Alternative Service Delivery Models in Rural Areas – Final Report

A report by CCRI, Rose Regeneration and the Rural Services Network to Defra

25 November 2013

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Executive Summary

It has been a priority of the Government to give citizens, communities and local government the power and the freedom to help themselves and their own communities: to build the places that they want through coming together and solving problems. Part of developing this 'Big Society' has been to encourage community and voluntary sector organisations (CVS), and others, to develop innovative approaches to the delivery of rural services, best suited to their local needs. This report examines how these 'alternative' approaches have developed, how they operate in practice, and what the main successes and barriers are to their implementation in rural areas. Lessons from both successful and unsuccessful projects also are summarised as understanding what doesn't work is just as important as what works.

The research took place in the spring and summer of 2013 and involved policy, literature and technical reviews. A survey of local authorities and CVS groups also was conducted and 12 in-depth case studies were carried out to observe more subtle nuances of a variety of schemes.

Key Findings

Several **emerging models of service delivery** were identified as being of value. From the classification below, hybrid models can be observed and their development has been to suit local circumstances and local skills and opportunities, as well as through a 'rational choice.

Model of delivery	*Essential Characteristics*
Commissioning services externally	where local authorities engage external third parties to provide the service.
Social enterprise	businesses with social or environmental objectives develop the service, where any profits are usually reinvested in the service.
Partnership	where local authorities work with other public, private and voluntary/community sector organisations or a mix of them to provide a service.
Shared services	where local authorities work across administrative boundaries, join up departments and/or merge services with neighbouring councils to provide a service.
Co-operative councils	co-operation between authorities, communities and service users/providers that enables everyone to become active participants in the service rather than passive recipients .
Mutuals and co-operatives	The service is provided by organisations that are owned and controlled by their members, who may be employees, organisations or consumers.
Internal transformation	the redesign of services or activities currently provided in-house..
Outsourcing	subcontracting processes, services and/or whole operations to a third party organisation while retaining overall ownership and ultimate responsibility
Direct delivery by local authority, including In-sourcing	where services that have been outsourced are returned to direct provision (to join up services or be more responsive)
Private companies	The service is provided by a sole trader, company or franchise where the business successfully tenders for a contract.
Co-production	a way of designing and delivering services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between staff, people who use services, and their families, friends and neighbours.

By making use of these mechanisms, the **CVS potential to deliver** further services is identified as considerable, particularly by making use of funding innovations, working across sectors and by developing independent governance. By working in this way, alternative service deliverers have recorded particular **achievements** in the areas of increased power and autonomy to communities; improvements in community cohesion; the successful

development of bespoke targeted services and the overall achievement of a wider range of services (including cultural and environmental as well as social provision).

At the **development stage** of a service, care has to be taken to ensure that local 'lay' enthusiasm and help is not occluded by the inputs of professionals, and that the choice of appropriate service delivery mechanisms fits the needs and desires of the locality in a way that minimises risks and maximises benefits. At the development stage, too, there is a perception that publicity is important to secure community commitment.

The most important **characteristics of success** in bringing a service into being through the VCS (across a wide range of the services investigated) were felt to be:

- Capacity, leadership and governance arrangements.
- Assets that are fit for purpose
- Adequate financial, business and needs planning
- Involvement with the Council

- Good communication

- Robust organisational models
- User and community involvement

Once a service is up and running the **economic benefits** that are felt to derive from the new or newly constituted service are felt to relate to: cost efficiency (through the considered use of resources and 'shopping around); accountability (being clear and transparent about the nature of income and expenditure and its purpose); targeting for local needs and economies of scale, again, joint provision is important here. Stakeholders of all types also have perceived a broader range of benefits from new service provision (for example, the multiple use of common resources) and general improvements in the propensity for the community to 'join in'.

In terms of **lessons to be learnt**, from both the processes and outcomes of alternative service delivery, there are a number of characteristics associated with the development of **a successful partnership**.

- Recognising that cutting services is not the only response to cuts in funding.
- Putting needs and choices above service delivery per se.
- Working together in partnership through leadership, time, investment and support.
- Access to local expertise.
- Ensuring sustainability beyond initial funding.
- Putting community benefit before asset acquisition.

Putting these in place effectively does benefit from **different kinds of support**. **Technical and experiential support** (often from consultants) was found to be most valued in the following areas.

- mapping local assets
- understanding community needs
- understanding limited resources
- identifying the right champions
- accessing infrastructure support.
- Using broadband effectively

- developing local assets
- Neighbourhood Planning
- stimulating creative ideas
- being transparent
- learning processes

Support through the **intervention of the local authority** was considered to be valuable but it was felt that the most useful role of the authority was acting as a broker rather than a direct deliverer of services. Their most valuable contributions were felt to be in the following areas:

- feasibility studies on a transfer of services;
- creating a robust business cases for implementation;
- ensuring all key legal criteria are met;
- ensuring effective and efficient management;
- developing built-in monitoring and evaluation procedures;
- ensuring that key stakeholders are engaged in the process.

Support also was considered useful from *Government.* Here, assisting with asset transfer and speeding up bureaucratic processes were considered particularly useful in the development of individual services. More general measures in support of community empowerment were widely understood and appreciated.

The ***barriers to innovation*** on the part of the voluntary and community sector in the delivery of alternative rural services covered the following.

- Inflexible procurement and commissioning processes
- Finance – finding the right mix of funding.
- The gap between what people say and what people do
- A need to provide services that people want to use.
- Reluctance to partnership working.
- Lack of community skills

- Change management
- Risk aversion
- Time pressures
- Service fragmentation.
- Insignificance of rural issues
- Lack of local assets

Blurring of boundaries between public, private and/or voluntary/community sectors.

The study suggests that the 'Big Society' approach, to give communities and authorities the wherewithal to tailor their services to local circumstances through a broad base of action, does offer a number of benefits, particularly through the use of common local assets by a number of services co-terminously. Good examples of these are provided in the report (for example, sustaining the pub, shop, library, social care, health, broadband and transport). Motivated individuals and personal commitment are critical to these developments and can be part of a virtuous circle: initial motivations can be infectious.

1. Introduction

Alongside Government and Local Authority service provision, the Community and Voluntary sector has provided services to positive effect both independently of strategic service providers, but also increasingly in partnership. Since The Compact[1] was drawn up, new funding initiatives to encourage innovation, and build skills and infrastructure in the sector have developed - recognising it as an important part of the nation's economy and social fabric. The emphasis in public policy has evolved towards creating a more supportive environment which enables 'better commissioning of third sector organisations and more ready adoption of third sector innovation where appropriate'. Delivering services through a "Big Society" model such as Community Ownership, Co-operatives or Mutualisation has become a more embedded part of the service delivery landscape. Recent reports (Aitkin et al, 2011, Bearing Foundation, 2012, Local Government Association, 2012 suggest that this area has considerable potential to develop further and that the public benefits derived from these alternative models could be significant. It is therefore helpful to identify how this trend might work in rural communities so that lessons can be shared and applied widely.

In pursuit of this **purpose**, The Countryside and Community Research Institute at the University of Gloucestershire, working with the Rural Services Network and Rose Regeneration, has been commissioned by Defra to research alternative service delivery in rural areas, with a particular focus on approaches involving the civil society (i.e. voluntary and community) sectors (VCS). The project has had three **objectives**.

- *To provide updated evidence demonstrating "Big Society" alternative approaches to public service delivery in rural areas, building upon the report produced by Rural Innovation Collaboration and Innovation in Rural Service Delivery.*
- *To identify operational conditions for alternative delivery models to deliver successfully in rural areas and identify the barriers which prevent further expansion of such service delivery models.*
- *Share learning from existing examples of alternative service delivery models both successful and unsuccessful.*

The interim report (available separately) developed the evidence base in objective one. This final report addresses the second two objectives in examining operational considerations for successful delivery and barriers to further expansion. It provides a series of detailed case studies (of varying degrees of success) from which lessons can be learnt. The **key findings** from this work are to be found in the executive summary above.

The report is **structured** in the following way. Firstly we outline of the methodology used in the study. We then present key findings in the 12 areas required in the tender for the research. It is these 12 areas that define the structure of the executive summary above and can be read in the contents page. From here, 13 case studies of different types of alternative service models at work in practice are presented as the main evidence base for identifying successes and barriers and as learning tools in this area. Finally conclusions are drawn. Three appendices provide further detail of methods and sources.

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[1] http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/The%20Compact.pdf

2. Research methods

This section describes what research methods were used in the study, why they were chosen and what they entailed. Methods used in pursuit of the first objective, assembling evidence, building on the report produced by Rural Innovation Collaboration and Innovation in Rural Service Delivery, entailed souring **secondary evidence from the literature and web-based sources**. This was done in three areas: policy, 'academic' perspectives and practice. The review took particular care to focus on **ASD** rather than **traditional** forms of service delivery (i.e. those largely provided by the local state). This method was chosen as an effective and time-efficient means of sourcing the range of information available about ASD from public sources.

To collect more targeted information about ASD a primary data '**call for evidence'** was conducted. This was structured around the findings of the literature and web-based reviews to pursue information gaps and issues of interest. This was felt to be necessary because developments in ASD are quickly changing and it would provide up to date information about t elates developments. It would also plug earlier gaps form the literature and web-based reviews. The questionnaire was sent to nearly 2000 selected rural local authority staff and Parish contacts covering an estimated 3000 parishes. Some 200 responses were received to an on-line questionnaire verifying and refining the review findings. Results of this call were analysed in different groupings (for example by region) and it provided a baseline for case study selection. The reviews and call for evidence in pursuit of the first objective were collectively termed the Rapid Evidence Appraisal (REA).

The second and third objectives were concerned to identify operational conditions and barriers to the successful operation of ASD and to provide learning experiences of both successful and unsuccessful examples of ASD in practice. A **case study method** was adopted here as this would allow detailed information to be collected about live cases. Interviews with active stakeholders in each of the case studies would allow a dialogue to develop about the process of ASD development and would allow specific questioning about difficulties and barriers as well as successes.

Cases studies were drawn from those who agreed to be used for this purpose from the call for evidence responses. Selection iterated to achieve a range of different organisational structures, of different service areas, different geographical areas and different rural classifications. In practice, our **definition of rural** for this purpose was anything operating within a Rural 50 or Rural 80 local authority. A final list of 12 case studies was agreed with Defra (listed in the contents to this report).

Semi **structured face to face interviews** were held with senior case study representatives in April and May 2013, covering the following themes, although interesting additional issues (such as financial arrangements, access to particular infraction networks) were explored where relevant.

- Nature of the service.
- Nature of the study area.
- Nature of the delivery (mechanism, implementation, stage of development, future plans).
- Nature and extent of expertise.
- History (genesis, motivation, those involved).
- Trends in use of the service.
- Consequences of the scheme.
- Successes, weaknesses and barriers.

The opinions of service users and other key stakeholders also were actively sought within the case study area, and each was written up in a common format 9see section 3 below). A final research method involved *triangulation*. Results of all of the foregoing methods were discussed at three rural-focused events (RCAN Fieldworkers Conference - Aston University 12 June 2013, the Rushcliffe District Council (Nottinghamshire) Parish Council Summit 25 June 2013 and the RSN seminar – "Planning and Localism" Shrewsbury 16 July 2013). The results of a matrix that was used in tis triangulation are at Appendix A.

These methods collectively are considered robust in respect of the evidence collected. The chief *limitations* relate to the call for evidence. This was self-selecting in that the research team was dependent on returns from those who chose to respond. This tended to underplay information about unsuccessful ASD projects as it might be suspected that unsuccessful projects were less keen to respond than successful ones. In addition unsuccessful projects, once the cease to exist are difficult to identify. Because the case studies were drawn from the reservoir of the call for evidence, these might also be supposed to be drawn form more successful projects. Nevertheless barriers and limitations were able to be ascertained.

3. Findings

The twelve research aims of this project form the structure of this section and each one is considered individually. Each section firstly presents findings that have come from our review work and secondly, from the case study evidence. The case studies illustrate how each of these issues plays out in practice.

3.1 Emerging models of service delivery

The review work uncovered eleven kinds of service delivery model that could be separately identified. These are described fully below as they are a cornerstone to the development of alternative delivery models. In practice, these models often become hybridised and adapted to individual circumstances: there are many variations of them. Because of this, there is no research evidence to suggest that any of these is better than another. Local circumstances (local expertise, specific type of service, nature of service being replaced of taken over) tend to determine, ultimately, which works best. Different models have worked well in different rural areas.

> A key finding from the research evidence, is that the models are likely to work equally well in urban as rural areas, depending on local circumstances

> Many of the models considered below are not 'new' (for example, social enterprises in England can be traced back to the 1970s). What is changing is their application to service delivery: the models are being used in different ways.

The specific examples cited in the literature can be referenced in more detail in the literature evidence base at Appendix B.

- *Commissioning services externally* occurs where the designers and funders are not necessarily the providers of services but were historically, or the service could have been provided in-house. Commonly local authorities commission private sector, or voluntary and community groups to provide services and this is increasingly done collectively through both councils and providers working in partnership. Project examples in the literature review include: "Pillars of the Community: the transfer of local authority heritage assets"[2]; "Involving older people in service commissioning: more power to their elbow?"[3], and local solutions for future local library services[4].

- *Social enterprises* are businesses operating on a for-profit or not-for-profit basis. They trade for a social or environmental purpose but have clear rules about what they do with their trading surpluses (for example, serving customers of users rather than shareholders) and generate their income by selling goods and services rather than relying upon grants to stay afloat. Project examples in the literature review include: Hackney Community Transport[5], North Country Leisure[6].

- *Partnership* (joint ventures, strategic partnerships) are where local authorities partner with other public, private and voluntary/community sector organisations or a mix of these sectors. They are much broader than public-private partnerships (PPP) or private finance initiatives (PFI) which focus upon capital intensive activity, because they have functions ranging from the transfer of back office responsibilities to specific

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[2] English Heritage (2011)
[3] (Wistow, G. et al, (2011)
[4] Local Government Association (2012).
[5] (The CTA State of the Sector Report for England – Community Transport Association 2012
[6] Impact on Reducing Rural Isolation – Leisure Futures Limited 2012

services. Project examples contained in the literature review include: Vale of White Horse & South Oxfordshire Councils' transforming governance.

- ***Shared services*** arise where local authorities work across administrative boundaries, join up departments and/or merge services with neighbouring councils. Project examples contained in the literature review include work within: Chorley and Worcester Councils.

- ***Co-operative councils*** have developed where councils have incorporating a co-operative ethos into their relationships with staff, communities, service users and providers. Presented as an alternative to traditional notions of outsourcing and as an extension of the Big Society focus on voluntarism; this approach establishes a way of working that enables residents/service users to become active participants rather than passive recipients. Examples contained in the review include: Brixton Re-Use Centre and Lambeth Resource Centre.

- ***Mutuals and co-operatives*** are organisations that are owned and controlled by their members. These may be employees, organisations or consumers. They are commonly established to meet shared needs and run on a democratic basis, These organisations may have left the public sector (a process called 'spinning out') but continue to deliver public services. Project examples contained in the review include: Sunderland Music Co-operative and Co-operative Trust Schools.

- ***Internal transformation*** involves the redesign of services or activities currently provided within an authority. Project examples include: charging for discretionary activities and trading activities. Examples contained in the literature review include Shropshire and Essex County Councils.

- ***Outsourcing*** is where services and/or whole operations are subcontracted to a third party but the overall ownership and ultimate responsibility remain with the authority. Examples contained in the literature review including leisure facilities and library services.

- ***Direct delivery by local authority, including In-sourcing*** is where services that have been outsourced are returned to direct authority provision to respond to changing public policy, to join up services at a neighbourhood level and/or have the flexibility to shift resources to respond to local need. Project examples contained in the review include: Cumbria (human resources, accounts, highways and economic development), Fife (building services), Hillingdon (housing management), North Tyneside (recycling), Redcar & Cleveland (customer service), Rotherham (grounds maintenance) and Thurrock (waste collection).

- ***Private companies*** can be sole traders, companies or franchises where the business successfully tenders for a contract/s. Project examples contained in the literature review include: Serco reoffending reduction project in Hull.

- ***Co-production*** is a way of designing and delivering services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between staff, people who use services, and their families, friends and neighbours. It can take place at many levels: between two people, at the level of a service, or to transform how organisations are run and what services are commissioned. Project examples contained in the literature review include: Goodwin Development Trust.

Commentary

In choosing which model to adopt, providers are most strongly influenced by the type of service to be offered and, often, the level of resource available. In many examples, a key driver for changing the service delivery approach is the need to reduce costs. There is little evidence to suggest that original service providers consider alternative delivery model options systematically. Rather, new approaches are influenced by the specific circumstances of the service. There is limited intelligence to enable a more detailed consideration of the alternative service delivery options and their circumstances.

Because of the subtle differences between these various types of alternative models listed above, there can be confusion. If better understanding of the use and application of alternative models is to be developed then there is a need for the structured "sharing of knowledge and best practice" to support all those involved in the process.

CASE STUDY EVIDENCE

Our case studies cover a number of legal structures: a Community Interest Company (CIC), an Industrial and Provident Society, a Charity, a Registered Social Landlord (RSL) and a private company. We have referenced the learning from the case studies for this section against the five guiding principles of the Open Public Services White Paper. Whilst this White Paper is concerned with public services, the scope of this study goes beyond that, these guiding principles nevertheless provide a useful benchmark against which to measure Alternative Service delivery.

1. *Choice for users* is evident in a number of case studies were local as well as more distant services are made available. More simply, some case studies simply created a new service or stopped an existing one from closing.

2. *Decentralisation/local decision-making* took place in a number of case studies (e.g. Jubilee Park) with positive results. In other cases decentralisation feels rather imposed (e.g. Horningsea where the community is looking for solutions where a public service is being cut).

3. *A diversity of providers* can be seen in the Suffolk Links (third sector transport providers) and Malbank Coaches (commercial transport provider). Community and volunteer-based organisations can be found in most case studies, usually delivering new services, rather than previously public sector-run/ funded services.

4. *Fair access to services* was an underlying theme of nearly all of the case studies, although 'fairness' didn't increase where a service was simply being replaced. What is or is not fair was seen to be an issue in some of the case studies (Malbank coaches).

5. *Accountability/user quality and taxpayer value for money* also were evident. Jubilee Park and Ennerdale Hub improved quality and a number appeared to offer value for money (Horningsea. Coffee Caravan, Okehampton Work Group), although there was not always anything to compare them with. The use of volunteers helps to reduce running costs and promote value for money.

Of all of these, accountability and diversity were most strongly evident as a theme. Some principles were not fully recognised because the new service provision was taking place as a

result of public service cuts, and some services did not seem to fit with these principles at all. In a number of cases communities have created new services simply to address unmet needs (Coffee Caravan, the Project Group). In this context, most of the case studies were reactive rather than pro-active i.e. 'how can we meet this need?' rather than 'wouldn't it be good to improve this service by making it more locally-run?'

Our Call for Evidence clearly showed rural communities are already actively and continue to take responsibility for delivering services themselves. They seem to have the capacity when the service is important enough to them. But there was less evidence of services being transferred as a deliberate process from public service providers to communities. There was also little evidence of specific rural services being transferred from the public sector to the community, with the possible exception of libraries.

3.2 Community and Voluntary Sector potential to deliver

New Alternative Service Delivery provides both opportunities and challenges for the Community and Voluntary Sector as it takes on new provision from the state. The independence of the Community and Voluntary Sector has to be asserted even when the boundaries between public, private and voluntary provision become blurred, particularly in joint provision[7]. Certainly, our literature review suggests that staff in the Community and Voluntary Sector have concerns with work pressures, responsibilities and liabilities and levels of resourcing, but these issues seem less of a concern for other stakeholders such as trustees, volunteers and service users[8]. One approach to managing these challenges which was suggested in related literature, is to develop 'networks' with common interests. These can then share interests, information and expertise particularly around funding, engagement with users, representation and visibility[9].

As well as networks, Town and Parish Councils also offer much potential for delivery because such councils are considered to be tried and tested models for neighbourhood level action. Village Agents are cited as a good example of such council inspired action[10]. Parish potential includes raising finance (through local precepts) and a range of statutory functions as well as many new, recently developed community rights as developed through the Localism Act. Our case study interviews, however, showed that this level of government might be a little conservative and cautious in respect of service innovation, particularly in relation to financial risk. Our survey showed that a growing number of Community and Voluntary Sector groups are involved in Alternative Service Delivery.

CASE STUDY EVIDENCE

This Community and Voluntary Sector potential was seen to be high in the case studies particularly where voluntary effort brought additional capacity. In the Wiltshire libraries, for example, (an Rural Services Network Online case study) community volunteers were able to extend opening hours. But there are limits to Community and Voluntary Sector involvement too – volunteers can be hard to recruit, can lack appropriate skills or can be unreliable. Our triangulation exercises identified that the availability of willing volunteers is one of the most crucial elements of the development of a successful Alternative Service Delivery approach. There is a vulnerability, however, in not being able to find such people or in them withdrawing their interest through 'volunteer fatigue'.

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[7] The Baring Foundation, 2012

[8] Macmillan, 2010

[9] Wallace & Miller, 2012

[10] NALC, 2012

The case studies also are informative in respect of capacity gains that result from flexible models of provision. Having choices about the way services are delivered can attract people to volunteering who might be put off by more traditional bureaucratic and regulatory means of provision.

3.3 Achievements so far

Our Call for Evidence identified a range of significant benefits resulting from the implementation of Alternative Service Delivery. Some 96% of respondents claimed there were social benefits arising from the service, 77% claimed some economic benefit and 61% claimed environmental benefits. The two most commonly cited overall benefits compared to more traditional delivery were that the Alternative Service Delivery "meets the specific needs of local people" and "offers a more flexible approach to service delivery". Social benefits included tackling social isolation/ loneliness, improved health and wellbeing, sense of belonging to community and physical access to services. Economic benefits related most commonly to improved service viability through reduced costs of provision, and to the provision of services that are of financial benefit to vulnerable people. Some 51% of replies indicated that they felt they offered better outcomes at no greater cost and 64% said they delivered the service at less cost, compared to a traditional model. Reducing the need to travel/number of vehicle journeys was the most frequently referred to environmental benefit.

More generally our reflections from the literature are:

- New models give much more power and autonomy to communities themselves, but they may not be fully prepared to take on this power, either in terms of skills or willingness.

- Alternative Service Delivery has been observed to improve *community cohesion* through active participation as well as personal well-being in a number of cases.

- New models avoid 'one size fits all' services. Better targeting towards specific needs and desires can be achieved. This leads to a more diverse range of projects, explicitly embracing *environmental* projects, for example community woodland.

- Under these models, *sustainability issues* also can be addressed directly, for example, through community energy projects and local food growing.

- *Cultural services* (for example heritage projects) also have been seen to develop under these models.

- The development of models at the community level enables greater range and linking of benefits as they are not detracted by department-led approaches within local government in the same way that conventional service providers are. The evolution of the Ennerdale Hub from an initial approach to save the local pub to a new all-encompassing community resource centre is a good example of this.

- More generally the multiple use of common resources (physical and skills based) makes for their more efficient deployment.

- The general enhancement of social capital and greater use of local assets commonly leads to their application on other spheres of life, beyond service provision

CASE STUDY EVIDENCE

The case studies support the Call for Evidence but with the caveat that detailed financial data were often unavailable, and the customer/user perspectives gained may have been biased towards those satisfied with the Alternative Service Delivery (as those that were not were not inaccessible to us). The personal benefit to volunteers/ staff (self-fulfilment, increased confidence etc.) may merit greater emphasis as appeared to be high in some case studies. We commonly discerned an intangible 'something extra' amongst stakeholders, beyond filling time/earning a wage. "Wishing Well" is one example where this impression came over very strongly.

The tailoring of services to local needs is also evident in many of the case studies - not just doing the same thing at less cost than the traditional provider but doing it differently and (according to some), better .Jubilee Park and Project Group are two case studies in which these views were expressed.

3.4 Economic benefits

Our literature and practice reviews, whilst comprehensive, uncovered very few studies that have attempted cost-benefit analyses of non-public services delivery, to the extent that specific monetary values can be identified. It was beyond the scope of this study, too, to undertake such work through primary data collection. Some research commissioned by the CBI[11] reports that in 20 discrete service areas covering local government services, healthcare support services, education, offender management and police support; average cost savings of at least 11%, or £2 billion, could be made by opening up these service areas to competition from independent providers. But this is derived from extrapolation rather than observed data and relates to all services rather than specifically rural ones.

The Open Public Services White Paper does make it clear, however, that there is a higher cost of providing services in remote areas. The Countryside Alliance in its Rural Manifesto of 2009, for example, estimates that people living in rural areas travel around 10,000 miles per year to access 'essential services' – 43% more than residents of towns. In recognising this, the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Rural Services of 2010, recommends that funds be allocated on a 'cost-based approach' rather than according to 'need' to take account of different types of area, with top-ups to adjustment for need and other priorities. Away from this national context, applying Social Return on Investment (SROI) to capture non-financial value, revealed how one pub in Sutton generated £59,200 worth of social value for its surrounding community[12] .

In the Call for Evidence, one survey respondent, *Hackney Community Transport*, a social enterprise established in 1982 to provide low cost minibuses for local community groups, offered some financial and employment data. . In 2011/12, Hackney Community Transport had 700 employees, 12 depots spread across London, Yorkshire, Humberside, the South West and Channel Islands, a fleet of 370+ vehicles and a turnover of £28.6 million.

In terms of principles deriving from the literature reviews and Call for Evidence we note the following.

- New Alternative Service Delivery models extend the scope of service provision beyond 'standard' services to those that can be prioritised by individual local communities themselves. This can be cost effective as the service is bespoke and targeted and because of this it is likely to meet needs directly and not provide

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[11] Oxford Economics (2012)
[12] Reynolds, 2011

extraneous services. This is not to say that such approaches are necessarily the *most* cost effective as, because of their bespoke nature, they do not offer the economies of scale that can be achieved through larger scale public service provision which has the ability to pull resources and shared services into a single programme.

- Competitively tendered services can be more cost effective than publicly provided ones that are not tendered for, particularly if the lowest cost tenders are selected.

- Local and more bespoke services can achieve economies of scale where they are co-located in an integrated way (such as in the Ennerdale Hub). These are economies of scale brought about by co-locating a number of different services within one place and one delivery structure.

CASE STUDY EVIDENCE

There is limited evidence in the case studies to substantiate financial benefits. Some grant making authorities seem to accept the benefits of certain schemes without a detailed evidence paper-trail (e.g. coffee caravan, the Project Group), yet other Alternative Service Delivery approaches s that, logically, seem bound to save statutory bodies money (e.g. Wishing Well, Okehampton Work Club) struggle for funding. This may well be because they are seeking to maintain a style of service provision which has been withdrawn or rationalised by an established service provider, rather than, as in the case of the examples above, filling a niche service area which has not been addressed previously.

3.5 Stakeholder perceptions

Stakeholders are defined as "people or groups who are directly or indirectly affected by a project, as well as those who may have interests in a project and/or the ability to influence its outcome, either positively or negatively"[13] . There is an acknowledgement that perhaps insufficient attention has been given to the voices and concerns of stakeholders in Alternative Service Delivery[14], and that (in practice) there is a risk of the further empowering of professionals which may lead them to always take the lead in deciding what is best for the communities[15].

Here, the role of stakeholders in assessing the likely risks and benefits of alternative models is important[16]. Activities that stakeholders can 'do' to support the chosen delivery mechanism include: promoting the benefits of the project through their own networks and associations; securing in-kind support for publicity/use of venues, ensuring attendance at public meetings/events and providing positive input to discussions with other stakeholders who are less supportive of the project[17]. Much of the information covers the impact and support needs of the voluntary and community sector rather than stakeholder perceptions *per se*.

CASE STUDY EVIDENCE

Stakeholders had positive views about the case studies, possibly reflecting the relative difficulty in identifying those who had had negative experiences of otherwise successful projects. For example anyone who felt the Alternative Service Delivery no longer had a relevance to them would probably have stopped being involved with it, becoming invisible to

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[13] A guide to long-term community ownership and development of land and buildings, DTA, 2010, page 7
[14] Macmillan, 2010
[15] House of Commons Communities & Local Government Committee, 2013
[16] Coperstake & Thompson, 2010
[17] DTA, 2010

the research team. In several cases stakeholders are effusive about the Alternative Service Delivery (Coffee Caravan and Wishing Well). Some do not like change, when Alternative Service Delivery initially replaces a traditional services (demand responsive transport in Suffolk), but they appear quickly to like/prefer the replacement. Stakeholders seem to find the Alternative Service Delivery services more joined-up, more tailored to their needs and (often) more accessible. In certain instances stakeholders prefer to deal with small, non-statutory providers where they know the people running them, than they do with "faceless, bureaucratic" statutory providers. This may be (at least partly) an issue of scale of the providing organisation rather than its sector.

We have not tested however, what happens when something goes wrong in an Alternative Service Delivery service. With public services, users generally have someone to turn to and a process to apply. The question of accountability once a service is transferred to an Alternative Service Delivery approach, or if it arises organically to fill a void, is interesting and a gap in the current evidence available, It should be noted, however, that standard processes of governance do apply to Alternative Service Delivery and community sector operators.

3.6 Community and voluntary sector successes

Characteristics of the most effective Alternative Service Delivery models regularly referenced centre on the following:

- User and community involvement.
- Adequate financial, business and needs planning.
- Having an organisational model that is recognised in procurement and commissioning.
- Ensuring assets are fit for purpose.
- Communication and constructive approach on the part of all bodies – including openness to service user involvement and support for change.
- Capacity and leadership – governance arrangements.

Community and Voluntary sector organisations have delivered all kinds of projects – from libraries and broadband, to pubs and shops, and transport and woodland. We review some key examples here.

- **Libraries**: there are differences between people's expressed desires to retain libraries and the extent to which they have been observed to use them. In the age of the Kindle, iPad and smartphone there are issues for both the public and policymakers about the use and function of libraries. This issue has to be clarified (possibly even on a case by case basis) before increased contributions from the private or voluntary sector are likely to be forthcoming[18].

- **Transport and high speed broadband** are both seen as increasing the connections between people and communities and lying at the heart of the Big Society approach, but both are challenging to deliver within and between rural communities[19]. Regarding broadband, the literature signposts community enterprise solutions that are being planned and delivered but also signals complexity in their delivery and how the community sector requires access to technical and other guidance to deliver[20]. A rise in fuel costs, declining access to public transport and a need to reduce social

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[18] Macdonald, 2012
[19] Moor & Leach, 2011
[20] Heery & White, 2013

isolation provide the main impetus for community transport schemes in rural areas[21] . Ealing Community Transport (ECT), originally established in 1979 to provide transport for older and disabled people, has developed into a social enterprise and Community Transport organisation delivering community transport solutions from 4 depots across England and employing 150 staff, is seen as a successful project[22].

- **The importance of co-location, particularly the use of community pubs, shops and post offices to host the delivery of public services** is particularly important in rural areas. Often this is framed against a backdrop of closure (an average of 13 rural pubs closes each week). There is significant support available to help communities take over the running of a local community facility (e.g. Pub is The Hub scheme, Plunkett Foundation's community shop support, Big Lottery Fund and ACRE Village SOS)[23]. Community shops can succeed where commercial ventures do not because the community has a vested social and economic interest, staff costs can be reduced by volunteering, the shop can co-locate in a community building and can tap into rate relief[24].

- **Insourcing**- one of the documents identified in the literature review examined decisions to bring services back in-house, the outcomes that have been achieved and the lessons that have been learned from the 'insourcing process'. However, the case studies focus upon services formerly contracted out to large external private sector providers (e.g. payroll, human resources, building services, call centres, housing etc.) rather than individual rural provision[25].

- **Mutuals** - A relatively new strand in the literature concerns the option of switching public service delivery from 'in house' services to autonomous mutual organisations[26].

Compared to schemes reported to be operating but experiencing difficulties, those Community and Voluntary Sector schemes reported as successful in the Call for Evidence were more likely to have resulted from a Council or Public sector initiative and more likely to have received some Council funding, than not.. They were also less likely to have operated for more than three years, less likely to have mixed paid and volunteer staffing arrangements and less likely to be community interest companies or charities. However any tentative conclusions need to be treated with caution given the fairly small number of cases analysed and potential differences in other characteristics such as the nature and complexity of the service being provided. Moreover, whilst some factors may occur more frequently in successful schemes those factors are not necessarily causal.

Nonetheless, schemes resulting from a Council or other public sector initiative do seem to have fewer funding issues and a greater likelihood of operating successfully. However, a greater proportion of those schemes are comparatively new so it is uncertain how they will fare in the longer term. The laissez faire nature of Alternative Service Delivery means that there can be a profusion of groups offering or seeking to develop services in some areas, and a dearth in others. It also can lead to 'rivalry' in some circumstances. This might be determined by factors such as deprivation, class and presence of the educated early retired. Equity issues frequently are raised in Community and Voluntary Sector provision. The more able and articulate are likely to be able to secure provision more effectively than others

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[21] Leisure Futures Limited, 2011

[22] Angier & Affleck, 2010

[23] Muir, 2012; Plunkett Foundation, 2012

[24] Plunkett Foundation, 2012

[25] Association for Public Service Excellence, 2011

[26] Angier & Affleck, 2010

A strand of the literature considers how key changes to the socio-economic character of rural settlements are impacting on their propensity to embrace Alternative Service Delivery. Many rural settlements are making the transition from being communities with local employment to dormitory villages or second home locations. This may influence the type and mode of delivery of projects that will develop as well as the Community and Voluntary Sector capacity to deliver them.

CASE STUDY EVIDENCE

The least formal Alternative Service Delivery in terms of their organisational set up often can be perceived to be the most successful as they are considered the most adaptive to local needs. This does not mean that the most successful projects are necessarily most important in terms of meeting key service needs. For example, demand-responsive transport services are vital in many rural areas, but also need to be formally organised to operate effectively. In general in the case studies, former public services tend to be more formalised than new local services, because of their organisational heritage.

The specific legal status of Alternative Service Delivery arrangements appears to be a secondary issue in respect of overall success. The most important factor is that the model is used that is best suited to local circumstances.

3.7 What makes a successful partnership?

In reviewing the literature we determined local partnerships to be organisations that have come together (formally or informally) to take on responsibility for alternative service delivery. The literature suggests that the most successful local partnerships have the following characteristics or behaviours.

- Thinking creatively in the face of budget reductions[27].
- Considering the needs, experiences and choices of local people holistically rather than just how an individual service might be delivered effectively[28].
- Working together creatively with clear leadership, time and support[29].
- Having access to expertise that is efficient and locally appropriate – including legal, employment, tax support[30].
- Ensuring sustainability, where activity continues after funding is allocated/spent; making decisions between short term necessity and long term planning[31]
- Having goals of enhancing community benefit rather than asset acquisition and income maximization[32].

Few of the responses to the Call for Evidence defined themselves as "partnerships" or "joint initiatives" but it is evident from the responses received that many projects discussed involve a high degree of collaboration/ co-operation between different groups and organisations.

CASE STUDY EVIDENCE

Good examples of comprehensive partnership working include the Parish Council and Industrial and Provident Society set up to run the Fox and Hounds in Ennerdale, where

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[27] LGA & English Heritage, 2012
[28] Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2011
[29] New Economics Foundation, 2012
[30] Local Government Association & English Heritage, 2012
[31] Impact on reducing rural isolation, Leisure Futures Ltd, 2011
[32] Community organisations controlling assets: a better understanding, Aiken *et al*, 2011

each organisation has a clear sense of its operational boundaries and works with the other to maximise the overall impact of the pub as a facility for the community. The Hopes in Keswick provided evidence of very good support and capacity building for the churches group which began the process of becoming a formal social registered landlord by helping them through the HCA registration process and providing on-going service support in terms of managing the properties once constructed. Whilst Jubilee Park in East Lindsey represents a formal transfer of an asset rather than an on-going formal partnership the District Council continues to provide positive support and encouragement to the Parish Council to underpin its operation.

Overall in terms of projects, whether this partnership component of Alternative Service Delivery is a strength or a weakness may be debateable. What happens when the partners' priorities diverge? For example the Wishing Well Project originally worked closely with the Council and Primary Care Trust both of whom subsequently withdrew funding putting it under considerable financial pressure.

3.8 The support that makes successful delivery

To ensure successful service delivery the extant literature suggests the importance of the following:

- Mapping assets in a given local area, identifying land and buildings valued by communities.
- Building a shared understanding of the community's needs, ambitions and capacities.
- Reducing wasteful conflict by increasing transparency and appreciating the pressures that different organisations may face to reduce operational costs/generate finance.
- Considering together how assets might be developed in a way that could be sustainable in either public, private or community hands.
- Stimulating creative ideas for the co-location of services, and the transformation of services, based on community enterprise.
- Assembling he right individuals to lead and champion the process[33].
- Using voluntary and community sector infrastructure support organisations such as the RCAN network and Community and Voluntary Sector.

Local authorities are seen to play an important role in opening up a diverse market of providers offering personal and flexible support through their commissioning, capacity building, signposting and market intelligence activities[34] . It is recommended at the outset that local authorities consider: (i) the impact of proposed changes on different communities and priority needs and ensure that statutory duties will continue to be met, (ii) a corporate approach to communication and consultation with users, the wider community and other stakeholders; (iii) the steps taken to ensure that any process of consultation has been designed to withstand any potential legal challenge to the decision making process[35].

In some literature the "Big Society" is seen as presenting an opportunity for the voluntary sector to refocus efforts on community engagement. In this context it is recommended that voluntary organisations build their resilience, promote innovation and entrepreneurialism and improve their own effectiveness[36]. At a community level, one document[37] identified an 'assets spectrum' with three bands: stewards (small, volunteer run groups), community

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[33] LGA & Locality, 2012

[34] New Economics Foundation, 2012

[35] Local Government Association, 2012

[36] Reynolds, 2011

[37] Aiken *et al*, 2011

developers (medium sized organisations) and entrepreneurs, that can be usefully used in determining the most appropriate support for individual projects.

Overall, Alternative Service Delivery models are considered a viable long-term solution rather than an easy, quick-win option to turnaround performance and reduce costs. Central government could do more to enable local government to overcome the hurdles and incentivise take-up where appropriate[38]. In this context, the literature tends to frame support according to project stage rather than by organisational type (i.e., feasibility, finance, business planning, design and construction and legal issues). The literature also references 'place based approaches that reflect the whole of people's lives and deliver value for money through co-ordinating support and resources; as well as assigning a high priority to involving people who use and support services in shaping them and ensuring local buy-in.

In the Call for Evidence noticeably few, only 12%, of organisations, reported taking paid-for advice, although almost 80% took advice of some kind. Councils and other public sector organisations were identified as the source of advice in 62% of responses. Significant outside finance was provided to 62% of the organisations that responded to the Call for Evidence. Unitary/County/ District Councils were identified as funders by 56% of respondents and Town/ Parish Councils by 34%. Some 54% also said they received outside finance towards operational funding. This means that fewer than half are operating in a manner that is financially self-financing.

Our analysis of the evidence suggests some very "current" themes in the development and support of capacity for rural Alternative Service Delivery:

- General expertise is developing in the area of Neighbourhood Planning, which can embrace implementation strategies.
- There is well established support in the areas of village appraisals, parish planning, village design statements and the like from individual communities but also from Rural Community Councils.
- A number of Alternative Service Delivery models incorporate processes of *learning* as well as provision, particularly when voluntary effort is involved in the delivery of services.
- The development of broadband into rural areas can greatly assist in the delivery of Alternative Service Delivery models, and indeed in places, comprises the service itself.

CASE STUDY EVIDENCE

Case studies identified that finding the right advice was not straightforward. They further established that the quality of the advice provided was highly variable. The Ennerdale Hub had several "false starts" in identifying the best advice. "The Hopes" at Keswick went through a range of support mechanisms before getting to the most appropriate support for what they wanted to achieve. Jubilee Park also had some challenges accessing the quality of third party advice they initially hoped for. Whilst there is often a mismatch between the support offered to Alternative Service Delivery projects and their aspirations this suggests a broader issue concerning diagnosing the most appropriate response to the "event" which in many cases drives the decision to develop an Alternative Service Delivery approach. The lack of a coherent set of case studies for a range of Alternative Service Delivery circumstances and often the emotive response to the threat of service closure mean that it can often take a little time for those organically stimulated into action in a community to identify the best means of managing the challenges they face.

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[38] PA Consulting, 2012

3.9 The best Local Authority interventions

In the literature review, local authorities are presented as brokers and commissioners of services rather than direct deliverers. In this role, public organisations are required to look at those services which need to be delivered and who is best placed to provide these services[39]. Planning and implementation stages particularly important for local authorities include the following[40].

- Carrying out thorough and detailed feasibility studies on proposed transfers of service.
- Creating a robust business case for implementation.
- Ensuring that all key legal criteria are met.
- Ensuring that any transfer of service is effectively and efficiently managed with built-in monitoring and evaluation procedures.
- Ensuring that key stakeholders are engaged in the process.

CASE STUDY EVIDENCE

Local authorities play differing roles within the case studies. In the Jubilee Park case study, East Lindsey District Council was receptive to Woodhall Spa Parish Council's request to enter a dialogue about the future of the Park. ELDC supported the transfer to happen in a number of ways, including the following.

- Assigning an Officer to lead the project and operate across departments within ELDC and work with the Parish Council so that the resources and costs required to run the Park were understood.
- Contributing (financially and Member time) towards the Parish Council's preparation of a Business Plan; as well as offering other strategic support, capacity building and signposting.
- Making a long-term commitment to support the underpinning of the project in providing an initial capital investment and a 5-year revenue stream.

In other cases Local Authorities may be procuring the service (Suffolk Links). Here, the strength of the County Council seems to have been its positive partnership approach, recognising that it has a contractual relationship, yet being able to work with the provider to address issues and seek improvements. In other cases, the Authority simply acted as a provider of information and business advice (e.g. Wishing Well, Horningsea) or a provider of grants. What has been helpful in the case of the Coffee Caravan, for example, has been: a) that some of the Authorities are prepared to commit in advance to funding for the following year; and b) that those like Mid Suffolk DC have taken a very enlightened view to project monitoring. When funding for a following year is not committed until almost year end it leaves the service on a knife-edge and means staff are wasting time chasing alternative sources instead of getting on with frontline delivery. Similarly, when monitoring is onerous it absorbs staff time and can represent a significant opportunity cost in terms of front line delivery.

3.10 Government support for delivery

Many of the documents of the literature review were written in response to or at a time when public bodies were being asked to transfer more power to people and communities. In some documents the transfer of power was not new and could be traced back to the introduction of

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[39] Turner & Townsend, 2010
[40] Museums Galleries Scotland, 2010

the Welfare State in the 1940s. In other documents 'restructuring', 'Citizen Focused Delivery'[41] and 'co-production'[42] were used to signal a shift. Here, the pace of change is considered to be fundamentally different and related to available funding and levels of need. There is a requirement to balance state provision with community participation.

There are concerns that there is insufficient time to involve service users and carers fully due to a pressure to make decisions quickly[43], that local authorities and communities will all be at different starting points and if what is happening now will respond to future service demands. One document references how central government needs to do more to enable local government overcome hurdles and incentivise take-up, where appropriate[44]. Some organisations welcome Government measures. For example, the National Association of Local Councils believes local councils at their best are standard bearers for community empowerment and localism in action[45].

CASE STUDY EVIDENCE

Central government did not greatly feature in the case studies except as the source of funding cuts. This may be a little unfair, in that central government obviously sets the policy framework and legislation which is the context within which case studies were developing. Such acknowledgement was rarely made. It remains early days for opportunities like the Community Rights (to Challenge, to Bid and to Build) under the Localism Act 2012, so it is perhaps not surprising if these measures did not feature in the case studies. Only one of our case studies was taking advantage of social finance (Ennerdale Hub with community shares). However, we identified there could be scope for one or two others to do so too, such as Okehampton Job Club with social investment bonds. The Hopes in Keswick was interesting in that it had registered directly with the HCA as social housing provider.

3.11 Barriers to Community and Voluntary Sector innovation

In addition to discussions above barriers that affect Community and Voluntary Sector decision innovation identified in the literature include the following.

- Inflexible procurement and commissioning processes.
- Change management.
- Risk aversion.
- Time.
- Finance – finding the right mix of funding.
- Service fragmentation.
- The gap between what people say and what people do
- The need to provide services that people want to use.
- Blurring of boundaries between public, private and voluntary/community sectors.
- Reluctance to partnership working.
- Rural issues regarded as insignificant.

Reflecting more widely on the totality of the research evidence

- The limits, within communities, of organisation, skills and 'local assets' can be critical.

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[41] Commonwealth Secretariat, 2011; Staite, 2012
[42] For example, NEF, 2012
[43] Smith & Cavill, 2010
[44] PA Consulting, 2012
[45] NALC, 2012

- Funding sources are known to be competitive, fragile and short term, preventing strategic planning in many cases. We found examples of a number of funders willing to be the funder of last resort but few wishing to lead "the funding charge."
- Funding sources are more readily available for capital than revenue projects often limiting the longer term provision of a service.
- Alternative Service Delivery projects need a combination of a LA willing to "let go" and the presence of a community/leader willing to take it up. If both these factors are not present then it can be very difficult to pull off the considerable challenge of developing an Alternative Service Delivery approach.
- Some smaller organisations face a mismatch between their capacity and the willingness of the statutory sector to engage with them. Approaches to procurement and formal quality assurance are often both discouraging and "a sledgehammer to crack a nut" in some cases.

In the Call for Evidence operational funding was the most widely reported difficulty in terms of the success of the organisation followed by set-up funding and then finding/retaining volunteers. Almost 37% of respondents to the Call for Evidence identified other barriers relating to financial and physical resources; lack of expertise; and technical and political procedures.

3.12 Can 'Big Society' fill the gaps?

Under the strap line 'whose public services?', the literature review identified queries about how the future of public services will be decided – by the public actively stepping forward as participants in a robust and informed debate, or by the public passively stepping back and allowing politicians to take decisions on their behalf[46] . There is also a debate within the literature about the impact of funding reductions on the frontline services and the (unequal) relationship between statutory and discretionary services when making decisions about reductions in resources and support[47].

Many of the rural Alternative Service Delivery examples found in the literature concern archetypal rural issues (i.e. sustaining the pub, shop, library) with some examples in social care, health, broadband and transport. Co-location approaches, which are applicable in a rural context, are relatively limited in terms of recent evidence which has been written up. The Woodland Trust has identified community ownership and management of woodland in the UK as underdeveloped – with some key questions to be answered around actual level of demand among communities for greater involvement. More information could also usefully be provided in terms of the Community Land Trust agenda.

More generally from the research we note the following.

- Alternative Service Delivery can be very successful if a number of factors (such as having an appropriate personality in the community to drive a project, accessing finance, having the support of the local authority and having a high degree of community capacity) coalesce, as the case studies show.
- The Alternative Service Delivery approach certainly allows 'gaps' to be more readily identified at the local level.
- Alternative Service Delivery approaches can lead to the development of community capacity which in turn can develop into other areas of community cohesion that might not be considered services but that nevertheless make communities more resilient.

CASE STUDY EVIDENCE

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[46] Ipsos Mori, 2010
[47] NEF, 2012

On balance, the case studies have been more about filling gaps in service provision than about transferring existing public sector services into the voluntary/community or private sectors. This nevertheless conforms to 'Big Society' precepts. Some have specifically identified needs that were not being addressed and have sought to meet them. We have identified that services to tackle rural loneliness and isolation are a particular feature – mainly for, but not only for, older people. Whilst they may not be replacing existing public sector services, it can be argued that keeping older people active and engaged makes them less likely to need (costly) Adult Care Services and the NHS.

Gaps may be met in at least two ways. There may be geographical gaps (where existing services are not reaching into rural places) or service gaps (needs which are not being tackled). The reason for this gap-filling may simply be that community-minded individuals are spotting holes in provision and devising clever projects to fill them. By definition those projects are Alternative Delivery Projects and not traditional models.

4 Overall conclusions

In our overall conclusions, we address the three objectives of the research.

To provide updated evidence demonstrating "Big Society" alternative approaches to public service delivery in rural areas, building upon the report produced by Rural Innovations - Collaboration and Innovation in Rural Service Delivery.

Community Capacity is Crucial. We found that the availability of an inspirational individual to lead the development of an Alternative Service Delivery approach is an important characteristic in many of the case studies and more broadly in the literature we evaluated concerning the effective operation of Big Society principles. The availability of a willing pool of volunteers also is important. These two factors along with the importance in a number of cases of a major "event" or service loss or deficiency were identified clearly through our three triangulation exercises as the most important drivers for ASD. Some communities that have a strong community spirit are well able to harness the expertise and capacity needed to deliver ASD approaches but what might be done to address the challenge in other communities that don't have that capacity is less clear. We found a mismatch between the quality of advice available to support ASD within communities and the practical demands facing communities willing to take on and develop a service. In some cases this may be because there has been limited effort effectively to diagnose the support required for a given project (and consideration should be given to how to help communities do this more effectively) in other cases however it is simply because the quality and availability of advice is patchy and not always very accessible.

The Role of Legislation. We found that whilst the Localism Act and other legislation that enables the principles of the Big Society such as the Social Value Act are now fully in force, communities have relatively limited recourse to their provisions. We also found that many Parish and Town Councils, whilst sympathetic to the idea of ASD, were not heavily involved in leading the ASD agenda. That is not to say there were not some examples of good Parish involvement. We also conclude that Neighbourhood Planning is an increasing driver of wider community engagement in the context of ASD in rural communities.

To identify operational conditions for alternative delivery models to deliver successfully in rural areas and identify the barriers which prevent further expansion of such service delivery models.

We identified a number of positive achievements for ASD. Models, when run well, can be resilient and can have a lower cost base than conventional services. It can be claimed to be more accountable where those running the service live in the community themselves (although this can also put significant pressure on some individuals involved in the delivery where they feel they are never "off duty"). ASD models can be flexible, adaptable and fact moving and targeted when run and governed at the local level by their users. We did find that the co-location of local service delivery was one element of ASD which did work particularly well in rural areas where limited community or business facilities need to be managed effectively. We found that often it is established service providers in public, voluntary and commercial sectors who are the best mentors and supporters of ASD groups. The role of Housing Associations in Keswick and Gloucester and East Lindsey District Council in the Jubilee Park case study exemplify this. .

Less positively, we found that small scale ASD providers are often challenged by onerous procurement and quality standards. Small ASD providers also can be adversely affected by short term funding decisions, particularly in the early stage of development. Also, ASD

arrangements are sometimes dependent on a small group of individuals and can close when they cease to be active.

We found overall that the most effective ASD approaches in rural areas (and this may be generic in terms of urban places as well) have the following:

- significant community and user engagement;
- good financial planning and systems;
- good communication structures;
- good leadership and governmental transparency;
- an ability to deal with challenges of procurement (i.e. being able to supply to the public sector)

We found those partnerships that think about the challenges facing 'their place" and take a long term view of how best to tackle them are more creative and potentially most sustainable.

To share learning from existing examples of alternative service delivery models both successful and unsuccessful.

We found evidence of many different legal and financial models for ASD. We did not find evidence that one model suited specific rural places more than others. Many models of organisational structure have been around for a long time. What is new is the application of these models to ASD. The most important structural issue seems to be choosing a model that best fits the very specific circumstances of the place and service. We did find that a lack of well-developed examples of organisational and financial models constituted a gap in the extant evidence, particularly in terms of rural examples. We suspect this is in part because current "top down" models of transferring services from local government (and the public sector more generally) to communities have been limited in rural areas. This research may go some way towards filling this gap.

We did find significant dynamism and entrepreneurial spirit in rural communities where people had responded to a lack of services in both the public and private sector by working through their own solutions. In some cases this was in response to an established service closing. In some cases communities were delivering brand new services to fill specific needs.

5. Case Studies

5.1 Lechlade Youth Club – a community run facility for young people

Lechlade Youth Club is a youth club that caters for about 300 young people between the ages of 11-19. The service was saved from closure in July 2012 and is seeking to build on links with other clubs and the school in the town as well as the Music Festival. The Youth Club is now led by a local group and looking to secure longer-term funding.

5.1.1 Introduction

Lechlade is a small market town with a population of 3,000 located 12 miles north of Swindon and 24 miles west of Oxford in the heart of the Cotswold hills and the Cotswold District of Gloucestershire.

In July 2012 the District Council announced that the Youth Club (YC) would have to close as part of local government cuts. This had been suspected by the Town Council and respective councillors. The Town Council quickly picked up the concern about the closure from the young people and others within the community. A local District Councillor responded to this challenge and set out to raise the money required to prevent the closure. In the event a significant proportion of the money was secured from a local business (£5,000) and this was matched by a contribution from the Town Council budget.

The Youth Club is now one year in to a budget that lasts for 5 years, and has set itself up as a community based social enterprise with a number of local trustees, mostly local parents. The aim is to put the group on a sustainable footing and to integrate the YC into the other youth related activities in the town such as the school and cricket club.

5.1.2 The issue

The key driver was the anticipated threat and then announcement of the notice to close the youth club in July 2012. The County Council withdrew its county-wide youth service in 2011 but provided some funding to enable District Councils to provide something in their areas. Rather than bid into a competitive pot for a lesser amount of money the Town Council and District Councillor (ward member for Kempsford & Lechlade) were able to anticipate this coming and respond in a slightly different manner. The actions of the District Councillor were critical in shaping both the speed and type of response. Another key factor was the presence of the music festival in Lechlade, which had increased the connections with the young people, so they were able to articulate their concern about the threat of closure and make it clear that they felt that its loss was significant. This articulation of need from the young people and the feeling that anti-social behaviour would increase without the presence of a Youth Club, even one that meets only once a week, was sufficient to galvanise a swift response.

On a more general note the other clubs in the town were experiencing a growth in numbers of young people, especially the cricket club, and this may well have contributed to the awareness of young people. The nature of the town is also changing with more young families moving into the town and this will grow with the addition of 200 new houses. The youth club caters for young people from the ages of 11-19, although most are aged between 13-17. Numbers have been increasing and it is estimated that the youth club is now in touch with about 150 young people.

The actual cost of the service is relatively modest (£7,500 over 5 years) and the premises already exist as they use a room within the cricket pavilion. Thus the monies required maintained the presence of 2 youth workers provided by the County Council youth service Active Gloucestershire. Doing this has fulfilled one of the aims of the Town Council and secured the appointment of the Youth Liaison Worker, who is a volunteer. All of the other areas, including the new trustees, are volunteers with a core of about 10. Increasingly the young people are coming up with ideas and are organising and holding a 'bring & buy' sale to raise funds for the group. Therefore, from the weekly 2 hour session, the idea is to grow the youth provision so that is combines with the school and other clubs within the community as well as the music festival.

5.1.3 The response

The shape of the response was determined largely by the District Councillor who secured some funding from a local business. This appears to be an act of altruism as no obligations are attached to this money. From this the councillor was able to secure further matched funding via the town council. The view of the trustees is that this provides the short-term stability that can now enable a business plan to be developed and the creation of the community-own enterprise for the long-term.

There has been little change to the structure of the 2 hour weekly sessions with the emphasis being on the County Council youth workers being paid to deliver these sessions. The cost of the sessions (£1) has been introduced as it helped the young people feel that they are contributing to the sessions and in a sense 'owning' the youth club. It was stressed that this is not strictly applied and if a young person is in difficulty it is quietly waived.   The young people clearly value the service as was apparent from the response to keep it and they see the music festival, cricket club and youth service as being part of the same opportunity within the village for young people to express themselves.

5.1.4 Benefits and Impacts

The main benefit from saving the youth service and growing this in the longer-term is seen as being a social benefit. This was articulated in terms of reduced anti-social behaviour and in providing a positive environment for young people within the community. There are also thought to be economic benefits, less damage resulting from anti-social behaviour and more rounded and able young people who are more likely to stay and contribute economically through jobs and spending. The potential for environmental benefits is less well developed however this is possible in the longer term. There is potential for all three to be satisfied in the longer term.

There was thought to be little direct economic benefit. The savings to the District Council are unclear as this was a County Council run service that was stopped in 2011. In 2011 as part of cuts totalling £114 million the county closed 12 youth centres and 32 separate services that ran in communities across the county. The youth element saved £3.6 million but some was provide back to District Councils, with Cotswold District offered £55,000 for wards and parishes to bid into in order to provide something for young people. It was estimated that the saving in the Cotswold area was about £12,000 a year, however this was

the whole youth provision to a number of market towns in the area. The amount raised by Lechlade was about £7,500 and this was sufficient to retain the use of the Pavilion for the 2 hour weekly sessions organised and run by 2 County Council youth workers. There are thought to be indirect economic benefits that are associated with a perceived reduction in anti-social behaviour.

5.1.5 Facilitators and barriers

The success factors have been securing the Youth Centre in the short-term and determining a structure to tackle longer-term issues. There is clearly a desire to integrate the YC with other aspects concerning young people, such as the school and cricket club. The key facilitator was the District Councillor who had the idea of implementing this as an opportunity to take the running of the youth service into the hands of the community and independent of the both the County Council and the District Council. Alongside this there was also sufficient contact with the young people for them to engage with the revised approach and buy into it.

Currently it is difficult to see any barriers but it would be worth revisiting this type of alternative service provision in about 3 to 4 years to see how the future planning is developing and whether it takes a conventional route, replicating what the County has provided in previous years, or something more alternative, such as a community owned social enterprise.

5.1.6 Organisations and Resources

Whilst the Town Council is involved and has welcomed the development of the enterprise it does not appear to be taking a leadership role. It has adopted more of a support and enabling role. Similarly the District Council has been reactive to requests. Thus the new format for the YC is a community based group that sees itself as being more responsive to the needs of young people and more embedded within the community.

The costs are quite straightforward, as they were clear to all when the threat of closure was made. This enabled the 5 year block of funding to be sorted and secured. As the previous youth workers are retained in the current model the costs are largely similar but some aspects have been taken on by the town ensuring some small savings through the work of volunteers. However the greater community involvement has secured more connections and an increased in interest in the youth club so numbers have increased over the year. Thus the cost of the service per young person has been reduced. Also there are knock on benefits for the cricket club and school as well as other areas of the town in terms of reduced anti-social behaviour.

5.1.7 Lessons and Next steps

The next steps are to:

− secure funding for the period beyond 2016/7;
− put in place a business plan that involves integrating the YC with the school and other clubs, perhaps covering mentoring and vocational training;
− develop the music festival so this adds to the YC activities and financial sustainability.

The main (replicable) lessons for other service deliverers:

1. begin planning early when you can see a threat to a community asset;
2. work with your local politicians to enable this planning and seek political approval;

3. seek to integrate complementary services so that there is mutual benefit;
4. involve the users (in this case young people) in decision making and development.

5.2 Colwall Orchard Group – reviving traditional orchards

Colwall Orchard Group was set up to revive traditional orchards, which are known to provide high biodiversity vale, at the time as providing community open space (a community orchard) and an area from which to base a local food scheme (an allotment area). The intention is to involve the whole community from young to elderly and the project is widely considered to be a successful community orchard scheme. The scheme started in 2007 and has secured a number of grants in order to fund a range of activities.

5.2.1 Introduction

Colwall village in east Herefordshire has a population of about 2,500 and it located 20 miles east of Hereford. Close to the border with Worcestershire, Colwall is just to the west of the Malvern Hills and 12 miles south west of Worcester. The first known recording of orchards in the parish was in 1577 with 350 acres of orchard established from 1858 onwards to supply a fruit packing and processing business in the village. This business closed in 1961 and with no demand for orchard produce, many orchards were bulldozed or neglected and Colwall lost the traditional skills associated with orchards, such as pruning mature trees and the effective use of the fruit produce.

The Colwall Orchard Group aims to promote, celebrate and restore traditional orchards thereby re-integrating them into the local community and providing social and environmental benefits. This service seeks to develop alternative delivery by combining social, environmental and economic aspects through local action, in a way that traditional and statutory service providers do not.

Since the start of the initiative Colwall Orchard Group has provided assistance to orchard owners within the community and further afield on orchard management and restoration. This has raised the profile of orchards and their need for management in this region amongst orchard conservationists and in the local community. In 2011 the group established a community allotment of about 1 hectare containing a new orchard and children's play area and has run a series of public activities that coincide with important dates in the orchard calendar that promote orchards as sources of food and community cohesion.

5.2.2 The issue

Following an initial survey in 2007, funded as part of a national project co-ordinated by the People's Trust for Endangered Species, a high number of traditional orchards was identified but most were neglected through a lack of management. In particular old trees that were split or fallen over were left to rot while others were over-laden with mistletoe and further damaged by sheep stripping off the bark. The survey identified 41 orchards, of which 26 still

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survived as traditional standard orchards. However, the social, environmental and economic benefits are dependent on active management. Over the past 6 years the Colwall Orchard group has shown that there is a demand from orchard owners for guidance and support in re-introducing management to orchards and that many people are willing to volunteer their time locally to help and enjoy activities based around orchards.

5.2.3 The response

Since the mid-2000s the Colwall Orchard Group has had a number of initiatives and sought funding from a range of sources to provide advice to orchard owners inside and outside Colwall village and to development community and economic activities based around restored orchards and the community garden. Initially the Colwall Orchard Group, aided by funding from the Malvern Hills AONB and National Trust, surveyed the area and linked this back to historic maps before purchasing pruning kits and training volunteers in restorative pruning techniques. This was followed by regular volunteer work parties to re-introduce management to the orchards. The funding from the National Trust also enabled the group to plant young trees into a number of orchards and these activities have continued and developed over time with a particular focus on public activities such as the Big Blossom picnic, Apple Day, Mistletoe fair and Wassailing. This has widened further with links to the Ledbury Poetry Festival in order to emphasis the cultural heritage importance of orchards, although the group recognise that this aspect is under-explored.

The aim of the community garden is to establish a community orchard containing a range of local and scarce varieties of apple, pear, cherry and plum. Alongside this the allotments provide a range of plots in terms of size and suitability for the elderly and less able. There is a shed which will be converted for training and within the orchard area there is a natural play space for children as well as plans for a 'green' amphitheatre and camp fire area for social events.

5.2.4 Benefits and Impacts

The activities of the group over the past few years have highlighted a number of benefits that this type of alternative service provision can provide. These include:

- the presence of old orchard trees in small 'garden orchards' are now recognised as important in terms of connectivity and are often of high value;
- orchards are attractive to a wide range of members within a local community;
- volunteers feel a strong sense of purpose at an individual and community level;
- such orchards can include some scarce varieties of fruit trees, although many owners are unaware of this and the trees are unrecorded;
- these trees are under managed because the owners do not have either the equipment or knowledge;
- most owners would struggle to pay for the management at the market rate;
- owners are not aware of the range of varieties in terms of the potential use, different situations and those whose pollination would supplement existing trees.

Whilst traditional orchards are visually pleasing within the landscape around Hereford and Worcester they are also productive and their fruit can still have a value to the local economy. The trees and grassland have a high wildlife benefit if managed sensitively and strongly linked to local history, traditions, archaeology and scarce tree varieties.

Colwall has a diverse set of orchards ranging from traditional farmstead and garden orchards to the remnant orchards of a former commercial fruit enterprise in the village. This

includes apples (dessert and cooking), pears (cooking and perry), cherries and damsons. The group sees traditional orchards as an important element of the landscape and heritage and note their wildlife importance as a 'priority' habitat under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (2007). However, the biodiversity aspect is not emphasised more than the social or the economic as it is the social aspects that provide the management that enhances the biodiversity. The economic aspects also provide the means by which the social and management activities can be sustained in the long-term, suggesting a virtuous circle and confirming the group's insistence that the system is interconnected.

5.2.5 Facilitators and barriers

The Colwall Orchard group has identified a number of factors that underpin the perceived success of the project. Crucially this is seen as a communitarian project, in other words one that emphasises the connection between the individual and the community. As part of this approach the group:
- enables people to make a difference;
- emphasises that orchards are more than wildlife havens;
- invests in children and families;
- looks towards local solutions and funding;
- maintains a high level of publicity.

The approach taken by the group that stresses all three aspects has, they feel, made accessing funds more problematic as these are often linked to one aspect rather than all three. Much energy has been put into various applications such as the Heritage Lottery Fund, which is demoralising when they are not successful.

5.2.6 Organisation and Resources

The group is dependent on volunteers and in 2011/12 it recorded 66 active volunteers, of whom 24 were considered 'core' giving over 10 hours during the year. In total the volunteer activity amounted to 1084 hours over this financial year. Over the course of the first 5 years of the project 155 volunteers have been involved giving over 10,000 hours of their time. Over the life time of the project the group has held 40 training events and 23 public events.

The community garden development required a change in approach and structure and in a sense has formalised the group. The parish council decided not to contribute to the fund to buy the land proposed as the community garden however through an anonymous donor and other donations the land has been purchased. Nevertheless the group had to borrow about £60k for the land purchase and this has caused tensions because of servicing the debt whilst maintaining other core activities and developing Colwall Village Garden. Further support from the Herefordshire Council Community Fund enabled the land to be fenced and 60 allotments to be established in June 2011. A change in governance was required in order to receive these monies and would make other applications more straight forward. The agreed approach was to apply for company status, and then for charitable status for the company.

The group has a range of income generating activities, including:
- running public events
- offering a tree pruning service for people with garden orchards
- running a tree ordering and supply scheme
- making apple juice for sale
- producing preserves for sale
- selling mistletoe and wood arising from management activities

Currently the group receives funding from the Sustainable Development Fund via the Malvern Hills AONB, in recognition of the fact that orchards are a particular feature of this special landscape. This funding stream supports projects that bring social, environmental and economic benefits to the AONB. Malvern Lions has recently provided funding for the group to buy children's play equipment, including a bug hunting kit. The group has also received grants relating to organic gardening (for tools), allotments (for water infrastructure) and to ameliorate volunteer burnout (kit to support our volunteers). The Local Action Group (LAG), formed under the LEADER Programme, a European funding stream designed to deliver rural development through local community action, has provided funding to bring electricity to the community garden. In 2012 the group successfully secured a Higher Level Stewardship agreement from Natural England that will cover the cost of planting and managing fruit trees in the community orchard over 10 years. In total the group has secured grants in excess of £45,000 from 5 organisations and loans and donations of £70k. However it has debts of about £50k following the purchase of the land for the community orchard and garden.

5.2.7 Lessons and Next steps

The next steps are to:
  − secure funding to allow for the completion of the community orchard and garden;
  − become financially sustainable as a charity;
  − fully implement the project linking traditional orchards, poetry and the arts;
  − embed the community orchard and garden into the life of the community through the participation the local school and other community groups.

The main (replicable) lessons for other service deliverers are:

1. assess the natural assets within your community and look for ways in which the community can become actively involved in their enhancement;
2. seek to integrate complementary activities so that there is mutual and multiple benefits for the local community;
3. link your activity to national targets;
4. maximise the publicity you receive for your project at a local and national level.

5.3 Horningsea - A community seeking a transport solution

Finding a solution to a small rural community's transport needs, which is both practical and cost-effective, is no easy task. This Parish Council in Cambridgeshire is striving hard to find the right answer for its residents, working with its local transport authority.

5.3.1 Introduction

The village of Horningsea is three miles north-east of the Cambridge city urban boundary. It has a population of around 300 which, for the most part, might be categorised as reasonably prosperous. There are few facilities within the village and, as might be expected, many residents travel or commute into Cambridge to access services and employment opportunities. Among travel options for those with a car are the park-and-ride near the city boundary and catching a train from the station at Waterbeach. Those without access to a car or wishing to use other means may use the infrequent 196 bus route to the city centre.

5.3.2 The issue

The 196 bus service is one of the most expensive in the county to operate. It costs Cambridgeshire County Council some £57,000 annually in subsidy, which works out at over £7 per passenger. Moreover, if passengers joining the bus at Waterbeach are excluded (as they have other transport options) the subsidy cost is greater still.

In mid 2012 Horningsea learnt that that subsidy was likely to be substantially reduced from 2013/14 and the expectation was the bus operator would then withdraw the service. The situation in Horningsea is not unique. Faced with severe budget constraints, the County is in the process of reducing its subsidy for bus services from £2.7 million a year to £1.5 million a year over a three year period. Nonetheless, unless an alternative could be found, residents in Horningsea could find themselves entirely dependent on private transport.

It should be noted, however, that the current situation is far from ideal. The bus service only runs twice a day into Cambridge (there being no service in that direction after 9.30 am) and twice a day back to Horningsea (there being no service in that direction until 12.30 pm). As a result it has not been well used. Horningsea Parish Council accepts the need for change.

5.3.3 The response

In October 2012 Horningsea Parish Council circulated a transport questionnaire form to their residents, which had been designed by Cambridgeshire County Council. It was mostly distributed online, though hard copies were also made available. Parish Councillors spent some time going door-to-door to encourage people to complete the form. The questionnaire sought information about people's travel patterns, their current use of public transport and what types of future provision they would consider using.

When the Parish Council analysed responses they were surprised by the results. They discovered that those expressing a wish to access a service came from a range of age groups. Moreover, there was a fairly flat pattern of demand throughout the day and not just at peak hours. Much of that demand was for travel to destinations in Cambridge, though residents also sought to go north to Waterbeach and, in some cases, west to Milton or the science park. In short, more people were likely to use a service if it ran more frequently and through the day.

Discussions with the local County Councillor and the authority's Transport Officer indicated that diverting another bus service into the village was not favoured as an option, since it would mean re-negotiating a service contract. But there was real support for further thinking about community-run or community-owned transport options.

The approach initially explored was to pilot a community-run scheduled bus service operated with a section 22 licence, since this was the closest fit with the stated wishes of local residents. A Business Plan was drawn up by the Parish Council. Exploratory talks were held with local vehicle owners and potential drivers. The Business Plan assumed acquiring a second-hand vehicle, using three part-time drivers, having on-call access to a mechanic, having access to a back-up vehicle and paying for an administrator to oversee operations. The administrative role was felt to be too much to expect of a volunteer.

It was further assumed that the County would be prepared to provide half the level of its current service subsidy. However, even making some fairly optimistic assumptions about passenger numbers (based on the questionnaire returns) the figures under this model simply did not stack up.

Horningsea Parish Council therefore changed tack, investigating an approach based on a shuttle service which would join up with other services, including Cambridge city buses and the rail line at Waterbeach. A draft timetable was produced, offering nine daily services towards the city. A potential operator has been identified, with vehicles that are underused for much of the day. But even under this option the financials look risky and there is more work to do before it could realistically proceed. Indeed, further options will be considered.

Cambridgeshire Future Transport

Under the Community Future Transport programme started in 2012, the County Council is seeking to explore the potential for innovative solutions that will improve local service accessibility. It is working with local communities and operators to find alternative and more cost-effective transport solutions to a traditional subsidised bus service. Working groups are set up with representatives from the affected communities, which include their County Councillor and have input from an authority Transport Officer.

Those bus services with the highest subsidy levels are the ones being addressed first. The County Council envisages different solutions being appropriate to the particular needs of different areas. Indeed, the aim is to try and find solutions that, whilst practical and built on

evidence of transport needs, have been endorsed by the local communities affected.

5.3.4 Benefits and impacts

This story is work in progress. Horningsea has still to identify a workable, or to be precise fundable, option. In the meantime the County Council has committed to retaining the 196 bus service whilst alternatives are properly explored. Quite how long this situation will last is unclear, but it certainly seems likely that service support will run throughout 2013/14. In the meantime it cannot really be said that vulnerable residents are being left isolated, since there is a healthy culture of lift giving amongst the villagers.

It is, though, an issue which has stirred much debate within the community. One Parish Councillor describes it as the "hottest topic" since he took office six years ago. If a solution can be found it will certainly open up new travel opportunities for residents. The proposal for nine services towards Cambridge each day would, in the words of that Councillor, "alter the whole dynamic for the community". It should, for example, become much more attractive for shopping and leisure visits or more possible to travel at times convenient for appointments.

5.3.5 Facilitators and barriers

It is notable that the community in Horningsea has already taken ownership of a village pub, which it bought with local subscriptions and which it runs as a Community Interest Company. This has encouraged them to believe that if they can run a pub, they can also run a transport service.

The Parish Council has some sympathy for the County Council over its financial predicament and does not seek to blame it for the threat to its current bus service. Indeed, they stress that they have had a good working relationship at both political and officer level with the County when it comes to finding a solution. The County helped it gather evidence of local transport needs and has provided some advice about future options. Since both County Councillor and Transport Officer have recently changed, they hope those key relationships can be maintained.

Inevitably, the financial balance sheet presents a major challenge to this project. There will be limited public subsidy available and the service will be operating in a rural area where passenger numbers cannot hope to generate a commercial income. It is therefore taking time to identify a sufficiently cost-effective way forward.

One barrier is knowing where to turn to (aside from the County Council) for information and advice. Even if it exists, it may not be known about by individual communities. Horningsea Parish Councillors have met some nearby communities that have experience of different types of non-traditional transport services. This has proved useful, though Horningsea says it hasn't found anywhere with quite the same circumstances and able to answer all its questions. They wish there was a 'how to' manual they could turn to and they'd like to find an existing model of a service delivery plan which they can adapt.

The transport licensing regulations are viewed as quite complex for a community group, though equally as quite reasonable. The Parish Council recognises that running a public transport service requires a degree of professionalism and should only be undertaken by people with sufficient skills.

5.3.6 Organisations and resources

The Business Plan was drawn up with cost assumptions for a replacement service owned and run by the community. A one year pilot project was estimated to have costs slightly in excess of £50,000. This would have been funded in almost equal shares by fares (including concessionary fare reimbursement) and by other income or grants (notably subsidy from the County). The Parish Council has already set aside £5,000 towards this transport initiative and it may be willing to invest a modest sum to keep it running in subsequent years.

As noted above, this cost model was felt to be unrealistic or too risky, largely because the income stream from fares, whilst based upon information derived from the questionnaire, required a very substantive growth in passenger numbers when compared with the current 196 bus service.

Relying more heavily on volunteers to run the service might be one way to reduce costs further. However, Horningsea sees downsides in such an approach, since volunteers are not bound (by employment contract) to turn up on a regular basis. The view taken is that volunteers have a part to play, but probably not in frontline service delivery.

The proposed service is considered too large for the Parish Council to manage directly, given that the project cost would be four times the parish's current level of precept. Initially the idea was that a Community Interest Company would be established to manage the transport service, but it is not yet clear if this is the best organisational model. A charitable organisation is another possibility.

5.3.7 Lessons and next steps

One lesson is that it takes time for a community to explore local needs and then weigh up the different options, not least given the technicalities and financial risks involved. Horningsea Parish Council wishes it had started work more immediately after the bus subsidy cut was announced. But it is easy to say that with hindsight and finding a solution by April 2013 may never have been a realistic ambition.

That they have made progress this far is in large part down to a positive working relationship with the County Council. Both sides want to find a workable solution. The County Council finds itself trying to strike a balance between allowing communities the time and scope to explore options which meet their needs, whilst needing to steer things towards a resolution within a reasonable timeframe. It does not wish to impose an answer. What might help the Parish Council would be having access to additional expert transport advice from a third party support organisation.

It might be concluded that what is happening in Horningsea is a big ask of a small village. With few resources it is working hard to address the conundrum of meeting local service expectations in a rural setting where it will never be commercial as far as public transport provision is concerned. It is an example which raises awkward questions about what level of service is achievable and reasonable.

Yet, for all the ups and down the Parish Council has experienced it remains optimistic that an appropriate solution can be found which will serve the needs of residents.

"*It must be possible to provide a better service than we currently have and for half the money.*" – Parish Councillor

5.4 The Project Group - A creative environment for people in touch with mental health services

" Some of the most wonderful people"…"warmth, wit, wonderment"…."the most fun I've had all year". These are just a few of the comments made by visiting artists about 'The Project Group', an arts-based Community Interest Company that produces public art commissions and designer retail items.

5.4.1 Introduction

The Project Group is based in the centre of Oswestry, a town of approximately 18,500 inhabitants located in the North West of Shropshire just five miles from the Welsh border. The town is traditional in character and acts as a service centre for a wide rural hinterland.

The Group describes itself as "providing a creative environment for individuals, in touch with mental health services, to achieve at their own pace." It draws its membership, of between 35 and 50 adults, from many rural parts of the County as well as from the town itself.

The group works largely on art commissions for the public and private sectors. It also provides community and public workshops and has developed a range of giftware 'Designs in Mind'.

The studio, located at first and second floors above shops, provides a variety of equipment including a glass fusion kiln: a ceramics kilns, screen-printing facilities, a graphics suite; a laser cutter and sewing machines.

5.4.2 The issue

The members of the group, who have been referred by health care professionals, are usually unemployed and many have low levels of self-confidence. Without peer support and

interaction it can be very difficult for individuals to move forward which, in turn, increases dependence on statutory services.

5.4.3 The response

The group sets out to "foster a culture of achievement through which members gain in confidence and self-esteem, show motivation and commitment, and often exceed their own expectations."(group's website)

The group was developed from a former NHS day care service. The present Project Co-ordinator, who is an artist rather than a health care professional, saw the creative potential and transformed scheme into an autonomous group, despite facing considerable organisational resistance at the time. In 2002, with funding from MIND, the group opened a studio in a room within a community centre in Oswestry. Then, in 2006, they expanded, leasing their current premises.

Today, the studios are open three days each week between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. and are used by up to 50 members, about half of whom live in the town itself. The available space is a constraint on numbers and there is a waiting list. The organisation is very flexible and most members choose to attend on one or two days each week. Some members stay only a few months, some stay longer and others may leave but then return. There is no charge for members and travel costs, by private car or public transport, are reimbursed.

Not only are members involved with art work but wherever possible they are given the opportunity to undertake other paid work that is important to the Group. This may, for example, include maintenance, cleaning or IT tasks.

5.4.4 Benefits and impacts

There are clear, but not easily quantifiable, benefits to the statutory providers of health services and adult social care. As one member of staff expressed it: "What most members would say is that the Project Group keeps them 'less ill' and no doubt prevents further deterioration of health; it gives them a focus to their week, a reason to get up, something 'useful' to do; be creative; forget their 'problems' and 'be normal'; and above all provides friendship - oh and hugs!!"

The Group is obviously popular with its Members, one of whom commented:

- "I'd be lost without it…it breaks up my week. Otherwise, if you're not working, you're just left looking at the wall
- There's a really good atmosphere - gently encouraging rather than pressured. We do social events too and lots of people have made new friends here.
- It gives you a real sense of pride when people enjoy something that you've worked on.
- It would be good if the Group could expand and take more people"

The benefits are not confined to statutory service providers and group members. Commissions are undertaken in collaboration with the users of the buildings so that the end-products are not only beautiful but also meaningful. For example, residents of a rather stark new care home were involved with the design for a large wall panel which now provides a cheerful focal-point in their lounge. In another instance bereaved parents were invited to participate in creating a commission for a children's hospice, a piece of artwork that works on many levels.

A number of commissioned pieces are displayed in public buildings, such as Oswestry's Memorial Hall, for the enjoyment to the wider public. One such commission, currently being worked on, is a mosaic for Oswestry Town Council.

Not least, privately commissioned artwork and items purchased in the Group's pre-Christmas sale or from the 'Designs in Mind' giftware range all give pleasure to their owners.

5.4.5 Facilitators and barriers

Whilst their existing premises are currently affordable, well equipped and in the town centre, the Group would ideally prefer the security of owning their own premises and a more prominent location with a ground floor would give scope to incorporate a shop and café.

Strong and positive relationships have been established with the Clinical Commissioning Group (formerly the PCT) and with Shropshire Council, both of whom value and financially support the group's work. Other local public sector organisations, including Oswestry Town Council, are also supportive.

Business advice has been provided to the group but this was considered of variable quality. That provided by the Social Enterprise Development Officer at the then Shropshire County Council was specifically identified as having been "really helpful", but another source of business advice was considered "quite hopeless" (staff comments).

The Group has benefited immensely from the input of visiting artists who have enthused members and inspired many of the Group's designs. They have also enjoyed the support of many "good people" in the wider public.

Funding is a serious issue. The Group currently runs at a deficit and "constantly applying for grants is exhausting" (Project Co-ordinator). Recently, it successfully launched a retail range but publicising the groups products to a wider marketplace, including larger companies, is an on-going challenge.

The paucity of public transport in much of rural Shropshire is a serious constraint to potential users and indeed to volunteers (one of whom faces a two hour journey each way on two poorly connecting buses). This accessibility problem is particularly acute for those residents in the more rural areas of the County and distant from Oswestry who are reliant on public transport.

The Project Co-ordinator expressed concern that some group members are adversely affected by a 'benefits trap' barrier whereby they are fearful that by volunteering, even for a limited time and in a supportive environment, this may be deemed as making them "fit for work". This is seen as unhelpful to the individual person's progress.

5.4.6 Organisations and resources

The Group is a Community Interest Company. An executive (which includes paid staff, volunteers and members) is responsible for policy and operational decisions. There are 4 part-time paid staff and 5 volunteers.

About half the Group's costs are funded, in the form of grants, mainly from the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group (with whom they have a service level agreement), and also from Shropshire Council. Additional income comes from commissions and other sales. In the past it has received Lottery and Arts Council grants and funding from MIND. The group does not wish to be over-reliant on grant funding but income from its commercial activity can be very

unpredictable and over the last year the Group has experienced an overall shortfall in income of about £10,000.

5.4.7 Lessons and next steps

Staff at the Group identified the following qualities as key to the success of the scheme:
- Flexibility- to meet the needs and aspirations of individual members.
- Passion- to enthuse members, funders, and buyers.
- Commitment- to keep the Group going and growing. "There is so much potential, but so much work"(staff comment)
- Resilience- because not everything always goes smoothly

Building up good relationships is key to success. The group has developed and maintained very positive relationships with the NHS, with Shropshire Council, with Oswestry Town Council and with the local community.

The Group is enthusiastic to increase its income from commissions and retail sales and to reduce its reliance on grants. They are exploring options to expand their retailing activity, possibly including internet sales, and looking at ways of raising their profile both generally and with major companies. A new Social Enterprise and Business Development Officer has recently been appointed with a remit that includes strengthening the retail arm and further developing their commissions business.

5.5 Suffolk Coffee Caravan – A rural information project

This popular project manages to deliver information about a wide range of services to village communities in an engaging and informal setting. The way that it operates also contributes to tackling rural isolation and loneliness.

5.5.1 Introduction

The Suffolk Coffee Caravan Information project operates across the whole of the County, targeting mainly the smaller and more isolated communities. Indeed, the priority is to go to the places without their own service outlets and amenities. It has grown over the years and, being mobile, it now delivers its services from around one hundred locations, so has considerable reach across the rural parts of a largely-rural County.

5.5.2 The issue

It is well documented that services can be thin on the ground in rural areas. Yet often residents in smaller villages (in particular) are surprisingly unaware what services and amenities are available to them. This is especially important when it is services that could improve their wellbeing or make a real difference to quality of life.

Village life for some can also be (or become) an isolating or lonely experience. Especially in places where shops, pubs and post offices have disappeared and where populations have changed, leaving less contact between neighbours. This project has therefore mainly targeted villages without any amenities or a community centre.

5.5.3 The response

The origins of the project lie with Canon Sally Fogden, a trustee of the Farm Crisis Network[48]. Watching people struggle through the hardship left by the major foot-and-mouth

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[48] Now called the Farm Community Network.

outbreak in 2001 she saw that some of those living in villages did not know where to turn for assistance or even what support services existed to help them. So in 2003 she set up an information helpline.

Soon afterwards she had the idea of buying a caravan to take information out to rural communities. An initial grant was forthcoming from the Rural Stress Information Network and another followed from Mid Suffolk District Council. Villages which appeared to be appropriate for the project were identified, though with uncertain funding it is fair to say that early progress was gradual.

The current Project Manager was recruited in 2004 and she set about canvassing parish councils with a questionnaire to find out what local amenities they had and whether a mobile information service would interest them. Around forty said that it would. A recognisable logo was created for the caravan and volunteers were recruited from the villages to be visited. Incrementally the project grew, as word got out and more communities invited them in.

Significant additional funding was won in 2009, which enabled an expansion of the service. A Project Officer was recruited and a second vehicle – this time a camper van – was bought. This purchase enabled the project to operate year round: it was only practical to operate a caravan between Spring and Autumn.

On any village visit the caravan or camper van will spend two hours at its location, typically parked at a village green, in a car park or on a suitably wide verge. Anyone can come along. They will be offered a free cup of tea or coffee and a piece of cake. Depending on the weather, they can sit inside or out. Information leaflets from a variety of agencies will be laid out for taking. People might turn up to ask for information or they may simply come along for a chat. In all, about 100 rural communities are now visited by the project each year.

A more recent development has been the running of Golden Age Fairs. These are one-day events held in a hall, where at least twenty service providers and support agencies have stands under one roof. A key target audience for these is older rural residents who are lonely. Although there is a very serious purpose, the Fairs always include a few fun things to make them attractive. The first or pilot Fair was held in 2011 and over 250 people attended, proving its worth. Attendance is completely free and transport to the event can be arranged for those who need it. Some smaller events in smaller venues have also now been tried.

Project delivery during calendar year 2012

	Number of visits	Number of visitors
Village visits	227	4,440
Golden Age Fairs	7	831
Other events	7	493
Total	241	5,764

Project staff are constantly on the look-out for community needs where information could help. They have sometimes built-up their own knowledge by attending training courses, such as one on fuel poverty run by Suffolk Switched On and another on household budgeting run by Money Matters. In most cases, they can handle people's questions, which might mean looking up information or signposting them elsewhere. On the odd occasion where a serious concern comes to light, such as domestic violence, they will suggest contacting a specialist support agency. The aim is never just to leave someone in the lurch.

5.5.4 Benefits and impacts

The Suffolk Coffee Caravan Information project is a valuable resource for information for those living in rural areas. In many cases this means vulnerable people with special needs

that may otherwise go unaddressed. The most popular leaflets at village visits are those on Age UK, British Heart Foundation, preventing falls, mental health, dementia, bereavement, managing money, local authority services and libraries, leisure services and local foods.

The reverse is equally true: the project offers a great way for service providers and support agencies to get information out to an audience which may be hard to reach. More and more agencies have been asking the project to carry their literature.

It also provides those who feel isolated or lonely with an opportunity to get out and socialise, either with project staff or other residents. A district council officer cites social isolation as a significant issue in the area. The project finds that some people are cautious about joining clubs, yet seem happy to pop along to the caravan. While the staff never probe, it is not unusual for an individual's needs to come to light during conversation. Nor is it unusual for another resident to offer them help (for example, with their shopping).

The project visits and the coming together of residents can act as a focal point or catalyst for community action. It was on one visit that residents decided to refurbish their village playground and at another that residents decided they should have a village hall built.

Almost two-thirds of those who turn up at the visits are retired, but the demographic can be varied. It includes elderly people living alone, carers who need a break, new arrivals in a village who wish to meet some neighbours, those working at home who need a little time away from the computer, young mothers wanting to get out of the house and active residents with an idea they want to test out on others.

> The Project Manager spotted that the rubber ferrules on the bottom of some of the older visitors' walking sticks were very worn, putting them at risk of falls. As a result the caravan started taking round a stock of new ferrules and 34 were replaced last year.

There have been spin-off initiatives. Two of the villages visited now run a regular coffee morning in someone's house and another established a ladies lunch club. The caravan still calls by to replenish their stock of information leaflets. One of the volunteers felt sufficiently inspired by the experience to set up a Good Neighbour Scheme in Kesgrave. She says that it gave her the confidence and the knowledge to do so.

Such achievements have recently been recognised with a nomination to the Queen's Award for Volunteering.

5.5.5 Facilitators and barriers

The district councils in Suffolk have been supportive, offering a good working relationship and in most cases grant funding. This has been especially true of Mid Suffolk District Council, which has been a supporter from the outset. It even stepped in with a quick one-off grant when the caravan failed its MOT. Thus far, the project has been fortunate to attract sufficient financial support to enable it to operate and grow. If there is an issue, it is rather that funding is given one year at a time and the aim of knowing, in advance, where half the funds will come from for next year has not been realised. If the aim could be reached less time would be spent chasing funding.

Without doubt a major facilitator has been the enthusiasm, commitment and can-do attitude of the project's core staff. They seem to be genuinely inspired by running the project and the benefits that it evidently brings. It is an approach which combines real care for the service

users with sound project management. The Project Manager sums it up by saying: "It's such a great job. It feels like being a paid volunteer."

> "*It [the project] should be prescribed on the NHS. It's spirit lifting: they bring so much to wherever they go.*" – one of the volunteers

Demonstrating benefit can prove difficult with this type of project, since the outcomes are not easy to measure and there is a reluctance to intrude by asking service users what happened as a result of the information they received. However, the project can cite many stories of individuals who have been helped and the project funders seem content with this approach.

> "*It's about allowing them to get on and deliver, rather than requiring them to fill out loads of forms. I'd rather they spent our grant on delivery.*" – Mid Suffolk District Council officer

5.5.6 Organisations and resources

Since 2008 the Suffolk Coffee Caravan Information project has operated as a registered charity. Its work is overseen by a volunteer Board of Trustees which is chaired by the project founder, Canon Sally Fogden. Becoming a charity has opened up more grant application opportunities.

The project employs three paid members of staff, a Project Manager, Project Officer and part-time Administrator. The first two undertake frontline delivery, taking out on-site the caravan and the camper van respectively. In each of the villages visited there is a volunteer whose role is to help organise the visits and to promote them to local people. Staff or volunteers from other agencies (such as Police Community Support Officers and Fireman) often join the visits to promote information and get community feedback. There is another group of six volunteers which helps out with the Golden Age Fairs.

Annual running costs for the project are in the region of £85,000 to £100,000. Costs for running a Golden Age Fair are in the region of £4,500 per event. These sums pay for the staffing and the service overheads. However, these costs are kept very low. When not out on visits, the staff work from their homes.

Most of the local authority funding comes in the form of a 12 month Service Level Agreement. Six district councils are now contributing – Mid Suffolk, St Edmundsbury, Babergh, Forest Heath, Suffolk Coastal and Waverney. The Suffolk Foundation also makes a sizeable contribution to running costs. In 2012 another £4,000 was usefully added to the budget when the Project Officer undertook a sponsored walk along the Suffolk coast, raising awareness of the project in the process.

One of the district councils points out that it's unusual for them to offer core revenue funding to a project, but in this case they certainly feel it justified.

5.5.7 Lessons and next steps

In many ways this project's informality is its strength. It is not and doesn't seek to be a commissioned (and therefore a defined) service. That leaves it free to operate however it sees best and to try to meet whatever needs emerge from its users. It also helps to keep the administrative and management overheads very modest.

A further lesson would appear to be that the project is attractive to users because it is not associated with formal institutions. The staff are seen as friends. In the words of the Project Manager: "They talk to us. We don't belong to anybody." She believes that the critical skill

required is knowing how to listen and when to ask. A district council officer adds that users trust the project staff, in part because they can act as advocates for them. Another point made by a volunteer is that many people visit the caravan or the fairs because doing so is made easy. It's free, it's accessible and it's sociable.

The project has proved to be highly adaptable. This applies on a day-to-day basis, where an individual's needs will somehow be addressed. It is equally true at the strategic project level, where the delivery model has evolved, such as the introduction of Golden Age Fairs.

Despite the level of success in providing information and advice, project staff recognise that there are boundaries which they must not overstep. They cannot hope to know the answer to every question they will be asked. Nor must they go beyond the offering of advice (which would easily become telling people what to do).

The view is that this project currently feels about the right size for the task in hand: there are no plans to add further vehicles or to increase substantively the number of events. That said, there is a strong wish to sustain the service at around its current level.

There are also many ideas in gestation for improving the service offer. They would like to offer IT awareness training, perhaps using smart phones or tablets, not least as one means to help address isolation. They are considering putting on tea dances and, if funding can be secured, they would like to run dementia awareness sessions. They are also thinking about ways to generate some income, which could happen through sponsorship that promotes local businesses or by selling local products e.g. food or crafts.
One thing is for sure. There is little danger of the project running out of enthusiasm or commitment. Both staff and volunteers remain as dedicated as ever.

5.6 Suffolk Links – A demand responsive transport service

Flexibility and efficiency are combined in the model of demand responsive transport provision that operates in east Suffolk, with obvious benefits for those living in its relatively isolated rural communities.

5.6.1 Introduction

Demand responsive transport (DRT) services are operated by CATS along the Suffolk coast, in five adjoining areas between Lowestoft and Felixstowe. Estuaries mean that north-south travel is not easy until the A12 and East Suffolk Rail Line are reached inland. The area is distinctly rural, though with a number of small market towns such as Saxmundham, Leiston and Framlingham. It is essentially beyond the London commuter belt, though there is a reasonable level of affluence and some coastal settlements are much populated by retired households.

5.6.2 The issue

The settlement pattern, as in much of Suffolk, means that traditional bus services are not well suited to the level of demand, the variety of needs or the often narrow roads. The issue for the County Council, as the transport authority, was therefore how best to provide residents, businesses and visitors with a service which suited their needs, whilst doing so in an efficient and cost-effective manner for the public purse. This was especially important when considering those isolated groups who do not have their own means of transport.

5.6.3 The response

Suffolk County Council undertook considerable research when planning their response. Through parish and town councils they distributed a questionnaire asking residents about their current and potential travel needs. This generated much data and some 'spider maps' showing the pattern of demand for rural bus travel. It also helped them identify appropriate boundaries for the areas over which various DRT services would run.

Going back a few years the area had quite a mix of transport provision. Coastlink was the first of the new-style DRT services to operate, initially targeting mainly visitors and receiving support from the National Trust and RSPB. Since then DRT services have more overtly

focused on meeting the needs of local residents, though they remain available for use by anyone who makes a booking.

CATS is now the transport provider for 5 of the 13 DRT services within Suffolk, running 25 minibuses and making it the largest operator in the County. Those services have varied origins. Suffolk Links Alde (started 2012) was introduced alongside a traditional scheduled bus service, addressing the needs of those away from its route and providing a feeder to that service. Suffolk Links Blyth (started 2005) replaced a section 19 transport service and Suffolk Links Wilford (started 2009) replaced a scheduled bus service.

All these DRT services now operate under the Suffolk Links brand using 11 seater minibuses. All operate as Section 22 (rather than Section 19) services, which allows them to accept concessionary fare bus passes. All offer travel from 7.00 am to 7.00 pm on Mondays to Saturdays. This standardisation has simplified the operation and is felt to have helped promote the service to its client base.

Those wishing to use the service phone the CATS travel line to make a booking, where the office enters online their journey start and finish points and their requested time of travel. Services are offered on a first-come first-served basis, with bookings taken up to a week in advance and late bookings accepted even one hour beforehand if they can reasonably be accommodated.

The MOBISOFT booking and scheduling system analyses the information and works out the most efficient route and timing, given other bookings taken in the same DRT area for the same date and similar time. It attempts to meet customer requests as closely as possible, whilst providing a route with achievable drive times. This might mean the office agreeing a slightly revised pick-up time with the passenger from that they requested.

The scheduling information is then sent by Wireless connection to the minibus, where it appears on screen, as a mapped route (similar to 'satnav'), along with timings and customer information. This is updated in real time to reflect new or changed bookings. It even schedules in the breaks that drivers are required by law to take.

5.6.4 Benefits and impacts

DRT is providing a valuable public transport service in a rural area and benefiting various groups. Unsurprisingly, the largest passenger group is the retired. However, visitors use the services and one caravan park regularly books journeys for those staying at its site. Some commuters also use the services, though with only two advance journeys bookable at a time, this requires some diligence. All the minibuses are wheelchair accessible.

Passenger surveys show that DRT is most often used for shopping trips, attending medical appointments and connecting with other public transport.

Its flexibility as a service model is attractive. The minibuses operate door-to-door throughout rural areas, although they must set-down and pick-up (only) at bus stops in the market towns (except with disabled passenger). DRT can also offer a useful feeder into other services, such as at stations along the East Suffolk Rail Line.

However, passengers have had to get used to the fact that it is not a scheduled service and neither is it a personal taxi. Pick-up times are within a 10 minute window and journey times are allowed to vary by up to 40 minutes, since routes must be variable to cater for passenger demand. That said, if a passenger states when booking that they must arrive by a set time for an appointment or connection, then the journey time will be set to meet that need.

DRT service	Passengers carried per month	Typical passenger loading
Suffolk Links Alde	400 (roughly)	2 or 3
Suffolk Links Blyth	400 to 700 (varies through year)	2 or 3
Suffolk Links Wilford	600 to 750	6 or 7

Some of the services are busier than others. Suffolk Links Wilford, which replaced a scheduled bus service, is particularly busy and finds that most of its passengers want to travel within one transport corridor. Both County and operator say that little promotional activity has been needed for these services, which have largely sold themselves, though some parish councils and GP surgeries have been helpful. CATS also produces a newsletter for distribution to those on its database.

5.6.5 Facilitators and barriers

The computerised booking and scheduling system is a huge boon for the operator. Indeed, they say that they would not realistically be able to operate such a complex DRT service for so many passengers without it. A manual system would be fine if there were just one or two services, but it could not sensibly be scaled-up to the operation delivered in east Suffolk.

The relationship between Suffolk County Council and CATS is a commercial one, yet it is also a partnership built upon a considerable level of trust. In one sense it needs to be, since CATS are operating local authority vehicles. However, it also seems clear that if service issues arise, the County feels it can rely on the operator to try and sort them out.

Another facilitator has been the County providing the operator with specific (and free) advice on occasions, for example to help it understand and interpret legislation.

There was initially some scepticism among passengers about introducing a DRT service, because of the need to book in advance and the lack of a timetable. This was most keenly voiced around Wilford, where a scheduled bus service was being replaced. However, experience has shown that people quickly adjust to DRT and like its positives attributes.

> "*Once people see the service they like it and don't want to go back [to a scheduled bus service]*" – Manager of CATS.

There is no perfect service model and there are occasions where a booking has to be turned down, perhaps where a service is fully booked or where it would result in an impractical route for the minibus. However, this is unusual and the operator will generally find a way to accommodate a difficult booking request.

5.6.6 Organisations and resources

Suffolk County Council procures the various DRT services in the 13 specified areas by competitively tendering them as three-year contracts. The County still owns the vehicles and it maintains them with its in-house team.

CATS pays for fuel and its staff salaries plus other operational costs. They collect and keep all fare revenue, with fare levels being set by the County to align with other bus services. Suffolk pays CATS a daily subsidy rate, as agreed in their contract, and reimburses it for carrying concessionary fare passengers. The subsidy works out at about £7 per passenger, which Suffolk admits is not cheap, yet the daily cost is still estimated to be half that of running a traditional scheduled bus service in this type of rural area.

CATS' describes itself as a social enterprise and in legal terms is an Industrial Provident Society with charitable status. Any operating profits are re-invested in the business. This may well help attract other donations and encourage a favourable passenger response. It has a Management Committee which comprises entirely of local volunteers.

The office staff and the DRT minibus drivers are paid staff. CATS notes that it must meet its contractual obligation to run in each DRT area six days per week and so it must have drivers contracted to turn up: volunteers, however willing, can turn round and say they are not free to work. Dial-a-ride and car services also run by CATS do, though, operate with volunteer drivers.

5.6.7 Lessons and next steps

The computerised booking and scheduling system makes such an efficient DRT operation possible. However, common sense and human intervention are sometimes needed. When the system was installed, it was necessary to adjust some of the software settings to take account of local road conditions and so to give realistic journey times.

The staff taking bookings find it sometimes makes sense to override and rationalise the route produced by the software (which they can do). The order that bookings are taken means that roundabout routes are sometimes generated and a quicker route could be run if passengers are phoned to have their pick-up times slightly altered.

CATS are also methodical about producing a manual back-up to the computerised system, just in case it should go down. A full paper copy of the following day's bookings is run off late each afternoon.

Technically speaking, each of the DRT services operates within a defined area. However, some flexibility is applied and a passenger may be taken a modest distance into a neighbouring DRT area if this simplifies their journey. For longer journeys across DRT area boundaries CATS will arrange for minibuses serving the two areas to meet at given location where the passenger can transfer.

A final lesson cited by the County is that one should always be prepared to review. Whilst these DRT services operate successfully, they are open to suggestions for improving the service, especially if that means better meeting the needs of isolated rural communities.

Suffolk County Council had intended to expand DRT operations further, plugging a few remaining gaps in rural provision. However, those plans are currently on hold because of financial constraints. It is, though, looking to existing DRT services to pick-up some of the needs where scheduled commercial bus services are being reduced. DRT is expected to remain an attractive option when services come up for tender in future.

5.7 Wishing Well - Services for the elderly

A wide range of services for the elderly are offered by Wishing Well, an independent Company limited by Guarantee based in Crewe. Whilst originally having a distinctly urban focus, it has expanded its activities into a number of smaller towns and the wider rural area.

5.7.1 Introduction

Wishing Well covers a diverse area of East Cheshire including the towns of Crewe, Nantwich, Alsager, Middlewich and their rural hinterland. Whilst parts of Crewe suffer from multiple deprivation some other towns and many of the rural areas are quite affluent.

Cheshire East as a whole has a higher proportion of older people than the average for England and, in general, the greatest increase has been in its rural areas. An ageing population profile has given rise to increasing demands for care and support services.

5.7.2 The issue

As Wishing Well recognise, a number of factors (including families moving away, not driving, reduced public transport and/or the closure of local facilities) have left many of their elderly rural clients with little in the way of local support networks and feeling very isolated.

5.7.3 The response

The Company cites its key goals as being to:
- Empower and support the community and social participation.
- Encourage confidence, ambition and personal development in the community.
- Provide local services and activities to encourage a sense of well-being in the community.

It aims to provide an integrated menu of support services to meet the needs of local residents.

Wishing Well started out in 2002 as a Crewe and Nantwich Borough Council initiative, supported by Cheshire County Council and the Primary Care Trust, to meet community needs in a multiply disadvantaged area of Crewe. At that time it also received funding from the Lottery New Opportunities Fund. It subsequently became an independent company set up as a social enterprise organisation and, in 2011, it expanded to take on six day-care centres for the elderly that had formerly been run by Age Concern, based in Crewe (3), Middlewich, Alsager and Nantwich. It has grown into a thriving community support scheme providing a range of health related services and activities to local people.

Wishing Well's provision of services to elderly rural residents was initiated quite by chance. As their Project Manager explained, "One day, about two years ago, a social worker came into our community café and told us that the local hospital wanted to discharge an elderly gentleman but they were worried about him cooking for himself. They asked if we could possibly supply meals to him at home. Well, of course we were pleased to help…that was the start of our home meals service."

Now, hot lunchtime meals are delivered every week to over 85 customers, many of whom have a meal every day. The charge for a freshly cooked two course meal is just £4 (other providers are said to typically charge £5.30 - £6.25). Wishing Well also provide a range of additional services to the elderly including:

- Social support (including home based help, outings, appointments, health and fitness groups) £11 an hour.
- A laundry service. £7 per load of towels and bed linen.
- A shopping service (charged at 20% of the value of items bought).
- Gardening. £11.50 per hour.
- Cleaning. £11.50 per hour.

About half the customers of these services are resident in rural areas.

Referrals come from a number of different sources including the Council, hospital discharge staff, other medical professionals, and friends and family. Sometimes elderly people contact them direct having heard of the service from other customers.

Elderly rural residents are also very welcome to attend the day care clubs (£10 per session including lunch), luncheon clubs and other activity groups, and many do so. Wishing Well will assist with transport whenever possible either by helping to liaise with the flexible transport service or, if required, by seeking volunteer drivers.

Volunteer entertainers at a Wishing Well day centre.

Wishing well also provides access to a variety of other services such as benefits advice, opticians, assisted technology and art and crafts activities.

5.7.4 Benefits and impacts

Wishing Well consider that their services to the elderly have a number of benefits in terms of improved well-being, for example in reducing both the number of and duration of hospital stays and enabling people to continue living in their own homes.

Their provision of services, which utilises a great deal of voluntary help, is also extremely cost effective. For example, they estimate that the annual cost of running each day care centre would be approximately £78,000 if run entirely by paid staff compared to their current figure of £10,000. Their services are also highly co-ordinated so that, for example, the person delivering a meal may also collect washing or deliver shopping for the same customer during the same visit.

There are important links with Social Services, health professionals and the Police which help to ensure that problems and issues are responded to appropriately.

The organisation is highly flexible and encourages and values many different forms of volunteering. There are the regular helpers, (who may, for example, deliver meals on one or two days a week), and those who may volunteer in a short-term capacity or for specific events, (such as students providing entertainment at a day-care centre).

From the customer's perspective their services are highly regarded. A 90 year-old lady living alone in a rural village commented on how much she enjoyed the hot meals "they're very good indeed…and they check that they're suitable for me (diabetic) so I don't have to worry". With regard to their other services the laundry was "just beautiful" and other help, including travel to hospital appointments, provided by the "very nice and very kind ladies", was evidently greatly appreciated. She volunteered that "I know quite a few people who use Wishing Well. Everyone is very satisfied".

Importantly, her appreciation of Wishing Well services was not confined to the quality, reliability and price of the services that she received, but also to the peace of mind she derived from knowing that they are there and contactable. "I don't think that there's anything that they won't try to help with if it's really important".

From the Council's perspective, the services offered by Wishing Well decrease the demands made upon their adult social care budget which is under great and increasing pressure because of the demographic characteristics of the area and the authority-wide reduction in Government funding.

5.7.5 Facilitators and barriers

The Project Manager has a background in social care and has been with the organisation since its inception. It is evident that her inspiration, energy and determination have been crucial to the development of Wishing Well although she appreciates the importance of increased delegation and of building skills within the wider team. She is supported by a small core group of managers, by other paid staff and by many volunteers.

Funding is a significant issue. Although the community café and outside catering make a small profit and the delivered meals, laundry, shopping and assistance at home all broadly cover their costs, increasing pressure to reduce spending has recently led the Council to withdraw grant funding for the day care centres. This has presented considerable problems to Wishing Well who are now struggling to fund the centres from their other activities. Also, as the cooks employed through the day-care centres work closely with the cooks and volunteers running the meals delivery service, there is a concern that if the day care centres were to close the meals delivery service would also be threatened.

The organisation relies heavily on volunteers and Wishing Well is fortunate in attracting support from the local population including students from the local Manchester Metropolitan University campus and from South Cheshire College. Nonetheless additional volunteers are always wanted. All volunteers are CRB checked and given relevant training in areas such as food hygiene and First Aid.

The interconnectedness of the services to the elderly are a great strength. Not only are customers offered a range of services but also they generally enjoy next-day delivery and combined purpose journeys help to keep costs low.

5.7.6 Organisation and resources

Wishing Well is a Company Limited by Guarantee which uses a social enterprise model such that profits from any of its services are used to fund non-income generating services. It has around 20 paid part-time staff in total and a large, but variable, number of volunteers. Its activities are not confined to services for the elderly. Indeed, it provides a community café and a wide variety of activities, classes and clubs for all ages. In addition, supported work placements are often provided to vulnerable people, referred by social services or medical professionals, thus helping them to socialise in a safe environment and reducing demands on other statutory services.

The organisation's main sources of income are from the charges made for its services (including also the community café, commercial catering and room hire); Wulvern Housing; and from Cheshire East (for Lifelong Learning). Until the current financial year (2013/14) it also received grant funding from Cheshire East Council for Day Care Services. It also receives donations from a number of small organisations and individuals and raises money through its own fund-raising activities.

The benefits of the company's work are widely recognised but not always easy to quantify in monetary terms. Funding is not entirely secure and is subject to periodic reviews. Neither does the organisation own any of its own premises. The headquarters at Jubilee House are rented from Cheshire East Council for a peppercorn rent and a variety of separate arrangements exist for the use of other buildings. Accordingly the company is potentially vulnerable to reductions in funding, to losing the use of particular venues and/or to increases in accommodation costs.

5.7.7 Lessons and next steps

The Project Manager mentioned flexibility as a key feature of the organisation. Certainly Wishing Well sets out to be responsive to the needs of the local community and its diversification into providing services to elderly rural residents is a clear example.

Strong leadership and commitment have been essential to the organisation's effectiveness. Wishing Well is now a complex organisation with many interconnected strands to its service delivery all of which need to be managed and co-ordinated efficiently.

Building good relationships with funders and wider community has been very important. By being genuinely responsive to customer, and potential customer, needs the organisation has built a positive reputation not only with funders but also with the wider community.

Valuing and training volunteers. Without volunteers far fewer services could be offered and it is clear that Wishing Well genuinely values their help and aspires to give them confidence and a sense of wellbeing. Appropriate training and/or support are routinely offered.

Understanding then meeting needs. Wishing Well is a responsive organisation which will continue to listen to requests from the community. One new venture currently being developed is a 'telephone friends' service, whereby any older people who may be feeling unwell or particularly lonely will receive a phone call to provide them with an opportunity for a friendly chat. The volunteers running this new service, many of whom are themselves elderly, are receiving training from a counsellor with extensive experience within the Samaritans organisation. No doubt this service will be particularly welcomed by many elderly rural residents who might otherwise suffer from severe isolation.

As Wishing Well quite deliberately seeks to respond to identified community needs, whether urban or rural, the possibilities of delivering new services and/or delivering services from new venues are constantly under consideration.

5.8 Okehampton Work Club – Helping unemployed people access job opportunities

The work club provides a friendly and supportive environment in which unemployed people are helped to access job opportunities. It operates from the Ockment Centre, which is located in the centre of Okehampton, and customers are drawn from surrounding villages as well as from the town.

5.8.1 Introduction

Okehampton is a town of approximately 6,000 residents located immediately to the north of Dartmoor and approximately 20 miles west of Exeter. It is the day-to-day service centre for an extensive, sparsely populated, rural area. Whilst not particularly deprived in a national context, neither is it one of the more affluent parts of Devon.

The Job Centre in Okehampton closed in 2008 and the nearest one is now in Exeter.

5.8.2 The Issue

In the first four months of 2011 over 320 jobs were lost from the town when three major employers closed. The largest of these, and the first to close, was a food products factory which had operated in the town, under different ownerships, for many years. The others were an established dairy and a specialist chocolate manufacturer. These were followed a year later, in March 2012, by the closure of another food product factory resulting in 90 job losses. The vast majority of the jobs lost from these companies were comparatively unskilled.

Suddenly people, many of whom had worked for the same employer for years, if not decades, found themselves redundant and facing a gamut of emotional, financial and practical issues. The manager of the Ockment Community Centre says that within hours of the first factory redundancies people stared to appear at the Centre, "absolutely shocked, very upset …. and all of them looking for help."

5.8.3 The response

The Ockment Centre sets out to be responsive to local needs. Their first response to the mass redundancies was to provide "a good supply of tea, coffee and tissues" (manager) followed rapidly by other practical help in the form of 'The Work Club'. This was set up through the initiative of the Centre Manager who recognised the need to do something straightaway despite having no funding stream in place.

From the outset the Centre was keen to ensure that not only would the club provide practical help to enable its users to look for new employment but that it would provide a welcoming environment were the valued social contacts between former colleagues could be maintained.

By listening to those who had been made redundant it quickly became evident that many lacked even the most basic computer skills and others had, for example, no recent experience of writing a job application or compiling a C.V. Their needs were not for a formal IT qualification but for much more basic, practical help. Fortunately Westward Pathfinder was, at that time, already providing a range of IT courses at the Ockment Centre and they were able to provide a paid tutor whilst the Centre provided the room and equipment. The Westward Pathfinder tutor then led the scheme until August 2012 at which time their previous funding (which included assistance from Dartmoor Leaf and the Department for Work and Pensions) was reduced and they were "unable to continue providing open access

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learning at their smaller centres", including Okehampton. The Ockment Centre considered the provision so important that they then employed the tutor direct for one day each week.

5.8.4 Benefits and impacts

Although not yet back to the pre- January 2011 level, the number of local people claiming Job Seekers Allowance has steadily dropped.

There are, as yet, no customer satisfaction surveys but the Work Club is undoubtedly actively used. 53 customers made a total of 193 visits to the work Club between September 2012 and January 2013 (60% were from the town and immediate environs and 40% from the wider rural area) indicating that it is performing a valued service.

It is impossible to quantify the effectiveness of the Work Club, in isolation, in helping people back to work. However, a past customer, now back in employment, expressed the following views:

- "A lot of us had worked for the same company for a long time, I'd worked in Polestar for over 17 years …the Club helped us prepare CVs and make on-line job applications, things that lots of us had never done before.
- The Centre was very welcoming, the people there were all very nice and never made you feel stupid…. It made me feel a lot more confident….I think some people might have felt uncomfortable using the College.
- Having somewhere to go where you could meet and have a cup of tea with former colleagues was really important too."

5.8.5 Facilitators and barriers

The initiative and determination of the Centre Manager was central to the setting-up of the Club and for securing local funding to maintain it. The availability of a skilled and empathetic tutor, and initial external funding for his work, have also been key factors in the popularity of the service.

The generosity of Okehampton United Charities (who provided a £12,500 grant to the centre in March 2012) and Okehampton Town Council (recent funding of £5,000 per annum) have enabled the service to continue. This funding is not however secure for the future. The Centre has to make bids for these grants on an annual basis which makes longer term planning very difficult. Also, because staffing levels are kept low to reduce costs (even the manager is part-time) this means that there is little capacity for making wider funding bids.

The manager considers that adopting a deliberately responsive model of provision makes it harder to find funding because potential funders prefer to pay for more easily definable services. However, she remains convinced that it is vital for the Centre to remain flexible enough to meet changing local needs and also that, by operating with minimal numbers of staff, it means that "money gets through to service delivery without being creamed off by layers of management bureaucracy."

The presence of Job Centre staff on Fridays to deal with routine signings (although not initial registration or advice) enables some customers of the Work Club to make dual-purpose visits.

With regard to this specific service the original partner-provider (Westward Pathfinder) has been unable to continue due to cuts in government funding. Although, as noted above, the Centre has received local grants, the absence of secure longer-term funding creates uncertainty and hinders longer term planning.

Services to the Work Club's customers would be made more seamless by a better co-ordination of local services, for example:

- If the Citizens Advice Bureau office in the Ockment Centre accepted appointments on Fridays (which is the day the Work Club runs and Job Centre staff are present), this would enabling more multi-purpose visits. This could be of particular benefit to rural customers reliant on public transport.
- An increase in the range of Job Centre services provided at the Ockment Centre, or at least the provision of a low cost phone link to their Exeter offices, would reduce the need to travel to Exeter. Again this would particularly benefit those rural residents without access to a private vehicle.

More widely, the Government's agenda to encourage more on-line service delivery is not being facilitated by the loss of/ absence of local basic IT training.

Accessibility to jobs and training can prove difficult. There is a reasonable daytime bus service from Okehampton to Exeter but it can be hard to travel from or around the more rural areas by public transport. This is a particular problem to those without a car, even to town residents, as several potential employers are based in rural areas rather than the town itself.

5.8.6 Organisations and resources

The Ockment Centre is a mainly self-funding autonomous charity, which provides community facilities from a former primary school in the centre of Okehampton. It has 3 trustees and is run by a 0.4 FTE part-time centre manager with the support of 2 full-time receptionists /administrators, part-time cleaning and caretaking staff and the part-time tutor. In total the staffing equates to 3.8 FTE.

Although the Centre derives an income through letting out rooms, which covers about 90% of its expenditure, it is routinely in deficit by around £12,000 per annum. In recent years the Centre has been reliant on local grants, primarily for the Okehampton United Charities and Okehampton Town Council, to make up the shortfall.

The scheme is free to users and the cost of provision has recently been calculated by the Centre to be just £10 per user visit.

5.8.7 Lessons and next steps.

The centre is genuinely responsive to local needs "we have an open-door, meet-the-need policy here" (manager). It also helps that people use the Centre for a variety of purposes so no-one outside need know why any particular person is attending, it could be for an art class, yoga, the Work Club or to meet a Social Worker.

Flexibility. Everyone' needs are different, as are their reactions to redundancy.
The Work Club illustrates that it first listens to individuals to find out their needs and then responds appropriately. For example, the initial key need for some was to get over the shock of redundancy in a supportive environment.

Help with IT is carefully focused on customer needs. The main requirements were not to obtain a formal qualification but to access work opportunities. The Centre ensured that the tutor was someone who could help those with absolutely no computer skills, and who was able to do so with a sense of compassion.

The environment matters. A friendly, welcoming atmosphere, not at all like a formal classroom, makes The Work Club a place that people enjoy attending.

If funding were available the centre would like to develop the Work Club to provide interview skills and to offer benefits advice. Ideally, it would also like to other work-relevant courses, both in the day and evenings.

5.9 "The Hopes" – An affordable housing development in Keswick.

A serious lack of affordable housing in Keswick was the motivation for the use of land at St John's Church to bring forward 11 housing units. The project was led by a multi-faith group which had been meeting for some time to discuss the challenges facing their community. This case study is supplemented by a very current example of good practice in Gloucester. It also contains a description of the Faith in Affordable Housing a national source of support for the use of faith assets in the provision of affordable housing.

5.9.1 The Issue

Keswick is an iconic Lakeland settlement of 5,000 people at the heart of the Lake District National Park. It has an important role as a rural service centre, providing health, leisure, education and employment for a large hinterland. The extremely attractive landscape surroundings make Keswick a popular place to live and to visit and as a result the ratio of house prices to local incomes is exceptionally high. There is also an acute shortage of affordable housing so it is a very difficult place for local people to find accommodation unless they have significant personal means. The challenge is based on both high rental costs and, even more significantly, a lack of available houses for rent.

The issue of affordable housing has, for some time, been a concern for a range of religious denominations in Keswick. They initially came together under the umbrella of 'Churches Together in Keswick' in order to explore a number of issues affecting the town's sustainability. From these meetings a particular further focus emerged in terms of affordable housing: People in modestly paid jobs, (with the sort of incomes which, in other less expensive areas, might enable them to be self- sufficient in terms of housing), were simply not able to access any form of rented accommodation in Keswick.

There was a strong feeling that the application of national norms in terms of housing policy to a particularly challenged place like Keswick was causing these households to "fall between the cracks". There was a further concern that the concentration of affordable housing in more distant urban settlements (such as Workington and Whitehaven) was leading to a "decanting" of young families out of Keswick making the settlement socially polarised and less sustainable.

5.9.2 The Response

A committed group of participants from the Churches Together group began the search for a site to bring forward some new affordable housing for Keswick. Initially they were not focused specifically on church land or assets but it was soon identified that land adjacent to St John's Church was potentially available through the Carlisle Diocese to bring forward housing.

Cumbria Rural Housing Trust (CRHT) were then recruited to advise the group on how to make the transition from identifying the site to providing some new affordable houses. Other support was supplied by individuals from both Pro-Help and the Cooperative Development Hub. Initially Derwent and Solway Housing Association and latterly Impact Housing Association (who will manage the finished properties) also provided practical and technical advice.

5.9.3 Benefits and Impacts

The group appreciates that this development will only go a very small way to addressing the challenge of affordable housing in Keswick. The scheme has however:

- demonstrated that determined local people can access the know how to address a significant challenge.

- established a mechanism for bringing forward further affordable housing in Keswick - the group are currently seeking a second site for a development up to twice as large as the current project.

5.9.4 Facilitators and Barriers

The determination and dedication of the individuals leading the initiative and their preparedness to on certain occasions to release finance, and even, for example in terms of planning fees, to meet elements of fee costs personally, was a key factor in making the development happen. Overall the process has taken four years.

The pivotal role played by CRHT throughout the process, and by business advisers and Housing Associations in supporting the development of the Community Land Trust.

Crucially the common religious ground which existed between St John's Church and those leading the development of the initiative was persuasive in securing the land at a beneficial cost that supported the development of the project.

There have been a few negative comments from the some in the community who are opposed to the provision of affordable housing.

Planning permission was relatively straightforward. However, there were some challenging negotiations with local land owners around securing access to the site which took some time to resolve.

The positive response of the Cumberland Building Society to providing supporting finance was important, particularly as the group had no collateral. The requirement, in relation to this funding, for the group to raise £50,000 (which was exceeded) provided a useful driver to encourage the organisation to firm up the commitment of its supporters.

The development of the allocations policy was a challenge and an important means for the organisation to confirm its core purpose and values.

5.9.5 Organisation and Resources

Over a 4 year period the residents formed a Community Land Trust Charity, underpinned by Industrial and Provident Society (IPS) Status, which registered as a social landlord with the Homes and Communities Agency. This was an onerous and complicated process but it enabled them to be truly independent and to access the crucial HCA funding required to make the scheme financially successful. Other funding was raised through an IPS share issue and in the form of a bridging loan from the Cumberland Building Society. Specialists solicitors Cobbetts in Leeds helped with the legal aspects of the development.

11 houses are currently being constructed on the development, named "The Hopes". 5 properties will be shared equity housing and 5 will be for rent. At one stage it was thought that as many as three properties might have to be sold on the open market in order to balance the books for the development, but through good financial husbandry this was reduced to just a single property. The overall development business plan was prepared by residents with support from CRHT and a link to a plan which had some similarity and had been developed by a group in Crosby Ravensworth. The Allocation Policy has been developed by the group to reflect key local priorities and the whole initiative is underpinned by the National Housing Federation.

The total cost of the development will be £1.1 million with £770,000 paid off through disposals and the balance managed through rental income.

5.9.6 Lessons and Next Steps

This case study showcases the real opportunities which exist to use the latent potential of church assets to bring forward affordable housing in rural areas. This is particularly useful in view of the limited land for development in many smaller rural communities. The Faith in Affordable Housing (FIAH) initiative has encouraged the bringing forward of other church assets (of all denominations) for affordable housing. More information about the organisation can be found at http://www.housingjustice.org.uk/pages/fiah.html

There are a number of other case studies which can be accessed through FIAH. One particularly contemporary development, which forms a modest companion example of good practice to run alongside the Keswick case study, is the vicarage redevelopment at St Stephen's Church in Gloucester. This is attached below.

5.9.7 Other key features of the Keswick case study include:

The importance of a group of dedicated individuals who were not prepared to "give in"

The technical challenges (financial, housing and development based) which had to be overcome and the social and legislative issues surrounding them. Without the support particularly of CRHT but also other key players, including business advisers; Housing Associations; and the Cumberland Building Society, the project would not have been able to proceed

The preparedness of the HCA to accept a new registered organisation from scratch. This also gave the organisation the independence to be a long term agent for further development and change rather than a provider of a one-off facility. The importance of the group realising their limitations around detailed housing management and identifying a positive and supportive Housing Association partner to take on this role. The group is currently seeking to bring forward a second site of up to twice the size of the first.

Faith in Affordable Housing (FIAH)

Faith in Affordable Housing is a project inviting churches and other property-owning Christian organisations to offer their land/unused buildings for affordable housing. Initially funded by the Tenant Services Authority, Homes and Communities Agency, Housing Justice, the Commission for Rural Communities, the Quaker Housing Trust and the Church of England to produce an online guide in 2009; it is now funded by Tudor Trust and Sylvia Adam's Charitable Trust to fund two Project Officers in England and Wales . It is hosted by 'Housing Justice', a national Christian charity dedicated to addressing homelessness and housing need.

The online guide showcases 9 case studies of church assets being used to bring forward affordable housing. The report and case studies are available at
http://www.housingjustice.org.uk/data/files/FIAH/FiAH_Guide_for_web.pdf

Faith in Affordable Housing does not have an exclusive rural focus. In rural settlements however under-used or closed church buildings and land provide a potentially widespread source of sites for affordable housing projects.

Whilst small in terms of its resource base, the organisation has built up a significant amount of "know how" in terms of facilitating the use of faith assets. In addition to promoting the positive outcomes of successful schemes, this involves helping with technical issues - including clarification of s.36(9) of the Charities Act in relation to the disposal of land for housing in the context of the requirement for Church trustees to secure "best value" for their assets The Project Officers also provide active support and brokerage links with housing organisations and other bodies to help get schemes started.

St Stephen's Vicarage – Gloucester

An "urban" example of the work of FIAH in action is the key role it has played in facilitating a partnership between the Gloucester Diocese and Rooftop Housing Group (RHG), to bring forward 15 units of affordable housing and a new vicarage at the derelict St Stephen's Vicarage site in Gloucester. A key theme of the development is the provision of accommodation for young people. The scheme is currently under construction.

Gloucester Diocese has established an innovative approach to managing its land and buildings through the creation of a company, the Good and Faithful Servant, which provides it with the scope to actively pursue a number of objectives in terms of disposals including the provision of affordable housing. This approach has led to it developing a very practical and focused management of its assets and provided a dynamic vehicle for projects such as the St Stephen's initiative.

In return for the provision of a new vicarage the Diocese has granted Rooftop a 125-year lease on the rest of the land surrounding the old vicarage. This has enabled the housing association to bring forward 14 new homes, 11 for use by younger people, managed through G3 a subsidiary of RHG, two three bed houses for general needs and two three bed shared ownership homes. The scheme is being part funded by the Homes and Communities Agency as part of RHG's 2011-15 funding allocation. - bedroom house, all as affordable housing units.

The identification of an underused faith related site through a focused approach to disposals; the provision of a vicarage in return for development land; and the focus on the development of housing for young people are all highly transferable examples of good practice equally relevant to the rural context.

5.10 Ennerdale Hub – A community owned pub

The closure of the Fox and Hounds pub in Ennerdale Bridge inspired the local community to take direct action as the first stage in their plans and save this much treasured asset – 'more than a pub', its reopening is one step on a holistic journey of community led regeneration: where local community meets wild valley. They are now considerably advanced down the route of creating a new physical community hub to complement the services offered by the pub.

5.10.1 Introduction

Ennerdale Bridge is an isolated rural community in the Western Lake District, approximately 8 miles inland from Whitehaven. It has a parish population of 220 people but Neighbourhood Statistics recognise the broader catchment that depends upon this settlement as comprising 1,025 people. It is on the Coast-to-Coast Path which starts at St Bees on the west coast of Cumbria and ends at Robin Hood's Bay in North Yorkshire. Commuters and other users (including employees at Sellafield) also pass through the village, generating a footfall of 130,000 people each year.

5.10.2 The issue

The community became concerned as the rural services which they relied upon were progressively being lost. The shop and post office closed in November 2010, the bus service was subsequently reduced and there were fears that the only public telephone in the village (which has no mobile phone coverage) would also be withdrawn.

Between 2009 and 2011, Ennerdale and Kinniside Parish Council, local community groups and 'Wild Ennerdale' project staff undertook a series of community events and surveys to find out how people felt about this decline in services. This included 'the Community Gateway Gather', an event to celebrate the Ennerdale Valley which took place in September 2009 and the use of household questionnaires. In 2011, a Feasibility Study was carried out to weigh up the ideas emerging from the consultation process. This revealed overwhelming community support for restoring the village shop. In parallel, a project was being undertaken to bring farmers and local food producers together to supply the pub and the hotel in Ennerdale Bridge. The deterioration of village facilities and wider impact of the recession had

led to a position where travel guides and online reviews of Ennerdale Bridge were poor, discouraging tourists and visitors from stopping as "there's nothing there".

At the end of February 2011, one of these village pubs, 'The Fox and Hounds Inn', was suddenly closed. This acted as a catalyst in bringing the community together, furthering the ground swell around diminishing local services and making people want to take action:

"We wanted to regain village life and the desire was there and we didn't want to moan but get on and do something about it" Ennerdale Bridge resident.

"Without the Fox and Hounds Pub, what would we all do?" Ennerdale Bridge resident.

5.10.3 The response

The Ennerdale Hub Ltd - an Industrial and Provident Society was set up to take on the operation of the Fox and Hounds Pub and to develop and take forward other projects on behalf of the community.

£67,000 was needed from the community for them to be able to take on the lease of the pub (which is independently owned and was not for sale) – with the owner giving the community just 10 days in which to generate the money. A meeting was held in the local church and attended by 130 people who pledged £100-£5,000 each. Within 8 days this target had been reached.

The Board of the Ennerdale Hub Ltd then put a business plan in place, creating a shared community vision of what they wanted to achieve, the products and services the pub would provide and sell as well as the financial targets they wanted to reach.

The Hub set the pub opening date for 4 April 2011 so as to capitalise on the business potential of Coast to Coast walkers, Easter holidays and additional public holidays. This led

to 4 weeks of hectic activity, with hundreds of residents helping – including 100 volunteers cleaning, repairing, redecorating and gardening the weekend prior to reopening.

5.10.4 Benefits and impacts

"The Pub gives the community ownership and reason to help out and make sure it doesn't die" Ennerdale Bridge resident.

"Already the reopening of the pub has helped to revitalise relationships within the village. When there is no central hub for a village, people begin to withdraw to their own homes and miss out on day-to-day interaction. The pub has already helped to revive the community at that personal level. It has also brought about a massive sense of empowerment — people have seen what is possible and started to believe in themselves" Peter Maher, Secretary, Ennerdale Hub Ltd.

The Fox and Hounds Pub have given the community in Ennerdale Bridge ownership of and a say in how a local facility is run, turning them from passers-by into loyal regulars. This pub (which also has three visitor bedrooms) is also:

- Providing a meeting venue and outreach facilities for a range of agencies and organisations including Citizens Advice, Groundwork and Wild Ennerdale.
- Acting as a base and focal point for community activities (e.g. arts and crafts group, cookery club, gardening group, having an information board); reducing social isolation and improving the mental health and well-being of residents.
- Supporting the delivery of public services – hosting a book drop/library for Cumbria County Council.
- Creating and sustaining local employment and skills – providing 2 paid positions and volunteer opportunities.
- Helping to ensure that money stays within the local economy and community. Turnover in the first 12 months (April 2011- April 2012) exceeded £276,311 against a business plan target of £250,107. The pub has relationships with suppliers to sell locally sourced food and drink and provides bed and breakfast accommodation.
- Pulling in partnership working opportunities with Copeland Borough Council, Wild Ennerdale project and Lake District National Park Authority.

5.10.5 Facilitators and barriers

"You need social entrepreneurs with the energy to drive things forward...sufficient people with time and skills and someone who can get things going and keep the momentum" Ennerdale Bridge resident.

- Practical Experience - The residents of Ennerdale Bridge had never run a pub before and found there was little or no practical 'know how' information or guides to help them. Whilst there are significant resources available to support the development of community shops and the privately owned pubs there is very limited information and support for the development of community owned pubs.

- Technical Help - The Hub found it difficult to identify an appropriate source of technical support and eventually was able to get the help they needed in the form of external advice through a consultant from Co-operative and Mutual Solutions Ltd (set

up by The Co-operative to support social enterprises) helped them develop the business model of the Hub (i.e., shareholders, employing staff).

- Harnessing Local Capacity - The Hub Board, supported by the Parish Council and individuals in the community already had key skills in business, project management, finance/accounts, legal and food and drink; and everyone coalesced around wanting to make the pub work. Managing the workload of the community residents involved was a challenge because so much needed to happen within a short period of time. Notwithstanding this challenge, which was overcome, there is significant local commitment to the on-going operation of the pub, which engages a significant number of local unpaid volunteers in its on-going operation.

- Local Ownership – There can be no doubt that the development of the community owned pub has made a major contribution to the sustainability of the village and provided a practical impetus towards the wider "Ennerdale Hub" concept. Running the pub has been a significant challenge in terms of reconciling community "ownership" and the day to day management of a commercial facility in the sense that the landlord has been accountable to the whole community for their decisions.

- Funding – The Hub had to rely on support from the development of the pub project from the Copeland Community Fund (a community development linked to BNFL administered by Copeland Council) and feasibility support from Cumbria Fells and Dales Leader. Both sources of funding were vital to the success of the project but both had demanding bidding and claiming requirements.

5.10.6 Organisations and resources

The Ennerdale Hub Ltd is an Industrial and Provident Society that is fully constituted with shareholders and an elected Board of Directors. The Fox and Hounds pub now has 220 shareholders, each paying in between £100 and £4,000. The Society employs 4 full time equivalent staff to run the pub, supported by community volunteers.

5.10.7 Lessons and next steps

- The Start of Something Bigger – The story of community development in Ennerdale is about people coming together to tackle the issue of village sustainability – not simply a community owned pub. The development of the community owned pub has given the community activists involved the confidence and impetus to move to the next stage of their vision. Now the pub is established and has a sustainable income, the community want to take on the next phase of Ennerdale Hub Ltd; establishing the 'Ennerdale Centre', a village shop, information service for visitors, exhibitions about the area, office/desk space for local organisations, community facilities and a cafe. They hope to utilise a disused Forestry Commission building on the western side of the village and feasibility work is currently being undertaken.

- Detailed Planning - Ennerdale Hub Ltd did its homework in preparing a Business Plan at the outset so as to crystallise the community's aspirations and make sure plans for financing and running the pub were achievable.

- One Size Doesn't Fit all - The conditions in Ennerdale were conducive to taking action to address the sort of economic decline affecting many rural communities – a number of them however are also unique to the place itself. It has a reservoir of dedicated people able to put their professional experience and time into the development of the project. It was able to raise significant funds through the Industrial and Provident model to acquire the lease on the pub. The settlement has the beneficial footfall along the coast to coast path which sustains the operation of the pub. There is a traditional of rural regeneration and landscape engagement in the community through the work of the North West Copeland Regeneration Partnership and "Wild Ennerdale" to build on. Funds were accessible to get things started from Leader and the Copeland Community Fund. Whilst the lack of one of these facilities/circumstances is unlikely to have detracted from progress the overall combination of them reminds us that there are as many locally specific as generic characteristics which underpin a successful case study of this type.

5.11 Jubilee Park – A community-run leisure facility and tourist attraction

Jubilee Park is a valuable local leisure facility and tourist attraction. Led by Woodhall Spa Parish Council with support from the Friends of Jubilee Park, this green space is now being 'run by the community for the community' after a refurbishment and asset transfer package from East Lindsey District Council.

5.11.1 Introduction

Woodhall Spa has a population of 4,000 people and is located on the edge of the Lincolnshire Wolds, in the East Lindsey district of Lincolnshire.

Jubilee Park was created for the benefit of the people of Woodhall Spa by Lady Grace Weigall and opened in 1935. In 1947 the Park was gifted to the Urban District Council (UDC) and between then and 1974 the authority put considerable investment into the Park and swimming pool and marketed it countywide. Following local government re-organisation in 1974, the UDC agreed to transfer the Park to East Lindsey District Council (ELDC). Over the next 35 years the authority updated the pool changing and reception areas and created a bowling green and pitch and putt course.

Today Jubilee Park encompasses a caravan and camping site, a main outdoor swimming pool and a paddling pool, cafe, children's playground, 3 tennis courts, bowling green, putting green, cricket fields, croquet lawn, table tennis area, band stand, lawns and flower beds as well as public toilet block.

5.11.2 The issue

From the late 1980's Jubilee Park struggled to compete for funds with other, newer, leisure venues in the district. Financial pressures within ELDC caused a re-evaluation of leisure priorities within the authority in the summer of 2009. The Council wanted to streamline its direct provision of sports facilities to a minimum core infrastructure whilst also supporting the Big Society principles of putting communities in control of local facilities.

The community of Woodhall Spa have united in putting pressure on ELDC to invest and save the Park and to protect the legacy of Lady Weigall. After the Parish Plan was completed in 2005, the Parish Council established a 'Friends of Jubilee Park' (FOJP) group to act as the community's interface with ELDC.

5.11.3 The response

The Parish Council, supported by their ELDC ward councillor, organised a meeting with ELDC's Chief Executive, the leisure portfolio holder and Council Leader in September 2009 to discuss the future of the Park. The Council's Leisure Strategy (2005-2008) cited Jubilee Park as being of local benefit rather than strategic benefit. At the meeting it was clear that ELDC did not want to retain on-going revenue or capital liability for the Park. ELDC was

amendable to an asset transfer providing there was community support and a credible business plan.

Subsequently, a number of public meetings were held to determine the level of community support. These were attended by up to 100 residents who were overwhelmingly in favour of the project. Jubilee Park became a specific item on the agenda of every Parish Council meeting.   Further meetings were held with ELDC in the autumn of 2009 to develop a framework needed to enable an asset transfer to be approved by the Executive Committee and full Council.

The Parish Council set up a Working Group (with Councillors and community representatives) to take the project forward. In November 2010, with support from Lincolnshire Co-operative Development Agency, The Parish Council published a Business Plan. This included:

- A Situation Analysis – confirming the roles and responsibilities of the Parish Council and ELDC in transferring the Park.
- A Strategic Plan – setting out the objectives of the asset transfer; action plans (i.e., how to build awareness, drive usage and increase customer loyalty at the Park); and a financial plan.
- Management of the Park – how the site would operate on a day-to-day basis.
- Tracking – how the Parish Council would monitor progress.

The Business Plan was subject to an external audit by Focus Consultants (UK) Limited on behalf of ELDC and signed off.

The Parish Council looked at other community enterprises running open air pool facilities including Hampton Pool (Middlesex) and Portishead Lido (North Somerset). These visits underlined the importance of having a quality retail offer (cafe, shop), provided them with ideas to maximise revenue, emphasised the need for good leadership to give direction and focus to the community's energy and the need for volunteer support.

At the end of this process, ELDC agreed to:

- Fund a capital refurbishment programme: spending £700,000 at the outset to repair the main outdoor pool and install a new filtration system and to improve utilities at the caravan site.
- Provide an annual subsidy to the Parish Council over a 5-year period to cover revenue costs: £150,000 in total decreasing over time - £59,763 in 2011; £39,907 in 2012; £17,813 in 2013; £18,044 in 2014; and £14,309 in 2015.
- Provide in-kind support: enabling the Parish Council to shadow grounds maintenance and pool/technical support teams to understand what is involved in the day to day running of the Park.
- Ensure the property, services and equipment was in good working order, meeting all regulations with up-to-date certifications/maintenance.
- Work in partnership with the Parish Council to seek competitive tenders from local trades' people to undertake capital refurbishment programme and ground maintenance.
- To agree the freehold asset transfer of the Park to the Parish Council.

5.11.4 Benefits and impacts

"It brings in tourists, is a staple of the village and keeps the economy going...most people recognise Jubilee Park" Joe Stanhope, Manager Jubilee Park

In April 2011, Jubilee Park was formally transferred to the Parish Council. The asset transfer to the community has led to:

- An increase in community involvement with more than 1,500 volunteer hours donated each year to running the park.
- An improved "park offer", including the opening of a new cafe (May 2013) and an events programme (e.g. picnic in the park, 1940s weekend, midnight swims).
- More efficient financial management of the Park through local marketing, the use of volunteers, reduced personnel overheads (with managerial oversight by Parish Council not paid employees of ELDC) and tackling any maintenance problems promptly.
- A dedicated Park website with information about activities, events and an online booking facility for the caravan site – this has led to a 15% increase in caravan bookings.
- The Park playing a more active role in the local economy –the Parish Council has created 2 full time jobs (for a Park Manager and Site Warden), with many seasonal posts filled by members of the local community.

5.11.5 Facilitators and barriers

"3 or 4 years ago the Park was sad, tired, slightly neglected, the cafe dilapidated and the local authority didn't want to throw money at it. But the community here thought it important...Jubilee Park is the heartbeat of the village" Lucy Wells, Woodhall Spa Parish Council

The local community is passionate about the future of Jubilee Park – evidenced by public consultation events and in Parish Plans. The Chair of the Parish Council supported by other Parish Councillors was proactive in approaching ELDC at an early stage to explore the possibility of transferring the freehold of the Park to the community.

Between 2011 and 2012 it took some time for the Parish Council's Working Group to understand the revenue costs of the Park – they liaised with different budget holders, service areas and shadowed ELDC staff. Since taking over the Park, the Parish Council has been able to rationalise the finance and management of the site leading to savings and greater efficiency.

While the asset transfer was welcomed by ELDC as a straightforward move from one local authority to another local authority; the status of the Parish Council has prevented it from applying to some grant funders. The Parish Council has also had to manage the Park in accordance with its governance and procedures (i.e. stipulating when and how meetings are held) which has not always been conducive in helping them to make practical and swift decisions about the Park.

With some of the facilities at the Park seasonal – the outdoor pools are open from May until September and the caravan and camp site from March until November – the Parish Council has considered how the site can generate income all year round (e.g. through holding car

boot sales, special event rallies) and with full time permanent staff supported by volunteers there are opportunities to do this.

5.11.6 Organisations and resources

Jubilee Park has 2 full time staff (a Park Manager and Site Warden) that are employed by the Parish Council. They are supported by 25-30 seasonal staff and 240+ volunteers.

ELDC has provided a capital investment and five-year revenue stream. In 2013, the Park is predicted to make a profit of approximately £9,000 – the Parish Council anticipates less revenue support than the sums budgeted by ELDC will be required between 2013 and 2015. By 2015 the Parish Council, FOJP and ELDC anticipate that the Park will be self-sustaining.

In May 2013, the Parish Council appointed three directors to head a new charitable company to run the Park - two Parish Councillors and a respected local businesswoman. These appointments have been made on an interim basis with the intention of installing longer-term directors by the end of 2013. This process has made Woodhall Spa one the first parish authorities in the entire country to take advantage of new powers and form a company. Because the company will have charitable status, it will be eligible for relief on VAT payments on the Park's numerous activities.

5.11.7 Lessons and next steps

The Parish Council and FOJP played a significant role in the initiation and development of the asset transfer of the Park. The Parish Council had a driven Chair and Councillors with the vision, strategy and entrepreneurial flair required to drive the scheme forward. While encouraging the whole community to participate in the process, the Parish Council and FOJP recognised the importance of finding people with specialist and generalist skills to support them (e.g. people from commercial/business backgrounds, with backgrounds in leisure and retail, leadership skills and mediation/negotiation) that could also make the substantive time commitment required.

"Jubilee Park is a much loved facility and there is local determination to make it work" Mark Humphreys, Strategic Development Manager, ELDC

ELDC supported the transfer to happen in a number of ways:

- Assigning an Officer to work with the Parish Council so the resources and costs required to run the Park were understood.
- Contributing (financially and Member time) towards the Parish Council's preparation of a Business Plan.
- Making a long-term commitment to support the underpinning of the project in providing an initial capital investment and a 5-year revenue stream.

While the Parish Council has successfully taken control of Jubilee Park, it now needs to achieve economic sustainability. This has led to discussions within the local community about the relationship between protecting the Park and having to find new ways to make it pay. On the one hand, this has generated a list of ideas of other activities and facilities that could potentially be developed on the site so as to provide income all year round; on the other hand, the Parish Council is exploring how the Park links to other assets in the village such as Coronation Hall, mineral springs and its Dambusters/RAF heritage.

"In going forward it's about managing community expectations and aspirations...we may have something else in the Park that isn't here...we now need to manage the future of the Park" David Little, Chair, Woodhall Spa Tennis Club

5.12 Malbank Coaches – A commercial service providing travel to day-care

This case study looks at a response to tightening public sector finances. It raises some difficult policy issues about fairness, not least because it is about a vulnerable client group, but in terms of service delivery it also demonstrates some useful practice and learning.

Malbank coaches are a family firm operating from a base near Nantwich who operate a commercial local service for vulnerable or disabled adult users of the Council's day-care centres. An authority-wide service was previously provided directly by the Council using its own fleet of vehicles, at which time it was significantly subsidised by the Council Tax payer. The transformation from an in-house provision to a commercial one is claimed by Cheshire East Council to have saved them some £1.4 million per annum.

5.12.1 The issue

The Malbank Coaches travel to day-care service covers an area of East Cheshire including Nantwich, Crewe, Alsager, Sandbach, Shavington and Haslington. The area is described as quite mixed with parts of Crewe being characterised by high levels of multiple deprivation but the more rural surrounding areas being typically more affluent. Cheshire East as a whole has a higher proportion of older people than the average for England and, in general, the greatest increase has been in its rural areas. Isolation is seen as a particularly significant issue for vulnerable and disabled rural residents so their ability to access day care centres is recognised as particularly important to their wellbeing.

An ageing population profile has given rise to increasing demands for social care services, yet funding available to the Council is reducing. The motivation for the scheme was, quite overtly, to enable the Council to reduce expenditure on Adult Services, a budget which was (and still is) under acute pressure and which had been significantly overspent.

The in-house transport service was loss making. A report on an Adult Services Charging Consultation presented in March 2012 costed the provision of transport to day centres at £9 for a single journey yet, at that time, each passenger paid just £2. The same report gave the Council's spending on Adult Services transport as £1.6m per annum. (A Council employee who was interviewed said it subsequently peaked at £1.8m). The same report explained:

"The problem of the social care budget keeping track with the demands of an ageing population and growing demand for service has been an unremitting problem in Cheshire and in the UK generally. Cheshire East Council has taken substantial steps to try and mitigate this impact. However, the cut in funding from central government means further measures need to be taken"

"It is a national principle laid out by the Government that social care users should pay for services if they can afford to do so"

5.12.2 Response

The Council decided to discontinue its fleet adult social care transport service which was then phased out, finally ceasing completely in December 2012.

Malbank coaches saw an opportunity to provide a commercial service that would operate around their core school transport and private hire business, enabling their vehicles and drivers' time to be more fully utilised. This more efficient use of their resources enabled them to provide a travel option to day-centre users at a realistic, but commercial, price. They worked closely with the Council in the months before the Council's fleet service came to an end in order to facilitate a customer focused service. Mindful of the needs of the potential service users, routes were devised to limit journey times to one hour, wheelchair lifts were provided, and trained and CRB checked escorts employed to assist those in need of the additional help.

Their careful analysis of the different levels service users' needs and their associated costs resulted in Malbank operating a three tier charging structure:

- £15 per day (return trip) for passengers able to walk on relatively unaided
- £20 for passengers who need a significant amount of help

- £30 for wheelchair users

Plus £15 if an escort is required.

It is understood that, by the time the Council's fleet service ended, everyone who had used that service in Cheshire East was catered for by Malbank, other small bus companies, or taxis.

5.12.3 Impacts

As a result of the service change from in-house to commercial the Council's budget for Adult Services transport was reduced to under £250,000 in 2012/13.

22 customers now use the Malbank service with varying frequency and, despite the increase in fares compared to the former fleet service, neither Malbank nor the Council can recall any complaint having been received about the new service. Since the service is now entirely commercial, passengers can choose to make alternative arrangements. Malbank advise that since their service commenced only one person has switched to an alternative form of transport (a taxi), apparently simply because he preferred to be a solo passenger rather than actively enjoying the more sociable aspects of the bus journey.

Malbank consider their service has the following benefits to users compared to the former service bus:

- A shorter average journey time which is more comfortable for passengers
- A service is more tailored to individual needs

As well as appreciating the cost saving the Council views the new service as delivering better outcomes at no greater overall cost (although this cost is now met by the service user, with funding support from the Council as required, rather than being more heavily subsidised by the Council) and that the bespoke provisions meet specific needs and so reach harder-to-reach clients. They also recognise that a group travelling together brings environmental and, potentially, social benefits compared to individual travel.
Arguably individuals have a choice of transport, although in some areas not covered by commercial coaches/buses such choice may be limited to different taxi firms.

However, the perspectives of those who use the service are not necessarily wholly in accord with those of the bus company or the Council. One lady whose daughter uses the Malbank service said that she had had no criticisms of the quality of the previous Council service and felt that the new service is "very good and very caring". She also commented that her daughter and fellow service users positively enjoyed the social aspects of travelling together.

In terms of cost however, the higher fares were understandably unwelcome and she voiced some significant concerns: "The council service used to be free, then they charged £4 a day. Now it's £15 a day which is a real stretch…. I can't drive and a taxi would cost £10 each way... We've had to cut back on holidays… It seems unfair when she (daughter) would be entitled to free travel on other buses (concessionary bus pass) but she has no way to access them... Some people can't afford to go every day….some must feel very isolated." Taken in context it is evident that these comments were not a criticism of the Malbank service, which was acknowledged to be both of good quality and less costly than other options, but rather reflected her views about the fairness of a system that has come about because of public sector austerity more generally.

She also said that although she knew well in advance that the Council intended to stop running buses she only learned of the new Malbank service about a fortnight before it started running. In the interim "the uncertainty caused a great deal of worry."

5.12.4 Facilitators and barriers

The Council had a clear plan to cease their fleet operation and a set timescale to do so. Their positive engagement with the private sector in the months leading up to the fleet withdrawal helped prospective commercial providers to plan new services.

As the Council has not retained any control over the journey to day centre services, the contracts being between the passenger and the transport provider (in this case Malbank) the coach company is able to take a longer term view about service delivery and improvements unfettered by any concerns over contract renewal or grants.

It might be assumed that the increased cost to them might be a barrier for service users. Neither Malbank nor the Council think that this has been a significant issue because many service users are likely to receive disability/mobility benefit income and Council funding remains available for those who meet the eligibility criteria and might not otherwise have been able to pay. One customer voiced a very different opinion suggesting that, for some at least, increased travel costs may be a significant barrier to accessing day-care services. However, it was not possible to determine how widespread cases of actual hardship might be.

It would seem likely that the move away from Council fleet provision has had differing impacts on different households. Those who are reliant on taxis, particularly for longer journeys from outlying rural areas, may be faced with the greatest increase in costs.

5.12.5 Organisations and resources.

Malbank Coaches are a private commercial firm, a family run business operated by a father and son partnership. They operate a range of coaches with capacities between 8 and 70 seats. They express a commitment to quality and describe their drivers as "experienced, pleasant, helpful and ready to provide a safe, comfortable and reliable service"

Until now (June 2013) Malbank has not had sufficient capacity to expand its provision of day-care buses due to other commitments. However, it has recently been informed that its bid to continue providing a flexible council-funded local bus service for the elderly and disabled was unsuccessful. Whilst expressing concern that the specification of the new flexible service may prove unsuitable for a number of current service users if frequency or geographical coverage is reduced or levels of customer assistance are not maintained, Malbank recognise that the increased in availability of vehicles may provide new opportunities. This might include providing day-care travel to new customers on additional routes. Such an expansion would, in turn, provide improved choice for more day-centre users.

5.12.6 Lessons and next steps

Clarity is important. Whilst the increase transport costs met by service users may understandably not have been popular with everyone the Council's intentions and reasoning were transparent and the objective of reducing spending was achieved.

Close working between the Council and private sector providers helped to ensure that everyone had been offered alternative travel arrangements before the Council-run services stopped, albeit that some service users would have liked that information earlier.

Bespoke high quality provision is appreciated and retains customer loyalty. As reflected in the absence of complaints and the positive comments of the mother of a service user, it is evident that Malbank carefully assess and provide for each individual customer's needs. The Company is continuing to invest in vehicles that provide good wheelchair access and are suitable for other disabled customers.

Malbank Coaches have indicated that they are actively exploring the possibility of providing additional day-centre travel routes. They are also considering whether it might be possible to expand their services to include travel to hospital appointments.

5.13 Case Study Bulleted key learning points

Horningsea
- Careful to scope with the community (survey)
- Realism regarding costings
- Ambition fuelled by previous success (community pub)
- Struggled to find the right advice
- Short timescale to find solution

Suffolk Links
- Flexible service including door-to door in rural areas
- Publicity crucial
- Use of bespoke IT
- Partnership with Council important

Coffee Caravan
- More than one service (providing information and reducing isolation)
- Strong manager
- Informal/ friendly/ sociable/approachable
- Has encouraged other social groups to form
- Funding a year at a time leads to ongoing uncertainty

Okehampton Work Club
- Responsive to local issues
- Strong manager
- Friendly/ informal/ welcoming
- Funding not secure although local charity and Town Council have been supportive
- Negative view on bidding for other funding (time consuming, unlikely to succeed)

Project Group
- Flexible/ friendly
- Finances variable
- Strong manager and management group
- Trying to become more commercial
- Negative view on bidding for other funding (time consuming, unlikely to succeed)

Malbank Coaches
- Customer care- tailored to individual needs
- Sets out to make travel enjoyable for its clients

Ennerdale Hub
- Strong leadership
- Community funding a key aspect of the success of the initiative
- Ambition to do more

"The Hopes"
- Determination of group
- Support from other organisations
- Ambitious

"Wishing Well"
- Portfolio of sometimes interconnected services (complex)
- Strong manager

- Valuing volunteers an important aspect of the operation
- Flexible and responsive to needs
- Many benefits, but difficult to quantify in monetary terms
- Has evolved from urban to urban/ rural mix
- Financial issues including short notice of withdrawal of Council funding for day centres.

Jubilee Park
- Complex relationships and management issues had to be overcome
- Careful assessment of costs a real strength of the project approach
- Developing skills/ learning from others was important
- Improved 'offer' (café) has made a difference
- Determination and a strong will to succeed characterise this operation

Colwall Orchard
- Tries to engage whole community.
- Events well publicised
- Social as well as environmental aims
- Financial issues (due to land purchase) have been a challenge

Lechlade Youth Club
- Altruistic financer and Parish supportive which made a real difference to viability
- Ward member actively supportive
- Example of successful outcome- early planning in response to threat of service closure
- Developing business plan was a challenge.

Appendix A - Stakeholder Engagement Matrix scoring

Please indicate the level of importance of each of the issues below as a stimulant for the development of Alternative Service Delivery approaches

A local occurrence or issue which engages the community
RCAN: High 25, medium 3, low 0 (89%, 11%, 0%)
PARISH: High 22, medium 4, low 0 (85%, 15%, 0%)
RSN: High 23, medium 0, low 1 (96%, 0%, 4%)
Aggregated: High 70, medium 7, low 1 (90%, 9%,1%)
Aggregated Average Score – where High is 3, Medium 2 and Low 1 – 2.88

The availability of a highly motivated leader or community group
RCAN: High 22, medium 5, low 0 (81%, 19%, 0%)
PARISH: High 21, medium 5, low 0 (81%, 19%, 0%)
RSN: High 20, medium 1, low 1 (91%, 5%, 5%)
Aggregated: High 63, medium 11, low 1 (84%, 15%, 1%)
Aggregated Average Score – where High is 3, Medium 2 and Low 1 – 2.82

A willingness by local people to act as volunteers
RCAN: High 22, medium 4, low 1 (81%, 15%, 4%)
PARISH: High 17, medium 6, low 1 (71%, 25%, 4%)
RSN: High 14, medium 7, low 1 (64%, 32%, 5%)
Aggregated: High 53, medium 17, low 3 (73%, 23%, 4%)
Aggregated Average Score – where High is 3, Medium 2 and Low 1 – 2.68

Access to specialist external support to make the project happen
RCAN: High 16, medium 6, low1 (70%, 26%, 4%)
PARISH: High 12, medium 9, low 4 (48%%, 36%, 16%)
RSN: High 10, medium 10, low 2 (45%, 45%, 9%)
Aggregated: High 38, medium 25, low 7 (54%, 36%, 10%)
Aggregated Average Score – where High is 3, Medium 2 and Low 1 – 2.44

Access to professional expertise and support
RCAN: High 11, medium 14, low 0 (44%, 56%, 0%)
PARISH: High 7, medium 14, low 2 (30%, 61%, 9%)
RSN: High 9, medium 8, low 2 (47%, 42%,11%)
Aggregated: High 27, medium 36, low 4 (40%, 54%, 6%)
Aggregated Average Score – where High is 3, Medium 2 and Low 1 – 2.34

A long term vision for how the alternative service fits into the community more broadly
RCAN: High 4, medium 22, low 2 (14%, 79%, 7%)
PARISH: High 8, medium 13, low 1 (14%, 79%, 7%)
RSN: High 11, medium 7, low 2 (55%, 35%, 10%)
Aggregated: High 23, medium 42, low 5 (33%, 60%, 7%)
Aggregated Average Score – where High is 3, Medium 2 and Low 1 – 2.26

A decision from the traditional service provider to deliver the service differently or to end it
RCAN: High 4, medium 17, low 3 (17%, 71%, 12%)
PARISH: High 8, medium 10, low 4 (36%, 45%, 19%)
RSN: High 6, medium 11, low 2 (32%, 58%, 11%)
Aggregated: High 18, medium 38, low 9 (28%, 58%, 14%)
Aggregated Average Score – where High is 3, Medium 2 and Low 1 – 2.20

The availability of expertise within the community
RCAN: High 8.5, medium 17.5, low 0 (33%, 67%, 0%)
PARISH: High 4, medium 21, low 1 (15%, 81%, 4%)
RSN: High 6, medium 13, low 4 (26%, 57%, 4%)
Aggregated: High 18.5, medium 51.5, low 5 (25%, 69%, 5%)
Aggregated Average Score – where High is 3, Medium 2 and Low 1 – 2.17

The ability of the service to be delivered in a way which engages all service users including those with challenges around accessibility
RCAN: High 1, medium 17, low 6 (4%, 71%, 25%)
PARISH: High 9, medium 5, low 7 (43%, 24%, 33%)
RSN: High 5, medium 12, low 4 (24%, 57%,19%)
Aggregated: High 15, medium 34, low 17(23%, 52%, 26%)
Aggregated Average Score – where High is 3, Medium 2 and Low 1 – 1.97

Appendix B – Alternative Service Delivery Literature Evidence Base

Author Date	Title	Type	Source	Relevance - parameters, location, service area	Findings & Impact - aspiration/implemented/evaluated and success/barriers identified	Quality/ reliability/ strength of information	Notes
Aiken, M. et al, 2011	Community organisations controlling assets: a better understanding	Report Charity	JRF http://www.jrf. org.uk/sites/fi les/jrf/commu nity- organisations -controlling- assets- EBOOK.pdf	This report examines the experience of community organisations controlling assets in the UK over a ten year period as part of an attempt to build an evidence base.	The report examines the forms of community control of assets; the costs/benefits/critical success factors; outcomes and supporting the different organisations in this field. Identified a community assets spectrum with three bands: stewards (small, volunteer run groups), community developers (medium sized organisations) and entrepreneurs. People in these bands acquired assets in response to a threat or an opportunity. 6 factors to achieve success were found: (i) adequate financial and business planning; (ii) ensuring assets were fit for purpose; (iii) constructive approach to transfer on part of public bodies, (iv) capacity and leadership within the community, (v) effective governance of community buy-in, and (vi) financial sustainability - fit for purpose external investment. The report presents a series of implications for policy and practice.	Rural and urban locations explored in the study.	
Baring Foundation 2012	Protecting Independence: The Voluntary Sector in 2012	Panel report	http://www.ba ringfoundatio n.org.uk/Prot ectingIVS201 2.pdf	Looks at the role of the voluntary sector in delivering public services esp in terms of its	Identifies key impacts of the current recession on the sector in relation to delivery of public service contracts: 1. The effects of a contract, rather than a grant, funding model. 2.The inability of the voluntary sector, in a	England wide and comprehensi ve with rural and urban examples	

Author Date	Title	Type	Source	Relevance - parameters, location, service area	Findings & Impact - aspiration/implemented/evaluated and success/barriers identified	Quality/ reliability/ strength of information	Notes
				independence	competitive commissioner/provider environment, to influence the design, delivery of services and funding models, 3. The blurring of boundaries between the public, for profit, and voluntary sectors, with new models and governance structures 4. The pressure on independent governance, and the need for expertise and a strong commitment to mission and values, 5. Regulatory systems and safeguards for independence that may not be sufficiently robust, or thoroughly complied with		
CABE & Asset Transfer Unit, 2010	Community-led spaces. A guide for local authorities and community groups	Report Charity	CABE & Asset Transfer Unit http://locality. org.uk/wp-content/uploa ds/Communit y-led-spaces_FINA L_Nov10.pdf	a guide for community organisations and local authorities around the community asset transfer of public spaces such as parks, gardens and woodlands.	The report defines public open space assets, makes the business case for transfer (around governance, accountability, finance and communications) and contains 8 case studies.	2 references to rural - role of town and parish councils and an example of asset transfer from Essex.	
Centre for Policy on Ageing, 2011	How can local authorities with less money support better outcomes for older people?	Report Charity	JRF http://www.jrf. org.uk/sites/fi les/jrf/authorit ies-supporting-	The report looks at how to provide 'that bit of help' that older people want and value.	The report draws out the implications of public sector funding reductions, how the community and voluntary sector groups that provide 'that bit of help' may struggle to survive and 4 ways forward (involvement, investment, refocusing and	The report covers rural and urban areas - provides example of	

Author Date	Title	Type	Source	Relevance - parameters, location, service area	Findings & Impact - aspiration/implemented/evaluated and success/barriers identified	Quality/ reliability/ strength of information	Notes
			older-people-summary.pdf		connecting).	Sole Mates/Age Concern in Oxfordshire and intermediate care service for older people with mental health problems in Herefordshire.	
Community Transport Association, 2012	2012. The CTA State of the Sector Report for England	Report Charity	Community Transport Association http://issuu.com/societymedia/docs/cta_sos_report?mode=window&viewMode=doublePage	This is the third state of the sector report published. It is intended to build a detailed picture of the size and scope of the sector.	The report provides an overview of where community transport is found, the size and scale of the organisations involved, the support available for community transport, an analysis of community transport permits and planning and collaborative working. The report found remote rural areas to have more community transport organisations than urban areas.	A definitive drawing together of evidence in terms of community transport	Context: city deals and Rural Coalition's 'rural challenge' document.
County Councils Network, 2012	Counties: Driving Economic Growth	Report Local Government	CCN http://www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk/Documents/CCN%20Gro	The report looks at opportunities for driving economic growth outside of London and the big cities,	The report contains 5 case studies: Somerset County Council, Essex County Council, Cheshire East Council, Worcestershire County Council and Cumbria County Council (includes Village Agents example).	Rural examples in the case studies	Context: city deals and Rural Coalition's 'rural challenge' document.

Author Date	Title	Type	Source	Relevance - parameters, location, service area	Findings & Impact - aspiration/implemented/evaluated and success/barriers identified	Quality/ reliability/ strength of information	Notes
			wth%20Pam phlet%20201 2.pdf	highlighting examples of work being undertaken by CCN member councils.			
CPRE, 2013	Countryside promises, planning realities	Report Charity	CPRE http://www.cp re.org.uk/me dia-centre/latest-news-releases/item /3264-nppf-verdict-less-local-control-more-greenfield-development	Provides an analysis of how the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is being implemented during its first year.	The report concludes: (i) the plan led system is being undermined because little weight is given to emerging plans; (ii) valuable areas of countryside are being lost to development despite policies in the NPPF calling for their protection; (iii) the requirement for 'deliverable' land is being used to justify development on Greenfield land and not to develop on Brownfield sites first; (iv) policies are being interpreted on the grounds of economic returns to developers not on the basis of community need; and (v) localism is being undermined because the transitional period of 12 months has not allowed sufficient time to get up to date plans in place. CPRE is calling on the Government to give more support to getting local plans in place, develop more detailed planning guidance over the next 6 months to address confusion and provide clarity, and revise the NPPF so prioritising urban regeneration and protecting/enhancing the countryside are properly integrated into policies to promote economic development.	Based upon analysis of 20 major planning for housing application cases and reports from 20 local plan examinations . CPRE found growing level of interest in and support for neighbourho od planning - citing plans in a number of villages, towns such as Faringdon (Oxfordshire) and Frome (Somerset),	

Author Date	Title	Type	Source	Relevance - parameters, location, service area	Findings & Impact - aspiration/implemented/evaluated and success/barriers identified	Quality/ reliability/ strength of information	Notes
						and successful referendum in Upper Eden Valley (Cumbria).	
Elvidge, J. 2012	The Enabling State. A discussion paper.	Discussion Paper Charity	Carnegie UK Trust http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/changing-minds/people---place/enabling-state	Intended to stimulate debate on the role of Government (in the UK and Ireland).	The document raises four questions for discussion: (i) is it the right time for change, for substantial rethinking of the relationship between society and the state? (ii) Is communitarianism - helping people build their capacity for mutual help - the right foundation of change? (iii) should the state develop an enabling role around building capacity, alongside its role in continuing to provide public services where their effectiveness is clear? (iv) what actions are needed in your country or region to assist change?	A useful summary of the philosophical debate around local community delivery	Forms part of an overarching project on the Enabling State being undertaken by Carnegie 2012-2013.
Hart, I. 2010	To have and to hold	Report Charity	Development Trust Association http://locality.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/To-have-and-to-hold-210910-for-web-FINAL.pdf	A guide to long-term community ownership and development of land and buildings.	The guide sets out starting points, maintenance and management, building support from stakeholders, feasibility, finance, business planning, design and construction and legal issues.	Principles applicable to rural communities	

Author Date	Title	Type	Source	Relevance - parameters, location, service area	Findings & Impact - aspiration/implemented/evaluated and success/barriers identified	Quality/ reliability/ strength of information	Notes
Heery, D. & White, D. 2013	Going the last mile - how can broadband reach the final 10%?	Discuss ion Paper Charity	Carnegie UK Trust /Community Broadband Network http://www.ca rnegieuktrust. org.uk/CMSP ages/GetFile. aspx?guid=a 88d402f- 26c9-4f74- 9f53- 24e10c8e74d 3	Considers how future public investment in broadband can be organised in order to achieve the best possible outcomes for the final 10% of rural communities who are most likely to be left behind in the roll out of NGA.	3 key challenges identified: finance, areas not covered by BDUK/local authority funding streams, and marginal environments. Draws upon several examples in the United States to call for an intermediary approach which uses specialist investment intermediaries to find the right mix of loan/equity/grant funding for each project and then manage the finance. Three models of intermediaries are presented: (1) public sector intermediaries (e.g. iNorthumberland Loan Fund, LEP Growing Places fund); social enterprise intermediaries (e.g. Social Investment Business, Big Issue Invest); and private sector intermediaries (e.g. projects in the Cotswolds, South Devon and North Devon identified).	Good rural coverage	
Leisure Futures Limited, 2011	Impact on Reducing Rural Isolation	Report Charity	Big Lottery Fund http://www.bi glotteryfund.o rg.uk/about- big/publicatio ns?containin g=%20rural	A report on how projects funded by BIG have reduced rural isolation and recommendations for BIG-funded programmes aimed at further reducing rural isolation.	Key findings: the demographic trend towards an older population is increasing prevalence of social isolation; cuts in rural public transport and rises in fuel costs impact most on rural isolation; and the voluntary and community sector is the main provider of services that address rural isolation supported by BIG. Village Agents was cited as a successful project. The report praises the work of BIG in reducing isolation (even when this was not an explicit aim of the project funded) and identifies lessons learned and makes a	Secondary analysis of previous evaluations commissione d by BIG and primary research (166 out of 475 projects completing a questionnaire about rural	

Author Date	Title	Type	Source	Relevance - parameters, location, service area	Findings & Impact - aspiration/implemented/evaluated and success/barriers identified	Quality/ reliability/ strength of information	Notes
					series of recommendations.	isolation).	
Local Government Association 2012	Local solutions for future local library services	Report Local Government	Local Government Association http://www.local.gov.uk/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=fe4e381a-17ff-4138-9499-dc7241805636&groupId=10171	The publication sets out the context and issues around library services re-design and provision, a decision making process, a set of good practice case studies, and a checklist of things to consider when deciding how to provide a local library service.	The publication identifies 6 popular models for service re-design: alternative funding models, empowering communities to do it their way, a digital age, shared services, delivering wider community outcomes/co-location, and building on existing provision. Rural examples provided include Warwickshire Council and Lancashire County Council.	Part of the Future Libraries Programme, involving 36 councils.	
Local Government Association, & English Heritage 2012	New ways of working for historic environment services	Report Local Government	Local Government Association http://www.local.gov.uk/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=2395f768-08d0-476a-afbd-586a39a58544&groupId=10171	Sets out how the LGA and English Heritage are working with local authorities to help them manage historic environment services amid budget reductions.	The report contains information about 8 case studies that the LGA and English Heritage have worked with: Cheltenham District Council, Chichester (West Sussex Councils), Cotswolds AONB (Gloucestershire & Oxford Councils), Essex County Council, Northumberland County Council, Northamptonshire County Council, South Hams District Council and Cornwall Council. 5 common themes run through these case studies: (i) the historic environment makes a positive contribution to an area, (ii) reviews of heritage services	Part of the Historic Environment: Local Authority Capacity (HELAC) project.	

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Author Date	Title	Type	Source	Relevance - parameters, location, service area	Findings & Impact - aspiration/implemented/evaluated and success/barriers identified	Quality/ reliability/ strength of information	Notes
					have been precipitated by concerns regarding capacity and budgets, (iii) the protection of historic environment assets requires professional input, (iv) stakeholder respect in-house provision and (v) there are opportunities and limits to involving others such as the voluntary sector.		
Macdonald, I. 2012	A New Chapter - Public Library Services in the 21st Century	Discuss ion Paper Charity	Carnegie UK Trust http://www.ca rnegieuktrust. org.uk/public ations/2012/a -new-chapter	Outlines considerations that need to be addressed if a new vision for public libraries of the future is to be developed.	The document outlines a gap between what people say and what people do (the need to provide libraries that people want to use); and the divergence in policy and practice between England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and Ireland (and the need for their shared heritage to lead them to share practice and new models). Five key questions are critical to the future of libraries: (1) what is the relationship between libraries and community and individual wellbeing? (2) Do the aims of the library service need to be redefined for the 21st century? (3) How should library services be provided in the future? (4) What is the role of library buildings as community assets? (5) Would more policy direction and coordination at a jurisdictional or cross-jurisdictional level be helpful? Alternative models of provision include: creation of arms length companies or trusts; the use of volunteers; community managed services; shared	Based on a survey of 1000 people by Ipsos MORI and a review of literature on public libraries.	Accompanied by a full research report and factsheet for each country.

Author Date	Title	Type	Source	Relevance - parameters, location, service area	Findings & Impact - aspiration/implemented/evaluated and success/barriers identified	Quality/ reliability/ strength of information	Notes
					services with other local authorities; and/or use of the private sector.		
Muir, R. 2012	Pubs and Places. The social value of community pubs	Report Think Tank	IPPR http://www.ippr.org/images/media/files/publication/2012/01/pubs-and-places_2nd-ed_Jan2012_8519.pdf	This report assesses the social value of community pubs, showing why pubs matter, and why we should be concerned about the current state of the pub trade.	The report provides an audit of Britain's community pubs, why they matter, flaws in the current policy framework, and makes a series of recommendations (i.e., around business rate relief and finance, planning, alcohol pricing, and the relationship between tenant and pub companies). In rural areas the report finds the community pub is becoming a host for public services (cites the shop, post office and broadband); the importance of co-location; and the success of the Pub is the Hub scheme.	20 interviews undertaken in rural and urban areas.	
NALC 2011	Localism in Practice	Report Membership organisation	NALC http://www.nalc.gov.uk/Publications/Booklets_and_Resources.aspx	A set of case studies showcasing how councils are delivering services.	A series of case studies are presented under five headings covering: young people, power of wellbeing, crime and safety, innovative practice and participatory budgeting.	Many of the case studies cover rural areas.	
NALC 2012	What next for localism?	Report Membership organisation	NALC http://whatnextforlocalism.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Whatnextforlocalismsmall.	A series of essays and think-pieces by parliamentarians, think tanks and others sharing their ideas about localism and the	11 think pieces covering devolution, finance and localism	Strong rural context	

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			pdf	big society.			
National Housing Federation et al., 2010	Affordable housing keeps villages alive	Booklet Industry Body	National Housing Federation http://www.housing.org.uk/publications/find_a_publication/development_and_regeneration/affordable_housing_keeps_vil-1.aspx	The booklet sets out how a relatively small number of new affordable homes in a village can help ensure rural England has a bright future.	The report defines affordable housing, sets out how it is interlined with the provision of services, an ageing population and key workforce, options for developing affordable housing and source of advice and information. Examples are presented throughout the booklet.	Strong rural context	
Naylor, A. & Wood, C. 2012	Empowering communities: making the most of local assets. An officer companion guide.	Report Local Government	Local Government Association http://www.local.gov.uk/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=e87d6415-81b6-4ddd-bcb8-61983af9ef2d&groupId=10171	This guide aims to provide support to officers and introduces the full suite of tools available to them around community asset ownership and management.	The guide sets out how to map assets in your local area, build a shared understanding of community needs, increase transparency, consider how assets can be developed in a sustainable way and stimulate ideas for the co-location of services and transformation of services based upon community enterprise.	Practical toolkit applicable to rural communities	

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New Economics Foundation, 2012	Doing services differently	Report Think Tank	NEF http://neweconomics.org/sites/neweconomics.org/files/Doing_services_differently.pdf	This report is about local innovation in services for disabled people.	The report present a plethora of examples of innovations developed by local authorities and providers that demonstrate how services can improve disabled people's lives, build on their abilities, and model and promote social change (e.g. Community Catalysts in Nottinghamshire, Shop4Support, KIDS Direct short breaks, Keyring Living Support Networks).	Rural local authority examples	
Plunkett Foundation, 2012	A Better Form of Business. Community-owned village shops.	Report Charity	Plunkett Foundation http://www.plunkett.co.uk/resources/publications.cfm	Provides an overview of the development of the community shop sector in the UK, and the health and wealth of the sector.	At the beginning of 2012 there were 273 community shops trading in the UK - growth peaked in 2009 and 2010 attributed to Plunkett Foundation's Village CORE Programme. Highest concentration of community shops in South West and South East of England. Of the 286 shops that have ever opened only 13 have closed. Over 60% of shops have chosen to register as an Industrial and Provident Society. Tenure type is 33% freehold, 33% leasehold and 35% based in former village shop premises. Based on the 190 shops that shared their financial data, average turnover for 2010-2011 was £156,981. The report documents the other benefits that community shops deliver (e.g. local food, reducing isolation) and concludes that community ownership works but it works in a different way in every community.	Comprehensive summary of Plunkett's rural shop experience	
The Rural	The Rural	Report	Rural	The report sets	The report sets out solutions or key	Looks at how	

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Coalition, 2010	Challenge: Achieving sustainable rural communities for the 21st century	Representative bodies	Coalition http://www.acre.org.uk/Resources/ACRE/Documents/The%20Rural%20Challenge.pdf	out a positive and lasting legacy of sustainable rural communities in which people enjoy living and working.	propositions under the headings: creating and maintaining sustainable rural communities, meeting the affordable housing needs of rural communities, building thriving rural communities, delivering great rural services, flourishing market towns and empowering communities,	you can build the big society in rural communities in ways that are sustainable, attractive and flexible.	
Rural Services Network, 2010a	The Rural Review of Public Services	Report Membership organisation	RSN http://www.rsnonline.org.uk/images/files/ruralreviewofpublicservices2010.pdf	A review of the rural services' present condition – and recent trends – ahead of both the 2010 General Election and the substantial public expenditure cuts which will follow, irrespective of which party is in Government.	This report examines recently published analyses about public service provision in rural areas and considers it alongside survey evidence gathered from Rural Services Network members (local service providers and community representatives). It focuses down onto five topics – public transport, primary schools, affordable housing, facilities for young people and support services for older people. These were identified as priorities by Rural Services Network members. Key themes covered in the document include: demand and need, accessibility, fairness, cost, expectations and sustainability.	Rural focus	
Rural Services Network 2010b	The Rural Services Manifesto 2010 and beyond	Report Membership organisation	RSN http://www.rsnonline.org.uk/images/files/ruralservicesmanifesto201	A product of a comprehensive consultation process with our membership and other individuals	The report sets out a series of proposals around service provision, rural proofing, rural growth, broadband, transport, schools, health and social care, fuel poverty and flood defences.	Rural focus	

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			0.pdf	and organisations with an interest in rural affairs.			
Rural Services Network 2011a	State of Rural Services Report 2011	Report Membership organisation	RSN http://www.rsnonline.org.uk/6-publications	Research into the costs of delivering services in rural areas.	The following local authority services were reviewed to identify whether, and the extent to which, there was a 'rural cost penalty' associated with the additional costs of delivering services in rural areas, not arising from differences in policy: Fire Services, Primary Education, Home to School Transport, Waste Collection/Recycling, Domiciliary Care and 'Visiting Services' (Housing Benefit/Council Tax, Premises Inspection and Nuisance Pollution visits). The research found significant differences in the level of funding per head provided to rural and urban authorities - £163 per head (50%) for 2011/12 in post-damped Formula Grant. Predominantly Rural authorities receive an average of £324 per head and Predominantly Urban authorities receive an average of £487 per head.	Rural focus	
Rural Services Network 2011b	Cost of Providing Services in Rural Areas	Report Membership organisation	RSN http://www.rsnonline.org.uk/6-publications	Research into the costs of delivering services in rural areas.	Evidence base for State of Rural Services Report covering the costs of delivery across rural England of: Fire Services, Primary Education, Home to School Transport, Waste Collection/Recycling, Domiciliary Care and 'Visiting Services'	Rural focus	Content used to develop the State of Rural Services Report
Shucksmith, M. 2012	Future Directions in	Report Charity	Carnegie UK Trust	Considers how rural development	Presents two models of rural community development: (i) a choice between top		A follow on the 'A Charter for

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	Rural Development		http://carnegi euktrust.org. uk/CMSPage s/GetFile.asp x?guid=c032 b476-c5e8- 4f56-b3ef- a04e9e4494 e2	should proceed in an era of austerity.	down or bottom up? (ii) a networked approach. The document raises issues around equality and capacity and governance. The networked approach involves the mobilisation of assets, building of capacity amongst individuals, and networks which connect people beyond their locality. The report argues that in an age of austerity there will be a return to bottom-up development models.		Rural Communities' published by the Carnegie UK Trust in 2007.
Smith, C. & Cavill, M. 2010	Shaping public spending priorities for adult social care	Report Charity	JRF http://www.jrf. org.uk/sites/fi les/jrf/public- spending- social-care- full.pdf	This report investigates some of the key issues currently confronting those involved in planning and providing adult social care at a time of budgetary pressure.	The report identified 5 current issues: (1) scepticism about the ability of the market place, providers and the voluntary sector to respond to future demands. (2) priorities for spending - statutory provision, rationing demand and/or long term prevention. (3) Involving service users and carers will not be realistic given the pressure to take decisions quickly. (4) future needs - making the case for long term prevention. (5) local authorities are at different starting points leading to concern that we may see a widening gap between performance.	20 interviews undertaken by Ipsos MORI (15 interviewees from local authorities and 5 interviewees from organisations representing service users or carers).	
TCPA 2012	A vision for rural England	Report Membe rship organis ation	TCPA http://www.tc pa.org.uk/dat a/files/TCPA _Rural_Polic y_Statement. pdf	A policy statement setting out the TCPA's views on the future of rural England.	The vision identifies 5 critical challenges/opportunities: (i) how do we meet the immediate needs of many rural people for affordable homes, well paid jobs and access to services? (ii) how do we meet the growing housing and employment needs of a growing and	Looks at the challenges of development in rural England	

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					ageing population? (iii) how can rural England cope with the economic pressures and restrictions facing the nation? (iv) rural areas have crucial roles to play in growing food and providing eco-services. (v) implementing national, sub-national, local and community policies successfully will be the greatest challenge of all.		
Trotman, C. 2012	Broadband Fit for Rural Growth: CLA vision for rural broadband	Report Membership organisation	CLA http://www.cla.org.uk/Policy_Docs/CLA_Broadband_Paper.pdf	This report sets out the CLA's policy on broadband and puts forward a series of recommendations for the Government and broadband infrastructure industry to consider and take forward.	The report sets out the rural-urban digital divide, Government strategy, the future needs of rural areas, and sets out recommendations around universal coverage, competition within the bidding process and forming strategic alliances.	Rural focus	
Wallace, J. & Miller, M. 2012	Rural Development Networks. A mapping exercise.	Report Charity	Carnegie UK Trust http://carnegieuktrust.org.uk/CMSPages/GetFile.aspx?guid=4063ad9f-18b4-	Explored where and why rural networks exist, their benefits to users and the key issues they face in the current climate of public	Rural Networks play an important role in building community capacity but within an era of austerity face challenges ahead. Networks face issues around funding, engagement with users, representation and visibility, prominence of rural issues, facilitation and moderation, and partnership working. Proliferation and	222 local, national and cross/international networks in UK and Ireland found.	

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			4a89-843c-4f102d07461c	spending cuts.	complex landscape of networks exists. Makes 2 recommendations for networks: (1) they should meet and discuss how they can best represent the voices of users; and (2) share experiences of partnership working. 3 recommendations for Government: (a) hold a summit of rural networks to look at future efficiency and effectiveness; (b) map sources of information and advice; and (c) short life forum for senior civil servants to discuss issues relating to the sector.		
Wallace,J. & Schmuecke R.K., 2012	Shifting the Dial: from wellbeing measures to policy practice	Report Charity	Carnegie UK Trust /IPPR North http://www.ippr.org/images/media/files/publication/2012/10/SHIFTING%20THE%20DIAL_WEBfinal_9826.pdf	The report shares the findings of a project undertaken to ask what needs to happen to ensure that measuring wellbeing is made to matter in policy-making practice.	The report contains case studies from the United States, Canada and France. The report recommends three areas for action: visible leadership, continuing to develop practical means of using wellbeing data and mobilising a wellbeing movement.	Excellent international case studies with rural resonances	

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Wistow, G. et al., 2011	Involving older people in service commissioning : more power to their elbow?	Report Charity	JRF http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/older-people-service-commissioning-full.pdf	The report asks 'Does older people's involvement in commissioning and service delivery herald a bright new future?'	The research explored how older people in Salford and Dorset were involved in commissioning and service delivery; what difference their involvement made; the factors which lead to successful engagement; and the barriers to involving older people.	Salford and Dorset were selected for their reputations as sites which were relatively advanced in promoting the involvement of older people.	

Websites

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Local Government Association	Future Ways of Working	http://www.local.gov.uk/future-ways-of-working;jsessionid=16127A852519570E52E0F3CDE89EA930
Ethos	Big Society Series	http://www.ethosjournal.com/topics/civil-society/item/209-big-society-series
NCVO	Public Service Delivery Network	http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/advice-support/public-service-delivery/public-service-delivery
Charity Commission	Charities delivering public services	http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/Charity_requirements_guidance/Your_charitys_activities/Delivering_services/default.aspx
Carnegie UK Trust / Plunkett Foundation	Fiery Spirits Community of Practice	http://fieryspirits.com/
Newcastle University	Newcastle Institute for Social Renewal	http://www.ncl.ac.uk/socialrenewal/
Locality & Joseph Rowntree Foundation	Impact of Austerity	http://locality.org.uk/projects/impact-austerity/ see also http://www.jrf.org.uk/topic/austerity
Action for Market Towns	Policy Resources (NB: some documents restricted to members only)	http://towns.org.uk/knowledge-hub/knowledge-hub/
The Plunkett Foundation	Publications: this section is divided into community owned rural services; food & farming; and general co-operative interest. Some publications under the first heading were funded by RDAs.	http://www.plunkett.co.uk/resources/publications.cfm
ACRE	rural services publications - NB: some of the policy position documents were published in 2007.	http://www.acre.org.uk/Resources/publications/acre-briefings/acre-briefing-services
Arthur Rank	Library of Rural Good Practice	http://www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk/library-of-good-practice

Organisation	Title	Web link
Centre		
CPRE	resources - NB: policy statement on Rural Services published in 2006.	http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources
NALC	Booklets and Resources	http://www.nalc.gov.uk/Publications/Booklets_and_Resources.aspx
RTPI	Rural	http://www.rtpi.org.uk/knowledge/topics/rural/
RSN	Publications	http://www.rsnonline.org.uk/6-publications

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