

# A Manifesto for Rural Communities

Inspiring Community Innovation



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Disclaimer: This report draws upon the findings of 44 partners. The views presented here do not necessarily reflect the views of the Carnegie UK Trust.

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# Introduction

Carnegie UK Trust has long championed the work of rural communities across the UK and Ireland. Our report, *A Charter for Rural Communities* was published in June 2007. This new publication builds upon the vision provided in the Charter but acknowledges the accelerating pace of economic and social change. Here we set out some very positive opportunities for rural communities (and indeed communities everywhere) to survive and thrive during what are proving to be turbulent times. Resilient communities will accept that any status quo is unlikely to last for long and that the community needs to be constantly learning new ways of both self-sufficiency and collaboration.

This publication draws upon a rich source of evidence from real places. During the past four years, in a unique collaboration between Carnegie UK Trust and Big Lottery, forty-four progressive organisations and communities have explored some of the most pressing challenges facing rural communities.



- How can rural communities take a lead in securing essential services?
- How can rural communities plan their futures?
- What can we learn from the special characteristics of rural communities in very remote areas – as culturally rich areas and hotbeds of invention?
- What must be done to manage community assets in a sustainable way?
- How can newcomers to rural areas be included in community life?
- What are the essential skills needed to build excellent rural communities?

Furthermore, Carnegie's rural team have travelled extensively and have met thousands of activists who are achieving the most remarkable things in their communities. This experience leads us to conclude that rural 'Fiery Spirits' are pioneering innovations that promise to benefit neighbourhoods **everywhere**.

We see the tables turning: a new compact between city and country as we negotiate the rapid transition toward a zero-carbon society – **the** key challenge for today and tomorrow's generations.

This is not a view from 'Little Britain'. These remote communities demonstrate a strong global ethic; appreciating our interdependence and that we have much to learn from each other.

In this 'taster' publication, we first discuss three 'enabling' factors that seem to us to be prerequisites for successful communities; skilful people, community assets and great plans.

We then explore in detail ten characteristics of the resilient community of the future first highlighted in the Charter for Rural Communities and now illuminated by evidence from pioneers. We have not found the place with everything – but there are many communities that are well on the way!

If you are interested to learn more, full action research reports are available on our website: <http://rural.carnegieuktrust.org.uk>

# Three enabling factors

The Charter for Rural Communities set out the three enabling factors that form the prerequisites for vibrant rural communities. These continue to underpin our vision for the future.

- Growing the capacity of local people, agencies and professionals who support rural communities; building strong social networks founded on high levels of volunteering and skilled support.
- Enhancing community assets of all kinds
- Effective community-led planning and stronger local governance.

**Our evidence suggests that dynamic, vibrant and sustainable communities need creative people working together, assets to support their aspirations and agencies and local people collaborating to an agreed plan. All three are needed.**

## Growing the capacity of local people, agencies and professionals that support rural communities

Strong communities are places where the talents and skills of local residents are identified, valued and used and ample opportunities are provided for all to develop new skills needed to thrive in a changing world. These skills must be matched by the capacity of those professionals who work with communities. Although the rhetoric of governments is encouraging a 'new localism' and greater community engagement, without sustained investment in growing the capacity of all those who need to be involved in the process, these aspirations will not be fulfilled.

Carnegie UK Trust has worked with a **Skills Consortium**<sup>1</sup> ([http://rural.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/rarp/rural\\_community\\_development\\_skills](http://rural.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/rarp/rural_community_development_skills)) made up of academic and practitioner partners from across the UK and Ireland, to determine the core skills, knowledge and competencies required by rural activists, professionals and policy makers and, thinking ahead, the requirements for communities who face an uncertain future.

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<sup>1</sup>ACRE, University of Gloucester, Irish Rural Link, Maynooth University, Rural Community Network NI, WCVA, University of Bangor, Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC)



The **Carnegie Skills and Knowledge Bank** summarises the basic, developing and higher level skills and the essential knowledge requirements needed by rural community activists, professionals and policy makers. (Appendix 4)

This work has been taking place in the wider context of government goals for a skills 'revolution' in order to meet new challenges and the review of the **National Occupational Standards** ([www.ukstandards.co.uk](http://www.ukstandards.co.uk)) for Community Development work. These are reviewed every five years and we have ensured that the skills and knowledge requirements of rural communities have been given full consideration.

**However, in a rapidly changing world there are new skills and knowledge sets needed by rural communities and these may not be best nurtured in a traditional manner.**

In this complex world, rural communities have to determine what kinds of innovation and new ways of working offer the best prospect. In some places, communities are leading the way; not because there is a government programme prompting them to do so but because people understand what needs to be done. Transition Town Initiatives are an example. But the challenge can seem daunting;

‘Participants were much less aware of what they could do collectively to mitigate the effects and adapt community life to some of the future scenarios. Beyond changing their own consumption patterns and modifying behaviour around such things as recycling and developing allotments the solutions people proposed were fairly basic. The idea of a collective response was only encountered amongst one group who were very much the exception. On the whole people felt powerless to have much impact on a hugely complex and confusing set of issues<sup>2</sup>.’

### **Dealing with change is going to be a core skill we all need in the 21st century.**

‘The rules, patterns, habits and assumptions about the world we grew up in are going to unravel and we will need to re-invent ourselves.<sup>3</sup>’

**To understand this complexity we have to draw upon ideas from many different disciplines.** This is an important lesson that we have gathered from our partners at the Eden Foundation, where ideas have been generated by an eclectic group of collaborators; mining engineers, clinicians, philosophers, artists, police officers and architects working together. Education based on narrow subject silos has little to offer rural communities.

In North Wales our partner from **Bangor University** ([www.bangor.ac.uk](http://www.bangor.ac.uk)) has experimented with **self-directed learning** in a sample of rural communities. In self-directed learning, the individual or community group, with a budget, takes the initiative and the responsibility for their own learning journey; they select, manage, and assess their own learning activities, which can be pursued at any time, in any place, through any means, at any age. This approach to informal learning is extremely powerful.

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<sup>2</sup>Rural Community Network, ‘Community Activism in a Changing Rural Context.’ Carnegie UK Trust, (2009).

<sup>3</sup>Eden Foundation, ‘New Ground-Final Action Research Report.’ Carnegie UK Trust, (2009).



**Ideas for Action:** Carnegie UK Trust would like work with collaborators to pilot a scheme of 'Community Learning Accounts' where the rural community determines how a pot of money can be deployed to provide learning in the priority areas that have been identified. The resource could be spent with traditional training providers, to undertake action research or used to finance 'learning journeys'.



The attraction of funding self-directed learning is that a competitive market will be created and **institutions or groups providing excellent support will flourish.**

Furthermore, communities wish to learn directly from other communities who have 'already been there and bear the scars'.

**There is a huge demand for inspiring 'learning journeys' to places that have pioneered new ideas**

such as 'Incredible Edible Todmorden', the island of Eigg's energy scheme or County Offaly's integrated area planning. This creates a particular pressure on volunteers in successful communities who are inundated with requests to host study visits.

Pioneers from successful initiatives should be financially rewarded for their time and expertise in hosting 'learning journeys' – this is both an enterprise opportunity and the means by which good ideas can be spread like a virus. Good ideas should also be harvested from other parts of the world. **International Association for Community Development** ([www.iacdglobal.org](http://www.iacdglobal.org)) is working with Carnegie UK Trust to arrange Global Village Residencies so that we might learn from international experience.

**Idea for Action:** Excellent pioneering communities need to be able to generate an income from 'rural development tourism' where their hard won expertise is properly valued. Carnegie UK Trust would welcome the opportunity to work with collaborators to develop more learning journeys and Global Village Residencies.

Not everyone involved in rural community initiatives wants to go on a course or become accredited! Understanding the power of **informal learning**, the Carnegie Commission for Rural Community Development and our contacts in rural communities asked if Carnegie UK Trust might resource opportunities for the informal exchange of experiences by those who are finding their own innovative solutions to the challenges communities face. We have experimented with this way of working by organising regular themed network events and the popular Annual Rural Convention – **bringing people together who would not normally meet. We use the word 'hosting' a lot; there is a real art in welcoming people, putting together the right mix of participants, sharing 'warts and all' stories in what must be convivial spaces**<sup>4</sup>.

Carnegie UK Trust has therefore committed to progress this approach through a **Community of Practice** for rural activists, professionals and policy makers. Communities of Practice are groups of people who share a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis<sup>5</sup>. Communities of Practice are well-established in the private and increasingly in the public sector. They are consistent with Carnegie's asset-based rural development approach, being a highly effective way to connect people separated by geographical distance, sectoral silos and disciplinary boundaries. They enable small, local stories to be heard by decision makers;

<sup>4</sup>We have been influenced by the work of sociologist Ray Oldenburg who writes of the importance of 'Third Spaces'

<sup>5</sup>Wenger, E., McDermott, R. & Snyder, W.M. 'Cultivating Communities of Practice: A Guide to Managing Knowledge.' Boston: Harvard Business School Press, (2002).

and many stories together are capable of achieving significant social change. Carnegie UK Trust supports the Community of Practice virtually through [www.fieryspirits.com](http://www.fieryspirits.com) social networking site and with a range of events large and small.

Carnegie UK is a small trust and we could not hope to achieve this mission alone. We have asked four inaugural 'host' organisations each to deliver a substantial programme of demonstration activity, each developing ideas set out in Carnegie's Charter for Rural Communities. They have committed to share their experience via our social networking site and through a programme of workshops, conferences, festivals, field visits, seminars and other events. These organisations are:

### **The Eden Foundation**

A charity and social enterprise best known for the world-class visitor attraction – the Eden Project, Eden is experimenting and extending innovative methods for public engagement on community futures. Along with a wide range of collaborators, Eden is contributing to imaginative plans for the future regeneration of their local area around St Austell (including the development of a new eco-town) – [www.new-ground.org.uk](http://www.new-ground.org.uk)

### **Tipperary Institute**

A dynamic higher education, development and research centre. The Institute is unique in Europe in its integration of higher education with rural development programmes. The Institute specialises in encouraging participation in area-planning and overcoming barriers to community involvement – [www.tippinst.ie](http://www.tippinst.ie)

### **The Falkland Centre for Stewardship**

Promoting the practice of stewardship locally in Fife and the philosophy of stewardship in 21st century Scotland and beyond, the Centre is developing the One Planet Food initiative to create a more sustainable and equitable regional food system in Fife. The Centre also plays host to Scotland's largest eco-festival – the Big Tent – [www.centreforstewardship.org.uk](http://www.centreforstewardship.org.uk)

### **The Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT)**

CAT was founded in 1973 on the site of a disused slate quarry near Machynlleth, in mid-Wales. The founders set out to develop tools, technologies and lifestyles which could be adopted to inspire and inform the transition to a genuinely sustainable future. CAT's vision of a 'Zero Carbon Britain' offers a blueprint for a sustainable future – [www.cat.org.uk](http://www.cat.org.uk)

Carnegie is aware that many other nations are very much more advanced in implementing asset-based approaches. We are therefore working with **International Association for Community Development** and their members across the world to ensure we can learn from the real experts in asset-based rural development including John McKnight (ABCD Institute in Illinois) and Alison Mathie and Gordon Cunningham (Coady Institute in Nova Scotia) – [www.iacdglobal.org](http://www.iacdglobal.org)

**Idea for Action:** Carnegie is keen to extend the network of ‘host organisations’ – hubs of activity where the community is willing to share their experiences with others. For example, Carnegie will be working with Highlands and Islands Enterprise to ensure that we have the opportunity to learn from exemplary initiatives in Argyll and Bute (relating especially to rural services) and North Harris. We are aware that currently England is not well represented and we hope that new collaborators will help support this extension.

**So, supported by partner ‘host’ organisations, each with experience of excellent rural development in their own areas, Carnegie UK Trust is now directly involved in growing the capacity of those with an interest in the well being of rural areas.**

In this respect we follow the practice advocated by Wheatley and Frieze;

‘We focus on discovering pioneering efforts and naming them as such. We then connect these efforts to other similar work globally. We nourish this network in many ways, but most essentially through creating opportunities for learning and sharing experiences and shifting into communities of practice. We also illuminate these pioneering efforts so that many more people will learn from them. We are attempting to work intentionally with emergence so that small, local efforts can become a global force for change.’<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup>Wheatley, M & Frieze, D, ‘Using Emergence to Take Social Innovation to Scale.’ The Berkana Institute, (2008).

Having put in place the infrastructure for the Community of Practice – a virtual social networking site, host organisations and a programme of activities, we are becoming more and more aware of the potential this provides to transform rural communities. For instance, an individual wishing to engage their community in a planning exercise can put a call out on [www.fieryspirits.com](http://www.fieryspirits.com); a great number of members will have relevant experience and may be able to assist. However, the Community of Practice provides even more opportunities. Our host organisations might welcome them to attend an event on community-led planning; they could visit a community that is engaged in the process to see how things can be done in practice; and in the longer-term a mentor can provide ongoing support and advice.

**Idea for action:** Now that Carnegie UK Trust has in place the infrastructure to support a rural Community of Practice, we welcome the opportunity to work with collaborators to ensure that learning opportunities are maximised.

## Enhancing community assets

Here we examine the policy implications of the growing interest in asset-based rural development. In a later section we explore practical ways in which communities can be supported to identify, utilise and optimise assets. Also, in a companion publication to this, Carnegie UK Trust has asked **International Association for Community Development** to look at asset-based rural development in detail and in a global context. In this section of our report we outline some guiding principles.

The Carnegie Commission for Rural Community Development recognised that the old deficit models of rural development have failed: that forcing rural communities to denigrate their area in order to win essential funding is perverse. Carnegie believes that there is an alternative approach that builds upon the things that a community has – an asset-based approach to rural development. We realise that this new approach is contested and unproven and that there is a need for much more understanding of the method. And we do not, of course, deny that there is an urgent need for public investment in some rural areas – just that rural communities are well placed to understand how that resource or expertise can be allied with local assets to build economic and social success.

One of the most important guiding principles for our work is the idea that communities should build on the things that they **have** rather than concentrate on what they lack. Every community has a set of unique attributes that could form the basis of community and economic security. Our model of sustainable communities has asset-building at its heart.

**In an increasingly fragile world, rural areas should be recognised as resource rich; places where assets are stewarded for the nation as a whole. After decades where rural areas have just been seen as hinterlands to large urban areas and city regions, this imperative places rural communities at the heart of policy making for the nation as a whole.**

In order to explore the potential of asset-based rural development to inform rural policy, the Carnegie UK Trust has adopted the **7 capitals framework**<sup>7</sup>: This provides a framework for categorising assets. Unlike other frameworks, it includes political capital (inclusion, voice and power) and cultural capital (language, rituals and traditions) – aspects that are particularly important in a rural context.

Capital	Definition
<b>Financial</b>	Financial capital plays an important role in the economy, enabling other types of capital to be owned and traded.
<b>Built</b>	Fixed assets which facilitate the livelihood or well-being of the community.
<b>Social</b>	Features of social organisation such as networks, norms of trust that facilitate co-operation for mutual benefit, includes a sub-set of spiritual capital (that form of social capital that links to religion/spirituality). Bonding, bridging social capital.
<b>Human</b>	People's health, knowledge, skills and motivation. Enhancing human capital can be achieved through education and training.
<b>Natural</b>	Landscape and any stock or flow of energy and material that produces goods and services. Resources – renewable and non-renewable materials.
<b>Cultural</b>	Shaping how we see the world, what we take for granted and what we value.
<b>Political</b>	The ability of a community to influence the distribution and use of resources.

<sup>7</sup>Cornelia Butler Flora, Mary Emery, Susan Fey and Corry Bregendahl, 'Community Capitals: A Tool for Evaluating Strategic Interventions and Projects.' Iowa State University ([www.ag.iastate.edu/centers/rdev/projects/commcap/7-capitalsshandout.pdf](http://www.ag.iastate.edu/centers/rdev/projects/commcap/7-capitalsshandout.pdf))

A criticism of the use of 'assets' is that the approach is simplistic; that it assumes that assets are automatically a 'good thing'. We have also become aware of the dynamic nature of assets – their 'value' changes over time and as a result of many other determining factors. Clearly this area has not yet been explored or researched, but there seem to be important **parameters** determining the value of the assets.

Parameters include:

- **Scale:** where an asset is identified, it may be possible to develop that potential on a range of different scales; the power of a river might be utilised to power a small hydro scheme for an individual business or for an entire city.
- **Time:** the usefulness of an asset may vary over time; the Pentland Firth has one of the largest tidal ranges in the world but currently the technology does not permit energy production using this renewable source.
- **Global connections:** an asset may yield positive benefits or negative equity according to changing global conditions; timber prices were recently on the floor because of the world domination by Scandinavian producers but now there is renewed interest in biomass and escalating import costs there may be new local markets opening up.
- **Reinforcing complementary or conflicting demands:** an asset may be developed for a number of different purposes – for instance a reservoir may provide water storage, leisure pursuits and power production. Sometimes one development may preclude other uses; a wind farm may detract from the landscape quality or a coniferous plantation may not encourage biodiversity.
- **Costs:** assets may require actual financial investment or the application of other factors such as skills, knowledge and understanding in order that it might be developed. Costs may be measured in terms of the negative consequences of asset development – such as environmental damage. Costs may be incurred upfront, during and after asset development.
- **Age:** what may appear as a positive asset for individuals at a particular stage of life may prove a negative for a different age group. For example, the attraction of living in a geographically remote area may appeal to physically active, newly retired people but the same isolation can be debilitating for frail and single older people.



- **Sociological factors:** people from different social backgrounds may place a higher or lower value on a particular asset.
- **Perspective of the individual or the community:** it is possible to examine assets from the perspective of an individual (distinctive skills, financial circumstances, family support for instance) or from an entire community (shared networks or culture, community facilities for instance).

A policy debate is also raging about community ownership of assets.

Action research undertaken by **NEF** (new economics foundation)

([www.neweconomics.org](http://www.neweconomics.org)) has provided some interesting perspectives on this issue. There are instances where ownership is of very great significance (the buy outs in the Highlands of Scotland for instance) but sometimes ownership is an unwelcome burden. Sometimes ownership will provide collateral that allows a community to win additional resources. Very long leases might release the same potential, but the regular rents will be paid to third parties. We have concluded that the really important element is **access** to assets – tangible and intangible.

There is another issue that has become a ‘hot topic’. In recent times asset-based approaches have become synonymous with the development of land and buildings; there has been a great deal of attention given to tangible assets but we are convinced that **greater regard needs to be given to the intangible assets of a rural area – above all the skills and talents of local people.**

Social entrepreneurs who have developed and sustained highly successful enterprises appreciate that **people** make or break a capital project. We are grateful to action research partners from **Atlantis Leisure in Oban** ([www.atlantisleisure.co.uk](http://www.atlantisleisure.co.uk)), who after running their leisure complex for 17 years, have worked with other successful social enterprises (Shannon in Ireland, Chipping in Lancashire and Kilwinning, Ayrshire) to tease out the factors that proved critically important to their success. They identified three **‘Bedrock Elements’** that need consideration before any community takes on a physical asset (Figure 1) and they make the following observations:

- There is no reason for a community to take on land or a building without demonstrable need for such a facility from the community.
- Running a facility by an essentially volunteer management committee demands a particular set of skills allied with a strong commitment.

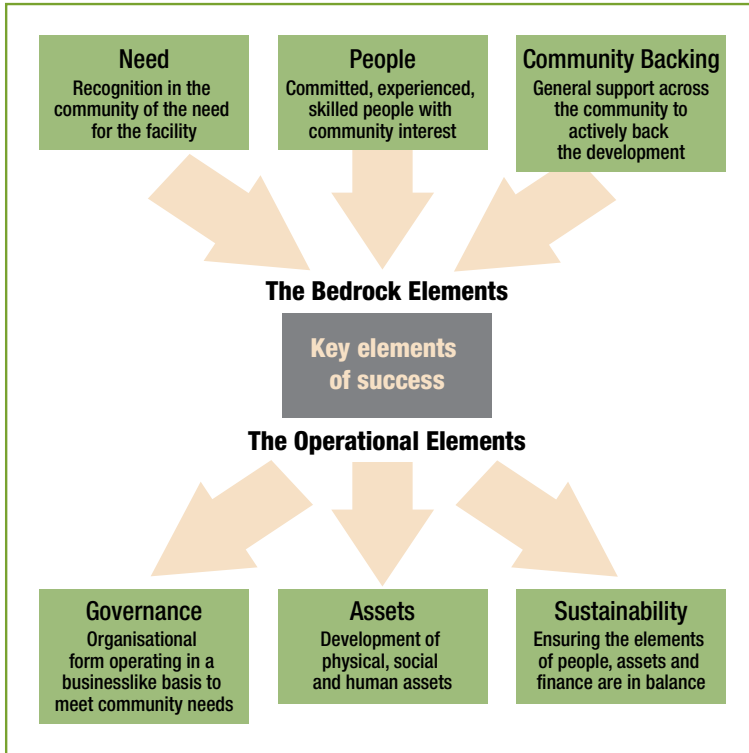


Figure 1: © Hugh McLean, Roy Clunie

- And whilst not everyone in the community will be directly involved in the day to day running, there needs to be a high level of general support by a mass of people who, when the chips are down, will write supportive letters to the press, turn out for fundraising events and display publicity material in their windows<sup>8</sup>.

**Without these elements in place do not even think of asset transfer from local authorities, other public sector bodies or anyone else!**

**Only then** should a group consider the asset itself and how it might be developed, the governance arrangements and how the operational elements – assets, people and finance can be balanced in the short, medium and long-term.

<sup>8</sup>McLean, H and Clunie, R, 'Steps to Successful Community-led Service provision in Rural Areas.' Carnegie UK Trust, (2009).



This **balance** emerged as a critically important factor in securing the long-term sustainability of the enterprise. So, for example, an initiative managed by a small and dedicated management group is severely at risk if they have no succession policy. The founders of Atlantis Leisure ruthlessly pursued younger, skilled people to be trained as the future trustees. Having acquired an asset, transforming that asset into the facility it could be requires an ongoing commitment to continuous improvement. Sitting on an asset without this development means that customers will lose interest, volunteers will get bored and the facility will look tired. Finance is another essential part of this jigsaw; income from earned activities is a staple but the 'offer' needs to be continuously refreshed to maintain and increase income streams. Contracts for the delivery of services on behalf of the public sector could form another important strand; these need to be realistically costed and regularly reviewed.



**At Carnegie UK Trust, we have a vision that rural communities will increasingly develop their own renewable energy projects, rural service hubs like village shops, fast broadband networks and even woodlands and farms.**

However, it is evident from our action research work with the **National Community Land Trust Demonstration Project** ([www.communitylandtrust.org.uk](http://www.communitylandtrust.org.uk)) and with the **Development Trusts Association** ([www.dta.org.uk](http://www.dta.org.uk)) that buildings can be tyrants! That acquiring, developing and managing what can sometimes be a multi-million pound facility is a serious undertaking for volunteer management groups.

‘Some local authorities are looking to offload liabilities rather than assets, many have concerns about the capacity of community organisations to manage assets and few really understand the need to transform assets through the transfer process – creating centres of enterprise and initiative rather than just doing ‘more of the same’ but with different governance arrangements.’<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup>Development Trusts Association, ‘Bearing Fruit: Good Practice in Asset Based Rural Community Development.’ Carnegie UK Trust, (2008).

These findings have highlighted to us the necessity of **technical support of the highest quality** for rural community organisations which are taking on assets.

Some of these requirements are identified below:

Technical Requirements	Examples
Legal	Drawing up of contracts with building firms. Selecting the most appropriate constitution for an organisation.
Financial planning and securing resources	Grants, loans, mortgages, raising capital through community shares or bonds, tax liabilities.
Business planning	Business planning with a social conscience; balancing the social objectives with the need to generate sufficient income for the initiative.
Regulatory frameworks	Health and safety, securing tenant's rights.
Winning community support and engagement	Community led planning, visioning, planning for real.
Employment law	Managing a mixture of staff and volunteers.
Navigating the planning system	Securing a section 106 agreement, understanding development control.
Social inclusion	Housing needs assessments.
Governance	Industrial and Provident Society structures, co-operatives, company limited by guarantee.

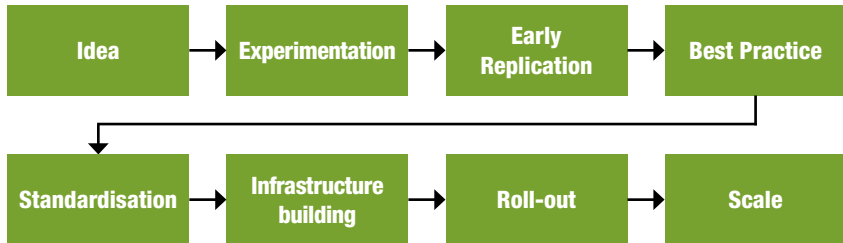
**As communities take on responsibilities for a range of assets, there needs to be a parallel growth in the provision of technical advice services by a cadre of professionals who see a market opportunity to develop their practice in these areas but understand the need to adapt and modify approaches to suit this new client group. Sometimes these professional services will be offered by a private sector business or an existing organisation such as a Housing Association or Development Trust.**

There is also a need to develop other parts of the infrastructure of support for community asset management at a national level. For example, in England, it is proposed that the growing movement of **Community Land Trusts** should be supported at a national level by a ‘trade body’, capable of negotiating on their behalf with Homes and Communities Agency, Communities and Local Government, Council of Mortgage Lenders et al. Another really good example of a very effective national support body is **Community Energy Scotland** ([www.communityenergyscotland.org.uk](http://www.communityenergyscotland.org.uk)); an independent Scottish Charity, actively supporting and funding community groups throughout Scotland to develop sustainable energy projects.

Depending on the level of activity, there may also be a need for regional or even sub-regional support mechanisms. For example, our evaluation of the early progress of Community Land Trusts (CLTs) in the National Demonstration Project revealed a ‘hotspot’ of activity in Cornwall, where small CLTs were taken under the wing of Cornwall Rural Housing Association. This Housing Association appointed a Community Land Trust Project Manager, supported by Cornwall County Council and The Tudor Trust. Clearly this has been a great success and to test this concept further, Carnegie UK Trust and Community Finance Solutions will deploy Empowerment Fund resources to establish a model CLT support structure in Somerset and Dorset to perform some of the demanding back office functions that can be so burdensome for volunteer management committees to take on.

Another stumbling block to progress is the **availability of funding**, particularly in the early, ‘high risk’ stages of asset development. In the recent past Big Lottery has played an important role in supporting asset acquisition – for example by supporting the Scottish Land Fund and then ‘Growing Community Assets’ and the Community Asset Transfer scheme in Wales. In the case of Community Land Trusts, a **Facilitation Fund** has been established, administered by Venturesome and supported initially by Tudor Trust and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. After this investment, and, for example, when planning permission has been obtained, the community group is well placed to access mainstream loans or mortgages. There is also a need to simplify and streamline funding mechanisms (such as those of the Homes and Communities Agency) to differentiate between the scale of Barratt Homes developments and schemes with one or two units in a village.

The experiences of rural Development Trusts set out in their action research report *'Bearing Fruit: Good Practice in Asset-Based Rural Development'* and in the **National Community Land Trusts Demonstration Project** suggests that there is a path from good idea through to mainstreaming that has to be supported.



In the past, really good initiatives developed by rural communities have withered and died after short-term project funding has dried up. Our action research has demonstrated some of the mechanisms that need to be in place if other communities are to benefit in turn from replication and implementation of great ideas.

There also needs to be an acknowledgement that this takes time; **much longer than usual project timeframes**. The constant reinvention of funding programmes (or programme promiscuity) is not helpful to communities who really want to make initiatives work on the ground.

**Idea for action:** We judge that in the case of Community Land Trusts, a high level of support is needed at national and regional level or the early pioneers will not be followed by a mainstream social movement to transform rural affordable housing provision. There are parallels with community asset management in general and we welcome the creation of the Asset Transfer Unit in England. The achievements of the Community Land Unit, established by Highlands and Islands Enterprise in 1997 to increase the role of communities in the ownership and management of land and land assets, and the sustainable management of these resources for the benefit of the community – are significant. We hope that this work continues. Furthermore the need for investment in asset acquisition, particularly in the early stages, is ongoing.



## Increasing the scope and quality of community planning (at a local and strategic level)

Statutory Community Planning is a process by which a local authority plans for the provision of services in their area. A number of public sector organisations including health, fire, police, enterprise agency and transport providers are usually partners in Community Planning. In addition to the statutory partners, Community Planning Partnerships typically involve other public, voluntary/community and private sector partners.

Engaging and connecting community aspirations to local, sub regional and regional level plans such as Community Strategies, Sub Regional Investment Plans, Regional Economic Strategies and Regional Spatial Strategies (and their equivalents) is a difficult process. Clearly these mechanisms are vitally important but how do communities navigate these byzantine channels to influence local service provision? How can communities identify their own priorities for action in their own areas? And how can these ideas connect with the strategic plans? These were the issues explored by our action research partners.

### Connecting with strategic planning

Decisions affecting the lives of rural residents are made by different levels of government and sometimes even by non-elected bodies. These include regional spatial and service delivery strategies and statutory Community Strategies for county, unitary and if appropriate districts/boroughs. In Wales there are at least 46 national strategies!

**Idea for action:** Intermediary organisations that support rural communities have a responsibility to interpret strategic planning processes. A great example is the 'jargon buster' guide produced by Action for Market Towns (<http://towns.org.uk>) as a result of their action research work.





'Where there is a lack of a grassroots community interface such as an accepted partnership or forum, it means that policy decisions made regionally or nationally effectively deny the community a meaningful opportunity to influence or challenge. An example of this is the Regional Spatial Strategy decreeing the number of new houses to be built, forcing Local Authorities to follow, causing much local opposition and concern with little or no opportunity for the community to challenge.'<sup>10</sup>

Community engagement is usually a stated aim for public bodies. We were keen to find out whether actions on the ground matched the rhetoric. After all, collaborative approaches to planning present significant challenges to existing systems and structures. Formal structures of decision-making have tended to be expert-led. A change to a more collaborative approach challenges these power structures; experts are asked to adopt a far less prescriptive approach and politicians have to share some of their decision-taking power with members of the communities they represent.

**Our action research partners reported that even where Statutory Community Planning is well established, community engagement often leans towards the perfunctory rather than the genuinely effective. Worryingly, Community Planning is often interpreted as an exercise in joining up the policies and decisions of different government departments and agencies (horizontal coordination) rather than linking and engaging with local communities (vertical integration).**

Planners and other professionals have to acquire entirely new skills to equip them to work effectively with communities and to respond to their needs. However, as our action research partners in Devon reveal, there is a real willingness to learn.

'We found that the Devon Heartlands Forum meetings helped us to see and hear from those who are working to represent us. We probably wouldn't go to a formal Council meeting, but feel welcome and encouraged to take part here and think the forum is very good for local communication. We proposed the idea of a 'Community Question Time Event' so that people had an opportunity to ask the candidates of different political parties about their policies ahead of the European Elections in June 2009'.

**Local residents and Forum regulars Dave and Valerie Cushing**

<sup>10</sup>Devon Heartlands. 'Engaging Rural Communities in Ongoing Community-Led Planning.' Carnegie UK Trust, (2009).

‘Creating an environment in which people feel they can influence decisions about where they live is central to empowerment. Community Forums such as that led by Devon Heartlands Community Partnership, which enable community groups, local authorities, and agencies to work together, are vital for connecting people to the complex power structures.’

**John Skrine, Coordinator of Empowering Communities,  
the Regional Empowerment Partnership**

A local Community Forum, as demonstrated by **Devon Heartlands** ([www.devonheartlands.co.uk](http://www.devonheartlands.co.uk)), addresses the perennial issue of how to sustain a community’s interest and involvement in the bigger issues beyond the life of a specific programme or project.

**To date the almost total absence of mainstreaming, planning for continued engagement and adequate resourcing is one of the major deficiencies of all community engagement programmes.**

A welcome development at the culmination of our action research is a decision by Devon County Council to include our findings, particularly in terms of the Devon Heartlands Local Community Forum concept, within a series of demonstration pilot studies across Devon that will explore different models of Community Engagement. This next phase of work is due to begin in the summer of 2009 and it is to be hoped that this model of grassroots engagement will prove to be of value to other communities in Devon and elsewhere.

**Idea for action:** We are delighted that Devon County Council has adopted ideas from the enlightened approach to community engagement adopted by Devon Heartlands and Carnegie UK Trust would welcome the opportunity to collaborate with Devon County Council in sharing this learning widely with Local Government Association members.

## Community-Led Planning

**Community-Led Planning is a structured process that engages local people in debate about their local area. It encourages them to identify local priorities, to develop local solutions and have real influence with local decision-makers. The process takes place over time, involving all sections of the community and covers all matters that affect quality of life in a local area, particularly those that need most support<sup>11</sup>.**

The process of community-led planning results in an action plan which identifies:

- Actions the community can take forward itself
- Actions that need external support to achieve
- Actions that require external influence over long-term statutory plans.

In England, community-led planning is a major movement that has been well-researched and evaluated at local, regional and national level. Community-led planning is already embedded as part of the landscape of relationships between citizens, communities and local government. Parish Plans and Market Town health-checks have allowed local people to develop a vision for their own future. A conservative estimate of the number of people benefiting in some way from the use of parish plans is around 5 million. If the parallel process of market town action plans is included, this figure rises to 7.2 million<sup>12</sup>. Similar community-led planning approaches (called by different names) are well established in Wales, Scotland and Ireland but are less common in Northern Ireland.

In England, Carnegie UK Trust, the National Association of Local Councils, Action for Market Towns and Action with Communities in Rural England came together with Urban Forum to call for increased importance to be given to community-led planning as the most effective and efficient route to delivering community empowerment in all communities, whether rural or urban.

<sup>11</sup>ACRE, 'The Comprehensive Resource for Community-led Planning.' [www.communityledplanning.com](http://www.communityledplanning.com)

<sup>12</sup>NALC, AMT, ACRE, Carnegie UK Trust, 'Rolling out Rural Experience of Community Empowerment.' (2008). [http://www.acre.org.uk/communityengagement\\_index.html](http://www.acre.org.uk/communityengagement_index.html)

These organisations asked that emerging national proposals on community empowerment recognise the huge contribution that rural experience already makes in:

- Providing a process, owned by the community, through which each and every citizen can participate in improving the quality of life within their locality
- Instigating genuine engagement between communities and local government
- Delivering effective support structures for community action.

**In general we found the quality of community-led planning to be commendable; the plans are no longer extravagant wish lists but realistic and achievable action plans.**

Our action research has revealed a repertoire of participative community led planning techniques being deployed by communities. The excellent Community Planning website ([www.communityplanning.net](http://www.communityplanning.net)) provides comprehensive details about the different methodologies. Here we highlight two examples of what we judge to be exemplary approaches; in Pembrokeshire and in Cornwall.

Pembrokeshire provides a particularly valuable perspective since there has been continuity of support for community led planning over a period of 15 years, provided by action research partners, **Pembrokeshire Local Action Network for Enterprise and Development (PLANED)** ([www.planed.org.uk](http://www.planed.org.uk)). This continuity has been achieved because the organisation has been able to access EU LEADER funding during the entire period.

**Community-led planning cannot be treated as a ‘project’; it is an ongoing process. Short-term initiatives that promote community engagement cannot secure long-term gains.**

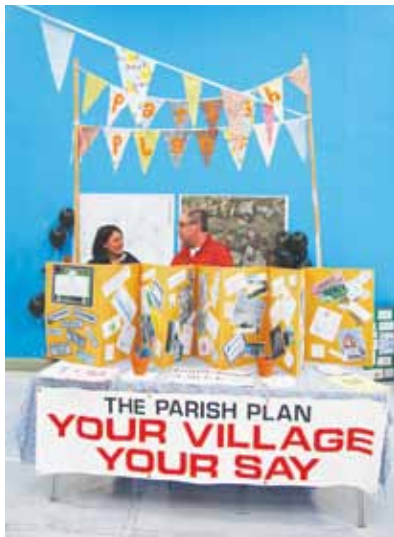
Never content to rest on their laurels, PLANED continuously review and adapt their facilitation approaches but generally they deploy ‘visioning’. For instance, in Solva, the Community Visioning Workshops consisted of the following activities:

- **Something Special:** special qualities of the Solva community
- **A Community Audit:** listing the main features and facilities
- **The Community in the Bigger Picture:** considering global and local issues

- Weaknesses, Threats, Strengths and Opportunities
- The Vision for 2028: Solva in the future
- Skills and Resources Audit: illustrating the variety of local skills
- Translating Ideas into Action: using the information to plan projects.

Visioning can help the community identify what skills and resources exist locally and to look at ways these can be harnessed to address local issues. It is an asset based approach. Visioning can result in new projects, new ways of working, an increase in energy locally and a realistic plan. **The Action Plan provides an overview of the changes and activities the community would like to see in the future and exactly what is needed to help make them happen. Having an Action Plan is just the start.**

From Tenby to St David's, 78 Action Plans have been drawn up. Some communities are actually on their third Action Plan, having successfully delivered on earlier ambitions! The visible results in rejuvenated towns and villages are there to be seen. A particular strength of the PLANED approach is an emphasis on entrepreneurship and sustainability within the action plans.



In Cornwall the china clay villages around St Austell are undergoing a period of rapid economic change. Our action research partners from the **Eden Foundation** ([www.new-ground.org.uk](http://www.new-ground.org.uk)) through a project titled 'New Ground', chose to focus on this area for a particular reason; **dealing with radical change will become the norm in many more communities in the 21st Century – when the past is no guide to the future and so progress needs re-framing and re-imagining rather than modifying existing practice.**

Eden Foundation has deployed culture-led approaches to community empowerment, believing that these are helpful in reframing how people see themselves and their futures. By 'culture' we mean a way of thinking, behaviour, value systems and beliefs. In the clay villages community led planning approaches have recognised existing community values; the importance of a shared sense of purpose, a proud history of community service, events that bring people together to create something – tea treats, local theatre, brass bands, clay carnival, and local services run by the community for the community.



Eden has worked with **Wildworks** ([www.wildworks.biz](http://www.wildworks.biz)) (an internationally renowned theatre group) to develop new ways of appreciating and valuing the things from the past that are important to communities before imagining what new opportunities tomorrow might bring.

**Idea for action:** We have recognised that the most important elements driving regeneration are people-based: ideas, attitudes, culture and narratives. This is a hopeful message in some ways because investing in people is cheaper than huge infrastructure projects – but it is much harder to do and to justify. Our research points to the need to redress the balance of regeneration programmes, away from expensive capital projects to investment in locally inspired action.

### Involving everyone in community-led planning

In general very high rates of participation are achieved in community-led planning. The hard-to-engage and the hard-to-reach are enlisted via many different and often creative approaches. The action planning process increases an understanding of the needs of all residents, particularly those disadvantaged by lack of mobility, lack of employment, or marginalised for other reasons.

Involving young people can bring a fresh perspective and new ideas; their involvement in a consultation process means that resulting projects can be designed based on actual rather than presumed needs. Action research partners, **Cornwall Rural Community Council** ([www.cornwallrcc.co.uk](http://www.cornwallrcc.co.uk)) engaged young people in community-led planning through creative arts and this proved to be very successful. One of the most popular methods of consultation was digital media/film. Here young people were encouraged to go out into the community with video cameras and film their views about the place in which they live. This included things they like about the area, things they would like to change to improve the place and what they feel their needs are (facilities, services, support); sometimes this included some very direct language! Information gained from these films was then fed into the community plan. Other consultation methods included photography projects, painting exercises, poetry, rap, drama, writing and music. Methods such as painting and drawing exercises are particularly useful if wanting to consult with young children, giving them the opportunity to express ideas and views in ways that are fun and easy to get involved in.

Our action research partners in North Wales – **North Wales Racial Equality Network** ([www.nwren.org.uk](http://www.nwren.org.uk)), looked at engagement of black and minority ethnic individuals/households in community planning. Typically ethnic minorities in rural areas lack the political clout to participate fully in local affairs. They are poorly represented on local boards, committees and other decision making fora or in positions of public office. It is well documented that their service needs are often overlooked and there are barriers for them in accessing services and gaining advice and information. In addition they may face racism and discrimination in their communities. This recognition has led to more innovative strategies for engagement; food is a key element of social interaction and cultural exchange and consultation meetings based around a meal or multi-cultural cookery workshops have proved successful. In fact, the effectiveness of any community meeting is directly related to the availability of cake! Piggybacking consultation with regular gatherings such as tenants' meetings was another successful strategy.





## Connecting strategic and local plans

Communities that are strong are ones where residents and service-users not only generate their own community action plans but also have an effective voice around the strategic planning table. **It is for this reason that we believe it is essential to bridge a closer relationship between locally determined community-led plans and wider strategies for developing and regenerating rural areas.**

‘A community’s ability to influence its public sector partners’, is enabled by producing a community led plan. It is as much the process of engaging with public sector partners to understand how that plan may be used by them, the building of relationships with those public sector partners, along the way to tailoring the way the plan is developed and presented to those users with affects how well the plan will deliver.<sup>13</sup>

Many action research partners found that there was not yet a good bridge between the community-led plans and strategic planning. Hardly ever were financial resources allocated to local communities through strategic plans.

Action research carried out in the north west of England by the **Rural Community Councils in Cheshire, Lancashire and Cumbria** found that although community planning was an effective way to get communities working together to deliver local actions and improvements, the ability of these communities to influence public policy and service delivery was limited. As recently as July 2007 DEFRA found that despite a policy framework that is ‘broadly supportive of neighbourhood/parish plans, there is often little recognition, by both local authorities and mainstream service providers, of the widespread benefits that parish plans can provide’.<sup>14</sup>

In their action research, **PAVO** ([www.pavo.org.uk](http://www.pavo.org.uk)) (Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations) also recorded a heroic number of attempts at connecting local communities throughout Powys with the strategies of the County Council and Welsh Assembly Government.

<sup>13</sup>Action With Market Towns, ‘Making the Connections- How Communities Can Achieve Influence Through Community Planning.’ Carnegie UK Trust, (2009).

<sup>14</sup>SQW Consulting Ltd for DEFRA, ‘Integration of Parish Plans into a Wider System of Government.’ DEFRA, (2007).

With a separation of community-led plans, spatial planning and strategic planning for the delivery of services and community based plans, we have considerable sympathy with the view of Ciaran Lynch, Director of Rural Development at **Tipperary Institute** ([www.tippinst.ie](http://www.tippinst.ie)):

'Land use planning has tended to be prescriptive and expert-led, while lodged within a structure that emphasises participation and democratic control. This dislocation between practice and structure may have contributed to the conflicted and adversarial model of planning that we now experience and the time has come for us to consider whether other models could serve us better.'<sup>15</sup>

We were therefore particularly impressed with the concept of **Integrated Area Planning** (IAP) being developed by Tipperary Institute. IAP offers community groups, local authorities and local area partnerships a new process of community planning where all partners develop a shared vision and agreed set of objectives and actions around local development priorities within a collaborative planning framework.

Fundamental to the IAP approach is a belief that planning is a multi-faceted process and while spatial planning is a vital aspect, it is not the only consideration. **It recognises that a successful plan for an area's development cannot deal with spatial aspects in isolation from the social, economic and environmental context.** Also of importance is the process of decision-making: how decisions are made and who makes them. Therefore participation by local people and the agencies who serve them in the process of developing the plan is as important as the plan itself.

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<sup>15</sup>Lynch, C., Corcoran, C, Horgan, C, Keating, Kirwan, B, McCormack, Mcgrane, E. and Ryan, M, 'Integrated Area planning: A Collaborative Approach to Decision-making.' Oak Tree Press, Cork, (2008).

Tipperary Institute has developed the following principles to guide the planning process;<sup>16</sup>

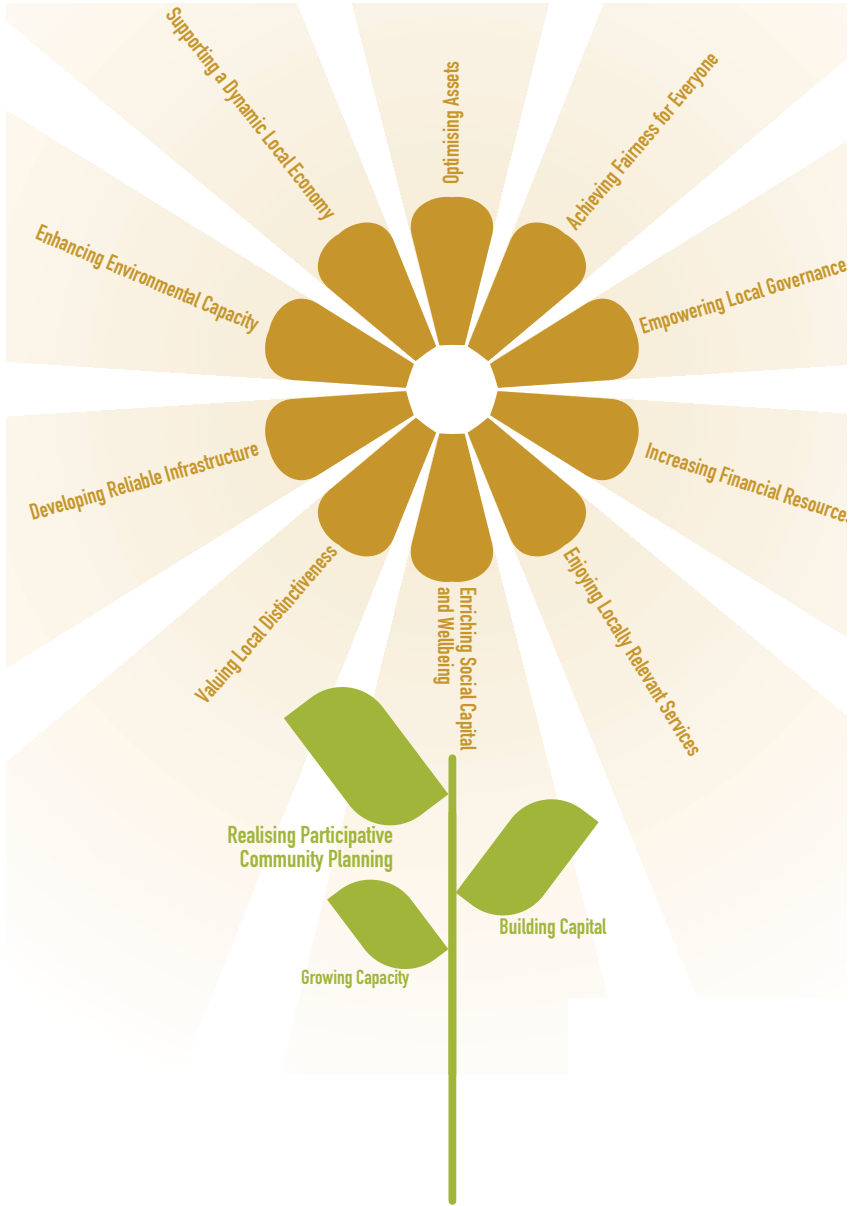
- The plan will be developed using an action plan model. The local community, State and private sectors will work together to address development in their area
- There is a commitment to work in a participatory and inclusive way
- An integrated approach, involving social, economic and environmental measures, will be deployed
- Development plans should be accessible and written in a clear and understandable language
- The planning process should develop structures for implementation of clear goals and objectives, with actions agreed to achieve agreed outcomes
- The process should commit to ongoing community communications.

Tipperary Institute has deployed these methods to great effect in County Offaly as part of their action research. We have seen with our own eyes the positive impact on places such as Ferbane. With a population of around 1,200, Ferbane is an area where traditional industries such as power generation from peat are declining. The Integrated Area Planning process was credited by local elected representatives and business with turning things around.

**Idea for action:** Those responsible for strategic planning in the UK should have to opportunity to learn about Integrated Area Planning from our partners in Ireland.



<sup>16</sup>Lynch, C., Corcoran, C, Horgan, C, Keating, Kirwan, B, McCormack, Mcgrane, E. and Ryan, M, 'Integrated Area planning: A Collaborative Approach to Decision-making.' Oak Tree Press, Cork, (2008).



# The model of the rural community of the future

The Carnegie Commission for Rural Community Development suggested that the dynamic, vibrant, engaged, sustainable rural community in the future would display a number of interrelated characteristics:

- Identifying, utilising and optimising assets
- Achieving fairness for everyone
- Empowering local governance
- Increasing resources for community benefit
- Enjoying locally relevant services
- Enriching social capital and well-being
- Valuing local distinctiveness
- Developing reliable infrastructure
- Enhancing environmental capacity
- Supporting a dynamic local economy.

We have found that this model forms a very useful analytical tool and it provides a mechanism for us to explore evidence from our action research.

‘In order to develop a vision of what type of world we want to see in the future, we have to challenge ourselves about what aspects of our current world make up the ‘essential character’ that we want to conserve. Changes will come whether we want them or not and how we respond requires us to have a sense of what sort of community we want to live in. This is why the Carnegie Petal Model is so powerful, because it helps us to identify the conditions that the sustainable community will possess.’

Here we explore each of the characteristics of the vibrant rural community of the future – noting that these characteristics are of course interconnected.



## Identifying, utilising and optimising assets

**The vibrant rural community of the future will display an assets-based approach rather than concentrating simply upon needs. The community will own, manage or ensure access to a range of tangible and intangible assets for the public benefit.**

In this context we understand an asset to be ‘something of value’, financially or otherwise. The ‘something’ could refer to a tangible thing (like a building, car or set of tools) or it could refer to something that is intangible (e.g. a skill or talent).

Since the publication of the Charter for Rural Communities we have gathered evidence from the action research partners to develop our thinking on asset based rural development, using the 7 Capitals framework. This can act as a ‘prompt’ to remind rural residents of the attributes of their area and of the potential they have for development.

**Importantly, it also reveals a coherent new agenda for rural development in the UK and Ireland.**

Capital	Examples in a rural context
Financial	‘Credits’ in Local Exchange and Trading currency, shares in a community shop, a Community Land Trust, a Community Foundation, credit union or access to banking services.
Built	Village hall, community owned shop (‘the store is the core’) or the pub (‘the pub is the hub’), broadband cables or satellite, work space units, affordable housing.
Social	Young Farmers Club, Women’s Institute, agricultural show organising committee, luncheon clubs, community action plan group, rural women’s network, farmer discussion groups, car share club.
Human	‘What you know’ can benefit your community: e.g. local historian, folk musician, botanist, judging livestock or produce, professional skills from the workplace deployed in a voluntary capacity.  Local schools can encourage place-based education. This and other learning opportunities develop human capital.

Capital	Examples in a rural context
<b>Natural</b>	<p>These assets are particularly significant in a rural context. Water catchments, forests, coal, fish, wind, biomass, wildlife and farm stock.</p> <p>Landscape types such as arable farmland; chalk and limestone grassland; coastal areas; countryside around towns; field boundaries; lowland heath; meadows and pastures; orchards, uplands, waterside land.</p>
<b>Cultural</b>	<p>Festivals, fetes, shows, livestock sales – events to celebrate significant local events, stories, traditions.</p> <p>Revival of indigenous language and respect for dialect.</p> <p>Place-based learning.</p>
<b>Political</b>	Parish or community council, development trust, Local Strategic Partnership.

Idea for action: Carnegie UK Trust would like to work with collaborators to more thoroughly test the asset based approach in real places to demonstrate practical methods that can be used by other communities who aim to plan for their sustainable future.

Our partners **International Association for Community Development** have helped us develop our understanding of asset-based rural development and we have published a companion publication of case studies from around the UK, Ireland and beyond which we believe will provide inspiration for many rural communities.





## Achieving fairness for everyone

**The vibrant rural community of the future will be open, diverse, inclusive, demonstrating a concern for equity and care for each other. It will work to redress and alleviate poverty and disadvantage. Our research partners have urged us to add that organisations should also be representative of the community as a whole.**

The Charter for Rural Communities recognised that inclusiveness is about all rural residents having the opportunities to fulfil their aspirations, whoever they are, irrespective of location.

Our action research reflected the dramatic social change that our rural areas have experienced in the last few years. **North Wales Racial Equality Network** reported that over 60 different languages were spoken in their area. Whilst some newcomers had experienced out-and-out racism, the majority had formed a strong attachment to their new home area. Indeed, a greater degree of antipathy from 'locals' is sometimes associated with middle class, recently retired incomers, 'off-comers' or 'blow-ins.' Far from living separate lives, these skilled individuals with time on their hands can be seen as 'taking over' local committees and 'running the show'. This is a really big and complex issue in many parts of the UK and Ireland – often mentioned to us quietly but not often spoken of freely. The shortage of affordable housing which forces the younger family members to move out of the area is a significant trigger, but so can be the insensitivity of newcomers to local traditions and way of life. No outside agency is going to solve this one; it is for the residents themselves to work out. The practical answer may lie in the provision of affordable housing or, more simply, the building a shared sense of community through celebration or festival.

Our expert advisor, Philomena de Lima, observes that on the whole many rural communities and organisations are poorly equipped to respond to 'newcomers', whether they are minority ethnic households/individuals, migrants or indeed in-migrants from urban areas. Local communities are often not aware of 'what it is like for newcomers' and 'newcomers' are often unaware of the culture of the local areas they have moved into.



'Integration is not an automatic consequence of learning the language of the host community. Individuals must also participate in the life of the community. SEEDS language courses have always been underpinned by the importance of a social integration programme. In 2008 this programme expanded to include visits to places of practical and cultural interest – libraries, service providers, local museums, theatres, galleries, and sites of cultural and historical significance. We have designed a programme encompassing local cultural aspects as well as oral history lessons.'<sup>18</sup>



While recognising that many groups may be excluded in rural communities for a variety of reasons, our action research primarily focused on minority ethnic groups and migrant workers. The aim was to support work that countered the tendency in the media to portray rural minority ethnic groups and migrants as victims rather than as individuals with a variety of 'assets' who are making a valuable contribution to rural communities.

Indeed, minority ethnic and migrant households are making a vital contribution (economic, social and civic) to rural communities at an individual and household level, as recounted in the 'Migrant Stories' DVD produced by the **Rural Media Company** ([www.ruralmedia.co.uk](http://www.ruralmedia.co.uk)) as part of their action research. The project created a picture of a rural county's relationship with its many thousands of migrant workers. Russian, Lithuanian, Bulgarian, Polish, Czech and Ukrainian workers in Herefordshire recorded their digital stories, alongside the local residents who befriended them. There are many different reasons for coming to England – to see the sights, to broaden horizons, to make money to buy a house back home, to escape unemployment. Many are homesick, lonely and disappointed by what they find here and are exploited by agents, who don't deliver what they promise. Many,

<sup>18</sup>SEEDS, 'RARP Progress Report.' Carnegie UK Trust, (2009).

however, have a good time and return to pick fruit every summer or decide to stay for years. The Herefordshire locals who get to know them say their lives are enriched by new friendships, activities and travel opportunities. The DVD is a powerful resource for the public sector (e.g. teachers, local authorities, NHS) as well as for communities who wish to understand their new residents.

Similarly, **The Wayland Partnership** ([www.wayland.org.uk](http://www.wayland.org.uk)), the development partnership for Watton and its surrounding villages in Norfolk, identified tensions between those people who had moved into the area more recently and people who had been living there for many years. They felt that there was an opportunity to look at the real life stories behind the headlines and begin to inform the settled community, starting with the young people, about the real facts, figures and motivations of the newly established migrant population in Watton. The Partnership approached Creative Arts East and together used the medium of theatre to explore the issue. This was also seen as an opportunity to develop a model for joint working which could be rolled out to other areas.

‘Those involved felt that the children had successfully highlighted the plight of migrants feeling lost and homesick. Incidents of bullying had reduced over the period of the project to almost zero and generally they felt more welcome. The response is summed up by Livia, who has left an 11 year old daughter in Slovakia. ‘I wake up every day missing her and I thought no one here in this lovely place could understand this, but now I know that you do want to understand why we are here and how painful it is to leave a family.’<sup>19</sup>

This approach to building relationships between the indigenous population and recent migrants proved successful and the work achieved great coverage on Radio Norfolk. Sadly we reflected that whilst one year’s pupils will have taken this experience with them, it is something that would need to be repeated with each successive tranche of pupils – and the vagaries of short-term funding and the competing demands for school funding did not allow this.

**Over the life of the action research work, we have become convinced that in order to strengthen the bonds in the community it is necessary to proactively eliminate fear, misinformation and barriers that keep individuals apart.**

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<sup>19</sup>The Wayland Partnership and Creative Arts North East, ‘Leaving Home Project Final Report.’ Carnegie UK Trust, (2008).



We have benefitted from the experiences of **SEEDS** ([www.seeds.ie](http://www.seeds.ie)) – a proactive diversity initiative created to address the challenges and opportunities of increased cultural and ethnic diversity in North West region of Northern Ireland. SEEDS was formed in response to concerns about increasing racial attacks, verbal abuse,

the isolation of migrant workers and their working conditions. SEEDS opened the ‘One World Centre’ in 2006 to provide a range of services and activities promoting integration and meeting unmet needs within the ethnic minority community.

During the action research, SEEDS has documented the support needed by around 400 clients each year relating to representation (with employers, social services, landlords and community representatives), dealing with undocumented workers and illegal arrivals, school admissions, substance rehabilitation processes, Police Service of Northern Ireland, prison, Inland Revenue, Home Office, Department for Social Development, legal advice, charitable donations (for food, clothing, heating and emergency accommodation). Alongside these critically important ‘survival strategies’, SEEDS also organise the impressive One World Festival; an international event designed to give all residents of Derry and surrounding communities an opportunity to learn about each other through novel cultural approaches.

Practical support for recent arrivals in the UK and Ireland is clearly important and it seems that the third sector is stepping in when State systems are overwhelmed. **Citizens Advice Bureaux** ([www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)) are often a first point of call and as part of their action research work are mainstreaming racial discrimination advice throughout rural areas of the UK. This has involved training for bureaux advisers and the recruitment of volunteers from migrant and other Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities as advisers and even onto Trustee Boards. In West Wiltshire, for instance, three out of seven trustees are people from ethnic minorities. The CAB partners are now actively promoting the service to recent arrivals and other BME communities.



## Empowering local governance

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**The vibrant rural community of the future will have the capacity to play an active role in shaping its own future through a revitalised system of elected and participative governance at local community level.**

In the period since the publication of the Charter for Rural Communities, we have seen the creation of several more unitary councils in England and the increasing power of unelected regional bodies such as Regional Development Agencies. At the same time voter turnout in local elections, especially in parish and town council or community council elections is low (even if an election takes place – given that it is very difficult to find volunteers to stand as new councillors).

As reported in the earlier section of this report on community led planning, action research partners have looked at community engagement models, the effectiveness of the organisational infrastructure of community planning and of the bridging of local action plans and Community Strategies. However, the Carnegie trustees identified a gap in our understanding; the potential of individual parish and town councils (or their equivalents) to cluster collaboratively to gain a greater voice with higher tier authorities.

Never has this been more critical than when a three tier system of councils is reorganised, with a new unitary authority being formed. We asked **Community Action Northumberland** ([www.ca-north.org.uk](http://www.ca-north.org.uk)) to examine this issue. Northumberland is England's most sparsely-populated county, covering some 2,000 square miles, with a population of approximately 310,000. The 145 parish and town councils cover 97% of the land-area, but only 56% of the population. Most of the local councils are small, covering populations of only several hundred people, with budgets typically of under £300 to £1,000, and served by a very part-time clerk. There are significant issues concerned with the capacity of individual local councils. At the same time, the expectations for local councils to have an enhanced role, both as a representative voice of their whole community, and to deliver a wider range of services locally, are growing. The aim of this action research, which will be completed in autumn 2009, is to examine whether a system of clustering of parish and town councils can enhance their ability to represent effectively the interests of local people and shape the strategic plans of a range of public bodies and the unitary authority, while not losing the individual identity of the local council or surrendering its autonomy.

**Whilst representational structures struggle to attract voters we have observed a flourishing of participative forms of democracy – particularly of development trusts.** We were keen better to understand the characteristics of these structures in rural areas, especially as they are increasingly taking on the management of physical assets and the delivery of essential services, and we engaged the **Development Trusts Association** to explore this issue.

The overall picture is clear: rural and semi-rural development trusts are increasing in number but are much smaller than their urban counterparts. Also many of them are struggling financially. Assets and earned income in particular are key indicators of sustainability, and many development trusts in rural and semi-rural areas remain fragile and are not performing well in business terms and therefore are not achieving as great an impact in their communities as they might. However, some are certainly thriving and our action research partners aimed to identify and understand the key success factors through seven case studies.

The **Development Trusts Association** identified ten characteristics of successful organisations and in doing so, **describe the type of governance structures that rural communities will need if they are to survive and thrive in future:**

- **Bridging the gap between service delivery and policy development:** Trusts started out by focusing on delivery but realised that they also had to impact on wider policy to effect change. Most are deeply involved in various partnerships and working groups to ensure their experience shapes the wider 'political' landscape within which they operate.
- **Working with the market:** No longer willing to rely on traditional notions of charity, or to see business as the enemy, these trusts have found ways to work with the market and develop income generation enterprises that contribute both towards their long-term stability and the achievement of their social goals.
- **A commitment to quality:** None of the trusts are willing to accept second best. This applies both to taking pride in the standard of services and facilities from which their users benefit – **'Our community deserves the best'** and in meeting commitments to funders and investors – **'delivering on promises'**.
- **Accountability:** All of the trusts are committed to consulting and involving their communities. Some have grown out of parish plans or Market Town Initiatives and all seek the views and input of local people – often as volunteers. At the same time, they recognise the need to balance community with opportunity and are willing to take unpopular decisions if they are the right decisions.

- **Ambition and passion:** These trusts are all marked by the passion of their staff and board members. They all want to make a difference, they all want to make their communities a better place to live and they won't accept 'no' for an answer. Their view is that they 'can do' and they'll find a way around problems rather than accepting defeat.
- **Inspiring champions:** Successful rural development trusts build strong communities of supporters who help them achieve their larger goals. They value volunteers and external champions not only for their time but also for their commitment. They create emotional experiences that help connect supporters to the trust's vision and core values. These experiences convert others who in turn recruit others – viral marketing at its finest.
- **Investing in networks:** Many trusts recognised that networking is a useful investment of time. They committed time to supporting other community organisations, freely sharing knowledge and experience and building platforms for collaboration rather than competition. The best example of this is perhaps the Northumberland Federation of Development Trusts (FoNDT) which has acted as a platform to launch a number of joint ventures as well as influencing policy at a strategic level and supporting a 'hotspot' of activity.
- **Embracing change:** All of the trusts studied are flexible and have responded positively to changing circumstances and opportunities. Some have made mistakes along the way. However, none of them believe the world owes them a living and they have re-invented themselves to reflect the external environment. They are able to let go of projects that have come to a natural end and respond to new needs.
- **Embracing risk:** Part of the shared culture change and the entrepreneurial spirit is linked to a willingness to take risks. This may be around using loan finance or developing new services and products, moving out of their comfort zone to achieve their objectives. If something goes wrong, their attitude is to try something different rather than giving up.
- **Sharing responsibilities:** The leaders of all these organisations exhibit charisma but they don't have oversized egos. They know they need to involve others, encourage people to take responsibility and give people the space to 'fail'. They all see their communities as a resource, a reservoir of potential that can be activated rather than a passive source of 'problems' that need to be solved.

**Having described the emerging governance arrangements we wondered how these can relate to traditional representative structures. We have concluded that each has a distinctive role and that the two roles are complementary. The local council/community council can commission a local plan and the development trust can deliver the actions.**

'A positive relationship with the town or parish council is a strong enabling factor for effective community partnership. Efforts by external bodies to isolate community partnerships from their local council are counterproductive, although a degree of independence is positive. At a practical level, town or parish councils can provide support for community partnership meetings, providing a room and the secretariat. Both these are critical, if simple support activities. At a more strategic level, if town or parish councils do not have a close relationship with community partnerships there is a disconnection, given their position as the most local elected representative bodies. This disconnect has a very negative impact, not least because there is a sense of competing to influence.'<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Action With Market Towns, 'Making the Connections- How Communities Can Achieve Influence Through Community Planning.' Carnegie UK Trust, (2009).



## Increasing resources for community benefit

When the Charter for Rural Communities was published in 2007, we stated that:

**The vibrant rural community of the future will have the capacity to access investment from the EU, central and local government, the business sector, lottery distributors and trusts and from a directly raised precept.**

The four parts of the UK and the Republic of Ireland all have Rural Development Programmes based on the EU Rural Development Regulation and virtually the whole rural territory in each administration is covered by a network of Local Action Groups following the highly successful LEADER approach. Although in some English regions the pace of implementation is disappointingly slow, resources are available for bottom-up, community-led projects throughout the UK and Ireland.

But on the wider front since the publication of the Charter, there has been a financial crisis which may entirely change the funding landscape; and in all probability there is to be a public sector squeeze the like of which few people will have experienced. Resources are likely to be concentrated on the provision of statutory services and those services are likely to be increasingly centralised in an effort to economise. The private sector has been badly hit by the crash; with corporate social responsibility budgets being the first to be hit. Trusts and Foundations have had the value of their endowments greatly diminished as equities crashed and dividends were cut. The amounts available for grant giving are greatly reduced. And finally the Lottery distributors have other calls upon their resources such as the 2012 Olympics.

All of these factors will impact significantly on rural communities and will require **new resource strategies**. For a generation the voluntary and community sector have relied upon grants; some initiatives will continue to need grant funding but there are other possibilities need to be explored.

**Through our action research we have observed that there are different categories of rural initiative that require resources and a new repertoire of financial arrangements: these are just a few examples:**



- Ongoing services, especially for vulnerable people that are necessary to fill the gaps in statutory provision. An example might be a nail cutting/bathing service that allows older frail people to stay in their own home. The State therefore benefits from not having to spend money accommodating that person in a home or in hospital. However there is no method to account for costs that are not incurred and the service is therefore not fully appreciated. There is another example that we have become aware of: a young people's dance initiative in Cornwall has had a very positive impact upon young lives and in reduced petty crime, drug taking and numbers of teenage pregnancies. Again, these benefits are never recognised and the initiative struggles to raise modest amounts of funding to survive. In these cases income generation is not possible. **There must be ability for the State to invest in prevention rather than pick up much heavier costs in dealing with the consequences of not taking earlier action.**
- Claimants in rural areas do not draw down the full value of benefits that are due to them. If they did so, resources could be invested in the provision of care services by local people.
- Public sector strategies setting out clear goals should not sit on shelves gathering dust. Where rural communities can demonstrate that they can contribute to the achievement of targets of public bodies, there should be longer-term **revenue investment** to support these activities.
- As a rural community investigates the potential for a new community enterprise or the possibility of taking on a service which is threatened, there is a need for funding for **feasibility and business planning. Where long-term sustainability is a real prospect, this early stage investment is of great value.**
- There is an **income-generating opportunity** for rural communities in contributing towards national targets for recycling, renewable energy production and carbon capture. For instance, following the lead set by the Scottish Government, communities can own micro-generating systems (wind, wave, mini-hydro, bio-digesters) that provide an ongoing income stream.

- Community investment is a way of raising money from communities through the sale of **shares or bonds** in order to finance enterprises serving a community purpose. Community investors may also receive interest or dividends on the money they invest (or even in beer in the case of one community owned brewery). Community investment underpinned the birth, growth and development of co-operatives in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and there has been a resurgence of interest in using community investment to finance a range of community initiatives.
- **Community supported agriculture** is a social enterprise model that is based on support through a producer-consumer partnership. It offers an innovative business approach where a food or farm enterprise has members who own 'shares' in the harvest and therefore also share in the risk. Enterprises range from allotments on farms, a community making an agreement in advance to purchase a particular crop from a producer, the community members making regular input of labour, to the purchase of land or related holdings or renting land and employing the producer.



**There was a moment of revelation for Carnegie Trustees on a study visit to a regeneration project that had just been awarded £26M; the need for this initiative had not been established with local people who would be living next door. Consultation with the community had been cursory (display boards in the library). The scale of this initiative was so vast that it was beyond local comprehension.**

**Yet alongside this, local groups were struggling to find just £1,000 for great-value youth programmes. In times of austerity we must more carefully consider the application of public money and acknowledge that in communities, a little goes a long, long way.**



## Enjoying locally relevant services

**The vibrant rural community of the future will enjoy equity of access to essential services and have the ability to shape additional public, private and third sector services that are locally relevant.**

Rural service provision remains a challenging area of policy and practice, due to the dispersed nature of rural populations, low numbers living in rural areas and therefore the high cost of service provision per head of the rural population. A typical response has been a succession of short-term projects which attempt to address rural service provision through 'pilots', at the end of which a void is often left at community level. In our action research, it was felt that there was much value in working with communities and organisations that had already been successful in pioneering new and enduring ways of service delivery to understand how they had achieved success.

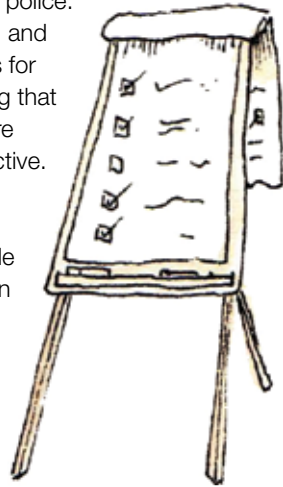
We remain convinced that there are some **services that are essential** and that should be available wherever people live. These include:

- Infrastructure of utilities, even if provided 'off-grid', such as water supply, electricity, telephone and broadband connectivity
- Access to affordable and healthy food
- An accessible and flexible community meeting place within reasonable distance
- Access to primary level education
- Access to benefits for those who are eligible
- Access to general health care suited to each stage of life
- Security and public safety – access to police and fire services.

Rural residents are realistic and understand that delivery mechanisms might be quite different in a rural context. **Co-production of services** – where users work alongside providers to design and deliver services, with rural communities fulfilling a number of different roles including: planning and design, commissioning, purchasing, managing, delivering, monitoring and evaluating is the way forward. It is felt that this approach is cost-effective and increases viability of rural service provision. It also requires professionals to possess skills in user engagement and partnership working. In turn, user and community groups require support and skills in service management and delivery.

Nowhere was this better illustrated than in relation to the research carried out by **Cheshire Centre for Independent Living** ([www.cdf-northwest.org.uk](http://www.cdf-northwest.org.uk)), looking at the potential of direct payments. Direct payments are monies paid directly to people with disabilities by councils so that they can purchase their own care from Personal Assistants. The possibility of recruiting a local person to provide care is valued by users and the part-time employment opportunities are a welcome source of income. By 2011, Cheshire will be providing 5,000 people with direct payments. However, becoming an employer can be daunting and it was found that peer support groups (called 'Independent Friends' groups), assisted by professionals, provided confidence and the potential to recommend and share trusted carers. It is necessary to tackle the over-complicated arrangements for those employing carers; we call upon Government to adopt the proposals contained in the Low Income Tax Reform Group report 'Independent Living: Direct Payments and the Tax System'. **We concluded that there is great potential to capture public investment in the form of benefits through the creation of local employment opportunities.**

Support services for the most vulnerable rural residents have to be imaginative and tailor made to local circumstances. **Pulteneytown People's Project** ([www.pulteneytownpeoplesproject.org.uk](http://www.pulteneytownpeoplesproject.org.uk)), in the north of Scotland provides innovative support for young people, some of whom are at risk; who are not attending school or who have been in trouble with the police. Learning programmes are tailor made to the individual and these are often work related. The long-term outcomes for these young people have been positive, demonstrating that support mechanisms outside the public sector, that are rooted in a local community can prove to be very effective. Here the local knowledge of this community based social enterprise proved on many occasions to be of critical importance. We learned of one specific example where the rehabilitation of an offender could have been jeopardised from day one. The prisoner was released from Glasgow with insufficient funds to purchase public transport back home, yet it was a requirement that he fulfilled certain curfew hours. So not only did he not have the means to travel, he could not have completed the journey back to Caithness in time anyway. The intervention of staff from Pulteneytown People's Project saved the day.





The **Plunkett Foundation** ([www.plunkett.co.uk](http://www.plunkett.co.uk)), titled their research '**The Store is the Core**' – examining the function of village shops in offering extended services. We were particularly impressed with the achievements of one of their case studies – from Uig on the Isle of Lewis which has greatly extended service provision in a remote area. This successful community venture in the Western Isles has been hailed as a perfect example in helping to secure the future of rural and remote areas. The shop, which includes a petrol station and post office, provides a lifeline for the 400 residents of Uig – one of the most remote communities in the islands. The previous shopkeeper was forced to abandon the business due to difficulties in maintaining it on a financially viable basis. That sparked a community drive to secure the premises and ensure that a vital local facility was retained for future years. An agreement was struck with the Co-operative to supply produce at the same prices as those offered to the group's supermarket in Stornoway. **The assistance from the Co-operative has been crucial in enabling the venture to go ahead, with the Co-operative Bank providing the final piece of the funding jigsaw.** There was considerable investment in the shop extension – the £500,000 from a range of partners including Big Lottery Fund, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, HIE Innse Gall, the Scottish Government's Rural Services Priority Area Fund and Communities Scotland. A renewable energy aspect will also be incorporated in the coming months to help supply the shop with electricity through small wind turbines and solar panels, a venture supported through **Community Energy Scotland**.

Although other community shop case studies adopted by the Plunkett Foundation have achieved some successes, they found challenges have been exacerbated by the financial downturn and some ambitious plans for extension of services in the other locations have been postponed. Clearly not all community shops will be able to benefit from public and charitable investment on the scale of Uig; we hope that Plunkett Foundation will be able to distil some transferable success factors that will benefit other community enterprises when they complete their action research work later in 2009.

Beyond the village shop, there is an urgent need for innovation in rural service delivery, particularly in respect of care for vulnerable people. For example, there is a rapid increase in the number of older people in the countryside – when a partner dies and the person is separated from extended family support and increasingly frail, the future looks dire. Imaginative schemes are beginning to be developed – such as Sycamore Hall in Bainbridge, North Yorkshire, which provides extra care housing alongside a restaurant, hairdressers, a shop and treatment rooms. This new facility means that people can stay in the area with friends that they know whilst receiving vital support.

Undoubtedly there will be greater use of online services such as telemedicine in future and we have seen from the work of **Alston Cybermoor** ([www.cybermoor.org](http://www.cybermoor.org)) how technology can effectively connect the remotest of communities.

Centralised service providers can have difficulty engaging with rural user groups – public meetings are costly and there can be apathy amongst target communities. There is huge potential to deliver services to rural communities using ICT – saving travel to council offices and allowing citizens to carry out transactions 24/7. Unfortunately many public sector websites lack the private sector's usability as they are not 'selling' their services to buying customers. Public service providers also seem nervous about open web discussions and tools for online collaboration. It undermines their ability to control how information is accessed and gives disparate clients, particularly in rural areas, the information to campaign for better services.

We concluded that community websites, with a compelling mix of news, comment, services and information can act as the 'killer application' to get people onto the web. For instance, the Cybermoor portal is visited by 10% of the local population every day and acts as an entry point to local government services such as County Council Neighbourhood Forums and the Police. With local jobs information, it also provides services with a local relevance to the community.



## Enriching social capital and well-being

**The vibrant rural community of the future will display high levels of volunteering and social action, high social trust and neighbourliness, and a welcoming ethos that attracts people to remain or to move into the area.**

During the Rural Action Research Programme we have benefitted from links with international advocates of asset based rural development and through them have developed a better understanding of the potential of communities to shape the quality of life for residents. A key event for us was the conference in which we participated – ‘**What’s Working in Community Development?**’ ([www.horizonscda.ca/iacdconference.html](http://www.horizonscda.ca/iacdconference.html)) at Acadia University, Nova Scotia in 2008. Carnegie UK Trust ran a session dedicated to asset-based approaches and is developing an international network of organisations using these methods. It is through this network that we have appreciated the work of people such as John McKnight and Ron Colman and collaborated with others to ensure that audiences in the UK heard more about their work.

We were particularly influenced by **John McKnight's** analysis<sup>21</sup>, suggesting seven important areas of well-being that can be positively influenced by community action: health, security, environmental quality, economy, food production, nurturing of children and care for others.

- How long we live and how often we are sick is determined by our personal behaviours, our social relationships, our physical environment, and our income. As neighbours, we are the people who can change these things
- Whether we are safe and secure in our neighbourhood is largely within our personal domain. Many studies show that there are two major determinants of our local safety. One is how many neighbours we know by name. The second is how often we are present and associated in public – outside our houses
- Health of the environment is a major local responsibility. How we transport ourselves, how we heat and light our homes and how much waste we create are factors we can control
- In our villages and neighbourhoods, we have the power to build a resilient economy. Most enterprise begins locally. As neighbours, we have the power to nurture and support these businesses so that they have a viable market. We have the local power to capture our own savings

<sup>21</sup>Community Capacities and Community Necessities, Address by John McKnight, at the “From Clients to Citizens Forum,” Coady International Institute, St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, Nova Scotia (2009).

- We have some control over the production of the food we eat
- We all say that it takes a village to raise a child
- Locally we are the site of care. Our institutions can only offer service – not care. As neighbours, we care for each other, for our children and for our elders.

Throughout our action research, we have reflected on the importance of well-being and yet how these factors are overlooked when measuring progress of countries, regions or communities. Professor Ron Colman believes that we need tools of analysis that properly value social, economic and environmental assets. That is what the **Genuine Progress Index** is designed to provide.

Today, the most commonly-used measure of economic progress is still the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which is simply the total value of all the goods and services that are exchanged for money. GDP does not count some of our greatest sources of wealth – unpaid household labour, volunteering, and a clean environment. GDP counts the depletion of our resources as economic gain. Crime, war, pollution, tobacco smoking, and car accidents all cause people to spend money – and so they all increase the GDP. GDP only reports how much income we produce – but not how that income is distributed. We have found that since the financial crisis, more and more people have questioned the pursuit increased GDP.

The **Genuine Progress Index**, by contrast, is based on a capital accounting framework in which the value of human, social, and natural capital are recognised along with the manufactured and financial capital that are currently measured.

Others are working on new measures that capture the things that really matter. Nic Marks from New Economics Foundation also presented the work on **National Accounts of Well-being** ([www.nationalaccountsowellbeing.org](http://www.nationalaccountsowellbeing.org)) alongside Ron Colman at the 'Measuring What Matters' conference held in Dundee in 2009. At last, enlightened individuals are developing the means by which communities can really measure their progress.

We have also been concerned to understand how that progress is instigated in the first place. We know that it is often highly motivated individuals, who we call Fiery Spirits, who get things going in a community. These people often do not set out to be leaders but rather circumstances turn them into leaders. Colleagues at the Eden Foundation have a hypothesis; such local leaders are a necessary condition for local change to occur. Amazingly one or two people can turn round the fortunes of a community; Hazel Stuteley calls them the 'Trojan Mice'!

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<sup>22</sup>Hazel Stuteley is a health professional, member of the Health Complexity Group, Peninsula Medical School and advisor to government – more importantly an inspiration to us all



**Rural areas are places where the contribution of individuals becomes especially obvious.**

**The Fiery Spirits, the change agents who somehow find themselves in pivotal positions in a process of development and renewal, stand out because of the limited capacity of the overall system to care for**

**rural areas. We don't necessarily mean those in an elected, statutory or organisational authority, or even those who have an informal mandate to lead. We mean simply the people who somehow, from wherever they stand become the agents who catalyse change, releasing the assets from communities – the Fiery Spirits.<sup>23</sup>**



Fiery Spirits need support; a chance to learn from others and to share ideas. We are convinced that this is best provided through contact with other activists. When you put Fiery Spirits together it is electrifying;

'We've got shed-loads of ideas', 'You've got to have a passion for it', 'Just do it!'

The experience of Fiery Spirits is not, however, always entirely positive, especially when that person is employed by public sector organisations driven to meet clinical, public order or crime prevention targets. One of the most inspiring people we have met on our journey is **David Aynsley** – a 'super-cop' working in Camborne. His story involves young people from 'failing' estates, hip hop, a nightclub, a choreographer to the stars and the transformation of many young lives; also, the conflict that this caused him at work. What is unusual is that he has written about his experiences<sup>24</sup>. This is essential reading for anyone in local government or the police with a responsibility for direct work in communities.

<sup>23</sup>Eden Foundation, 'New Ground-Final Action Research Report.' Carnegie UK Trust, (2009).

<sup>24</sup>Aynsley, D, 'Connecting with Communities.' Kingsham Press, (2009).

Many Fiery Spirits understand instinctively the importance of cultural activities as a tool for delivering change. Sometimes there is a rich cultural inheritance to draw upon. Sometimes this has to be invented. We have been inspired by the work of **John Fox and Sue Gill** ([www.deadgoodguides.com](http://www.deadgoodguides.com)) (formerly Welfare State International) whose lantern festivals in Ulverston, Cumbria brought a town together.

But what of communities where there is no Fiery Spirit and where community spirit is decidedly lacking? Is it possible to jump start a community? Evidence from our action research partners suggests that it can.

The '**Communities on the Edge**' ([www.sup.org.uk](http://www.sup.org.uk)) initiative based at Southern Uplands Partnership suggests that the local, home grown 'animator' may increasingly become a feature of rural community action.

'We talk about the role of the Animator as being concerned with community development and capacity building, the empowerment of individuals and groups who, when equipped with the skills, knowledge and confidence they require can make things happen.'<sup>25</sup>

How on earth did the job title come about? Not without some agonising!

'Animator – A word suggestive of being active and positive, of enthusing, working with (not for) folk, of bringing out the best, of motivating and inspiring (helpfully). Not suggestive of any hierarchical relationship between the worker and the community. Has potential to be perceived as being suggestive of 'pulling strings'. A novel word and therefore might not be understood widely; might be construed as being about cartoon making!'

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<sup>25</sup>Communities on the Edge, 'A Handbook for Community Animators.' Carnegie UK Trust, (2009).

However, one animator was delighted to be called by that title;

'I've loved being called an Animator. If nothing else, it's been a great way to start engaging and conversing with people. The alternative 'development worker' carries negative connotations. The word 'development' in itself implies that people or a community require changing or developing. While this may be the case, this may not be the view of the indigenous population. The term animator is much friendlier and suggests that the role is a positive one which involves firing up the wider community and initiating local projects. The focus is taken away from the term 'worker' which implies that the person is there to serve a community rather than support and animate it.'

Communities on the Edge defined some characteristics of animators;

- Local people who are employed to animate other local people into action
- Primarily concerned with the ideas, concerns and ambitions of local people – they shape the agenda
- A role to signpost people to the relevant agencies or local authority departments equipped to deal with specific issues
- The definition of 'support' will vary greatly – dependent on the make up, experience and expertise of the community. Different groups will require different levels of support
- Capacity building is central to the work, endeavouring to up-skill the community, both through formal training and informal learning
- Maintain a dialogue with the wider community about the work. Openness and transparency is the key to the success of building positive relationships.



## Valuing local distinctiveness

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**The vibrant rural community of the future will thrive on its local distinctiveness; the attractiveness of its landscape and culture encouraging people to stay in a place they love and to be welcomed into the area.**

In the Charter for Rural Communities, the Commissioners alerted us to the risk that as fewer people actually derive their living from the land or the immediate rural area, so there might grow a disconnection between a community and its distinctive characteristics. It would seem that in order to reverse this, we will need to nurture a heightened awareness of 'place'. The Charter stated that rural schools have an important role to play in achieving this;

'We call upon governments, the curriculum development agencies, local education authorities and the teaching profession to support place-based learning as a cross cutting feature of the primary and secondary curriculum in rural schools.'<sup>26</sup>

Our education system, driven as it currently is by the 'standards agenda', is seen by some commentators as culturally homogenising and failing to address local communities' needs. In fact, it is suggested that the process of schooling often encourages young people to reject their home communities and to seek elsewhere for the 'good life' depicted by the media. We believe that schools have a responsibility to equip rural children and young people to continue to live and work in rural areas if they choose to do so.

**Place-Based Learning** is an attempt to reconnect the process of education and human development to the well-being of community life. It aims to deliver better academic achievement, revitalised teaching, enhanced personal and social development, stronger communities, and improved environmental stewardship. Carnegie asked experienced teacher and trainer, **Will Coleman** ([www.placebasedlearning.co.uk](http://www.placebasedlearning.co.uk)), from Cornwall to stimulate a debate about how we utilise local ecological and socio-cultural settings to develop the sense of connection to the land and community upon which an ethic of care and responsibility can be built.

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<sup>26</sup>Carnegie UK Trust, 'A Charter for Rural Communities,' Carnegie UK Trust, (2007).



Will has shared examples of excellent practice as an inspiration for teachers, educators and curriculum developers and has engaged actively with the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency. He is developing support materials so that practitioners can take steps towards excellent practice in place based learning.



Carnegie UK Trust has for decades been a strong supporter of indigenous languages and cultures, believing that these cultures represent unique assets which enable communities to thrive. We worked with **Voluntary Arts Wales** ([www.vaw.org.uk](http://www.vaw.org.uk)) and Irish and Scottish partners in a collaboration called **Celtic Neighbours**.

The partners collated their experiences of collaboration and celebration of indigenous cultures in a book called *'Ferment'*. This remarkable collection of stories illuminates the true value of language and culture; collectively they provide a glimpse of a rich community life that many people hunger for and try to recreate where it has been lost.

'The boldly ambitious aim of Celtic Neighbours is to reconnect three Celtic language communities historically divided for centuries by politics and religion and dispersed across the margins of five legislatures. This dialogue has identified differences but has also identified great affinities. The impact of in-migration, out-migration on cultural identity, the importance of language status, the significance of our sense of place, the growing need for indigenous creativity in a globally mediated world'.<sup>27</sup>

**Calum MacLean, Director, Proiseact Nan Ealan**

In 2006, Carnegie UK Trust co-sponsored the Scottish Government/OECD conference on rural innovation. Presenters Timothy Wojan and David McGranahan from the US Department of Agriculture highlighted to us the great economic potential of the 'creative class'; people who can design innovative solutions to complex problems. Creative people are not just artists. We have found that sometimes creativity is indigenous and sometimes it is imported when creative people move into an area. It also seems that creative people chose to live in particular rural environments especially areas with a high landscape value; they are drawn to an area because of a sense of place. If these creative people are allied with entrepreneurs rural areas have a great tactical advantage in the marketplace.

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<sup>27</sup>Meic Llewellyn, 'Beim/Bwrlwm/Fiachadh Foinn/Ferment.' Carnegie UK Trust, (2009).



## Developing reliable infrastructure

**The vibrant rural community of the future will play a role in the development of a reliable infrastructure including transport, broadband connectivity, energy and water, and a range of affordable housing to rent or buy.**

The shortage of rural homes is the most pressing concern for rural communities. The Affordable Rural Housing Commission estimated that 11,000 homes were needed annually in England alone. This compares with the annual average of nearly 2,900 rural homes provided by housing associations through the Housing Corporation's programme and about 300 homes built by private sector companies. 7,800 more homes are needed every year in England. **Community Land Trusts** (CLTs) are just one emerging solution and the National CLT Demonstration Project, run by our partners, **Community Finance Solutions (CFS)** ([www.communityfinance.salford.ac.uk](http://www.communityfinance.salford.ac.uk)), has provided a very important component of our action research.

**A Community Land Trust is a non-profit, community based organisation committed to the stewardship and affordability of land, housing and other buildings used for community benefit in perpetuity. CLTs can provide affordable housing (especially intermediate housing for people in work but on low incomes), workspace, community halls, green spaces or even farms.**

With the help of key supporters, CFS has delivered some impressive outputs; they appraised 20+ potential rural CLT projects, half of which have resulted in practical action on the ground. They won cross-party political support and promoted and achieved a legal definition of CLTs in the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008. Together we promoted the need for a Community Land Trust Facilitation Fund with an initial £2m to help CLTs get started which was supported by two major charities and launched on 30 September 2008. Now the next stage of the work will be progressed the Communities and Local Government 'Empowerment Fund'.

**We have every confidence that Community Land Trusts, given the infrastructure of support that will be developed using this funding, will flourish as an important mechanism for the provision of community owned affordable housing, workspace, community halls and green spaces in rural areas.**

Transport is another concern in rural areas, but one where there is an urgent need to reconsider options, starting with better use of the available means of transport that already exist. **The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO)** ([www.scvo.org.uk](http://www.scvo.org.uk)) looked at ways in which public, private and voluntary transport provision could be integrated in a remote area of Argyll and Bute. With careful planning of timetables this can be achieved and the benefits for passengers and providers are evident. The social, environmental and economic benefits of community transport have also been explored by the **Community Transport Association** ([www.ctauk.org](http://www.ctauk.org)) using a social audit process. This is a method of demonstrating the value for money of community transport schemes to funders.

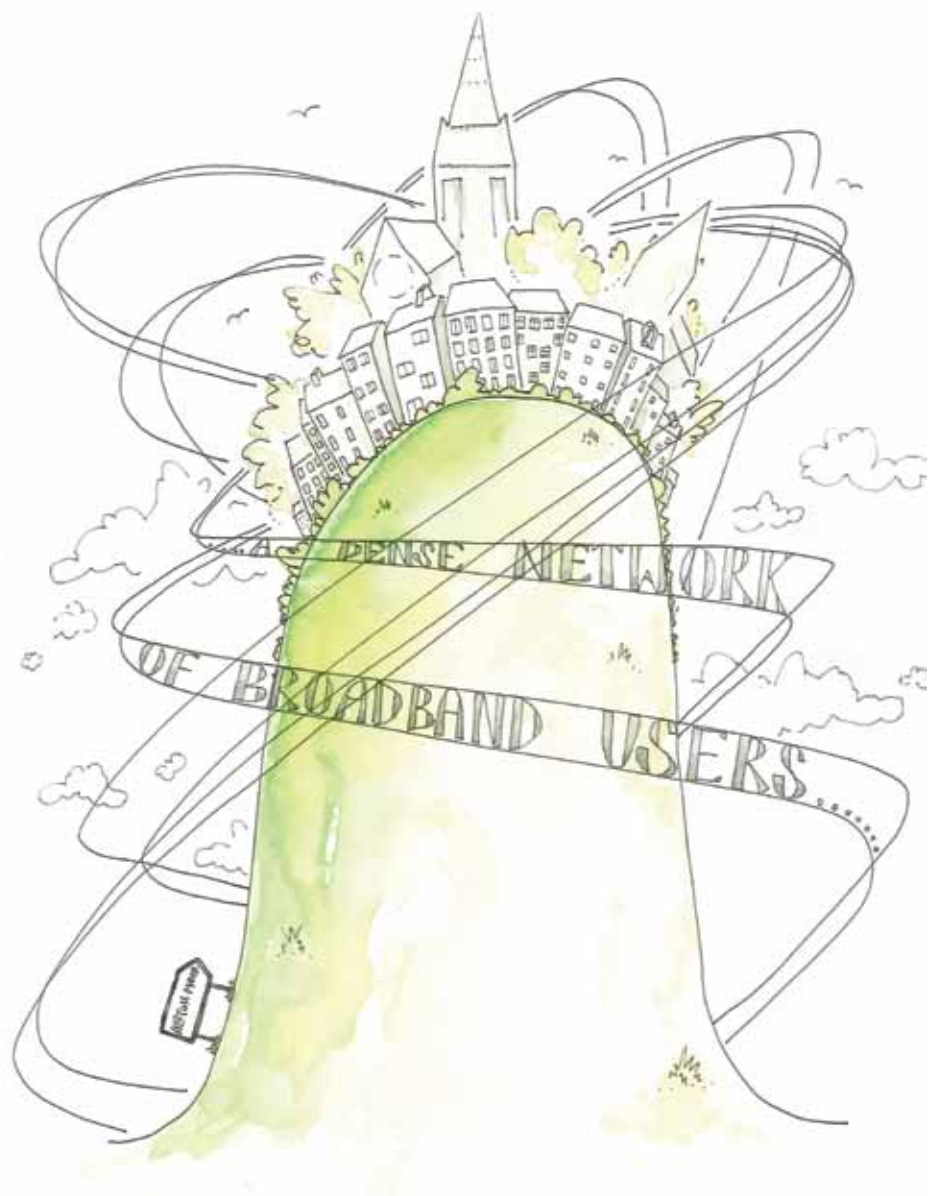
In the absence of public transport in the countryside there is great reliance on the motor car. Some policy makers consider that this makes rural areas inherently unsustainable and that we all ought to live in cities so that we can walk or cycle to work. Our partners at the **Centre for Alternative Technology**<sup>28</sup> are developing a different perspective; one that depends on our transport system being converted to renewable energy sourced, electric battery vehicles within the next 20 years. The technology has been feasible for two decades. Electric motors are 4-5 times more efficient than internal combustion engines, giving an immediate energy saving. Another major incentive to adopt electric vehicles would be a Vehicle to Grid system, which would allow people to sell the use of their onboard battery storage back to utility companies while they are not being used – helping to overcome some of the variability issues of renewable energy technologies. So there is a prospect that residents will be able to continue to live in rural areas with a clear conscience!

Given the costs involved in transport to essential services in rural areas, it is not surprising that providers have increasingly turned to the Internet as a means of communication and delivery of services, although there are problems of coverage (broadband ‘not-spots’), of accessibility (in terms of hardware and computer literacy). What is evident is that without such access, residents will increasingly be disadvantaged. They will not be able to access cheaper online payment systems for utility bills or book tickets at advantageous rates. No organisation has done more to champion broadband accessibility than action research partners **Alston Cybermoor** (mentioned previously in the Services section above.)

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<sup>28</sup>Centre for Alternative Technology, ‘Zero Carbon Britain – an alternative energy strategy.’ (2008).





The Cybermoor project started in response to a Government initiative to connect communities to the internet. Alston Moor was selected due to its remoteness and the distance that people had to travel to access basic services. The funding paid for computers for 88% of residents, a community website and broadband for 32% of homes plus adaptive equipment for people with disabilities. Cybermoor Ltd (the UK's first broadband community co-op) was set up in January 2003 to collect broadband revenue from residents and move the project towards sustainability. 14 jobs have been created and at least three businesses have been attracted into the area through the project.

Cybermoor Ltd now has the highest penetration of broadband in any rural area in England. Residents are trained to publish stories and events onto the Cybermoor website. The website has also been used to trial a range of travel services including text message alerts when roads are blocked by snow and a lift sharing service. A discussion forum allows residents to talk about a variety of local issues from CCTV to tracing old school friends. Lonely hearts of Alston have found lasting love thanks to the web! Improving the level of skills among residents has been one of the key outputs of the project. 72% of residents have used a PC to learn from home. The super fast wireless broadband network which now covers most of Alston Moor will be used for Cybermoor TV, a new local television channel which can be viewed by broadband subscribers.

Using this wealth of experience, Alston Cybermoor has produced for us a detailed briefing for any community wishing to set up a community website.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Heery, D, 'Effective Rural Service Delivery through Community-led Websites.' Carnegie UK Trust, (2009).



## Enhancing environmental capacity

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**The vibrant rural community of the future will adapt to the needs of a low carbon economy by reducing its carbon footprint, nurturing its biodiversity assets and reaping the potential of community owned renewable energy generation.**

Increasingly rural communities will be called upon to play a central role in the delivery of ambitious national targets for renewable energy, carbon capture, food production and water catchment management. Aspects of this new imperative have been examined by our action research partners.

With evidence of climate change and resource depletion established, ambitious targets for CO<sub>2</sub> reduction are being set by governments. We are pleased that the **Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT)** has considered how these might actually be achieved! It means 'powering down' – identifying ways in which we can reduce the amount of energy we use in homes, businesses and farms and 'powering up' renewable generation. CAT's work on Zero Carbon Britain suggests that this transition is scientifically urgent, economically unavoidable, technically achievable and politically viable.

As part of our action research, we have supported partners to examine some of these practical challenges in more detail. Food alone accounts for a big slice of our environmental impact – made up of food miles, nitrous oxide from fertilisers, methane from grazing animals and disposal of food waste, food processing and packaging. However, there are many opportunities to reduce this impact. **Falkland Centre for Stewardship** ([www.ctauk.org](http://www.ctauk.org)) has devised One Planet Food Fife to model a new viable food system involving farming, food processing and retailing. This work is at an early stage but we will follow progress closely.

**Communities on the Edge** initiative, run by Southern Uplands Partnership, explored ways in which three rural estates (Buccleuch, Douglas and Roxburgh) and their immediate communities in the south of Scotland could work together. A conference was held at Floors Castle in November 2008 to mark the end of this work.

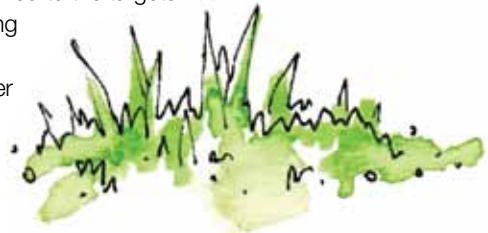
**One of the significant outcomes was the clearly identified need for formal recognition and reward for the ecosystem services (or public goods benefits) derived from sound land management.**

It was recognised that land managers are increasingly seen as stewards of natural resources for the nation as a whole but that these social, economic and environmental benefits do not yet yield an income in the way that markets for food commodities operate.

Following the conference, a number of representatives from landowning estates volunteered as case studies and through the initiative of one of those estates, **Buccleuch**, further research is planned on the topic of ecosystems services with the **Institute for Sustainable Water, Integrated Management and Ecosystem Research** at the University of Liverpool.

**We understand ecosystem services to be the transformation of a set of natural assets (soil, plants and animals, air and water) into things that we value but generally take for granted and often assume to be 'free' goods – such as water quality and quantity, habitats for fish and wildlife and carbon storage to mitigate climate change.**

We believe that the real benefits of ecosystems services are not being recognised adequately in economic markets, government policies or land management practices. In a simple market, a buyer and a seller come together to trade commodities. Through this exchange a price or value will emerge. However, this simple definition cannot easily be applied to a market for complex ecosystem services, where there are multiple benefits to be valued and the benefits are often intangible. For example, a land manager may manage moorland in such a way as to capture carbon, promote biodiversity, prevent flooding and encourage visitor access. Markets will also need to be closely linked to the targets for natural resource management being established by governments, as the government will often be the purchaser of ecosystems services on behalf of all of us.



Initially, a pilot study will establish the requirements for investigating and developing the full range of market opportunities for ecosystem services in two case study areas including **Langholm Estate in Dumfriesshire**. Whatever system is devised must meet the expectations of a range of stakeholders such as land managers (from the owners of large estates to tenant farmers) as well as to the local community in general. We also intend to innovate by acknowledging the 'added value' when a range of stakeholders work together to secure ecosystem services; for instance when farmers work collaboratively to achieve benefits across a catchment area or where volunteers maintain access routes, thus releasing potential that would otherwise be unrealised. This approach is consistent with Carnegie's commitment to Asset-Based Rural Development – building upon all the assets of a particular area in a way that secures the maximum social, economic and environmental benefits.

Communities are increasingly taking responsibility for stewardship of natural resources. **The Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust** ([www.yorkshiredalesriverstrust.org.uk](http://www.yorkshiredalesriverstrust.org.uk)) sought to develop a model of community engagement and action to enhance the biodiversity, water quality and public access and understanding of the Raydale river catchment area and in doing so have demonstrated the multiple benefits of such collective action. They were able to assist Yorkshire Dales National Park in the identification of a site for a mini-hydro electric scheme and have drawn up a catchment environmental improvement plan. The actions deemed necessary include moorland grip blocking<sup>30</sup> to slow down water run-off after heavy rain thus reducing flash flooding and associated erosion, and reducing flow variability which benefits wildlife, farm livestock and hydro-electric schemes. Gill fencing and tree planting will reduce the amount of silt entering watercourses and the lake (Semerwater), which will also benefit trout and native crayfish. Bankside fencing and tree planting will help to remove agricultural chemical run-off especially nitrogen and phosphate. By advising farmers on the economic advantages of cutting back on fertiliser use and maximising their use of manures, the amount of agriculturally generated nitrogen and phosphorus entering the soil water system will be reduced.

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<sup>30</sup>Grips are drainage ditches cut into peat moorland.



## Supporting a dynamic local economy

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**The vibrant rural community of the future will see farming integrated into a wider and more diverse rural economy, a breaking out of the low skills low wages loop – in part through the growth of local social enterprises and the entrepreneurial development of local assets.**

There are increasing demands on our countryside for food production, the creation of renewable energy, access for recreation and the management of river catchments; at the same time there has been an upsurge of interest from consumers in the provenance of food and a growing awareness of the implications of peak oil.

Decision-making strategies around competing land use priorities are likely to become increasingly complex. The relationship between land, land managers and their communities of interest and place will become increasingly important, yet this area of policy has been neglected. We applaud the research that has been instigated by the Scottish Government into competing land uses.

‘Scotland’s rural land is one of our greatest assets. We depend on it for the food on our table and the energy we consume. It dictates where and how we live. It is home to our unique flora and fauna. But to date little has been done to examine how best these competing pressures can be managed as a whole. With new local and global pressures emerging, it is time to take a look at how we use our rural land to everyone’s benefit.’

**Richard Lochhead, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment,  
Scottish Government (2008)**

Both the UK and Ireland have many extremely efficient and productive farm businesses that can aspire to compete in global markets. Other parts of our agricultural economy are facing enormous challenges even without a recession. The collapse of the cooperative Dairy Farmers of Britain has greatly affected small producers in remoter locations who have found it difficult to find alternative buyers for milk. The price that farmers receive for milk and some livestock sometimes does not cover the cost of production.

According to the Scottish Agricultural College's Rural Policy Centre report, *'Farming's Retreat from the Hills'*<sup>31</sup>, the national sheep flock has declined by 2.3 million animals over the last nine years. This is largely due to change in the way support is provided coupled with the inherent lack of profitability of hill livestock. Yet we know that traditional hill farming has clear social, cultural and community benefits that should be supported.

For the past three years, Carnegie has supported an action research programme examining hill farming in the North of England. This work, undertaken by **Viv Lewis** and **Geoff Brown**, has highlighted the fragile nature of traditional land management systems; the impact of an ageing farmer population, lack of succession planning, heavy reliance on subsidies and the impact on the sustainability of these communities. We must not overlook the fact that at its best, extensive hill farming is low input farming and an entirely appropriate use of marginal land. This research concludes that there is an urgent need for recognition of the wider contribution land managers make in creating landscapes that are so cherished; in short the issue of 'ecosystems services' has already been discussed.

The research also demonstrated how effective farmer collaboration can be in addressing input costs, marketing and waste management, as typified by the success of the **Cumbria Farmer Network** ([www.cumbriafarmernetwork.co.uk](http://www.cumbriafarmernetwork.co.uk)). This was set up by farmers for farmers.



Apprenticeship-type schemes have been piloted in various areas in the UK, demonstrating that succession issues can be addressed. It might not be possible for a single farm to support a trainee but when all the farmers in a valley club together then have the necessary resources and the trainee benefits from

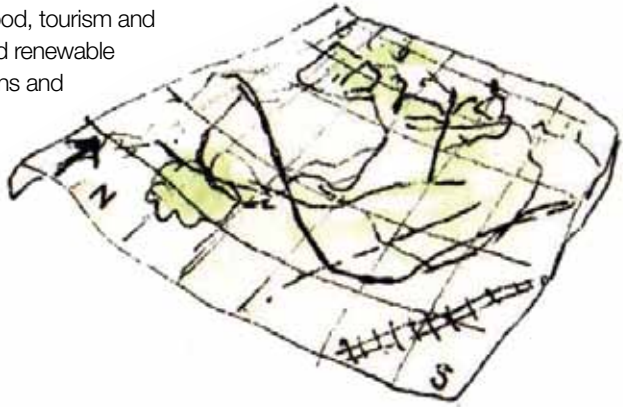
experience of different approaches. We were concerned that rigid systems for the allocation of funds for training struggle to accommodate innovative approaches like this.

<sup>31</sup>Scottish Agricultural College Rural Policy Centre, 'Farming's Retreat from the Hills.' SAC, (2009).

It was a great shame that the actions recommended by the Task Force for the Hills report in 2001 were overlooked in the wake of the foot and mouth crisis. This makes the forthcoming report on the Future of Upland Communities in England even more important. We hope that this action research has made a significant contribution to this Commission for Rural Communities Inquiry. There is a need for every part of the UK and Ireland to consider what is required from the agricultural sector. With continued reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, on what basis will future payments be made and will these be equitable? In what ways can land managers help to meet the challenges of resource depletion, peak oil and climate change? How will the UK and Ireland respond to concerns about food security here and in the rest of the world?

### **Integrating farming into the wider rural economy**

Whilst farming occupies a high level of rural space in the countryside and therefore is very visible, the total number of people employed in agriculture in the UK has been declining steadily over the last thirty years. The agricultural workforce now only accounts for 1.8% of the national workforce . We are convinced that the health of the farming sector will be dependent on greater integration with other parts of the economy. Our interest was sparked by a report produced by **NEF** (new economics foundation) for Exmoor National Park that advocated this holistic approach. The work was rooted in the asset-based approach and focused on three central and closely interlinked areas of economic activity in Greater Exmoor: agriculture and food, tourism and recreation and building and renewable energy. In the report, actions and ideas were proposed to provide an integrated, area-based strategy for the sustainable development of Exmoor.



<sup>32</sup>Economic and Social Research Council Factsheet 2009.

<sup>33</sup>The report for Exmoor National Park, funded by the South West Regional Development Agency, ENPA, West Somerset Council, North Devon District Council, Devon County Council and Somerset County Council.



We wanted to see for ourselves how this approach might work in practice and are grateful to the National Park staff who took time out to show us some impressive initiatives. One particular project caught our imagination. Exmoor ponies are one of the world's oldest breeds. They are extremely hardy and appear to disregard the worst winter weather. They could be seen as an important and unique asset for the area but sadly, despite their versatility and their rarity value, Exmoor ponies were not given the recognition they deserved. The Exmoor Pony Centre aims to change this by providing a place where visitors will be welcome not only to learn more about the ponies, but also to be able to interact with them – adding greatly to the visitor experience. Wilful young foals will be properly trained as family ponies, thus increasing the market for each year's crop of foals and the income for Exmoor farmers. Potential owners can spend time at the Centre acquainting themselves with the quirky behaviour of the ponies. This is a perfect example of the economic value to be gained from the transformation of under utilised assets!

While we recognise that all rural areas in the UK and Ireland are more or less integrated into regional, national and global markets, following an asset based approach means that we start our analysis of the economy with the assets found within the local area. However, assets are only the beginning of the story – the building blocks of economic activity. As the simple story of the Exmoor Pony Centre shows, various assets (especially the ingenuity of people) must be combined and made to work together, in order to support economic activity.

In working with the private sector members of the **Aviemore, Badenoch and Strathspey Destination Management Organisation** we found that the same principles of asset building can be applied to the tourism sector. Although businesses can provide fantastic facilities, people can make or break a holiday experience. A grumpy ticket collector at the station, the absence of anyone who knows about good single malts or the local Ceilidh can really spoil the day. So the private sector have invested in community infrastructure to address these issues and have even tested ideas about voluntary visitor payback schemes to ensure that investment in local communities is ongoing.

**The message from our rural action research partners is that community and enterprise are indivisible in rural areas; if one suffers in the downturn then so will the other.**

### **The changing nature of employment in remote rural areas**

Workers in most rural areas of the UK and Ireland can access employment opportunities in nearby towns or cities. However the workforce in remote rural areas has to derive an income close to home. These adaptable and inventive people are an important asset and in our action research we have been keen to understand employment trends in remoter rural areas. NEF (new economics foundation) has researched **the changing nature of rural livelihoods** in the Alston Moor area of Cumbria. For many years this was predominantly a mining area, which characterised the area not only economically but culturally. Often miners lived on small-holdings; these would be run and worked by the miner's wives and children during the week. By the 1960s mining in Alston had ceased, leading to a period of depopulation due to lack of employment. Since then Alston Moor has struggled to rebuild local employment opportunities. For the majority of people who live on the Moor their livelihoods are gained either through holding multiple small or part-time jobs, through self-employment, or through commuting to larger cities such as Carlisle and Newcastle.

Whilst respondents reported that having multiple jobs meant working long hours, it was in a way an insurance policy; if one business went under they had other jobs to rely on. Because of the seasonal nature of work people earn more in the summer to see them through the winter. It is apparently difficult to complete the necessary paperwork in order to remain legal when their working pattern is so variable.

**These livelihood strategies are increasingly common in remote rural areas, with the phenomena of multi-jobbing presenting some particular challenges, not least to the long-term financial security of these households. Rural areas benefit from a flexible workforce but it is difficult for multi-jobbers to sustain contributions to pension schemes so the retirement prospects of these workers are not good. The welfare system should be reviewed and simplified and must be able to respond to the fact that people lead complex lives and may move in and out of employment, often in short periods of time, or have multiple jobs.**

In Scandinavia and in the Scottish crofting communities, for instance, multi-jobbing is accepted as a necessary and indeed noble way of life. In other parts of the UK and Ireland it will become commonplace. Farmers will recognise that small units only generate part-time incomes and, as many wives and partners have already done, will seek out additional employment or supplementary enterprises. For rural businesses armed with fast broadband the world is their oyster; they can operate in a global marketplace. We will also look to the rural workforce for a reliable supply of food and water, renewable energy, to care for cherished landscapes and rich biodiversity and a place to go where we can recharge our batteries.

# Conclusion

Carnegie’s action research work pulled together an eclectic group of communities and organisations to address the challenges and opportunities in areas that are ‘on the edge’ relative to major urban populations and centres of policy development.

We found that rural areas are ideal settings for exploring innovation; the scale is manageable and a rural community is often a microcosm of a larger settlement – where life is experienced in the round. Necessity is the mother of invention and in rural areas there are often severe deficiencies in service delivery, infrastructure weaknesses, policy gaps and unintended consequences of existing policies for activists to overcome.



This publication explores a vision of the community that a great many people have told us they want to see in the future; although we have drawn upon inspiring examples from rural communities, it is of relevance to neighbourhoods everywhere. It is a vision that anticipates rapid and unpredictable change which will be as significant as anything we have ever experienced before.

The report identifies three enabling factors present in successful rural communities; skilful people, a range of assets and a plan of action. We particularly highlight the importance of hard won experience passed on to others in informal settings, of 'building on what you've got' – especially valuing people and the effectiveness of community led plans in achieving a vision for the future.

We then look at the ten characteristics of the resilient community of the future.

**Here are some highlights from our report:**

- A '7 capitals' model that defines new opportunities for rural communities
- Pro-active communities welcome newcomers – fun if it involves festivals and food
- New entrepreneurial organisations like development trusts are flourishing but elected representatives have to collaborate more
- In times of austerity application of locally raised finance needs to be allied with funding redistributed from large regeneration programmes
- Communities play a growing role in delivering tailor made rural services
- A realisation that the pursuit of growth is not everything; well being matters
- Without a sense of place it is difficult for people to feel like they belong
- In terms of infrastructure, distributed and localised solutions to rural affordable housing and transport are leading the way
- Rural communities are guardians of food, energy, water resources for all of us
- Successful economies transform their unique assets into income generating enterprises that match producers, processors, retailers and consumers.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1: The Carnegie Method



The Rural Action Research Programme presented the opportunity for Carnegie UK Trust to work in an entirely new way; to work alongside partner organisations as collaborators and mentors and to actively develop a learning network.

Each of the six themes was guided by an expert consultant, who devised the research brief, advised Carnegie trustees on the recruitment of partners, and ran regular network meetings and online discussion with the group. Research methodologies were tested and challenged throughout.

Carnegie provided an online network using the web-based project management and collaboration tool **Basecamp** and then through the social network (website [www.fieryspirits.com](http://www.fieryspirits.com)) using **Ning**. We organised an Annual Rural Convention open to all RARP partners and an annual programme of seminars, conferences and field trips.

Carnegie has decided that this approach should be developed further and is committed to supporting a rural Community of Practice for activists, professionals and policy makers.

‘An interesting aspect of the Rural Action Research Programme was the connections developed with the other RARP partners under the ‘Community Led Planning’ theme. The Offaly partners benefited from visits by Trevor Cherrett as expert adviser, from visits by staff from the Carnegie Trust, from attending meetings in the UK focusing on community led planning and from attending the Carnegie partners convention in Cashel in 2008. An important aspect of this was the benefit gained from reading about other partner’s experiences and engaging in thought-provoking discussion.’

**Catherine Corcoran, Tipperary Institute.**

‘The Value of the Rural Action Research Programme: ‘It is like throwing a small stone in a big pond, it has a ripple effect.’

**Tony Kendle, Eden Foundation.**

‘What I feel sets this particular piece of research apart from other important commentaries is that it has been diligently undertaken by a small grassroots organisation rather than a more powerful or influential body. I am convinced that it is this which renders the outcomes and findings of the Devon Heartlands of the greatest value, coming as they do from actual experience.’

**Philip Wagstaff, Chairman, Devon Heartlands Community Forum**

## Appendix 2: Full list of Rural Action Research Programme partners

Action with Communities in Rural England  
Action with Market Towns (National)  
Action with Market Towns – Yorkshire and Humber  
Aviemore and the Cairngorms Destination Management Organisation  
Brave Tales Ltd – Will Coleman  
Caithness Partnership  
Cheshire Centre for Independent Living  
Community Action Northumberland  
Community Transport Association  
Cornwall Rural Community Council  
Cybermoor Ltd  
Development Trust Association  
Devon Heartlands  
Falkland Centre for Stewardship  
Irish Rural Link  
Lifelong Learning UK  
New Economics Foundation  
North Wales Race Equality Network  
North West Rural Community Councils  
Oban and Lorn Community Enterprise  
Oxfordshire Rural Community Council  
Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations



Pembrokeshire Action Network for Enterprise and Development  
Plunkett Foundation  
Pulteneytown People's Project  
Rural Community Network (NI)  
RuralnetUK – The Rural Community Carbon Network  
Scottish Community Development Centre  
Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations  
SEEDS  
Southern Uplands Partnership – Communities on the Edge  
The Citizens Advice Bureaux  
The Community Development Unit at the University of Bangor  
The Eden Foundation  
The National University of Ireland, Maynooth  
The Rural Media Company  
The Wayland Partnership  
Tipperary Institute  
University of Gloucestershire  
Voluntary Action Cumbria – Hill Farming Communities  
Voluntary Arts Wales – Celtic Neighbours  
Wales Council for Voluntary Action  
Wessex Reinvestment Trust  
Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust

## Appendix 3: Consultants

**Trevor Cherrett**, Head of Planning, Housing and Transport, the Commission for Rural Communities (CRC)

**Philomena De Lima**, Director, UHI Centre for Remote and Rural Studies

**Paul Henderson**, Community Development Consultant and formerly Director of Practice Development at the Community Development Foundation.

**Professor Frank Rennie**, Professor of Sustainable Rural Development, Head of Research and Post-Grad Development, The University of the Highlands and Islands

**Dr Sarah Skerratt**, Senior Researcher and Team Leader of the Rural Society Research Team, Scottish Agricultural College

## Appendix 4: Carnegie Rural Community Skills and Knowledge Bank

### The Carnegie Skills Bank

	Communication skills	Planning skills	Facilitation skills	Survival skills	Delivery skills	Developmental skills
Basic skills	Listening/ active listening	Interpreting information	Building relationships with stakeholders	Self-motivation	Administration/ administration of grants	Networking
	Writing	Research/ questioning/ interrogation	Supporting participation	Assertiveness	Time and task management	Peer exchange
		Identifying learning needs	Group work/ Cooperation		Office skills	Co-operation
		Focusing on core issue	Interpersonal skills	Coping with transitions	Meeting/event organisation	Promote/ publicising issues
		Community appraisal/ Needs and asset assessment	Team building/ Coordination	Thinking skills	Project management/ staff management	Lobbying
Developing skills	Presentation	Performance assessment/ impact measurement	Guidance Mentoring	Flexibility/ ability to adapt	Financial planning and management	Creativity/ lateral thinking
	Marketing/ Media skills					

The Carnegie Skills Bank (continued)

	Communication skills	Planning skills	Facilitation skills	Survival skills	Delivery skills	Developmental skills
Developing skills	Active listening	Visioning	Advocacy		ICT and new media	Nurturing and sustaining creativity
Higher level skills	Intercultural communication	Social analysis Policy analysis	Leadership skills	Reflective practice	Resource management/ Risk management	Inter-organisational skills
	Debating/ promoting dialogue Publishing	Project planning/Action planning	Conflict resolution		Using experts	Monitoring and evaluating
			Negotiation			
			Brokerage			

## The Carnegie Knowledge bank

Rural knowledge	Policy knowledge	Technical knowledge	Community knowledge	Self knowledge	Implementation knowledge
Understanding what rural support organisations and structures exist	Government policies and programmes – and how they are implemented	Understanding how to resource your community initiatives through grants, loans, locally generated income	Understanding your local context and the key players. Deploying local knowledge – identifying indigenous issues	Developing career plans/ personal planning	Teamwork and management How to build teams
Understanding/ responding to rural poverty/ disadvantage	Business, social enterprise and micro-business models	Information sources and resources	Models of best practice	Understanding own role	How to influence policy and decisions
Rural development theory	Asset transfer and ownership	Eco-economies	Appropriate measurement of the real impact of your work	Values and integrity	How to plan, implement and manage resources
Rural proofing	Cultural awareness: equality and diversity		Participatory methods	Understanding motivation and psychology	Understanding structures and responsibilities

The Carnegie Knowledge bank (continued)

Rural knowledge	Policy knowledge	Technical knowledge	Community knowledge	Self knowledge	Implementation knowledge
			Community consultation and networking methods		Understanding the planning process
			Understanding people/groups/local politics (intelligence) Understanding audiences Understanding exclusion Understanding motivations		Asset management
			Understand community systems and structures		
			Understand community change		



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If you would like to comment on this publication or offer feedback please email [kirsty@carnegieuk.org](mailto:kirsty@carnegieuk.org)

If you have been inspired by this publication you can find out more on the Carnegie UK Trust website, where the full action research reports can be found. Or join the Community of Practice via [www.fieryspirits.com](http://www.fieryspirits.com)

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