



Inquiry into the future for England's upland communities

July 2009 Progress Bulletin

Introduction

This is the fifth in a series of regular bulletins intended to keep participants and other interested parties informed of progress with the Inquiry. June and July have been busy months involving the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative evidence, and the first stages in working through an outline structure for the final report.

Latest Updates

Progress is reported here against the key deliverables for each stage of the Inquiry, providing a summary of the evidence gathered, and sharing findings from the initial analysis:

Public 'Call for Evidence'	<p>The 'Call for Evidence' closed on 30th April 2009 with well over 100 formal submissions received. Many of these contain detailed answers to the questions and many also appended further documentary evidence.</p> <p>Our initial appraisal of the submissions can be viewed in Appendix 1</p>
Hearing the views of people in upland communities	<p>The CRC commissioned a qualitative study to supplement the information that is expected to be generated by the call for evidence and regional hearings.</p> <p>Through a combination of methods that includes interviews and focus groups, the research has drawn its findings from people in the following six upland areas: Dartmoor, Shropshire Hills, Yorkshire Dales, Weardale, Lake District and Peak District.</p> <p>Our initial appraisal of this work can be viewed in Appendix 2</p>
Regional Hearings	<p>The Inquiry Panel heard evidence from over 200 stakeholders across the six English regions with uplands, through a series of two-day hearings held in Shropshire, North Yorkshire, Northumberland, Derbyshire, Devon and Cumbria.</p> <p>Six summary reports (each approx 6 pages) present the main points arising from each of these hearings are now available on the CRC website at: www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/projects/uplandcommunities</p> <p>A summary of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats highlighted during these regional hearings can be viewed in Appendix 3.</p>
'State of the Uplands' Report	<p>The State of the Countryside report on the Uplands was published in June and can be viewed at: www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/publications/stateofthecountrysideupdateuplands</p> <p>The report itself presents statistical evidence that challenges some of the common assumptions made about the uplands and, together with the other streams of evidence gathering, help to inform the inquiry findings.</p>

Evidence base: Expert Papers and Seminars.	<p>This research-based evidence gathering has been assembled from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • statistical data extracted from the CRC's 'state of the countryside' datasets; • a series of commissioned specialist papers and five expert seminars taking place between March and June 2009; • a supplementary literature review (where needed) and consultation of key informants; • the evaluation and synthesis of information from each of these sources. <p>Delta-innovation ltd, supported by Newcastle University, have been working with the CRC to deliver this work, and two reports on 'Understanding the Uplands' and 'Developing the Uplands' will be completed in July and August respectively.</p>
Reference Group Network	<p>The CRC's inquiry team is currently analysing the evidence gathered, and recently started to contact specific members of the Reference Group, wherever practical, to discuss the emerging findings. In particular, the CRC team is keen to explore the views of other organisations and individuals and test some of the thinking and emerging concepts with them. If you have any comments on what you have seen in this update please don't hesitate to contact us at the email address below.</p>

For regular and up to date news on progress please visit:

www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/projects/uplandcommunities

All enquiries regarding progress with the Inquiry can be addressed to:

uplandsinquiry@ruralcommunities.gov.uk

**Chris Kolek
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Appendix 1: EMERGING ISSUES FROM THE 'CALL FOR EVIDENCE'

COMMUNITIES

Strengths

- Upland communities are not homogenous. The composition of upland communities can be as diverse at times as urban environments

- There is a strong sense of community.
- There is a sense of pride across upland communities
- Rural living brings communities closer and increases sense of community
- Upland landscapes increase sense of belonging amongst upland communities

Weaknesses

- The quality of socio-economic data relating to the uplands is poor
- The uplands are a desirable place to live, increasing the cost of housing out of reach of younger, local people
- People working in the uplands feel they have no voice in relation to implementation of policy
- Recognition is needed that residing in the uplands is not always a choice
- Communities in the uplands experience the poverty-trap more widely than people living in other areas

Opportunities

- There is an opportunity to develop integrated transport policies responding directly to the needs of people living in the uplands
- Policy can be used to aid landowners in freeing up land in relation to housing to support increasing communities
- Development and expansion of community development programmes to support community capacity building
- Continued support of upland communities is required to sustain livelihoods

Threats

- NIMBYism
- Change in population skills due to increased transport links
- Many communities are fragile due to shrinking labour sector
- Ageing population
- Out-migration of traditional skills and diversification into new skills (IT, marketing etc)
- Cost of living is disproportionate to that of income

ECONOMIES

Strengths

- Lower business rates in rural areas support business development
- Expansion and/or development of property for business use
- Diversification from traditional farming
- Rural Enterprise Gateway supports positive economic development
- 'Game' tourism, such as shooting, fishing etc, upholds economic base of uplands
- Perception of people from lowlands of the uplands as a place to visit, increasing income in locality

Weaknesses

- Over reliance on few 'big earning' tourism outlets impacts upon other economic development
- Remoteness of the uplands
- Poor IT infrastructure
- Expectation on farmers to diversify without appropriate support
- Increased cost of living impacts upon profit margins disproportionately to lowland areas
- Poor land quality
- Farmers over-reliant on subsidy

Opportunities

- Improve skills of current residents to offer access to greater economic base
- Impact of recession on overseas travel needs to be harnessed for the benefit of the uplands
- Integrated economic development programmes developed and implemented
- Increase food production due to food security fears could increase economic base of uplands

Threats

- Impact of livestock disease (FMD, Blue Tongue)
- Income from 'Game' tourism will decrease due to recession
- Changes to EU funding structures
- Ability of agencies to administer new funding structures
- Higher cost of living is disproportionate to income
- Uplands economies cannot compete with lowland economy

POLICY & PRACTICE

Strengths

- Partnership work is effective
- National parks play an important role in the management of the uplands

Weaknesses

- Central policy does not relate to local need
- Perception of agencies undertaking work is poor
- Policy is seen as a one-way system
- People feel disengaged from policy development
- Capacity of agencies to deliver work is in doubt
- Agencies perceived as unresponsive to community needs
- Upland areas seen as having a single-identity rather than distinctive individual identities
- Natural England
- Planning policy reflects the desires of government and not local people
- Over reliance by some farmers on subsidies

Opportunities

- Integrated rural development programmes would offer more cohesive work programmes
- Landscape development
- Payment for entering upland areas
- Policy needs to reflect and promote diversity and distinctiveness of upland areas
- Public transport policy needs to reflect local need
- Planning needs to reflect multi-generational accommodation needs
- Planning policy needs to favour upland farmers

Threats

- Uplands are at a critical point and central policy does not help
- Central policy decisions disregard the views and needs of upland communities
- Planning policy on use of dwellings causes resentment from communities
- Impact of non-Game tourism on upland landscapes
- Legislation relating to hill farmers is considered disproportionate to lowland areas
- Policies to urbanise and centralise services has negative impact on communities
- Policies relating to, and having a positive impact on lowland areas do not necessarily have the same effect on upland areas (post office closures)
- Local government policies do not consider community and ecological structures, or micro-climates, of upland areas

PUBLIC GOOD AND BENEFITS

Strengths

- Upland areas are held in high esteem by the nation
- National parks support the continued existence of upland landscapes
- Cultural landscapes provides visual heritage for residents and communities
- Upland areas are distinctive and diverse
- Communities
- Schools in upland areas get better Ofsted reports
- Space, peace and tranquillity

Weaknesses

- Uplands seen purely as a provider of bio-diversity
- Public opinion of what the uplands has to offer
- Debate of re-wilding against grazing is ongoing with no end in sight, impacting on any move forward for uplands land management
- Upland areas are more vulnerable sooner than lowland areas to the effects of climate change
- Policy consultation on future of uplands seen as lip-service by communities

Opportunities

- Source of renewable energy
- Extension of national park boundaries would see future protection of uplands secured
- Cessation of sheep farming may help eco-balance
- Increase opportunities for land-sensitive businesses

- Increase opportunity for development of more tourism outlets reflecting benefits of upland areas

Threats

- Non-extension on national park boundaries will have negative impact on landscapes
- Reliance on traditional methods of land management – must be continued in partnership with modern methods
- Lack of investment
- Over reliance on 'traditional' uplands image, not developing and adapting to modernity

EMERGING THEMES

The 2 key themes emerging from the CfE so far are Sustainable Communities and Uplands Landscapes, with other branches arising from these.

The 5 key issues so far around Sustainable Communities are (in no order of importance):

- Affordable housing
- Economic viability
- Future of communities
- Landscape management
- Ageing populations

The 5 key issues so far around Uplands Landscapes are (in no order of importance):

- Future land management
- Impact of central policy locally
- Agency inefficiency
- Future subsidies
- Future of tourism

Appendix 2: Analysis from Hard to Reach Research

Upland Communities

Key Strengths

Strong sense of community spirit
Natural beauty of uplands
Feelings of security and peace mind
Welcoming nature of people
Agriculture and tourism industries
Traditional lifestyle

Key Weaknesses

Level of public service provision
Level/type of private sector amenities
High cost of housing
Demographic profile of population
Geographic isolation
Reliance on cars/4by4s

Key Opportunities

Development of community facilities
Building affordable housing
Improving services/infrastructure
Means of keeping young people in uplands
Relaxation of planning controls

Key Threats

Continued outmigration of young people
Further decline in services and amenities
Higher travel/transport costs
Further increase in house prices
Decline in existing industries

Upland Economies

Key Strengths

Existing agricultural and tourism industries
Ability of industries to diversify and specialise
“Buying local” – support for local businesses
Local employers employing local people
Broadband infrastructure
Building/land availability

Key Weaknesses

Insufficient employment opportunities
Low wages
High cost of running rural businesses

Confusion over planning regulations
Knocks suffered by agriculture sector
Seasonality of tourism sector

Key Opportunities

Targeted business and local authority support
Expansion of current industries
Business collaboration/networking
Financial support for rural businesses
Clarity and communication on planning controls

Key Threats

Lack of jobs causing young people to leave
Further decline in business base
Further outbreaks of TB/F&M/other diseases
Decline in skills base
Dependence upon declining industries

Public Goods and Benefits

Most valued benefits

Landscape
Environment
Heritage and Culture
Community and tradition

Areas for investment

Conservation of natural landscapes
Maintenance/upkeep of existing amenities
Support for new car parks
Maintenance of footpaths/bridleways

Actions to safeguard future

Greater investment in traditional upland skills, particularly for young people
Greater support for “keepers” of the benefits ie hill farmers and landowners

Threats to benefits

Lack of continued investment in local public amenities/services in upland areas
Lack of investment in preservation of landscape and natural environment.

Policies and Practices

Agencies/policies working (not classified – represent “successes”)

National Park Authorities/AONBs
Local Authorities
Voluntary and third sector organisations
Sure Start
ESA Grants

Improvements Needed to Policies

Consultation with upland communities at policy development stage (**policy process**)
Joined-up thinking and coordination between agencies responsible for policy and delivery (**policy process**)
The amendment and application of existing planning regulations (**planning**)
Amendment of regulations covering rural transport infrastructure (**transport**)

Actions Needed

Improved transport infrastructure (**transport**)
Upkeep of essential community services (**Public services**)
Enablers to retain local (particularly younger local) people in upland areas (**demography, development**)

Policies Threatening Future

Rural transport infrastructure and subsequent lack of access to essential services (**transport**)
Provision of local amenities (**public services**)
Availability (and cost) of homes – effect of planning policies. (**affordable housing, planning**)

Appendix 3: SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE FROM REGIONAL HEARINGS

Communities

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong communities within and across upland communities e.g. field sports, farming. • People are mostly independent/self-sufficient and communities survive. • Hill farming a “way of life” with strong traditions in the uplands. • Active voluntary and informal networks of support e.g. for older people. • Faith plays significant part in upland life. • Young people achieving good educational results. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shortage of affordable housing • Limited and steady decline in local services • Lack of things to do - especially young people • Absence of clear strategy on what change is needed in uplands for a sustainable future. • Fuel poverty resulting from limited energy choices and “hard to treat” buildings. • Isolation in bad weather – snowfalls in winter. • Volunteers often one person deep in small communities – their loss can leave gaps. • Parish councils unwilling to use precept. • Low benefit take up and financial exclusion. • Others see uplands as a mono-culture. • NEETS (not in employment, education, training or school) feel isolated.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community-led planning process can bring communities together and lead to joint action. • Better co-ordination of services & extension of outreach services from local towns. • Extend use of village halls - multi-use facilities • Parish Councils could lead locally in tackling “bigger issues” such as climate change. • Enablers can help provide affordable housing • Give local communities more say and funding. • Addressing the concerns of NIMBYs through engagement and appropriate development. • Allow hill farming families to (re)develop buildings on farm to meet housing needs. • Asset-based regeneration enabling communities to invest in their own futures. • Equality work could be extended beyond urban centres to include upland communities • University campuses can open up new options for young people e.g. Buxton 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerability of services in small communities. • Growth in number of second/holiday homes • Significant proportion of young people leaving uplands for education & employment. • Ageing population – demands on voluntary sector to fill gaps left by statutory services. • NIMBYs resistant to change. • Planners overlooking smaller settlements and focusing development in larger towns/cities. • Democratic deficit as consequence of being small in number – “voices not heard”

Economies

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscapes - tourism strong and still growing in “attractive” uplands. • Adaptability of workforce e.g. people employed on several p/t jobs. • Large proportion of enterprising sole traders. • Homeworking becoming commonplace. • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perception that upland communities have little to offer: “forestry, grouse & sheep” • Skills deficit in new hi-tech businesses. • Absence of good transport infrastructure and public transport services. • Patchy communications e.g. mobile coverage and quality of broadband • Relatively high costs of fuel compound disadvantage of distances to market. • Training and other services not tailored to deliver to dispersed populations. • Absence of specialists – e.g. setting up

	<p>community enterprise or renewables.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perception that planning restrictions are suppressing new enterprise. • Hill farming is often not financially viable without public funding. • Funding through regional agencies has big is best approach. • Uplands diverse but individual communities often dependent on single sector or major employer.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broadband technology has and could continue to open doors for employment. • New thinking on ways to keep tourism spend within local upland economies. • New lifestyle business locate in uplands. • Extend Live/Work opportunities. • Develop food sector infrastructure. • Refurbishment of redundant upland buildings for new homes or workspace. • On and off-farm diversification. • Growing global demand for food, water and energy. • RDPE could support development of a more competitive farming sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital exclusion – missing out on new generation broadband technology. • Animal disease cannot be predicted. • Diversification itself may threaten future of traditional skills. • Public procurement of services through competitive tendering can undermine local skills base e.g. forestry & social care

Public Goods & Benefits

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hill farming and management of grouse moorland delivers public benefits. • Majority of uplands designated as National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and provide open access for recreation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upland assets difficult to value in pounds. • Capital costs to establish micro-generation e.g. hydro are prohibitive. • Agri-environment schemes seen as too top-down, centralised, overly bureaucratic and meddling. • Income foregone inappropriate for calculating payments in uplands.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uplands asset-rich in sources of renewable energy. • Improvements in management of water catchments can deliver range of benefits. • Collaboration of farmers to introduce new technologies e.g. anaerobic digesters. • AONBs & NPAs working in partnership with communities & landowners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs and effort involved in managing the uplands not widely understood. • Absence of farming/grazing will change landscape, vegetation and access, not least on commons. • Failure of farmers to work jointly on business solutions. • National & regional as well as local opposition to some renewable e.g. wind. • Decline in specialist skills to protect uplands built and natural heritage. • General public taking landscapes and other public goods & benefits for granted. • Agri-environment schemes could bring unwelcome changes e.g. undergrazing.

Policy & Practice

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership between communities and National Park Authorities can work well. • Many communities now have their own Parish Plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some but not enough joined-up thinking or activities by public bodies in uplands. • Limited or absent cross-boundary working e.g. Exmoor and Welsh Borders • Govt agencies e.g. Natural England - set priorities not shared by communities. • Farmers perception that their knowledge is overlooked in agri-environment. • Loss of good initiatives such as Rural Housing Enablers leaves gaps.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope for much more local decision- making e.g. land use & management. • Support & delegation to LEADER and other community-based partnerships. • New integrated Regional Strategies address investment needed in uplands. • RDA Act could be amended to allow RDAs to delegate both funding and decisionmaking to appropriate local scale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitudes of planning authorities, particularly in National Parks. • Planning for conservation failing to deliver sustainable development in uplands. • Perception that uplands are becoming residual to public investment strategies e.g. City Regions. • Crude checklist approach to sustainable communities is writing off upland communities.