and a national network of support for people in rural communities who are suffering from stress and need help.

As part of the Action Plan for Farming, MAFF is giving £500,000 towards a rural stress action plan agreed and implemented by the voluntary sector, including the Rural Stress Information Network (Telephone: 024 7641 2916, e-mail: rusin@btinternet.com). Several organisations are working in partnership to deliver support to make a difference to those in distress; details of the plan were announced in October 2000 (MAFF News Release 351).

Case studies – rural social care solutions

Dorset, Bedfordshire and Lincolnshire have negotiated with housing agencies to provide day care in the communal lounges of sheltered housing units in villages, which are nearer to rural service users than day care services in towns.

In Wiltshire, arrangements with cafes and public houses allow for the delivery of meals to recipients' homes or to be taken on the premises.

Careline, a service in Derbyshire, provides a network of volunteers to make a daily telephone call to elderly or disabled people living alone and at risk.

- We will pilot a **24 hour 'Care Direct' phone line** to provide general advice on care and support services and benefits in rural as well as urban areas. When necessary, callers will be referred to advisers to answer detailed queries and help them obtain the services they need.
- We will ask the Social Services Inspectorate to report on the degree to which the national agenda for modernising social services is being delivered in rural areas.
- We will be making sure that our national frameworks for health and social services require providers to assess rural needs, and give clear information about what is available.

4.3. Education and learning

4.3.1. Improving education and learning opportunities for people throughout their lives is fundamental to our objectives for a globally competitive economy, a highly skilled and productive workforce, equality of opportunity, the elimination of child poverty within one generation, and a better quality of life for all. This applies in rural as much as urban areas. We intend to make sure that people of all ages living in rural areas have full access to the range of opportunities available and that obstacles to access are addressed.

4.3.2. Rural transport problems and the location of training can be barriers which deter young people from engaging in further education and training after finishing compulsory education at 16. The New Start and Learning Gateway initiatives involve personal advisers dealing directly with young people to help them overcome these difficulties – as, for example, in Norfolk, where public service providers are

working together to find solutions. Across the country, local education bodies are helping to fit budgets for supporting students with ways for students to travel to classes.



Alford IT project, Lincolnshire
Credit: The Countryside Agency

- The new **Connexions service** will build on this by providing young people with access to a personal adviser who will provide help, support and guidance through their teenage years. The Connexions service will be phased in from 2001 with pilots currently testing aspects of the service in 13 areas around the country. Pilots in Cornwall, Devon and Lincolnshire are focusing on rural issues as part of their activities. As part of the Connexions Strategy the Connexions Card aims to increase participation and attainment in learning by reducing some of the financial barriers, such as transport costs, preventing young people remaining in education.

4.3.3. From September 2000 we will pilot the use of **Educational Maintenance Allowances for 16–18 year olds** to pay for education-related transport costs so as to help widen participation among 16–18 year olds from low-income families. The scheme will be piloted for three years in five areas, including Suffolk, Worcestershire and East Lancashire, and will include two approaches: one which pays the entire cost of the transport, the other which combines a weekly allowance with subsidised transport.

- We will consider **extending to the rest of the country education maintenance allowances for 16-18 year olds** in the light of the most successful approaches from these pilots.

4.3.4. Higher education (HE) establishments are mainly located in larger urban centres and so less accessible to people in rural areas. One response is to take advantage of the increasing availability of distance learning. Degree courses and other HE qualifications available online – including full tutorial and other support services – are being developed by the Higher Education Funding Council for England in the ‘e-Universities’ project. For those in rural areas travelling to more traditional campuses a **Hardship Fund** of £57m (which covers both urban and rural areas) and bursaries are available to institutions offering higher education courses for 2000–01 for students who have difficulty in meeting their living and course costs, including travel to and from their place of study.

4.4. Tackling social exclusion

4.4.1. Social exclusion and deprivation in rural areas are significant and persistent problems. Although poverty is less prevalent than in urban areas, distance, isolation and poor access to jobs and services compound the problems of poorer people in rural areas.

Neighbourhood deprivation

4.4.2. In some cases deprivation will be evident across an area. A number of rural areas will benefit from a series of national targets set out in the cross-cutting spending review on *Government Intervention in Deprived Areas (GIDA)*. These are designed to secure major improvements in rates of employment, educational attainment, health improvement, and crime reduction in areas where outcomes fall below the minimum standard we expect. Local communities have a vital part to play in identifying priorities for tackling deprivation and improving services in their areas, and in creating a strategy to tackle these priorities. We are currently consulting widely on our proposals for Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) (see para 12.4.5). These will be an important element in the fight against rural social exclusion.

4.4.3. We are allocating £800m over the next 3 years to the new Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) to help local authorities in the most deprived areas improve services for poorer people and deliver the targets. A number of rural areas will benefit – for example £3.1 million will be available for Kerrier and £1.7m for Allerdale over the next three years. A commitment to work towards the establishment of a Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), or alternative acceptable partnership working arrangement, is one of the conditions for those local authorities receiving NRF resources.

4.4.4. We are allocating an extra £210m over the next 3 years for the New Deal for Communities to help implement the Action Plan for Neighbourhood Renewal to be published by the Social Exclusion Unit in the near future. Funds will be used to establish:

- The **Centre for Neighbourhood Renewal**. It will promote best practice and improve the skills and expertise of those involved. This will include what is likely to work in deprived rural areas.
- **Community capacity building projects** and pilot projects for **neighbourhood management** in deprived (mainly urban) areas, will benefit a number of rural places.

The Indices of Deprivation 2000

These are a major step forward in assessing deprivation in both rural and urban areas. They provide new fine-grain information on six key elements or ‘domains’, so that – for the first time – small areas experiencing deprivation can be properly identified.

The six aspects are:

- Low income
- Employment deprivation
- Education, skills and training deprivation
- Poor health and disability
- Poor housing
- Poor geographical access to services for benefits claimants

All 8,414 wards in England are ranked, showing how deprived individual wards are under each domain, as well as in an overall index of multiple deprivation. Information is also available at the local authority district level.

The *Indices of Deprivation 2000* will raise understanding of the complex nature of deprivation, including rural aspects like access to services. They will also be used across Government to target policies and allocate resources to the most deprived areas.

Social exclusion in the wider rural community

4.4.5. Where deprivation is more isolated and less concentrated, we will tackle it through improving the targeting and delivery of main programmes, improving information and ensuring that **new initiatives are piloted in rural areas** (as with Health, Employment and Education Action Zones) so that in developing policies and disseminating best practice, rural impacts are fully taken into account and rural communities can fully benefit.

Employment and income

4.4.6. Providing employment opportunities for all is the single most effective means of tackling poverty and social exclusion. Employment enables individuals to improve their living standards; it also makes constructive use of human resources.



Casual labour – Strawberry picking
Credit: MAFF

4.4.7. We are delivering macroeconomic stability so there can be increasing employment opportunities for all; and employment in the UK is at a record level – up by over 1 million since the last general election. The employment rate of 74.7% is the second highest in the EU. We are making work pay through various tax and benefit reforms; raising standards of education to equip young people with the skills and knowledge they need to be able to take up jobs; and developing a culture of lifelong learning so we have a skilled, flexible and adaptable workforce.

4.4.8. We are also **assisting unemployed people** to acquire employability skills and find work through: the New Deals for unemployed claimants; helping those on sickness and disability benefits get back into the labour market and from there into employment through other welfare to work programmes such as the New Deal for Lone Parents; and taking a wide range of local initiatives designed to improve the functioning of regional and local product and labour markets. To help people further to make the transition from welfare into work, we announced in Budget 2000 a £100 job grant to help people make the transition from welfare into work; extended payments of Income Support for mortgage interest when moving into work, to match the housing benefit run-on already available; simplified rules for applying for these payments to increase take up; and a new childcare tax credit.

4.4.9. In rural areas employment among those of working age is generally higher (78% in rural districts compared to 73% for urban in 1999) and unemployment is generally lower than in urban areas (4.3% for rural compared with 7% for urban

districts in England in 1998). But changing employment patterns, relatively high levels of casual and seasonal work, and problems with access to transport are all particular challenges in rural areas. There is also higher self-employment, with many on low incomes. Low wages are common.

“We’ve got one local supermarket at the moment. So that’s retail, pack house work or farm – and that’s it.”

4.4.10. Although jobs come up all the time even in areas where employment is low, joblessness tends to be concentrated amongst certain groups and in certain localities in both urban and rural areas. A key element of our policy is about addressing this inequality. It is vital that people living in rural areas have good and flexible access to the employment services which will help them find suitable jobs; and that the services provided, such as the new Action Teams for Jobs in some rural areas, address the particular mobility and childcare problems people living in the country may have (see paragraph 6.3.3). New developments such as the telephone advice service Employment Service Direct are already making a big difference as people no longer have to go to job centres.

- From this Autumn 2000 vacancy information will be available on the internet and via computerised information kiosks at conveniently located public places. ICT Learning Centres will give access to **Employment Service Direct and the Employment Service Learning and Workbank**. This will increase the availability of access to jobsearch facilities and help for those people in isolated rural areas.

4.4.11. Our **welfare to work** policies aim to assist people not in employment, particularly those on welfare, into work. The New Deal programmes (for 18–24 year olds, the long term unemployed, the over 50s, lone parents, partners of unemployed people and disabled people) concentrate support on those who find it most difficult to obtain work and improve their prospects of remaining in sustained employment. Personal advisers consider with participants how to break down barriers to employment through programmes such as improving basic skills and understanding of the qualities employers are looking for, training opportunities, in-work benefits and information on local childcare provision.

4.4.12. For Job Seeker Allowance claimants and participants in the New Deal and New Deal for Lone Parents schemes, individually tailored help is available for people living in rural areas, including help with transport and childcare (see chapter 2). The **National Minimum Wage** will particularly benefit rural workers because a higher proportion of rural workers are on low wages.

Case study – Working Family Tax Credit: North Cumbria

The Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC) provides support for low and middle income working families. The WFTC, together with the National Minimum Wage, provide a guaranteed minimum income of £208 a week for a family with someone working at least 35 hours a week. In Northern Cumbria a partnership approach led by the county council, and involving other local authorities, the voluntary sector, NHS, and parish councils, has successfully increased the uptake of this scheme. Some 5,400 local families with children are benefiting from the WFTC. The increase in the take up of the benefit was particularly noticeable in rural areas of the country, where many people are on low incomes.

Case study – Sure Start South Fenland

The Government's Sure Start initiative brings together early education, health services, family support and advice on nurturing to disadvantaged families. One rural area selected as a Trailblazer for the approach is South Fenland in Cambridgeshire. The area has considerable problems including: low population density and isolation making it difficult to sustain community facilities and services and to access them; low wages and high unemployment; the highest crime rate in Cambridgeshire, including youth offending and drug misuse.

Central government funding of nearly £2.9m over three years will enable a programme to go ahead to include: a mobile play and learning centre; a Sure Start shop; improvements to buildings and upgrading of outdoor play areas; a bookstart scheme; a network of trained childminders; information and advice for families, including early support for families who may be facing difficulties; specialist teaching and support for children with special needs; and a community transport scheme to improve access.

The aim is to achieve social cohesion within communities in the area, with equal opportunities for quality, confident and independent lifestyles for tomorrow's children and their families.

Sure Start South Fenland will be one of 500 programmes aimed at deprived communities in urban and rural areas. £1.4bn has been allocated to this initiative over the financial years 1999–00 to 2003–04.

4.4.13. Successful action to tackle **social exclusion** in rural areas requires partnership action involving both local and specialist agencies. The Countryside Agency has a key part to play in developing expertise and knowledge, and we have already allocated an additional £3m over three years to the Agency to develop its programme of research, pilot projects and dissemination of information and good practice.

- The Countryside Agency is launching a **Rural Social Exclusion Advisory Group** to guide its work and provide links with other key social exclusion initiatives including the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) who will be taking account of the rural dimension in their future work programme.

4.4.14. Over 50 rural **local authorities** are actively working with anti-poverty and social exclusion strategies. The Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) is working to encourage networking and good practice sharing, including between urban and rural authorities. Improved access to fine grained local benefits data has recently helped authorities to identify very small pockets of need in their areas. **Local community action**, through rural community councils, parish councils and voluntary organisations, is important in helping to assess and present needs, develop solutions and deliver services. Much hidden need has been identified and valuable innovative practice put in place as a result of community level action (for instance through the formation of village companies in coalfield areas with support from the Coalfields Regeneration Trust).

- We will be strengthening this work by an extra £4.5m over the next three years for the Countryside Agency to fund additional community development work in every county to help communities set up new projects to tackle problems of social exclusion.



Raindrops community project on the Royce Road estate in Spalding. A multi-agency community development project, in Spalding which brings service providers and the community together to help solve social problems. The photo shows a mother and toddler group which has helped residents' confidence grow through their involvement.

Credit: City Graphics Partnership

Cultural and leisure services

4.4.15. Access to cultural and sporting activity helps to provide an increased quality of life for rural communities. We are encouraging all local authorities to develop local cultural strategies which are based on a partnership approach. These encompass sport, countryside, parks and tourism as well as arts, cultural heritage and libraries.

4.4.16. Libraries play an important role in providing local facilities in rural areas through their branches and mobile units. They can draw on new technology to improve services and provide easy access to information about the locality and its services. Our aim to ensure a high quality library service will lead, in April 2001, to the introduction of the first library standards. These will cover location and opening hours to mobile as well as branch libraries.



Mobile Library, St Buryan, Cornwall
Credit: The Countryside Agency, Liane Bradbrook

4.4.17. The Government and three Lottery distributors have recently announced the **Spaces for Sports and the Arts scheme** providing £130m aimed at improving facilities in primary schools for dual school and community sports, drama, dance and other activities. It is targeted at areas of greatest need, including 14 largely rural counties such as Cornwall, Cumbria, Derbyshire, East Sussex, Kent, Norfolk, Northumberland and Somerset. This is part of our strategy for sport, *A Sporting Future for All*, the twofold purpose of which is for more people of all ages and social groups to take part in sport, and more success for our top competitors and teams in international competitions. This support is in addition to the commitment given by Sport England to fund 500 different facilities projects in rural areas as part of its current 10-year Lottery strategy.

Access to legal and advice services

4.4.18. Advice services, which help people resolve disputes and enforce their rights effectively, have a vital role in tackling poverty and achieving social inclusion. People in rural communities have traditionally had poor access to advice and many do not claim all the benefits due to them. We launched the Community Legal Service (CLS) in April 2000 to improve access to good quality legal advice. The CLS will focus particularly on access to advice on benefits, housing, debt, immigration and employment problems, based on an assessment of local needs. Local networks of legal advice services, consisting of solicitors, Citizens Advice Bureaux, independent advice agencies and local authority services, will be created and supported by local CLS partnerships – local authority, Legal Services Commission and other local bodies involved in advisory services. Their job is to find the best means of meeting local needs. In rural areas, this will mean overcoming problems of reaching remote and disperse rural communities.



Just Ask! Website of the Community Legal Service
Credit: Community Legal Service

4.5. Safer communities

4.5.1. Evidence from the British Crime Survey shows that the levels of general crime, and fear of crime, are significantly lower in rural than in urban areas. Burglary, violent and vehicle crime in rural areas declined from 1995 to 1997 and again from 1997 to 1999; violent and vehicle crime declined more in rural than in non-rural areas. But the threat of crime felt by rural communities is still very real. Greater isolation, personal experience and publicised cases can all add to this. Some crimes are specific to rural areas – thefts of livestock and farm equipment, wildlife crime and mass trespass. In some areas and for some individuals, these can pose particular and serious problems.

Our approach

4.5.2. There is no ‘acceptable’ level of crime, and we are fully determined to tackle crime, and the fear of crime, wherever it exists. We have already launched a range of rural initiatives and are now building on these by

- promoting partnership working in ways that meet rural needs;
- providing extra resources to tackle the extra costs of policing rural areas;
- introducing new ideas and ways of working.

4.5.3. Local communities can identify problem areas, contribute to joint solutions with the police and provide vital intelligence through initiatives such as neighbourhood watch. This is additional to, not a substitute for, the growing resources committed by the police themselves and gives the community access to sophisticated crime fighting techniques.

4.5.4. Local crime reduction partnerships and strategies (set up under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998) bring together local authorities and local people, including parish councils. They are developing solutions such as ‘**Watch**’ schemes covering farms, vehicles, horses, and increased provision for young people (such as dial-a-ride, schools-based community activities and young people’s projects) to help prevent young people drifting into anti-social and criminal behaviour. Police and the farming community have together established 500 farm watch schemes across England and Wales. New regional crime directors will help local partnerships to deliver their goals.

Neighbourhood Watch (Rural Watch in the countryside) is based on the idea that getting together with your neighbours can not only cut local crime but can help to create communities which care. The aims of Rural Watch are to improve two-way communications between rural communities and the police, to reduce opportunities for crime, and to strengthen community spirit.

It has given rise to a number of specialized “watches”, including Horse Watch and Farm Watch. **Horse Watch** has resulted in many animals being freeze-branded and some having their owners’ postcodes etched into their hooves. Tack is postcoded and postcodes are painted onto the roofs of horseboxes. **Farm Watch** schemes have arranged such measures as postcoding property, wheel-clamping mobile equipment, and painting postcodes on the roofs of vehicles.



Gloucestershire Rural Watch
Credit: Gloucestershire Constabulary



Hexham, Northumberland – Policeman and CCTV camera
Credit: The Countryside Agency, Liane Bradbrook

4.5.5. Closed circuit TV (CCTV) is increasingly being introduced by local partnerships as a proven way of tackling local crime problems, such as rowdy behaviour in small towns. A CCTV fund of £153m was announced in July 1998. Only 16 of 350 first round bids had a clear rural element, but rural bids have been specifically encouraged in the second round. Local communities can apply for Home Office funding through their local crime and disorder reduction partnership, perhaps contacting their local crime prevention officer or community safety officer in the first instance.

4.5.6. The use of **neighbourhood wardens** by rural communities to provide a uniformed, semi-official presence is another potential option for tackling crime at local level. Wardens can promote community safety, assist with environmental improvements and housing management and also contribute to community development.

Case study – Neighbourhood Wardens

The village of **Mullion in Cornwall** is setting up a neighbourhood wardens' scheme with assistance from the Home Office/DETR Neighbourhood Wardens' Grant Programme. Mullion is in an isolated location and has high levels of unemployment and deprivation. The wardens' scheme aims to reduce crime and fear of crime, and reduce anti-social behaviour by involving the community in finding solutions to these problems. Two part-time neighbourhood wardens will provide an interface between the police, local authorities, older residents and the youth of the village, in an attempt to improve community relations. The wardens will take a proactive approach to tackling vandalism and will encourage the repair of existing community facilities. The wardens will work very closely with Cornwall's Youth Service.

4.5.7. A rural family suffering **domestic violence** will feel extremely isolated when there is often literally no-one nearby to turn to. Four of the 34 projects being funded under the £7m Violence Against Women initiative of the Government's Crime Reduction Programme specifically address issues of rurality in connection with domestic violence

Case study – domestic violence support

Victim Support in the Cotswolds have recently produced a publication entitled 'Raising awareness of domestic violence in rural areas'. This covers an enormous number of initiatives they have been organising such as information stickers with contact numbers for Victim Support which are placed in public toilets. Another initiative involved Victim Support Cotswold working with British Telecom to place information sheets in all telephone kiosks throughout the Cotswolds – approximately 500 in total – to raise awareness of the services Victim Support offer and to enable victims to make untraceable calls for help. They advise that in many isolated communities there may be no Church or Village Hall, but there is always a phone box.

More resources, and more police on the ground

Case study – Community Safety Partnership

The **Boston Community Safety Partnership** scheme involves extending a current town centre CCTV system to cover a housing estate and to provide a mobile system for rural areas. The rural system will be targeted at crime hot spots but will also address the high level of fear of crime that exists in the rural area.



Lincolnshire Mobile Police Van
Credit: Lincolnshire Constabulary

4.5.8. Funding for rural policing has increased steadily since 1997. £15m from the Police Modernisation Fund has been earmarked for rural policing for this year and £30m next year. It has been allocated to police authorities on the basis that they must demonstrate real improvements in the policing of rural areas, responding to the needs of rural communities,

including the farming community, for whom crime and fear of crime are a real concern. Police authorities will be required to set out clearly in each year's Best Value performance plans how that money has been used to improve services and how it will be used in the coming year. They will be required to demonstrate improvements that can be measured by *Best Value Performance Indicators*, focusing specifically on rural force areas. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary will inspect on the basis of this.

Case study – response times

Each police force sets and monitors key performance targets, including speed of reaching incidents requiring immediate attention:

Lancashire Police Authority covers both major towns and extensive rural areas such as the Ribble and Lune Valleys. The target is for officers to arrive at an incident requiring an emergency response within 15 minutes, in both urban and rural areas. The force has consistently achieved a high success rate over the past four years. In 1999/2000, officers attended 83,063 emergency incidents, arriving at 95% within the target 15 minutes. Response times are inevitably quicker in urban areas (average 5.5 minutes over a three-month period) than rural areas. But a well-developed road infra-structure assists in providing rapid access to rural communities when needed. For example, in one rural area the average response time to emergency incidents was 11.5 minutes (over three months). Both the Police Authority and the force place a high priority on officers arriving at an emergency both as quickly and, very importantly, as safely as possible.

- **We will be looking for positive improvement in this aspect of police performance in rural areas.**

4.5.9. Rural police forces have also benefited from the ring-fenced **Crime Fighting Fund (CFF)** money, which will allow forces in England and Wales to recruit 9,000 officers over and above their previous plans over the three years to March 2003. The Government and the public will expect to see results from the CFF recruitment – reduction in crime, with more offenders being brought to justice.

4.5.10. In the past 10 years, the pressures of modern policing have led to a reduction in the number of local police stations and of a permanent policing presence in many rural areas. An efficient police service does have to reappraise its estate. But we recognise the concern of many in rural areas at the loss of a visible police presence. **We will encourage more active public consultation by police authorities and forces before any police station is closed.**

4.5.11. We are also working to increase the number of **special constables** in rural areas. Not only will this provide an additional visible presence in rural areas, but local recruits will bring local knowledge and expertise to the job of reducing crime and offending.

4.5.12. Illegal drugs are not just a problem of the inner city, but have spread deep into the countryside. We are ensuring that treatment services will follow by investing an extra £33m in drugs treatment services over the next three years.

- Every major rural police station will have a drugs worker to help to break the link between crime and drugs. The National Treatment Agency will ensure that national standards apply to drug treatment services and that access to services is fair.

Racism in rural areas

4.5.13. Research suggests that, relative to the number of ethnic minority people in an area, racist incidents and crime may be more common in the countryside than in urban areas. We are determined to tackle racism everywhere.

Challenging Racism in the Rural Idyll

This rural racism project reported in July 1999 and contains important information. Isolated families and members of ethnic minorities lack the support of a larger community and can feel, and be, more threatened. There is little official infrastructure to support ethnic minorities, by comparison, for example, with the activities of Race Equality Councils in more urban areas. **"No problem here"** is a common approach on the part of statutory agencies.

4.5.14. Local crime reduction strategies should ensure that racist crime, and racist overtones to crime, are properly tackled. Low level vandalism and other nuisance directed at people from ethnic minorities may be especially significant. The Racist Incidents Standing Committee produced guidance in 1998 on multi-agency working, including in rural areas. Local crime reduction partnerships in rural areas should use positive recruitment campaigns to attract members of ethnic minority communities

- The Home Office will be launching a new Race Equality Grant to provide funding of £5m per year. Some of it has been used to fund a number of projects in rural areas to help combat the problems found in the research.

4

New ways of working

4.5.15. We are enabling police officers to be more visible and effective on the ground, by reducing bureaucracy and by investing in new police technology so that police officers do not have to return to the police station to complete paperwork, but can process arrests and send the information back to the station on the move.

This year's budget provided a total of £285m to be spent on this area. Measures of particular benefit to rural communities include:

- A **new police radio system** for which £500m will be provided over the next three years.
- Introduction of **Geographical Information Systems** to improve the speedy location of incidents and police response times;
- **The Public Safety Radio Communication Project** (Airwave) which will provide every officer with secure and reliable communications, giving direct access to the information needed to resolve incidents;
- A new **Command and Control computer system** now under development will speed up the reaction to calls and dispatch of resources;
- £4m for **police aviation**;
- The development of a **rural crime toolkit**, drawing on research and existing examples of good practice, will offer a new resource to help the police achieve this in rural areas. The rural crime toolkit, with others, will be available on the Government's crime reduction website at www.crimereduction.gov.uk
- The **Targeted Policing Initiative** which is helping police forces develop improved ways of tackling local concentrations of crime, such as in Norfolk, Cambridge and Lincolnshire where improved cross-border co-operation and other enhancements are being made with £600,000 extra funding.

Greater visibility

4.5.16 One of the main concerns which rural people have on policing is to see and know more about how their area is being policed – how many officers patrol their area and what is being done to fight crime. Several police forces have developed good practice in this area, for example through measures to provide a regular police presence in village facilities such as the Post Office or community centre or a mobile police station, and to inform local communities how policing in the area is being delivered.

- Home Office Ministers have announced that they wish to discuss, with the Association of Chief Police Officers, and the Association of Police Authorities, how each police authority might better inform the public about the steps it is taking to maintain and improve police visibility and effectiveness in all parts of England and Wales.

an affordable home



The issues

- There is a shortage of affordable housing in many rural towns and villages which are frequently popular and attractive places to live. Demand for housing is high, both from local people and from new residents – commuters, the retired and second home owners. This can create unbalanced communities and deny local people the chance to acquire a home.
- The Right to Buy scheme has helped tenants to realise their aspiration to own their own homes and in many cases it has helped to create stable, mixed-income communities. But it has been a costly scheme and in the absence, under the previous government, of sufficient investment to replace housing being sold, has led to the removal of more desirable homes from the social rented sector. This has left local authorities with a smaller stock of poorer quality properties in which to house people who need affordable housing to rent, particularly in small rural communities with only a few homes for rent.
- There is less obvious homelessness in the countryside, but homelessness cases accepted by rural authorities have increased as a proportion of the total in the last decade.
- There is often resistance to new housing in small villages because of the fear that it will not fit in.

The future – what we want to see

- A high proportion of affordable and decent housing, both for rent and sale, in market towns and villages to support a living, working countryside with inclusive rural communities which help young people to remain in the area where they grew up.
- New housing development built sustainably in market towns where it is accessible to jobs and services and will reduce car dependence. By making use of previously developed sites we can reduce the amount of new development in the open countryside; an urban

renaissance so that our larger towns and cities will become more attractive places to live.

- Sensitively designed new housing in towns and villages using materials which blend with nearby buildings and that is carefully sited so that it fits into the surroundings.

Summary of measures

- Doubling funding for the Housing Corporation between 2000 and 2003 to benefit both rural and urban areas;
- Doubling the size of the Housing Corporation's programme in small rural settlements from 800 to 1,600 homes a year;
- Local authorities able to charge the full council tax on second homes and retain extra revenue (subject to consultation);
- Better use of the planning system to secure more affordable homes as part of mixed developments in market towns and rural areas. There is no reason why, in small villages if there is evidence of need and subject to financial viability, every new market house should not be matched with an affordable home;
- Better designed homes to fit in with rural surroundings;
- Package of VAT reforms to encourage additional conversions of properties for residential use.

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“So what happens to the young people when they get to the age when they want to make a household?”

“They leave, or they stay at home with mum and dad, or they go off to somewhere like Chesterfield where house prices are more reasonable.”

“So you really wouldn’t be able to afford anything in your own village?”

“Not in my village, no”

“Does that bother you, or not?”

“It does really, yeah, ’cos I do like where I live, but there’s just nothing – I would stay there if I could afford to.”

5.1. Introduction

5.1.1. We are putting in place a framework to ensure the housing needs of rural areas are better met. Our strategy is to ensure that rural affordable housing needs are properly identified; that a higher proportion of housing provided in rural areas is affordable; and that new housing is designed to enhance the countryside. We will deliver this strategy through a substantial increase in resources for affordable housing and by making better use of the planning system to provide a higher proportion of affordable housing.



Estate agents in Liskeard, Cornwall
Credit: Philip Wolmuth

5.1.2. In the Spending Review 2000, we announced an additional £1.8bn investment in housing over the next three years. This is in addition to the extra £5bn announced for housing as a result of our Capital Receipts Initiative and the 1998 Comprehensive Spending Review. This means that around £13bn will be available over the next three years for more and better housing.

5.1.3. However our aim is not just to increase the amount available for housing overall, but also to ensure that an adequate share goes towards those rural areas where additional resources are most needed.

5.2. Identifying the need for affordable housing

5.2.1. We know that the housing needs of rural areas are not always properly assessed at the local level. Responsibility for assessing housing needs rests primarily with local authorities. A robust needs assessment is an essential input to the housing strategies authorities are required to produce. Making such an assessment is not easy because of the scattered nature of rural communities. But it is essential that it should be done, and done in consultation with the local communities themselves.

- We are therefore asking all authorities with rural areas to make **a specific assessment of the rural housing needs in their area**, and to include in their strategies a plan for meeting these needs. We have recently issued guidance **on how to ensure the needs of everyone in their area are taken into account**, including the particular circumstances of sub-areas, including rural areas. This stresses the importance of local authorities consulting local communities including parish councils; and we have endorsed the recently published guide to local authorities *Developing Housing Strategies in Rural Areas* which has been developed by the Chartered Institute of Housing, along with the Housing Corporation and the Countryside Agency;
- In making recommendations on **funding allocations** for housing, the Government Offices in the regions will take into account how effective local authorities have been in identifying rural need. To this end the Government Offices will monitor local authorities' rural needs assessments;
- **The Housing Corporation** is now adopting an increasingly strategic approach to the allocation of resources under its Approved Development Programme. This ensures that investment decisions are based on regional and local priorities. The Corporation will continue to include allowance for the higher costs which can be incurred in developing small schemes in villages in its scheme cost criteria. It will also include issues relating to development in rural areas in its forthcoming review of total cost indicators and social housing grant rates.

5.3. Providing the resources for affordable homes

5.3.1. It is clear that there is a need for more affordable houses in many rural areas. We are providing an additional £50 million this year, followed by an extra £872 million between 2001–02 and 2003–04 for building new social housing in both rural and urban areas. This will mean that by 2003–04 we will have doubled annual funding for the Housing Corporation's Approved Development Programme (ADP).

Case study – rural housing development with local authority support

A council-owned in-fill development site in Chapel Lane, Weston Sub Edge, Gloucestershire was released from adjoining secure tenancies and originally granted planning consent for a single detached house. The Parish Council and Ward Member were concerned about the lack of affordable housing for local young people. Two one-bedroom homes were built instead.

The development was possible through the benefit of the partnering contract which batched a number of small rural schemes with a significant 20 unit scheme at Willersey. The scheme was completed in February 2000. The units were joint funded with Social Housing Grant by the Housing Corporation and Cotswold District Council.



Construction of 2 one-bedroom houses for rent with local authority social housing grant. In-fill development site in Gloucestershire
Credit: Cotswold District Council

Funding for social housing

The main mechanisms for financing provision of additional social housing (rented housing at below market rates) are:

- Funding by the Housing Corporation through its Approved Development Programme (ADP) to Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) which provide lower than market cost housing;
- Funding for new or replacement social housing by means of Local Authority Social Housing Grant (LASHG) through local authorities' housing capital programmes. This is financed partly from allocations from central government and partly from authorities' own resources.

Affordable homes in small rural settlements

5.3.2. There is a particular problem in small rural settlements, where often all the new housing has recently been executive homes that local people cannot afford to buy. To make sure that a fair share of the additional funding goes to small rural settlements where there is a need for affordable housing:

- **We will double the number of dwellings which the Housing Corporation's rural programme will deliver in settlements of less than 3,000 people over the next three years.** By 2003–04 we expect 1,600 dwellings a year (provided by Registered Social Landlords) to be approved in those settlements compared with about 800 dwellings in the current year. This means that the proportion of the dwellings in small settlements approved by the Corporation will rise from the current target of 3.4% to a new target of 6.4%;
- **We will encourage local authorities to provide more new affordable housing in small rural settlements where there is high demand through use of local authority Social Housing Grant.** This, together with the judicious use of planning powers (see para 5.4 below) should bring 1500 or so affordable social homes annually to small rural settlements – ie together with the Housing Corporation rural programme a total of over 3,000 by 2003–04.



Challock, Ashford, one of 20 small village schemes built on exceptions sites in Ashford District.
Credit: Rural Housing Trust, Mary Allwood

Affordable homes in market towns

5.3.3. While it is important to provide new affordable homes in villages where there is a need, about half of rural people live in market towns, and that is where we expect most new affordable housing to be provided.

- **Some 3,800 affordable homes (16% of the total Housing Corporation programme) were approved in 1999-2000 in local authority districts with rural areas, including market towns.** (This was in addition to the housing provided in settlements of under 3,000 people

under the rural programme.) We expect this to grow, alongside urban approvals, as they benefit from the extra resources which the Government is providing for the Approved Development Programme over the next 3 years.

- **Local authorities** also finance new affordable homes. On average we estimate that some 8,000 social housing dwellings are provided by this means annually in England, of which the majority are in the south east and south west. In 1999–00 around 2,500 dwellings were approved in rural districts. We expect rural local authorities to use this route to provide homes in market towns and small villages which help people to live and work in the countryside. They will be assisted by the massive boost in the overall resources provided to local authorities for housing investment. **The resources allocated for 2000–01 are around twice the amount allocated for 1997–98 and will increase by a further 40% over the next 3 years.**
- **The Housing Corporation will be reviewing its rural strategy following the White Paper** to ensure that it responds effectively to the housing needs of rural communities. The Corporation wants to fit its rural policy within their broader investment strategies and acknowledge the key role of market towns alongside the village programme.

Cheaper homes to buy

"It's a very difficult problem, it's not just young people, it's people like, for example, young teachers. When the schools advertise here for teachers they don't get many applicants, frankly, because they just can't afford to come and live here – very, very difficult for them."

5.3.4. In addition to the need for more social housing, there is a demand for cheaper housing for purchase in rural areas, for example to help young couples get their feet on the housing ladder.

- **We will therefore increase the level of support to help those on modest incomes acquire their own homes.** There are several existing schemes which help people into home ownership. Options include part buying and part renting homes from Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) or using an interest free equity loan from an RSL toward the cost of a property eg Homebuy.
- In addition our Housing Green Paper *Quality and Choice – a Decent Home for All* announced the new **Starter Home Initiative** which will assist key workers with home ownership in areas of high prices and high demand. The Spending Review has provided £250m to support this important initiative and we will make sure that these funds will be available to benefit rural high demand hotspots, among other areas.

5.3.5. Through these measures we can substantially increase the supply of affordable homes in rural areas. **We expect to deliver around 9,000 affordable homes annually in rural districts by 2003–04 (including 3,000 in small settlements).** However, the precise amount will depend on local authorities' investment decisions and additional housing provided through the planning system.

Case study – shared ownership housing

Uttlesford District Council gave planning permission in 1988 for ten houses on its first exception site (see paragraph 5.4.4) in Ashdon, near Saffron Walden. Because of the negligible land cost, English Villages Housing Association was able to provide shared ownership houses (at 50% of value) on this site without any public subsidy.

The scheme is now eleven years old and some of the houses have changed hands – always to people from the village of Ashdon. Building Societies remain willing to provide mortgages on the properties. Further non-subsidised shared ownership houses have been built by English Villages Housing Association in a further 6 villages in the District. Altogether, the association has built 397 non-subsidised shared ownership houses in 89 villages in England.

5.4.3. Furthermore, **in settlements of 3,000 or less, no thresholds apply.** So in villages where there is a clear need for affordable housing, the local authority can seek a proportion of affordable housing even on the smallest site. This provision, which is of particular benefit to rural areas, is not always used to full effect, and **we believe that its wider adoption could generate significant numbers of affordable houses in rural villages.**



Ashdon, Essex: the first exceptions site, where 10 fixed equity, shared ownership homes were completed in 1989
Credit: Rural Housing Trust, Mary Allwood

5.4. Planning for affordable housing

“To the best of my knowledge all the recent planning has been for medium-to-upper group housing.”

5.4.1. The planning system has a vital role to play in the provision of both affordable housing for rent and for purchase. Our new planning guidance on housing (*PPG3*) emphasises the importance of an affordable housing policy based on an assessment of local need.

5.4.2. When developers apply for planning permission to build new houses, the local authority can seek a contribution to affordable housing, usually by asking for a proportion of the units to be built on site as social housing. Local authorities outside London can do this if the development covers a site of at least one hectare or involves at least 25 dwellings or more. But where acute pressures can be shown to exist and smaller schemes would be viable, authorities can adopt policies in their plans to use lower thresholds down to developments on sites of only half a hectare or with as few as 15 dwellings. This offers particular flexibility for small housing development in market towns.

Exception policy

5.4.4. We also want to encourage the use of the **rural exception policy.** This is a special provision which applies only in rural settlements (but regardless of size) where permission would not otherwise be given for new housing development. It can provide a significant number of affordable homes for local people in rural areas – around 1,500 in 1998 – which is in addition to those delivered as a result of an authority's general affordable housing policy. The exception applies to additional affordable housing made available only for local people in perpetuity. Local authorities who include an exception policy in their local plan can grant planning permission for small sites within or adjoining villages which would not otherwise be released for housing. Again we would like local authorities to make more use of the exception policy.

“Yeah, but we sold some land for eight bungalows, and if it wasn't for those bungalows our church would fold – mother and I used to be about the only ones that went to church, and now we get about 16 – and they have really brought life.”

Case study – Sussex Rural Community Council helps deliver affordable housing

In Sussex, seven district councils work together along with the Sussex Rural Community Council to address affordable housing issues in a consistent and constructive way. In 1998–99 they secured over 450 houses, three quarters of which were in small villages. A Housing Enabler has recently produced *Guide to Good Practice, Affordable Housing for Rural Communities*. The Guide provides step by step advice to parish councils on ways they can participate in providing affordable housing in their village – assessment of local need and the use of local surveys, identifying a potential site, consulting with the community, choosing a developer (typically an RSL) and obtaining planning permission. It sets out the role parish councils can play in advising local people on the process of nomination to one of the new homes in their village.

Case study – exception sites

Hartpury and Staunton, Forest of Dean District Council, Gloucestershire

These two recent newbuild developments are mixed tenure schemes to meet local housing needs on a rural exception sites using Housing Corporation Social Housing Grant. It is the outcome of a local housing needs surveys in both villages. Both settlements are in higher house price areas causing a significant ‘affordability gap’ for local people to access housing. Each scheme is on a site bordering the village Planning envelope consisting of 8 two- and three-bedroom houses for rent and shared ownership. Rents are between £50 and £62 per week with shared ownership starting from £22,500 for a 50% share. Both schemes were oversubscribed and households housed all had strong local connections:

- 5 locally resident households
- 8 previous lengthy residence
- 10 with close relatives in the village
- 4 with employment in the village.

Putting affordable housing policies into practice

5.4.5. Local authorities’ success in using these planning policy tools is variable and some have not exploited them fully. We think authorities could and should make greater use of these policies.

- **Local authorities should negotiate an appropriate element of affordable housing and there is no reason why, in small villages if there is evidence of need and subject to financial viability, they should not seek to match every new market house with an affordable home.**

5.4.6. Closer working between housing and planning authorities, the Housing Corporation and Registered Social Landlords (eg Housing Association) is critical and this is something we are trying to encourage. We have already commissioned wide-ranging research on the use of current planning policy to provide for affordable housing and will advise on good practice guidance for local authorities and others on delivering affordable housing through planning policy.

We will issue best practice guidance which will:

- Provide practical examples of where rural authorities are planning successfully for affordable housing;
- Encourage local authorities to consider whether Local Authority Social Housing Grant, could be used to ensure that the potential of exceptions sites is used to the full;
- The Countryside Agency will continue to fund its successful Rural Housing Enabler programme and explore extending it to more rural areas.

Further help from the Countryside Agency

The Countryside Agency is already helping local authorities and rural communities to secure affordable homes in villages – eg through its Rural Housing Enablers programme. It is exploring further ways to help including using a community trust to purchase the land and through a combination of private funding and mortgaging the land, raising finance for social housing. This could be combined with mechanisms to retain the low cost sale element in the affordable housing sector in perpetuity.

Case study – Northumberland Rural Housing Forum

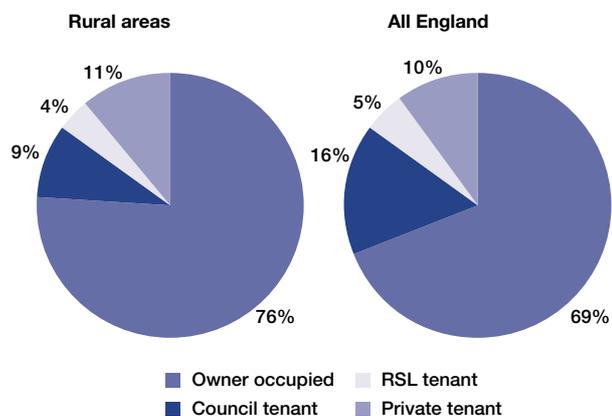
The Rural Housing Enabler (RHE) in Northumberland, based with the Rural Community Council, operates over the four district councils covering the rural parts of the county. Through joint working, now formalised in the **Northumberland Rural Housing Forum** the RHE has helped 45 communities identify needs and supported the development of 59 new affordable homes in 10 villages. With her support the community on Holy Island established a Community Trust. This has funded five rented homes for local people which are owned by the Trust. It has bought a vacant hotel and converted it to a community centre and hopes to do a further conversion to create two additional flats.



1 to 5 Kyle Gardens, Holy Island, a courtyard of two and three bedroomed houses for local people. Developed by a Community Trust supported by a Rural Housing Enabler
Credit: The Countryside Agency, Lianne Bradbrook

5.5. Making better use of existing housing stock

Housing tenure in rural areas compared with England as a whole



Source: DETR Survey of Housing 1998/99

5.5.1. One of our main priorities is to ensure that all social housing is brought up to a decent standard within ten years. Our strategy for improving the quality of housing and service delivery was set out in the Housing Green Paper *Quality and Choice: A decent home for all*.

5.5.2. We also want to make sure that more of the existing housing in rural areas is available to local people. In some rural areas, a high proportion of houses are used as second homes, empty for much of the year, thus increasing the pressure on the existing housing stock. Another concern is that dwellings originally provided as social housing can be bought by the tenant and then sold on, reducing the low cost housing stock available for local people and those who need to work in the area. That is why we need the possibility of imposing some restrictions on resale.

Restrictions on resale of right to buy homes

5.5.3. Secure tenants – most council tenants and some tenants of Registered Social Landlords – have the right to buy their home at discounts of up to 70%. Tenants in rural areas have the same right to buy as tenants in other areas. But right-to-buy landlords in certain rural areas can impose conditions on the resale of such homes, in order to maintain a supply of affordable homes for local people. In a National Park, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, or any area designated by the Secretary of State as rural they can impose one of two restrictions:

- They can require the tenant, if reselling within 10 years, to offer them the first chance to buy the home. This enables them to bring the property back into their stock of affordable homes for rent; or

- They can require him to resell only to someone who has lived or worked locally for at least 3 years. This requirement binds all subsequent buyers of the property. Such a restriction tends to reduce the value of the property, and so makes it more affordable as well as available to local people. As this limitation will have applied when the tenant first bought the property it will have been reflected in the purchase price, so the tenant will not lose out. This policy gives rural tenants the same rights as others while at the same time helping to promote the supply of affordable homes in rural areas and assist smaller communities to thrive.

5.5.4. Twenty four areas of England – mainly districts or parts of districts – have been designated as rural for resale restrictions since 1980. Applications for other areas to be designated can be made to DETR. These should be made or supported by the local housing authority. In reaching decisions the Secretary of State uses a number of criteria including size of settlement, population density and the incidence of second homes in the areas.

- We will remind authorities in rural areas where there is a significant demand for affordable housing to consider the possibility of applying for designation.

5.5.5. Our housing Green Paper *Quality and Choice – a Decent Home for All* made clear that we have no plans for further significant changes to the right to buy scheme.

Making housing available for local people

5.5.6. We are taking other measures to make sure that more existing dwellings in the countryside are available to local people on lower incomes:

- **We propose (subject to consultation) to give local authorities discretion to charge the full council tax on second homes**, rather than the 50% discount that they are required to apply at the moment. We propose that this should be discretionary, as pressure on housing varies from one area to another and some authorities may wish to encourage second home owners who can bring a useful input to the local economy. We propose that the extra revenue raised should be retained by the local authorities concerned and we will consult on whether the funds should be earmarked to provide affordable homes in the areas affected;
- Last year we introduced **fairer right to buy discounts**, replacing the cash limit of £50,000 by new regional cash limits ranging from £22,000 to £38,000. These better reflect house prices in each

region and offer the taxpayer better value for money. The new limits mean that the most expensive properties in attractive high demand rural areas will be sold only at a fair price;

- **We will promote more flexible lettings policies by local authorities, so as to take more account of specific rural needs in their area.** We propose changes to social housing lettings to promote a more customer-focused approach giving applicants more say and greater choice in where they live. There would be increased opportunities for people to move more easily between different landlords and different areas; although landlords could choose to give local people priority over incomers so as to reduce the pressure of demand on limited stock. Over the next three years, we will be providing £11m to support pilot schemes involving local authorities and registered social landlords which test choice-based lettings policies. We intend to invite pilots from rural areas;
- **We are funding the Empty Homes Agency to work with local authorities to bring more empty rural property back into use.** As a follow up to its challenge document *Wasted Rural Homes – a Blueprint for Action*, published last year, the Agency will shortly publish a good practice guide entitled *Wasted Rural Homes, Putting the Blueprint into Action*. The guide highlights good practice from the best rural local authorities and includes imaginative strategies that tackle empty properties. The Agency, with the full backing of Government, will continue to press authorities which have done little to tackle their wasted homes;
- We will ask the Regional Development Agencies and the Countryside Agency to address the issue of **empty properties** and promote the actions required to bring more of them back into productive use as part of the economic regeneration of rural areas. This measure was recommended by the Empty Property Advisory Group which was established at the end of last year. Following other recommendations of the Group, the Government is working with the Empty Homes Agency, the professional bodies and others in the property field to raise awareness and spread best practice among property owners, professionals, local authorities and others;
- As announced in the November 2000 Pre-Budget Report, we plan to encourage additional conversion of properties for residential use by **cutting the VAT rate to 5%** for residential conversions and removing the VAT burden on the sale of renovated

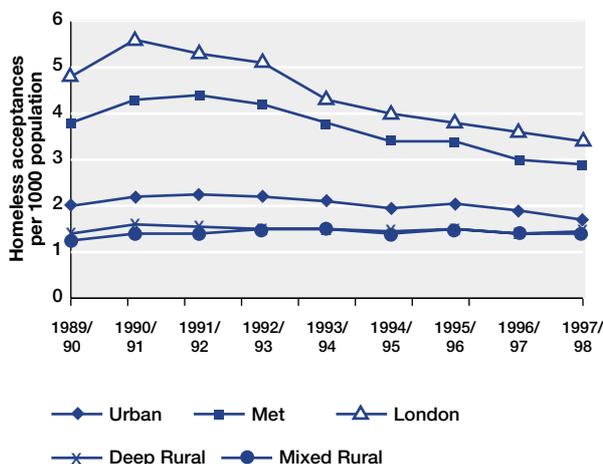
houses that have been empty for ten years or more. These measures will help encourage the redevelopment and better use of buildings and improve the environment for local residents.



Vandalised empty homes in the former mining village of Grimethorpe, South Yorkshire
Credit: Philip Wolmuth

5.6. Rural homelessness

Summary of Homeless Acceptances in England by population



Source: DETR HIP returns

5.6.1. Rural homelessness is not as obvious a problem as urban homelessness. It is less visible than the street homelessness seen in many cities and towns. But the misery felt by individual households who find themselves without a home of their own is just as acute whether they live in the countryside or in a major city.

5.6.2. Our Homeless Action Programme provides resources to develop practical measures to help those who are

particularly vulnerable to homelessness. Services provided under this fund include **housing advice and resettlement services for those in rural areas.**

5.6.3. Tackling homelessness in rural areas helps to prevent rough sleeping in larger towns and cities. Our Special Innovation Fund to prevent rough sleeping supports local initiatives such as the Benjamin Foundation in North Norfolk, which helps young homeless people through specialist advice and counselling and a direct access hostel, to expand the services that it provides. This will help prevent rough sleeping by tackling the root causes of social exclusion of young people in rural areas. The Foundation will now be able to set up a rent deposit and housing support service for young people who are vulnerable to homelessness. This will provide practical help to enable young homeless people to find and secure accommodation locally, close to their natural support networks. We will also be producing good practice guidance for councils which will address the particular difficulty in ensuring access to housing advice and homelessness services in rural areas.

Case study – Newark and Sherwood Foyer tackling homelessness and unemployment among young people

Research identified that the greatest unmet housing need was among young unemployed people whose lack of job or skills often meant they were homeless. In response a 'dispersed foyer' has been established to offer both houses and training. It provides 18 places for young people aged 16–25 years old for up to two years.

Temporary furnished housing is provided through housing association and local authority vacant stock in villages throughout the district. This cuts costs and means the young people can stay in or near their family and friends. At the end of their placement some move on to permanent accommodation provided as part of the scheme. Others become permanent tenants of the homes they occupied when with the foyer.

The training, tailored to individual need, is provided through the local colleges and training agencies. An outreach service provides life skills support for the young people in their foyer accommodation. This support remains available for the young people for six months after they leave the foyer.

Between January and March 2000 the foyer had received requests for help from 133 young people. The project has been developed through a partnership of the local district council, three housing associations, Social Services, a local hostel, NACRO, other key agencies and the RCC.



Official launch of the Newark and Sherwood Foyer 3rd April 2000
Credit: Nottingham Community Housing Association

5.7. Improving housing quality and design

5.7.1. New housing is not always well designed and attractive. Poor housing can change the character of a settlement, particularly in a village setting. New housing needs to be sympathetically sited and built in a style and use materials which blend with the rest of the village – for example using local materials. This does not mean that housing should always be based on traditional architectural patterns – sometimes modern architecture can make a real contribution to a locality.



Abbots Cottages, Corfe Castle – This infill housing development of 6 cottages arranged in a courtyard plan won a Civic Trust Rural Housing Award.
Credit: Civic Trust

“I would say in our village the development’s quite tasteful, blends in well”

“They look as if they’ve been there all the time, don’t they?”

“Beautifully done”

5.7.2. Creating better-designed places is a central message of our new planning guidance for housing (PPG3). We have made it clear that planning authorities should promote

developments that bring together environmental, transport, planning and architectural best practice to create places with their own distinct identity and in harmony with the local environment. Authorities can include planning policies in local development plans covering new buildings in the countryside which refer to local character, building styles and materials. They can also develop design guides, which may be approved as supplementary planning guidance.

5.7.3. We are strongly committed to promoting earlier, greater and better-informed attention to design wherever new development takes place. This was underlined when we published a ‘good practice’ guide earlier this year. We believe that better attention to design considerations from the outset will help to achieve high quality places in which people live, work or relax, not just in towns and cities but in villages and other rural areas as well. To promote better design we will encourage the preparation of village design statements as part of the Town and Village Plans described in chapter 12. These can be a particularly helpful design tool when considering new development in villages, or other rural settlements.

Case study – The Piggeries housing scheme, Frome

The Piggeries is the product of dedicated efforts by Mendip District Council to turn round a derelict part of Frome blighted by road proposals. Through land assembly and a clear design philosophy the Council has fostered a re-development that provides an attractive living environment sensitive to its surroundings. The establishment of a multi-disciplinary project group early on in the process was crucial to the scheme’s success, as was the involvement of the local community.

flexible local transport



The issues

- Distances between people and between settlements mean that difficulty with transport is often a dominant consideration for those who live in the country. With public transport services often sparse, communities are typically highly dependent on the private car. 84% of households in rural areas own a car, compared with only 69% in towns and cities; and the poorest 10% of households are twice as likely to own a car if they live in a rural area compared to a metropolitan area.
- There are particular problems of access to services for the one sixth of rural households who do not have the use of a car. These include many older people (and those who are frail or disabled), and young people, for whom it is often difficult to get access to training and job opportunities – or even to enjoy a night out with friends. Even when a family has a car, some members may not have access to it during the day and women in particular are often more dependent on public transport.
- Whether car users or not, all rural residents are affected by traffic levels, rising fastest on rural roads, and by concerns about road safety, with casualty rates falling more slowly on rural than on urban roads.

The future – what we want to see

- More locally provided services (shops, banking, health services) which people can reach without the need to travel long distances.
- Recognition of the important role of the car.
- Good quality public transport, responsive to people's real needs; flexible, well marketed, well integrated, stable and reliable.
- Better co-ordination of services to make best use of what is available, with an expanded community and voluntary transport sector, working with bus and rail service providers and filling the gaps in those areas which are not adequately served by scheduled services.

- A stronger role for local communities in identifying local needs and in deciding how those needs can be met, and more funds for small local projects.
- Improved rural road safety; with measures to minimise the impact of traffic in rural areas and to facilitate cycling and walking.

Summary of measures

- Additional rural bus services through increased funding: £132m over three years for Rural Bus Subsidy Grant and £60m over the same period for Rural Bus Challenge;
- A doubling of Rural Transport Partnership funds from £6m to £12m to deliver to up to 500 new Rural Partnership schemes over the next three years and at least one partnership in every county by April 2001;
- A new Parish fund of £15m over three years to support small-scale, locally generated transport solutions;
- Early consultation on measures designed to relax restrictions on rural transport services so as to allow for more responsive and flexible provision in areas not well served by scheduled services;
- New pilot schemes and funding for car sharing schemes and car clubs in rural communities;
- Better and more integrated travel information, including developing a comprehensive internet information and retailing service 'Transport Direct';
- Additional funding for Community Rail Partnerships – local authorities and businesses working together to promote local rail services;
- Rail franchises which protect rural rail services;
- Actions to make towns, villages and rural roads safer – through reduced speed limits, more investment in traffic calming, and some 50 rural bypasses.

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“With work as well I can do 100 mile a day quite easy without even realising it. It’s just nipping backwards and forwards, it just builds up very quickly.”

6.1. Introduction

6.1.1. We want to build on the new policies and substantially increased funding set out in the *Integrated Transport White Paper* and its supporting documents, and in the *10-Year Plan*.

The Integrated Transport White Paper

This set an extensive policy agenda to improve the framework within which transport is planned, provided and funded including:

- Support for regeneration and sustainable growth of rural communities;
- Improved access to services (including through reducing the need to travel);
- Combating social exclusion (including through improved mobility).

The 10 Year Transport Plan:

- Increased financial support for rural public transport;
- Set out proposals for relaxing rules to achieve greater flexibility in meeting rural needs;
- Made provision for some 50 new rural bypasses to take traffic out of towns and villages; and for investment to provide safer roads with less impact on the environment.
- Increased investment in total road maintenance in England to £31 billion over the next 10 years.



Accessible transport for all
Credit: Interconnect Project-Stephen Pauling

6.1.2. We have already transformed funding for rural transport.

| Rural Public Transport Funding | 1995/96–1997/98 | 1998/99–2000/01 | 2001/02–2003/04 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Rural Bus Subsidy Grant | | 90m | 132m |
| Rural Bus Challenge | | 48m | 60m |
| Countryside Agency | 4.8m | 17m | 47m |
| Total | 4.8m | 155m | 239m |

6.1.3. Our aim across the country is to promote public transport, both as an alternative to the car to reduce the impact of rising traffic levels, and to meet the needs of non-car users. But we recognise that, in rural areas, there will continue to be an essential role for the car. Our rural transport strategy takes account of this fact; but will make a real difference to the choices and opportunities of all people living in the country.

Commission for Integrated Transport

Our approach to the delivery of integrated transport draws on advice from the Commission for Integrated Transport (CfIT), the independent body which brings together a wide range of transport interests. For rural areas CfIT believes that transport policies should seek to **reduce reliance on the car** and the need to travel in total by:

- Ensuring effective integration, both between different types of transport and between transport and land use planning;
- Improving the availability of travel choice, including safer conditions for walking and cycling;
- Enhancing the opportunities for local access to shops and services.

To support its further advice to Government on the further development of rural transport policy, CfIT is carrying out research on the relationship between car dependence and declining service provision; the reality of car dependence; expenditure on rural travel; the availability of transport choice and rising traffic levels.

CfIT is also preparing advice for Government on how to obtain **best value from subsidy to the bus industry**. It has already recommended that buses without a fixed route (including Dial a Ride services) should be eligible for Fuel Duty Rebate in the same way as registered bus services and this should encourage new services in rural areas.

It is also considering: whether and how the money currently paid as fuel duty rebate could be applied more effectively so as to maximise the role of the bus, in tackling social exclusion, attracting traffic from the car and in meeting environmental objectives; and how to determine circumstances where other approaches – car clubs, community mini buses or taxis – would provide more effectively for people’s travel needs.

“It’s not just that the fuel is more expensive and the mileage you do is more, it is the fact that you have to have a car here – I mean I don’t like having a car, if I lived in a town there’s no way I would have a car.”



Long Melford bypass
Credit: Suffolk County Council

6.2. Bringing services closer to people

6.2.1. Addressing rural transport issues is not simply about how to improve people’s personal mobility. A major part of our strategy is to make access to important services less dependent on travelling, whether by car or other means. We will be issuing planning policy guidance (*PPG13*) emphasising the need to site new development where it is accessible by public transport or where, in the case of housing, people can access other services. Chapter 3 of this Paper describes how new technology will be used to provide more services direct to people’s homes (eg NHS Direct) and locally – in the Post Office, or community centre. This offers important benefits for users of services and for the environment if journeys are reduced. It can help to strengthen and sustain smaller rural communities by reducing the need to look further afield for the services on which people rely.

6.2.2. However, people in rural areas also want and should be offered the level of consumer choice which comes with being able to travel to local or regional centres. Measures to improve transport and mobility will therefore continue to be an important element in ensuring fair and equitable access to services in rural areas.

6.3. Improving personal mobility

Recognising the role of the car

6.3.1. For many people who live and work in rural communities, using a car is the only practicable means of undertaking many journeys. They are 50% more likely to use a car for their journey than are urban residents. Where a car is needed, but not available, there can be real hardship. The vicious circle of “no job no car; no car no job” is all too familiar to some people living in the country. We aim to offer more help to individuals who need the use of a car.

In the **Pre-Budget Report** of November 2000 the Government announced that it is consulting on a package of measures to reduce taxation for motorists which will be helpful to people in rural areas, given their high level of dependence on the private car, and the fact that rural households are twice as likely to have more than one car.

- The 83% of rural households who own cars will benefit from the freeze on fuel duty in cash terms in the 2001 Budget and the proposed reduction in duty on low sulphur petrol and diesel. Those with older cars will benefit from the proposal to **remove the duty premium on lead replacement petrol** (subject to an assessment of the environmental implications). This will help people on lower incomes who are more likely to own a car which is over 10 years old.
- The Government's proposals to extend a **reduced rate of vehicle excise duty** to cars of up to 1500cc will reduce the tax payable on a quarter of the cars in rural areas.

Our proposals to help **rural garages** by extending mandatory rate relief – subject to consultation – are set out in paragraph 3.2.3). These should help protect a valuable local service by improving the financial viability of rural petrol stations.

6.3.2. Car clubs are well established in some European countries. They have yet to catch on in this country, although there are one or two pilot projects in urban areas and paying for a lift either in a social car scheme or independently is becoming increasingly common. We believe that car clubs and informal car-sharing arrangements could be a practical solution in at least some cases. Typically, car clubs involve common ownership of a mix of vehicles which members can book for specific trips for which the car is the best option. They have the potential to provide access to a car for the many people who do not need a car every day, but who depend on one for particular journeys. To make it easier to set up such schemes:

- **The Countryside Agency, through the Rural Transport Partnerships scheme will encourage a wide variety of car-based schemes in rural areas.** Rural Transport Partnerships, are designed to bring together local community interests to develop new ideas for transport in co-operation with local authorities. The Agency will specifically invite bids to support pilot car-clubs;

- We are also discussing with the Motorists' Forum¹ what else can be done to make car clubs and other forms of car-sharing easier in rural areas (including through better use of ICT); with a view to developing practical advice and disseminating good practice.

6.3.3. The lack of a car is particularly serious for jobseekers and young people seeking training. The Employment Service (ES), as part of its local labour market mobility strategy, is working with local authorities, rural development agencies and transport providers to overcome transport problems for jobseekers. Action Teams for Jobs (ATs) offer flexible funding for jobless people living in areas, both urban and rural, where employment rates are low and for people who find it difficult to get work because of their background or where they live.

Case studies – Cornwall and Thanet

The **Cornwall ATs** plans include access to 'Wheels to Work' – a scheme which provides the loan of a moped for the first three months of employment, including CBT tests, insurance, helmet, top box and support services. To help people back into employment **Thanet AT** has provided funding for obtaining the new 'clean' driving licences to which they are entitled following expiry of penalty points.

6.3.4. The Rural Transport Partnership Scheme can also be used to support schemes to help people in rural areas travel to work, for example through the provision of mopeds or bicycles, help with car purchase or repair or public transport subsidy.

- **We shall double the resources currently available for Rural Transport Partnerships from £6m to £12m over the next three years.** By April 2001, we expect to see at least one Rural Transport Partnership per county, and up to 500 new Partnership sponsored projects over the next three years;
- The Countryside Agency will also encourage a more systematic approach by evaluating existing 'Wheels to Work' schemes and developing good practice advice based on those projects which have been particularly successful.

¹ The Motorists' Forum has been set up under the Commission for Integrated Transport (CfIT) to give motorists a voice in the development of Government policy.

A new Parish Fund

6.3.5. We also want to encourage rural communities at the local level – particularly in areas least well served by public transport – to identify and express their own local transport needs and to be able to take steps to meet them. We want to provide the means for parishes to develop and run their own projects, as they are well placed to know what will help at the most local level. We want parishes to think innovatively about what would best solve their problems

- **We are therefore creating a new fund of £15m over three years to support small scale transport projects identified by parishes. Parish Councils will be able to apply to the Countryside Agency for grants of up to £10,000 to fund schemes which meet local transport needs.**

6.3.6. For these small schemes, we want to minimise bureaucracy, so the application process will be simple and there will be no formal partnership structure to set up. To help parishes identify and work up proposals, the Countryside Agency will publish guidance on best practice and will support parishes through liaison with Rural Transport Partnership officers. Parishes will also be offered help to install and use IT networks to exchange experience. They will be encouraged to set up joint arrangements where appropriate. The aim will be to focus particularly on small-scale projects which meet very specific local needs such as:

- Purchase of cars or mopeds for community use, including for the use of job-seekers;
- Support for a car club or social car scheme;
- Support for community transport services, including refurbishment and maintenance of existing community vehicles
- Vouchers for taxis for the elderly or other people needing transport;
- Funding for a local bus company to divert a service through a village.

Concessionary fares

6.3.7. Local authorities can offer help towards travel costs through concessionary fare schemes. *The Transport Bill* introduces a national minimum standard for local authority concessionary travel schemes, which will guarantee half fares or better on local buses for pensioners and disabled people. The bus pass will be free of charge. Local authorities with more generous schemes (including those which cover travel by train) need not change them. Some local authorities operate voucher schemes which can be used for taxis as well as

buses. This may be particularly appropriate in remote rural areas where scheduled bus services are more limited. Provided they also offer the standard scheme, local authorities may continue such voucher schemes as an alternative option.

6.4. More responsive public transport

6.4.1. Our policy is to support a range of different public transport services, for different needs, and different places. That may mean better conventional, scheduled bus and train services; but in some areas the emphasis may be on less conventional services: buses with flexible routes which respond to passengers' demand, community buses and schemes for sharing taxis. We want to make it easier for people to plan specific journeys which may rely on several of these. There also needs to be good interchange between modes and better facilities for people who need to use private transport to get to public transport options. If it is not easy to switch between modes, people are more likely to stay in their cars for the whole journey.

Bus services

6.4.2. Many rural bus services are subsidised by local authorities because they would otherwise be uneconomic. Over 1,800 new or more frequent services are operating as a result of the Rural Bus Subsidy Grant (RBSG) introduced by DETR in 1998, with nearly 16 million passenger journeys made on the services in 1999–00.

- **We will continue RBSG until at least 2004 with up to £132m available over the next three years from the funding announced in the 10 year plan. This is an increase of 45% over the spending in the previous three years;**
- We will consider changing the rules to allow local authorities to let subsidy contracts for unremunerative services for up to 10 years instead of the five-year maximum which applies at present.

6.4.3. As part of a policy to encourage market towns to serve as a focus for services for a rural hinterland we want to improve services into and around market towns.

- The criteria for eligibility for RBSG will be broadened to allow services in and around towns up to 25,000 population to be supported. (The current threshold is 10,000 population.)



RBSG enabled Lancashire County Council to develop its benchmark scheme to ensure that, as far as possible, all communities received at least a minimum level of public transport service.
Credit: Lancashire County Council

6.4.4. The Rural Bus Challenge scheme is aimed at supporting innovative bus and minibus projects across the country. It has already financed 100 projects at a total cost of £28m.

- **Rural Bus Challenge funding will continue for the next three years with a minimum of £20m available each year, a 25% increase over the previous three years.**

Case studies – Rural Bus Challenge examples

The Wiltshire Wigglybus provides three new hourly bus services in the Pewsey and Devizes areas of Wiltshire. Journeys are booked in advance via a central booking agency up to the time of departure of the bus. The service operates along a core route but the bus ‘wiggles’ off the route to pick up passengers. Fares can be paid on the bus but these can be much lower for those who are members of a travelclub scheme. Since its launch in mid-1999, passenger numbers have increased significantly (currently about 2,500 per month) and there have been requests for extensions to the service. The Rural Bus Challenge contribution is £0.5m. The rural area around Worksop will benefit from the **Worksop Area Travel Choice (WATCH)** Project which aims to reduce rural isolation and social exclusion. It includes a Travelwise centre (monitoring securing and brokering transport services in advance of use), satellite vehicle tracking providing real-time information and the development of a smart card system for rural residents. The project is already delivering results: satellite tracking equipment has been fitted to 78 vehicles and is passing back information to the Travelwise centre; and bus stops are now in place which show real-time information on bus arrival times. The Rural Bus challenge contribution is £1.1m.

6.4.5. The combined effect of these measures should be to offer more people a useful bus service within easy reach. **By 2010 we expect to see a one third increase in the proportion of rural households living within about a 10 minute walk of a bus service which is hourly or better.**

Flexible services

6.4.6. Scheduled bus services have a vital role to play in rural areas, particularly in linking local centres, and we are funding more of them. But they cannot meet all rural public transport needs. So we need to encourage a network of complementary feeder services to these main routes or cater for situations where potential passengers are few or widely dispersed.

6.4.7. The existing law already provides for a range of such services, such as taxis or private hire vehicles, but also small buses operated by small-scale commercial operators or community transport organisations who are not required to meet the full requirements of operator licensing. The particular provisions that apply are summarised in table 6.1 on the next page.

6.4.8. There is scope within this framework of powers to offer a wide range of flexible services to meet a variety of needs. But although there are some excellent individual examples of what can be done, there is little evidence as yet that the full range of possibilities is being routinely built in to the planning of an integrated package of services for rural areas. We need to address this.

- **We will launch new guidance on what the law already allows – targeted at taxi and private vehicle operators, bus operators, local authorities and transport partnerships – highlighting examples of how the provisions can be used to open up opportunities for passengers.**

Rutland Bus Routes

500 RUTLAND FLYER
CORBY - LEPIDUGHAM - DAKHAM - MELTON MOWBRAY
MORNING TO AFTERNOON
RS: Not Saturdays. R: Includes only
R: Stops on request for passengers already on the bus

| | RS | R | | | | |
|---------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| CORBY | 07:00 | 08:00 | 11:00 | 12:00 | 12:00 | 13:45 |
| 500 Rutland Flyer 5 | | | | | | |
| Lepidugham | 08:30 | 09:30 | 12:30 | 13:30 | 13:30 | 15:30 |
| Dakham Green | | | | | | |
| Melton Mowbray | 09:00 | 10:15 | 13:15 | 14:15 | 14:15 | 15:00 |

Rutland bus timetable, available on the internet
Credit: Rutnet, Rutland County Council

Table 6.1: Provisions which can be used to set up flexible local services

| Service | Description | Benefits |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Shared taxi and private hire vehicles (PHVs) – advance bookings. (Section 11 Transport Act 1985)</p> | <p>Licensed taxis and PHVs providing a service at separate fares for up to 8 passengers sharing the vehicle. Operator takes the initiative to “match up” passengers who book in advance and agree to share vehicle.</p> | <p>An on-demand, flexibly routed service based on telephone bookings. For example, passengers being picked up at their own homes to go to a common or similar destination, or separate passengers returning home from a popular location (eg a shopping centre). Lower fares than for an exclusive hiring. Potential for operators to increase their passenger loadings.</p> |
| <p>Shared taxis – immediate hirings. (Section 10 Transport Act 1985)</p> | <p>Licensing authorities can set up schemes whereby licensed taxis (up to 8 passengers but not PHVs) can be hired by more than one person at separate fares, from designated taxi ranks or other designated places. The decision to establish is for the local licensing authority, but it is required to set up a scheme if the holders of 10% of taxi licences in the area ask for one. Sharing schemes identified by special signs at ranks or on vehicles.</p> | <p>Passengers pay only a proportion of the metered fare, and drivers will receive more than the metered fare. Consequently, cheaper for passengers to return from, say, the local town to an outlying area, or perhaps to a series of destinations in the same general area, without having to make prior arrangements.</p> |
| <p>Taxibuses. (Section 12 Transport Act 1985)</p> | <p>Licensed taxi owners can apply to the Traffic Commissioner for a restricted public service vehicle (PSV – or bus, see below) operator licence. A taxi proprietor can then use his cab to provide a bus service for up to 8 passengers. The route must be registered with the Traffic Commissioner. Taxibus services must have at least one stopping place within the area of the local authority which granted the taxi licence, but they can go beyond it.</p> | <p>Increased flexibility for taxis operators. They can register services at certain times of the day where they have identified a need (eg going to and returning from school), and then revert to traditional taxi work at other times of the day. Provides passengers with a bus service in circumstances where a larger bus would not be economic. When running local bus services, taxi owners will be eligible for fuel duty rebate (subject to meeting certain conditions). Taxibuses could be used for local authority subsidised bus services.</p> |
| <p>Bus service provided by an operator with a restricted operator’s licence (Section 13 of the Public Passenger Vehicles Act 1981)</p> | <p>For bus operators with up to 2 small vehicles. For an operator whose main business is not bus transport the vehicle may be up to 16 passenger seats. Restricted licence holders do not need to hold the Certificate of Professional Competence and they pay lower operator licence fees</p> | <p>Encourages small-scale operators to run bus services, including those doing so as a sideline to another business.</p> |
| <p>Excursions and tours (Section 137 of the Transport Act 1985)</p> | <p>Passengers pay separate fares for a bus journey travelling together to, and back from, one or more places. Such services are exempt from the requirement to register a route or timetable unless they are run at least once a week for a period of at least 6 weeks (if they are operated that frequently, there is a registration requirement though less detailed than that for a normal bus service)</p> | <p>Can be used for, say, a shopping expedition to town and back without involving the full route registration requirements.</p> |

| Service | Description | Benefits |
|--|---|--|
| Community bus service run by a non-profit making body (Section 22 of the Transport Act 1985) | Minibus service provided for the general public by a community group (a group concerned with social and welfare needs) on a non-profit making basis. A permit, issued by the Traffic Commissioner is required, but not an operator's licence. Services have to be registered as a local bus service. | Enables a voluntary group to run a scheduled bus service without the cost or burden of meeting all of the requirements of operator licensing. Can fill a gap not being met by a commercial operator. |
| Service provided by a non-profit making body for a particular social or community group. (Section 19 of the Transport Act 1985) | Enables voluntary bodies to provide a transport service for the particular group they serve, eg the elderly or disabled (though not for the general public) Permits issued by the appropriate "designated body" or the Traffic Commissioner. No requirement to register the service. | Enables the group to provide, say, a dial-a-ride service for those it serves without the need to obtain an operator's licence or register a route. |

6.4.9. Despite the flexibility which already exists, it may well be right to go further, particularly with the needs of rural areas in mind. The bus service registration requirements provide important consumer protection in terms of ensuring reliability and accountability – just as important in rural areas as in urban ones. So we need to make sure that moves to flexibility do not prejudice these safeguards, or discourage conventional scheduled bus services. It may be that in some remote rural areas where there are few scheduled services, more relaxation of the rules will be appropriate.

- **We will consult on detailed proposals to relax registration requirements covering the specification of routes and timetables, so as to make it easier to run flexibly routed services, especially in the remoter rural areas less well served at present by scheduled services.**

Community transport and voluntary services

6.4.10. Community transport (that is, services run on a not-for-profit basis) has a key role in catering for needs which are difficult to meet through scheduled commercial services, as it can offer a tailored and personalised service. We want to see its expansion, and its greater integration with commercial services in rural areas.

Case studies – examples of community transport schemes

In **South Gloucestershire**, with a Rural Bus Challenge Fund contribution of £0.6million, a rural community transport co-ordination centre has been established. It provides a brokerage service matching vehicles with needs, minibus group hire, timetable information and research into car sharing and local transport needs. Dial-a-ride services introduced in October 1999 have proved highly successful. Registered users of the scheme have more than doubled in the first six months of the scheme with a similar increase in patronage. On a smaller scale, the Challenge has provided **South Yorkshire** with £30,000 to refurbish two community transport vehicles and the construction of a bus turning circle which has brought a bus service to the village of Thorpe-in-Balne. Funding has also provided for the introduction of radio communication to 30 commercial and community transport vehicles which will enable the development and introduction of flexible and demand responsive services in the area.

6.4.11. The relaxation in the rules on registration described in paragraph 6.4.9 above should help some community services, and transport services run by non-profit making bodies already benefit from a 'light touch' regulatory regime. For instance, they are already exempt from the requirements of operator licensing and instead only require a permit issued by a 'designated body' or a Traffic Commissioner. But the PIU *Rural Economies* report drew attention to other barriers, such

as the ban on employing paid drivers (under section 22 of the *Transport Act 1985*) – a rule that can prevent communities which have purchased a minibus from making full use of it because of problems finding enough volunteer drivers. Allowing voluntary minibuses to offer services to the wider travelling public (by broadening the ambit of section 19 of the *Transport Act 1985*) could also make these services more viable and provide a more seamless web of commercial and voluntary services to the public. To encourage further development of community transport schemes:

- **We will provide increased funding for good schemes through the Rural Bus Challenge Fund and the Rural Transport Partnership.** The parishes scheme described in paragraph 6.3.5. above can also be used to help such services;
- **We will consult on proposals to broaden the eligibility for Fuel Duty Rebate, with the intention of having new rules in place for the 2001–02 financial year;**
- **We will review the notice period which community-based services are required to give before starting or withdrawing a registered service;**
- **We will also consult shortly on possible changes to the rules (eg on using paid drivers) so as to reduce the barriers to further expansion of the community transport sector.**

6.4.12. We need to make sure that in doing so essential safety standards are retained. It will be important to work with the community transport sector to ensure that quality of service, driver professionalism and safety standards are maintained, and improved where necessary, as the sector expands.

Rail services

6.4.13. Rural areas are now less well served by railways and where rural lines do exist they are unlikely to be profitable. That said, rail access can bring many benefits to rural communities, by making local businesses more competitive; reducing the amount of traffic – passenger and freight – on the roads; and, in some cases such as the Settle–Carlisle line, offering a tourist attraction in their own right. We want to see rail playing its full part in rural transport.

6.4.14. The level of franchised passenger services on rural lines is protected by the Passenger Service Requirement (PSR).

- **The shadow Strategic Rail Authority has announced that replacement franchises will be required to meet at least the existing PSR.** This means that people living in rural areas will have the security of knowing that their trains are protected: operators can run more trains, but they cannot run fewer than set out in the PSR.

6.4.15. A study commissioned by the shadow Strategic Rail Authority into *Secondary Rail Lines*, many of which serve rural communities, was published last June. It recommended ways in which such lines could be developed, through micro-franchises. These could involve the main franchise operator subcontracting responsibility for particular branch lines to local rail companies, whose increased focus on promoting the line, the report argued, could bring benefits in terms of increased passenger numbers, better integrated services, reduced costs and a more dynamic and sustainable rural economy. We would like to see this idea taken forward.

6.4.16. Rail users also benefit from community rail partnerships: local authorities and local businesses working together to attract more people to rail and to promote rail to visiting tourists.

- In August 2000 additional funding of £220,000 over 3 years was announced to support **Community Rail Partnerships** – to be provided jointly by the Countryside Agency, the Strategic Rail Authority and the Esmee Fairbairn Charitable Foundation.

Case study – Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership

The Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership, funded by local authorities, has helped establish and promote easier access to Dartmoor, with bus links and the restoration of a freight line to carry passenger trains for tourists at weekends in the summer. Quality promotional literature helps to promote green tourism and reduce the pressure on rural roads in the two counties.



Looe Valley Line – A case study for micro franchising (see 6.4.15)
Credit: Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership

6.4.17. The Rail Passenger Partnership (RRP) Scheme resourced at £105m over 3 years to 2002, administered through the SRA, funds projects which promote integrated transport and modal shift to rail.

- To make the scheme more responsive to local circumstances, a fast track **Rail Passenger Partnership bidding process** has been introduced, which allows for less formal and faster consideration and approval of smaller schemes.

Case study – Esk Valley Line

RPP funds have enabled the Esk Valley Line in North Yorkshire to operate a Sunday service throughout the year for local people and tourists visiting the North York Moors National Park. Previously trains ran only at the height of the summer.



Esk Valley line – the afternoon train at Egton
Credit: Neil Buxton

6.5. Better local transport planning and information

Co-ordinating services

6.5.1. A key objective for the Government is that local transport planning should reflect wide consultation and that there should be stronger and more pro-active co-ordination and integration of different transport services and modes. Local Transport Plans are central to achieving this. Our guidance on Local Transport Plans requires local authorities to identify the particular needs of rural areas; to develop targeted measures for dealing with them; and to develop consultation methods which tap into the views of all sections of the community including the use of their community planning powers contained in the *Local Government Act 2000* (chapter 12).

Case study – Lake District Transport Strategy

In the Lake District National Park, integrated transport planning is part of a wider strategy. The Lake District Transport Strategy aims to promote economic prosperity through tourism, to protect the environment and to combat social exclusion by engaging communities in developing services which meet the needs of local people.

Measures include a coach drivers' handbook about how to avoid unsuitable minor roads; interchange arrangements between trains and buses within the National Park to make it easier for visitors to get to the main sights by public transport; and park and ride schemes at strategic transport routes into the National Park.

6.5.2. In our *Transport Bill* we are emphasising and restating the requirement that, in exercising their powers to subsidise bus services, local authorities should co-operate with local education authorities and authorities with social service responsibilities. They also have a duty to take account of the transport needs of those authorities in formulating their general transport policies for their areas. Joint working of this kind – often through transport co-ordination centres – has opened up new opportunities to meet the needs of people in the communities being served and has delivered savings in terms of economies of scale and greater efficiency.

Case study – Devon Transport Co-ordination Service

Devon CC's Transport Co-ordination Service, set up in 1986, co-ordinates transport services across the whole of the County's functions – local bus services, school transport, social services transport and the in-house fleet. Over time, working closely with the local Health Authority, public transport operators and community transport groups, opportunities have been taken to introduce more flexibility in the way in which the county responds to the transport needs of people in rural Devon, and to develop new services to meet needs identified in conjunction with local communities. For example, merging education, transport and local bus services on some routes, has given school children more flexibility to stay on for after school activities and provides more travel choice for post 16 students as well as enhanced bus services for the general public. Similarly, through use of accessible minibuses jointly for social service and community transport provision the County has been able to offer an increased level of service to many rural communities.

- The Government will be looking at how **Local Transport Plans** can be used to identify and highlight **best practice in addressing rural transport issues** and we will be examining bids from a number of local authorities for Centres of Excellence status for rural transport in addition to the development of the Centre of Excellence for rural transport in Cornwall;
- The Countryside Agency will launch a good practice guide so that local authorities, operators and community groups can be better informed about what works, and can benefit from lessons learnt elsewhere.

Better transport information and ticketing

6.5.3. Public transport users and potential users often complain that information about services is difficult to access, incomplete or inaccurate or too narrowly focused on one mode or operator. New information and communications technologies offer one means of providing better information and marketing of services. A telephone-based 'Traveline' information service has now been switched on region by region in England and Wales. This is a step towards an internet based comprehensive transport information and retailing service

"Transport Direct" which the Government plans to see established by 2003. In addition:

- New powers in the *Transport Bill* will give local authorities power to require bus companies to provide and display information about their services. In rural areas, these powers may be used to ensure that integrated information is available in villages, for instance displayed in post offices;
- We will look to local authorities to demonstrate in their Local Transport Plans how, working with others, they are achieving improvements in information and other service quality issues, such as through ticketing and good interchange arrangements between modes.

Case study – www.travelcumbria.co.uk

TravelCumbria is an innovative web-based project designed to encourage visitors to the Lake District and the use of public transport by providing an interactive source of information linking accommodation, travel and tourist attractions. The site includes detailed information about public transport in the Lake District.

6.6. Improving rural road safety and reducing the impact of traffic in the countryside

Road safety

6.6.1. Public concern about road safety in rural areas is growing. Levels of traffic are increasing faster on rural roads than on urban roads. Although casualty rates nationally are falling, this is happening at a slower rate on rural roads. Road accidents on rural roads are more likely to be fatal, for all types of road users, than in towns. With the growth in countryside recreation, rural roads also have to cater for an increasing mix of users such as cyclists, walkers and horse riders.

6.6.2. The Local Transport Plans which local authorities produce in consultation with local communities will include local targets for reducing road casualties. To support the efforts of local authorities we will be implementing a programme of actions set out in our road safety strategy *Tomorrow's Roads*.

- We believe that the national 60mph speed limit is too high for some poor quality rural roads and lanes. We are developing a systematic way of assessing traffic demands on different types of rural road, so that the right speed limits can be imposed on the right roads. We are planning to develop **a simpler system of setting speed limits** which preserves adequate consultation with local people.
- In villages, we believe 30mph should be the norm, supported by traffic calming measures. Some authorities have taken action already. On the basis of experience, we will develop general **guidance** for issue in 2002.
- We are also promoting **traffic calming** more generally in villages – studies have shown that this can reduce all injury accidents by 25% and accidents involving death and injury by 50%. We have published new guidance and expect local authorities to include appropriate measures in their capital programmes from April 2001.
- We are looking for **new types of speed limit** signing for rural areas, which are both effective and fit in with the rural landscape. This will respond to concern that current speed restriction signs are often inappropriate for a rural environment.
- Some predominantly rural authorities are taking part with the police and Highways Agency in our **pilot scheme for funding the operation of speed cameras from fine revenue**. We will have early results of that this year. If they are successful, we will be looking to extend them and it may be possible for parishes to initiate or join partnerships to operate cameras, involving the police, the local highway authority, and the courts;
- On faster rural roads at locations where collisions are most common, such as junctions and bends, **we are developing measures for reducing vehicle speeds** (like vehicle activated warning signs); advice will be available in summer 2001.



Traffic-calming measure in the New Forest
Credit: The Countryside Agency – Chris Blandford Associates

Tackling the problems of too much traffic

6.6.3. High volumes of traffic may be relatively uncommon in rural areas but where problems exist they can be acute – for instance where a main road goes through a village or small town. Some 50 new bypasses will take through traffic out of some of the worst affected towns and villages. But by-passes are not always possible and will not solve all problems. In National Parks, these are a variety of other measures that can be taken to alleviate the effects of traffic. The box in Section 6.5 describes the Lake District Transport Strategy; and the box in tourism and transport in Chapter 11 also gives examples.

Case study – Transport 2000

With Government support, **Transport 2000** is working on a project to develop strategic approaches for leisure based travel. The project's three outputs are: a model for reducing leisure travel by car in a tourist area (pilot in South Downs, East Sussex); a green travel plan for a specific leisure facility (pilot in Harewood House, near Leeds); and a good practice guide (to be launched next year) on reducing car use for leisure trips.

Reducing the impact of lorry traffic

6.6.4. Rural areas need to be protected wherever possible from the environmental effects of heavy lorries. Problems can occur with deliveries in and access to market towns, as well as in larger towns and cities, and when lorries pass through small villages or use unsuitable minor roads. Lorries may have to

travel over local roads to access their point of origin or destination but should generally otherwise use the existing network of 'primary routes' comprising all green-signed roads, trunk roads and motorways.

6.6.5. There are a number of initiatives that can assist in reducing the impacts of lorry movements, for example:

- Freight quality partnerships can help by addressing freight traffic issues in sensitive areas.
- Local authorities can use their greater responsibility for traffic management, to produce a vehicle routing strategy and can introduce lorry control plans, which fully consider the needs and impacts of lorry movements.
- We are encouraging businesses to improve the efficiency of their transport operations in ways, which also benefit the environment by reducing the number of vehicle movements.

Case studies – reducing the impact of lorry movements

In **Ripon**, a **Freight Quality Partnership** – involving local businesses and transport operators, local authorities, the police and local residents – is looking at freight traffic management issues in this historic market town. For example delivery windows for goods vehicles are being controlled on a voluntary goodwill basis to minimise conflict between HGVs and people.

Lorry controls have been introduced to approximately 70% of Leicestershire's roads.

The Plan, developed after a review of the existing road hierarchy, limits access to controlled areas for commercial vehicles over 7.5 tonnes, except for loading and unloading.

Computerised Vehicle Routing and Scheduling Systems (CVRS) are increasingly being used by industry to improve the efficiency of their transport operations. By automating the matching of customer locations and quantities and types of goods to be transported, CVRS can bring cost savings and reliability improvements for business and benefits for the environment in terms of reduced lorry mileage. Safeway's use of CVRS for its national delivery operation has resulted in an 18% reduction in km travelled.

Encouraging cycling and walking

6.6.6. The measures to improve road safety and reduce traffic impacts will make it easier and safer for cyclists and walkers to use rural roads. Increased spending on road maintenance (see paragraph 7.5.6) will also improve conditions for cyclists and pedestrians. In addition, we expect all highway authorities in England and Wales to include cycling and walking strategies in their local transport plans. The Lottery funded National Cycle Network, launched in June 2000, will help to promote cycling in rural areas by linking town and country. Once it is complete, one third of our population will live within two miles of the National Cycle Network. Cycling for leisure can help to boost tourism in rural areas, and better cycling facilities open up opportunities for people living in rural areas. Assistance is being provided for the promotion of integrated and sustainable transport involving combined bicycle and rail, and bicycle and bus journeys.

6.6.7. The **Quiet Lanes project** is an initiative of the Countryside Agency. Pilot schemes are being undertaken in Norfolk and Kent following consultation with local communities, using existing legislative powers. The aim is to make selected country lanes more attractive for walking, cycling, and horse riding in the interests of a more tranquil and attractive rural environment.

- We have added a clause to the Transport Bill which will give legal status to quiet lanes. **Local authorities will be able to designate roads as quiet lanes** and to make orders affecting the way they are used and providing for speed reduction measures in them.



Quiet lanes, Norfolk Pilot project
Credit: Norfolk County Council



Truronian bus/bike rack
Credit: Truronian Ltd

Case studies – facilitating leisure on rural roads

Anglia Railways has recently received Rail Passenger Partnership funding to provide additional cycle parking at stations along its network.

Truronian Bus now operate buses serving Helston and The Lizard in South Cornwall, with funding from the County Council, Railtrack and the Rural Bus Challenge, specifically designed to connect with local rail services with an integrated timetable and through ticketing. The buses have been designed with purpose built cycle racks, and the route has become the first bus route in the country to win the National Cycle Marker, an award previously only ever given to rail services.

A Working Group of the National Cycling Forum is looking at examples of best practice in combined bicycle and bus initiatives.



Part 1

a *living* countryside

– objectives and spending

Objectives:

- To maintain and stimulate communities, and secure access to services which is equitable in all the circumstances, for those who live or work in the countryside.
- To facilitate the development of dynamic, competitive and sustainable economies in the countryside, tackling poverty in rural areas.

| £m | Spending (£ million) | | | |
|--|----------------------|---------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| | 1996–7 | 2000–01 | Projected for 2003–4 | Projected 2001/2–2003/4 |
| Support for Small Schools | – | 60 | (note 1) | |
| Village Shops Rate Relief | – | 4 | (note 2) | |
| Countryside Agency (services/social exclusion) | n/a | 4 | 4 | 12 |
| Post Office Network improvements (partly rural) | | | £270m over 3 years | 270 |
| Community Services Fund | – | – | 8 | 15 |
| NHS Primary Care facilities in rural areas (capital expenditure including public-private partnerships) | | | up to £100m over 3 years | 100 |
| Police Modernisation Fund (rural) | – | 15 | 32 | 45 |
| Neighbourhood Renewal Fund | – | – | 6 | |
| Housing Corporation Approved Development Programme | 105 | 90 | 120 | 300 |
| Local Authority housing programmes (rural districts) | 245 | 360 | c £400m (note 3) | |
| Rural Bus Subsidy Grant | – | 33 | 48 | 132 |
| Rural Bus Challenge | – | 20 | 21 | 60 |
| Rural Transport Funds (Countryside Agency) | 1 | 6 | 12 | 32 |
| Parish Transport Fund | – | – | 8 | 15 |

Note 1 Will continue but budget not yet set.

Note 2 Will increase in light of decisions on consultation (see 3.2.3)

Note 3 Outcome depends on local authority investment decisions. Central Government support will be increased by 40% nationally over next 3 years.