

The following report was agreed by the CCD Board of Trustees on March 12th 2008. they asked that it be considered by Devon Rural Network whose President Michael Winter chaired the Hatherleigh event. Representatives of DRN were involved in both.

1 BACKGROUND

CCD hosted two major events in 2007 under the 21st Century Village banner promoted by ACRE. The first, for senior officers in agencies from all sectors, was held at Hatherleigh Community Centre on 21st September. The second, aimed primarily at rural communities themselves, was held on 17th October at Halberton Village Hall.

Full reports for both were provided to attendees and are freely available on the publications page of the CCD website. **Supporting our rural communities in challenging times (Hatherleigh)**

www.devonrcc.org.uk/news.php?mode=2&nid=193

The 21st Century Village (Halberton)

www.devonrcc.org.uk/downloads/Conference%202007%20final%20report.pdf

The first event sought to draw out agency thinking about the ‘bottom up’ agenda often spoken of by central and local government. The second event highlighted the community perspective on solutions for the challenges faced by rural communities.

There was a good deal of common ground as well as some differences in emphasis. Some of these are well known and long established rural issues, but others are clearly rising up the rural agenda. **A one page summary of ideas and solutions for each event is appended.**

2 COMMON THEMES

There were a number of themes which were strongly featured in both events.

Familiar ones were:

- a. The high value – appreciated by communities and agencies – of the **Parish Planning** process, but continuing anxiety about how well the plans are taken account of by agencies and through strategic partnership processes. The potential of the new community planning database.
- b. Difficulty, complexity, bureaucracy, and short term thinking within **public agencies** who can support and fund rural community activity. Both events highlighted the need for coordination and brokering of the public sector ‘offer’ to be genuinely community facing and therefore enabling rather than disabling. Planners were often seen as preventing rather than encouraging innovation.
- c. Value of consistent **community development** and social enterprise support and enabling. This was mentioned in terms of both general community activity and specifically in relation to social inclusion. (CCD Trustees will be aware of the difficulty in sustaining funding for such services in rural areas)
- d. The potential for **Parish Councils** if proactive and positive in approach.

- e. The great difficulties caused by lack of **affordable housing**, as well as the environmental issues around housing.
- f. **Transport** issues – with affordability, access, and a new social approach to the private car featured.
- g. Less familiar ones or rising in importance appeared to be:
- h. **Clustering** or grouping of parishes and communities to undertake certain services and activities not practical in smaller settlements.
- i. The **hub** or **anchor** concept as a springboard for community activity. This is a local foundation and can refer to both a physical space (village hall typically) and a core of knowledge on how to make things happen, get things going, or move things on.
- j. The importance of **learning**, training and skills development. One idea was inter-generational activity.

3 OTHER AGENCY THEMES

- a. The importance of **evidence** of rural need and issues.
- b. The value of **information, media** coverage, networking and sharing ideas and good practice.

4 OTHER COMMUNITY THEMES

- a. The potential for **home working**, rural **ICT hubs** to have a positive impact on the rural economy.
- b. Stronger focus on green initiatives – lifestyle changes, local recycling, environmental technology development,
- c. Better targeted support for **village businesses**, more creative solutions including combining, mobile service, and **social enterprise**.
- d. Key **age groups** – young people and the elderly. Lack of youth facilities and activities are very marked. More support for older people to stay in their own communities.
- e. Concerns over **services**: policing, childminding, access to health, transport, information technology.

end