

Rural

Real Understanding of Rural Affairs and Local Issues

Issue Two

Spring 2005



Launch at Woodland Playgroup, Augher



Killyfoyle, Co. Fermanagh



Traditions Meet, Co. Tyrone



Moyola Angling Tobermore, Co L'Derry

Did you Know...?

Nearly 37% of people living in rural Northern Ireland are aged under 25

Source: 2001 Census of Population

Rural Schools : Mapping Out The Future



Kesh Out Of Schools Club

Did you know...?

Nearly 66% of primary schools in Northern Ireland are located in rural areas
Source: DENI 2000

there also be other roles some rural schools could play in providing countryside education for urban schools? Might there be health education and outdoor pursuit roles which could be considered?

DARD and DETI are currently developing a Food Strategy for Northern Ireland. A key aspect is local marketing and local connections between producers and consumers, and the extent to which public sector bodies such as schools, hospitals and civil service departments purchase food supplies locally. There are good examples in Cornwall of how this can be achieved, as well as in Italy (where purchase of organic food in school canteens is now encouraged by law), where one kitchen services a number of local schools with meals prepared from fresh local produce (the budget per meal in Italy is around €4.50 compared to 37p in the UK).

Thinking creatively may suggest other roles some rural schools could play, or ways resources could be shared.

The study will finish with a seminar to discuss the findings and explore options, and a report will be prepared. This study will be quite small and so the report will also help to identify what key questions should be asked in a wider survey of schools and parents to help inform decisions about retaining, closing or amalgamating schools.

For more information contact Nick Mack on 028 867 66980



Welcome to Rural:

Belleek Co. Fermanagh

Welcome to our second edition of RURAL the bi-annual newsletter from the Northern Ireland Rural Development Council (RDC) bringing you up-to-date news and developments on rural affairs and local issues.

In this edition we focus on the work of agencies and groups across rural Northern Ireland engaged in environmental regeneration projects. We also build on many of the discussions and challenges highlighted in our first issue, challenges which captured the interest of many readers and enabled us to open up the debate further with Government, local authorities and other agencies.

This feedback has already reshaped our work programme as we go to print. The role of the rural primary school in Northern Ireland was an issue many readers responded to with interest and vigour. As a result we are now engaged in some research to look at how we might sustain meaningful primary education facilities in rural areas. The outcome of this research will be presented to Government through the Interdepartmental Rural Proofing Steering Group.

The level of interest in many of the articles demonstrated to us the impact some developments have on communities and the concerns local people have on issues such as rural schools, planning, housing, water and rates reform. Indeed it only goes to demonstrate the need for us all to ensure such decisions are rural proofed and that appropriate consultation mechanisms are in place to ensure those most disadvantaged or affected have a way to input and be heard.

As a regional organisation operating across all rural Northern Ireland we believe we not only have a role in such processes but also in providing a key strategic focus linking the grass roots bottom up approach with top down policies and practice. We believe we can contribute by helping to develop and pilot solutions within communities presenting new opportunities or ways of working that are truly rural tested. This sort of work can provide Government with the evidence of solutions that meet rural need and could help to support mainstreaming of ideas to benefit the wider rural community.

We do hope you enjoy reading RURAL and once again invite others to feed into the discussion and encourage feedback in helping to form a real understanding of rural affairs.

Thank you for reading.

The RDC has embarked on a short study exploring the issues around small rural primary schools. The study, which will serve as a case-study of good practice for rural proofing policies, was prompted by the range of concerns being expressed about possible (or threatened) school closures as pupil numbers dwindle and budgets come under pressure. It has the support of the Government's interdepartmental Rural Proofing Steering Group.

It is important perhaps to note that this is not only a rural problem – urban small primary schools are also faced with similar difficulties. Demographic changes are having a strong impact across the board on the longer term viability, both financially and educationally, of some schools. Of key importance is the need to ensure rural children get a good quality educational service, but also that the role the rural school plays in the community, and any options for improving its overall viability when faced with closure, are fully taken into account.

What will the Study Look at?

Similar issues have been faced by small schools in England, Wales,

Scotland and the Republic of Ireland. In England a significant amount of research has been done to look at how small schools might deal with the decline in pupil numbers and this study will examine what conclusions were arrived at and how they might apply here.

RDC will map schools with different pupil numbers to identify where and how many schools might be faced with closure if pupil numbers continue to go down. How far might people have to travel to the nearest viable school?

A number of different solutions to the plight of small schools are being discussed. This study will look at the pros and cons of different approaches.

The study will explore with parents and Principals the outcome of amalgamations. What impact did these have on quality of life and sense of community – were fears about closure realised or were there also benefits?

At a time when school dinners are also a hot topic of conversation and when knowledge about farming, the environment and sustainable development amongst young people is also a concern, might

WHO WE ARE

The Northern Ireland Rural Development Council (RDC) is an independent organisation operating at a regional level across rural Northern Ireland. The RDC was established in 1991, under the DARD Rural Development Programme, and is presently managed by a 13-member Council comprised of rural community representatives drawn from the private sector, local government, ministerial appointees, environmental interests, community banking and the agriculture industry. This voluntary input provides strong corporate governance to a staff team of over 30.

As a Council RDC wants to encourage a flourishing and sustainable rural Northern Ireland and believe that rural communities play a vital and significant role in achieving this. Our activities are based on the principle that local people are best placed to identify their needs and propose solutions.

WHAT WE DO

We are involved in the delivery of support services, both financial and practical, to organisations involving people locally in planning regeneration projects that meet the real needs of rural communities. In addition, we are also involved in gathering and analysing data, research and information from a range of sources, sharing of information and building effective partnerships.

This unique combination of delivery and research by a broad partnership based organisation makes a significant contribution to rural policy development and delivery in Northern Ireland.

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Rural Reality:

Takes a look at what is happening across rural Northern Ireland. Here we look at 'Marking the Occasion' and how our work contributes to the wide calendar of events across Northern Ireland and beyond. We bring you examples of projects we have funded together with sharing the work of others.

International Women's Day

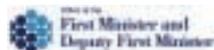
International Women's Day was marked on March 8th with a series of events across Northern Ireland and abroad with a theme of Gender Equality Beyond 2005: Building a More Secure Future. The theme recognises the close relationship between gender equality, security and development, and stresses reducing poverty, protecting human rights and investing in sustainable development as key to empowering women.

Coinciding with this day of recognition of women our own Chair of Council Caroline Breakey had just returned from Latvia where she was hosted by the Southern Latgale NGO Support Centre. The visit was part of an European Comparative Study on Young People and Rural Development by YouthAction NI funded by the Special EU

Programmes Body through the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister.

Caroline, in addition to her role as RDC Chair, is the Assistant Director of YouthAction NI. Accompanying Caroline on the trip were two youth workers; 12 young people from Aghnacloy, Middletown and Creggan and local community and statutory representatives from organisations in South Tyrone and South Armagh. The visit was a mixture of gathering and sharing information on rural and youth policies and included information drawn from Sweden and Republic of Ireland to identify learning and lessons to be shared for Northern Ireland.

For more information on this visit or the study contact Caroline Breakey at YouthAction NI on 028 9076 0067



Did you Know...?

That 2005 has been declared as the 'Year of the Volunteer' www.yearofthevolunteer.org

In Northern Ireland, the Volunteer Development Agency will be working in partnership with the Volunteer Bureau Network, Department for Social Development, Northern Bank and BBC to encourage engagement in volunteering. A special designated volunteer's week from 1st-7th June 2005 will form part of the activities and celebrations for the year.

For more information and opportunities for volunteering in your area contact the Volunteer Development Agency on 028 90 236 100 or email info@volunteering-ni.org

Rural Volunteers Praised

Rural Development projects offer many benefits to communities, the environment and economy. They can provide jobs locally, better access to services, improved community relations and a better quality of life for all. They also have one key ingredient in common and that is People. RDC recognises the valuable contribution local people

make to local development and would like to take this opportunity as part of the designated Volunteers Year, to thank all those involved in each of the 170 projects currently funded through RDC under the EU Peace II, Building Sustainable Prosperity and International Fund for Ireland Programmes.

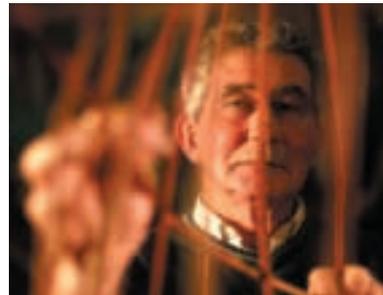
Celebrating Community Relations



The week commencing 7th March witnessed the culmination of many hours hard work when events took place across Northern Ireland to celebrate Community Relations Week.

This week provided an opportunity to highlight examples of good relations initiatives taking place within and between communities. Voluntary and Community organisations right across rural Northern Ireland staged activities from cultural displays and drama performances to workshop discussions and cross-community events.

As part of the celebrations the EU Programmes Body held their annual 'PEACE II Celebrating Success' event. This event, in its second year, showcased and celebrated the work of Peace II funded projects. This year RDC nominated two projects for selection:



- **Derrygannon Craft & Heritage Society Co. Fermanagh** – the group organised a series of workshops, training sessions and exhibitions aimed at revitalising

traditional crafts in the area. The project centred on the traditional crafts of cart and trap making, reed and straw weaving and horse leather skills. The project was designed to engage the community and promote improved relations both locally and cross-border. To date approximately 240 people have benefited from the project.



- **Traditions Meet Co. Tyrone** – a consortium which brought together 4 groups (Bready Pipe Band, St Joseph's Brass Band, McKinney School of Irish Dance and Sollus Highland Lassies) to design and deliver a showcase production on a cross community, cross border basis.

These projects demonstrate only a flavour of the good work being done by voluntary and community organisations across rural Northern Ireland funded by RDC under the EU Peace II Programme.

For more information on RDC Peace II projects or to obtain a copy of 'A Picture of Rural of Peace' publication contact Joyce McMullan on 028 867 66980

'Piping Hot' in Virginia



'Piping Hot', the lively stage show which features the talents of the people of the Newry area through the medium of music, dance, story and song, warmed the hearts of many Americans when it toured the state of Virginia USA over St. Patrick's Day. Blending two musical traditions, Scots and Irish, in a single fast moving pageant demonstrates that there is more that unites the two traditions than separates them. With the rhythms of Ireland and Scotland in the beat the Lambeg Drum and the Bodhran and the skirl of the Uilleann and the Scottish pipes this show is truly 'Piping Hot'.

Chief Executive of Altnaveigh House Margaret Thompson said "the trip to the US was a fantastic opportunity to promote some good coming from Northern Ireland, proving that peace and reconciliation is happening at grass roots level".

For more information on this project contact Margaret Thompson on 028 3026 5151

On Board...

In each edition we introduce you to some of the Board Members which make up Council. In our last edition we introduced Caroline Breakey Chair, Lesley Craig Vice-Chair together with Alison McCullough, Dr Arthur Mitchell and Brian Howe from the Board. We now introduce a further three...



Jenny Irvine

Jenny is from Co. Fermanagh and joins the Board as a nomination from the Rural Community Network. Jenny trained as a nurse, but currently works in rural development. Her involvement in rural issues spans many years; she has a wealth of experience ranging from strategic planning for partnership development, to initiatives addressing transport, childcare, community relations, pre-school education and family support amongst others.



Glenn Moore

Appointed by DARD Glenn is currently Clogher Diocesan Secretary with the Church of Ireland. In recent years he has played an active part within the voluntary and community sector at local and provincial level. He is director/member on a number of community groups and committees. Glenn's interests include community development, enterprise, community relations and youth.



Ian Buchanan

Ian, a full-time farmer, is conscious of the need for a sustainable future for rural Northern Ireland where agriculture will continue to have an important role. Ian is involved in community development and farm diversification projects in Dungiven and the wider Northwest region. He is a member of Dromboughil Community Association and was recently profiled on the BBC series 'Farming Lives'. Appointed by DARD Ian's interests include agriculture, farm families, community. development, youth, enterprise and rural tourism.

Watch out for further profiles in our next edition.



Make a date

The theme of this section has been on 'Marking the Occasion' highlighting key events across Northern Ireland and beyond. As well as celebrating in these achievements there are a number of other special dates and events to note:-

- 11th-15th April 2005: Rural Community Week hosted by the Rural Community Network (RCN) see page 8
- 12th April 2005: Shaping Rural Policy consultation event hosted by RDC and the NI LEADER Network see page 3
- 11th -13th May 2005: Annual Balmoral Show
- 5th June 2005: World Environment Day
- 22nd -23rd June 2005: Rural Youth Conference hosted by YouthAction NI - Rural College Draperstown
- 25th September 2005: Rural Health Week

Watch this space – RDC in partnership with other rural stakeholders plan to host RURAL LIFE WEEK in 2006. This will take a co-ordinated look at rural life and celebrate the many achievements of rural development.

If you are interested in participating please let us know by contacting Aileen Donnelly on 028 867 66980

Rural Agenda:

Putting rural affairs at the top of the agenda is a key priority for RDC and falls within the remit of our Policy and Innovation Research Unit. In this section we look at some of the key issues currently impacting on the rural agenda.

Future Taking Shape for Rural Northern Ireland: But will it be as an Asset or a Liability?

A number of important policy developments are taking shape which will determine the way rural Northern Ireland is supported from 2007 to 2013, and the role it will play in the region. An important issue is whether we continue to see

'rural' as a liability to the region or as an asset. To date, a focus on disadvantage and inequality has cast rural in the role of 'liability'; a problem child whenever public services and economic opportunities must be stretched out to reach those

beyond the towns. In the Regional Development Strategy rural areas narrowly avoided being treated as 'the bit left over' when urban development options had been classified and accounted for. But this is perhaps now changing. As highlighted within

the RDC Beacon Community study, more and more people want to live in rural areas, and consumer trends for genuine, healthy food and a clean environment mean rural assets (natural, cultural and social) are important to future

economic development. Our key message to the policy process is that whilst we must still address disadvantage, we should also be confident about what rural areas have to offer to the region.

Reforming Northern Ireland's Water and Sewerage Services

The reform of water and sewerage services has the potential to affect the lives of every person in Northern Ireland whether they live in the town or countryside.

Rural Perspective

The Government recognises the importance of identifying and addressing rural concerns. In 2003, a Consultation on the reform process sought feedback from the public and other stakeholder groups on the rural perspectives of the proposals. The Government also asked the Rural Community Network to undertake consultation focusing on elderly people living in rural areas and farmers. Details of the issues raised in this process are available on the RDC website www.rdc.org.uk

Way forward

Sensitivity to the needs of people living in rural areas will remain a central consideration in the

development of the Water Reform proposals. The new Economic and Consumer Regulator and the Consumer Representative for water and sewerage issues will be required to have regard to the interests of individuals residing in rural areas. A draft Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) has been carried out to assess the possible impacts of the proposals on defined groups or individuals. A Rural Proofing assessment was incorporated into the IIA which considered the implications for rural communities and households. The consultation period closed on 4 March 2005. The Minister will consider the responses made before finalising policy to be reflected in the proposed new legislation which will be subject to further consultation.

Further information on the water reform process can be found on the Water Reform website www.waterreformni.gov.uk

The First Report from the Review of Rural Policy for Northern Ireland. From Liability to Asset – A Crucial Time to Contribute Your Views

DARD recently commissioned PWC to conduct a wide-ranging review of rural policy for Northern Ireland. The result is a report, out now for public comment. The report is available from the DARD website and it is important that the views of rural people (as well, perhaps, as urban ones) are fed into the process. RDC are also inviting views through its website (www.rdc.org.uk) and you are encouraged to log on and take part.

For many, this will be the first time Northern Ireland has had a rural policy rather than being 'funding led'. But can such a policy be justified? What should its main aims be? How should it be delivered?

Thankfully, the report comes out strongly in favour of having a rural policy.

The report sees a need to make better links between rural development activity and the farming community, a point RDC would also strongly endorse, and for

better integration across government in progressing rural development policy issues. As an asset, rather than a liability, rural areas should be seen positively across government. A central aim suggested by the report is to ensure sustainable communities through a strong rural economy, good quality services, and a healthy environment. **Making it Happen**

Delivery of support to rural development has tended to be complex with a wide range of partnerships and organisations involved. An important challenge in taking forward rural development will be the way these different organisations work together, not only to deliver European funding under the 'European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development', (EAFRD) but also in assisting government departments to address opportunities or needs in rural areas. Various suggestions are made by the report including a single integrated

delivery body, delivery through the new 'super councils' following the review of public administration, or a combination of approaches. An approach which many currently favour is to build on the experience of the LEADER programme to establish local strategic partnerships for delivery, coordinated and supported by a central body, a role RDC would be able to provide, building on its own experience in delivery and strategic research.

The potential for a positive, forward looking policy for rural areas is there, and RDC will work to ensure it is achieved. Your views will also be important so look out for upcoming opportunities to contribute including the joint RDC and NI LEADER Network event to be held on 12th April 2005 Loughry College Cookstown.

For information on this event contact Aileen Donnelly on 028 867 66980

The New European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) Making the most of the Assets ?

Big changes are afoot in the approach to European funding for 2007 – 2013. At the present time, funding for rural development comes partly from the 'Rural Development Regulation' (which is part of the Common Agricultural Policy) and partly from EU structural funds. Structural funds are for the most part given to those regions with economic growth less than the European average, and until now this has included Northern Ireland. The funds are delivered under the current 'Building Sustainable Prosperity' programme for Northern Ireland and PEACE II. Expansion of the EU to include countries in eastern Europe means much of the structural fund money will go to these new member states.

The EU has been keen to simplify the complex number of different types of funding, each with their own different administrative procedures, making development

work a bureaucratic nightmare. As a result it proposes a single 'Rural Fund' (currently called the EAFRD) combining CAP and LEADER money into one pot. Structural funds are in turn also intended to be simpler and targeted at urban development. Whilst simplification is definitely to be welcomed an immediate concern is that 'rural' will become separated from regional development rather than connected to it. What makes this even more of a concern is that there is likely to be a lot less money available for rural development and it may be the social side (projects for young people, for community regeneration, for older people) which fall by the wayside if we are not careful.

An additional challenge lies in making good use of the EAFRD through a well thought out strategy for Northern Ireland. The fund is to be organised into three main priority areas more or less

focussing on 'competitiveness', 'environment', and 'rural diversification'. The danger is that different stakeholders each support one of these at the expense of the others. The challenge lies in building bridges across these three areas to make the most of the potential rural Northern Ireland has to offer to deliver jobs, improve incomes and improve quality of life. Whilst agriculture will continue to be a mainstay for rural development, it will also be important that farmers and other rural entrepreneurs work together to make best use of new opportunities in the years to come.

The RDC plans to encourage wide debate on the approach to rural development and to promote across government the value of rural Northern Ireland as an asset to the region as a whole.



National Parks – Avoiding the Liability ?

Whilst there are National Parks in England, Scotland and Wales, none so far have been designated in Northern Ireland.

The DoE recently completed consultations on how National Parks might be introduced, how they should be managed, and what aims and powers they should have. Proposals may well be produced later this year.

The fears people have of introducing parks is that they will restrict farming practices, prevent the building of new homes, and inhibit business activities. They see National Parks as an imposition from DoE and other 'outsiders' with more interest in protecting the environment than the livelihoods of local people.

But it may be that, given time for local people to help shape the aims and management approach to National Parks, they become a valuable asset helping to create jobs, new enterprises and a quality of life many will envy. The Countryside Council for Wales, for example, recently estimated that the countryside provided for:

- 117,000 direct jobs
- 52,000 indirect employment
- 17% of all Welsh jobs
- Outputs and services worth £8.8 billion / annum
- 9% of GDP
- Environmental Tourism and Education alone contribute £821 million / annum

Applied to the Mourne Area (the area which may see the first NI National Park introduced) this could represent

- up to 7,500 jobs within 10 years
- Additional outputs and services worth 0.5 billion within 10 years
- Potential income over 10 years of £5.0 billion

At a time when funding for rural areas looks set to fall considerably, National Parks may be an advantage in helping to make more of what is available or even increase the amount of support. What is crucial is that local people are involved fully in the management and aspirations of such parks. Only this way can they fully achieve their potential.

THE REALITY OF RURAL LIFE...

Finding out what it is like to live in a rural area in terms of gathering statistical data is one thing knowing what it is like because you live or work there is another.

Just what is it like in a rural community? What makes a rural community healthy, not in medical terms, but ability to survive and be sustainable? These are just some of the questions underpinning the Northern Ireland Rural Development Council's (RDC) recent pilot research initiative, Beacon Communities, contributing to the third RDC report examining perspectives of rural change and related policy issues.

What is the Beacon Communities Study?

The Beacon Communities Study seeks to provide a co-ordinated look at life in total in rural areas through the structured collection of primary data. Put simply finding out from rural people themselves what it is like to live and work in a rural community.

What is the third RDC report on 'Rural Change and Related Policy Issues'?

Drawing on the information obtained from the Beacon Communities Study and through the use of regional statistical data already available through NISRA, RDC seeks to connect and compare both sets of data in

helping to form a picture of the reality of rural life.

How was the information gathered?

To do this RDC established a number of Beacon Communities.

We looked at the type of communities and tried to get a good cross section of involvement to include farm and non farm interests; dispersed and village settlements; geographic spread and religious mix.

We worked in 6 rural community areas across Northern Ireland with the Ballylaw Farmers Group in Strabane, Bellek village in west Fermanagh, Claudy near Derry, Dervock near Ballymoney,

Mullaghbawn in South Armagh, and seven hamlet communities in the south east of the region between Lisburn, Banbridge and Newcastle.

What was the result?

A number of reports have been developed. One, being the full analysis of the study drawing on the findings of the Beacon Communities and NISRA statistical data combined to bring you the third RDC report examining 'Perspectives of Rural Change and Related Policy Issues'. A second, being a 'Snapshot in time', the 6 case studies of the participating communities. Both these reports will be made available online at www.rdc.org.uk

The case-studies are, of course, not a statistically representative sample of all rural communities, but the themes and issues emerging are likely to have echoes across rural Northern Ireland.

This combination of case-studies and data is designed to connect the experiences of people in rural communities to broader statistical data helping to inform policy thinking and assist decision makers of the reality of rural life.

This summary presents the key findings of the research under six section headings :

Mobility and Access to Services



Claudy Village Co.LDerry

Quality of life and social inclusion in rural areas is significantly influenced by the availability of local services.

The Beacon Communities study found that around 40% of service use was conducted within the communities sampled. Other services were accessed primarily from the nearest district town. Across the different communities, however, patterns in service use within the community varied considerably.

- Provision of post offices was previously estimated to be good. Nearly all respondents in

the Beacon Communities reported easy access to a post office and local shop.

- GPs were more likely to be accessed in the nearest district town with some attendant difficulties. More significant was the difficulty highlighted in accessing specialist outpatient services.
- Examination of local provision of childcare (other than family) suggested that often, provision was there, but was vulnerable to continued short-term funding, and that there is likely to be significant variations across other rural communities.

- Access to ATM provision (cash machines) reported in the Beacon Communities suggests increasing such provision may be less important than sustaining the local post office and its role in accessing money locally.

A role for urban centres in providing the key location for employment was evident but a direct relationship with their own hinterland was less clear, and urban centres were by no means the only option.

- In the rural west women are more likely than men to access employment in district towns
- Alternative locations of rurality-

based full-time employment are evident along the border and in pockets in central districts, which may represent alternative growth areas

- Pockets of local rural employment appear in Dungannon, and northwards through Cookstown, Magherafelt and Coleraine. These were locations in which there are a higher than average proportion of VAT registered businesses
- In more peripheral locations such as Bellek, respondents felt that it was "mainly the professionals that travel". The quality of local (rurally based) employment is then made all the more important.

Population and Settlement



Belleek Co.Fermanagh

Population trends indicate a slight fall in the numbers living in urban centres and an increase in those living in the countryside.

- Population estimates for the period 2002 – 2003 show urban districts such as Belfast, Derry, Castlereagh and

Newtownabbey had a net civilian outmigration (people moving out), whilst highest overall population growth was in Omagh, Banbridge and Newry and Mourne, where in-migration (people moving in) contributed to growth.

- In some Beacon Communities in-migration was felt to be introducing a change in the make-up of residents. This was also evident in the census data, in which existing residents working in semi-routine and manual occupations are being joined by incomers in professional and managerial occupations.

A pattern of out-migration, population growth and smaller household size are likely to be contributors to a substantial growth in the number of single dwellings in the countryside.

- Applications for single dwellings have grown in particular in Newry and

Mourne, Fermanagh, Dungannon in the south and in Antrim, Ballymena and Ballymoney in the north. Demand has remained relatively low in the north west.

- The Beacon Communities study also highlights a trend for new houses to be bought by 'investors' who then rent.
- The Beacon Communities study also suggests that with a rise in incomers comes a reduction in sense of community, familiarity and neighbourliness, which could create a situation in which crime or anti-social behavior can increase.

Young People



Young People Mullaghbawn Co.Armagh

A general view shared across the Beacon Communities study is that people are attracted to rural communities for raising their family.

Despite the greater level of perceived safety for children and young people in a rural community, there may be other risks to health and safety for all age groups.

- Play parks were in short supply or in bad repair in three of the five Beacon Communities.
- Adult respondents expressed concern for safety from traffic resulting from a lack of play space.

- Many reported that access to fields and the countryside was not readily available. Some of the adults interviewed felt they had more freedom and space when they were young.
- For some younger people, a key health issue is underage drinking rooted in the lack of alternative activities or meeting places. Data enabling a comparison between urban and rural young people is not available in order to assess this further.

Typically, respondents reported a trend for young people to leave on reaching 18 but this is less easy to confirm in census data.

- On the whole, 2001 census migration figures suggest a net out-migration of younger people from Northern Ireland.
- Examination of underlying population changes amongst young people is made difficult by changes in the registered address of students from the 1991 to 2001 census periods.

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES AND DATA

Economic Activity & Patterns of Employment

A number of factors indicate differences in the nature of employment and self employment in different parts of the region.

Different patterns of employment are found in the east and west or south of the region.

- Unemployment remains more concentrated in the rural west and in Newry and Mourne in the south relative to the east of the region
- Full-time employment in the east of the region is strongly associated with Belfast. Part-time employment is more prevalent closer to district towns and in the south and south east of the region
- A higher proportion of those in managerial and professional occupations are found in areas

around Belfast and the south east. Those in routine occupations or who are self employed (which includes farmers) are more widely dispersed

Proximity to larger urban growth centres may also act to hinder self employment in rural areas.

Employment patterns show different dependencies on agriculture from west to east.

- The distribution of wards in which 20% or more of the economically active population are in some way involved in agriculture is extensive, and particularly common in the rural west, the south, and the north east.

The largest category of employment in agriculture is still that of full-time farmers, but only exceeds the proportion in part-time farming by 8%. Casual workers account for just over 15% of the agricultural labour force.

- Employment in the textile industry was a significant part of the sense of identity of people in two Beacon Communities. The decline in employment in textile manufacturing over the past 7 years has been 39% greater overall than in agriculture.



Market Day Belleek Co.Fermanagh

Natural and Cultural Capital



Stone Marker Mullaghbawn Co.Armagh

Central to the distinctiveness of rural areas in the region, and underpinning the case for a distinct rural policy, is the close association between people, place, and natural resources. Rural development should be predicated on the active use of natural resources in economic development or quality of life.

There is a need to have clear agreement about what rural is and what it contributes to the region as a basis for rural policy goals.

- About a quarter of Beacon Community respondents related 'rural' to a sense of isolation and the absence of things like large shops or businesses, highlighting the policy goal of tackling disadvantage based on isolation
- Around a third of respondents related rural to the village and to settlements of smaller numbers of people, highlighting the policy goal of supporting communities as places for living
- Around a third of respondents linked rural to farming and green fields, cows, and open space, highlighting the policy goal of better integrating farming in local development

Given the separation of the single rural fund from other regional funding at EU level, a key challenge for any future strategy for rural areas should be to integrate rural and regional policies which can address these different aspects of rural development around a common vision and understanding of rural.

Traffic, limited access to surrounding fields, and public liability for farmers, may have separated people in rural communities from the countryside.

- When asked about the value of the countryside to the quality of local life, most respondents rated it as high.
- Use of the countryside was on the whole however limited; most said they went out for walks but largely restricted to country roads.
- 'Urbanisation' of local communities may be isolating farming, challenging farm practices, placing pressure on access to land and increasing problems with litter and opened farm gates.

Social Capital



Local People Mullaghbawn Co.Armagh

Community is, in essence, an expression of the strength of (local) social capital.

Respondents across Beacon Communities generally report high levels of social capital. However demographic changes may be acting to undermine this feeling, particularly for older people, and to weaken levels of social capital.

- Sense of community (as a feeling) consistently scored highest amongst all the indicators of social capital used, followed by 'knowing others' and 'feeling safe' – a key benefit of belonging to a community may be the added security it provides
- The pattern of scores across different communities, however, suggests there is no automatic link between different components of social capital, suggesting similar levels of social capital could

arise from different components. A 'composite' social capital indicator would need careful development if it is to be reliable

- Respondents comments during the Beacon Communities study suggest social capital may be strengthened by involvement of a community in local decision-making (Dervock) and through enhancement of cultural capital (e.g. Mullaghbawn townlands project)
- What might be considered the core of sustaining sense of community - 'Meeting and Talking' scored lowest – finding time and opportunity to meet and talk may be becoming harder for many.
- The local shop was the location most respondents said they met and talked with others, indicating its importance in sustaining social capital

- District towns were the most common destination cited for evenings out, rather than the local pub

Most of the respondents involved in the study reported feeling safe in their community, and felt there was a generally low incidence of crime or vandalism in their areas.

- Farmers reported significantly more incidences of crime than other community respondents
- Most concern was expressed for older people – insecurity was influenced by media coverage of incidents affecting older people rather than local events
- A reduction in social capital arising from changes in the mix of people living in the community, increased a sense of vulnerability
- Influxes of urban people to live in rural communities was associated with concerns about increases in antisocial behaviour

Whilst 'bridging social capital' (connections to other communities or groups) was generally felt to be high, 'linking' (connection to statutory bodies and decision-making) was rated consistently low.

Rural Reality:

Here we look at the work of some agencies and groups across rural Northern Ireland engaged in environmental regeneration. Included are just a few of the projects we have supported under the EU Peace II, Building Sustainable Prosperity and International Fund for Ireland Programmes. We also share with you the work of others.

Mighty Oaks from Little Acorns Grow!



Woodland Playgroup Augher Co.Tyrone

Woodland Adventure Playgroup and After School Club, established by Acorn Women's Group, is nestled in the heart of the Co.Tyrone countryside three miles outside Augher village. The Playschool provides for approximately 25 children of pre-school age, with the after school club catering for children from the local primary school. Located outside the main village of Augher, the playschool provides the ideal environment for children

to enjoy the openness of the surrounding countryside and to gain an awareness of the natural environment around them. Respect and appreciation of the environment is a central ethos of Acorn Women's Group and something the Group try to instill into all children attending the playschool. One major limitation at the playschool however, was the absence of an outdoor play area, and realising this the Group

decided to take action and develop one, but one which differs significantly from the norm. Following its environmental ethos, the Group have developed an outdoor eco-adventure playarea constructed almost entirely from recycled or renewable materials such as aluminium, rubber and wood. The new play area has proved to be a welcomed addition and is providing enormous enjoyment for the children, who now have a variety of play items

ranging from swings and slides to climbing frames and a multi purpose play area for ball games. The group have also arranged waste management awareness sessions for the children, facilitated by Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council, proving that you are never too young to begin learning about the importance of recycling and waste management.

For more information on this project contact Gail Lees on 028 867 66980

Pathways through Time



The village of Cullville in south Armagh sits right on the border astride a main east-west arterial route.

The village and the local community carry many scars of the troubles leaving with them a legacy of the conflict. Relationships have been affected not only within the local community but also with people from other neighbouring areas.

The Cullville & District Community Association sought to address some of these issues through the 'Pathway through Time' project. It seeks to create a sense of community pride in the area and a desire to enhance and maintain the village by creating visual images of the rich industrial and cultural history of the area.

The long since defunct Kinghams scutch mill, the popular blacksmith and his forge, the importance of agriculture by horse power and the lifeline of the once Great Northern Railway and Cullville Halt were identified as important elements of the local history of the area. These can now be seen depicted in symbolic images as you pass through the village.

Locals, visitors, young and old can now pause for a moment to reflect or learn from a rich past and feel proud that Cullville has a culture and history that goes way beyond current affairs and one that the local community can be proud of.

For more information on this project contact Albert Hunter on 028 867 66980

Every Drop Counts

Arney River Co.Fermanagh



One of three 'water' focused projects in Co. Fermanagh, the Arney Wise Use of Water Scheme is a community initiative by Killesher Community Development Association focusing on water resource management. The project is based on the management of a small catchment, along the Arney River, and aims to improve water quality through tackling point source pollution from industrial agricultural and domestic sources. The use of new and innovative alternative technologies involving storm water management systems, recycling and reuse of grey water and management of brown water through construction of small reed beds are just some of the solutions in helping address identified issues. Participants are also benefiting from access to training, sharing of good practice and environmental awareness. Tackling some of the same issues is Tempo Farmers Group near

Fivemiletown and Trillick. This group of proactive farmers is working to raise environmental awareness on farms in order to improve water quality in the catchment area. The results to date have had immediate and beneficial impact on the rural environment.

Another group, this time working to improve water access, is Knockmore Regeneration Group operating between Derrygonnelly and Garrison Co. Fermanagh. This group is working to reduce rural depopulation by focusing on the provision of much needed infrastructure to provide a mains water supply to a rural isolated and disadvantaged community.

So whether its water protection, quality or access these three projects truly demonstrate that indeed every drop counts!

For more information on these projects contact Michael Kelly on 028 867 66980



Did you Know...?

The 5th of June 2005 marks World Environment Day



Learnmount Forest Co.Derry

Friendships Renewed Along the Border



During the Troubles, border road closures resulted in some communities literally being split in two. Businesses were economically affected and long standing friendships were difficult to maintain. One such community is Cashel, a small mixed community located on the Border four miles east of Garrison, Co. Fermanagh. Their natural social and economic centre is the village of Kiltyclogher, just over the

border in Co. Leitrim. The border crossing bridge was for many years removed, cutting the community in half. With the recent construction of a new bridge and border crossings reopened the community have set about rebuilding the spirit and relationships that existed pre the Troubles. To help facilitate this, the Cashel Community Association secured Peace II funding from RDC to construct an outdoor activity area to hold

community events to bring the communities back into contact through social interaction. With the attractive small facility now completed the cross border movement of 'Kilty-Cashel' are planning a season of outdoor social and cultural events to rebuild the cross community good relations of yesteryear.

For more information on this project contact Albert Hunter on 028 867 66980

Hydro Power at Broughshane



The generation of renewable energy is fast becoming a central policy of Governments throughout the world as efforts intensify to reduce carbon dioxide and other emissions linked to global warming. We can all play our part in reducing pollution levels and every effort counts no matter how insignificant it may seem in the grand scale of things.

The Village Garden (Broughshane) Ltd, is a community group involved in the social, economic and environmental development of Broughshane. The Group are based in Houstons Mill, which once housed an established textile industry. In the early 1900's a water turbine was installed at the mill to generate power from the water supply used to turn the mill waterwheel. This turbine, despite now being almost one-hundred years old still generated power to the Mill until recently.

Technical surveys however concluded that the turbine, by today's standards, could not generate power as efficiently as a modern turbine. This prompted the Group to install a new hydro turbine which has the capacity to generate four times as much energy as the old turbine. This enables the Group to substitute electricity from the National Grid with clean, green energy.

This project demonstrates how renewable energy can be used to help community sector projects become more sustainable helping to reduce fuel costs significantly. Given the range of existing and emerging methods of generating renewable energy, the project is one which should be used to inspire all community based groups to think about how they could adopt to green energy and do their bit for the environment.

For more information on this project contact Gail Lees on 028 867 66980

Empowering energy use...

support from Northern Ireland Electricity

NIE is keen to encourage communities across Northern Ireland to use energy efficiently and to opt for more sustainable alternatives such as renewable energy or combined heat and power. Recognising the need to embrace renewable energy alternatives, NIE offers a broad range of support through the NIE Smart Programme to encourage communities, councils and businesses to adopt a more sustainable approach to energy use. These include Solar Smart – a grant for householders and businesses to install a Thermomax solar water heating system; Photovoltaic Top Up – NIE is topping up the grant for PV installations – available for

community groups, businesses, housing associations, public sector and charitable organisations; Help with Hydro – Communities and other organisations can apply for grants to install small scale hydro schemes; Domestic CHP – a trial to assess the benefits of this innovative technology which provides both home heating and 1kW of electricity. NIE is actively developing new grants and special offers for renewable energy so visit www.niesmart.co.uk on a regular basis. NIE may also consider supporting other renewable energy projects such as Housing Association new build developments. You can complete a register of interest form on the website.

Rural Community Environmental Capacity Building Project

In June 2005, The Rural Community Environmental Capacity Building Project at Northern Ireland Environment Link (NIEL) will officially launch 'Forging Links' a directory to help community groups improve their environment. Supported by the Big Lottery Fund, 'Forging Links' is the result of work with 19 rural community groups over a three-year period to help build their capacity to initiate local environmental action. The purpose

of 'Forging Links' is to help community groups demystify the environmental sector by providing a signposting facility to key services and resources available. By having access to this information, community groups will hopefully be able to develop solutions to local environmental problems, build essential partnerships and engender a sense of ownership in the process.

For more information contact NIEL on 028 9031 4944.

Sustaining our Natural Heritage

It's hard to imagine that the countryside which surrounds us, now dominated by green fields, was once an almost continuous blanket of natural woodland. Population expansion and the need for timber during the industrial revolution has however removed almost all of our natural woodlands. Those areas which remain are considered as valuable assets of our natural heritage. Carntoagher located outside Maghera, Co Derry is one such area. Designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) the surrounding area exhibits a wide range of natural habitats ranging from small sheltered wooded glens and rivers, through blanket bog and shrub land. The area also contains many archaeological sites dating back thousands of years.

Carntoagher Community Association was formed in 1992 to implement a broad community development strategy focusing on social, environmental, economic and cultural affairs. With the help of the EU Building Sustainability Prosperity Programme the Association is now implementing a three year Bio-diversity Strategy focusing on two valuable local ecosystems of natural wood and bog land. This Strategy outlines plans for conservation, habitat management, public access, education and volunteering with a Project Coordinator employed for a three year period to oversee its implementation. The Association hope that this project will act as a blueprint which can be replicated elsewhere allowing rural communities to realise the potential of the countryside and sustain it for the enjoyment of future generations.



For more information on this project contact Gail Lees on 028 867 66980

Rural Developments:

Looks to the future and what new developments are in the pipeline for RDC along with information on what other organisations currently have to offer rural communities.

RDC Resources

RDC have a series of resources, many of which are accessible from our website www.rdc.org.uk

- RURAL edition 1 Autumn 2004
- A Picture of Rural Peace 2004
- A Picture of Rural Change 2003
- A Picture of Rural Change 2002
- RDC Strategy 2001 - 2006
- RDC Annual Reports
- Services in Rural NI 2003

RDC Workbooks:

- Learning Communities
- Finance Matters
- Good Group Guide
- Participatory Village Planning: Practice Guidelines Workbook
- Developing community based environmental projects
- Developing community based culture heritage and local identity projects

RDC have also recently (since RURAL edition 1) responded to the following consultations:

- Draft Impact Assessments on the Proposals for Water Reform (DRD)
- European Commission's LIFE Proposal (DEFRA)
- Draft Strategy for Children & Young People in Northern Ireland (DFP)
- Reform of the Domestic Rating System in Northern Ireland (DFP)
- Draft Accessible Transport Strategy (DRD)
- Draft New EU Rural Development Regulation (DARD)

For more information on these or other consultations completed contact Nick Mack on 028 867 66980

Projects are online

A DATABASE featuring RDC projects which are helping rural communities across Northern Ireland is available on the RDC website – www.rdc.org.uk

For more information contact: Aileen Donnelly on 028 867 66980



Write to Reply

If you wish to respond to any of the articles in this edition or wish to contribute to further editions please contact Aileen Donnelly on 028 867 66980. Also contact Aileen for enquiries about editorial, inserts, advertising and circulation. RURAL is published bi-annually by the Northern Ireland Rural Development Council (RDC). Distribution is in excess of 120,000 copies. Designed by Hexagon: www.hexagondesign.com Photography by Michael Cooper, NITB, RDC and Project Promoters. Printed by Graham & Heslip. Paper source sustainable.

Editorial Team

Teresa Canavan Director of Programmes & Aileen Donnelly Communications Officer

With the support of the RDC Communications Forum Members: - Kirsty Burton, Ruth Dallas, Martin Delaney, Olga Gallagher, Eamon McMullan, Gail Lees, Joyce McMullan & Anne Marie Loughran.

Rural Community Week 11th – 15th April 2005

RCN is dedicating a week to talk to you about what is important to your rural community and to recognise the contribution that communities make to rural community development.

A range of consultations have been scheduled for:

Silver Birch Hotel, Omagh
Monday 11th April, 7.30pm
Hillyard House, Castlewellingan

Tuesday 12th April, 7.30pm
Portneal Lodge, Killea
Wednesday 13th April, 7.30pm
Clinton Centre, Enniskillen
Thursday 14th April, 7.30 p.m.

If you would like to attend one of RCN's discussion groups please register your interest. Please let RCN know of any discussions, events, celebrations, or meetings that are taking place within your

community during the week of 11th – 15th April by contacting Linda on 028 867 66670 or e-mail linda@ruralcommunitynetwork.org

The community consultation process is flexible therefore please avail of all opportunities for conversations even if they occur outside of the week 11th -15th April, officers will try to accommodate. If you can assist

RCN by having your own conversations a list of questions is available as a suggested framework for discussion.

The conversations will also inform the future of Rural Policy and the place of community development within policy.

Endorsed by Carnegie Rural Community Development Commission

Rural proofing update

The first Rural Proofing Annual Report was published in September 2004 and was generally well received. DARD is now working with all Departments to prepare the second report, where the aim is to show greater focus and detail on

how individual government policies have been shaped or influenced by rural considerations in the last year. It is hoped to publish this second report in June/July 2005.

For more information contact Lindsay Hodges on 028 9052 5057

One Small Step Campaign

Since the worst days of the Troubles, things have been changing rapidly. For many of us life has become better, although some have yet to reap the benefits of the process. We need to recognise that there is still some way to go on achieving a shared society. We need to work together in addressing the issues that create pain and division.

One Small Step aims to give individuals and groups the opportunity to recognise the importance of their role in peace-building; to create opportunities for

all to take action in securing a peaceful and meaningful future; to recognise the things that have got better and to celebrate and value all that is unique and special in all our cultural heritages.

The campaign strives to encourage everyone in society to play their own individual part in building a shared future for Northern Ireland.

Your voice matters.
For more information call 028 867 35717
email: info@onesmallstepcampaign.org
website: www.onesmallstepcampaign.org



'Be Aware Kids' - Farm Safety Campaign

The 'Be Aware Kids' campaign aims to make farms safer places for children to live and play. Over the past 10 years 18 children in Northern Ireland aged between 2 and 12 years died as the result of accidents on farms. Preventing these deaths is at the very heart of the awareness campaign by the Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland (HSENI). Although parents have a particular responsibility to prevent their children straying or trespassing into areas where they may be at risk, all adults working in agriculture, whether they are employers, employees, contractors or other visiting workers, must share responsibility for child safety. HSENI have already targeted primary school children, identified as the greatest risk category,



through a special poster competition in which they were asked to design a poster based on the dangers associated with farming. The winning entries were used to produce a 2005 calendar that has been distributed to children via rural primary schools in Northern Ireland to reinforce key child safety messages in the farming community. A 'Be Aware Kids' board game is currently under development and is due to be launched in May 2005.

For more information on the 'Be Aware Kids' campaign please contact the HSENI helpline on 0800 0320 121 or visit the website at www.hseni.gov.uk

The Prince's Trust Business Programme

Is it your ambition to become your own boss? Have you a good business idea that could be turned into a reality?

The Prince's Trust provides funding and support to help young people between the ages of 18 – 30 to start their own business. They can offer financial support in the form of a low interest loan (at 3%) of up to £4,000. A grant of up to £1,500 for individuals and up to £3,000 for two or more partners may be awarded in special circumstances. In addition the Trust offers advice and assistance, providing an experienced mentor for each new business. The WiredUp programme offers businesses supported by The Prince's Trust free marketing and IT advice and training.

If you would like to start a business or would like to volunteer as a business mentor with The Prince's Trust (2-3 hours commitment a month) please contact Fiona Waugh on 028 3751 5217.

For more information on The Prince's Trust visit www.princes-trust.org.uk

Rural Retailing



The Rural Retail Support Programme managed by RDC and funded by the International Fund for Ireland will re-open for application shortly.

For more information on this programme contact Malachy Gribbin or AnneMarie Loughran on 028 867 66980

Apology

In the last edition of RURAL we featured a picture of Mrs Vera Lenaghan utilising the services of a community transport vehicle (which was funded under the BSP Programme by RDC). We would like to take this opportunity to attribute this picture to Accessible Community Travel Services (ACTS) Newcastle, Co. Down and apologise for the oversight. Also Sir Ewan Cameron was noted as Chairman of the Countryside Alliance, this should have read Countryside Agency.

Welcome

RDC would like to welcome on board the following new staff: Sinead McErlain as Human Resource Officer; Diane Forshyne as Programme Officer (Vibrant Villages); Yvonne Loughrey as Programme Support (Vibrant Villages) and Malachy Gribbin Programme Officer (Retail)

and goodbye to...

We would also like to take this opportunity to bid farewell to Ruairi Maguire and Eamon Gallogly both moving on to new posts. Ruairi is taking up post with Ordnance Survey Northern Ireland and Eamon moves to the LEADER Company COLLAGE. Wishing them both every success!

We Listen

Thanks to all those who took the time to provide feedback on our first edition of RURAL. As you can imagine the production of such a newsletter, especially the first one, can be challenging and hard to get right in terms of balance between content, design and presentation. We very much welcomed the many positive comments and listened to those offering advice. We have enlarged the text and labelled the photographs proving, we hope, that we do listen!

If you have any further comments or feedback please let us know. Contact Aileen Donnelly on 028 867 66980

The Northern Ireland Rural Development Council (RDC) receives its core funding from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD)

RDC is also a delivery agent under the Rural Development Programme:

And administers funds on behalf of:



EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation



INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR IRELAND

We have flagged up the relevant Programme against the projects detailed in this edition to help you identify the source of funding.

Rural: