

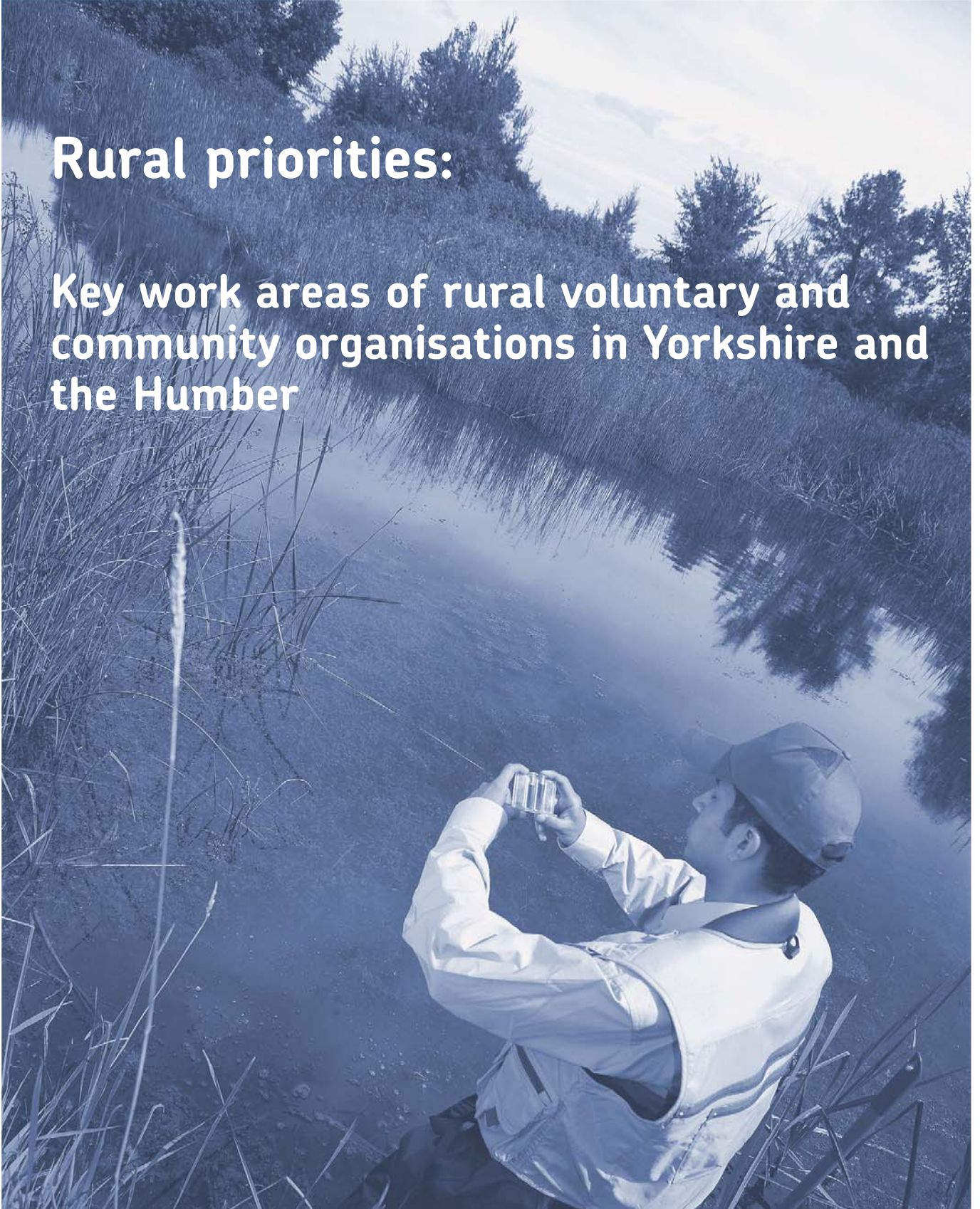
Report



Rural priorities:

Key work areas of rural voluntary and community organisations in Yorkshire and the Humber

www.yorkshirehumberforum.org.uk



Report

Rural priorities

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Background

Rural communities in Yorkshire and the Humber have long demonstrated a culture of self-reliance and self-governance. In fact, rural communities are often characterised by an extraordinary amount of voluntary activity. These are undertaken as a matter of course by local residents who engage in all sorts of projects in response to the needs that arise in their communities. Life in rural communities is shaped by people who are engaged in shaping their own future. The sheer volume of time and effort invested by rural residents in designing and delivering community projects is a very significant factor in the development of rural areas in Yorkshire and the Humber.

The Yorkshire and the Humber Rural Network was established in 2009 in order to ensure that the concerns and priorities of rural voluntary and community (VCS) projects would be collated, analysed and represented. This report showcases some of the most significant contributions of rural VCS organisations on key issues. The report aims to identify best practices, to learn from a variety of projects and to further encourage some of the most innovative groups across Yorkshire and the Humber.

The VCS comprises around 50,000 organisations in Yorkshire and the Humber with a combined income of £3.5 billion. According to figures from the Third Sector Trends Study conducted by the Northern Rock Foundation, there are over 49,000 paid staff working in communities and at least 175,000 volunteers, including 60,000 trustees. It is difficult to be precise about the proportion of these organisations which are based in and working in rural areas. Still, what we do know from looking at the VCS profile at a local authority level is that rural voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) display a number of specific characteristics:

- There are more voluntary organisations per 10,000 people in rural areas than in urban ones (up to and just over 3 times more in the most sparsely populated local authority areas).
- Organisations in rural areas tend to be smaller and to rely more on subscriptions and individual donations than the sector as a whole.
- As well as being more local in outlook and with more direct local financial support (as opposed to large scale grant funding or contracts from the state), the work of these organisations is closely focussed on residents' needs rather than on meeting the predefined requirements of an external funding body.

VCOs put the community at the heart of the matter. Each of the solutions presented here has been developed in response to issues identified by people who live and work in rural areas. There is much to be celebrated in the work of VCOs across Yorkshire and the Humber. Indeed, the history and tradition of rural voluntary action really does make it a Big Society ahead of the moment. At a time when the nation re-thinks the way in which its key services should be delivered, the Yorkshire and the Humber Rural Network hopes that the examples provided in this report will encourage and inspire many more rural initiatives!

1. An ageing rural population

Recent data commissioned by Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) on the Rural Share of Deprivation shows that, in Yorkshire and the Humber, the proportion of older people who live in rural areas is higher than the overall proportion of working-age people or children and that the rural population is ageing fast. As they become weaker, many older residents can become dependent on services provided by the community, their friends or their neighbours. An elderly person with no informal support networks and no access to services is especially vulnerable. In addition, there remains much undiagnosed need among older people, who may not tell anyone about the day-to-day difficulties which they encounter.

Rural VCOs provide numerous ways in which older people can break out of isolation and engage with their neighbours via activities taking place in a range of settings. When older people become less mobile, VCOs often step in to provide services in the form of befriending or meals-on-wheels delivery. These voluntary activities are especially important because the people who deliver them are coincidentally able to assess how older people are doing in general terms and to call in further services if necessary.



Richmondshire Community Befriending Service

Offers social support and companionship to older people who live alone and find themselves isolated. The scheme provides companionship, the chance to develop new relationships as well as opportunities to participate in a number of social activities.

www.richmond.org/community/st_johns/index.html
01748 832271



Age Concern Barnsley in Penistone

Aims to improve the health and well-being of older residents in the Penistone District through the provision of leisure and sports activities. The scheme oversees a range of volunteer-led activities including a walking group, a line dancing group and a gardening group. The Agewell Centre is open Tuesdays & Wednesdays and provides older residents with further opportunities to socialise.

www.ageconcernbarnsley.co.uk/projects/age_concern_barnsley_in_penistone/
01226 764997



Independent Living North Lincolnshire

Promotes and supports independent living in the community. The organisation seeks to improve the quality of life of people who are elderly, disabled or isolated. Among other services, Independent Living North Lincolnshire offers befriending, home and garden maintenance, information on benefits and practical help with form-filling.

www.e-voice.org.uk/ilnl
01652 636208



The Beach Hut Café in Hornsea

While not technically a social enterprise, the Beach Hut Cafe in Hornsea started delivering meals-on-wheels in May 2010 after realising that there was an acute need for the service in the community as the East Riding Council stopped providing the service in the county. The owner states that he is motivated primarily by the opportunity to give something to the community. The café charges relatively cheap prices that are broadly comparable with those practiced in the neighbouring county by North Yorkshire County Council (£3.50 for a main meal provided by the Beach Hut Café as opposed to £2.10 for a main meal provided by NYCC) and does not seek to make significant profits through this service. They also take care to provide well-presented home-cooked meals served on a plate. Customers report that the meals provided are very similar to the sort of food they would have cooked for themselves if they were able to do so.

07971 247559

Older people can also experience difficulties in accessing services because of a lack of adequate public transport, a lack of access to their own transport or the high cost of the means of transport that are available to them. In an attempt to address this need, VCOs in Yorkshire and the Humber have been especially active in developing community transport schemes (this is described in the transport section of this report).

2. Affordable housing

In many rural areas houses can attract buyers from a wealthy urban background. This has the effect of driving up the prices and of leaving local residents unable to enter the housing market. The difficulty of finding affordable housing in rural areas is reinforced by a lack of social housing. In his 2010 report, the rural advocate Stuart Burgess points out that social housing accounts for only 13% of the housing stock in rural areas, compared with 22% in urban places.

A 2008 report by the Arthur Rank Centre states that the median house price in accessible rural districts was around £160,000 higher than in urban areas. This meant that 37% of rural residents had to spend more than 50% of their income on mortgage repayment on an average home. The comparable figure for urban areas was 25%.

As a result of this shortage of affordable housing, individuals and families either enter into housing arrangements which are not optimal (such as young couples living with parents for longer than they would want to) or they are forced to move away. This can have adverse effects on many rural communities that are dependent on the presence and involvement of working-age adults and children. For this reason, it is essential to develop a range of innovative solutions through which affordable housing can be provided.

Throughout Yorkshire and the Humber, a number of VCS initiatives have been set up in order to encourage local people to remain in the area where they were born or brought up. Rural housing enablers in particular are able to conduct local housing needs assessments. They work with communities to find suitable sites for development and negotiate with landowners and local authorities to ensure that affordable housing is built and made available to rural families. Rural Housing enablers can be based at a local authority or in a VCO.



Bradford Rural Housing Enabler project

Set up in 2002 to research housing issues in rural areas around Bradford, the rural housing enablers engaged with parish councils and community groups in the area about their concerns regarding the lack of affordable housing. In Menston (a village in lower Wharfedale, 10 miles from Bradford and 12 miles from of Leeds), there were genuine concerns that local families were being priced out of the market. As a result of the work of the rural housing enablers, local residents were able to access affordable housing at the nearby High Royds development. Land surrounding the village was also released from the greenbelt for future housing projects.

www.idea.gov.uk/idk/aio/6462287

Community Land Trusts aim to develop local affordable housing, workspaces and local facilities even in areas with very high house prices. The trusts acquire land through purchasing it directly or through an asset transfer agreement from local authorities. They then oversee its development in accordance with their stated aims.

3.Transport

The need for transport is a clear priority for rural residents if they are to access the types of services that are easily taken for granted by residents of larger towns and cities. People who live in rural areas have to make more use of transport because the communities in which they live do not offer the services which they are trying to access. As a result, residents in rural areas often pay a high proportion of their income on travel costs.

Rural residents tend to use their cars more and to use less public transport than people living in more urban areas. As a result, and aside from the issues linked to carbon emissions, there can be problematic increases in traffic growth. This can be a significant problem for market towns regularly affected by gridlocked traffic.

For those without their own transport, including older people, the young and those with mobility issues, accessing key services can be a daily challenge. Without access to transport, even small distances can be an insurmountable issue. The availability of services and jobs in neighbouring towns is irrelevant if people do not have access to modes of transport which enable them to the right place at the right time. As a result of the lack of integrated transport, people may not be able to accept jobs or to seize other opportunities.

The provision of rural community transport has long been a focus of the VCS in rural areas. The Rural Community Councils are especially active in engaging with the main stakeholders to develop integrated transport solutions. Schemes include the provision of demand-responsive buses, community mini-buses, car-based taxis, minibus brokerage schemes, wheels to work schemes and the promotion of community rail initiatives.



Holderness Area Rural Transport (HART)

Provides a minibus service (with facilities for disabled people) for rural residents who find themselves in need of public transport. The MEDiBUS transports people to and from Hull & Beverley Hospitals from their own front door. The Twilight Buses enable pupils from villages to take part in after-school activities in neighbouring towns. The service is also available for community groups in rural areas for use during evenings and weekends.

www.medibus.org.uk
01964 536684



Ryecat

The scheme, which forms part of the Little Red Bus network, provides transport throughout the Ryedale district and contributes to providing an integrated approach to rural transport services.

www.littleredbus.co.uk/ryedale
01653 69 88 88



Friends of the Barton Line

Promotes and aims to further develop the services provided on the Barton line. The group seeks to ensure that the line is used and valued by the community it serves. The organisation holds regular meetings with the train operator and runs special events during which the train gets used.

<http://beehive.thisisscunthorpe.co.uk/default.asp?WCI=SiteHome&ID=1264>
01724 721397

4. Broadband provision

Access to fast and reliable broadband is vital for all who live and work in rural areas. Yet there remain a number of broadband “low spots” and “not spots” in some of the most rural parts of Yorkshire and the Humber. A study published by the Commission for Rural Communities found very significant disparities between urban and rural areas in this respect (Mind the Gap: Digital England, a Rural Perspective, 2009).

The lack of fast broadband affects local economies as well as households. At the moment, the internet connections that are available in some rural areas frequently cannot support video conferencing or live streaming. Rural residents are finding it difficult to do simple things such as paying bills online or filling in forms. It is also a major issue for children and young people who find themselves unable to do online research or to engage in social networking.

Various internet providers are beginning to introduce next generation broadband where this is profitable (in more densely populated areas) and frequently leave out the more rural areas. A new rural broadband campaign, Final Third First was launched in March this year by the Country Land and Business Association. The campaign seeks to ensure that the UK’s priorities in matters of broadband provision lie primarily in rectifying the imbalance between urban and rural areas.

Meanwhile, throughout Yorkshire and the Humber, a number of voluntary and community sector organisations have been setting up community broadband projects in order to supply their rural communities with the fast internet connections they need.



Robin Hood Bay Broadband Co-operative

This not-for-profit co-operative was set up in order to bring high-speed broadband access to a coastal village community. It now provides residents with access to the normal range of Internet services and applications.

www.rhbmesh.net

0845 330 8310



The Austwick Community Broadband Association

Covers large areas and ensures that a number of households are able to benefit from its broadband provision. An internet cafe is being set up in the village so that people who do not own a computer can still take advantage of their community's access to the internet. The association also provides training sessions and individual help for older people who may have otherwise been excluded from the project.

www.austwick.org

5. Access to services

As is to be expected, rural areas are often short of key services such as shops, petrol stations, general practitioners, dentists, post offices, schools, further education colleges, job centres, pubs, restaurants, advice services, police services, post offices, banks and free cash machines. The isolation from services is often exacerbated by the lack of transport options. As a result, the cost of accessing basic services in terms of time and expense can be prohibitive.

Furthermore, many of the activities and services that operate in more urban places do not have the resources to reach out to rural localities due to the increased costs associated with travelling to meet users. The time spent travelling affects the amount of time that can be spent with other clients. In a targets-based culture, many practitioners cannot justify this approach.

In countering the lack of access to services, there are three main options. The first option is to improve transport so that people can access the services they need. VCOs sometimes work towards increasing people's awareness of the various transport options available in their area. Alternatively, VCOs can provide community transport to users in order to enable them to access basic services like their GP, a bank or a jobcentre (this is described in the transport section of this report).

Another option is that of bringing more services in to an area, for example through mobile libraries and other outreach services. These solutions bring services to people's doorstep.



Two Dales Live

Enables people living in Swaledale and Arkengarthdale to contact a range of service providers using an internet connection. The users do not need any previous experience of using IT. Through the scheme, residents are able to take part in confidential face-to-face interviews. They can also share documents, signatures and photographs via the internet connection.

www.hudsonhouse.info/2dales.html



The Upper Wharfedale Toy Library

Organises play sessions at a variety of venues and deliver toys to a number of nurseries and playgroups. Families with children 0-5 years can join at no cost and borrow up to three toys at any one time.

www.northyorks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=683007541342426

In the attempt to bring services to people, it is also important to stress the vital role of community buildings. These building are often modern premises which provide a space in which a range of activities take place. This includes sports activities, art projects, the provision of specific services and a range of participatory processes.



ACRE's Village Halls Service

Provides advice and support through a network of village hall advisers for communities in running such buildings.

www.acre.org.uk/communityassets_villagehalls_informationservice.html
01285 653477

The third option is the provision of key services through bottom-up initiatives in which the rural communities themselves set out to deliver rural services. This can take the form of community owned shops, post offices, pubs or recycling facilities.



Burton in Lonsdale Village Shop and Post Office

One of about 150 community owned shops in England. In 2005, people of the village created a co-operative to buy the shop and a board of trustees was set up to seek funding and to plan the shop's development. The shop has operated ever since and won a number of awards, including a best rural retailer award.

www.burton-in-lonsdale.net/village_shop.htm
015242 62863



Slaithwaite Green Valley Grocers Shop

Functions as a cooperative and is owned and operated by local residents. The shop aims to benefit both its members and the broader community. It seeks to ensure that money is spent locally; that it protects and creates jobs and that it generally supports the rest of the local economy. The effect of the Green Valley Grocers Shop on the local economy of Slaithwaite is very tangible. Nearby businesses report higher takings as more residents begin to use local shops to buy groceries and household items.

www.slaithwaite.coop
01484 598050.

6. Fair access to healthcare

As a general rule, rural residents have poorer access to medical services (GPs, hospitals and specialist centres) than their urban counterparts. A study conducted by the Commission for Rural Communities shows that NHS Dental Care is especially difficult to access (Access to Dental Services in Rural areas, 2007). Furthermore, many of the more specialised support mechanisms are found mainly in cities. For example, a quick glance through the Yorkshire and the Humber directory of Narcotics Anonymous meetings shows that the service is mostly accessible in larger towns and cities.

The phenomenon known as “distance decay” means that people who live at a distance from health service providers use these services comparatively less. This in turn can result in significant health inequalities.



Health and Wellbeing Group, Holderness

The group has set up a number of initiatives designed to foster health equality. The aim of the group is to encourage its partner organisations to develop projects which encourage people in Holderness to live more healthy lives. The projects encourage people to keep active, to eat well, to find out more about positive mental health and to take part in community involvement exercises.

www.erypct.nhs.uk/templates/Page.aspx?id=5833
01482 391466

In order to counter this phenomenon, the VCS has been especially active in developing community transport schemes (this is described in the transport section of this report). Still, there is also a need to further develop the provision of remote service delivery to provide easy access to essential health services. Innovations such as telemedicine enable patients to be in regular direct contact with their GP despite the distance that separates them from the nearest surgery. VCS organisations are championing new initiatives in this domain and promoting the use of new technologies for the purposes of health monitoring.

7. Young people

For many children and young people, living in the countryside can mean that cinemas, clubs, or other facilities are not easily available to them. Because of the lack of transport, young people are also less likely to access extra-curricular activities. For this reason the VCOs are developing a range of programmes of activities for young people and setting up spaces that are available for them.



North Yorkshire Youth

Works with other voluntary sector youth organisations to provide a series of opportunities for young people. It also offers a number of grants to youth clubs and new projects in the sector.

www.nyy.org.uk
01845 522145



Greenheart

Is a social enterprise working with schools, youth groups, and community groups to provide workshops on green woodworking and a number of other environmentally friendly group activities. The organisation aims to reinforce the connection between children, adults

and the environment by offering them a chance to pick up a hands-on, practical skill.

www.green-heart.org.uk
01472 882491

Rural areas in Yorkshire and the Humber also lose many young people in the 15 to 29 age group as they leave the countryside to seek opportunities in more urban areas. The key concern is not so much that young people are leaving the countryside to enter higher education and to gain new experiences. The main issue is that they often do not, or cannot, come back. Some young people may not wish to return to live in rural areas, but others find that the local labour market, the lack of affordable housing, and the unavailability of childcare makes returning impractical.

The young people aged of 15 to 29 who have chosen to stay in rural areas often stay because of their families and friends despite the various challenges they face. Qualified jobs with opportunities for development are especially scarce. In their mid-twenties, young people who have always lived in rural areas may wish to leave but at this point they may lack the training and skills to compete for jobs elsewhere.



The ROSE project

Developed by the Princes' Trust to increase support for young people who wish to start a business in rural areas across Yorkshire and Humber. The project aims to strengthen rural economies while also making a real difference to the lives of young people.

www.princes-trust.org.uk/need_help/in_your_region/yorkshire_and_the_humber/rose_project.aspx
0800 842842



The Dales Countryside Trainee Scheme

Gives young people the opportunity to take part in a countryside and environment management programme. The programme involves formal education and a work placement with one of the local firms and agencies such as the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, Natural England, The National Trust and Dinsdale Moorland Services.

www.daelnet.co.uk/countrynews/country_news_09062010_2.cfm
015242 51002

8. Promoting sports, culture and the arts in rural areas

Sports, culture, and the arts are cornerstones that hold rural communities together. The availability of plays, films, festivals, exhibitions and sports clubs is a source of entertainment for residents and of income for those who run them. Sports, culture, and the arts contribute tangibly to the local economy and to the health and wellbeing of the population. These activities also strengthen the bonds between residents and reinforce rural communities' sense of security and cohesion.



Rural Arts North Yorkshire

Is a participatory arts organisation based in Thirsk. It works in the whole of North Yorkshire to bring arts initiatives to isolated communities and especially to young people. The organisation brings a range of performances and displays to various places around the county.

www.ruralarts.org
01845 526536



Arts in the East Riding of Yorkshire (Artery)

Engages with a number of venues in the East Riding. The scheme relies on volunteers and bookers to promote live entertainment and films. The films are hired from Film Bank, which provides films for hotels and commercial airlines, while Artery provides the initial equipment such as digital projectors and high quality speakers. Organiser Ellen Thorpe believes that:

"...it's about providing access to film at local venues and it is about making it easy for older people, people who don't have cars or who don't like going to park up in Hull or York at night." (Yorkshire Post interview, December 2007)

www.blaize.uk.net/articles/18/1/Artery/Page1.html
01943 607030



Holmfirth Art Week

Is one of the largest public-entry art exhibitions England. Holmfirth Art Week is a nationally-renowned fundraising event open to all artists, amateur or professional, who agree to put up two items of their work for sale and to donate 20% of the proceeds of the sales to the MacMillan Cancer Support Charity.

www.holmfirhartandmusic.org.uk
01484 682928

9. Local businesses and community enterprises

In some parts of Yorkshire and the Humber, rural communities have been hit particularly hard by the recession. This is due in part to the added costs of operating rural firms when both clients and suppliers are geographically distant. Rural small businesses feel threatened by a worsening of their economic bases. In rural areas the repercussions can take the form of a lower consumer demand, difficulties in securing bank funds and ultimately business closures.

Voluntary and community groups are usually involved in economic partnerships in recognition of their role in supporting local economies. Local businesses welcome VCS initiatives which enhance the workforce's skills and remove barriers to employment, such as initiatives designed to improve basic skills.



Community Economic Regeneration Team (CERT)

CERT is based in Immingham and supports and provides free or subsidised support for social enterprises and businesses. The organisation has a dedicated and professional team who have a direct experience of running their own businesses and can offer help with business planning, sales, finance planning, book keeping, costing and pricing, company formation, employing staff, funding, tax, national insurance and VAT Trading, E-Business and online marketing.

www.cert-ltd.co.uk
01469 572313

In response to these challenging economic times, a number of local schemes are being created in order to foster local consumption. In some places, "shop local" schemes have been introduced in order to encourage consumers to buy goods and services in their local community and help support the economic sustainability of their towns and villages.



Bedale ShopLocal Scheme

Introduced in 2009, the scheme provides a series of small rewards for local shoppers and has become increasingly successful as more and more shops and businesses are applying to become members.

www.northyorkshirelocalfood.co.uk/news_story.php?newsid=143

08443 573980

Aside from “shop local” schemes, community enterprises set up by local residents can prevent decline in rural areas. In some instances, village pubs are diversifying their activities in order to provide vital services to rural populations.



The Bagby Inn

This pub, near Thirsk, doubles as a tearoom offering cream teas and homemade cakes during daytime. The Bagby Inn also functions as a convenience store and provider of takeaway meals. It also provides its own version of meals-on-wheels and operates a parcel delivery service for local residents who are not at home when the post comes. Because of the services it provides, the Bagby Inn has become an essential cornerstone of the community.

www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/country-view/Putting-the-pub-at-the.6243856.jp
01845 597315



The Hudswell Community Pub

This pub near Richmond was bought back by the community after it had stood empty for some time. It can serve as a venue for community events, celebrations and for any sort of cultural and social activities. There are also plans to set up a small shop within its premises.

www.richmond.org/community/hudswellpub/index.html

10. Unemployment and worklessness

Some of the steepest rises in unemployment in recent times have taken place in rural areas. Over the last few months, there has been a rapid increase in those registered for Jobseeker’s Allowance in rural parts of Yorkshire and the Humber. A recent report by the Commission for Rural Communities indicates that

“...the number of people chasing every unfilled vacancy in many peripheral rural districts is far higher than the average across Britain and in the worst cases higher than in major urban unemployment blackspots” (Employment and the Rural Labour Market, 2009).

The report also suggests that worklessness is a larger issue than evidenced by raw unemployment figures. This is the case when many of those who would like to enter employment are not formally registered as

unemployed.

For those who are registered as unemployed and actively seeking work, the absence of a nearby Job Centre means that it takes much time and effort to browse offers or to access benefits. Distance, combined with the lack of transport and broadband, makes these services less accessible for people who live in rural areas.

In countering some of the worst effects of worklessness, VCOs provide positive ways in which people may obtain relevant experience through engaging in voluntary activities. A number of VCOs in Yorkshire and the Humber are also actively seeking to help those affected by long-term worklessness. These organisations endeavour to remove the barriers to returning to work such as poor skills, the unavailability of transport or low aspirations.



Yorkshire Coast Enterprise

Based in Scarborough, Yorkshire Coast Enterprise delivers information, advice, training and general support for people who wish to acquire the skills that will make them more attractive on the job market. The programme is designed to provide access to accredited courses and to work placements. Yorkshire Coast Enterprise also provides tailored support to individuals and groups who wish to start a company or who have recently done so.

www.yorkshirecoastenterprise.com
01723 588063



Wheels 2 Work (W2W)

Originally set up as a pilot project in the Bingley rural area (covering Bingley, Harden, Wilsden and Cullingworth) W2W now covers the whole of the Bradford Metropolitan District Area. The scheme is aimed at young people who live or work in isolated areas to help them to access employment or training. It provides users with a loaned moped which enables them to travel to the place where they work or study.

www.sbv.org.uk/wheels2work.html
01274 787933



Children and Family Action in Holderness

Delivers training, information and guidance to local residents in order to help them access skills that will help them gain access to employment. In particular, the organisation encourages and enables people to volunteer on projects in the area in order to increase their chances of accessing paid work at a later stage.

www.familyaction.org.uk/cfa/Home.html
01964 615340

11. Social exclusion

Rural areas frequently suffer from the misperception that on the whole its residents are better off in economic terms. Still, according to the Rural Share of Deprivation database (commissioned by ACRE, 2010) one in five rural households is classed as in income poverty and the percentage of the rural population living under the poverty line is rising. Income poverty in rural areas can result from low wages, low pensions, or lack of employment.

According to the most recent data made available on The Poverty Site (www.poverty.org.uk), one in six working-age adults in rural districts lives in low-income households. The Poverty Site indicators provide evidence that the average full time wage is somewhat lower in rural areas, with a greater proportion of the workforce earning £7.00 or less per hour. According to the same source, a quarter of rural households living in poverty are pensioners living on the basic state pension.

Instances of rural poverty can be concentrated or very dispersed, depending on the settings in which they occur. While there are pockets of multiple deprivations in rural areas, instances of rural deprivation in more privileged communities often fall below the radar. Rural communities are often characterised by significant inequalities of income. This means that measures such as average earnings fail to depict the reality faced by deprived households in a given rural place.



Rural Share of Deprivation Database

Is a new database, launched by the ACRE network, which makes it possible to precisely locate individuals who are at risk of social exclusion. The ACRE network hopes that the use of this information will help to close the funding gap between urban and rural areas.

www.rural-evidence.org.uk/home
01285 653477

It is important to point out that there are additional costs linked to living in rural areas. People experiencing poverty are further disadvantaged by the extra costs of transport in accessing essential services and the cost of heating homes that may be off the gas network and less energy efficient. The two Rural Community Councils in Yorkshire and the Humber are currently developing an awareness-raising project among households that are not connected to gas network. This project will provide incentives for people to make use of the various schemes that might enable them to save money on their heating bills.

12. Welfare of migrant workers

Migrant workers and families are attracted to an area by the promise of work. A 2007 report from the Commission for Rural Communities, (A8 Migrant Workers in Rural Areas), singles out Yorkshire and the Humber as one of the main destinations for migrant workers who seek employment in the agriculture and fisheries sector. Over time, a number of VCOs have become concerned that migrants who live and work in rural communities can suffer from a lack of integration into English life. There are also concerns about the overall precariousness of some migrants' economic and social wellbeing.

VCOs in the rural parts of Yorkshire and the Humber are increasingly responding to migrants' needs for integration and access to services. In Yorkshire and the Humber, a piece of research undertaken by the Churches' Regional Commission (The Labourers Who Mowed Your Field, 2007) points towards a number of voluntary sector initiatives that were designed to improve the welfare of migrant workers.



Ryedale Together

Was created to support migrant workers. It compiles a "welcome pack", funds a bilingual worker and carries out signposting and advice-giving activities for the migrants who wish to access them.

www.ryedaleva.org.uk
01653 600120



Humber All Nations Alliance (HANA)

Is an umbrella organisation formed in 2002 by BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) groups. The team promotes the wellbeing of BME communities through advocacy and conducts a number of specific projects. In the Goole area, its outreach team assists migrants who may be struggling to find work, to enrol on courses, or to access healthcare. The team acts as a link between migrant worker communities and service providers such as the council, NHS organisations, Humberside Police, and Humberside Fire and Rescue Service.

www.hanaonline.org.uk
01482 491177

13. The contribution of churches and other faith communities

In rural areas, Christian churches are usually among the main faith communities. The churches generally seek to maintain a presence in almost every rural community, no matter how small and peripheral. Churches in rural areas can be fairly dispersed. They are also sometimes forced to amalgamate the

resources of several parishes because of lack of funding. Yet despite these difficulties, rural churches generally remain a welcome and active presence in most aspects of rural life.

The churches share a strong ethos of service to the community. For this reason, rural congregations are exploring new ways to encourage and support new initiatives. In Kirton in Lindsey (North Lincolnshire) a number of local churches decided to use one building for worship and to release another building for community use. According to the Churches' Regional Commission in Yorkshire and the Humber, a "church presence" in rural communities includes local churches, social enterprises, Christian charities, community projects and arts-based initiatives. A Rural Churches Steering Group brings together clergy and laity across denominations to share information and work together on issues of concern to rural settings.



The Churches' Regional Commission in Yorkshire and the Humber

The Commission runs two distinct rural projects working with upland farmers who are not easily reached by the usual channels of support and training available to farmers elsewhere. The projects provide one-to-one mentoring; developing individual skills need assessments which are then followed by referrals to appropriate training (these are described in the farming section of this report).

www.crc-online.org.uk
0113 244 3413

Rural churches in Yorkshire and the Humber are also able to make use of the resources provided by the nationwide Arthur Rank Centre in Stoneleigh and the Arthur Rank Centre's Addington Fund (ARC-Addington). The Arthur Rank Centre's purpose is to provide resources for Christian churches in rural areas and to exchange best practices in matters related to training and ministry. The centre also aims to lead the Christian churches in their efforts to improve the quality of life of those living and working in rural communities.



Acorn Centre, Todmorden

Initially started by a group of Christians from several denominations as a safe haven for the marginalised and disadvantaged, the centre has grown to deliver a wide range of training and enterprise programmes within an area of 13 miles. It offers volunteering opportunities, internet access, training in basic skills and IT, employability skills and providing a community cafe and information advice and guidance.

www.acorncentre.co.uk
01706 839746

Rural churches are often noted for their readiness to provide in-kind benefits to rural communities. Churches provide volunteers for community projects, church buildings are used by the community for a variety of purposes, and church land is being ceded for the development of affordable housing (see the report: Faith in Affordable Housing. Using Church Land and Property for Affordable Housing written by churches and other VCOs to encourage the transfer of church property for the development of affordable housing).

14. Farming communities

Parts of the agriculture and farming sector in Yorkshire and the Humber are currently under threat. Farm incomes have been steadily falling in real terms with the result that a number of small and medium farms are forced to operate at a loss. The farmers who run them in these conditions find themselves unable to invest in much-needed farm infrastructure. Furthermore, the lack of predictability about future regulations renders farming decisions difficult to make.

In a rapidly changing agricultural environment it is essential that farmers take advantage of skills and knowledge transfer opportunities if they are to survive. A number of VCOs in Yorkshire and the Humber are very well-connected to the farming culture and can understand farmers' needs from first-hand experience. As organisations became aware of farmers' needs, they have set up a number of mechanisms to address them.



Yorkshire Rural Support Network

A partnership of Yorkshire statutory and voluntary agencies that provides support to farmers and the broader rural community. The Network also provides regular opportunities for its members to meet and work together in the most effective way within rural communities.

www.yas.co.uk/en/about-yas/networks-support/yrsn/
01423 541000



Farm Crisis Network

The Yorkshire and Humberside branch consists of groups of volunteers from farming communities and churches whose aim is to “walk with farmers” through any of the difficult situations which they face. The network contacts farming families directly and also provides a hotline service. The volunteers are happy to address any situations that the farmers and their families may be facing (such as issues linked with farm viability, inheritance, stress or personal relationships). This informal support network has proven invaluable during the foot and mouth epidemic and has over the years gained an enviable level of respect in the eyes of the farmers themselves.

www.farmcrisisnetwork.co.uk/Yorkshire
0845 367 9990

The Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution (RABI) and the Arthur Rank Centre Addington (ARC-Addington) support farming communities both regionally and nationally and are particularly active within Yorkshire and Humber. In addition, a number of voluntary initiatives are being promoted in order to develop direct marketing strategies.



The Yorkshire Organic Centre

Encourages farm diversification and onsite product transformation and the formation of medium-size cooperatives which enable smaller farms to enter the supply chains of buyers who would normally deal with larger suppliers.

www.yorkshireorganiccentre.org
0845 122 7645



The British Food Fortnight

A nationwide celebration of the diverse range of food that Britain produces. During the fortnight, a number of chefs volunteer to visit schools and talk about food to pupils. Restaurants such as Nunnington Hall in North Yorkshire adapt their menu according to the fortnight's themes. The Tickton Grange Restaurant and Hotel near Beverley is also setting up a number of initiatives to promote local food.

www.lovebritishfood.co.uk/blogcategory/british-food-fortnight-2010



Deliciouslyyorkshire

Is a local food network website, set up by the Regional Food Group, links local producers with consumers. The scheme was set up to support the local economy while also reducing the carbon footprint of food. Through distinctive labeling and the provision of a local food directory, Deliciouslyyorkshire is able to provide effective support to local producers.

www.deliciouslyyorkshire.co.uk/dy/



Lane End Farm Trust

A registered charity as well as a fully operating farm in Abney, near Hathersage, South Yorkshire, the farm established a trust in 2005 to provide disabled or disadvantaged people with training, support and residential stays. During their visit to the farm, participants can find out about horse management, dry stone walling, building vegetable plots, growing vegetables, caring for animals, spinning wool from the farm's own sheep and designing knitwear.

www.laneendfarmtrust.co.uk

15. Environmental issues

Environmental issues have gained a more prominent profile in the last few years. An increasing number of VCOs are being set up to address these challenges in rural areas and to invite people to take positive action with regards to their environment.



Action for Stannington

Was set up to promote the belief that everyone can help protect the local area through "careful behaviour and voluntary activities". The group organises community events such as "spring cleans" and seeks to find long term solutions e.g. co-operation with schools and promotion of recycling.

www.actionforstannington.org.uk/index.htm
07986 359969

The amount of car use in rural areas is both unsustainable and yet it is largely unavoidable. In order to reduce carbon emissions, the number of car trips should ideally be reduced. This can be achieved through the provision of integrated public transport solutions that are adapted to the needs of communities.



The Humber Rural Partnership

The partnership has recently undertaken a feasibility study for a rural car-share scheme in order to enable rural areas to catch up with the level of car-sharing already taking place in other areas.

www.humberruralpartnership.org.uk/ccm/navigation/home
01482 391691

As an alternative to simple car-sharing, it is possible to set up “car clubs” (whereby an organisation owns a small pool of cars which can be loaned to members).



Hour Car Club, Hebden Bridge

www.hourcar.org.uk/index.htm
01422-847971



Gocar Club, Bentham

www.littleredbus.co.uk/craven
015242 62753

VCOs also champion projects designed to use renewable energy such as wind-power and hydroelectric schemes.



Settle Community Hydro-Scheme

Set up by a group of local residents who wished to use renewable energy in their communities, the scheme is able to make a profit by selling hydraulic power to residents. Profits are then reinvested in projects that promote environmental sustainability in the area.

www.greensettle.org.uk/hydro
01729 823155

The village hall network coordinated by the Humber and Wolds Rural Community Council has also developed a number of initiatives designed to encourage the use of renewable energy sources.



Skeffling Village Hall

Generates its own electricity through a proven wind turbine and sells its excess power to the National Grid, thereby securing an additional source of income.

www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/cafe/Green-Communities/Get-inspired/Add-your-project/Warming-Skeffling-Village-Hall-Not-the-Planet

There have also been a number of VCS-led moves to improve rural homes' energy efficiency and reduce fuel poverty.



Community Energy Solutions (CES)

Many homes in Richmondshire will be soon be able to benefit from a project designed to promote renewable heating systems and insulation measures. The project will be led by CES in partnership with Richmondshire District Council and Vale & Dale Home Improvement Agency.

www.cesgroup.org
0113 237 2720

Finally, the transition town network is also well established with hubs in Richmond, Kirbymoorside, Marsden and Slaithwaite.

Conclusion

Voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) in rural areas have a great record of tackling local problems and providing local solutions. There is no question that the organisations presented here are able to deliver a range of much-needed services on which their users have come to rely. Many of these initiatives are proving essential to the long-term sustainability of rural communities. As has become evident, if these groups were not there, they would leave a number of significant holes in the fabric of rural life. This report highlights some of the key challenges of rural areas but it also points towards a number of truly remarkable VCS initiatives from Yorkshire and the Humber.

One of the significant challenges facing rural communities is that their inherent small scale and dispersed nature means that none of the individual issues in this report exist in isolation. As the report shows transport underpins many of the challenges. The public and private sectors are sometimes unable to meet the needs of individuals and communities in rural areas. This prompts rural community initiatives into providing their locality with the services that are taken for granted elsewhere. What happens to young people is determined to a great extent by the provision of education and opportunities for employment.

In this kind of report that focuses on communities and tackling disadvantages there is a risk of missing out some larger organisations that can create opportunities such as the National Trust as a major landowner, employer and provider of volunteering opportunities. Other organisations have an interest in maintaining the countryside and having positive links with rural communities such as the British Mountaineering Council, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and Wildlife Trusts who might also be engaged in environmental work to support their members' interests.

The numerous VCOs presented in this report have invested much time and resources in building long-term trust with their service users. The relationships they have established over time enable them to find out about the real needs of rural areas and to channel these insights to decision-makers. In the current economic and political climate, VCOs face a time of unprecedented change as they set out to reflect on their values, missions and strategies for the years to come. Echoing a concern of VCOs everywhere, rural groups find that insecurity of funding affects their work and could become a barrier to developing future activities. Other challenges include the relative isolation of rural groups from specialised supporting services.

In the years to come, the Yorkshire & Humber Rural Network and its partners will continue to support the groups and to promote the many imaginative solutions which they have set up in their attempts to provide local services to rural people.

Danielle Firholz
Rural Policy Officer

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Acknowledgements

Yorkshire & the Humber Forum and the Yorkshire and Humber Rural Network would like to thank:

project partners for their support and input into this report

- * Humber and Wolds Rural Community Council - www.hwrcc.org.uk
- * Rural Action Yorkshire - www.ruralclick.com/dbs/yorksccc

the following organisations for providing case studies and other input into this report

- * North Yorkshire Rural Voice - www.ruralclick.com/dbs/yorksccc/dyncat.cfm?catid=1173
- * Rural Infrastructure Support System - www.ruralconnect.co.uk
- * Rural Partnership Plus - www.hwrcc.org.uk/index.php?/projects/rural-partnership-plus1
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Report

Rural priorities

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Yorkshire and the Humber Regional Forum Ltd
Registered Company: 6752034. Registered Charity: 1127119



July 2010