

# **Integrated Rural Strategies**

## **Good Practice Guide**

**The Royal Town Planning Institute**

# Acknowledgements

This Good Practice Guide was written by Phil Turner, a member of the Institute's Countryside and Natural Environment Panel. Charlotte Hursey undertook to survey the Rural Community Councils.

The Royal Town Planning Institute wishes to acknowledge the financial support of English Nature and the Countryside Agency and the assistance of their staff, those of the former Countryside Commission and Rural Development Commission, and advice from the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions.

The Institute also acknowledges the contributions of the lead authorities for the examples of good practice, for which copyright has been given.

Finally, thanks are given to all members of the Countryside and Natural Environment Panel, all other panels of the Institute and Institute staff who were involved in some way with this Good Practice Guide.

## **RTPI Countryside and Natural Environment Panel**

### *Members*

Trevor Cherrett MRTPI (Sussex Rural Community Council)  
Mark Southgate (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds)  
Phil Turner MRTPI (Consultant)  
Philip Watts MRTPI (Retired)  
Jeremy Worth (Countryside Agency)

### *Secretary*

Laura Rheiter MRTPI (RTPI Planning Practice Officer)

March 2000

The Royal Town Planning Institute

© March 2000

The Royal Town Planning Institute

Registered Charity no.262865

Published by the Royal Town Planning Institute, 26 Portland Place, London W1N 4BE

Typeset in Times by Curran Publishing Services

Printed by M.F. Barnwell, Aylsham, Norfolk.

ISBN 1-902311-17-5

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by means electronic, electrostatic, magnetic tape, photocopying or otherwise, without permission in writing from the Royal Town Planning Institute.

Information received up to May 1999 has been used in the text and references. This publication is based on research undertaken for the RTPI (by telephone and a questionnaire to Rural Community Councils) during the latter half of 1998 by Charlotte Hursey and augmented by Phil Turner of the RTPI Countryside and Natural Environment Panel. Study of the archive of Rural Development Programme strategies in Malvern was made possible by Jo Lavis and the great assistance of Kay Homer of the RDC.

The summaries of information gathered by the research may be studied for the detail of scope, aims, action plans and participative processes by making an appointment with the Member Services Department at:

The Royal Town Planning Institute,  
26 Portland Place, London W1N 4BE  
Tel: 020 7636 9107  
Fax 020 7323 1582  
E-mail : [online@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:online@rtpi.org.uk)

# Contents

	page
<b>One About this Good Practice Guide</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>What territory is covered by a rural strategy?</i>	<i>6</i>
<b>Two Scope of rural strategies</b>	<b>9</b>
<i>Content</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Integration across the interests of all sectors</i>	<i>10</i>
<b>Three Why prepare an integrated rural strategy?</b>	<b>11</b>
<i>Managing change</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Enterprise and activity</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Agriculture: change, diversification and flexibility</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Population change</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Environmental change</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Leisure</i>	<i>14</i>
<b>Four Policy contexts</b>	<b>15</b>
<i>Why a rural strategy for all areas?</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>European context</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>National context</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Perspectives in the UK</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Regional context</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Local context</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Sustainable development</i>	<i>18</i>
<b>Five Role and scope of planning</b>	<b>20</b>
<i>Scope of the planning system</i>	<i>20</i>
<b>Six Good practice</b>	<b>24</b>
<i>What is good practice?</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Achieving consensus</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Detail, diversity, distinctiveness and definition</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Capacity building</i>	<i>25</i>
<b>Seven Position in the UK</b>	<b>27</b>
<i>Rural strategies in England</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>Scotland</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>Wales</i>	<i>37</i>
<i>Northern Ireland</i>	<i>39</i>
<b>Eight How to carry out a rural strategy</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Nine The task ahead</b>	<b>48</b>

<b>Appendix One</b>	Supplementary Guidance to Regional Development Agencies on rural policy	<b>49</b>
<b>Appendix Two</b>	Europe	<b>52</b>
	<i>The Cork Declaration: A Living Countryside</i>	52
<b>Appendix Three</b>	Europe 2000	<b>54</b>
	<i>Structural Funds</i>	54
	<i>The Rural Development Menu</i>	54
	<i>Article 33 of the Rural Development Regulation</i>	55
<b>Appendix Four</b>	Previous guidance on rural strategies	<b>56</b>
	<i>England</i>	56
	<i>Scotland</i>	56
	<i>Wales</i>	56
<b>References</b>		<b>57</b>
<b>Maps</b>	England	29
	Scotland	30
	Wales	31
	Northern Ireland	31

# Chapter One

## About this Good Practice Guide

1.1 The Royal Town Planning Institute offers this Good Practice Guide to inspire and assist all those concerned in the public, private and voluntary sectors, towards effective processes in, and the implementation of, integrated rural strategies. This is particularly important in this period of much political change when there is a focus upon policy and programmes for rural development.

1.2 The guide aims to promote the benefits of integrated rural strategies. This publication covers the rationale:

- what an integrated rural strategy (IRS) is
- where it might apply
- why and when one might be needed
- how the process of preparing one might be undertaken
- where the good practice examples may be found
- who the key performers are in partnerships.

The guide draws heavily on the English experience of rural strategies which cover areas smaller than regions: counties, districts and the areas of unitary authorities. It points to opportunities for integrated rural strategies in influencing policies and action at all levels, from European to local, with references to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

1.3 The planning process for urban and rural areas is firmly based on Statutory Development Plans (Structure, Local and Unitary Plans). Strategies for rural areas are non-statutory, although they may be adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance by planning authorities, who may also incorporate relevant policies from rural strategies into their development plans.

1.4 In particular, this publication is intended to inform and influence rural practice by members of the Institute. Professional planners are developing particular skills for working in an integrated way across issues of policy for future directions of economic activity, for resolution of environmental conflicts, for addressing social aspects and for the provision of community facilities. Planners are also involved in the implementation of policy through programmes of action. Whether they are employed in local authorities, private practice, agencies, development companies or the voluntary sector, they can assist partnerships which steer rural strategies.

1.5 In 1997 three government agencies jointly published a Rural Strategies Information Pack<sup>2</sup> which captured the “state of the art” rural strategy processes in England. For Scotland, guidance on preparing rural strategies was also issued in 1997<sup>3</sup>. (See Appendix Four.) The summary of the English guidance concluded that, to date, rural strategies had failed to lead co-ordinated action on the ground. This is now the challenge to be achieved by partnership and networking.

1.6 Since then local authorities, including district and unitary councils embarking upon rural strategies for the first time, have called for information on the scope of previous strategies, wishing to know how they might avoid having to re-invent the wheel. This Good Practice Guide is aimed at meeting that need. It takes forward the 1997 pack in a new form.

### **Good Practice Example 1**

#### **Cherwell, Oxfordshire<sup>1</sup>**

The first English district council to produce a rural strategy

*The strategy operates as an “informed basis for supporting rural communities through co-ordination and enhancement of service provisions and by targeting resources”.*

#### Research

*ECOTEC Research and Consulting Limited were commissioned to research economic, social and environmental issues.*

*An opinion survey was conducted through parish councils and post offices with a sample survey of rural businesses and postal correspondence with a range of local and other organisations, plus telephone interviews.*

Six key themes of principles and actions:

- *co-ordination and co-operation*
- *joint use of facilities and personnel*
- *empowering voluntary efforts*
- *information exchange*
- *increasing local accessibility and mobility*
- *local solutions for local situations*

Eleven major issues, from agriculture and countryside to leisure and recreation.

*“Helping to Shape the Future”, rural issues document and questionnaire was circulated widely in 1997. Topics were mainly related to land use issues:*

- *housing*
- *rural economy*

*“The Countryside – An Update” (August 1998) provides information on thirty-five (of thirty-seven) specific actions in the strategy which have been achieved.*

## **What territory is covered by a rural strategy?**

1.7 A point made at the 1996 seminar<sup>4</sup> organised by the three English agencies and attended by practitioners, was that there could be merit in strategies which cross local authority boundaries. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plans, for example, span more than one county, involve inter-authority working groups, and are increasingly addressing social and economic concerns as well as environmental issues. This also applies to adjoining areas of coast and estuaries, to other natural habitat/landscape features such as uplands and river corridors and to river catchments which are the subject of Local Environment Agency Plans (LEAPs).

### **Good Practice Example 2**

#### **South Oxfordshire<sup>5</sup>**

Using consultants to research the information and issues.

*The study has involved:*

- *preparation of a Gazetteer presenting key statistics and information for the district’s rural areas*
- *identification and prioritisation of the issues facing the rural community in the district, through widespread consultations with statutory and voluntary agencies, and consultations with the community, including parish councils*
- *identification of objectives to address the priority issues highlighted by the consultations*

- *development of a comprehensive and realistic action plan for implementing measures to achieve the*
- *development of recommendations for the way that the District Council should monitor progress in achieving the objectives and targets set.*

1.8 Rural strategies have generally been prepared for areas within regions: typically, in England, some shire counties and all Rural Development Areas (some across more than one county). More recently, however, strategies have been produced for district council areas. Their geographical scale reflects the particular political, economic and social:

- designation according to European policy and structural funding measures
- national policy and guidance as set out in government white papers and planning policy guidance
- regional planning policy and the roles of government agencies
- local government structure, functions and capabilities, including the scope and status of Statutory Development Plans
- influence and aspirations of communities and organisations at the most local of levels in rural areas.

### **Good Practice Example 3**

#### **Kent<sup>6</sup>**

*“Further towards integration”*

*Initially published in 1990, the Countryside Strategy was first reviewed in 1994. Influences quoted are the Rio Earth Summit and Local Agenda 21, Common Agricultural Policy review, Rural White Paper and Housing White Paper 1995. The increased level of integration is reflected in several aspects.*

*Vision: the “aim of the Countryside Strategy is to work towards an environmentally, socially and economically sustainable countryside”.*

Strategic themes are:

- *sustainable countryside*
- *rural economy*
- *viable rural communities*
- *quality of life*
- *countryside character and rural heritage*
- *enjoyment of the countryside*
- *working together*
- *community involvement and action.*

Achievements, context, issues, objectives and actions include:

- *agriculture and horticulture*
- *woodland; services and facilities*
- *recreation*
- *access and tourism*
- *environmental management.*

*Appendix Two contains a list of sixty-nine sustainability indicators for Kent across social, environmental and economic issues.*

*Each issue area contains general and specific action points and identifies agencies. There is Kent Countryside Forum comprises some thirty statutory, private and voluntary bodies. The emphasis of the strategy is on the physical and natural environment, although the socio-economic sections have a broad view.*

# Chapter Two

## Scope of rural strategies

### Content

2.1 The range of issues covered in a strategy will be wider than the remit of Statutory Development Plans. It may cover health, community care, education, local facilities, housing (particularly meeting the need for affordable housing), employment and recreation as well as land use, transport and the environment. The consequences of meeting leisure and tourism objectives, in the countryside, around towns, in National Parks, AONBs and in coastal areas are likely to be significant. Issues related to water resources and mineral extraction may also be important in some areas.

#### Scope of strategies

##### Issues covered

*Those strategies which are for other than Rural Development Areas tend to focus upon environmental concerns. The Berkshire Strategy, led by the Rural Community Council, has a social and economic emphasis. The scope of issues in all types of strategy is tending towards comprehensive coverage of social, economic and environmental issues and actions to be taken.*

Least frequently mentioned aspects include:

- *culture: this is a strong feature of European rural development initiatives and the English language meaning of the word differs. Few references except to landscape and other physical heritage.*
- *health: many strategies have only general references to community care.*
- *access: for people with disabilities and for people from ethnic minority groups.*
- *rural crime and security: although the Basingstoke and Deane consultative draft has addressed these issues and West Oxfordshire, a largely rural district without a specific rural strategy, has community safety among its key strategies related to the authority's corporate planning and a rural issues debate linked to the Local Plan Review.*
- *transportation related to training: young and older people find it impossible to attend evening classes if there are no buses running.*

This last item is one example of the way in which issues such as access, learning, social inclusion, training for skills development and environmental management, community activity and facilities can all be inter-related across sectoral responsibilities.

#### Good Practice Example 4

##### Northumberland Rural Development Strategy<sup>1</sup>

A whole county approach in a Rural Development Programme

*The strategy for the designated Rural Development Area (RDA) has the unusual feature of including opportunities for action in other rural areas of the county which are nearly all eligible for Development Area and Intermediate Area support.*

*The actions to be implemented are in the Operating Plans on a three-year cycle.*

*A special section is given to implementation:*

- *encouraging partnership, action to stimulate integration and participation by community/voluntary sectors*

- *maximising funding to local communities from European level and from private sector and grant-*

*The scope of the issues is greatest in the economy and employment, as would be expected of an RDA, but it extends across all sectors, for example: community initiatives; special needs housing; childcare; sustaining traditional industries; fishing; strategic transport, mobility and access; effective use of leisure and recreation premises; traditional culture; arts; integration of information and advice services; village surgeries and specialist health services; agri-environment and urban voluntary outreach services.*

## Integration across the interests of all sectors

2.2 Integration is a keyword. Integrated thinking and integrated strategies are crucial for national and European policies and programmes. *Vertical* integration, between activities at European, national, regional, sub-regional and local levels, is essential for the success of implementation. *Horizontally*, departments and sections of bodies, from government departments to charitable organisations, need to recognise the rural dimensions and implications of their work, and the importance of integrating urban and rural policies. Horizontal integration, between economic, social and environmental interests, and between statutory, private and voluntary bodies, working in partnership, is emphasised in this Good Practice Guide.

# Chapter Three

## Why prepare an integrated rural strategy?

### Managing change

3.1 Most strategies are initiated as a response to changes in rural areas, identifying needs to be met and the resources to meet them.

### Enterprise and activity

3.2 Because regional and European strategies are founded on economic sustainability, this aspect is worth closer examination at sub-regional levels, in relation to the other two legs of the “three-legged stool”: community and the environment. The Countryside Agency produces information on the whole range of economic activity and needs in rural areas, nationally and locally.

### Agriculture: change, diversification and flexibility

3.3 Farming will continue to influence rural areas. There remains a “need for a viable and competitive agricultural sector to underpin the rural economy. . . . Despite a decline of 20% in agricultural employment in the South East [of England] in the last ten years, there were still nearly 60,000 people employed in agriculture in the region in 1997. . . . Farming is fundamental to the rural economy and prosperity in the South East and is the most effective mechanism to conserve the countryside and rural landscape . . . it is vital that the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is changed in a way which does not have severe direct and indirect effects on the region’s rural economy and social fabric.”<sup>1</sup>

#### Good Practice Example 5

##### Stratford-on-Avon, Warwickshire<sup>2</sup>

Information – for decisions

*“In putting together the Rural Strategy, two aspects have become clear. First, that the base of information about rural communities could be vastly improved to assist decision-making and co-ordination. Second, that the information about the support and assistance available from the District Council and our partners which is required by local people, is patchy and sometimes difficult to obtain. These two issues are addressed in the Strategy.”*

*The twelve page adopted Rural Strategy has four key issues which affect quality of life:*

- *the provision and price of housing*
- *the local economy – especially local job opportunities*
- *the availability of essential local services and facilities*
- *accessibility to those homes, jobs and services.*

*A programme summary has thirty-six main actions for the first year and Action Sheets detail issues, aims, project leaders and the Panel/Committee responsible, process targets and outcome targets, with implications for future years. Key partners in delivering the strategy are identified. Future effectiveness and the wide scope of key issues and existing services being undertaken is shown.*

3.4 Agriculture, in the second half of the twentieth century, has had a diminishing role in the economic activity of rural areas. Much agricultural activity in the UK is exempt from planning controls, because it is not defined as development. As farmers and landowners have become less

reliant on food production for their income and survival, they have proposed other kinds of enterprise and employment.

3.5 There is evidence of good performance by local planning authorities in allowing rural diversification in a positive response to guidance in the 1992 version of Planning Policy Guidance<sup>7</sup> (PPG7). However, the researchers (Oxford Brookes University for the Department of the Environment)<sup>3</sup> found that many local authority decision makers still have too little information on local economic needs in rural areas, including agricultural performance. Such information is needed to inform policy-making (including land use and transportation), and will be essential to the integrated rural strategy process.

3.6 A more recent study by the Oxford Brookes team, funded by the Rural Development Commission, concluded that “The rural economy was not identified as a key policy issue in most structure plans, despite it being seen as a key issue in national planning guidance (PPG12). . . . Local plans contain general policy statements supporting the principle of encouraging rural business and economic diversification, but the wording of detailed policies tends to be more restrictive than government guidance (PPG74). Local plans tend to identify development sites in larger settlements . . . [and] . . . generally restrict development to small-scale developments or certain types of business. They contain a strong preference for the re-use of existing buildings and only 44% of local plans accept that new buildings may play a part in rural diversification.”

3.7 National Parks, in exercising their functions, have a statutory duty to foster the economic and social well-being of their areas. “Many local plans also contain strict policies on the expansion of existing businesses. Policies for economic diversification are stricter in National Parks, reflecting their statutory purpose. Structure plans covering Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) . . . refer to economic and social needs in these areas, but under half of local plans covering AONBs mention the need to take these into account.”<sup>5</sup> Government policy is to encourage no distinction between the two types of area designated. The study for the RDC recommended that “local authorities should be encouraged to audit the economy in AONB areas, to inform their planning decisions. National Parks should carry out a socio-economic audit of their activities and be able to use some of their budgets for economic and social development”.

3.8 There are serious doubts about the viability of animal farming in terms of maintaining the grazing regimes essential to the chalk grassland habitats of the Sussex Downs AONB. The Weald, in Sussex and Kent, is an example of a marginal farming area with magnificent landscapes largely created and managed by woodland and farming, both of which have an uncertain economic future. These concerns are even more acutely felt in the hill-farming landscapes of Wales, Scotland and Northern England. Changes in the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in 1999 may trigger change. One possibility may be additional tree cover of rural land.

3.9 Farming continues to face uncertainty. There will be greater competition from world markets and a critical round of negotiation in the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Whatever the proposed European funding regimes may hold out for farmers in the existing Member States, the extension of Community membership will bring competition from those Central and Eastern European states whose fertile soils will offer potential advantages when their access to markets is improved.

3.10 Flexibility will be needed to adapt to whatever animal husbandry and cropping might give the greatest financial return. Consumer demands for cheap goods will drive production and delivery methods. Preferences for organic and “animal friendly” practices may strengthen the trend towards using land in non-intensive ways. Growing of energy crops, rather than food, may increase. The pattern of agriculture in Britain’s landscape has been changing over centuries; the prospect now is accelerated change.

## Population change

3.11 Urban and rural areas are interdependent. Space is needed to accommodate households to the year 2016 and beyond; the pressures on rural areas in England to provide a proportion of this are well documented elsewhere. Land will also be required for associated employment, transportation and other infrastructure. Houses and job opportunities should be considered together with the aim of reducing commuting. Some rural strategies and development plans seek to concentrate new housing at existing settlements which have service provision readily available and advantages in reduction of travel distances. Others recognise that almost every village has a need for housing for local people to retain and enhance the social mix and to sustain village services.

### **Good Practice Example 6**

#### **Basingstoke and Deane, Hampshire<sup>6</sup>**

*The strategy covers farming, community, health and crime, in addition to land use, transport and development issues.*

##### **Farming**

*One impetus was the Hampshire Farming Study<sup>7</sup> as well as the 1995 Rural White Paper, PPG1 and PPG7. The rural strategy, covering rural wards, was given priority under the 1998/99 Corporate Strategy “Planning for a Sustainable Future”.*

*Demographic, service and other information underpins the work, which is related to the Council’s “How Shall We Live” initiative.*

*Examples of draft target areas and issues include:*

##### **Community**

- *maximising benefits to rural residents through careful targeting of limited resources*
- *providing for the special needs of the disadvantaged and the elderly*
- *imbalances in the provision of childcare facilities*
- *improving the quality and awareness of information on local goods, services and clubs.*

##### **Health**

- *improving access to health and social care facilities for all rural residents, especially the elderly or deprived*
- *maintaining those in ill health within their own homes and communities.*
- *improving access for the disabled in the rural area.*

##### **Crime**

- *combating rural crime and improving safety and security for rural residents and their belongings.*

##### **Results of consultation**

*Ranked in order of importance in responses to a questionnaire:<sup>8</sup>*

- *meet transport needs in a predominantly car-dependent rural population by the most sustainable means possible*
- *maintain balanced, active rural communities*
- *maximise the availability and potential of rural facilities and services*
- *accommodate the changing needs of agriculture whilst minimising its adverse aspects*
- *sustain existing rural businesses that provide local employment, and encourage appropriate new ones*
- *provide for high quality new development in appropriate locations to meet the needs of the rural population*
- *provide for the special needs of young rural residents*
- *sustain existing retail services that meet the needs of the rural population and encourage appropriate new ones*

- *provide for the recreation needs of rural residents whilst accommodating wider demands for*
- *meet the health and safety needs of the rural population.*

## Environmental change

3.12 Many current environmental concerns reflect the need for management of countryside and coast in the short term, with the longer term in view. Short-term environmental change is relatively well understood but it currently lacks a range of mechanisms that help to move this understanding into policy. Approaches such as English Nature's Natural Areas programme, the clear targets set in Biodiversity Action Plans at both national and local levels, countryside character and environmental capital can all play their part. Understanding longer-term environmental change will inevitably embrace the implications of global warming. Few strategies to date have begun to address the impact of managed retreat on lowland coastal habitats and the possible adjustments, even greater than CAP reform, that farming will have to face as world production capabilities and markets change. These are problems which local planning authorities will have to come to grips with in rural strategy work.

## Leisure

3.13 One of the most significant links between urban and rural areas is the demand for leisure and recreation, whether informal or market driven. The countryside is seen as a playground for those who make trips from the towns and cities. The urban fringe has a strong role to play in reducing both the distance of travel and the impact of visitors upon more sensitive countryside. The leisure patterns of rural residents are more complex. Village appraisals can reveal a diverse interaction between places of residence and centres of leisure provision.

3.14 Scottish guidance<sup>9</sup> states: "Residents in rural areas have similar needs for sport and recreation (to) those in towns and cities, but the provision of facilities has to be tailored to the smaller and more widely scattered population. Existing schools, village halls and the re-use of farm buildings can help provide facilities for community use. The provision of sport and recreation facilities in rural areas also contributes to the economy of rural areas and enhances the quality of life for residents."

## Chapter Four

### Policy contexts

#### Why a rural strategy for all areas?

4.1 A recent publication, *The Countryside – A Rural Strategy*<sup>1</sup> advised that: “An integrated rural strategy with a European dimension is needed at both national and regional level” and there should be “mandatory Rural Strategy Plans” at sub-regional levels. The RTPI believes that, for rural areas, development plans and integrated rural strategies should be developed and implemented in parallel, as two essential, interdependent elements of a strong, integrated planning system at national, regional, strategic and local level.<sup>2</sup> Logically, every rural area should have an integrated strategy.<sup>3</sup>

#### European context

4.2 Extension of the 1992 reforms of the CAP will move away from general price and production support to farmers towards direct payments for agri-environmental measures. This will influence opportunities for diversification of activity in rural areas and may even embrace rural social and economic development. This would require a more coherent rural policy to accompany the process. The 1996 *Cork Declaration*<sup>4</sup> (see Appendix Two) called for an integrated rural development policy.

4.3 The reform of European Union (EU) structural funding mechanisms, Agenda 2000<sup>5</sup>, will affect all rural areas. The conclusions of the European Council in Berlin<sup>6</sup> set out a new financial perspective and confirmed agricultural guidelines for the reform of CAP approved by the European Parliament.

4.4 It remains to be seen how far the Agenda 2000 changes will result in a truly integrated development approach at European level, within and beyond the farm gate. Initiatives in the UK will be necessary to achieve a vision of the future for rural areas and rural communities, from national to parish level. Funding from European Commission sources<sup>7</sup> will increasingly call for a clear identification of rural priorities and the relationship between urban and rural areas<sup>8</sup> in all parts of the countryside, not just the present Rural Development Areas.

4.5 The Rural Development Regulation<sup>9</sup> (see Appendix Three) requires all parts of Europe to have a Rural Development Plan and Programme. Such plans have to be submitted by Member States. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) will do this in November 1999. Whether these are strategies at national or regional levels (or combined), they will be significant in deciding priorities for funding in rural Europe. Under the new Objective 3, EU funds from agricultural sources may be applied across all rural areas towards both rural development and agri-environmental measures.

4.6 The European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) documents were seen by ministers “as a basis for political discussion on how European spatial policy can contribute to the integration of cohesion, sustainability and global competitiveness . . . introducing a more integrated, multi-sectoral approach to policies to influence spatial development at the cross-border, transnational and European level”.<sup>10</sup> The ESDP of 1997 also said that “Spatial development strategies in rural areas must . . . adapt to local features, and have to be based on a reassessment of partnership between towns and the countryside.”

## National context

4.7 Changes to structures and policies emerging at European, national and regional levels are influencing “joined up” thinking about rural areas. The many links between issues are approaching a critical mass and will demand some effort to promote understanding and ensure that the connections are being made. Local authorities occupy a vital position, between the “top down” and the “bottom up”. Much effort needs to be “middle in”<sup>11</sup> at sub-regional level, where local objectives often need policy mechanisms at national and regional level as an enabling framework.

4.8 The need to promote sustainable development in planning has been made clear in government guidance<sup>12</sup> and the government’s Sustainable Development Strategy of 1999 has an integrated approach and will influence approaches to rural development. There are four integrated objectives: social progress, environmental protection, responsible use of natural resources and economic growth. *Opportunities for Change*<sup>13</sup> stated that “sustainable development is all about . . . a new and integrated way of thinking about choices right across Government, and throughout society, so that we can share in the highest quality of life now, without passing on a poorer world to our children”. The paper considered “how to promote sustainable communities” and welcomed “views on measures to tackle rural deprivation, and on ways to combine development and conservation in smaller rural communities.”

## Perspectives in the UK

4.9 An integrated perspective is needed at the national levels in Europe, to provide a framework for the extensive changes to land use and economic activity in rural areas that may result from the reform of the CAP. This perspective is needed in addition to existing national planning policy guidance (in England, in particular, PPGs 7 and 12<sup>14</sup>). Needs and priorities will differ in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales over the range of economic, social, environmental and transport issues.

4.10 The White Papers of 1995 in England<sup>15</sup> and Scotland<sup>16</sup> and that for Wales in 1996,<sup>17</sup> marked the first comprehensive review of the future of rural areas since the 1942 Scott Report<sup>18</sup> which considered the future of agriculture and how to stem the “drift from the land”.

4.11 However, “The Government’s Rural White Paper . . . will set out more fully our new framework for rural policy. The new Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) will have a key role in ensuring that rural areas benefit from, and contribute to, the development of their region as a whole and taking forward the Government’s commitment to an integrated approach to rural policy”.<sup>19</sup> A new Strategic Statement for Rural Wales was issued for consultation in Autumn 1999.<sup>20</sup>

4.12 Similar documents will cover Scotland and Northern Ireland. The partnership approach in Scotland provides opportunities for strategic initiatives by local organisations.

4.13 *Planning Policy Guidance* PPG 7, as revised in February 1997, has a box headed “Rural Strategies, Appraisals and Agenda 21s”, above paragraph 2.10, which says: “Some local authorities have prepared non-statutory Rural Strategies, in partnership with other bodies and local communities. Comprehensive strategies for responding to rural needs which integrate conservation with economic and social development should be taken into account in preparing development plans. The countryside agencies have published guidelines on rural strategies.<sup>21</sup> Village Appraisals and Local Agenda 21s may also influence development plans. Village Appraisals identify a local community’s needs and priorities for the future. Local Agenda 21s (LA21) seek to identify what sustainable development means at local level.” PPG7 also offers advice on the “character” approach to rural planning, which seeks to underpin decisions by a full understanding of the unique

character – in both landscape and nature conservation terms – of different areas of countryside. The approach is particularly valuable in the preparation of integrated rural strategies.

## Regional context

4.14 Regional Development Agencies in England, in operation since Spring 1999, now have regional economic strategies by October 1999. Rural aspects of these will be important and the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) has drafted guidance to the RDAs on rural and sustainable development.<sup>22</sup> This states that each “Regional Development Agency will wish to build on the existing strategies and programmes for the Rural Development Areas designated by the Rural Development Commission for the targeting of its rural regeneration programmes”. In every part of rural Britain there are pockets of disadvantage, unemployment, deprivation, social exclusion and lack of access to facilities, often masked by an apparent overall prosperity. In the light of the implications of changes in the European Structural Funds, the existing Rural Development Areas may be reviewed.

### **Good Practice Example 7**

#### **East Riding of Yorkshire<sup>23</sup>**

##### Strategic action and delivery

*Widespread publicity of the draft was followed by a large conference in 1998 and the document is being reviewed to incorporate extensive consultation comments.*

##### Aim:

*To ensure – within a framework of sustainable development and through partnership between local communities and the public, private and voluntary sectors – that the economic, social and environmental needs of people living in the countryside are met, that communities are able to respond positively to opportunities and change and that the rural economy is efficient and competitive.*

A comprehensive statement of policies, needs and proposed action embracing three broad themes: *Working, Living, Environment* covering:

- *agriculture*
- *inward investment and new businesses*
- *tourism potential of countryside heritage*
- *support for local services*
- *access to training and education*
- *employment*
- *health and social care*
- *sports, arts and recreation*
- *transport and traffic reduction*
- *housing*
- *quality of built environment*
- *landscape, natural resources and countryside management.*

*A detailed action plan gives about 100 initiatives, partners and targets.*

Key strategic actions will inform the means of delivery:

- *establish East Riding of Yorkshire Rural Forum to implement and review the strategy*
- *co-ordinate existing activities to ensure a corporate approach to action*
- *enhance communication through newsletters, seminars and an annual conference*
- *networks of enablers and village contacts*
- *a rolling programme of community involvement under Local Agenda 21, village appraisals, village design statements and other activities*
- *investigate a rural business focus group*

- *establish a comprehensive database for economic, social and environmental matters, including*
- *maximise potential for a small projects fund.*

4.15 Integrated rural strategies which are already in place (such as those for the Rural Development Areas) will be influential in informing the policies at regional and national levels and in decisions on eligibility for European and national funding. The regional planning conferences of local authorities will need to address integrated rural planning – environmental and social as well as economic – in ways which can be promoted in strengthened Regional Planning Guidance. The work of the Regional Development Agencies will build upon this augmented regional planning framework.

## Local context

4.16 At Examinations in Public of some structure plans, scant regard has been given to non-statutory rural strategies in relation to the development plan process. However, among rural groups, there is a revival of interest in village appraisals, a burgeoning of activity in preparing village design statements, and energy and enthusiasm in many village communities for that work, alongside participation in the Local Agenda 21 programme.<sup>24</sup>

4.17 These locally organised processes may point to pockets of need across the economic, social and environmental spectrum and produce their own lists of rural issues, generating parish or community action plans. These may suggest particular priorities for public authorities to address. Collectively, these many different community initiatives in a rural area will inform the overall strategies of a local authority, and in particular will have influence towards an integrated rural strategy, with its own action plan.

4.18 The notion of sustainable rural communities is found in paragraph 8.4 of the 1999 *Draft of Planning Policy Guidance Note 11: Regional Planning*: “Rural people often have greater distances to travel to work, fewer local services including public transport, and may have more difficulty in accessing opportunities for jobs, training, housing, shops or leisure. There is often a shortage of affordable housing to rent or buy. Rural businesses are frequently very small and may have difficulties in gaining access to business advice and support, training services, good communications and suitable premises. The combined effect of these factors is to make rural life very difficult and produce social exclusion. Therefore, it is essential that the advice in other sections of this PPG should not be applied in a way which would undermine the objective of sustainable rural communities. For example, it would be quite inappropriate to apply a public accessibility criterion for new development throughout the region which did not discriminate between rural and urban areas, given how poorly served many rural areas are by public transport. Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) should set out how its policies and proposals differ as between urban and rural areas recognising the generic differences between urban and rural living.”<sup>25</sup>

## Sustainable development

4.19 Local Agenda 21 activity (LA21), which originated at the Rio Summit in 1992, is a good example of the key role of local authorities working with local communities in response to international concern over the environmental future. Similar participation in the processes of integrated rural strategies should not be seen as an extra burden, or in competition with LA21, but as complementary, helping sustainability appraisals of integrated rural strategies.

4.20 Solihull, a metropolitan borough with a green belt, an urban fringe and much adjacent countryside, has recently issued a consultation draft in which LA21 features strongly.

4.21 Sustainable development should become a hallmark of rural strategy. The RTPPI has commented that “More emphasis might be given to the role of the RDAs in stimulating development, and activity at the local level, where they can contribute to better-integrated local communities, and help combat social exclusion. Economic development [has] a multiplier effect at the local level, generating positive interaction between different social groups, self-help and a range of neighbourhood initiatives. Quite often these activities are voluntary and unwaged, but they do contribute to the overall quality of life and sense of place. Sustainable development is much about these attributes. . . . All current regional planning guidance (RPG) in England is now in the process of review and will be subjected to environmental appraisal. . . . At more local levels the same is true of development plans.”<sup>26</sup>

### **Good Practice Example 8**

#### **Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council<sup>27</sup>**

Addressing sustainability through Local Agenda 21

*“The Council has published a Local Agenda 21 (LA21) plan for Solihull which aims to achieve sustainable development locally. It has been prepared in partnership with the community in Solihull. This (rural) strategy will make an important contribution to the aims of LA21 by guiding change in accordance with sustainable development principles. It should ensure that the quality of the countryside endures for the enjoyment and use of future generations. The strategy includes a number of initiatives which have been developed through the LA21 process.”*

*“Whilst the Green Belt designation provides protection against unacceptable development it cannot ensure effective long-term management of the countryside. What is required, therefore, is a different approach where change is anticipated and guided, not just through control of development, but also by more positive programmes and partnerships involving all those with a stake in the Solihull countryside i.e.:*

- the Council*
- landowners and farmers*
- parish councils and other bodies representing the residents of the countryside*
- voluntary groups*
- environmental groups.*

*The preparation of this strategy meets the commitment of the Council in . . . the . . . Unitary Development Plan (UDP).”*

Rural Strategy Action points for the Council include:

- maintain and raise the profile of the Green Belt*
- prepare a Countryside Design Summary to promote good design in the countryside*
- environmental assessment of highway schemes and signing*
- propose a new UDP policy on control of light pollution*
- encourage sensitive management of farm landscapes and key habitats*
- promote the use of Organic Aid and Countryside Stewardship schemes*
- promote small-scale sensitive farm diversification schemes*
- promote cycling as a leisure activity*
- support existing shops in rural communities*
- continue provision for affordable housing in existing settlements*
- support proposals for conversion of buildings to commercial uses where they promote farm diversification, contribute to the local economy, protect the character and openness of the countryside*
- explore the potential for promoting the countryside as a destination for business visitors*
- encourage schools to include rural issues and make greater use of the countryside in their curricula*
- encourage the involvement of the community in countryside issues, and support community initiatives through the LA21 process.*

# Chapter Five

## Role and scope of planning

### Scope of the planning system

5.1 For centuries rural areas have been influenced by changing social and economic patterns. Since the advent of the Town and Country Planning Act fifty years ago, professional planners have become increasingly involved in the processes of managing change.

5.2 Statutory Development Plans (Structure Plans, Local Plans and Unitary Development Plans) are mainly concerned with land use – for housing, employment activities, other built development, minerals and transportation and other necessary infrastructure – all taking into account sustainability and environmental impact.

#### **Good Practice Example 9**

##### **Peak National Park Plan 1989<sup>2</sup>**

##### **Peak Park Planning Board**

A pioneer in the concept of integration

*“Integrated action. By this we mean ways of tackling things which link up purposes, partners or sources of money; which bring local authorities, statutory bodies and local people closer together. The Board has long been a champion of partnership and has benefited greatly from working with other bodies”.*

*“In 1994 the European Commission designated much of rural West Derbyshire and North East Staffordshire (in the Peak District Rural Development Area) as eligible for Objective 5b assistance . . . and in 1995 the area was also designated as eligible for support under the LEADER II programme . . . being run in parallel to the Rural Development Programme (RDP).”*

The Plan’s Rural Development Strategy has the objectives:

*“To establish and maintain economically viable and socially balanced village and farming communities throughout the Park, by encouraging business investment and social development of a form and type which does not detract from, and should contribute to, the conservation and recreation objectives for the Park.*

*To maintain a strategic planning policy for the development and use of land in order to plan and provide for the social and economic needs of the local community, to assess the balance of national interest in proposals generated by needs originating outside the Park, and to implement these policies through development control and by new development mainly by other agencies.”*

5.3 Much change in the countryside has been as a result of changes in economic activities which are beyond the remit of the development plan system. These may include farming practices which lead to loss of hedgerows and have an impact on the appearance of the landscape and on wildlife habitats. Other changes may affect the viability of local services such as village shops which impact upon the quality of life in the human habitat.

5.4 As experience in the Peak District National Park has shown, “Rural areas do not consist of a set of absolutely distinct interests. Society wants our rural areas to provide food, an attractive environment for recreation and reasonable living conditions for a significant proportion of our population. The achievement of any one of these objectives can affect the other two, for good or ill.”<sup>1</sup>

5.5 It is clear that the many strands of action in rural areas are interlinked, that rural and urban areas are interdependent, and that decisions taken in one sector can affect one or more other sectors. The future of rural areas cannot be determined by farming alone, nor should the countryside be seen merely as a place for recreation or as a desirable setting for those who are able to exercise choice in their place of residence.

5.6 Strategic vision for a rural area will be a vital context for statutory planning decisions. Individual planning applications, the development control process and development plans are crucial to the implementation of rural strategies.

### **Good Practice Example 10**

#### **Peak District Rural Development Area 1997/83**

*The purpose and aims (of the RDP) are:*

- *to stimulate the development and diversification of the rural economy in a manner compatible with environmental conservation and sustainability*
- *to improve the quality of life for people in rural communities.*

*These aims are underpinned by the following fundamental principles:*

- *enabling local communities and businesses to tackle the problems themselves*
- *working through partnership between the Rural Development Commission and local organisations and the private sector*
- *working through integrated programmes of economic and social action*
- *devolving planning and decisions as close as possible to the beneficiaries.*

*The operating plan gives details of objectives and project output targets for the following aims:*

#### **Aim 1**

Improve and diversify the local economy by supporting and enhancing business, employment and training opportunities:

#### **Aim 2**

Support and diversify the agricultural economy:

*The outputs include:*

- *advice schemes*
- *start-up businesses advised*
- *networks established*
- *seminars, training places, jobs created.*

Other Aims and outputs are:

#### **Aim 3**

Develop sustainable tourism:

- *tourist information facilities provided*
- *additional visitor spend*
- *accommodation places created*
- *bed spaces provided*
- *transport facilities provided*
- *product marketing initiatives*
- *community groups*
- *networks and services*
- *business floorspace created.*

Support and enhance community life, access to services and community development opportunities:

- *jobs secured*
- *training places*
- *buildings refurbished*
- *community facilities improved or created*
- *target population provided with transport to services or facilities,*
- *passenger trips*
- *training*
- *community groups established.*

### **Agenda 2000**

*This initiative now proposes three Objectives rather than six. The model for all rural strategies in Europe may well be based on LEADER. The LEADER II programme and INTERREG have both supported cross-border and transnational programmes. LEONARDO has facilitated lifelong learning in rural areas and SOCRATES may support projects on rural deprivation.<sup>4</sup>*

### **LEADER<sup>5</sup>**

*One of thirteen European Union initiatives during the 1994–99 period, LEADER supports a global approach aimed at giving a new dynamic to rural development by supporting innovative projects undertaken by local action groups, and by encouraging information exchange and transnational co-operation.*

*EU aid for rural development (outside the horizontal measures) is delivered (1994–99) through three priority Objectives of the Structural Funds:*

- *Objective 1 (least developed regions)*
- *Objective 5b (fragile rural areas not covered by Objective 1)*
- *Objective 6 (extremely sparsely populated regions) (e.g. Sweden).*

### **Leader+**

*Integrated strategies: all rural areas*

*In June 1999<sup>8</sup> the General Regulation of the European Structural Funds established a Community Initiative for Rural Development, called LEADER+. Unlike LEADER I and II, all rural areas will be eligible under LEADER+. Member States may limit its application to certain rural areas on the basis of criteria which are consistent with their rural development objectives. Local Action Groups will be the partnerships which will draw up development strategies and be responsible for their implementation. The European Commission will lay down guidelines describing the aims, scope and method of implementation of the rural development initiative. In the year 2000, six months after the Commission announces approval, Member States may present proposals for LEADER+ programmes.*

*LEADER+ will aim to:*

- *enhance the natural and cultural heritage*
- *reinforce the economic environment, in order to contribute to job creation*
- *improve the organisational abilities of rural communities*

*LEADER+ will be structured around three actions:*

- *support for integrated territorial rural development strategies of a pilot nature based on the bottom-up approach and horizontal partnerships*
- *support for inter-territorial and transnational co-operation*

*Territories will range between 20,000 and 1,000,000 population. Strategies must be integrated: adopting a global approach based upon interaction between actors, sectors and projects, built around a strong theme typical of the identity, resources and specific capabilities of the area. Those areas of the UK which have partnerships and integrated strategies already will be best placed to take advantage of the opportunity of pilot funding for rural development.*

5.7 Economic aspects of rural development, within a sustainable development framework, should form a strong part of the focus of the proposed Regional Development Agencies in England (see Appendix One). “PPGs and RPGs . . . (Regional Planning Policy Guidance) . . . [should include] . . . clear expectations that all development plans should contain . . . effective integrated planning and transport policies embracing the rural hinterland of urban areas.”<sup>6</sup> Rural strategies “allow land use planning issues to be considered as part of the whole, complex range of the wider environment, social and equity concerns and competitiveness issues”.<sup>7</sup>

# Chapter Six

## Good practice

### What is good practice?

6.1 Good practice in rural strategies is exemplified where the process and outcomes are:

#### Integrated

across interests of the environmental, economic and social sectors:

- land use and management
- transportation and accessibility
- diversity of the natural and built environment
- economic activity, employment and training
- services and facilities, housing, education, leisure and recreation
- health and social services, public order, arts and culture
- community development, information and advice, lifelong education, resources and funding.

#### Made by consensus

on clear overall aims and objectives, for example:

- to preserve a living countryside and rural communities with a healthy environment
- to promote sustainable development principles and establish specific aims and objectives
- to relate to, and draw upon, other strategies (e.g. Biodiversity Action Plans and economic strategies) where they already exist
- to complement such other strategies and the development plan, while drawing together threads of particular relevance to rural areas
- to form a framework for rural policy and implementation into which other strategies and programmes might fit.

#### Open

to the widest and most inclusive participation:

- community, voluntary and private organisations
- local authorities, Regional Development Agencies
- government offices, agencies and departments
- working together in a constructive and stable partnership.

#### Underpinned

by available data of high quality, particularly on local economic performance, social conditions and landscape assessments.

The purpose of information should be to assist in the making of decisions.

#### Implemented

by action plans: with targets, priorities, timescales and clearly identified action to be taken by lead bodies – those responsible for making progress on policies and for taking initiatives with a wide range of stakeholders – in partnership.

#### Monitored

and evaluated regularly to assess the level of achievement of targeted actions; sensitive to external influences, physical changes, changes in attitude, opinions, latest expertise and practice, and the aspirations of participants and partners, in order to review and update the strategy.

## Achieving consensus

6.2 In developing a vision for their area, rural strategies can and should be used as mechanisms for building consensus between different stakeholders. It is often possible to resolve potential conflicts between interest groups at the strategic level where proper policy integration has been achieved. However, some conflicts may remain, for example where areas of different rural strategies adjoin, and/or in the allocation of resources between different parts of a region. The suggestion was made at the 1996 seminar that the English Government Offices for the Regions might provide clear guidance on how integration between competing interests might be achieved within a regional context. Regional Development Agencies are now in place which have great potential for assisting consensus. (See Appendix One.)

## Detail, diversity, distinctiveness and definition

6.3 Rural strategies should bridge the gap between aspirations and reality, providing a sound basis for applying resources for the improvement of social, economic and environmental conditions.

6.4 A diversity of styles and range of scales should be encouraged to reflect particular circumstances. This is borne out in the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) guidance for Scotland, and the emerging district-level rural strategies in England. Each strategy should set out a long-term vision, using as a starting point the strategic vision in strengthened Regional Planning Guidance (RPG). A mutual exchange of information and approaches between RPGs and integrated rural strategies (IRSs) would identify the potential for IRSs to influence strategic issues in RPGs when addressing rural needs .

6.5 Rural strategies need to have their role clearly defined and will be recognizably distinct from other plans and strategies which have different purposes, although these may also have policies and programmes which impact on the rural area.

6.6 They should draw upon other strategies. For example, where ecology issues have been addressed through a nature conservation strategy or biodiversity action plan they should be incorporated in the rural strategy, and the strategy's actions/targets need to be assessed against social, economic and landscape considerations. Within rural strategies, there should be identification of those parts (policies or action) which should be transferred to, or should influence, the development plan, local transport plans or the plans of the Health and the Education authorities, economic development agencies, housing authorities, social services and bodies responsible for business support and training.

## Capacity building

6.7 The very nature of participation will have an impact on the process, content and outcomes of strategies. The process will be one of learning for all partners: statutory, private sector and community based. Education – for sustainability, economic awareness and employment-related training – needs to be a continuing process in rural areas, as a component of lifelong learning. Personal and social education throughout adult life has influenced many people to take an active part in the development of their rural area. Capacity building is the term used to describe the process of developing skills in participation, beginning at the most local level. Training for, and facilitation of, learning in rural development skills may be a fundamental strand of financial assistance in the proposed Objective 3 application of funding across all areas of Europe under Agenda 2000. It could be a means of targeting the pockets of deprivation and social exclusion which exist, even in the apparently prosperous regions. It is more important than individual or innovative projects because it gives people the capacity to tackle initiatives together to meet their own objectives, in areas of particular need.

## Good Practice Example 11

### Essex<sup>1</sup>

#### Generating a consensus

*The Rural Strategy will work towards an environmentally and economically sustainable countryside which is beautiful, environmentally healthy, diverse, accessible and thriving.*

*Community participation and sustainability are linked in a description of the involvement of “all members of the community . . . from farmers and landowners to children and young people. This can include environmental auditing, village appraisals, village design statements, parish maps, local needs surveys, ‘visioning’ exercises and evolving the management of rights of way. . . . Greater environmental awareness should also bring with it more responsible citizenship as local community groups and individuals become more aware of . . . the consequences of (their) choices.” “Working in partnership . . . between the County and District Councils, countryside agencies, voluntary bodies, farmers and landowners . . . All those involved recognise that the success of the final strategy rests on being able to generate a broad consensus in support of its proposals and to foster a ‘grass roots’ sense of shared ownership within the rural communities themselves.”*

*The Essex Rural Forum will “meet annually to highlight emerging issues and changes in policy direction. The Rural Strategy Steering Group will . . . take responsibility for monitoring actions and preparing an annual report. Within the County Council, a Corporate Working Group will progress the Strategy and develop the rural dimension to all aspects of Council Policy, including strategic planning policy, service delivery, transport, waste management, tourism and enterprise, to ensure that there is effective co-ordination and integration between the Council’s various activities in the rural area.”*

*“Developing a dialogue, monitoring and review . . . It is recognised that agencies and service providers . . . can only have a limited effect upon improving the quality of life and achieving more sustainable lifestyles in rural Essex. Because of this, particular emphasis is put on developing existing and new ways of assisting local communities to develop their own responses to some of the issues and actions identified and improving opportunities for rural dwellers to influence the way things are done in a constructive manner.”*

*The Rural Strategy contains a number of proposals for working groups and local forums to be set up under specific headings, and a mechanism to put all the initiatives in context and review progress in a comprehensive way. It is proposed to launch the Essex Rural Strategy through a Rural Conference or Forum, to which all those organisations with an interest in rural affairs of the county will be invited. (The rural transport section of Community and Economy has a “Best Practice Guide”).*

# Chapter Seven

## Position in the UK

### Rural strategies in England

7.1 In 1987 the Countryside Review Panel (chaired by Sir John Quick) recommended that county councils should prepare rural development (or countryside) strategies embracing economic, social, environmental and recreational objectives and policies for the use for rural land. The value of such an approach had already been indicated in the national parks by the production of National Park Plans. The Rural Development Areas received guidance on the preparation of rural strategies in 1994.<sup>1</sup>

7.2 *Rural England 1996*, presented to Parliament as a report on progress since the 1995 government White Paper *Rural England*, stated on page 15 that: “Rural strategies provide one useful mechanism for local authorities for identifying rural needs and responding to them with targeted policies. The Countryside Commission, English Nature and the Rural Development Commission, which jointly developed the approach in 1992, have undertaken a review of progress so far. A short study was used to inform a seminar for practitioners of rural strategies in April 1996.”

“The study and seminar . . . revealed:

- ❑ strong support for rural strategies to encourage an integrated approach to policies affecting the countryside
- ❑ concerns about the quality of data available to underpin strategies, particularly on local economic performance
- ❑ significant interest in the development of case study material to exemplify good practice”

“It is important for strategies to be a living process in which a wide range of interest groups have a sense of ownership, for example by building on village appraisals . . . [and] . . . broadening strategy development to embrace such areas as education, health and social services.”

7.3 Paragraph 4.18 of PPG 7 advocates that local planning authorities should take account of Rural Development Areas and (former) Objective 5b designations in preparing development plans.

### Coverage so far of England

7.4 At sub-regional level some English local authorities, notably county councils from the 1990s onwards, and more recently some shire districts, have drawn together those with an interest in rural areas:

- ❑ to share perceptions of future change
- ❑ to reach agreement on policies and actions, and
- ❑ to publish rural strategies.

7.5 New unitary authorities are also playing their part in setting the scene for policy and action at the interface between the region and the local community. Other local authorities are involved with the Countryside Agency in an integrated approach to strategies for the Rural Development Programme Areas. The Management Plan for the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is a recent example of a more integrated approach for an AONB.

7.6 National Parks, which have statutory planning duties and are required under the Environment Act to foster development to meet the social and economic needs of their rural communities, have experience of the integrated approach to rural policy and land management.

7.7 Social and community aspects of strategies for Rural Development Areas and counties have featured strongly in the 1990s. The *Suffolk Strategy for Rural Communities* (1993, not adopted)<sup>2</sup> is an example of integration over a range of issues in a particularly rural area. Rural Community Councils (RCCs) in England have a supportive and influential role and in some cases (notably in Berkshire) have led the process.

### **Good Practice Example 12**

#### **Berkshire Rural Community Strategy (BRCS) 1994<sup>3</sup>**

*Led by the Rural Community Council: the Royal County now has unitary authorities.*

*Vision: "a multi-purpose countryside which addresses the requirements of those who live in, work in, or visit rural areas, and which is 'sustainable' both in terms of the use of resources and maintenance of balanced local communities".*

*The strategy "concentrates on social and economic objectives rather than environmental issues".*

*The 1994 BRCS broke new ground as the first rural strategy co-ordinated by a voluntary organisation, the Community Council for Berkshire (CCB), rather than a local authority.*

Participation methods included:

*"various methods of securing community involvement. Community appraisal . . . not compartmentalised . . . a process involving six stages:*

- identification of participants*
- initial investigations*
- desk top study and statistical analysis*
- community appraisal*
- action plan*
- development of action plan."*

Methods of community appraisal:

- village appraisals*
- planning for real*
- community action plans*
- Rapid Rural Assessment*
- community visions*
- local needs assessment.*

*Statement of needs: Further research: farm diversification, financial health, obstacles, land ownership, use and appearance of land taken out of agricultural production.*

Recommendations

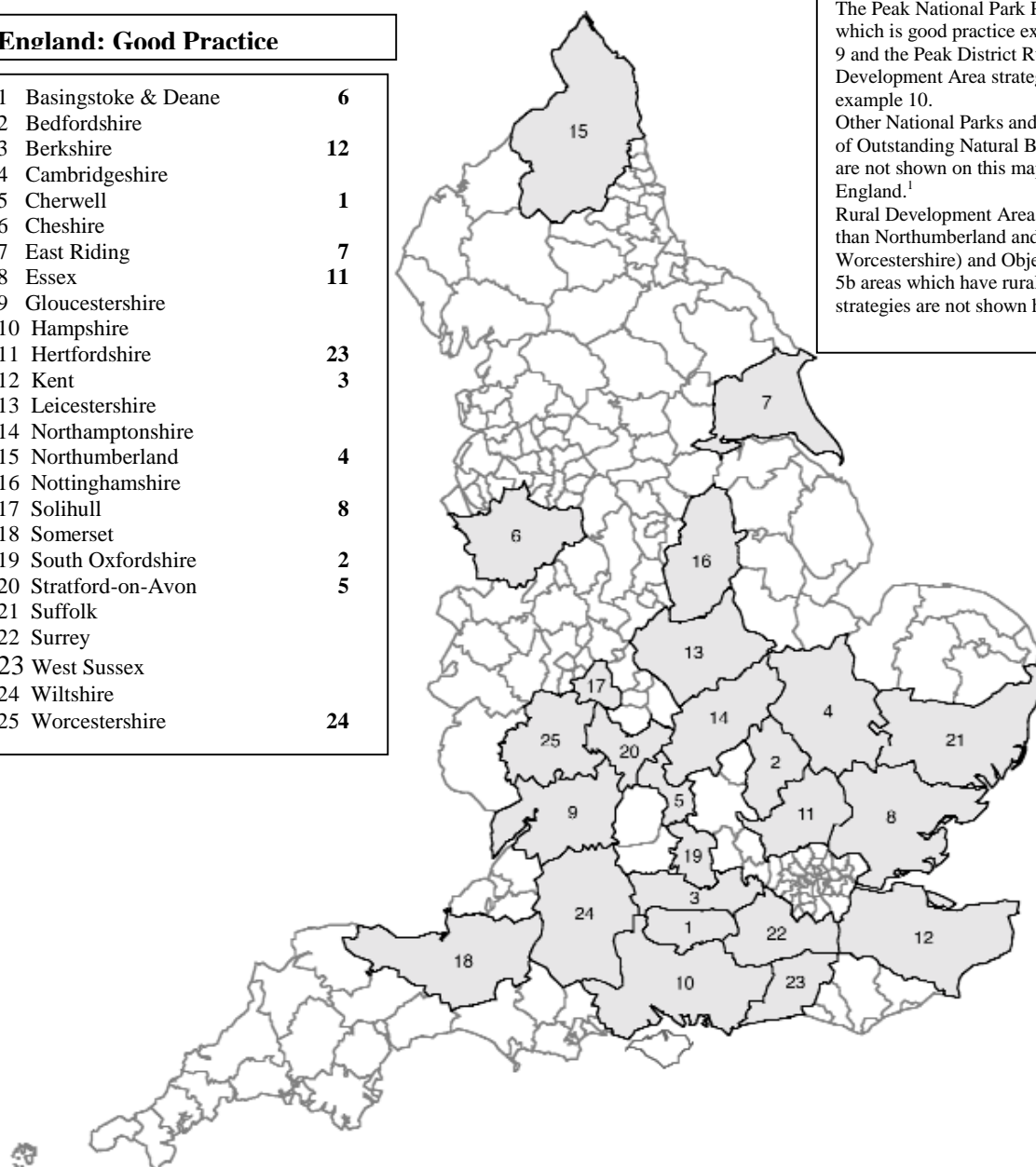
- a county framework for action by a large number of agencies*
- emphasis on inter-linkages between the rural economy and community and the local environment*
- a programme of priority actions to supplement the Strategy's key objectives*
- reinforce the provision of affordable housing.*

*Conclusions of the Review: "Lack of action in many areas, partly as a result of limited commitment and resources from implementation agencies . . . problems of non-prioritisation . . . realisation that the Strategy is not an end product but just a beginning".*

## Local Authority Areas with a Rural Strategy (Other than Rural Development Areas [RDAs])

### England: Good Practice

1	Basingstoke & Deane	6
2	Bedfordshire	12
3	Berkshire	1
4	Cambridgeshire	7
5	Cherwell	11
6	Cheshire	23
7	East Riding	3
8	Essex	4
9	Gloucestershire	8
10	Hampshire	2
11	Hertfordshire	5
12	Kent	24
13	Leicestershire	
14	Northamptonshire	
15	Northumberland	
16	Nottinghamshire	
17	Solihull	
18	Somerset	
19	South Oxfordshire	
20	Stratford-on-Avon	
21	Suffolk	
22	Surrey	
23	West Sussex	
24	Wiltshire	
25	Worcestershire	



Not shown on this map:

The Peak National Park Plan, which is good practice example 9 and the Peak District Rural Development Area strategy, example 10.

Other National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are not shown on this map of England.<sup>1</sup>

Rural Development Areas (other than Northumberland and Worcestershire) and Objective 5b areas which have rural strategies are not shown here.<sup>2</sup>

- 1 See map of the Countryside Agency's designated and defined interests as at 1.4.99 on page 44 of *The State of the Countryside 1999* Countryside Agency 1999.
- 2 See map of Objective 5b and Rural Development Areas on page 45 of *The State of the Countryside 1999* Countryside Agency 1999. A map showing Local Authority Districts and unitary authorities classified as rural is to be found on page 43 of *The State of the Countryside 1999*.

Local Authority Areas with a Rural Strategy (Other than Rural Development Areas [RDA's])

**Scotland: Good Practice**

1 Angus	16 and 17
2 Perth & Kinross	15



Local Authority Areas with a Rural Strategy (Other than Rural Development Areas [RDA's])

**Wales: Good Practice examples**

- |   |  |    |
|---|--|----|
| 1 | Pembrokeshire (SPARC)  | 20 |
|   | South Pembrokeshire Partnership for Action with Rural Communities Objective 5b and Leader II |    |
| 2 | Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough  | 18 |
| 3 | Ynys Môn (Anglesey) County Council   | 19 |
|   | AONB and Leader II   |    |



**Northern Ireland: Good Practice**

- |   |           |           |
|---|-----------|-----------|
| 1 | Cookstown | 22        |
| 2 | Dungannon | 22        |
| 3 | Fermanagh | 21 and 22 |
| 4 | Omagh     | 22        |
| 5 | Strabane  | 22        |



## Scotland

7.8 *Rural Scotland: People, Prosperity and Partnership* was the title of the first Scottish White Paper on rural policy, produced in December 1995. Page 2 stated that “in 1992 . . . the Government . . . established the Rural Focus Group which brought together the Scottish Office and the main Government Agencies, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), and the private and voluntary sectors, represented by the Rural Forum”.

7.9 Work by the Scottish Office on a *Development Strategy for Rural Scotland*<sup>4</sup> accepted that the basic concerns of rural areas were the same as those of the rest of Scotland (including the opportunity to make a decent living, access to good educational provision, healthcare, a safe environment and mobility).

7.10 The Framework (which was further advanced for the planning and delivery of rural development strategies before the first meeting of the Scottish Parliament) recognised the diversity of rural Scotland and stressed that rural development strategy must work through an integrated approach and facilitate community involvement. Local rural partnerships were favoured as conduits of opinion to government.

7.11 The 1999 NPPG 15 guidance<sup>5</sup> states: “The Government supports local community involvement and believes that rural development should reflect the needs and aspirations of local communities. In some rural areas, there will be a need to help communities become involved and to participate in partnerships, especially where pockets of multiple deprivation or social exclusion occur. . . . Councils can enlist the help of organisations such as Planning Aid and Rural Forum to undertake exercises like ‘planning for real’ and community profiling. One approach might be to stimulate local communities to generate their own plans and community profiles along the lines of Islay and Jura, where Rural Forum and the Corrom Trust have been involved with local people and the community councils using a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis to identify the priorities and needs of the area.”

“Development plans can benefit from the input of locally formed partnerships and local communities, particularly at the issue identification stage of plan preparation. In some areas, e.g. Dumfries and Galloway and Highland, the establishment of area committees has been helpful in promoting community involvement in planning, particularly in considering planning applications relevant to the local area.”

### **Good Practice Example 13**

#### **At National Level**

*Rural Scotland: People, Prosperity and Partnership White Paper 1995*<sup>6</sup>

One outcome of the “Public Consultation Exercise . . . which underpins and informs the White Paper” was “that there was a need for an integrated strategy for economic and social activity in rural areas” (page 5).

The “Future for Scottish Rural Communities” in working “towards the development of regional identities; where each society; each group; each person, is able to express their character . . . people of these rural communities should be enabled to take control of their lives, with the assistance of networks of experienced organisations” (page 31).

“Scottish Homes, the Enterprise network, Scottish Natural Heritage and The Scottish Office . . . have all set up arrangements for local decision-making, within strategies set by each body. The time is now right to move that progress a stage further, by finding ways to encourage linkages between these bodies working at a local level . . . joining forces with the local community.” Page 83 gives the Tayside Rural Strategy Group<sup>7</sup> as “an example of local bodies, led by the Regional Council in this case, getting

*together to agree a strategy for the area. On a smaller scale, the Rural Stirling Partnership uses an approach that seeks to maximise the contribution that each individual body can make . . . We believe that the success of these initiatives must now be built upon and encouraged more widely” (page 82).*

*Rural Scotland describes the concept of the voluntary Scottish Rural Partnerships and promises guidance for their work, depending on local priorities. The basic functions include “preparing a local strategy, taking stock of overall needs and priorities for rural development in the local area and the policies available to achieve this; perhaps drawing on the work that local authorities are doing on Local Agenda 21 plans; considering . . . local service delivery . . . providing a focus for promoting and responding to community-led initiatives” (pages 84 onwards).*

#### **Good Practice Example 14**

##### **At National Level**

*The Scottish Office, in January 1997, issued a guidance note on “Local Rural Partnerships 1997–98” which pointed to the publication from COSLA “Guidance to New Councils on the Preparation of Rural Strategies.”<sup>8</sup>*

*This stresses the role of local authorities in “co-ordinating the activities of other agencies in meeting local needs . . . strategy should represent a shared vision of the partnership of agencies and the community preparing it.”*

*“The strategy will be operating within the context of the statutory plans and policies of both the local authority and other agencies working in the area. The rural strategy will therefore draw upon the plans of the partners as well as the local authority. In turn, the rural strategy and the issues contained in it will provide a useful feedback about a local area which can be used to refine the policies contained in other plans” (paragraph 4).*

*Paragraphs 7 onwards call for assessment of: needs and opportunities; key principles; vision statement; strategic objectives and action programmes; and a formal statement on monitoring, giving the process in diagrammatic form.*

*Case studies are given: “The Douglas Valley Initiative”; the “Harris Integrated Development Programme – a Partnership Approach”; the inter-agency partnerships of Rural Stirling Partnership and the Fife Rural Development Group; “The Uist 2000 Project – A Community Initiative”; community appraisals, statistical indicators and the strategic objectives of the Highland Council; and “The Central Scotland Forest Strategy.” These are summarised in text, with no illustrations.*

*Other initiatives are: Highland Council community appraisals, statistical indicators and the strategic objectives; Cairngorm Partnership management plan.*

#### **Good Practice Example 15**

##### **Perth and Kinross<sup>9</sup>**

*As well as the emergence of a new rural policy for Scotland, other policy changes (land reform, National Parks, transport, housing, social exclusion and the Health Service) are cited, together with Agenda 2000 and Local Agenda 21, as the main reasons for needing a sustainable rural strategy.*

*All of Perth and Kinross, apart from Perth City, is classified as a rural area by the Scottish Office and the Upland area is eligible for European assistance for rural areas (Objective 5b and LEADER II).*

*A discussion paper “Understanding the Nature of the Rural Communities” has statistical information on key characteristics.*

*A working group of officers from Leisure and Cultural Services, Economic Development, Education and Environmental and Consumer Services has developed a programme for the consultation process.*

*Base information document received by: (bodies asked to identify their key issues):*

- *Scottish Natural Heritage*
- *Health Board*
- *Forestry Authority*
- *Perth College*
- *Tourist Board*
- *Royal Mail*
- *Scottish Agricultural College (SAC)*
- *NFU*
- *Scottish Enterprise Tayside (SET)*
- *Water Authorities*
- *Scottish Environmental Protection Agency.*

Meetings of Rural Partnerships:

- *Carse of Gore*
- *Strathmore*
- *Highland*
- *Crieff and Strathearn*
- *Kinross*
- *Voluntary organisations*
- *Community councils (equivalent to communes).*

Other meetings with agenda item (identification of key issues):

- *Agricultural Forum*
- *Voluntary Sector Liaison Forum*
- *Youth Council*
- *50+*
- *Tenants Federation*
- *Federation of Village Halls*
- *Convention of Community Councils.*

Sample of population

- *series of targeted readings and entertainment*
- *facilitated discussion, with comments recorded*
- *questionnaire*
- *use of web site to obtain views.*

7.12 NPPG 15 also says: “Councils should promote community involvement . . . and in areas where the population is dispersed, planning authorities should consider the scope for decentralised schemes and area committees. . . . The Government believes that all Government departments, agencies, local authorities, the private and voluntary sectors, and local communities must work together if the overall aims of rural policy are to be achieved. Partnership has a vital role to play at both national and local level. Under the Community Planning process, partnerships will bring together local government and key agencies in the public, voluntary and private sectors and the community itself to plan for, and promote, the well being of the communities they serve.”

## Total coverage of Scotland by rural strategies

7.13 NPPG 15 indicates that the coverage of Scotland by rural strategies is intended to be total. “Community Plans are being prepared for each local authority area, for completion by [the] end [of] September 1999. Within this process, rural development strategies will be developed across Scotland which will set out a shared vision of the priorities facing each area, and the contribution each partner can make to attaining that vision. Below strategic local authority area level, local partnerships may wish to articulate a vision for the local community which reflects local needs and

concerns, and provide feedback on Community Plans and rural development strategies. NPPG 15 advises that:

- ❑ councils should facilitate the Community Planning process, and involve organisations and local action groups in drawing up their rural development strategies, thereby building upon local community aspirations; and
- ❑ planning authorities should work more closely with the LECs (Local Enterprise Councils), the private sector, SH (Scottish Heritage) or their agents, SNH (Scottish Natural Heritage), SEPA (Scottish Environmental Protection Agency), Rural Forum, community councils and other local organisations to identify land use issues and to harness the many initiatives that already exist, and are being prepared, to provide small businesses, affordable housing and tourist-related developments.”

7.14 The conclusion of NPPG 15 (paragraph 65) states: “The guiding principle for councils and developers considering proposals for rural development is that the development should benefit local communities economically, socially and environmentally. Development plans must draw on the needs and aspirations of rural communities and identify development opportunities which meet those needs and aspirations in a way that does not diminish environmental quality. In rural Scotland this presents a particular challenge, given the widely dispersed rural population and the outstanding quality of much of the natural and built heritage. However, that challenge has to be taken up with increased vigour by planning authorities, developers and agencies involved in rural areas, if communities are to prosper and the quality of life for those who live and work there is to be improved.”

7.15 The Tayside Rural Strategy, given as an example in the Scottish Rural White Paper, has been taken forward in different ways by partnerships led by two of the successor authorities: Angus Council and Perth and Kinross Council.

#### **Good Practice Example 16**

##### **Angus Rural Partnership<sup>10</sup>**

Building links with Community Planning

Themes:

- *a commitment to an integrated approach to developing policies and programmes to enhance the health, social, economic and environmental well-being of rural communities*
- *working co-operatively towards ensuring that environmental quality is secured, that the needs of all the rural communities in rural Angus are treated equitably*
- *engage local people in a dialogue on the development of their community.*

*Eleven issues and thirty actions are identified in the action plan for 1999–2000.*

#### **Good Practice Example 17**

##### **Tayside Rural Strategy (extracts relating to Angus)<sup>11</sup>**

Aims, actions and lead agencies:

##### **Sustainable economy**

Aim 1 To achieve and maintain a stable and balanced population structure throughout the rural area.

*Existing projects:*

- *funding affordable housing for rent and ownership*
- *provision of rural home ownership grants (Scottish Homes).*

Aim 2 To improve the skills of the population to meet labour market demands of new, existing and diversified businesses.

*Planned and new projects:*

- *University of the Third Age adult returners (Angus Council Community Education)*
- *sheep health scheme*
- *Forest Industry Forum (Scottish Enterprise, Tayside (SET))*
- *Rural Women in Business (Angus College Rural Forum)*

*Recommendations and proposals:*

- *a rural business use class (Angus Council Planning).*

Aim 3 To . . . encourage . . . sustainable business . . .

*Existing projects:*

- *extension of Glen Esk Folk Museum (Glenesk Trust)*
- *farm business environmental audits (Scottish Natural Heritage and SET).*

*Planned and new projects:*

- *regular markets selling local products (Angus Council)*

Aim 4 To safeguard . . . rich cultural, historic and natural heritage . . . management of . . . resources.

*Existing projects:*

- *“Walkers Welcome” initiative (Forestry Authority).*

*Planned and new projects:*

- *Montrose centre environmental improvements (Angus Council Roads and Transport/Planning/SET).*

*Recommendations and proposals:*

- *management plans for designed landscapes (SNH with Angus Council Planning and SET).*

### **Rural Disadvantage**

Aim 1 To encourage greater co-ordination between agencies in tackling problems.

*Existing projects:*

- *young people – bring agencies together*
- *district forums for childcare (Angus Council Social Work and Education).*

*Recommendations and proposals:*

- *database on disadvantage (Angus Council).*

### **Enabling local communities**

Aim 1 Development of information networks.

*Planned and new projects:*

- *Youth Enquiry Service run by young people (Angus Council Community Education)*

*Recommendations and proposals:*

- *Public sector information networks in local communities (Angus Council).*

*Existing projects:*

- *Inverkeilour Jigsaw-craft based project (local community).*

*Planned and new projects:*

- *eco-feed back – reduction of energy consumption (Angus Council Planning/Housing).*

## Wales

7.16 *A Working Countryside for Wales*, the White Paper of March 1996, emphasised, on page 8, the role of the “Welsh Office, with the economic development and conservation agencies, the voluntary sector, the private sector, and above all local communities” as having an important part “to play to achieve a working countryside. . . . Local authorities will have a leading role to play. The Welsh Office and the development agencies will continue to support local authorities and regional groups for economic development.” Page 9 states that the aim is to “provide a policy framework and funding mechanisms . . . which will help (public and voluntary sector organisations) to build on and expand successful examples”.

7.17 To integrate countryside matters across Wales, a Welsh Office Task Force was established and the Rural Partnership for Wales set up with Ministerial support. The Partnership’s inaugural meeting, at Aberystwyth in November 1998, followed a public consultation to which many organisations had responded by pointing to the need for a strategic and objective overview of the issues affecting rural areas in Wales. “The concept of a rural strategy is supported in principle subject to further clarification of how this would be achieved in practice within the final organisational structure of the National Assembly.”<sup>14</sup> Among its main points it noted that: “The Partnership needed to address both local and regional needs; . . . any rural strategy should be based on an holistic approach with sustainable economic, community, social, cultural and environmental development at its heart and conducive to the good health and safety of individuals.”

7.18 In February 1999, the Welsh Office announced that a new Strategic Statement for Rural Wales, prepared by the Rural Partnership for Wales, would be issued for consultation the following May and for consideration by the National Assembly for Wales. “We must ensure that the needs and aspirations of rural communities are brought to the fore of the Assembly’s agenda. . . . Preparing the Strategic Statement must involve everyone with an interest in rural issues. . . . The anticipated award of Objective 1 funding for the Valleys in . . . South and West Wales provides an unprecedented opportunity for many rural areas”.<sup>15</sup>

7.19 The South Pembrokeshire Partnership for Action with Rural Communities (SPARC) exemplifies partnership in an area of 400 square kilometres, dominated by agriculture – beef and dairy – forestry and a limited amount of tourism.

### **Good Practice Example 18**

#### **Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council Countryside Strategy<sup>12</sup>**

*With assistance from the Countryside Council for Wales the four core areas in 1997 strategy and Integrated Action Programme were:*

- *landscape conservation and enhancement*
- *nature conservation*
- *public understanding of the environment*
- *access and enjoyment.*

*The important role of the planning system is stressed. There are policies and a three year programme of action. The 250 + items in the Action Plan are reviewed annually. Next stages in the strategy will address the rural economy, historic environment, countryside sport and tourism.*

### **Good Practice Example 19**

#### **Ynys Môn (Anglesey) County Council**

Countryside Management Strategy 1997–2002 “Building Partnerships in a Living Countryside”<sup>13</sup>  
Countryside Forum, AONB and LEADER II

*The island’s 71,500 hectares in North West Wales are designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, have Heritage Coasts, Special Areas for Conservation, National Nature Reserves, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and a wealth of historical and archaeological interests. The whole Island Environmentally Sensitive Area, for agri-environmental programmes, is to be embraced by Tir Gofal, an all Wales scheme.*

*The European LEADER programme covers all the rural area (outside Holyhead). Menter Môn, funded by the EU programme and the County Council, is active in supporting local nature reserves, village enhancement, green tourism and telematics as well as other economic projects. The Countryside Council for Wales and the Environment Agency are instrumental in wetland and heath-land strategies on the island of some 70,000 population. They, and Menter Môn, have joined with significant landowners (the National Trust and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds), the County Council (with its Coed Cymru officer for woodland management) and other bodies in a Countryside Forum. This meets three times a year, with other events giving an opportunity for networking, topic reports and monitoring. The partners discuss progress on the twenty-point action plan of the strategy. Since the reorganisation of local government in Wales there has been a growth in an holistic view of the countryside of Anglesey.*

### **Good Practice Example 20**

#### **South Pembrokeshire<sup>16</sup>**

Community Appraisal and Action Plans

*Capacity building: an integrated approach to working with local communities.*

*South Pembrokeshire Partnership for Action with Rural Communities (SPARC) seeks to ensure the sustainable development of the area through:*

- *involving local people in the decision making process*
- *forging partnerships between local communities, agencies and local authorities.*

*In this way local people can:*

- *play a more significant role in developing their communities*
- *plan to meet their needs*
- *respond to opportunities in the light of these needs.*

*It is the experience of SPARC that to ensure full involvement of members of the community in successful local development activities:*

- *people need to fully understand the process and how they fit in: there is a need for a participatory structure*
- *people want involvement on a village basis*
- *public meetings alone do not provide a satisfactory way of involving the community*
- *a wide range of people with energy and enthusiasm must be encouraged to become involved*

- wholly objective ways have to be found to rank proposals in terms of impact, appropriateness, information, professional advice, training and confidence building are essential prerequisites for local people to feel able to meet as equals with representatives of authorities and agencies.

*The benefits of the process:*

- presents a universal participation opportunity
- training and capacity building device
- a framework for everybody to come together
- mechanism for working together to analyse responses
- assists identification of projects, proposals and programmes
- helps understanding of planning, evaluating and prioritising
- plans are developed on the basis of facts and understanding
- provides a comprehensive agenda for community action.

*SPARC management committee and staff develop area strategies which address the more strategic needs identified in the Action Plans. This is done through working groups on Environment, Tourism, Business and Agriculture, made up of community members and specialist agency representatives.*

*SPARC is reviewing the strategy produced four years ago for European Objective 5b and LEADER funding, with a view to new Objective 1 status.*

## Northern Ireland

7.20 Northern Ireland's Planning Strategy of 1993 embraced rural community development and care for the environment.<sup>17</sup> The Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland) has consulted extensively on a new strategy for the whole of Northern Ireland to be taken forward by the Assembly. Entitled *Shaping our Future*,<sup>18</sup> the draft framework for the period to 2025 includes a spatial development strategy and "recognises the strong interdependence between the Regional Towns and the rural community living in the small towns, villages, small rural settlements and individual homes in the countryside which together make up Rural Northern Ireland (all of the Region outside the Belfast Metropolitan Area and the City of Derry/Londonderry). Reflecting this interdependence, the objective . . . is to develop a strong and vibrant rural community. The strategy aims to strike a balance between town, village and countryside development in the best interest overall of Rural Northern Ireland."

7.21 The announcement of work on *Shaping our Future*, together with the Agenda 2000 arrangements for the future allocation of EU Structural Funds, was the impetus for *The West Rural Region – A Strategy for People, Partnership and Prosperity*,<sup>19</sup> a joint publication by Cookstown, Dungannon, Fermanagh, Omagh and Strabane district councils in 1998. One of those authorities, Fermanagh District Council, produced the *Fermanagh Economic Development Strategy 1995–1999*.<sup>20</sup> This sets out projects and programmes that could qualify for funding from the International Fund for Ireland, European Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, LEADER II and INTERREG. The partnership formed for the strategy process has a vital role in monitoring and evaluating the progress of the plan, adapting it to changing circumstances and opportunities as they arise.

### Good Practice Example 21

## **Fermanagh District Council**

Fermanagh Economic Development Strategy 1995–1999<sup>21</sup>

Vision:

*“intended to be an effective contribution towards creating a quality of life which will ensure that all the people of the County will share, in a socially just way, the achievement of attaining the highest possible degree of self-development, confidence, personal dignity and self respect.”*

*The primary objective of the strategy was to reduce social and economic disadvantage in the County by promoting equity and equality of access to sustainable employment and training opportunities.*

Impetus:

*To set out projects and programmes that could qualify for funding from the International Fund for Ireland, European Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, LEADER II and INTERREG.*

Participation methods:

*Role of partnerships stressed. Arrangements to enable a broad participation with the relevant players, to see that proposals are pursued and resources found, over the period of the strategy.*

*The partnership has a vital role in monitoring and evaluating the progress of the plan, adapting it to changing circumstances and opportunities as they arise..*

*Thirty-eight issues are programmed and costed.*

## **Good Practice Example 22**

**The West Rural Region – A Strategy for People, Partnership and Prosperity 1998<sup>22</sup>**

Joint: Cookstown, Dungannon, Fermanagh, Omagh, Strabane District Councils

Impetus:

*Department of the Environment (NI) announcement to prepare a new strategy for whole of Northern Ireland.*

*Future arrangements for allocation of EU Structural Funds.*

Vision:

*A region of opportunity, underpinned by dramatic changes in information and communication technology, informed by a shared sense of identity among its constituent parts.*

*By the year 2025 the West Rural Region will have:*

- *improved the quality of life in the region*
- *secured a diversified economy and varied settlement pattern*
- *harnessed new technology*
- *worked in partnership*
- *created a knowledgeable community*
- *developed innovative actions*
- *achieved an integrated approach, capitalised on the border location*
- *asserted the region’s place in Europe and in the world.*

Issues and needs:

- *deprivation: 56% of Farming in Severely Disadvantaged Areas; 87% within Less Favoured Areas*
- *population increase and impact upon the quality of the environment*
- *unemployment: “jobs gap”.*  
*(Quoting the European Observatory – LEADER, AEIDL 1997):*
- *diversification of local economies; intensification of interactions between the local and global context; strengthening of relations between local actors by moving towards new internal or local synergies*

- *enabling of small enterprises, meeting increased demand for quality products, demand for new*
- *using ICT (Information and Communication Technology) to transcend distances and transport links between businesses, areas and distant markets*
- *maintenance of social cohesion, recognition of favourable demographics, respect for cultural heritage, stewardship of the physical environment.*
- *“In Northern Ireland the district councils are not a natural planning unit: not sufficiently large or self-contained to enable macro-planning” (Scott and Hanvey 1996).*

## Chapter Eight

### How to carry out a rural strategy

8.1 It is preferable to announce at the outset that the process has begun and that the widest participation will be encouraged throughout. A sense of ownership from all involved and a common commitment (which ideally should include a willingness by individual organisations to use their resources in a way that also meets wider objectives) are essential parts of a rural strategy. Expressions of interest from the public and from groups in the private and voluntary sectors should be invited. These responses, together with the perceptions of key organisations which are likely to form a partnership/steering group and the views of elected members of the local authority, should form the basis of an initial scoping exercise so that a report can be made to the Planning Authority, or other lead body. The corporate involvement of the local authority, likely to be a major delivery mechanism, should be strong at the beginning of the process.

Process	Examples: wording and content
<b>A Initial decisions</b>	<i>to gain approval for resources of people and finance</i>
purpose of the strategy	<i>to assist the local planning authority and other organisations in maintaining and improving the environmental, social and economic well-being of the rural area</i>
aims	<i>to identify and prioritise key objectives for rural areas to set out a clear programme for action (an action plan) which will be monitored</i>
area to be covered	<i>all rural wards or both town and country</i>
status	<i>Supplementary Planning Guidance to influence the Statutory Development Plan and plans and programmes of public and voluntary bodies</i>
impetus	<i>Community Plan, Structure Plan, Local Plan, Unitary Plan, Regional Planning Guidance, Rural Development Agency Strategy, Rural White Paper, revision of PPGs 1 and 7, European structural funding: Rural Development Regulation agri-environmental measures</i>
relationship with other strategies and plans of the local authority	<i>(their timescales of publication and review)</i> <i>statutory development plans economic housing social inclusion biodiversity transport education</i>
of others	<i>Rural Development Programme Regional Development Agency Environment Agency Health Authority</i>

provisional programme	<i>period of preparation, adoption and review</i>																
outline scope of the strategy	<i>fully integrated across all social, economic and environmental sectors and issues subject to the involvement at the outset of other interested organisations and a survey of the opinions of people living and working in rural areas</i>																
	<i>legal implications for the services for the local authority and for responsibility</i>																
<b>B Management towards a partnership</b>	<i>as inclusive as possible</i>																
inter-departmental group or inter-organisation group	<i>review adequacy of existing information for the whole rural area and of settlement-specific demographic, service and other information which is likely to be relevant to decisions on the strategy process and outcomes</i>																
	<i>consider the need to commission special studies by consultants, researchers or others review the issues raised in community appraisals and similar previous activities by local groups ( e.g. LA 21, village appraisals and parish action plans) which seek to influence rural policy and delivery</i>																
	<i>refine/extend scope: specific issues, broader issues, under topic headings (for example):</i>																
	<table> <tr> <td><i>agriculture</i></td> <td><i>water</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>business</i></td> <td><i>environment</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>retailing</i></td> <td><i>community</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>transport</i></td> <td><i>culture</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>energy</i></td> <td><i>youth</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>recreation/tourism</i></td> <td><i>housing</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>physical development</i></td> <td><i>health</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>facilities/services</i></td> <td><i>disability</i></td> </tr> </table>	<i>agriculture</i>	<i>water</i>	<i>business</i>	<i>environment</i>	<i>retailing</i>	<i>community</i>	<i>transport</i>	<i>culture</i>	<i>energy</i>	<i>youth</i>	<i>recreation/tourism</i>	<i>housing</i>	<i>physical development</i>	<i>health</i>	<i>facilities/services</i>	<i>disability</i>
<i>agriculture</i>	<i>water</i>																
<i>business</i>	<i>environment</i>																
<i>retailing</i>	<i>community</i>																
<i>transport</i>	<i>culture</i>																
<i>energy</i>	<i>youth</i>																
<i>recreation/tourism</i>	<i>housing</i>																
<i>physical development</i>	<i>health</i>																
<i>facilities/services</i>	<i>disability</i>																
	<i>preliminary work on identifying measures to address the issues, to give practical reality at the outset of the process of participation</i>																
latest stage at which partnership begins with key rural organisations: private sector, statutory and voluntary	<i>initial consultation on the issues</i>																
	<i>identify new issues and agree scope</i>																
	<i>agreement on a “vision”, aims and objectives</i>																

	<p><i>seek commitment</i></p> <p><i>sense of ownership</i></p> <p><i>willingness to devote time and other resources</i></p> <p><i>agree the <b>lead body</b> for the strategy, the sharing of cost of meetings, publicity and documents, editorial responsibility and means of facilitating meetings and participation</i></p>
set up steering group	<p><i>agree and prioritise target areas and credible means of achievement, short term and long term</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>agree programme for gathering opinion and enabling the involvement of rural communities, businesses and individuals, throughout the remainder of the process</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>a rural forum</i></li> <li>• <i>series of conferences</i></li> <li>• <i>questionnaire survey</i></li> <li>• <i>workshops and meetings</i></li> <li>• <i>teams for study and report on specific issues to steering group</i></li> </ul> <p><i>and/or conferences</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>local community group discussion and action</i></li> <li>• <i>use of the Internet and public information points</i></li> </ul> <hr/> <p><i>appoint lead people for each target area drawn from the lead bodies for implementation</i></p>
<b>C Going public</b>	<i>fully participative, not token consultation</i>
prepare a document for public consultation	<i>set out the draft target areas and issues accompanied by an open-ended questionnaire asking for views on the issues and target areas</i>
summarise the results	<i>by target area and issue</i>
hold a conference, other open meetings	<p><i>report on the results of the consultation and confirm the forum and scope of the strategy and target areas, recognising the different perceptions expressed, aiming at consensus and identifying conflicts to be resolved</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>recruit further interest and involvement throughout the process at whole area and local levels</i></p>
publish report(s)	<i>inform and maintain interest and ownership of the meetings in the process</i>
set up working groups on a topic and area basis	<p><i>reporting to the steering group</i></p> <p><i>addressing the agreed targets and issues and exploring ways of resolving conflicts</i></p> <p><i>making recommendations for the strategy documents for its action plan and for performance measures to be used in monitoring of achievement</i></p>
steering group report on the recommendations of the working groups	<i>by means of a newsletter and/or a forum with wide publicity</i>

	publish a draft strategy	<i>inviting comment from the partners, participants and the wider public</i>
	analyse the comments	<i>and publicise significant new issues and changes by means of a newsletter and other media</i>
	consider implications	<i>for the responsible lead bodies, which will implement the targets in the action plan, and gain their agreement</i>
<b>D</b>	<b>Approval</b>	<i>by responsible bodies</i>
	steering group reports to lead body	<i>local planning authority approval to adopt as Supplementary Planning Guidance</i>
		<i>agreement to continue existing steering group and/or forum to monitor and review the action plan and strategy over an agreed timescale</i>
<b>E</b>	<b>Publication</b>	<i>the real beginning</i>
	Lead body publishes integrated rural strategy	<i>as adopted by the local planning authority with Action Plan</i>
<b>F</b>	<b>Monitoring and evaluation</b>	<i>continuous after publication</i>
	monitoring body continues	<i>measuring success of implementation</i>
		<i>highlighting any difficulties in implementing the strategy</i>
		<i>identifying new issues, keeping alert to regional, national and European policy influences</i>
		<i>identifying needs for change, revised courses of action</i>
		<i>considering the need for particular working groups or specialist studies</i>
		<i>influencing the statutory and other plans and programmes of all bodies responsible for implementation and for policy from European, through regional to local levels</i>
	monitoring reports	<i>to the partnership bodies at least annually</i>
		<i>achievements, impediments and new issues publicised</i>
	continuing forum	<i>perhaps on an annual basis</i>
<b>G</b>	<b>Review</b>	<i>at an agreed interval, the process begins again</i>

Acknowledgements to rural strategies by Basingstoke and Deane Borough (A–C above)<sup>1</sup> Hampshire (B–E)<sup>2</sup> South Pembrokeshire (C)<sup>3</sup> East Riding (C and F)<sup>4</sup> and Worcestershire (E–G)<sup>5</sup>.

### Good Practice Example 23

#### Hertfordshire's Countryside Strategy 1996–2001<sup>6</sup>

The role of a forum

*In August 1996 the Hertfordshire Countryside Forum published Hertfordshire's Countryside Strategy. Hertfordshire Countryside Forum exists to debate countryside issues and help different groups find ways of working that reflect the interests of all sections of the community.*

*The strategy has four action plans covering economic, social, conservation, recreation, information and education issues. Each plan outlines projects and areas of work for the next five years. It also explains who will achieve what and by when.*

*The "Living & Working Action" Plan aims to:*

- *encourage a healthy and sustainable rural economy*
- *maintain and improve the provision of affordable rural services*
- *encourage self-help in rural communities and enhance parish democracy*
- *encourage and support links between Hertfordshire's rural communities and communities in the developing world.*

*Other strands are:*

- *"Sustaining & Enhancing" Action Plan*
- *"Access and Recreation" Action Plan*
- *"Awareness & Understanding" Action Plan.*

### Good Practice Example 24

#### Worcestershire<sup>7</sup>

A county which has part of a Rural Development Area  
Monitoring and evaluation

*The 1995 report set out the monitoring process: a statement on*

- *measuring success or otherwise of implementing the actions*
- *highlighting any difficulties in implementing the strategy*
- *identifying any needs for change and any revised courses of action to ensure implementation.*

*Annual forum meetings were envisaged.*

*"The partnership will need to consider the following matters:*

- *are the objectives being achieved?*
- *are the objectives still relevant?*
- *are there any new issues which need addressing?*
- *have the priorities changed?"*

*Performance indicators given, e.g.:*

*"Provision and access to facilities and service in the Parishes – number of parishes without a shop, Post Office, public house, village hall or bus service" .*

Three working groups:

Lead body

*Rural economy and tourism:*

*County Council*

*Community facilities, rural housing and transport:*

*Rural Development Commission*

*Managing the countryside and recreation*

*Countryside Commission*

Hereford and Worcester Rural Strategy Partnership for the Rural Development Area covers Herefordshire and some parts of Worcestershire.

*This has perhaps the most comprehensive coverage of any of the RDA strategies and is particularly strong on: training and education, maintaining the diverse character of the countryside, recreation facilities, multi-use of school provision, accessibility to health facilities and means of reducing rural crime.*

*Herefordshire is now a unitary authority and is producing a Unitary Development Plan which will address rural issues, drawing upon "Rural Strategy Partnership for Action" 1995.*

*Worcestershire Structure Plan (under review: development options 1998 followed by consultation draft) will address (inter alia) social, economic and environmental rural issues, drawing upon the 1995 Rural Strategy, which the new Council has endorsed.*

## Chapter Nine

### The task ahead

9.1 Members of the RTPI should play their part in ensuring that the next round of rural strategies makes the link between policy and action. Professional planners may not take the lead role for many of the detailed actions. However, their skills and experience, working for voluntary bodies, research teams, private concerns and public authorities have been valuable in making the links across sectoral boundaries. Conversely, it is becoming increasingly evident that the issues identified in rural strategies are influencing statutory development plans.

9.2 This Good Practice Guide is intended to inspire local authorities to embark and act upon integrated rural strategies, or review and implement those which exist. It stresses to local authorities the need to have integrated rural strategies in place and the role of planners in the process. It is also intended to influence regional activity on rural policies and priorities.

9.3 Government has said that “Full integration means government, local government and non-government organisations working together across sectoral interests and linking the three policy strands of social, economic and environmental issues and the five priorities of the government – integration, decentralisation, regeneration, partnership and sustainability”.<sup>1</sup> The Institute asserts that a new range of integrated rural strategies is now required, covering the whole UK.

9.4 Rural strategies which are fully integrated and which have clear means of implementation are commended to local authorities as essential to the planning process alongside Statutory Development Plans, corporate plans, Local Agenda 21 processes, National Park Plans, AONB strategies, coastal strategies and Local Environment Action Plans (LEAPs of the Environment Agency). They are important components of the new “community plans”.

9.5 Strategies for rural areas should incorporate Action Plans. These, and the mechanisms of implementation, are highlighted in the examples of good practice given in this document. If implementation is to be successful, rural strategies must identify the agencies and stakeholders who are to take forward action and meet targets. This requires agreement when the strategy is drawn up. It depends upon integration and upon partnership. Responsibility should be identified for monitoring the progress made towards targets. This should avoid the shelving of strategies and the “gathering of dust”.

9.6 Following an article entitled *Rural Strategy Practice Guidance* (by C. Hursey and P. Turner in *Planning* magazine, the Journal of the RTPI, 22 January 1999 page 17), many practitioners have indicated that they are contemplating, or embarking upon, a rural strategy, and have supplied copies of documents. Any omissions or misinterpretations are due to the speed and complexity of developments in the policy field and in actual practice, as well as to limitations of space in this document.

The RTPI would be grateful to receive copies of draft strategies as well as adopted versions, for deposit in the Institute’s library. This will assist further dissemination of good practice.

# Appendix One

## Supplementary Guidance to Regional Development Agencies

*Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, 1999, extracts<sup>1</sup>*

### CHAPTER 5: RURAL POLICY

#### 5.1. Introduction

5.1.1. The Regional Development Agencies' (RDAs) purposes, as set out in Section 4 of the Regional Development Agencies Act 1998, give them a wide interest in all aspects of the economic and social development of their areas. The Act makes clear that their purposes apply as much in relation to the rural parts of their areas as to the non-rural parts.

5.1.2. The statutory guidance on preparation of RDAs' strategies states that the RDAs should take account of the particular features of the region's rural areas including the effects of sparsity of population, small settlements and a narrow economic base; relative inaccessibility, remoteness and peripherality; and the role of land-based industries (such as agriculture and forestry) and countryside conservation priorities.

5.1.3. There is no precise definition of rural. A useful working definition, adopted by the Rural Development Commission, is wards which lie mainly outside the boundaries of settlements of 10,000, or greater, population but RDAs will wish to be flexible in how they classify areas within their regions.

#### 5.5. Sub-regional work

5.5.1. The guidance on RDAs' strategies refers to the relevance of sub-regional work, including "rural strategies" and the "rural development strategies" for the rural development areas designated by the RDC, to the RDAs' strategies. Such "rural strategies", produced by groups of local partners, vary widely in scope and content. They may cover the area of an individual local authority, a group of local authorities; or some other area (as with the Rural Development Areas). They may focus particularly on economic development or they may include a wider range of rural issues and services.

5.5.2. Sub-regional strategic plans might be a means of taking forward the objectives of the regional strategy: tailoring it to locally, but not regionally, significant factors; ensuring ownership of the strategy by more local organisations, including those from the voluntary and community sector; and provide the basis for the more detailed co-ordination of the plans and programmes of local partners. Where such a sub-regional strategic plan includes rural areas it would be helpful if the plan recognised the characteristics of rural areas including the role of land-based industries and the rural environment.

5.5.3. It would be particularly helpful if such sub-regional strategic plans encompassed and analysed the position of land-based industries alongside other locally important economic sectors, highlighting likely changes, strengths and weaknesses and the links with other sectors. The strategic plans will then provide a framework for the development of these industries; and for the co-ordination of development with linked industries and activities. It would be most helpful if this framework also reflects the assessment of priorities for the countryside environment (i.e. the historic environment, landscape and countryside character; nature conservation); the scope for assisting in the enhancement of the local environmental assets (e.g. Community Forests); and the

contribution of such assets to the local economy (through tourism, the provision of a sound environmental infrastructure etc).

5.5.4. RDAs will wish to consider how to encourage the development of a coherent set of sub-regional strategic plans within their regions. *They will also wish to be alive to the need for cross-regional working where issues straddle regional boundaries.* RDAs will wish to build on the existing “rural development strategies” and programmes for the Rural Development Areas designated by the RDC for the targeting of its rural regeneration programmes. The “rural development strategies” and Rural Development Programmes for each area are drawn up by a local Rural Development Programme Committee involving a range of core partners. Account should also be taken of other relevant sub-regional strategies (e.g. Local Environment Agency Plans, National Forest Strategy, Local Agenda 21 plans and Biodiversity Action Plans) and local authorities’ statutory Development Plans.

5.5.5. Further information and non-statutory guidance on existing arrangements and the future policy framework for rural regeneration funding, including the rural issues raised by the LGA New Commitment to Regeneration, is covered in the separate note to RDAs on regeneration.

#### ANNEX 5A RURAL CHECKLIST FOR REGIONAL STRATEGIES AND RDAs

Has the analysis of the regional economy specifically considered the rural areas and their distinctive features? Does this include consideration of land-based industries and countryside environmental assets?

Have rural needs been identified using indicators which can properly assess such needs?

Has there been consultation with key rural partners and other organisations and interest groups concerned with all aspects of the rural areas of the region?

Does the strategy have a clear rural dimension covering all rural areas – both rural areas in need of regeneration and others?

Does the strategy consider the interrelationships of the urban and rural parts of the region?

Does the strategy recognise the need to integrate social, economic and environmental factors at the local level in rural areas?

Does the strategy identify approaches tailored to rural areas to meet the rural issues identified in the strategy?

Does the strategy identify any barriers to the development and delivery of programmes meeting rural needs?

Does the strategy encourage appropriate sub-regional strategies through which the rural objectives of the regional strategy can be taken forward and delivered locally?

Are the roles of the rural partners in the implementation of the strategy clearly set out and agreed?  
Does the strategy encourage rural community involvement in delivery and decision making?

Is the RDA organised in a way which will help identify rural issues and deliver rural programmes?

Does the strategy set out a fair and defensible basis for allocating resources between rural and other areas?

Does the strategy identify ways to monitor and evaluate rural programmes and measure success in rural areas?

Does the strategy allow for an on-going review of rural programmes to reflect the outcome of monitoring and evaluation *and to be flexible in response to changing circumstances?*

## Appendix Two

### Europe

#### The Cork Declaration: A Living Countryside<sup>2</sup>

*Extracts from the report of the European Conference on Rural Development  
Cork, Ireland, November 1996*

Rural areas . . . are the home of a quarter of the population and . . . 80% of the territory of the European Union . . . a unique cultural, economic and social fabric, an extraordinary patchwork of activities and a great variety of landscapes . . . their inhabitants are a real asset to the European Union and have the capacity to be competitive.

Agriculture and forestry are no longer predominant in Europe's economies . . . agricultural land . . . largest part of rural Europe . . . strong influence on landscapes . . . major interface between people and environment . . . farmers . . . as stewards of . . . natural resources.

Rural development must address all socio-economic sectors in the countryside. European citizens pay growing attention to quality of life . . . health, safety, personal development and leisure . . . rural areas are in a unique position to respond to these interests and offer . . . a . . . modern development model of quality.

Common Agricultural Policy . . . the shift from price support to direct support . . . farmers must be helped in the adjustment process and be given clear indicators.

Public financial support for rural development, harmonised with appropriate management of natural resources and maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity and cultural landscapes is increasingly gaining acceptance.

Ten point rural development programme for the European Union: to promote . . . local capacity building for sustainable development in rural areas . . . private and community-based initiatives . . . well-integrated into global markets.

1 Rural Preference . . . a fairer balance of public spending . . . between rural and urban areas . . . a growing share of available resources . . . for promoting rural development and securing environmental objectives.

2 Integrated Approach . . . multi-disciplinary in concept, multi-sectoral in application . . . applying to all areas in the EU . . . agricultural adjustment and development, economic diversification – notably small/medium scale industries and rural services management – of natural resources, enhancement of environmental functions . . . promotion of culture, tourism and recreation.

3 Diversification . . . of economic and social activity . . . framework for self-sustaining private and community-based initiatives . . . strengthening the role of small towns . . . promoting development of viable rural communities and renewal of villages.

4 Sustainability . . . promote rural development which sustains the quality and amenity of Europe's rural landscapes.

5 Subsidiarity . . . rural development . . . decentralised . . . based on partnership and co-operation . . . (local, regional, national and European) . . . participation . . . "bottom-up" . . . harnesses creativity and solidarity.

- 6 Simplification . . . notably in . . . agriculture . . . radical simplification in legislation . . . more subsidiarity in decisions, decentralisation of policy implementation.
- 7 Programming . . . procedures . . . integrated into one single rural development programme for each region . . . a single mechanism for sustainable and rural development.
- 8 Finance . . . local resources to promote local rural development projects . . . diversify rural economies.
- 9 Management . . . effectiveness of regional and local governments and community groups . . . exchange of experience through networking between regions and between rural communities throughout Europe.
- 10 Evaluation and Research . . . reinforced . . . to ensure transparency of procedures, guarantee the good use of public money . . . stakeholders . . . consulted in the design and implementation . . . involved in monitoring and evaluation.

## Appendix Three

### Europe 2000 Structural Funds

From the year 2000, the European Commission proposes three priority Objectives of the Structural Funds:<sup>3</sup>

Objective 1: Support to regions lagging behind in development: the least developed regions (defined at the NUTS II level and having income (GDP) per head less than 75% of the Community average).

The outermost regions of the Union and the former Objective 6 regions would be assimilated to Objective 1.

Objective 2: Economic and social reconversion in declining areas, regions undergoing structural adjustment in the services' sector, rural areas in difficulty, disadvantaged urban areas and areas dependent on fisheries, areas confronted with restructuring problems (rural areas in decline; areas undergoing socio-economic change in industry and services, urban areas in difficulty, and crisis-hit areas dependent on fishing).

Objective 3: Human resource development, the fight against unemployment and social exclusion. Adaptation of education and training systems in areas not covered by Objectives 1 and 2.

The Regulations for the Structural Funds specify designation of Objective 2 areas at NUTS level III (counties or groups of unitary authorities). NUTS (Nomenclature of Units for Territorial Statistics) are areas used by EUROSTAT, the European Commission's Statistical Office, for presenting regional and local statistics. For Objective 2, these areas may be built up from a lower level of geographical unit, for example NUTS IV. The only requirements are that the data used at whichever level are publicly available on a national basis and capable of being used on a broadly consistent basis across the UK.

Outside Objectives 1 and 2, rural development programmes would be financed by the EAGGF Guarantee alone and implemented at the appropriate geographical level.

Both the natural and man-made elements of the environment will be key concerns for the new generation of rural development programmes that are due to become operational from the year 2000. These programmes will include measures to support all forms of environmental management in rural areas, specifically targeting land improvement, water management and recovery from the effects of natural disasters. In addition, measures that support the preservation of Europe's rural heritage, including the renovation of villages, are incorporated into the programmes.

#### The Rural Development Menu<sup>4</sup>

"Accompanying measures" include:

- agri-environment (Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs), countryside stewardship, organic aid, etc.)
- early retirement of farmers
- Less Favoured Areas (LFAs) compensatory allowances (currently Hill Livestock Compensation Areas (HLCAs) in the UK)
- afforestation of agricultural land.

Other measures:

- investment in agricultural holdings
- aid for young farmers
- training
- marketing and processing grants
- other forestry
- general rural development (Article 33: see below) i.e. measures like those in the current Objective 5b areas.

## Article 33 of the Rural Development Regulation

“Support shall be granted for measures, relating to farming activities and their conversion to rural activities, which do not fall within the scope of any other measures . . .

Such measures shall concern:

- land improvements
- reparaCelling
- setting up of farm relief and farm management services
- marketing of quality agricultural products
- basic services for the rural economy and population
- renovation and development of villages and protection and conservation of the rural heritage
- diversification of agricultural activities and activities close to agriculture, to provide multiple activities or alternative incomes
- agricultural water resources management
- development and improvement of infrastructure connected with the development of agriculture
- encouragement for tourist and craft activities
- protection of the environment in connection with land, forestry and landscape conservation as well as with the improvement of animal welfare
- restoring agricultural production potential damaged by natural disasters and introducing appropriate prevention measures
- financial engineering.”

## Appendix Four

### Previous guidance on rural strategies

#### England

An eight page leaflet entitled *Rural Strategies Advice from the Countryside Commission, English Nature and the Rural Development Commission* was published in 1992. These agencies in 1997, again jointly, issued a *Rural Strategies Information Pack*.<sup>5</sup>

This recognised the growing support for an integrated approach to rural development, citing the *Cork Declaration* of November 1996<sup>6</sup> which stated that rural development policy must be multi-disciplinary in concept and multi-sectoral in application.

The *Rural Strategies Information Pack* included:

- position paper presented to a seminar for practitioners held in April 1996
- overheads presented at the seminar
- summary of the seminar findings
- summaries of the rural strategies prepared (to January 1997).

The analysis included information on responsibility, key players, methods of preparation, public consultation, length of document, vision, aims/policies/actions, related strategies, structure for implementation and coverage of topics.

In those rural strategies published by 1997, it was considered that there had been two main weaknesses:

- some have fallen short of full integration of economic, social and environmental factors
- most have lacked a firm programme for action and implementation, and also monitoring and review mechanisms.

#### Scotland

The Scottish Rural Partnership is charged with the task of promoting rural development. A *Good Practice Guide* was devised in 1997 by the Rural Research Branch of the Scottish Office Central Unit and COSLA.<sup>7</sup> This addresses the issue of developing local rural strategies for action. Steps to formulating a strategy are given; how to involve the wider community; collecting data, using available information and local knowledge; community appraisals; developing an action plan and programme; format and monitoring.

#### Wales

The Countryside Council for Wales guidance<sup>8</sup> covered countryside strategies and integrated action plans, emphasising that “the process of preparing a strategy is as important as producing the document as it should involve the forging of partnerships with other agencies and local communities as well as encouraging unitary authorities to integrate the work of their departments. . . . It is recommended that strategies are prepared to cover 5 years and reviewed every 3 years; with integrated action plans to cover a 3 year period and reviewed annually.” Five examples are given, four from Wales and one from Hertfordshire. An appendix gives key questions in a checklist for preparing integrated action programmes.

# References

## Chapter One About this Good Practice Guide

- 1 *Cherwell Rural Strategy*, Cherwell District Council, 1996.
- 2 *Rural Strategies Information Pack*, Rural Development Commission, English Nature and the Countryside Commission, February 1997.
- 3 Good Practice in Rural Development No 3, *Preparing Rural Development Strategies: Frameworks for Action*, Scottish National Rural Partnership, Scottish Office, 1997.
- 4 *Rural Strategies Information Pack* (op. cit.).
- 5 *South Oxfordshire Rural Strategy and Action Plan*, Draft Report, DTZ Piedad Consulting, April 1999.
- 6 *Kent Countryside Strategy, 2nd Review*, Kent County Council Strategic Planning, 1998.

## Chapter Two Scope of rural strategies

- 1 *Northumberland Rural Development Strategy*, Northumberland Rural Development Programme Committee, 1995.

## Chapter Three Why prepare an integrated rural strategy?

- 1 *Agenda 2000, Comments by Strategic Local Authorities in South East England on the proposals for reform of the Common Agricultural Policy*, Hampshire County Council and others, 1998.
- 2 *A Rural Strategy for Stratford-on-Avon District 1992–2002*, Stratford-on-Avon District Council, August 1999.
- 3 *Planning for Rural Diversification – Good Practice Guide*, Martin Elson, Caroline Steenberg and Jacqueline Wilkinson, Oxford Brookes University, published by Department of the Environment, 1995.
- 4 Planning Policy Guidance PPG 7, *The Countryside – Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development*.
- 5 *Rural Development and Land Use Planning Policies*, Martin Elson, Caroline Steenberg and Leslie Downing, Planning Policies Research Group, Oxford Brookes University, 1998.
- 6 *Rural Strategy – Draft Target Areas and Issues*, Questionnaire, Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, 1998.
- 7 *Hampshire Farming Study*, Dreweatt Neate, Chartered Surveyors, Portsmouth University Land and Construction Management, Hampshire County Council Planning Department, 1997. Note: the *Oxfordshire Farming Study* was published by Oxfordshire County Council in January 1999.
- 8 *Borough Rural Strategy*, Basingstoke and Deane BC, draft, March 1999.
- 9 *National Planning Policy Guideline – Rural Development NPPG 15* (paragraph 51) Sport and Recreation, Scottish Office, 1999.

## Chapter Four Policy contexts

- 1 *The Countryside – A Rural Strategy*, Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, Royal Town Planning Institute and the Planning Officers' Society, RICS, 1999.
- 2 *The Countryside: The Need for a Co-ordinated Planning and Transport Policy*, RTPI, September 1997.

- 3 *The Countryside – A Rural Strategy*, RICS, 1999 (op. cit.).
- 4 *The Cork Declaration: A Living Countryside*, European Conference on Rural Development, Cork, Ireland, 9 November 1996.
- 5 *Agenda 2000*, European Commission, July 1997.
- 6 *Presidency Conclusions*, Berlin European Council, 24 – 25 March 1999.
- 7 *Agenda 2000* (op. cit.).
- 8 *European Spatial Development Perspective – Informal Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Spatial Planning*, Noordwijk, 9–10 June 1997.
- 9 *Agenda 2000 CAP Reform – Rural Development Regulation – Consultation on Implementation in England*, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, April 1999.
- 10 *European Spatial Development Perspective*, June 1997 (op. cit.).
- 11 Alan Watt (personal communication), commenting on *The New Champions of Sustainable Community Participation*, Watt and Martin Purcell, Town and Country Planning Association Journal, July/August 1997.
- 12 *A Better Quality of Life*, 1999; Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, (DETR) Planning Policy Guidance PPG 1, *General Policies and Principles*; PPG 7 (op. cit.); UK Sustainable Development Strategy, 1994.
- 13 *Opportunities for Change: Consultation Paper on a Revised UK Strategy for Sustainable Development*, DETR, 1998.
- 14 Planning Policy Guidance PPG 7 (op. cit.), PPG 12 *Development Plans and Regional Planning Guidance*.
- 15 *Rural England, A Nation Committed to a Living Countryside*, November 1995.
- 16 *Rural Scotland: People, Prosperity and Partnership*, December 1995.
- 17 *A Working Countryside for Wales*, March 1996.
- 18 *Report of the Committee on Land Utilisation in Rural Areas* chaired by the Rt. Hon. Lord Justice Scott, Ministry of Works and Planning, 1942.
- 19 *Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, Issues: Rural and Sustainable Development Guidance for Regional Development Agencies*, Michael Meacher, DETR, press release, 17 December 1998.
- 20 *Rural Development Plan for Wales 2000–2006*.
- 21 *Rural Strategies Advice from the Countryside Commission, English Nature and the Rural Development Commission*, 1992.
- 22 *Supplementary Guidance to Regional Development Agencies*, DETR, 1999.
- 23 *Rural Strategy Draft Consultation*, East Riding of Yorkshire Council, 1998.
- 24 *Local Agenda 21 Principles and Process: A Step by Step Guide*, Local Government Management Board, 1994.
- 25 Planning Policy Guidance PPG 11: *Regional Planning*, public consultation draft, DETR, 8 March 1999.
- 26 RTPI Response January 1999: *Consultation on Draft Guidance to the Regional Development Agencies on Sustainable Development*, DETR, December 1998.
- 27 *Solihull's Countryside: A Draft Strategy*, January 1999.

## Chapter Five          Role and scope of planning

- 1 *Two Villages, Two Valleys, 1990, The Peak District Integrated Rural Development Project 1981–88*.
- 2 *Peak National Park Plan, First Review*, 1989, paragraphs 20.14 and 20.15.
- 3 *Annual Review 1997/8, Peak District Rural Development Area*, paragraphs 1.9 and 1.10.
- 4 *INTERREG Rural Forum, Somme and East Sussex*, Sussex Rural Community Council, forthcoming 1999. *The New Poor in the Rural Environment*, application to SOCRATES forthcoming LABOS, Rome (personal communication).

- 5 Fact Sheet: *Rural Development – A Vital Policy*, European Commission web site.
- 6 *The Countryside*, RTPI, 1997 (op. cit.).
- 7 *The Countryside*, RTPI, 1997 (op. cit.).
- 8 *Official Journal of the European Commission* OJL161, 26 June 1999, pl.

## Chapter Six            Good practice

- 1 *Essex Rural Strategy*, Essex County Council on behalf of the Rural Strategy Working Group, Consultation draft, December 1998, forthcoming, March 1999.

## Chapter Seven        Position in the UK

- 1 *Guide to Preparing Rural Development Strategies*, Rural Development Commission, 1994.
- 2 *Strategy for Rural Communities*, consultation draft, Suffolk County Council Planning Department, 1993.
- 3 *Berkshire Rural Community Strategy*, Community Council for Berkshire and Bابتie Public Services Division on behalf of the Berkshire Rural Strategy Steering Group, 1994, and *The Way Forward*, Community Council for Berkshire Review of BRCS, November 1997.
- 4 *Development Strategy for Rural Scotland*, Scottish Office (Discussion Paper, 1997 and Framework, 1998).
- 5 *National Planning Policy Guideline – Rural Development*, NPPG 15, Scottish Office, 1999.
- 6 *Rural Scotland: People, Prosperity and Partnership* (op. cit.).
- 7 *A Rural Strategy for Tayside*, Tayside Regional Council, 1995.
- 8 *Guidance to New Councils on the Preparation of Rural Strategies*, COSLA (post-1995, undated).
- 9 *Towards a Sustainable Rural Framework*, Update, Perth and Kinross Council Social Policy Sub-Committee, May and December 1998.
- 10 *The Role of Angus Rural Partnership April 1999–March 2000*, working paper.
- 11 *A Rural Strategy, Action Programme for Angus*, updated 1998 from *A Rural Strategy for Tayside*, Autumn 1997.
- 12 *Countryside Strategy Rhondda*, Cynon Taff County Borough Council, 1997, *Integrated Action Programme*, 1998.
- 13 *Building Partnerships in a Living Countryside*, Countryside Management Strategy 1997–2002, Ynys Môn (Anglesey) County Council.
- 14 *A Rural Strategy for Wales*, in *Rural Partnerships for Wales: Response to the Public Consultation*, RP/98/2, Welsh Development Agency, 1998.
- 15 *New Strategic Statement for Rural Wales Announced*, Welsh Office Minister Owen Jones, 14 February 1999.
- 16 *The SPARC Initiative 1991–1998, Local Participation – The Key to Sustainable Development in South Pembrokeshire*, SPARC.
- 17 *A Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland*, 1993.
- 18 *Shaping our Future*, draft Regional Strategic Framework for Northern Ireland, December 1998.
- 19 *The West Rural Region – A Strategy for People, Partnership and Prosperity*, District Councils of Cookstown, Dungannon, Fermanagh, Omagh and Strabane, 1998.
- 20 *Fermanagh Economic Development Strategy 1995–1999*, Fermanagh District Council (undated).
- 21 *Fermanagh Economic Development Strategy 1995–1999* (op. cit.).
- 22 *The West Rural Region – A Strategy for People, Partnership and Prosperity*, 1998 (op. cit.).

## Chapter Eight      How to carry out a rural strategy

- 1 Draft *Basingstoke and Deane Borough Rural Strategy*, 1999.
- 2 *Rural Development Strategy for Hampshire*, 1991.
- 3 *The SPARC Initiative 1991–1998 Local Participation – The Key to Sustainable Development in South Pembrokeshire*, SPARC (op. cit.).
- 4 *Rural Strategy Draft Consultation*, East Riding of Yorkshire Council, 1998.
- 5 *The Rural Strategy – Indicators and Monitoring Report*, Worcestershire County Council Policy Group, Environmental Services Department, December 1997.
- 6 Leaflet, *Hertfordshire Countryside Forum*, Secretariat, c/o Environment Department, Hertfordshire County Council (pers. com.) 1999.
- 7 *The Rural Strategy – Indicators and Monitoring Report*, Worcestershire County Council (op. cit.).

## Chapter Nine      The task ahead

- 1 Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, June 1997.

## Appendices

- 1 *Supplementary Guidance to the Regional Development Agencies*, DETR, 1999 (op. cit.).
- 2 *The Cork Declaration* (op. cit.).
- 3 Fact Sheet: *Rural Development – A Vital Policy*, European Commission web site.
- 4 *Agenda 2000 CAP Reform – Rural Development*, MAFF, 1999 (op. cit.).
- 5 *Rural Strategies Information Pack* (op. cit.).
- 6 *The Cork Declaration* (op. cit.).
- 7 *Preparing Rural Development Strategies: Frameworks for Action*, Scottish Office, 1997 (op. cit.).
- 8 *Guidelines for the Production of Countryside Strategies and Integrated Action Programmes*, Countryside Council for Wales (undated).