Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

What sort of Countryside do we want?

Wales Planning Research Programme

Research Report

The Wales Planning Research Programme

This research project has been commissioned and undertaken as part of the Welsh Assembly Government's Wales Planning Research Programme (WPRP). The Programme has been established to meet the need for evidence based land use planning policy development within the context of the Assembly Government's principles and priorities.

The Planning Division of the Assembly is responsible for managing the Wales Planning Research Programme and ensuring that any research undertaken meets the priorities and needs of the Assembly Government. The research is undertaken predominantly by external commission, or collaboratively, with other organisations. The Division works closely with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister on land use planning research and also draws on research undertaken by other bodies.

Separate research programmes have been established to inform work on Mineral Planning Policy development and the Wales Spatial Plan.

What sort of Countryside do we want?

The key objectives and long term priority themes for the Wales Planning Research Programme were established by the Land Use Planning Scoping Study (2000):

Key Objectives

- To focus on distinctive Welsh issues
- To support the development of planning policy
- To provide management information for land use planning policy development and
- To develop best practice guidance.

Long term priority research themes

- Sustainable development
- Rural planning and
- Spatial planning

A User Group has been set up to advise on the content and direction of the programme.

A Wales Planning Research Newsletter is produced annually and expressions of interest received in response to this are included on a database which is used to assist / inform the procurement of research contractors.

Further information on the WPRP, and research in progress and published may be accessed at http://www.wales.gov.uk/subiplanning/topics-e.htm#research.

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Institute of Rural Sciences

Contract No 249/2002

FINAL REPORT
TO
THE WELSH ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT

BY
THE INSTITUTE OF RURAL SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF WALES, ABERYSTWYTH

And
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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The aims of this study were to:

- investigate rural communities' aspirations for the countryside;
- investigate the aspirations of others who use the countryside for recreational and other uses; and
- investigate how the planning system and the Assembly Government's planning policy can foster sustainable development which meets these aspirations.

Literature Review

Five key themes emerged from the review on planning for the countryside which set the context for the research. First, the changing role of the countryside from a centre of production to one of consumption has bought with it a re-conceptualisation of "rural" concomitant with a multifunctional and integrated countryside. Second, that there is no one size fits all approach to solving what are now well documented countryside problems. Actions must be flexible and locally derived and integrated with improvements to organisational structures. Third, the planning system, whilst having a pivotal role in countryside matters, represents only part of any solution and it has yet to fully grapple with the social, cultural, environmental and economic implications of the sustainable agenda. Fourth, the public have a key role to play in the formulation of policies for the countryside. However, this is problematic due to the short term and top down nature of much participation which rarely exceeds tokenism. Fifth, studies looking at the kind of countryside that is wanted reveal powerful attachments to local landscapes in both aesthetic and functional terms. Complexity and diversity, traditional landscape features and a working landscape are highly desired components. Development is supported so long as it respects the qualities of particular places at a local level. Negative reactions were recorded for the current pace and scale of landscape change through the perceived homogenisation and industrialisation of the countryside, together with a sense of frustration at the perceived marginalisation of the public from planning decisions.

Methodology

The methodology elicited the views of the public, communities and professionals together with an evaluation of planning strategies and documents. This enabled a direct comparison of how far the public agenda for the Welsh countryside matched the current theory and practice of the Welsh planning. The method was informed through a simple four fold classification of Wales at ward level into rural, rural fringe, urban fringe and urban.

1. A household survey: Eight wards were selected at random; 2 corresponding to each rural/urban classification. A standard questionnaire was devised which addressed the themes listed above. A random sample of 75 residents was undertaken for each ward making a final sample of 600.

2. A stakeholder survey: 105 stakeholders were consulted with 22 written responses. A seminar was used to progress the wider findings of the project.

3. An internet survey: This was made available via the Institute of Rural Sciences home page and publicised throughout various email forums in Wales. This replicated the household survey and 128 responses were obtained.

4. Community visioning exercise: Eight communities were selected, 2 corresponding to each rural/urban classification. A purposive sample of residents was taken on a field trip to assess/discuss 3 previously selected viewpoints surrounding the community.

5. Analysis of Planning Policy Wales for its approach to rural development and analysis of development plans from the community exercise for their approach to rural development

6. Two planners' workshops where the implications of the public findings for planners were discussed.

Results

Overarching issues	***Comments***
Clear recognition of a multifunctional countryside	*though how to work with this multifunctionality is less clear*
Public disquiet with their experiences of planning for their countryside.	*there is a clear disquiet with the experience of planning though public preferences do in part reflect current planning policy .*
Strong affinity with the countryside	*the countryside is widely appreciated and valued*
Strong concern with overdevelopment	*which contrasts with identification of types of necessary development*
Strong concern with the littering of the countryside.	*consistent theme in both rural and urban countrysides.*
Little change desired	*strong support for rural conservation but how to reconcile with necessary development not clear*
Protection of the open countryside and designations	*strongly supported*
Appropriate scale and design of development	*a key overriding issue*
Planning for established needs	*supported as the correct approach to a wide range of development*
Policy integration	*widely suggested as missing but necessary*
Locally distinctive policy	*need to respond to the many countrysides that make up Wales and marry top down with bottom up*
Contested issues (hunting/farming/transport/housing)	*Common issues identified but the articulation of these suggests a greater complexity than simple urban vs rural reductionism. .*
Topic issues	***Comments***
Housing	*leading issue of concern focused on planning for housing needs rather than demand, and affordability* *need for greater coordination with employment policy*
Transport	*vexed issues as poor transport access is seen as holding rural areas back, but rural to urban commuting is also identified as a problem*

Employment	*desire for diversification to help 'weak' rural economies and improve quality of jobs, jobs for locals and youngsters* *but also concern over scale and 'industrialisation' of the countryside*
Future of farming	*strong concern with broad agreement on the need for appropriate diversification*
Tourism	*but of the 'right' scale, distinctively Welsh, and locally 'attached'/ integrated*
Recreation	*recreation is the dominant relationship with the countryside* *greater opportunities for local people supported, especially for informal recreation*
Local countryside	*identified as the most important sort of countryside, but too little recognised as such*
National Parks / AONBs	*identified as the next most important sorts of countryside*
Settlement strategy	*no clear agreement as to the right places for most development*
Sustainable development	*need for greater integration and focus on locality*
Local communities	*concern over weakening of communities and lack of public sector connection with them*
Welsh language	*identified as an important issue but disagreement in terms of how to respond*

Discussion

Four key discussion themes were identified from the results. First, that there is a consensus over the kind of countryside that is wanted but within no simple unified vision. Specifically, a locally derived and sustainable countryside was required. Development in the countryside would be supported but only where there was clear evidence of need. There was widespread rejection of developments which increased commuting, fragmented community structures and reduced available and accessible green space/countryside. Second, that a more integrated and holistic approach to the countryside was needed which allows the plethora of agencies with countryside remits to work together with, and for, local communities to produce more joined up thinking and strategies. This informs the third theme of policy subsidiarity and local distinctiveness, where planning should be more devolved to local communities who become actively engaged in policy formation, primarily through the community strategy process. Operationalising this new agenda will involve significant capacity building for local communities and agencies to move away from the current top-down emphasis and short term nature of public engagement towards a more long term process supported by a widened debate and improved communication. Finally, there is a key theme about the mechanics of the town and country planning system in Wales. The results show strong levels of public support for much of the theory of current planning approaches protecting the open countryside and designated countryside, but universal criticism of their experience of planning in their countryside where the type, pace and scale of development apparently does not square with either policy or their ideals. Here the local politicisation of planning and the decision making processes require further scrutiny.

Recommendations

National

1. It is recommended that the Welsh Assembly Government produce an updated rural strategy which sets out a new framework for the countryside within which agencies and the planning system will work. Such a document has to address all the constituent parts of countryside policy and how the planning system fits in. It also should address the need for policy subsidiarity at the heart of the sustainable agenda developing themes inherent within the Wales Spatial Plan. In particular how top down agencies can re-engage with their local communities through proper local differentiation and attachment of policy. Integrated development strategies and community strategies are seen as important tools to achieve this.

2. It is recommended that the Welsh Assembly Government provide guidance on how sustainable development can be operationalised in both the planning system and the countryside. This particularly applies to Integrated Development Strategies. The development of rural proofing within all policy making is one mechanism to improve "joined up thinking" about countryside matters throughout Wales. Furthermore, the use of Strategic Environmental Assessment and State of the Countryside reports are recommended to improve the consistency and monitoring of policy/plans more generally.

3. It is recommended that the Welsh Assembly Government, through PPW, require policies for the countryside (housing employment and transport) to be based on sound local empirical evidence and needs analyses to address the current presumption in policy formulation. In addition a set of countryside indicators should be developed to track change in the Welsh countryside.

4. It is recommended that the Welsh Assembly Government evaluate the role that LANDMAP can play in providing empirical data to improve the sustainable development of the Welsh countryside.

5. It is recommended that the Welsh Assembly Government should provide fuller guidance in the revision of TAN6 on the sustainable development of the Welsh multi-purpose countryside and the use of integrated rural development strategies as a mean for achieving this. A particular focus should be on economic development (of all sorts) and its relationship with the provision of housing and transport. Planning Delivering for Wales should also address these issues.

6. It is recommended that the Welsh Assembly Government should provide fuller guidance in the revision of TAN6 on identification of rural development needs through appropriate evidence (including the views of local communities), including for housing and employment, and the circumstances in which this can lead to policies which depart from the general guidance of PPW. In turn PPW should also make clearer the circumstances in which policies for rural development might depart from its general guidance.

7. It is recommended that the Welsh Assembly Government, as part of Planning – Delivering for Wales, should give greater guidance on the relationship between Community Strategies/Local Development Plans and development

control. In particular how to marry strategic imperatives and community aspirations in support of sustainable rural development.

8. It is recommended that the Welsh Assembly Government should encourage better coordination of work on rural transport through Local Transport Plans, Community strategies, setting integrated solutions to transport problems, including addressing the impacts of rural car use.

9. It is recommended that the Welsh Assembly Government should consider pooling planning gain funds to support non land use aspects of rural communities.

10. It is recommended that PPW should give greater emphasis to the provision of affordable housing and housing to meet local needs in rural Wales. It should also make clear the circumstances in which housing not meeting recognised local needs should be resisted. The revision of TAN 2 Planning and Affordable Housing should address both affordable housing and housing to meet local needs in rural areas. Uptake of the approaches outlined in *Local Housing Market Analysis: An Advice Note To Welsh Local Authorities From The Welsh Assembly Government (2002)* should be encouraged in rural Wales.

11. It is recommend that PPW should also make clear that assumptions of settlement hierarchy and functional relationships may vary with local circumstances and that local policy should reflect such variation, based on sound appropriate evidence.

12. It is recommended that PPW should give more guidance on planning's role in improving opportunities for informal countryside recreation, especially for local communities, and the necessary connections with other activities, particularly community strategies.

13. It is recommended that TAN 12 Design should be better cross referenced with PPW and give greater emphasis to the design of new rural buildings *per se* and their contribution to distinctive Welsh rural landscapes, not just the location of new development. Clearer linkage should also be made to LANDMAP as the key tool for understanding/interpreting Welsh rural landscapes.

14. It is recommended that when TAN 20 The Welsh Language and Unitary Development Plans and Planning Control is revised, it should give particular consideration to the issues raised by planning in rural Wales, drawing on other current research. The TAN should support the development of different policy approaches to suit differing local circumstances.

15. It is recommended that the Welsh Assembly Government review the roles and responsibilities of community councils in order to respond to the policy subsidiarity agenda.

16. It is recommended that the Welsh Assembly Government support the development of community strategies as a means to generate local distinctiveness and use this as a vehicle to ensure effective engagement of the bottom up view with top down agency programmes.

17. It is recommended that the Welsh Assembly Government give sufficient resources and support for capacity building for organisations and communities to improve and re-invigorate community strategies and integrated rural strategies and work attached to it such as formulating local planning policies and promoting informed discussions about key issues in the countryside. The resource (time and cost) implications should not be overlooked. The agenda drawn out from the public surveys in this research: overdevelopment; litter; future of farming; transport and field sports offer a useful and justified starting point.

Local

18. It is recommended that local authorities and agencies should recognise the place and role of planning work in other public sector work and programmes. In particular the current failure to utilise integrated rural development strategies and community strategies should be addressed.

19. It is recommended that local authorities and agencies address work programmes to clean up the countryside and to generate a greater culture of respect for those that visit or pass through countryside locations. Responding to the widespread perception of countryside full of litter/rubbish is an important priority emerging from this research.

20. It is recommended that local authorities, in conjunction with other agencies, should seek more integrated approaches to rural development, including the use of visions and integrated rural development strategies. In some cases there is a role for regional strategic policy development such as that developed in South East Wales. This should not be necessarily dependent on the fuller Welsh Assembly Government guidance, though this will be of obvious importance.

21. It is recommended that Local Authorities and associated agencies should seek to develop/foster local entrepreneurship in rural development activities. Current training initiatives and business support should be audited to identify any gaps and highlight examples of good practice such as Farming Connect.

22. It is recommended that Local Authorities should consider making better use of the strategic capabilities of planning to pursue a more pro-active and integrated approach to rural development, particularly as expressed through community and integrated rural strategies.

23. It is recommended that Local Planning Authorities should seek to develop more locally distinctive planning policies based on local evidence (including the views of local communities). It is envisaged that LANDMAP data can help inform such policies which should be supplemented by pro-active public surveys. Such material can then inform the proposed local development plans as part of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill.

24. It is recommended that local authorities utilise the community strategy process as a tool for proactive consultation which identifies local needs across the spectrum of social, economic, cultural and environmental interests. This then provides the foundation for agencies to set their agendas in a more integrated and sustainable manner thereby reducing consultation fatigue.

25. It is recommended that support be given to community based projects highlighting local distinctiveness. Parish maps, plans and village design statements should all be encouraged. The public perception component of LANDMAP is seen as a useful vehicle within which to locate such activities.

26. It is recommended that local authorities, as part of an agency consortium, promote informed local discussion and debate over key countryside issues, making information publicly available.

27. It is recommended that participation in the community strategy is managed and co-ordinated to meet the needs of other public sector strategies in order to reduce the burden of current consultations.

28. It is recommended that more consideration is given to the involvement of youth in local matters (eg community council representation). Their voice is often marginalised within community consultations. Their voices are often unheard with presumptions made about the kind of facilities/activities they want.

Further research

29. Research is needed to support better guidance on the identification of rural development needs through gathering of appropriate evidence (including the views of local communities). Housing, transport and employment are key issues but there is a widespread lack of systematic use of evidence to support local rural planning policies. It is recommended that the Welsh Assembly Government should provide a lead in improving this situation. This is particularly important as a component of closer working with local communities. Policy development needs a better platform.

30. The research has highlighted a pivotal role for community strategies and integrated rural development strategies to secure a sustainable countryside. It is the authors' views that these processes are not yet delivering their full potential and it will be important to identify the "why" "how", "where" and "what" answers through examination of practice and scoping of new methodologies of working practice.

31. The research has led to some tentative findings (based on a small sample size) that ethnic minority and retired peoples' use of the countryside is less than that of other categories. Productive research might investigate whether there are significant differences in expectations and use of the countryside for these groups and how these might be best addressed.

32. The research has sampled across a range of social and economic circumstances and it would appear that there are some subtle differences emerging in the way different groups are attracted to certain types of countryside. Research might like to investigate how different social classes construct and use the countryside.

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GLOSSARY

AONB – AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY
CAP – COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY
CCW – COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES
CLA – COUNTRY LAND AND BUSINESS ASSOCIATION
CPRW – COUNCIL FOR THE PROTECTION OF RURAL WALES
DEFRA – DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND RURAL AFFAIRS
DETR – DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT TRANSPORT AND THE REGIONS
EU – EUROPEAN UNION
FCW – FORESTRY COMMISSION WALES
FOE – FRIENDS OF THE EARTH
FUW – FARMERS UNION OF WALES
GM – GENETICALLY MODIFIED
HEP – HYDRO ELECTRIC POWER
LA – LOCAL AUTHORITY
NFU – NATIONAL FARMERS UNION
NIMBY – NOT IN MY BACK YARD
NNR – NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE
NPA – NATIONAL PARK ASSOCIATION
PPW – PLANNING POLICY WALES
RPW – RURAL PARTNERSHIP FOR WALES
RSPB – ROYAL SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF BIRDS
SAC – SPECIAL AREA OF CONSERVATION
SSSI – SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST
TAN(S) – TECHNICAL ADVICE NOTE(S
UCL – UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON
UDP – UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN
WDA – WELSH DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
WPRP – WALES PLANNING RESEARCH PROGRAMME

2 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to acknowledge the help and support of the Steering Group in guiding the progress of the research and for providing a critical commentary on the report.

Nigel Adams	Wales Tourist Board
Tim Ball	Ceredigion County Council
George Ashworth	Monmouthshire County Council
Keith Davies	Countryside Council for Wales
Jeff Phillips	Welsh Assembly Government
Lyndsay Roberts	Welsh Assembly Government
Jasper Roberts	Welsh Assembly Government
Paul Robinson	Welsh Assembly Government
Richard Thomas	Welsh Assembly Government
Ann Watkin	Welsh Development Agency
Merfyn Williams	CPRW/Cynnal Cymru the Sustainable Development Forum for Wales'

The following people are also acknowledged in developing the research methods, production of the report and fieldwork support.

Roz Wornell IRS
Iwan Owen IRS
Isobel Daniels LUC
Lyndis Cole LUC

3 INTRODUCTION

PROJECT BRIEF

3.1 The following objectives were set for the project to:

- investigate rural communities' aspirations for the countryside;
- investigate the aspirations of others who use the countryside for recreational and other uses; and
- investigate how the planning system and the Assembly Government's planning policy can foster sustainable development which meets these aspirations

3.2 This research project forms part of the Welsh Assembly Government's Wales Planning Research Programme (WPRP). The Programme has been established to meet the need for evidence based land use planning policy development within the context of the Assembly Government's principles and priorities.

POLICY MAP FOR THE COUNTRYSIDE IN WALES

3.3 The policy map below highlights the complexity of current strategies that impinge on the countryside at national, regional and local levels. It also helps the reader appreciate the current approach to countryside matters within the Welsh Assembly Government and unitary authorities.

NATIONAL PLANNING

Planning Delivering for Wales 2002

3.4 'Planning: Delivering for Wales' sets out proposals to change the planning system in Wales, to improve the delivery of development plans and the decision making process

Wales Spatial Plan 2003

3.5 People, Places, Futures sets out a direction of travel for Wales for the next 20 years, describing what is required to put Wales firmly on the path towards sustainable spatial development

Wales : A Better Country 2003

3.6 A vision to build on the key strengths of Wales' unique identity in order to establish a distinctive and sustainable future for Wales. With planned reforms to the EU Common Agricultural Policy, the scope for the land-based economic sectors to benefit the natural environment and local communities is growing.

A Winning Wales 2002

3.7 A Winning Wales is the Welsh Assembly Government's Strategy for transforming the economy of Wales, while promoting sustainable development. The Strategy points the way to increase the knowledge, research and development, and innovation capacity in all parts of the Welsh economy; build on strengths in manufacturing; increase the number of jobs in financial and business services and help more people into jobs to bring down our levels of economic inactivity. This should be read in conjunction with "Learning to Work Differently: Sustainable Development" and "Supporting Rural Wales" documents published by the Welsh Development Agency.

Rural Development Plan 2002

3.8 This plan channels support from Europe into the sustainable development of rural Wales. It complements the changes which have occurred in the agricultural sector by backing projects which promote greater integration between farming and the wider rural community.

Farming for the Future 2001

3.9 Farming for the Future is the Welsh Assembly Government's strategy aimed at helping secure a viable future for farming in Wales that is sustainable economically, environmentally and socially.

Learning to Live Differently 2000

3.10 This strategy sets out principles for the Welsh Assembly Government's statutory sustainable development scheme. This applies to all areas of policy making at national and local levels.

Rural Partnership 1998

3.11 The Rural Partnership for Wales (RPW) was established in November 1998 and is an advisory body that brings together a wide range of organisations to contribute to the future development of rural policies and programmes. Its remit embraces the economic, social, environmental, equal opportunities and cultural issues of concern to rural Wales.

Regional Planning

3.12 For example Strategic Planning Guidance for South East Wales provides informal regional planning guidance in order to provide a context for the preparation, consideration and revision of Unitary Development Plans (UDPs); to minimise delays and conflicts between planning authorities at the public inquiry stage; to identify areas of agreement on common issues; to identify strategic spatial policy issues that may need resolution and identify the mechanisms for resolving them and it provides an opportunity for interested organisations to contribute to the regional planning process.

Unitary Authority
Planning Policy Wales

3.13 The purpose of *Planning Policy* Wales is to set the context for sustainable land use planning policy, within which local planning authorities' statutory Unitary Development Plans are prepared and development control decisions on individual applications and appeals are taken.

Unitary Development Plan

3.14 These provide the statutory framework within which development control decisions are taken.

Countryside/Rural strategies

3.15 These are Informal planning documents that set out a vision for the countryside of a given county. This covers both land use and wider issues associated with countryside that fall outside the planning remit. It is a long-term vision for the countryside, based on a partnership approach, bringing different groups and organisations together in setting joint priorities.

Community Strategies

3.16 Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2000 placed a duty on each principal council in England and Wales to prepare a community strategy to promote and improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of their areas and to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development in the UK.

3.17 Community strategies are intended to bring together all those who can contribute to the future of communities within a local authority area, to agree on the key priorities for the area and pursue them in partnership. As such, the preparation and implementation of community strategies will involve the local authority and a wide range of organisations in the public, private, voluntary and community sectors as well as local people.

Economic Development Strategies

3.18 Under the Local Government Act 2000 local authorities have the power to do anything which they consider is likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well being of their area.

Biodiversity Action Plans

3.19 These are plans, programme or strategy for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity which are operationalised at national, regional and local levels in accordance with agreed priorities for habitats and/or species.

4 LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

4.1 The countryside in Wales is a multi-functional and contested resource. The demands of an increasingly sophisticated society are such that "*more and more functions must be integrated simultaneously in a given landscape*" (Tress & Tress, 2003:9). Yet, for all the rural white papers, dedicated countryside agencies and rural strategies and plans, we still lack a comprehensive vision of what we want from the countryside (Cherry, 1973). This review charts both the changing context within which the public and the professional view the countryside and signposts some of the key issues relating to the kind of countryside we want and for whom should it be managed.

ROLE OF THE COUNTRYSIDE

4.2 Commentators have long recognised the countryside as contested space. Wibberley (1982) proposed seven roles for the countryside:

- To produce food
- To build and develop
- To reflect back to a historic rural idyll
- To preserve the status quo (the present rural idyll)
- To recreate and play
- To protect flora and fauna
- To be a refuge for solitude and peace

4.3 Although these roles are still very much in evidence, Marsden (1999) identifies a fundamental shift from the countryside as a centre of production, where agriculture and forestry dominated, to a centre of consumption where housing, rural services, recreation and tourism now feature. This reconstruction of the countryside arena gives rise to new tensions and conflicts. External pressures from diverse points of origin such as CAP reform, centralisation of public services, variations in local housing markets and informal recreational demands, focus such divides within an increasingly emotive rural discourse.

4.4 Future policy direction must not only balance and accommodate these pressures in relation to specific countrysides, but it must be more creative about the types of intervention used to build the competitive capacity of our rural regions.

4.5 This point is reinforced by Midmore (2003) who calls for a more flexible approach to the changing Welsh countryside, citing a danger of applying 20th Century solutions to 21st Century problems. Yet, as Buckwell (2002) warns, any reconstruction of the countryside must have a pre-requisite of profitability if it is to meet any desired vision.

4.6 Planning policy has a key role to play in the management of the countryside, yet it remains embedded in its land use roots, reluctant to embrace the social, environmental and economic dynamic of the countryside. According to Scott *et al.* (2004), current policy making structures in Wales are ill-placed to tackle this agenda, although arguably the Wales Spatial Plan provides a platform for such issues to be incorporated into the strategic planning process (Welsh Assembly Government, 2003a).

PLANNING FOR THE COUNTRYSIDE

4.7 The town and country planning system is seen as the most "*powerful and influential mechanism for leading and inspiring the sustainable development of the countryside*" (Wakeford 2003). However, Macnaghten (2003) observes that countryside planning "*has tended to remain reactive, conservative and pre-occupied by a visual aesthetic*" (p99). Furthermore, the UK land use planning system focuses almost exclusively on the 'physical' impacts of new development and the consequent effects this has on communities. He argues that public consultation exercises have been wholly unimaginative, serving only to reinforce the views of the more articulate and well connected communities. Planning policy therefore has not been successful in incorporating the social and cultural dynamics over time.

4.8 Planning for sustainability therefore represents a major challenge as recognised by Planning: Delivering for Wales (Welsh Assembly Government: 2002d). Within this reconstructed countryside it is important to know whose countryside we are planning for. Traditionally, countryside policy equated with agricultural interests. The countryside was rarely considered as a whole and consequently agricultural policies shaped the landscape albeit with important environmental, social and economic impacts which countryside policy then struggled to address (Curry, 1993). Now that countryside policy assumes centre stage we see more divergent and contested development paths.

4.9 The Wales Rural Development Plan (1999) acknowledges this shift. It is clear that 'the rural' is no longer the preserve of farmers, with competing claims in the rural development discourse that reflect alternative priorities for the countryside. This reflects a search for new futures about the "*way agriculture and the countryside might be reconfigured*" (Ploeg et al 2000:390). For example, recent research in Wales has assessed the viability of establishing 'Wildwoods' in the uplands (Land Use Policy Group, 2002); work by Land Use Consultants for the Welsh Assembly Government (2002a) on the rural economy has highlighted the increasing diversity of the rural economy with moves away from traditional industries; work looking at the Tir Cymen agri-environment scheme has highlighted new relationships between urban and rural economies (Banks and Marsden, 2000) and work for the Welsh Assembly (2002b) on second and holiday homes has highlighted the increased trends for retirement and commuting type "incomers" to the countryside, complete with their different aspirations, lifestyle and needs.

4.10 Significantly, the spatial development of the countryside has not been given sufficient attention (Hadjimichalis, 2003). However, the new Wales Spatial Plan (Welsh Assembly Government, 2003a) attempts, within four spatial challenges: valuing the environment; building sustainable communities; increasing and spreading prosperity and achieving sustainable accessibility, to take more account of local variations in the economic, social and environmental character of the countryside as recommended by DETR (2001) and Shorten *et al*. (2001).

4.11 This more integrated thinking is critical as, according to Selman (2002), the planning scene is typified by complexity with a whole host of divergent interests and plans represented in a piecemeal manner with no overall co-ordination. Land Use Consultants (Welsh Assembly Government, 2002a) share similar views calling for greater integration of approach, nationally and locally, with local planning policy better rooted in clear understandings of differing local circumstances.

4.12 However, Scott (2001) is concerned that the planner today is not well equipped to fight the significant demands of these new agendas. Research by Hales (2000) supports this with a powerful critique of the way sustainable development has been operationalised in development plans. Evidence shows that planners have implicit bureaucratic support for the status quo, rarely challenging its policy basis and lacking the resources to challenge extant policy guidance (Scott, 2001).

DECONSTRUCTING PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF COUNTRYSIDE

4.13 The methodologies available to tap into public perception are well established and increasingly sophisticated. They include semantic rating scales (Penning-Rowsell and Hardy, 1973); photograph surveys (Byrne 1979); focus groups for woodland policy (Burgess, 1996); locally fashioned village appraisals and village design statements (Owen, 2002); Planning for Real Exercises (Tewdwr- Jones and Thomas, 1998); scenario- based approaches (Yorkshire Dales National Park, 1992); computer scenarios (Tress and Tress, 2003) and more recent internet visioning interactive programmes (Kingston 1998). Whilst such studies readily capture public perceptions, their translation into policy outcomes remains problematic; after all there is no one public or single view on such matters. Indeed, there is a risk that consulting with the public becomes an end in itself rather than any planned incorporation into wider policy making.

4.14 Despite the methodological development, the danger with many studies is that they become restricted wish lists rather than meaningful assessments of the realities of the countryside. As Osborn (2002) states there is a need to inform people about countryside issues and dispel the myths and simplistic treatment so widespread in the media before research is actually conducted. Nevertheless, it is clear from studies that the public can exhibit sophisticated views on countryside matters (Scott 2003; Forestry Commission Wales, 2003; Box 1). For example public perception studies undertaken across Wales as part of the LANDMAP process reveal strong positive associations with the local countryside, sense of place, functionality, tradition, diversity, recreation potential and the need for sensitive development. Underlying these attachments is a universal theme of a countryside under threat (Box 1).

4.15 Indeed, sense of place engenders strong emotional and cultural attachments to local countrysides which become powerful arguments for their conservation (Bullen *et al,* 1998a, b, and c). The recognition that landscape provides a sense of identity requires policymakers to account for the highly valued personal attachments individuals have to particular local places and the sense of personal well-being these engender.

4.16 Public value is attached to managed landscapes in terms of both aesthetic and functional considerations. Positive responses are encountered with respect to the fertile and managed agricultural landscapes which are reinforced by perceived threats of urban encroachment. This desire for the preservation of 'greenness' and the negative responses to the reduction of the countrysides' 'traditional' elements such as hedgerows, stone walls and field edges is pervasive and echoed by the CCW, who recognise: "*in general, communities perceive the need for a pleasant green edge to and between settlements, such as woodland, heathland and pasture*" (CCW, 1996:5).

4.17 Additionally new research published by the Forestry Commission Wales (2003) shows how the public value and support trees in the landscape and wish to see more woodland in Wales, although there is a clear preference for broadleaves.

"Because I feel part of it; that I belong there", (in Bullen *et al*, 1998b).

"…..sense of belonging – as though it's your patch" (in Bullen *et al*, 1998c)

*"It's obviously not rough and tumble; it's tidy, that's how the countryside should be" (*in Scott, 2002a:285)

"Looks like a giant chess board. Like a patchwork. I like the pattern and the colour" (ibid, 287)

"Plenty of colours and lows and high, lots of trees and would like to walk in that landscape. The diversity is important" (Comments on a valley landscape in Scott, 2002a:285)

"…..walk across green fields. No cars or people. Very peaceful and healthy" (Countryside Commission, 1995:9

"I feel free to wander here. I live near the sea and I enjoy wandering along footpaths to keep fit" (in Bullen *et al* 1998b)

"…..it is the quiet places of North Wales that are most under threat" (Scott, 2003)

"……we are losing the diversity and character of our villages. It's the same red brick; it could be anywhere in the UK. (Scott, 2003)"

Box 1: Selected quotes from public perception studies across Wales

4.18 Scenario-techniques employed by Tress and Tress (2003) in Denmark found nearly three quarters of their study groups in favour of an increase in industrial farming, coupled with environmental improvements such as more trees and natural areas. This type of landscape is valued holistically, but is comprised of features that are also valued individually. Field patterns and colours are highly influential and generally associated with 'naturalness', giving rise to the need for landscape professionals to adopt a more flexible approach to the interpretation of the term "natural" in the context of policy development. The LANDMAP studies have also highlighted how people value the economic and recreation functions of countryside, where the presence of attractive countryside alone, without evidence of economic development, managed recreational space or "something going on", is criticised (Scott, 2002a). These themes are also reflected in some recent research published by the Welsh Assembly Government on aged balanced communities in Wales, where the views of rural youth were identified and assessed in action plans (Welsh Assembly Government, 2004). Here, rural youth wanted improved job availability, effective career paths, an effective voice to inform policy and targeted rural services that met their current lifestyle needs for employment (childcare), recreation and leisure.

4.19 A further issue of engaging with the countryside was revealed by a study looking at black and ethnic minority populations where perceptual and physical barriers prevented access and enjoyment of the countryside (Countryside Agency, 2003).

4.20 The most positive responses to countryside have come from landscapes that are comprised of elements that are considered 'traditional' and/or 'natural'. Here elements such as deciduous trees, hedges and stonewalls are highly significant (Forestry Commission Wales, 2003; Bullen *et al*, 1998, 1999; Countryside Commission, 1995; Scott, 2002a; Tress & Tress, 2003). Associated with this aesthetic response is also a desire to experience that landscape through active involvement. Research by Tress and Tress (2003) supports this, with respondents positive towards wider

opportunities for recreation in the countryside including wider access and new recreation opportunities in the form of trails, fishing ponds and recreation centres. Comparative work in Wales (Bullen *et al* 1998, 1999) and England (Countryside Commission, 1995) substantiates this view of the countryside as a place for healthy activity and recreation.

4.21 Nevertheless, caution was evident in places of tourist sensitivity such as Gwynedd, where tourism was considered as a clear threat, being perceived to contribute towards the in-migration of non-Welsh speaking residents concomitant with loss of "Welsh" culture (Scott, 2003).

4.22 However, despite the negativity towards some development for tourism purposes, research has shown that it is not development *per se* that is seen as a threat, but the type, location and scale of current developments. It is recognised that in order to maintain the vibrancy and viability of communities, change is inevitable (Bullen *et al,* 1998b). Affordable housing, local employment and transport, albeit at an appropriate scale are the key changes most commonly cited. There is a strong desire to see development in keeping with existing surroundings with a preference for building restoration as opposed to new build, village infill instead of ribbon development and use of local materials and labour (Scott 2003). Indeed, there are clear negative responses to the perceived "homogenisation" of the countryside by new developments that are large scale, characterless and placeless.

4.23 Scott (2003) goes as far as to suggest that the type and scale of new development is destroying valued local landscapes thereby creating public dissatisfaction and hostility toward policy makers. Here the policies affording countryside protection do not apparently square with public perceptions.

5 METHODOLOGY

5.1 The combination of methods we have adopted for this research reflects the need to take a rigorous approach into what is a problematic and highly subjective research area. Consultative methodologies abound in the literature, yet their use is often compromised by a single-handed reliance on one particular technique (Scott, 2002). As Burgess (1999) has observed, there is a need for researchers in the rural arena to utilize a combination of quantative and qualitative approaches in order to explain complex and controversial areas of applied rural policy investigation and evaluation. Nowhere is such a view more pertinent when it comes to identifying and assessing the kind of countryside the public want.

5.2 The methodology has seven phases capturing the views of the public, communities, professionals and stakeholders, together with an evaluation of planning strategies and documents. Four themes underpin the project and have been used to shape the subsequent methodological approach.

- Definition/understanding of 'countryside'
- Desired vs actual roles/land uses for the countryside
- Issues that concern respondents about the countryside and why
- Respondents' vision for the countryside and how this might achieved

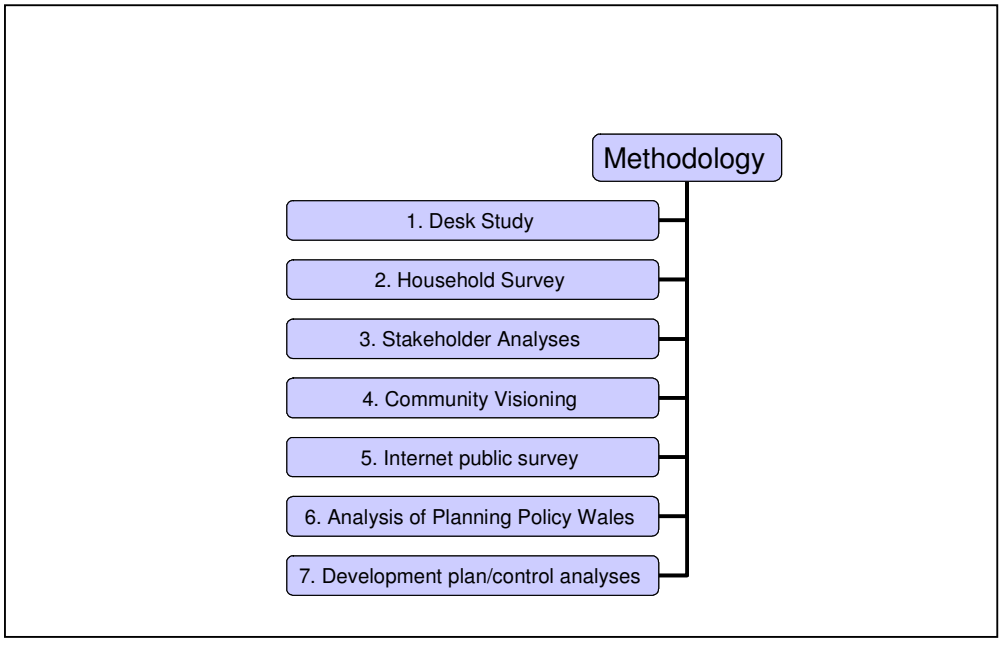


Figure 1: Methodological approach

Each phase is now described in turn

PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF COUNTRYSIDE

Household survey

5.3 In order to secure a representative sample across Wales a multi-staged approach was required. The following methodological sequence was adopted.

5.4 A simple typology addressing different rural/urban locations was devised adapting that used by Land Use Consultants (2001) on the diversification of the rural economy[1]. Here we discriminated between the more accessible rural areas under the influence of a settlement as **rural fringe** as opposed to **rural** areas which were more self-contained; while for the urban typology we classified the immediate areas abutting urban areas as **urban fringe,** as opposed to traditional urban centres classified as **urban.** Whilst the classification is crude, it does allow for discrimination between urban and rural space.

5.5 All wards across Wales were classified into this typology using a previous Office of National Statistics cluster analysis undertaken at ward level on the 1991 census. The resultant clusters were based on a range of economic and social characteristics which were then transposed into our typology. This replicates the published approach by the Countryside Council for Wales in their guidance for undertaking public perception studies (CCW, 2002).

5.6 From these categories two wards were selected at random creating the eight final wards for the study. (Map 1).

a.	Urban	Aberavon (Neath/Port Talbot)	Offa (Wrexham)
b.	Urban fringe	Mawr (Swansea)	Aston (Deeside)
c.	Rural fringe	Talgarth (Brecknockshire)	Llangybi (Monmouth)
d.	Rural	Tregaron (Ceredigion)	Caerhun (Aberconwy)

5.7 Allied Computing Services[2] then provided a random sample of 150 households with a quota of 75 respondents for each ward. The remaining 75 were reserves in case of refusals or non-response. This generated a final sample of 600 respondents. Individual households were then assigned male/female target respondents in proportion to the 2001 census results.

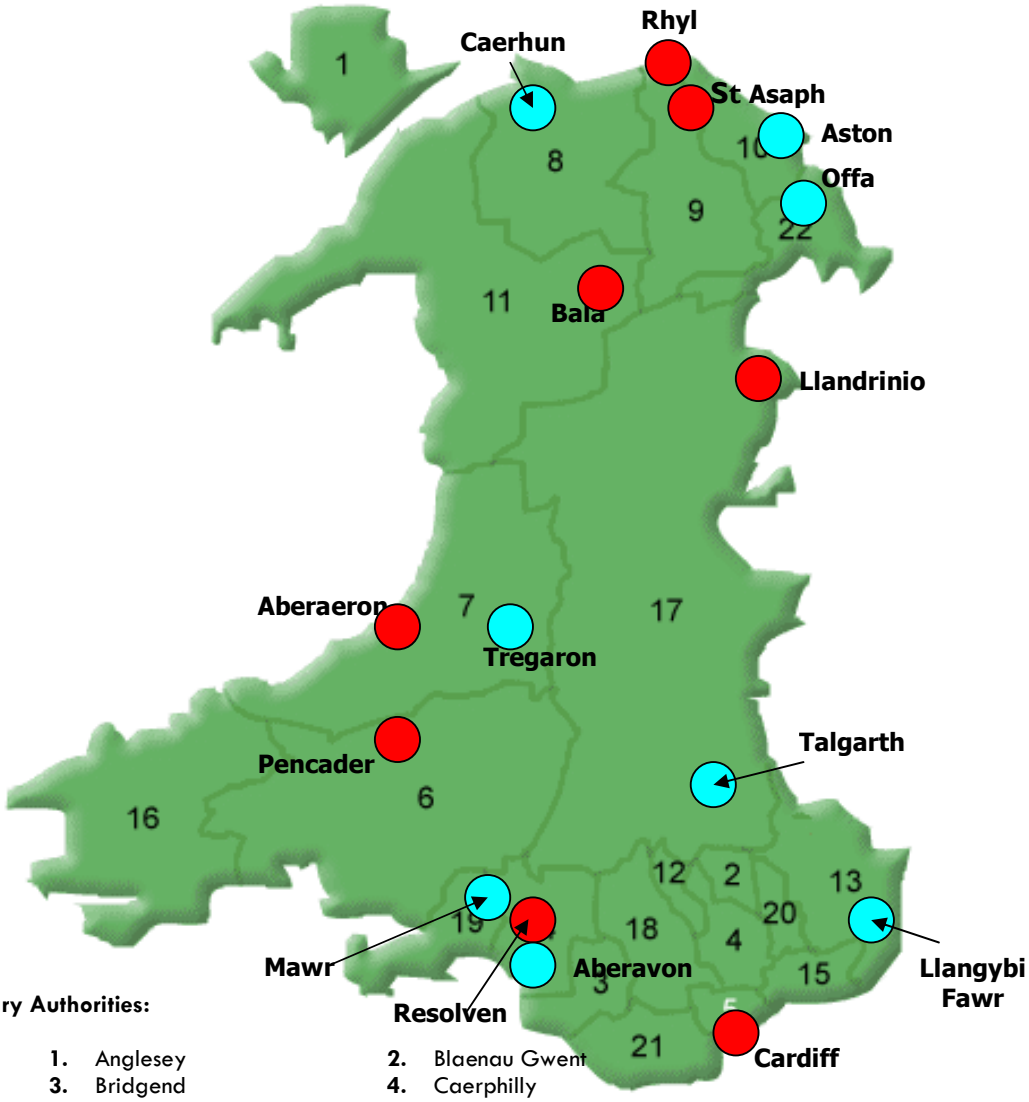
5.8 Bilingual surveyors then interviewed these respondents during August-October 2003 in their home using a questionnaire covering both open and closed questions (Appendix 11a) The interview schedule lasted for about 20 minutes.

5.9 Responses were then input into Keypoint 3 (questionnaire software package).

5.10 All these elements have been combined in the analysis undertaken in Chapter 6. Further details on the socio-economic details of the sample are located in Appendix 11f.

[1] Classifying local authorities into remote rural, accessible rural and urban fringe areas

[2] The use of this service was necessitate due to changes in the data protection act limiting the value of the electoral register as a sample frame and the implications of local authority officer monitoring of surveyors using this resource.



Unitary Authorities:

1.	Anglesey	**2.**	Blaenau Gwent
3.	Bridgend	**4.**	Caerphilly
5.	Cardiff	**6.**	Carmarthenshire
7.	Ceredigion	**8.**	Conwy
9.	Denbighshire	**10.**	Flintshire
11.	Gwynedd	**12.**	Merthyr Tydfil
13.	Monmouthshire	**14.**	Neath Port Talbot
15.	Newport	**16.**	Pembrokeshire
17.	Powys	**18.**	Rhondda Cynon Taff
19.	Swansea	**20.**	Torfaen
21.	Vale of Glamorgan	**22.**	Wrexham

KEY:

Community Visioning Sites: Household Questionnaire Wards:

Map 1: Sample selection of wards and communities

Stakeholder consultations

5.11 This involved a conventional consultation exercise with pre-defined questions broadly mirroring the household survey but within a more open style format (Appendix 11b). 105 organisations with an interest in countryside matters were asked to respond between September to November 2003, but we received only 22 written responses with five oral briefings.

5.12 This was followed by an interactive seminar on November 14th which focussed on the wider results of the study. This iterative process helped clarify stakeholder responses to the publics' agenda as well as provide further insights.

Internet public survey

5.13 The internet survey provided an opportunity for anybody who was interested to participate in the survey. The internet survey mirrored the household survey and was created in Welsh and English using Keypoint 3 software (http://www.irs.aber.ac.uk/als/netpage/research/countrysidesurvey.htm)

5.14 An extensive programme of publicity and press releases was used to try and generate interest in the survey in national newspapers and media. In addition established forums were emailed in order to try and elicit responses. These included

i. http://www.allwalespeople1st.co.uk/forum/; http://www.whatswrongwithbritain.com/
ii. BME-WALES-HEALTH-SOCIAL-CARE-request@jiscmail.ac.uk mail user group
iii. BBCi

5.15 In total we received 129 responses by the December 1st deadline. However it has to be stressed that these merely inform the results as, by default, they are biased to those with specific interests rather than the public at large.

Community visioning exercise

5.16 This phase of the project involved the in-depth study of eight communities. Two communities from the rural-urban typology described earlier (5.6) were selected with a genuine attempt to contrast geographical, economic and social characteristics in the final choice (Map1).

Urban :	Cardiff and Rhyl
Urban Fringe:	Resolven and St Asaph
Rural Fringe	Pencader and Llandrinio
Rural	Bala and Aberaeron

5.17 A visioning model was employed but adapted to the specific requirements of the project using pre-selected site visits to areas of countryside within or surrounding a particular community.

5.18 A pre-visioning site visit took place by the project team from which different viewpoints were identified from which to conduct the visioning, subject to agreed criteria as set out in Appendix 11d.

5.19 The exercises took place over October and early November and involved up to 12 individuals from within and adjacent to a particular community (normally set within 5 miles).

5.20 Participation was secured through a system of key contacts and networking within community groups and leaders. The aim was to achieve a balanced representation of that community as far as was possible using a purposive sampling approach. Consequently, established leaders and local politicians were not included except for a one community council representative.

5.21 The meeting was taped and a secretary was used to capture the discussions and produce a final transcript following a set of prescribed procedures (Appendix 11e). The session lasted up to 4 hours and involved.

- Technical briefing
- 3 site visits and associated discussion
- Final discussion to identify the vision for the community.

PLANNING POLICY FOR THE COUNTRYSIDE

Analysis of Planning Policy Wales (2002) and the TANs

5.22 Planning Policy Wales (PPW: Welsh Assembly Government 2002c) and the 20 accompanying TANs (Technical Advice Notes) make up Welsh national planning policy. For this research we focussed on an evaluation of PPW together with TAN 2 Affordable Housing; TAN6 Agriculture and Rural Development; TAN13 Tourism; TAN14 Coastal Planning; TAN16 Sport and Recreation; TAN18 Transport and TAN20 Welsh Language.

5.23 Their analysis takes the form of identifying the main themes of the findings of public perceptions of the Welsh Countryside and exploring their implications for national policy.

Analysis of development plans and development control

Development plans

5.24 The project team have drawn upon their earlier reviews of rural policy in Welsh development plans and have undertaken evaluations of seven UDPs relevant to the community visioning exercise (Cardiff, Neath Port Talbot, Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Denbighshire, Snowdonia National Park). In addition the counties of Flintshire and Swansea were added to make eight plans in total.

5.25 As for PPW and the TANs, the main avenue of analysis was to take the main themes of the findings of public perceptions of the Welsh Countryside and explore their implications for local policy.

Planning workshops.

5.26 Two workshops with development control officers and elected members were held providing an arena to discuss the findings of the public perceptions of the

countryside and their implications for planning policy and work. These were held in early December in Cardiff and Penryndeudraeth.

5.27 These three elements of planning analysis have been combined in chapter 6.

6 RESULTS : PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE COUNTRYSIDE

HOUSEHOLD SURVEY

6.1 The household survey results are now presented and interpreted for all key questions. Further sections then deconstruct these results by key social, economic, cultural and geographic variables.

Perceptions of the countryside

town or country %	rural	rural fringe	urban	urban fringe	Total
Town	20%	11%	80%	22%	33%
Country	79%	86%	19%	74%	64%
Other	1%	3.%	1%	3%	2%

Table 1: Do you consider yourself to be from the town or countryside (n=580)

6.2 Table 1 reveals that the respondents' ward location does not equate solely with their urban-rural perceptions. While most of the population interviewed considered themselves to be from the countryside (64%), it is noticeable that some people living in rural wards felt that they were from the town (20%) and vice versa. Further questioning revealed that these perceptions were largely shaped by the places where people had grown up or had spent most of their lives and /or associations with their current surroundings or employment. The results are particularly interesting in the urban fringe where a clear majority perceived themselves to be from the countryside (79%). Here the critical factors appeared to be the presence of green fields and a perceived degree of physical separation from a defined urban area.

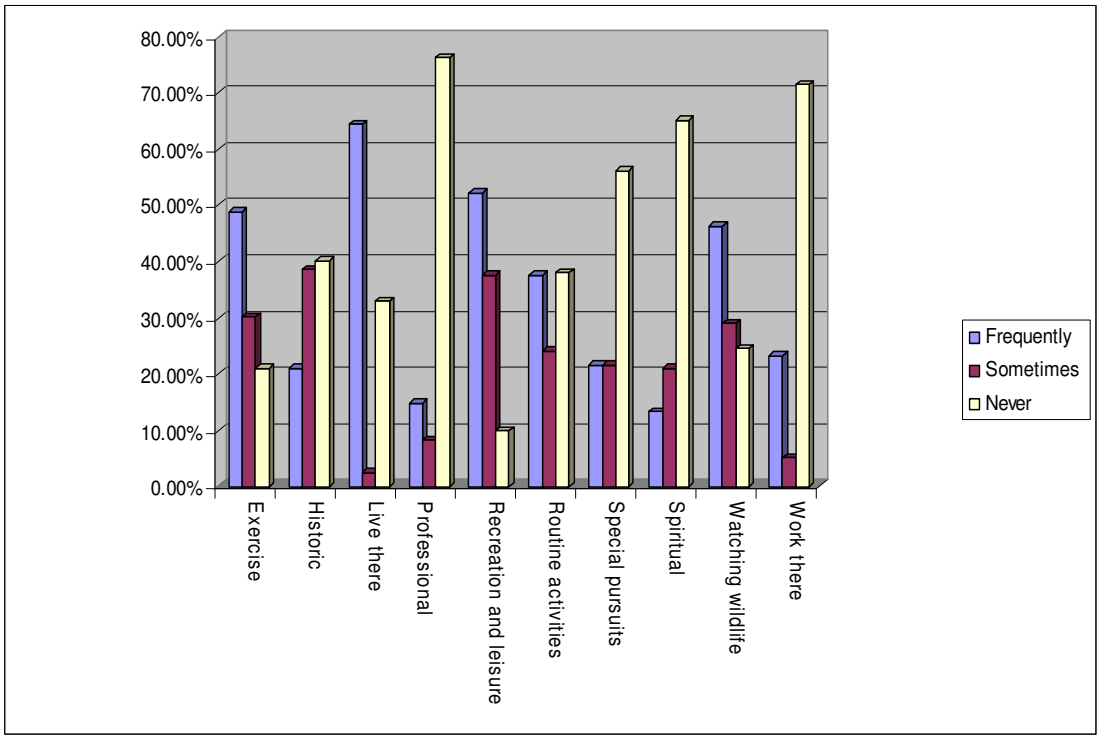


Figure 2: What do you use the countryside for (n=598)

6.3 Figure 2 reveals that respondents use the countryside frequently for a range of activities encompassing residential, recreation, conservation and routine. Significantly, the countryside is less used for work/professional activities, spiritual or special pursuits.

6.4 Figure 3 suggests that the public see the countryside performing multi-functional roles. The strongest levels of agreement are for the countryside as a place to conserve (60%) and as a place for peace (49%). However, high levels of agreement are recorded for the countryside as a place to produce food (32%), live (37%) and recreation (26%). Principal areas of disagreement challenge the countryside as a place for building and for transporting goods and services.

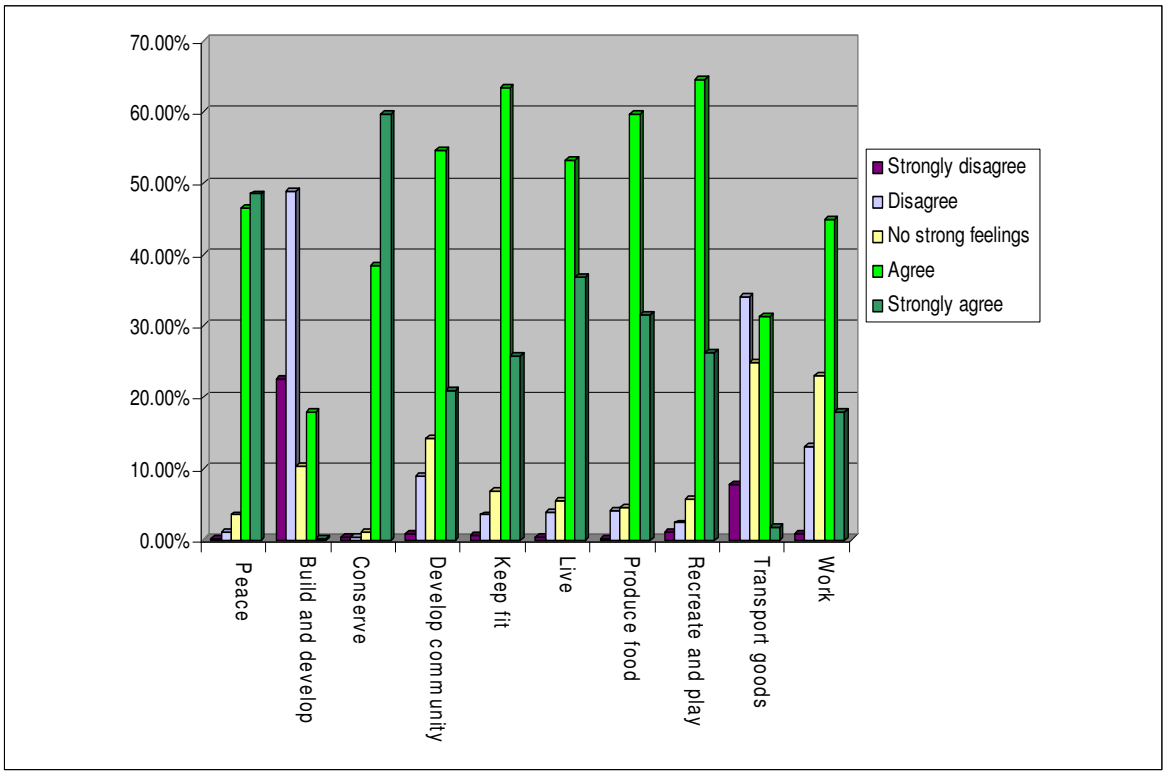
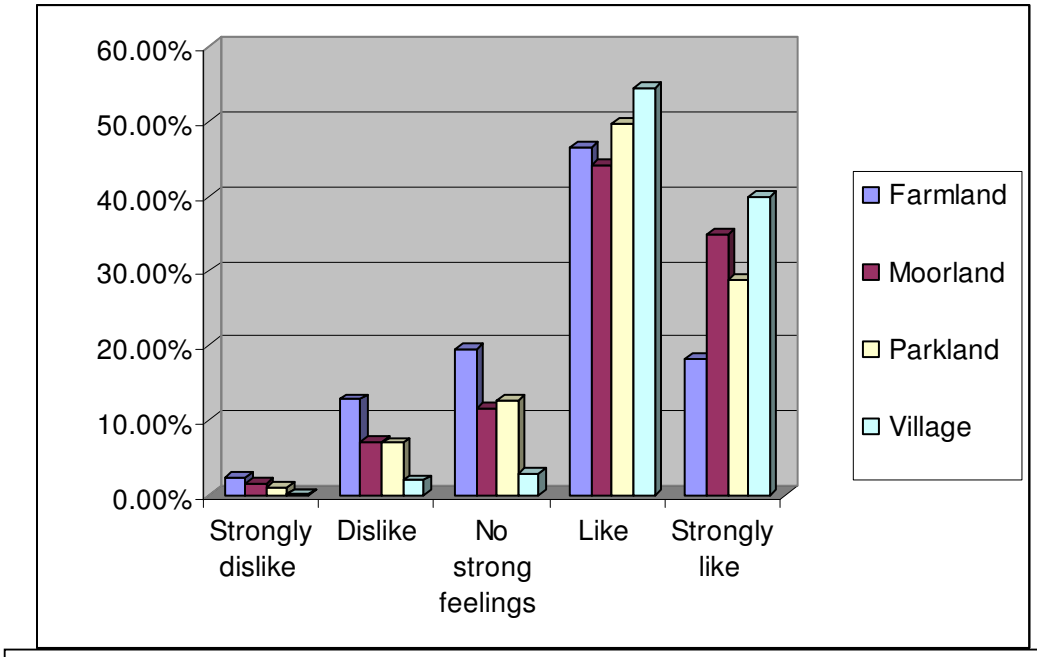


Figure 3: What is the role of the countryside (n= 599)

6.5 The photographic assessment revealed strong positive assessments for all the four types of countryside (Figure 4). The village and moorland countrysides were most valued with the farmland less popular. Reasons for these assessments were explored in supplementary open questions. Although a minority of respondents answered this question (108), the preference for moorland was based on its wildness, peace and inherent beauty with dislikes citing the boring, monotonous and dull aspects. The village was liked due to its perceived "sense of community" and intimate scale with the surrounding landscape. However, contrasting views were evident in the farmed landscape with some assessments recognising "good/productive farming land" while others reacted against perceived "intensive agriculture" and "lack of conservation value". The parkland was valued for its recreational opportunities but was also seen as boring and unproductive.



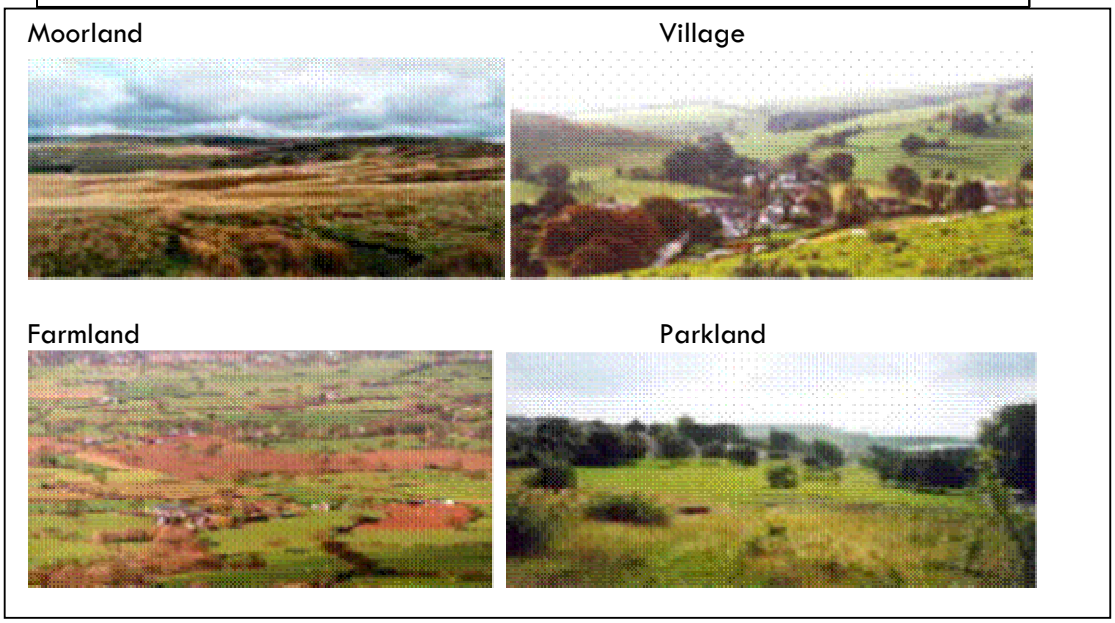


Figure 4: Photographic Assessment (n= 597)

6.6 The changes desired to these countrysides reflected high levels of respondent satisfaction with most responses advocating no changes at all (Table 2). In the moorland, parkland and farming landscapes there was an emerging consensus around the need for more small scale forestry/woodland (primarily deciduous or mixed) and wildlife conservation practices.

What changes to photos	Moorland	Village	Farmland	Park
no changes at all	68%	81%	59.7%	69.8%
small scale housing development	2.2%	5.5%	3.5%	1.3%
small scale employment development	1.2%	5.5%	2.5%	1.7%
small scale tourism development	5.7%	5.8%	4.2%	6.5%
small scale forestry and woodland	13.3%	2.3%	18%	4.8%
small scale agricultural expansion	4.3%	1.2%	4%	1.3%
new settlement	1.2%	0.2%	1.2%	0.3%
large scale tourism development	0%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
large scale intensive agriculture	0.5%	0.2%	0.2%	0%
large scale forestry and woodland	2.3%	3.3%	12.7%	12%
reservoir or power generation	3.2%	0.3%	1.2%	0.8%
roads/rail development	0.8%	0.3%	0.5%	1.7%
new conservation practices	7.3%	0.8%	1%	0.2%
wildlife conservation areas	14.3%	1.8%	11.5%	7.3%
Total (frequency)	746	651	721	648

Table 2: What changes would you like to see to the photographs (n=108)

6.7 The preference for different types of countryside is further revealed when respondents were asked to identify their favourite piece of countryside in Wales. Naturally the range of responses was diverse, but common trends were identified (Figure 5). First there is a clear preference for the "local countryside" (34%), based on familiarity, accessibility and landscape aesthetics. Second, National Parks figured extensively within named preferences confirming their status as valued countryside. This trend for valuing high quality landscapes is supported by other named areas falling within Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB [3]).

6.8 Supplementary questioning revealed that people used these landscapes/places for recreational activities and repeat visits, thereby confirming the importance of countryside recreation in a Welsh context.

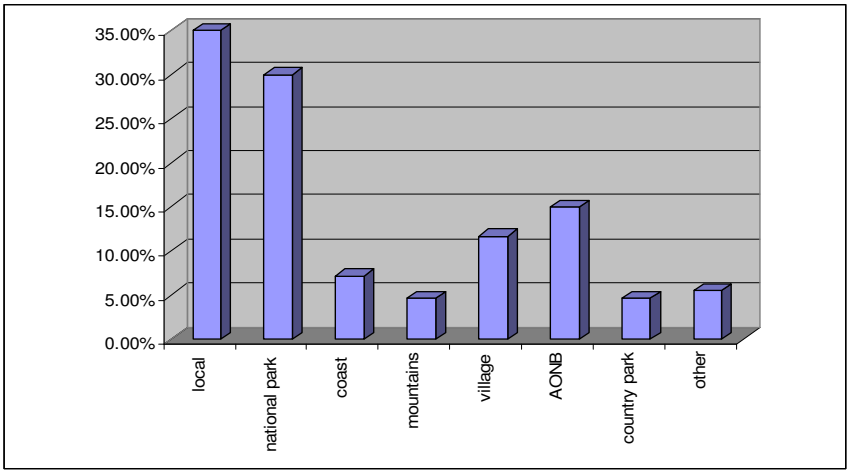


Figure 5: What/Where is your favourite piece of countryside in Wales. (n=654)

[3] There was no recognition of these areas being AONB rather the area cited was within an AONB designation.

The publics' agenda for the countryside

What issues concern you	Percentage	What issues concern you	Percentage
overdevelopment	21%	rural employment	5%
rural transport	17%	drugs/crime	4%
litter/dumping	16%	other	3%
future of farming	12%	windfarms	3%
hunting and field sports	11%	town vs country	4%
rural housing	9%	affordability	3%
nature conservation	8%	tourism	3%
incomers	8%	future	3%
public access to the countryside	7%	bureaucracy	2%
pollution	6%	motorbikes/4WD	2%
access to rural services	6%	welsh language	2%
youth	5%	local planning dispute	2%
		landscape designations	2%
		primary education	2%
		extraction	2%
		rural taxes	1%

Table 3: What issues concern you most about the countryside (n= 632)

6.9 Table 3 identifies the issues that concern respondents most with respect to the Welsh countryside. There are many issues apparent and it is clearly naïve to view these in isolation. However, five issues stand out: overdevelopment (21%), rural transport (17%) litter (16%), future of farming (12%) and field sports (11%). These are now deconstructed in order to help explain particular viewpoints and identify areas of consensus and conflict.

6.10 The overdevelopment issue, whilst clearly consensual, reveals a variety of themes. These reflect dissatisfaction with the pace, scale, type and extent of development in the countryside and question the ability of the planning system and agencies to deal effectively with a countryside under threat.

- Loss of countryside/natural beauty
- Large scale development in countryside
- Too much new development based on housing
- Inappropriate development
- Suburbanisation of the countryside
- Against industrialisation of countryside
- Enlargement of smaller villages
- Too much building threatens agriculture
- Commercialisation in countryside
- Overpopulation of the countryside
- Too much change
- Lack of planning control/restrictions
- Ad-hoc planning control/restrictions
- Lack of attractive new buildings in countryside
- Erosion of green belt
- Lack of agency respect for the countryside

- Too many incomers
- Excess of new building plots

6.11 Transport was a multifaceted issue with clear areas of agreement but also some important tensions. The main priorities focussed on the quantity of traffic and lack of public transport in the countryside with concerns also expressed about local traffic congestion/parking problems. A further issue related to the increased costs of motoring. However, the clear tension appeared to be between those who wanted better roads and those that were opposed to more road building in the countryside. Significantly, there were also tensions between different users of the roads, particularly on small rural roads where potential safety issues predominated.

- Local transport
- Too much traffic
- Lack of public transport
- Road building in rural areas
- Damage to roads and countryside by heavy vehicles
- Need better roads (new and improved)
- Improved traffic management in towns
- Road user conflicts (bikes/horses/lorries/farm vehicles/cars/school children)
- Speeding cars
- Increase costs of motoring

6.12 Litter and dumping was a totally consensual issue. Concerns reflected the increased use of the countryside for the dumping of household goods via fly tipping as well as more obvious litter in the form of wrappers and cans etc. There was also a problem with vandalism with damage to buildings, property and even animals. There was recognition that the issue was now worse in the countryside than in urban areas reflecting a clear lack of respect for the countryside.

- Dumping
- Lack of respect for the countryside
- Litter is worse than in urban areas
- Vandalism and abuse

6.13 The field sports issue was more controversial with some respondents concerned at government interference, supporting the right to hunt and shoot whilst others expressed concern with the perceived cruelty to animals. The issue also raised the interesting theme of whether local communities should have the ultimate say in whether particular activities took place. Badger baiting was raised on several occasions which suggests that whilst it is illegal it is still endemic in places. The data shows this was not a simple rural versus urban issue with respondents seemingly from both urban and rural areas voicing opinions across the divide.

- Protect countryside traditions
- Badger baiting
- Leave hunting alone
- Ban hunting
- Local communities should have the say

6.14 The future of farming was an interesting issue, again reflecting a range of viewpoints and highlighting an important debate about the future of farming. Themes

emerging reflect economic, political, social and environmental concerns with no clear consensus other than the fact that farming should be supported. Tensions existed between the need to support large, small or young farmers and the need to keep agricultural holdings intact. There was universal negativity towards GM crops with strong support for more organic farming and less large scale/intensive farming together with the need to consider animal welfare issues. The supermarkets were also singled out as a key player in the current agricultural crisis.

- Loss of farmland to development
- Break up of traditional farm units
- Support (financial and political) needed for Farmers
- Viability of farming under threat
- Large scale intensive agriculture is a problem
- Overgrazing
- Should not have uneconomic farmers
- Need to encourage organic farming
- Too much pesticides
- Support small scale farmers
- Damaging agricultural practices
- Transporting livestock
- Animal welfare
- Loss/ poor management of hedgerows
- GM crops
- Supermarket manipulation
- Younger generation will not farm

Development and transport in the countryside

6.15 Pre-selected rural issues identified by the Steering Group involving rural and affordable housing, economic development and transport were subjected to analysis within the questionnaire (Figures 6-9). The results show the level of agreement with particular propositions reflecting possible planning responses.

6.16 For rural housing and economic development in the countryside an essentially similar profile emerges (Figures 6 and 7). The key message seems to revolve around ensuring that development respects the scale and character of the landscape in particular locations rather than opposition *per se*. The highest levels of agreement are reserved for development that is of appropriate scale and design, with strongest protection afforded for the open countryside and designated landscapes. Areas of strongest disagreement related to the idea of new settlements in the countryside and development in the wider countryside outside settlement boundaries. However, there is a clear dichotomy of opinion evident between the need for development in larger settlements and in small villages and hamlets.

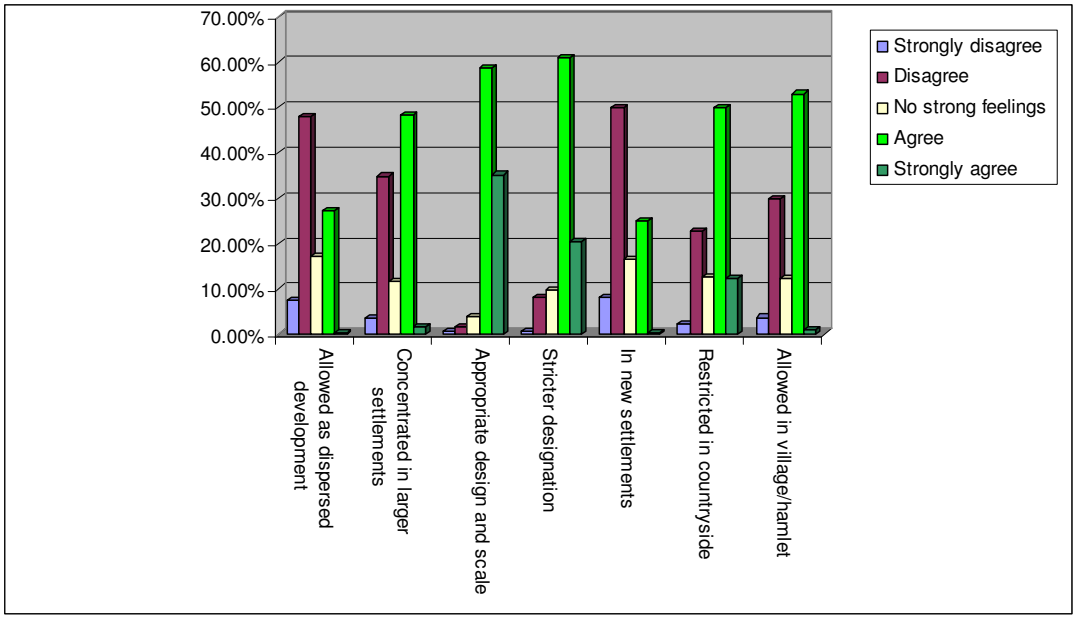


Figure 6: Housing in the countryside should be based in/on: (n=599).

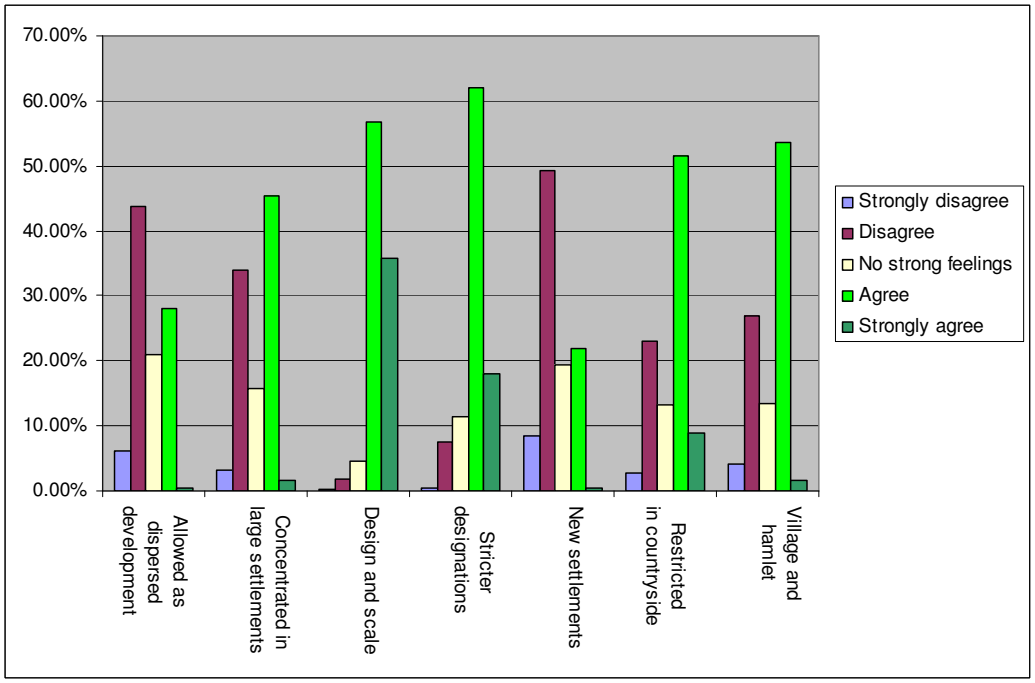


Figure 7: Economic Development in the countryside should be based in/on (n=597)

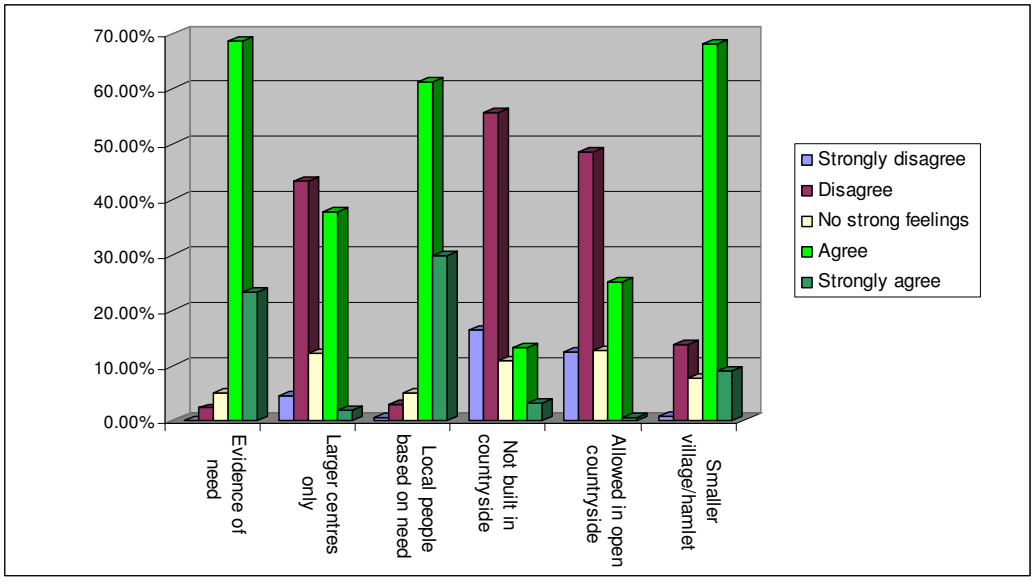


Figure 8: Affordable Housing should be based in/on (n=598)

6.17 The profile for affordable housing shows the highest levels of agreement for responses based on evidence of need with particular emphasis on the "local" dimension (Figure 8). Endorsement was also evident for affordable housing development across the rural settlement hierarchy including smaller villages and hamlets, with clear disagreement with the proposition to restrict development to only larger centres. There was increased support evident for affordable housing in the countryside more generally. Opposing views were evident over the use of larger centres for housing development.

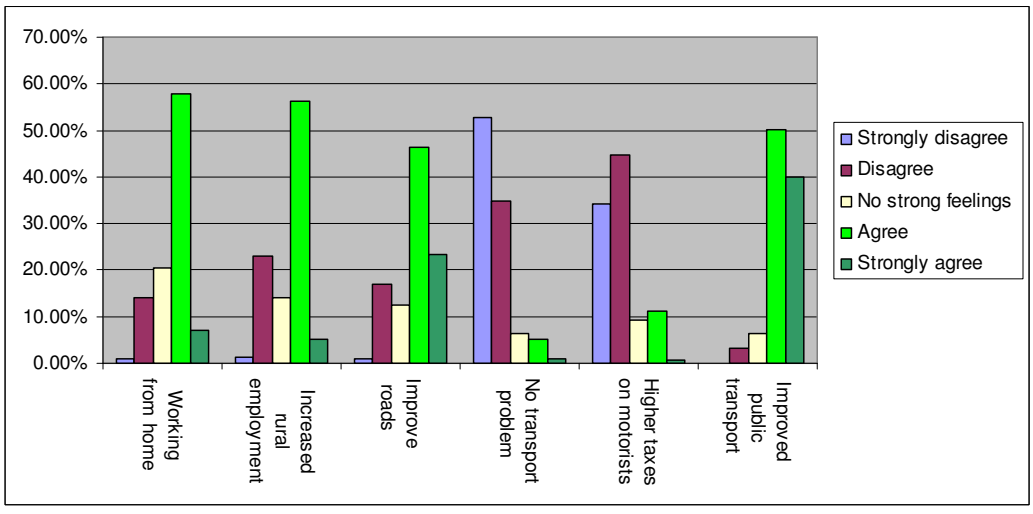


Figure 9: Transport problems should be solved by: (n=600)

6.18 The results in Figure 9 show that the respondents strongly disagree with the proposition that there is no transport problem. In terms of solutions, the highest levels of agreement are for improvements to the public transport system coupled with road improvements. Working from home and increasing jobs in rural areas are also endorsed. However, there is a large majority rejecting higher taxes for motorists challenging the implementation of a simple polluter pays principle.

Visions for the countryside

6.19 A set of open questions drew upon respondents' visions for the countryside by rural interest. A range of responses were evident which increasingly reflected an emerging consensus of how the countryside should be managed. In this section we identify the key themes within which views were expressed.

Agriculture and Forestry

6.20 A range of views were encountered reflecting an important debate over the future direction of agriculture and forestry in Wales. It was recognised that agriculture and forestry must have a future but within a more diverse countryside. There was clear recognition that the traditional views of these industries needed to change. In such instances more extensive multi-purpose and environmentally-led activities were favoured. The following themes were evident.

- There was recognition of problems facing farming but caution expressed in the kinds of policies adopted. For example merely throwing money at the problem was not helping; nor was merely replacing farming with forestry.
- There was support for the continuation and support of agriculture as a food producing industry in the countryside. Here the need to support young and small farmers was evident as was the need to move towards quality products.
- There was also support for a more extensive agriculture in Wales that was GM and pesticide free with a desired trend for more organic produce.
- There was support for local, quality products with more emphasis on farmers markets and local initiatives in food
- There was also support for the development of woodland and forestry in Wales in marginal agricultural areas particularly in terms of its recreation potential. However there seemed to be a reaction against large scale coniferisation in favour of native deciduous trees.
- There was a need to diversify the rural economy if farming itself was to survive. Reference was made to recreation, economic development, tourism and conservation activities that respected the character of places.

Recreation and Tourism

6.21 Recreation and tourism were seen as key industries for the future of the countryside in Wales. However, there was concern that they needed to be tied more sensitively into the needs of the local populations as well as visitors. Here effective and "Welsh" marketing were seen as key factors. It was stressed that new developments should accommodate and benefit local needs as well as those of affluent tourists. There was also a tension evident between those views that supported the development of tourism and those that felt saturation point had already been reached. The following themes were evident.

- Seen as an important component to rural development but needs to respect the places and local communities in which it is located.
- Importance of marketing to ensure a distinctive Welsh flavour is evident and the right messages are got across. Concern with over commercialisation of the countryside.
- A tension apparent between those who want to develop tourism and those that feel the countryside is full enough already.

- Important to provide local recreational spaces for people particularly children. All too often the emphasis is on attractions and facilities that are unavailable for local populations due to admission charges or closure out of season.
- It was important to get people to stay and actually spend money there rather than just pass through.

Job Creation

6.22 It was recognised that the future of the countryside lay with the provision of quality jobs, in particular, favouring local people. This had implications for the type of training programmes, type of housing development and scale of development. In particular there was a clear reaction against the perceived "industrialisation" of the countryside in favour of small scale developments. Opportunities were cited in the growing sectors of recreation, tourism and conservation, together with a need to foster a culture of local entrepreneurship which was perceived to be absent.

- There was recognition of the need to create jobs in the countryside to keep it going but not to industrialise the countryside . A "small is beautiful" view was evident and strongly supported.
- There is a strong association with the development of new jobs in tourism, recreation and conservation. The poor image of such jobs was seen as a major issue for action.
- Whilst new industry and the associated jobs were welcome, there is a clear preference for smaller scale indigenous employment generation, currently perceived to be absent.
- Job creation is seen as absolutely essential for "local people" with concerns at the number of incomers coming in to areas where new investment has been forthcoming.
- There is a need to provide jobs for youngsters associated with good and relevant training programmes in the colleges.
- There was also concern that more support was needed for existing industries such as farming. There was a perception that new development and inward investment was attracting too much grant support.

- There was concern at the high incidence of commuting and retirement where people move to Wales to live (cheaper property prices) and then commute to jobs in England.

- Support for "value added" jobs from the farming and forestry base to encompass crafts, food and eco products.
- Rural areas lose out with respect to issues such as broadband and other investment programmes that are seen in urban areas. Are rural areas second best?
- Recognition of need to provide jobs in the countryside to reduce traffic and commuting

Residential Development

6.23 Residential development attracted the most critical comments. Although there was support for housing development throughout the settlement hierarchy, the key issue appeared to lie with the identification and application of "need" as a factor in shaping new developments, rather than the current perceived overdevelopment with widespread luxury style developments. There was clear support for strategies which favoured "local" and "youth" sectors and actively intervened to negate the use of rural

Wales as a commuter centre for England. More integrated planning was also advocated with more specific linkages to jobs, services and housing developments.

- Whilst there is some recognition of the need to live in the countryside, there is a need for greater control as well as the need to measure and quantify "need". Significantly there are also views that challenge this premise calling for a halt to rural housebuilding except in larger centres.
- There is a clear reaction against the scale and type of housing development which favours executive style properties at the expense of affordable housing. Small scale developments are supported which use infill or brownfield sites.
- Support was evident for housing developments throughout the settlement hierarchy providing the scale and design was appropriate.
- There was also a clear trend supporting local based housing, particularly for youngsters with reactions against incomers and commuters.
- Support was also forthcoming for barn conversions which could benefit a rural landscape.
- There was widespread recognition of the interdependence between housing and employment if strategies were going to be successful.
- There was concern that there were too many English people moving in at the expense of Welsh moving out.

Sustainable Development

6.24 This question attracted significant non-response (120). Recorded responses also made clear that people did not readily understand the term. For example "I do not understand what you mean" was commonly encountered by the surveyors.

6.25 For those that volunteered specific answers, sustainable development seemed to revolve around improved strategic planning, support for the countryside by agencies and its improved management. Conservation, transport and the control of pollution also figured.

6.26 From the comments made, the following themes were evident:

- "We need it; whatever it is".
- More strategic planning from the Welsh Assembly Government and other agencies working together to support the countryside rather than destroying it.
- Need to invest in the countryside and its infrastructure.
- There was a need for better and more simplified funding for the countryside favouring start up businesses and farmers.
- There was a need for a more effective countryside agency with a single remit.
- A strong theme associated with preservation and conservation was evident particularly with respect to designations.
- It was important to build strong communities.
- There was support for more renewable energy development especially wind turbines though this was countered with views against more windmills.
- There was a need to have a better road and rail system.
- There was a need to control pollution and in particular improve water quality.

Any other comments

6.27 This identified new themes within the household survey responses addressing custodianship, independence, status quo and "Welshness".

- The idea that the countryside is a resource that needs to be looked after and cared for. There was a need to change the culture politically and socially.
- The need to keep the countryside as it is.
- The need to maintain and support countryside traditions without outside interference.
- The need to develop a Welsh tourism product but to move away from the theme park model.

Further breakdown of results

6.28 This section compares the general trends reported above with a range of variables that may influence attitudes to the countryside. Only substantive differences or trends are reported within the text commentary.

Urban/Rural ward differences

6.29 For most of the questionnaire responses there were relatively few differences observed from the general profile (Sections 6.1.1-6.1.4). Significant results confirm the importance for all urban (urban; urban fringe) and rural (rural; rural fringe) wards of the countryside as a place for enjoyment and recreation. As one would expect, the residential category differed reflecting the obvious point that people in rural wards lived in the countryside. In terms of the role of the countryside, multifunctionality was endorsed, but those living in rural wards were more biased towards agreeing with the countryside as a place for building and developing (30%) and transporting goods and services (47%) when compared with their urban counterparts. This suggests a slightly more protectionist view from those living in urban settings.

6.30 The photographic assessment also revealed that the urban wards were more attracted to the parkland and village landscapes whereas the rural wards favoured the moorland and village landscapes. The favourite landscape question also revealed some differences with those in rural wards more likely to favour their local countryside than urban wards, which were more disposed to favour National Parks, AONBs and Country Parks.

6.31 The public agenda for the countryside reveals that while overdevelopment, litter/dumping and the future of farming remain key concerns, there are differences which suggest that a 'one size fits all' approach to the countryside will not work. For example in the rural category, incomers (22%) and youth (13%) feature, whilst in the rural fringe category transport (41%) and hunting/field sports (18%) dominate. In urban wards nature conservation is a higher priority (14%). Furthermore, specific differences between the urban/rural wards show a clear urban bias on litter/dumping with a rural bias towards housing issues. The issue of field sports is surprising in that the issue is less apparent in the rural areas and more prevalent in the urban and rural fringe areas.

What issues concern you /ward	rural	rural fringe	urban fringe	urban	Total
extraction	0%	5%	1%	0%	2%
public access to the countryside	7%	10%	8%	8%	8%
rural housing	11%	14%	7%	7%	10%
primary education	0%	5%	1%	1%	2%
access to rural services	5%	13%	6%	2%	7%
litter/dumping	12%	11%	25%	23%	17%
local planning dispute	1%	4%	2%	2%	2%
drugs/crime	4%	5%	2%	8%	5%
rural employment	8%	9%	1%	2%	5%
bureacracy	1%	6%	1%	2%	3%
future of farming	11%	17%	13%	10%	13%
hunting and field sports	4%	18%	15%	13%	13%
rural transport	16%	41%	14%	4%	20%
rural taxes	1%	3%	1%	0%	1%
pollution	4%	5%	11%	8%	7%
landscape designations	1%	4%	2%	0%	2%
wildlife conservation	7%	9%	8%	13%	9%
town vs country	4%	7%	5%	0%	4%
incomers	22%	5%	5%	3%	9%
future	3%	5%	2%	2%	3%
youth	13%	7%	2%	1%	6%
affordability	5%	7%	0%	0%	3%
other	4%	5%	2%	3%	4%
overdevelopment	15%	26%	27%	25%	23%
motorbikes/4WD	1%	2%	3%	3%	2%
windfarms	4%	1%	8%	2%	4%
tourism	4%	2%	2%	4%	3%
welsh language	6%	0%	3%	0%	2%

Table 4: What issues concern you most about the countryside by rurality[4]

6.32 The development and transport statement questions reflect the general profile across urban /rural wards with no real differences apparent. Support for designations and the wider countryside was tempered with acceptance of a more flexible approach to affordable housing. Both urban and rural wards were opposed to higher taxes to solve the transport problem.

Town/Country perceptions

6.33 This section assesses the results from the perceptions of the respondents themselves as to whether they were from the town or country. Significantly, this profile reveals very few differences from the general profile described previously.

6.34 The use of the countryside is similar confirming multifunctionality of the countryside by both "town" and "country" people. With regard to the role of the countryside again, both "town" and "country" support the general findings with notable opposition in both groups towards the countryside for building and transporting goods. This contrasts with the urban/rural wards results above and possibly suggests that specific locational factors are more influential in explaining differences. The photographic assessment also reveal that the perceived "town" respondents were more attracted to the village and parkland landscapes with more negativity expressed

[4] Please note that the table relates to the identification of the issue and not the specific viewpoint taken on it. For example hunting covers both supporters and opposers.

towards the farming and moorland landscapes. When the public agenda for the countryside is considered, the profile is surprisingly similar except for perceived "rural" biases with respect to "incomers" (11%) and "rural transport" (24%) as issues. For the development and transport issue statements, there are interesting biases apparent with the perceived "urban" population more accepting of economic and housing development (excluding affordable) throughout the settlement hierarchy. However, they are equally supportive of the designation system and protection of the wider countryside. For transport and affordable housing the same profile is evident.

Social class

6.35 The results profile is dominated by consensus across all social classes.

6.36 The use and role of the countryside was consistent across all categories reflecting the general trend, as was the photographic assessment. With respect of the favourite countryside there was one clear difference with the unskilled D category strongly favouring the local countryside (40%), with the remaining classes more equally split between National Parks and local countryside. When the public agenda for the countryside is considered there is also uniformity with only slight biases recorded towards overdevelopment and rural transport amongst the higher professional classes. The development and transport issues also reflect consensus supporting the overall profile.

Ethnicity

6.37 The results by ethnicity demand caution in their interpretation given the low numbers of black and other ethnic minority respondents. Indeed appendix 11f shows that only 2.3% (14) respondents were non-white.

6.38 The profile largely reflects consensus across most results. Surprisingly in terms of town versus country perceptions, the ethnic minority population considered themselves mainly to be from the country reflecting the overall trend. This challenges the existing stereotype that puts ethic minorities in the towns. It was noticeable however, that the ethnic populations across all activities were less frequent users of the countryside when compared with the white population. The role of the countryside reflected similar views across all categories endorsing the concept of multifunctionality, while the photographic assessment reflected the previously identified urban biases against the moorland and farmed landscapes. The favourite countryside was also significantly different in that the ethnic populations universally favoured the local countryside (49%) with relatively few citations for National Parks (7%) or AONBs (14%). With respect to the public agenda for the countryside, the profile was essentially similar, but with some bias within the ethnic populations to access to services (27%) and rural transport (27%). For development and transport issue propositions the results were broadly similar.

Locals vs incomers

6.39 For this section the results were adapted from Appendix 11f classifying locals as people who had lived in a particular place for longer than 5 years. Those who had lived less than 5 years were classified as incomers.

6.40 This breakdown revealed a consensus between locals and incomers about the countryside which is perhaps surprising given the abundant literature that proposes different attitudes present[5]. In terms of the use and role of the countryside the two

[5] For example Newby: H. (1988)The Countryside in Question ; London: Hutchison

groups are in broad agreement. Extensive use of the countryside is made for recreation and exercise/routine activities. Endorsement is given for a multifunctional countryside with strong support for food production and conservation. Both groups identify the same issues for the countryside. However, perhaps the most interesting difference is evident in the development and transport section. While the general profile of results is maintained, for housing and economic development, the incomers are pro-development with higher percentages favouring dispersed development for development in new centres and development across the settlement hierarchy than the locals. There is still endorsement of the designation system but clearly these results do challenge conventional notions that incomers are more closed to development than locals.

Age

6.41 For this section we can again reveal that there are relatively few differences apparent. We have adapted the categories from Appendix 11f to form 3 categories "young", "middle aged" and "retired".

6.42 In the town versus country perceptions it is interesting that in both the young and elderly categories, people considered themselves to be from the town rather than the country contradicting the overall trend. This might suggest that both these populations are recent movers to the rural locations. For the elderly this would reflect the observed trend for the countryside to be used as a rural retreat. In terms of the role of the countryside all age groups support the multifunctionality concept. However, with respect to use of the countryside there are some interesting differences apparent with respect to the elderly group with significant non use across all activities when compared with middle aged and younger populations.

What issues concern you /Age	Youth	Middle	Retired
public access to the countryside	5%	7%	13%
rural housing	7%	12%	5%
access to rural services	5%	6%	8%
litter/dumping	17%	18%	18%
drugs/crime	7%	4%	6%
future of farming	5%	13%	15%
hunting and field sports	5%	15%	10%
rural transport	10%	19%	24%
pollution	10%	7%	5%
wildlife conservation	7%	11%	7%
incomers	7%	9%	9%
youth	15%	4%	9%
overdevelopment	34%	23%	19%

Table 5: What issues concern you most about the countryside by age (adapted)

6.43 The public agenda for the countryside shows some interesting and complex differences. Whilst litter is seen as a universal problem by all age groups, the youth are more concerned with issues to do with youth and overdevelopment, whilst the elderly are more concerned with rural transport and public access to the countryside and the future of farming. Those who are classified as middle aged are more

concerned with overdevelopment, field sports and housing although they do also express concern for rural transport.

Welsh language

6.44 This section examined the differences between the Welsh speaking and non-Welsh speaking populations. Again the profile is characterised by relatively few differences. However, over half of Welsh speaking respondents agree with the countryside as a place for transport of goods and services contrasting significantly with the non-Welsh speaker views. However, they do not support the countryside as a place for building and developing. Welsh speakers are more likely to favour their local countryside and have a predilection towards the moorland and village landscapes as depicted in the photographs. Significantly the issues agenda is dominated by concerns with incomers and language when compared with non Welsh speakers; otherwise the issues are in broad agreement. With regard to the development of the countryside there is support for development throughout the settlement hierarchy reflecting previously identified trends.

Summary

6.45 The household survey has revealed the following key areas of agreement about the countryside:

- The countryside is valued as a multifunctional resource.
- There is widespread use of the countryside for a range of activities.
- The local countryside is important.
- Strong positive attachments to both managed and wilder countrysides.
- The public agenda for the countryside includes overdevelopment, transport, litter/dumping, future of farming and field sports.
- Development should be based on good design and scale of locality.
- Economic development and housing should be controlled in designated and wider countryside.
- Affordable housing should be based on local need wherever it is identified.
- There is a significant transport problem in rural areas.
- The future of the countryside is inextricably linked to a more diversified rural economy with a stronger social agenda.

6.46 The household survey also revealed the following differences

- Lack of ethnic minority and elderly use of the countryside.
- Some variation in concerns for the countryside according to urban/rural perception, lifestage, and cultural factors.
- Some urban bias towards issues of litter/rubbish and conservation.
- Some rural bias to issues of rural housing and transport.
- Clear tension with the Welsh population concerned about incomers.
- Clear tensions apparent in the articulation of aspirations for the future of farming and field sports. However this did not reflect the often portrayed urban vs rural divide.
- Different preferences for favourite countrysides with ethnic, unskilled and rural populations favouring local countrysides at the expense of designated countrysides.
- Preferences between urban/rural populations for different countryside types.

INTERNET SURVEY

Introduction

6.47 This survey serves as a supplement to the household survey reported in the previous section. A web-based approach provided an opportunity for people across Wales to complete the survey but, in so doing, it is heavily biased to individuals who felt motivated to complete it. In all some 129 responses were obtained[6].

6.48 Consequently, the results must be treated with caution. The following tables are the key summaries of the responses. Significantly, the patterns and trends emerging replicate the key findings reported in the household survey and imply an emerging consensus.

Perceptions of the countryside

town or country	percentage
Town	38%
Country	58%
Other	4%
Total	100

Table 6: Do you consider yourself to be from the town or countryside (n=129)

6.49 The responses show a bias towards respondents considering themselves from the countryside (Table 6). The issues of green space, family background and experience are the key to these perceptions, whereas urban biases are more centred on the place that respondents are currently living.

Use of the countryside

Use of countryside	Frequently	Sometimes	Never	Total
Exercise	75%	19%	6%	100
Historic	33%	67%	0%	100
Live there	60%	27%	13%	100
Professional interest	69%	6%	25%	100
Recreation and leisure	87%	13%	0%	100
Routine activities	60%	33%	7%	100
Special pursuits	43%	50%	7%	100
Spiritual	15%	31%	54%	100
Watching wildlife	53%	33%	13%	100
Work there	33%	47%	20%	100

Table 7: What do you use the countryside for (web survey) n=129

6.50 The responses confirm the multiple use made of the countryside by the respondents (Table 7). Most use is made for recreation activities and there are a significant number of people who undertake special pursuits. Significantly, there are

[6] This is the current number of responses as of December 4th 2003. The survey is live until January 30th.

also more people who register a professional interest. This is not surprising in a self-selecting type of survey.

Role of the Countryside

Role of the countryside	Strongly disagree	Disagree	No strong feelings	Agree	Strongly agree
Achieve peace	0%	0%	0%	31%	69%
Build and develop	33%	33%	7%	20%	7%
Conserve wildlife	0%	0%	0%	19%	81%
Develop community	0%	0%	12%	37%	50%
Keep fit	0%	0%	13%	69%	19%
Live	0%	0%	19%	50%	31%
Produce food	0%	0%	13%	44%	48%
Recreate and play	0%	6%	19%	25%	50%
transport goods	13%	33%	27%	27%	0%
Work	0%	6%	13%	44%	38%

Table 8: What do you consider to be the role of the countryside (web survey) n =129

6.51 The responses confirm the view that the countryside is a multifunctional resource (Table 8). There are strong levels of agreement for the countryside as a recreational, environmental and agricultural resource. Significantly there is also support for the countryside as a place of work. The roles currently not supported are for building and developing and for the transport of goods.

Photographic Assessment

photo assessment	**Farmland**	**Heather moorland**	**Parkland**	**Village**
Strongly dislike	0%	4%	0%	0%
Dislike	5%	0%	5%	0%
No strong feelings	40%	23%	19%	11%
Like	40%	27%	33%	53%
Strongly like	15%	46%	43%	37%
Total	100	100	100	100

Table 9: Photographic assessment (n=120)

6.52 The photographic assessments reveal positive responses to all the countrysides (Table 9). The preferred countrysides were the heather moorland and the parkland. For the moorland the qualities of wildness, recreation potential and biodiversity were all stressed; whilst for the parkland the recreation potential and value of open and managed green space was deemed important.

What changes to photos	Moorland	Village	Farmland	Parkland
no changes at all	41%	48%	16%	31%
small scale housing development	0%	9%	3%	0%
small scale employment development	0%	13%	6%	3%
small scale tourism development	0%	4%	0%	6%
small scale forestry and woodland	15%	4%	19%	9%
small scale agricultural expansion	0%	0%	0%	6%
new settlement	0%	0%	3%	0%
large scale tourism development	0%	0%	0%	0%
large scale intensive agriculture	0%	0%	0%	0%
large scale forestry and woodland	0%	4%	23%	25%
reservoir or power generation	6%	0%	0%	0%
roads/rail development	3%	4%	3%	3%
new conservation practices	12%	4%	3%	3%
wildlife conservation areas	24%	8%	23%	13%
Total	100	100	100	100

Table 10: What changes would you like to see to the photographs (web survey) (n=88)

6.53 The changes desired to these photographs reflected an almost universal desire to keep the landscapes as they were, albeit with the exception of the farmland (Table 10). Here respondents wanted a combination of wildlife conservation areas and more forestry and woodland. Indeed, there is clear evidence of support for more small scale forestry and woodland in all landscapes. Interestingly, there was also support for new employment activities in the village.

The publics' agenda for the countryside

What issues concern you	Percentage	What issues concern you	Percentage
overdevelopment	31%	welsh language	5%
rural transport	23%	drugs/crime	4%
future of farming	16%	Other	3%
hunting and field sports	13%	windfarms	3%
Litter/dumping	11%	bureaucracy	3%
rural housing	11%	tourism	3%
wildlife conservation	10%	lack of planning control	3%
access to services	10%		
public access to the countryside	8%		
pollution	6%		
rural employment	6%		
youth	5%		

Table 11: What issues concern you most about the countryside (web survey) (n=146)

6.54 The respondents' agenda for the countryside mirrors, to a large extent, the responses obtained in the household survey (Table 11). The profile does reveal, however, the importance of a larger cluster of issues covering development, transport, agriculture, field sports, litter, housing, conservation, recreation and rural services. Again this table merely raises the agenda and does not seek to quantify the actual discourse inherent within each.

Development and transport in the countryside

Development in countryside	Strongly disagree	Disagree	No strong feelings	Agree	Strongly agree
Dispersed settlement	45%	23%	14%	18%	0%
Larger settlements	9%	27%	27%	27%	9%
Design and scale	0%	0%	4%	22%	74%
Restricted in designations	5%	0%	18%	27%	50%
New settlements	45%	36%	9%	9%	0%
Restricted in the countryside	13%	22%	17%	35%	13%
Village and hamlet	10%	19%	10%	62%	0%

Table 12: Economic Development in the countryside should be based on/in (web survey) (n=101)

6.55 The responses reveal support for economic development throughout the settlement hierarchy with clear opposition to the development of new settlements (Table 12). However, where economic development takes place, issues of design and scale are strongly supported. There is also widespread agreement for restriction of such developments in the designated countryside. Significantly, there is a clear tension in the proposition that economic development should be restricted in the countryside.

Housing in the countryside	Strongly disagree	Disagree	No strong feelings	Agree	Strongly agree
Dispersed settlement	38%	46%	0%	15%	0%
Larger settlements	4%	19%	15%	42%	19%
Design and scale	0%	0%	4%	21%	75%
Restricted in designations	9%	0%	13%	26%	52%
New settlements	31%	46%	8%	15%	0%
Restricted in the countryside	5%	9%	23%	36%	27%
Village and hamlet	15%	19%	12%	54%	0%

Table 13: Housing in the countryside should be based on/in(web survey) (n=101)

6.56 The responses to housing in the countryside show a similar profile to economic development, particularly relating to the importance of design and scale in new developments and their restriction in designated landscapes (Table 13). However, there are subtle differences apparent. Most notable is the level of disagreement in the village and hamlet category which reflects an emerging tension in these smaller settlements for new housing. There is also clearer support for more restriction of new housing in the countryside.

affordable housing	evidence of need	larger centres	local need	Not built	open countryside	village/hamlet
Strongly disagree	0%	17%	0%	16%	44%	5%
Disagree	5%	28%	5%	32%	50%	11%
No strong feelings	21%	6%	5%	32%	0%	5%
Agree	47%	33%	47%	11%	6%	47%
Strongly agree	26%	17%	42%	11%	0%	32%
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table 14: Affordable housing in the countryside should be based on/in (web survey) (n=103)

6.57 The profile for affordable housing shows considerable support for development based on assessments of need with particular emphasis on the "local" dimension (Table 14). Such developments should be located throughout the settlement hierarchy as opposed to policies of concentration. Indeed, there are clear differences here in favour of affordable housing when compared with the profile for housing more generally (Table 13). Interestingly, there is considerable disagreement with affordable housing in the open countryside.

Transport	Strongly disagree	Disagree	No strong feelings	Agree	Strongly agree
Work at home	0%	4%	32%	40%	24%
More jobs in the countryside	0%	16%	8%	56%	20%
Road improvements	12%	27%	19%	35%	8%
No transport problem	58%	27%	4%	12%	0%
Higher taxes	20%	28%	20%	16%	16%
Improved public transport	0%	0%	0%	50%	50%

Table 15: Transport problems in the countryside can be solved by (web survey) (n=129)

6.58 The results confirm, first and foremost, that there is a problem with rural transport that needs to be addressed (Table 15). Improvements to the public transport network receive the highest levels of support, together with the creation of jobs in the countryside and home working. Road improvements and higher taxes show a divergence of opinion; the levels of support for tax increases are higher here than in the household survey.

Visions for the countryside

6.59 The web survey also received respondents' ideas for visions in the countryside. The responses are summarised below in a series of themes.

Agriculture and Forestry

6.60 The key themes emerging in the vision were:-

- The localisation of agricultural produce.
- The need for more environmentally sustainable farming.

- The need for more diverse countryside with more areas of native woodland planting.
- The need for more local employment to support agriculture and forestry and add value.
- A positive vision for the future providing farmers adapt to new circumstances.

Recreation and Tourism

6.61 The key themes emerging in this vision were:-

- To further increase the opportunities for recreation and tourism for all in the Welsh countryside.
- To develop sympathetic and "green" tourism based on needs and in conjunction with local communities.
- To ensure that legal rights of access are available to all who wish to use them.
- To extend existing recreation and tourism developments rather than create new ones.
- To recognise the dangers inherent in pursuing tourism in isolation from other rural development initiatives.

Jobs in the countryside

6.62 The key themes emerging in this vision were :-

- Risks to job creation due to high labour costs in Wales.
- Need to create jobs in agriculture and forestry with the opportunities arising from CAP reform.
- Divergence of opinion as to the need to create jobs in the countryside versus concentration in larger settlements.
- See more light manufacturing enterprises set up in the countryside.
- See more local entrepreneurs able to set up new businesses.

Living in the countryside

6.63 The key themes arising from this vision were:-

- There needs to be more control on new house building in the countryside based on where it is strictly needed.
- There needs to be a massive increase in the supply of rented properties available for local people.

- Design and scale are key planning considerations. Keep out Wimpey and Barratt from the countryside.
- Housing problems locally solved by local people with local control as they have a stake in the environment in which they live.
- More focus and provision of affordable housing as opposed to luxury developments for outsiders.

Sustainable Development

6.64 The key themes arising from this vision were:

- Localisation responding to global needs.
- Improved understanding of impacts of resource use in the countryside.
- A sustainable agriculture moving away from intensive farming systems.
- More effective use of sustainable power such as wind, HEP and wave.

COMMUNITY VISIONING

Introduction

6.65 Representatives from eight communities were subjected to an intensive visioning exercise utilising the same four fold urban/rural typology as in the household survey (Section 5.14). This section focuses on the key themes and discussion points when respondents considered selected viewpoint prompts in their local countryside. Where possible illustrative quotes have been used to help explain and contextualise these issues.

6.66 Table 16 reveals the principal issues that participants identified as relevant to their countrysides. Significantly, lack of integration, affordable housing, growth of commuter centres, traffic management and the role of agriculture figured in all the communities studied. Additionally, the outward migration of youth and access to the countryside were also prevalent, being associated with at least three of the categories.

6.67 Notwithstanding these general findings, there are distinct issues which appear to be inherent in rural and urban countrysides. For the rural areas there was more pre-occupation with socio-economic factors such as employment and the changing structure of populations with all the associated conflicts, while in the more urban areas issues to do with access, safety, recreation and conservation predominated.

6.68 Understanding these issues and the contexts within which they are played out in different countrysides is critical to their deconstruction within contemporary notions of rurality. Each issue is now examined in turn to give personalised insights and assessments.

Consultation

6.69 At the outset of these visioning exercises respondents from several communities raised real concerns about their purpose and value (Bala; St Asaph; Rhyl; Pencader). Significantly respondents had been aware of other consultations in the recent past but remained sceptical of their overall value given the perceived lack of action.

"I have been to several meetings like this in recent years." "Nothing's happening – what's the point?" (Rural)

"We only had a meeting like this last week; we never see anything happen" (Rural Fringe).

6.70 Such sentiments are important with respect to the number of public consultations that are held and the way the process is managed, the way in which resulting information is used and communicated back to those who participated[7].

[7] All respondents have been promised a copy of this section of the report.

Issue/rurality	**Rural** Aberaeron Bala	**Rural Fringe** Llandrinio Pencader	**Urban Fringe** Resolven St Asaph	**Urban** Cardiff Rhyl
Lack of integration	x	x	x	x
Affordable housing	x	x	x	x
Commuting / Dormitory	x	x	x	x
Traffic	x	x	x	X
Agriculture	x	x	x	x
Loss of youth	x	x	x	
Lack of access to the countryside		x	x	x
Public transport	x	x		x
Idyllic environment	x	x		
Employment	x	x		
Poverty	x	x		
Transient / changing populations	x	x		
Community		x		x
Growth/merger of settlements		x		x
Neglect			x	x
Local governance			x	x
Recreation			x	x
Changing shopping patterns	x			
Impact on language and culture	x			
Incomer / local division		x		
Outside influences		x		
Lack of information			x	
Lack of investment			x	
Lack of respect for countryside		x		
Lack of protection				x
Retirement	x			
Safety				x
Reliance on tourism / imbalance	x			

Table 16: Priority issues emerging from community visioning exercises

Lack of integration

6.71 Respondents in all areas stressed the importance of making connections between the key issues of jobs, housing and transport. The perceived fragmentation of the wider rural picture is evident in actions and policies "forced" upon residents, particularly within the rural and urban fringes where the inexorable push for new houses without new jobs and other infrastructure was most evident.

"Road improvements, together with a low community charge, transforms commuting opportunities. We have no jobs here but commuters displace locals and travel to England to work"(Urban fringe).

"If you provide housing you have to provide jobs, recreation - the whole package. There is a clear perception that this is not occurring particularly with respect to the predominance of housing development" (Rural fringe).

6.72 There was also the view that the countryside needed special treatment and programmes. Currently there appeared to be little recognition of this in rural development initiatives.

"Rural development is being treated the same way as urban development - the same criteria are used. This is making a terrific impact on our villages; the new development sticks out like a sore thumb" (Rural fringe).

Rural housing

6.73 The generic issue of rural housing can be deconstructed into six key concerns; overdevelopment, the nature and pace of development, the growth of commuter centres, lack of affordable housing, housing for young people and the rapid growth and coalescence of settlements (Table 16). The only subtle difference was the issue of second homes which was only mentioned in the rural areas. All these factors however, were perceived to deleteriously affect the structure, culture, landscape and vitality of communities.

6.74 The following snapshots are typical of the exchanges on this subject, across the communities we studied.

"This is becoming a commuter village / town / county" (Urban Fringe).

"More housing development causes a loss of community" (Rural).

"These houses aren't for locals they are for rich commuters from England." "It's a breath of fresh air when somebody local buys a house here" (Rural Fringe).

"Recent housing developments do not fit with local architecture; huge luxury houses crammed together look awful." "Urban style developments do not fit in – traditional villages exhibit a lot of different styles but today they build houses so they all look similar and are out of character." "Common sense does not prevail in planning" (Urban).

"We are losing our countryside through rapid expansion and ribbon development" (Rural Fringe).

"The biggest threat to this countryside in the future is housing" (Urban Fringe).

"Housing should be accompanied by facilities and amenities and linked to jobs" (Rural).

"A sympathetic compromise is needed" (Urban).

6.75 Clearly, the all-pervasive nature of these issues in all communities reveals significant dissatisfaction with the perceived operation of planning and housing policies in the countryside. Deconstructing these perceptions reveals that the countryside is seen as a valuable multifunctional resource and that there is excessive loss of countryside by both the scale and pace of new house building with important negative implications for the landscape and community structures. The issue of scale was most apparent in the

rural fringe areas where rapid development had seemingly transformed the "feel" of the place and created tensions between locals and incomers. For the urban areas, the emphasis was on creating a green belt designation to prevent further coalescence and to protect existing green space.

6.76 Significantly, we feel that this was not a simple NIMBY- type protestation. The solutions proposed acknowledged the inevitability of more development, but that it should be targeted on evidence of need, favouring young and local people and that development should be small scale and use existing sites for infill rather than stray out inexorably into the countryside. Sensitive design was seen as another important factor for improving the overall acceptability of developments.

6.77 These sentiments match explicitly current planning policy (PPW) and might suggest therefore that it is the operation of policy is that is problematic. Consequently, the often expressed need for more devolved power to local people was seen as crucial for more effective and integrated planning.

Agriculture

6.78 Agriculture attracted significant comment and concern. It was generally agreed that the countryside must be farmed and that farmers should be supported, albeit with environmental inducements together with improved opportunities for diversification. Again this reflects the thrust of current strategy and future policy arrangements.

6.79 In the urban/urban fringe areas there was clear recognition of the need to "*maintain a managed farmed landscape"* with primary concerns expressed over farm "abandonment" with subsequent amalgamation and/or new residential development. Incidents relating to vandalism, dumping and crime were also seen as handicaps to the continued viability of farming near urban/urban fringe areas.

6.80 In rural areas this issue generated more debate and concern particularly with respect to the future of agriculture and agricultural policy more generally. For example, while agri-environment schemes were seen as important there were concerns.

"*Tir Gofal – the principle is right but the practice is wrong; too few haves and too many have nots*" *(Rural)*.

6.81 It was also recognised that agriculture was "*previously at the heart of the community / language / culture – but not necessarily any more" (Rural)*. This had important repercussions for the future of farming and the strength of the farming lobby more generally. Farm succession was a key problem that had to be addressed "*As soon as young people get a taste of a weekly wage, they will never come back to the farm*" *(Rural)*.

6.82 The sentiment that "*farmers are not a problem any longer"* reflected their more explicit linkage with conservation priorities as well as their declining numbers and influence within the area's economy.

6.83 Although there were high levels of support for agriculture, some individuals did challenge this consensus. In particular within the urban fringe a discourse ensued over the relative merits of allowing farmland to revert to scrub and woodland in selected

areas primarily for conservation but also as a means to add to the diversity in the countryside.

Recreation and access to the countryside

6.84 This issue was evident across all communities. The local countryside was seen as an important recreational resource and, in general, there was support for increased and improved access and recreation opportunities as part of the wider process of diversification of the rural economy.

6.85 However, there were subtle differences in the way the access and recreation issue was conceptualised in the communities we investigated. In urban areas the discourse was couched more in terms of restrictions and conflicts; the threat from motorbikes and four-wheeled drive vehicles and restriction/obstruction of access from large shooting estates, forestry managers and individual farmers. Here the participants stressed the importance of access to the countryside for local recreation, both for established users and for people from urban areas who could potentially "connect" with their countryside. Comments also supported the increase of recreation opportunities in the countryside with managed recreational areas seen as particularly important in providing a locally accessible resource for pedestrians and those with disabilities. There was strong support for parks/green space where the community could engage in sports and activities, as well as local nature reserves which had important educational functions. All this was seen as very important for the youth who constantly were seen as suffering from a lack of planned facilities.

6.86 Farmer/landowner representatives in these groups were keen to stress that there was only a minority who created problems of access and that, within the countryside surrounding urban areas, farmers faced serious problems from the lack of public respect for the countryside with associated dumping, litter and vandalism with even accounts of attacks on animals.

6.87 In rural areas the debate also centred on providing green space and more formal recreational opportunities. However, this was more explicitly linked with tourism which was seen as vital to the economy of these areas. There was concern about local authorities and other agencies wanting the public to access the countryside to provide the necessary infrastructure for people to understand their rights and responsibilities in the countryside, and for people to respect the countryside as a multifunctional resource. It was also important to ensure that tourism developments benefited the local economy.

"*Visitors need to be better informed" (Rural)*.

"*Authorities need to demonstrate synergy with local and visitor needs" (Rural fringe)*.

Traffic / Transport

6.88 Road traffic and transport were viewed as major issues. Claims that areas were being "throttled by traffic" and that "the roads cannot cope" were common place, as was the linkage between transport and prospects for rural development. The lack of adequate public transport outside the main routes was deemed to be a significant drawback to those without access to a car. Specific examples alluded to the volume and flow of traffic in villages and towns and the lack of parking in towns with the concomitant impacts on quality of life and development opportunities. The key theme clearly centred on county council/Welsh Assembly actions bypassing the views and needs of local people.

"There is no public transport – if you haven't got a car you can't get anywhere."(Rural)

"The road planning is a disaster. Why didn't they ask us" (Urban).

6.89 Road transport improvements were also seen as responsible for the growth in commuter type developments. This was most marked in the rural and urban fringe areas where, in particular, commuting to England was a practical prospect due to high quality road links. This was seen to have serious implications on local housing markets and community structures.

Employment / Local economy

6.90 While most rural respondents were only too aware of the high quality of the surrounding countryside, there was recognition that the countryside was an economic resource not a museum. The functional role of the countryside as a resource for employment and profit was a consistent theme throughout the communities.

"Unless the community generates an income it doesn't matter what we say we want in the countryside." "It's lovely to live in the countryside but you cannot eat scenery"(Rural fringe).

"One thing that has struck me is the poverty." "The average wage here works out as the same rate as on the dole" (Rural).

6.91 The state of the local economy and the need to provide a full range of jobs featured prominently in the discussion in the rural countryside. A dearth of "professional" employment opportunities caused by the removal of services that historically provided relatively well paid jobs e.g. banks, administration, police *"Local businesses use local services – the knock-on effects are huge"* and the apparent devaluation of "trades". *"Traditional practical skills are lacking"* were deemed to be significant contributory factors.

6.92 The loss of young people to larger towns and cities, attracted by education and career opportunities, was bemoaned and the need to retain or attract younger people back, highlighted.

"Young people want to leave as soon as they can and not come back." "You are losing all that ability." "We need to enrich the community with 20 and 30 year olds" (Rural fringe).

6.93 The urban areas surprisingly echoed these sentiments. The local economy, apart from that in Cardiff was perceived to be suffering due to uneven investment and there was a general feeling that "we were losing out". This was exacerbated by the large scale incursions of commuters into accessible countryside surrounding towns to go to jobs that had been supported by local authority and European investment elsewhere. In the community studies in the north of Wales, there was increasing resentment at the power and influence of Cardiff compared to elsewhere.

Tourism

6.94 The form and function of tourism featured prominently in both rural areas and the one rural fringe and urban area where it was perceived as a significant contributory factor to the local economy.

6.95 Opinions varied from those who perceived tourism as a threat *"there's nothing else except tourism" (Rural),* or a drain on resources at the expense of the local inhabitants *"they benefit but don't pay",* to an appreciation of the role which tourism

currently plays and of its potential for the future, provided local inhabitants and businesses were fully aware of tourists' requirements.

"We need to be a more tourist friendly place. There is a lack of synergy with tourists' needs" (Rural.)

6.96 There were also strong views expressed about the nature of some tourism development; *"no more caravans"* with the desire to cater for a wider range of tourism and tourists than hitherto. Increasingly the trend was to capture higher spending customers with a significant switch from the "bucket and spade brigade".

"We need good hotels." "We need a greater diversity of tourism, for example cultural tourism." (Rural).

6.97 In the urban areas there was recognition that the surrounding countryside was an economic asset which could help attract tourists wanting more amenities. The fundamental problem seemed to be getting tourists to actually stay and spend money in the local economy; all too often smaller towns and centres were bypassed.

Forestry and woodland

6.98 Woodland was seen as an important component of the landscape in the communities with high levels of satisfaction for the existing woodland cover and a desire for more trees.

6.99 However, large scale coniferous plantations were universally rejected in favour of broadleaf woodland planting *"Monoculture forestry is a disaster" (Rural).* Nevertheless, when integrated with other landscape features at an appropriate scale, conifers were seen to make a positive contribution to a scene. However, native broadleaved species and species mixtures were clearly favoured *"it is lovely to see the seasons change" (Urban fringe).*

6.100 Whilst the Forestry Commission was the dominant land-holder in one locality, the role of woodland in the local economy was not perceived as significant by either the rural or urban communities *"Very few people are employed in Forestry" (Urban fringe),* and lack of access to forestry land was the subject of significant complaint.

Community structures

6.101 The loss of "identity" and traditional community life/structures was highlighted in both rural and urban communities and attributed to the rapidly changing population structure, favouring incomers who were seemingly unwilling or unable to play any part in the life of the community.

"People only seem to know others in their immediate area." "The people who take part in community life are always the same individuals."(Rural).

6.102 There was appreciable concern expressed about where the next generation of "active" participants would be found and disquiet about the apparent lack of an appreciation of community life amongst many recent incomers, despite concerted efforts to encourage involvement.

"Incomers are not aware of what a community means."(Rural).

6.103 Transient populations, an influx of people from urban areas and developments such as the sub-division of properties into rented flats, had led to previously unheard of social problems such as drug abuse and a perceived long term resident-incomer

divide in some areas. The decline in traditional family / extended family life was also deemed to be a major loss to the community.

6.104 Within some urban/urban fringe areas it was widely perceived that incomers were displacing local people from these areas due to inflated housing markets with a focus on luxury housing developments associated with commuting or retirement. Indirectly this was affecting the traditional and stable feature of these communities with real concerns as to their future sustainability. In part this sparked a most interesting discourse concerning the importance of local governance. There was a clear view that many developments had been imposed on the community and that there was a need to re-engage with local people in a more effective manner that gave them more control and say in what happened. There was seen to be a real appetite to play a more active part in the community if there was real and effective power there to do something.

Culture / Language

6.105 Culture and the Welsh language featured most prominently in discussions in the rural communities. Although the fact that many recent incomers had committed themselves to attending classes in order to learn Welsh was viewed as heartening, the fact that *"few incomers have an appreciation or love for the language"* was noted with apprehension.

6.106 It was felt that culture (both the language and local history) should feature more prominently in planning policy through targeted housing, employment and tourism policies where, for example, concern was expressed that *"the Tourist Board seem frightened to tell people that this is a Welsh speaking area"* (Rural).

6.107 On the other hand, in one rural community, the view was expressed that "*The Welsh language is a barrier, impacting negatively on the tourism potential"*, highlighting the threat that some non-Welsh speakers felt but possibly reinforcing the lack of appreciation or tolerance highlighted above.

6.108 In one urban community the Welsh Language Act was seen as a handicap for English speaking Welsh and English people getting jobs in public services (the major employer) and there was a call to relax the language requirements.

Designation

6.109 Frequent reference was made to the nature and extent of "designations" made or imposed on areas of countryside or entire localities. Debate and comment primarily involved designations designed to both protect and preserve wildlife or landscape, but discussion also extended to designations which would enable the area concerned to qualify for assistance with what was perceived as much needed regeneration and European monies.

6.110 There was a general feeling that they (the inhabitants) did not know enough about designations: e.g. what AONB status actually meant but, on the other hand, strong feelings were expressed about the need to afford protection to areas which were perceived to have intrinsic value which added to the uniqueness of the area in question.

"*..we the stakeholders need more information … we …. Should know what's allowed and what's not" (Urban fringe).*

"The hills …. Have a Welsh identity and, without them, …. Would be like a picture without a frame" (Urban).

6.111 The elite status accorded to designated areas was also a bone of contention i.e. perceptions that National Parks/AONBs were actually better landscapes when there were deemed to be areas which are equally attractive and valuable but which are not included in any designations. Significantly the current approach to landscape character assessment in LANDMAP may address such concerns in the future.

"It is equally as important as the National Parks" (Rural fringe).

"Why can't we protect the Vale of Clwyd as well as the hills; its every bit as special"(Rural fringe).

6.112 On the other hand, the legislation and intervention associated with designated areas, as well as the apparent intransigence of some Authorities concerned, were deemed to have damaging effects on both the level of enjoyment that could be derived from the area in question and the perceived economic / tourist ramifications.

"The lake is becoming less user-friendly because of the influence of the National Park Authority. It's getting more difficult to enjoy it." "You can't talk to them." (Rural).

6.113 At the other extreme, the failure to recognise the deprivation associated with rural and fringe areas by means of other forms of designation was perceived as a major barrier to regeneration.

"We have niches of deprivation in our area, but not enough to qualify for outside assistance to solve our problems" (Rural fringe).

Summary

6.114 The visioning exercises have produced an important snapshot of issues and futures. Table 16 (6.3.1) provides the clear summary map of issues identified in the communities. Significantly the involvement exercises revealed much about solutions rather than the long established tradition of identifying problems. Here joined up approaches, empirical assessments of need, local devolution in planning and better information reflect a clear consensus on the path ahead. Many of the views articulated reflect the current theory and aims of planning policy today. Consequently, their perceived dissatisfaction questions both the process and way policy is operationalised on the ground.

STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

Introduction

6.115 Of the 105 stakeholders invited to respond to the written consultation exercise (Appendix 11b) only 22 written and 5 oral responses were received. Personal communication with non-respondents revealed concerns (listed below) with both the extent and demands of this exercise together with concerns over the number of consultation demands in general:

- Difficulties in making an agency response due to the countryside remit not falling on one clearly identifiable person
- Difficulties facing multifunctional organisations which do not have an explicit countryside vision presenting "one" view.
- Perceived duplication with a whole host of other rural/countryside consultations currently being undertaken by the Welsh Assembly Government and others.
- Consultation fatigue
- High officer workloads preclude making any responses which demand significant time and resources.

6.116 Whilst of necessity taking these factors into consideration, the exercise was further problematised by respondents making little direct comment specific to planning in, or for, the countryside. This reflects the prevailing view that the planning system is only partly influential in determining the kind of countryside that is wanted. Where comments were made, it became apparent that there was confusion over the differences between planning policy and planning regulations, with the majority of comments concerning the latter.

6.117 In order to develop the outputs from the consultation, a seminar involving 20 key organisations was held in Builth Wells. The outputs from these were fed into the key themes discussed below.

Interest/Policies in countryside matters

6.118 The stakeholder responses revealed a diversity of interests in the Welsh countryside. Box 2 summarises these, and it is noteworthy to see both sectoral and personal development interests apparent. The agency responses reflect specialist interests with considerable overlap, significantly without any individual organisation taking an integrated countryside perspective. Policy statements, because of the diverse nature of the organisations, tended to be general rather than specific; indeed hiding more than they revealed about the sustainability of the countryside. Box 2 also summarises the key policy actions for the countryside and it is noticeable that there are no dedicated "town and country planning", "integrating" or "regulating" functions evident.

Interests			
Livelihoods	Learning	Employment	Planning
Services Recreational	Landscape	Environment	
Community	Housing	Best practice	Well being
Understanding	Safety	Prosperity	Enjoyment
Tourism	Economic dev.	Access	Partnership
Sustainability	Services Culture	Heritage	
Habitats Health			
Policies			
Promoting	Fostering	Developing	
Protecting	Providing	Maintaining	
Supporting	Conserving	Enhancing	
Achieving	Creating Educating		

Box 2: Summary of stakeholder interests and policies in the Welsh countryside.

What are the key issues facing the future of the Welsh countryside?

6.119 The stakeholder responses identified sixteen key issues for the countryside (Box 3). Whilst some of these were well documented rural problems, others identified the need for a more holistic approach with organisation reform and improved communication as priorities for action. Supporting comments wanted a "… *working environment of integration and communication with all stakeholder bodies across Wales involved in the countryside*", while other comments stressed the need for agencies to cater for a diverse countryside: "*the countryside or rural Wales is not a homogenous entity and therefore responses need to be flexible to take account of these differences*".

6.120 The specific issues identified reflected the complexity of the "countryside problem". Much was made of the need to enable good quality employment and livelihoods to be derived from, and in, the countryside while maintaining and enhancing the biodiversity, the environment, the community, access and recreation. There was recognition from all that the countryside was a contested resource, but that full recognition of this has yet to take place within planning policy.

Too many agencies spoil the broth	Integrated rural development:
Transport	Effective public engagement
Viable and profitable agriculture	Sustainable rural communities
Improved access to rural services	Tackling social exclusion
Reform of the planning system	Planning for climate change
Environment as economic/ social asset	Provision of good quality jobs
Increased public access to the countryside	Inclusive countryside
Maintenance of cultural/natural heritage	Improved private investment
Increased multipurpose forestry	

Box 3: Key Issues facing the countryside

Satisfaction with general countryside policy

6.121 Responses highlighted a set of common concerns related to the current organisational infrastructure in Wales that hindered a unified policy response. The fragmentation of agencies and lack of joined up thinking and action were seen as causing unnecessary confusion and duplication, whilst out of date organisational structures were perceived to stagnate countryside policy making. There were repeated calls for more dynamic and innovative approaches towards countryside matters, policy making and delivery at local, regional and national levels.

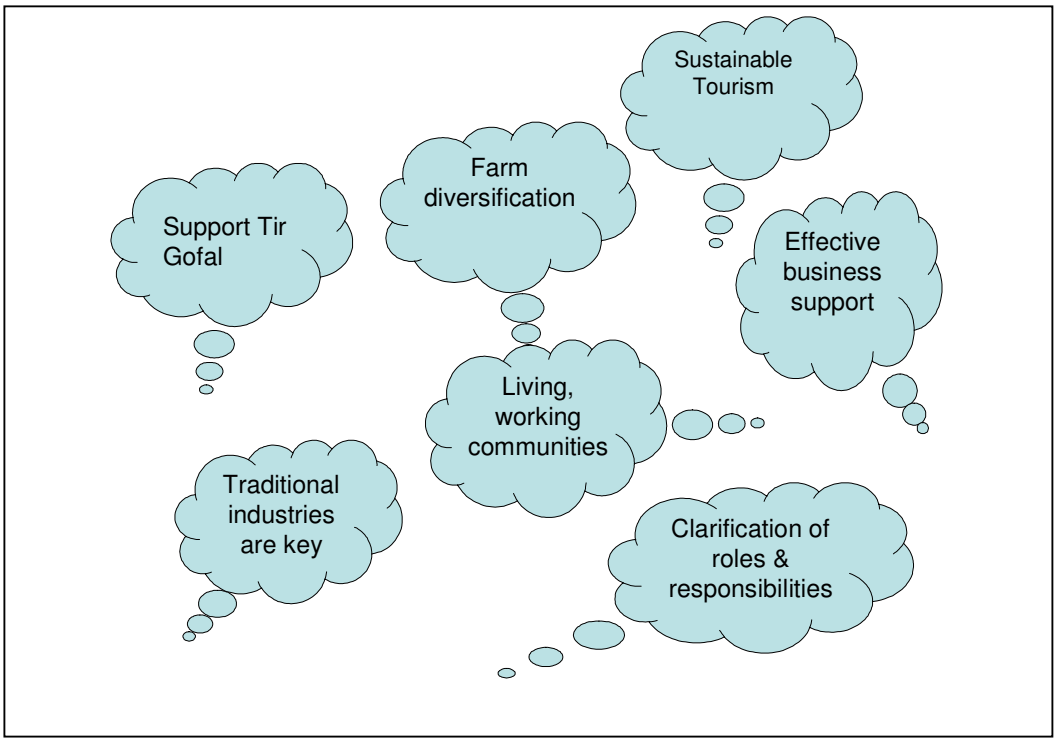
6.122 Whilst welcoming the establishment of the Welsh Assembly Government, the responses advocated concerted action to reduce the proliferation of separate strategies in favour of a more corporate approach within which planning and all other mechanisms could be effectively linked to a unified vision which was currently lacking. Specific planning critiques felt that local needs were not being addressed, in part due to the 'one size fits all' planning template which was perceived to force inappropriate responses in some areas. Here there was recognition that reform of the planning system was only part of the solution "*planning is more than just a process – there seems to be a tension between the economic use of the countryside and other uses, we need to tie in with planning policy but recognise that it is only one component that influences the countryside*"

6.123 A key theme related to problems of community consultation and its ability to inform and influence policy decisions. Explicit engagement with communities was recognised as lacking and there was no strategic effort being made to counteract this. However, the dangers of oversimplifying the 'bottom up' approach were voiced where unrealistic expectations from communities could leave agencies unable to deliver through resource constraints. The key was felt be the establishment of effective *partnerships* rather than the establishment of more talking shops.

6.124 Funding issues were also felt to be crucial to an effective and sustainable approach to the countryside and a more strategic and managed process involving both joined up and long term funding packages were deemed urgent. The Communities First initiative was hailed as an exemplar for possible adaptation to the long term problems of the countryside.

Economic development

6.125 Box 4 summarises the key themes associated with the economic development of the Welsh countryside. There is strong support for the traditional countryside industries (agriculture and forestry) but within new emphases on diversification, multifunctionality and environmental responsibility. To achieve this transition effective business support, simplified grant structures and advice were seen as critical support mechanisms as was the probable extension of agri-environment schemes to a larger population of farmers. Here the role of Farming Connect was positively highlighted. Additionally, there was a need to re-examine the way business rates and the planning permission process were perceived as frustrating many legitimate opportunities for diversification.

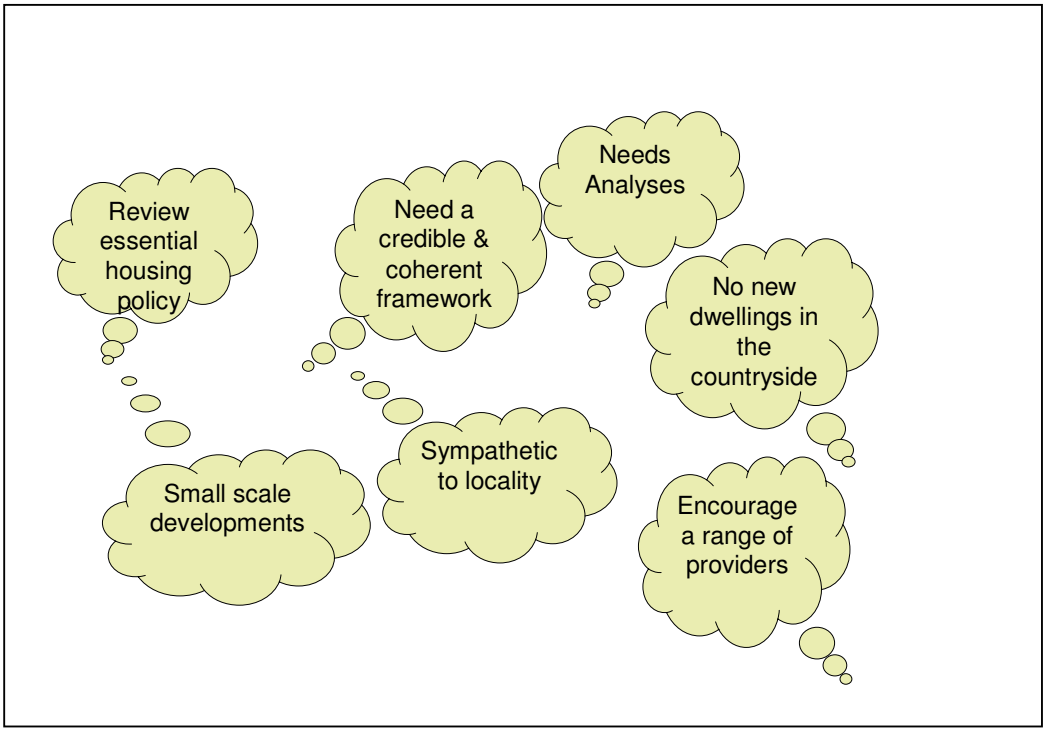


Box 4: Summary of key themes associated with economic development in the countryside

6.126 The key message, however, was that the countryside needed to have a wider rural economic base than hitherto, requiring a reconstructed countryside with good quality employment in rural communities and the necessary human and physical infrastructure to support such developments. Concomitant with this wish was a need to re-engage with local communities to help allay their perceived fears about such developments.

Housing

6.127 The responses to housing policies for the countryside showed considerable concern and negativity (Box 5). There were calls for a fundamental review of policy with clear dissatisfaction with the way certain aspects of the planning system were operating. The main problems related to the perceived scale and pace of development; the overemphasis on luxury housing developments; the standardisation of housing development which impacted upon sense of place; the lack of integration with jobs, transport and other infrastructure which created commuter style settlements directly challenging the economic development imperatives identified earlier. Key actions advocated the use of systematic housing needs analyses at the local level which were not based solely on affordability criteria; the use of small scale developments throughout the rural settlement hierarchy and a range of housing providers through innovative partnership schemes where profit was not the sole motive. Significantly, most stakeholder responses supported the current policy emphasis restricting development in the open countryside.



Box 5: Summary of themes associated with housing in the countryside

Affordable housing

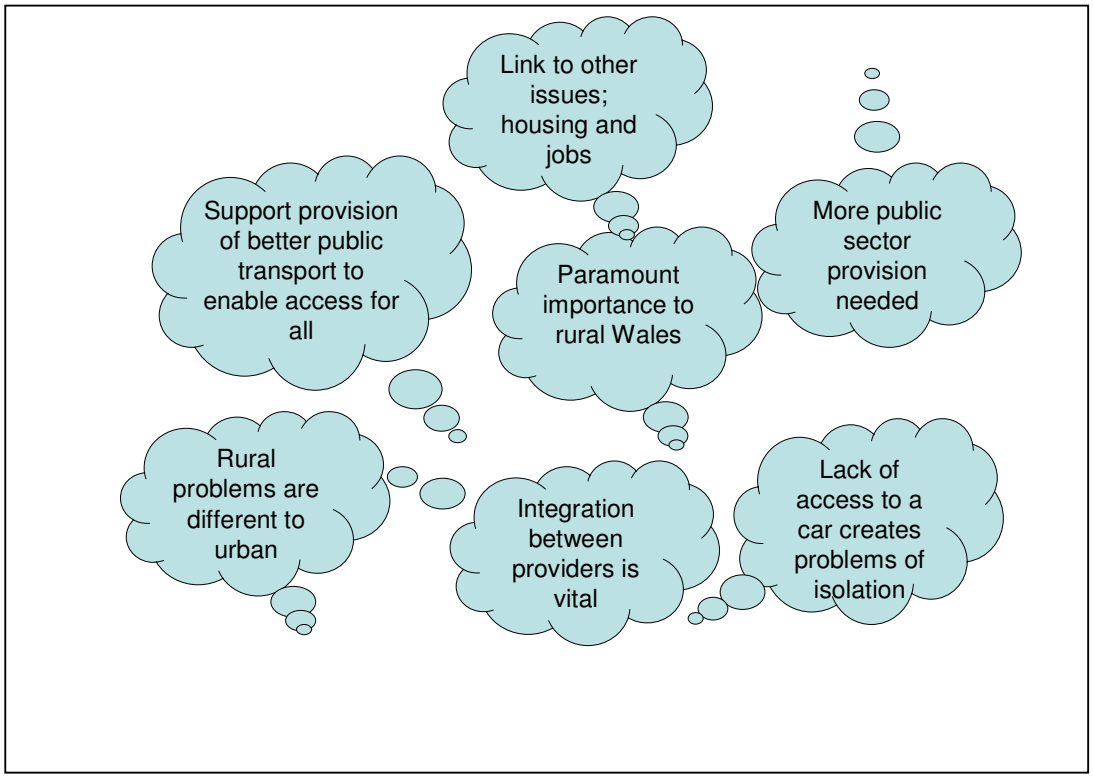
6.128 Despite stakeholders wanting housing needs assessed on wider criteria than affordability, affordable housing was seen as an urgent priority for the countryside (Box 6). Responses highlighted the clear link between affordable housing, the retention of young people in the community and rural sustainability. There was clear concern that the amount of current provision did not equate with perceived need nor balance with respect to the amount of new housing development that was not affordable. However, it was argued that affordable housing should not be seen as the saviour of rural communities; rather the focus should also be given to employment, transport and services in conjunction with affordable housing.

6.129 Actions suggested the more effective use of needs assessments and to use existing planning policies more extensively in securing affordable housing quotas. It was also suggested that there was a role for more innovative schemes such as community land schemes which have been successful in Scotland, thereby supplementing housing association activity.

Box 6: Summary of themes emerging from affordable housing in the countryside

Transport in the countryside

6.130 Transport was seen as another priority issue for the countryside and again most comments related to the way policy was seen as compounding rural problems (Box 7). However, there was little comment specific to transport planning issues. First and foremost it was stressed that rural transport had to be conceived and implemented in a different way to urban transport. New models were required which explicitly addressed the "rural" dimension and the divergent needs of residents. Again the concept of "needs" seemed paramount in the desired responses. Issues to do with investment, locally designed but nationally supported voluntary schemes, quality and frequency were stressed, as was the need for integration between different providers.



Box 7: Summary of themes emerging from transport in the countryside

Visions for a sustainable Wales

6.131 Stakeholder visions for the future of the countryside in Wales are broadly similar. In summary, statements reveal:-

- The need for a strong vision either at national or local level to orchestrate strategies and programmes.
- The need for an integrated approach.
- "Stronger" recognition of the people component.
- Innovation, versatility and flexibility in policies.
- The need for more effective engagement with the public.
- The need to create real opportunities for communities to feed into high level discussion and make a difference.
- The need for funding to be used more effectively rather than simply requests for more funding.

6.132 Despite calls for a review of rural policy in general, stakeholders recognised that policy will never be able to match all desires for the future of the countryside in Wales. However, a note of caution was sounded for those that want a complete overhaul of the planning system. In the main stakeholder responses were more concerned with planning regulations and their effective use at the local level rather than planning policy *per se*. Despite the consistency of the 'visions' for Wales iterated by stakeholders, the seminar revealed that a 'one size fits all approach' would be unacceptable and that local needs should be assessed and included in any development.

Photographic assessment

6.133 The photographic elements included in the consultation were found, on the whole, to be confusing for stakeholders with relatively few responses. However the few responses that were received were both detailed and insightful.

6.134 Photograph 1 (Moorland) elicited similar concerns in that overgrazing and/ or coniferous afforestation were to be avoided, whilst traditional boundaries, deciduous trees and limited grazing were all acceptable. A minority stated that there may be opportunities and threats over wind turbine developments in such environments.

6.135 Photograph 2 (village) prompted similar responses across stakeholders ranging from a desired decrease in improved pasture with a reversion to semi-improved pasture to restoration of hedgerows and scrub areas. There was agreement that whilst small scale development may be appropriate for such an area, no such decision could be made without a more holistic understanding of the particular circumstances of the locality. In addition, it was stressed that any such development should be small scale and in keeping with existing buildings.

6.136 Photograph 3 (farmland) elicited conflicting views. Respondents were split on more or less equal lines about the value of intensively farmed landscapes such as the one depicted. Views for the future of such landscapes ranged from the need to maintain agricultural practices for a viable countryside to the concern that more semi and unimproved pasture would be more beneficial to wildlife. Agreement was reached on the possibilities for small scale development in the landscape, whilst one respondent indicated the possibility of hotel or leisure facility development in such an environment.

6.137 Photograph 4 (parkland) revealed that amenity spaces were very important bits of countryside, not only providing access and recreation opportunities, but also supplying green space in otherwise urban environments. It was felt that more could be done in such areas to create wildlife habitats and to encourage community involvement in the upkeep / management of such. Built development of any kind was only mentioned by one respondent – it was felt that the site could accommodate new hotel or leisure facilities, providing their development was sensitive to the landscape.

6.138 Despite the attempts by stakeholders to provide comments and views on individual photographs, general comments received underlined the difficulty of so doing without any contextual background to the depictions. However, stakeholders were keen to make clear that *any* changes to the Welsh landscape should be considered with strong regard to sustainability in its broadest sense. Nonetheless, the dynamism of the countryside was a key theme and there was a consequent need for any changes to reflect the future needs of the communities affected and actual users of the countryside, but again there was little insight provided into how this could be achieved.

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE COUNTRYSIDE

6.139 This section draws together the key findings from the public perceptions of the countryside.

Overarching issues	***comments***
Clear recognition of a multifunctional countryside	***though how to work with this multifunctionality is less clear***
Public disquiet with their experiences of planning for their countryside.	***there is a clear disquiet with the experience of planning though public preferences do in part reflect current planning policy***
Strong affinity with the countryside	***the countryside is widely appreciated and valued***
Strong concern with overdevelopment	***which contrasts with identification of types of necessary development***
Strong concern with the littering of the countryside.	***consistent theme in both rural and urban countrysides***
Little change desired	***strong support for rural conservation but how to reconcile with necessary development not clear***
Protection of the open countryside and designations	***strongly supported***
Appropriate scale and design of development	***a key overriding issue***
Planning for established needs	***supported as the correct approach to a wide range of development***
Policy integration	***widely suggested as missing but necessary***
Locally distinctive policy	***need to respond to the many countrysides that make up Wales and marry top down with bottom up***
Contested issues (hunting/farming/transport/housing)	***Common rural issues identified but the articulation of specific issues suggests a greater complexity than simple urban vs. rural reductionism***

Topic issues	*Comments*
Housing	*leading issue of concern focused on planning for housing needs rather than demand, and affordability* *need for greater coordination with employment policy*
Transport	*vexed issues as poor transport access is seen as holding rural areas back, but rural to urban commuting is also identified as a problem*
Employment	*desire for diversification to help 'weak' rural economies and improve quality of jobs, jobs for locals and youngsters* *but also concern over scale and 'industrialisation' of the countryside*
Future of farming	*strong concern with broad agreement on the need for appropriate diversification*
Tourism	*but of the 'right' scale, distinctively Welsh, and locally 'attached'/ integrated*
Recreation	*recreation is the dominant relationship with the countryside* *greater opportunities for local people supported, especially for informal recreation*
Local countryside	*identified as the most important sort of countryside, but too little recognised as such*
National Parks / AONBs	*identified as the next most important sorts of countryside*
Settlement strategy	*no clear agreement as to the right places for most development*
Sustainable development	*need for greater integration and focus on locality*
Local communities	*concern over weakening of communities and lack of public sector connection with them*
Welsh language	*identified as an important issue but disagreement in terms of how to respond*

6.140 In the following chapter these public perceptions are now assessed with respect to the current planning policies for the countryside at both national and unitary authority levels.

7 RESULTS: PLANNING POLICIES FOR THE COUNTRYSIDE

INTRODUCTION

7.1 There are two levels of rural planning policy in Wales – national: Planning Policy Wales 2002 (PPW) supported by Technical Advice Notes (TANs), and local (Unitary Development Plans - UDPs). PPW is relatively new and will have influenced only some of the UDPs as many will have been substantially prepared under its predecessor (Planning Policy Wales 1999). Nonetheless, many elements of PPW were carried over from earlier national guidance.

7.2 TAN 6 Agricultural and Rural Development is of greatest relevance due to its explicit rural focus, though other TANs such as 5, (Nature Conservation), 13 (Tourism), 16 (Sport and Recreation) and 18 (Transport) are also relevant insofar as they cover urban and rural aspects of these policy topics.

7.3 PPW sets overall priorities for sustainable development in urban and rural areas. Those for rural areas are:

- *sustainable rural communities with access to high quality public services;*
- *a thriving and diverse local economy where agriculture related activities are complemented by sustainable tourism and other forms of employment in a working countryside; and*
- *an attractive, ecologically rich and accessible countryside in which the environment and biodiversity are conserved and enhanced.* (2.4.4)

7.4 The commentary that accompanies this list of priorities emphasises the complexity of rural resources in the countryside and the consequent need for policy integration.

7.5 In additional the consultation draft of the innovative '*The Wales Spatial Plan, People, Places, Futures*' (September 2003) presents the vision for sustainable development in Wales and a framework for more integrated and collaborative working and decision making across sectoral and functional boundaries.

7.6 National policy gives a national 'view' of the countryside, both in the round and through more thematic policy such as housing, employment and conservation. As planning is primarily concerned with managing change, then this policy envisages certain elements of the future countryside.

7.7 The same also applies to local planning policy. Local policy is also generally expected to reflect national policy and interpret it for local circumstances.

7.8 This section takes the main themes from the public and stakeholder perceptions of the countryside and holds them against national and local planning policy in Wales, allowing assessment of whether planning policy might need to be reviewed in response.

OVERARCHING ISSUES

A multifunctional countryside, policy integration

7.9 That the countryside is multifunctional is a keynote of the findings. PPW picks this up and makes the important link that a multifunctional countryside requires an integrated policy approach:

"*The countryside is a dynamic and multipurpose resource. In line with sustainability principles, it must be conserved and, where possible, enhanced for the sake of its ecological, geological, physiographic, historical, archaeological and agricultural value and for its landscape and natural resources, balancing the need to conserve these attributes against the economic, social and recreational needs of local communities and visitors*". (2.4.5)

"*For these aims and priorities to be realised it will be essential that social, economic and environmental policies are fully integrated. The preparation of integrated rural development strategies is recommended*". (para 2.4.6., p17)

7.10 This is a relatively sophisticated take on rural sustainability and the notion of a multifunctional countryside, and it is not that surprising that this sort of thinking has yet to filter through to the UDPs to a significant extent. Thus the policy in PPW remains somewhat aspirational, largely because it is in part quite innovative and therefore rather demanding to implement locally. More guidance on how to operationalise this agenda is urgently needed, which could be included in the future revision of TAN 6.

Strong affinity with the countryside, strong concern with overdevelopment, little change desired, protection of the open countryside

7.11 These grouped issues strongly suggest agreement with the longstanding principles of conserving the countryside for its own sake and protecting the open countryside from development. There was very little support in the findings for the idea that planning is unduly restrictive in rural areas, and holding back their progression; rather the opposite was in evidence in that housing particularly was seen to be biasing development with deleterious environmental, cultural and social impacts.

7.12 PPW reflects these strong planning principles in discussing the importance of natural heritage and noting that it is not confined to statutorily designated areas, extending across urban areas, the countryside and the coast:

Attractive and ecologically rich environments are important, both for their own sake and for the health and the social and economic well being of individuals and communities. Biodiversity and landscape are important in the economic life of many communities and the quality of the environment is often a factor in business location decisions. (5.1.1)

7.13 Such concerns are well reflected in the UDPs also. Development in the open countryside is generally discouraged. This is an established mainstay of rural planning in Wales, and it is given strong support by the findings of the research. But it is also important to note that this broad protectionist ethos cannot sit entirely happily with other aspects of the findings where need for certain types of new development is strongly identified.

7.14 It may be, then, that what is reflected more widely in the findings is the primacy of conservation of the countryside but also an acceptance of *necessary* change in as sympathetic fashion as possible.

Appropriate scale and design of development

7.15 Again that rural development should be of appropriate scale and design to its setting is a longstanding principle of planning policy and is well reflected in PPW and the UDPs.

Development in the countryside*…. All new development should respect the character of the surrounding area and should be of appropriate scale and design.* (2.5.7)

7.16 However, there are comments dotted across the earlier findings which suggest that some rural development is not of an appropriate scale and design. This contradiction demands further scrutiny and commitment when operationalised at a local level. LANDMAP through its characterisation process, together with village design statements, are seen as key tools to facilitate this. TAN 12 Design should be better cross referenced with PPW and give greater emphasis to the design of new rural buildings *per se* and their contribution to distinctive Welsh rural landscapes.

Planning for established needs, locally distinctive policy

7.17 Though most often expressed about housing development, the idea of planning for established development needs was also more widely applied to areas such as employment, tourism and transport. There is clear concern that some recent rural development has not been what the countryside has needed, and has therefore brought outcomes such as 'executive' housing which locals cannot afford, or the creation of jobs which favour 'incomers' over locals.

7.18 These are obviously highly charged issues in many instances. When coupled with the widely expressed concern that policy should better reflect the local area and be more sensitive to the views of local communities, a clear message is given for greater differentiation of rural planning policy.

7.19 PPW covers these issues well, requiring that Part 1 of UDPs must:

"for rural areas, set out an integrated rural development strategy for new development based on sustainable development principles and tailored to the area's specific assets and needs". (7.5.1)

7.20 It may simply be a reflection on the newness of PPW, but none of the UDPs included in the research showed much evidence of such work. Indeed, earlier work for the Welsh Assembly Government[8] noted the lack of such an approach and the general lack of the explicit use of evidence to underpin much rural planning policy.
The planning workshops confirmed this situation and established a general perception that departing from national policy is rarely supported by the Welsh Assembly Government. The planners perceived that PPW acts more as a strait jacket, setting a somewhat discouraging tone on this topic:

[8] *The Rural Economy and the Planning System* (2002), LUC.

If policies or proposals contained in a draft UDP appear to conflict with the Assembly Government's planning policy guidance and appear not to be justified by local circumstances, the Assembly will draw this to the attention of the local planning authority and, if necessary, intervene in the plan process by means of objection or direction to modify or by calling in all or part of a plan. The Assembly would expect to use its powers of direction sparingly. (3.1.6)

7.21 Consequently, there is an apparent tension here in the widespread concern that rural planning in Wales is insufficiently responsive to local circumstances.

TOPIC ISSUES

Housing

7.22 Concern that the wrong sorts of housing – 'luxury' or 'executive' homes – are being built across the Welsh countryside were widespread in the findings. Coupled to this is the equally strong concern that more affordable houses should be built instead, and that house building should be based on identified needs and not solely on demands wherever they occur throughout the settlement hierarchy.

7.23 These are issues stirring up considerable feeling, and are often closely linked to those focused on changes to rural communities such as 'incomers', the loss of the young, new job opportunities and impacts on the Welsh language and culture.

7.24 PPW gives detailed guidance on housing development, favouring an integrated approach to rural provision and emphasising the importance of assessing housing needs. Addressing rural housing development in particular it notes:

"*In planning for **housing in rural areas** it is important to recognise that development in the countryside should embody sustainability principles, benefiting the rural economy and local communities while maintaining and enhancing the environment. There should be a choice of housing, recognising the housing needs of all, including those in need of affordable or special needs provision*". (9.2.18)

7.25 The importance of settlement strategy in meeting sustainability objectives is also emphasised here. Most new development is to be focused on existing larger settlements identified in UDPs. This is a longstanding approach to rural development in Wales, particularly housing, with exceptions for small sites for affordable housing and agricultural and forestry workers' dwellings. It is not surprising, therefore, that this is a development strategy strongly reflected in the UDPs.

7.26 The public views clearly demand a significant shift in the emphasis of policy towards affordable housing and housing to meet recognised local needs, which is seen simply to have lost out to other types of housing for some time. In corollary there is also a clear desire for much less non-affordable housing to be built.

7.27 Yet arguably useful policy is already in place. What appear to be less satisfactory are the outcomes of such policy. This is because the provision of affordable housing cannot be delivered by planning alone, particularly in rural areas where affordability problems are often more pronounced and where there are fewer larger housing development sites. This can only occur in conjunction with public funding or private partnerships.

7.28 These issues were discussed at length in the planners' workshops. It was clearly felt that local planners and communities should be given greater latitude to explore more radical planning solutions to the lack of affordable housing and housing to meet local needs in rural Wales. The National Park Authorities are already seeking to target their housing policies more closely on local needs, but at the moment the Welsh Assembly Government have indicated that Pembrokeshire Coast National Park's policies are insufficiently backed with appropriate evidence. It was also agreed that, although the Welsh language was an issue often closely aligned with affordable housing, the two are not synonymous and that planning should be careful not to confuse them, though they may sometimes be coincident.

Transport

7.29 The findings reveal widespread dissatisfaction with both public and private rural transport in terms of their inadequacy and rural specificity. Furthermore, the influence of nearby (and also not so near) urban areas, as increasing locations of employment and service use for rural residents, was also bemoaned.

7.30 Transport, it would appear, is a double edged sword. It is also an issue which planning alone cannot carry. Planning can only influence the distribution of new development. It does not often provide new transport infrastructure or influence the management of existing infrastructure. Clear concern is voiced at the way the Welsh Assembly Government have sole responsibility for trunk roads and local authorities for the rest of the road network. The perceived alienation of local people from transport decisions, which can have significant spatial impacts, was an emerging theme from the results.

7.31 Thus PPW and the UDPs strongly support the location of new development in rural areas in locations which are accessible by means other than the private car – coined as *local service centres* in PPW. However, declining rural services and increased commuting are arguably symptoms of the greater use of cars in rural Wales. Public transport provision can only have a moderate influence on this. Planning too, cannot dictate how people *actually use* services and travel to work.

7.32 Thus planning cannot directly address many of the findings. Integrated policies tailored towards the rural dimension and based on empirical evidence of need address the wider sustainability agenda but the issues are far from easy to resolve. Close coordination between Community Strategies, Local Transport Plans and planning work is most important. But it is also important that the current reality of rural transport use is grasped and that policy engages with car use as well as public transport.

Employment and the future of farming

7.33 These are linked issues as diversification is seen as important both to sustain agriculture in future and also to assist weak or disadvantaged rural economies. Providing more jobs suitable for 'locals' and also the young are particularly highlighted. But these comments are also counterbalanced by the concerns that the countryside is being industrialised and suffering from the effects of more rural to urban commuting.

7.34 These dilemmas are not unique to Wales, but large areas of Wales are strongly rural and so PPW gives detailed guidance on the rural economy, clearly advocating the use of *integrated rural development strategies* as a frame for the future development of both *traditional rural industries* and *new enterprises*.

PPW also notes that

"New businesses in rural areas are essential to sustain and improve rural communities, but developments which only offer short-term economic gain will rarely be appropriate". (7.3.1)

7.35 Most commercial development is to be directed to e*xisting settlements* with the exception of *farm diversification* which should be regarded positively *irrespective of whether farms are served by public transport.*

7.36 The rural economy and the planning system was the subject of recent research in Wales for the Welsh Assembly Government[9]. The results indicated that planning was generally welcoming of economic development in rural areas, but was too reactive in emphasis. In order to offer more proactive support, greater integration of approach, nationally and locally was needed with local policy more firmly rooted in clear understandings of differing local circumstances.

7.37 At the time of this research PPW was very new and its fresh policies could not be expected to have found their way into UDPs.

Neath Port Talbot Deposit Draft: Policy 9 (Part 1 UDP)

"The diversification and strengthening of the local economy will be encouraged. Emphasis will be placed on helping farms diversify, tourism-related proposals, assisting the creation and growth of small and medium sized enterprises and in particular, those which seek to promote social inclusion and more environmentally sustainable practices"

7.38 But support for rural and farm diversification are established principles for rural planning and so are broadly picked up by the UDPs as might be expected. The more rural counties clearly identified the importance of diversifying the rural economic base whilst the urban authorities appeared to face a different set of issues; development pressures around the urban fringe and in the near open countryside, and settlement coalescence.

7.39 From this study evidence of an integrated approach to rural economic development was rare. Quite simply integrated rural development strategies are not being taken up. In light of these findings the problems of maximising planning's contribution to rural economic development substantially remain.

Tourism and recreation

7.40 The findings set an interesting tone with respect to rural tourism and recreation. Both are clearly recognised as very important in rural Wales, but there are also clear concerns that future tourism development should be more sympathetic to its locality and Welsh context, better attached to local communities, and better integrated with the rest of the rural economy.

7.41 For recreation it is very clear that this is a highly significant point of connection with the Welsh countryside for most residents. Yet they are also strongly concerned that recreation opportunities for *local* people are unsatisfactory, especially informal recreation. Significantly PPW contains relatively little comment with respect to countryside recreation and there clearly is scope for redress in future revisions.

[9] *The rural economy and the planning system,* LUC et al, 2002

7.42 However, PPW notes that tourism is of particular importance to the rural and coastal areas of Wales, and a major element in the Welsh economy and identifies the need:

- *"to encourage sustainable tourism in Wales, maximising its economic and employment benefits, promoting tourism in all seasons, and encouraging its development in non-traditional destinations, while safeguarding the environment, and the interests of local communities; and*
- *to manage change in the tourism sector in ways which respect the integrity of the natural, built and cultural environment to provide for economic growth, employment and environmental conservation".* (para11.1.2)

7.43 Likewise sport and recreation are noted as contributing to the population's quality of life and policy objectives are:

- "*a more sustainable pattern of development by creating and maintaining networks of facilities and open spaces in places well served by sustainable means of travel, in particular within urban areas*
- *social inclusion, improved health and well-being by ensuring that everyone, including the elderly and those with disabilities, has easy access to good quality, well-designed facilities and open space".*(para 11.1.3)

7.44 In the countryside and on the coast, tourism, sport and recreational facilities should be accessible by a choice of modes of travel, but particularly on foot, by cycle and public transport.

7.45 Sustainable tourism is also a strong theme of the UDPs, and is linked to safeguarding and conserving the environment, particularly in those areas that traditionally receive large numbers of visitors.

7.46 In some UDPs policy support for new tourism initiatives is based on links to local cultural and historic heritage through sustainable tourism developments. Denbighshire, Powys, and Neath Port Talbot UDPs all incorporate policies to restore and exploit local canal links for tourism and recreation. This linkage to wider rural regeneration problems is both important and welcome.

7.47 Rural tourism development is generally directed to the main settlements, with the exception of farm diversification enterprises which occur in the open countryside. In such cases proposals are usually required to be secondary or supplementary to the main use of the farm.

7.48 However, some aspects of the findings, that new tourism development should be better integrated and attached to communities or clearly in support of the land based economy of the area, are not well expressed in either PPW or the UDPs.

7.49 Provision of recreation opportunities is a longstanding planning concern, and so is well covered in the UDPs. But the considerable appetite for enhanced informal recreation opportunities for locals uncovered by the findings is a point not well reflected in either PPW or the UDPs.

7.50 This is another issue where arguably to focus on planning is somewhat disingenuous, as informal recreation infrastructure only sometimes requires planning permission. Nonetheless local people are clearly asking for a more locally responsive approach to recreation to which planning is expected to make some contribution.

7.51 PPW does recognise this in para. 3.1.6 where local policies can conflict if they are justified by local circumstances.

Swansea UDP Consultation Draft: Policy HC35

"Opportunities for informal recreation in the countryside and within the urban greenspace system will be promoted provided that:

1. *There would be no harm to the character or appearance of the countryside or urban greenspace;*
2. *There would be no loss of amenity to people living in the vicinity or to the enjoyment of other countryside users, and*
3. *There would be no harm to sites of nature conservation value or archaeological and historic importance.*

Improved access for all such areas will be sought through the development or extension of safe, convenient and attractive routes."

Local countryside, the National Parks and AONBs

7.52 The findings underlined the importance attached to local countryside by the Welsh population. National Parks, and AONBs to a lesser extent, are also identified as important.

7.53 Thus a dichotomy emerges for the majority of the Welsh population – i.e. those who do not live in the three Parks or five AONBs. Both National Parks and the AONBs are given the highest level of protection in PPW and the UDPs. Sites of importance for biodiversity and nature conservation are also protected.

7.54 In contrast much of the rest of the countryside has no designation and hence no special protection, though PPW encourages local designations such as Special Landscape Areas although these are not envisaged as tools for protection:

"*Local non-statutory sites can add value to the planning process particularly if such designations are informed by community participation and reflect community values*". (5.3.11)

7.55 However, the issues raised go wider than designations alone. Perspective is crucial. For decades planning has focused on protection and enhancement of the finest landscapes – the designated landscapes. The findings suggest that the Welsh population value the more 'ordinary', local countryside just as highly. Yet this is the countryside less regarded by planning, and therefore more 'vulnerable' to development, particularly surrounding larger settlements. The LANDMAP initiative is crucial here in illuminating landscape character where such assessments can be used to protect the inherent qualities that shape particular countryside characters. Here the multilayered approach to assessing landscape will improve future planning policy.

7.56 The *urban fringe* is an emerging policy concern. The findings suggest a broader rethink of the value and use of local countryside as this encapsulates a range of concerns including recreation, overdevelopment and the future of farming.

7.57 This should not in any way diminish the importance rightly accorded to the National Parks and AONBs, but instead adds a further dimension to the "joined up" policy approach to the Welsh countryside as a whole.

Settlement strategy

7.58 The findings give little support for most types of new development in the open countryside, or for new settlements. Beyond this, though, there are contested views as to whether housing and economic development should occur in larger settlements and smaller settlements and hamlets. Significantly, rural Wales has a very variable settlement pattern and therefore development 'possibilities' and 'needs' will vary.

7.59 PPW sets a familiar strategy for rural development. *New building in the open countryside* away from existing settlements or areas allocated for development should *be strictly controlled*, while minor extensions and infilling are permissible in existing settlements. Thus local planning authorities need to consider a number of factors when drawing up their land allocation policies and proposals:

- "*Promote sustainable patterns of development, identifying previously developed land and buildings, and indicating locations for higher density development at hubs and interchanges and close to route corridors where accessibility on foot and by bicycle and public transport is good;*
- *maintain and improve the vitality, attractiveness and viability of town, district, local and village centres;*
- *foster development approaches that recognise the mutual dependence between town and country, thus improving linkages between urban areas and their rural surroundings.*" (para 2.5.2, p17)

7.60 The importance of respecting local diversity and protecting the cultural identity of local communities is also emphasised.

7.61 The protection of open land around towns and cities in Wales is seen as vital in PPW, and local planning authorities are encouraged to consider establishing Green Belts and green wedges to:

- "*provide opportunities for access to the open countryside;*
- *provide opportunities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation;*
- *maintain landscape/wildlife interest;*
- *retain land for agriculture, forestry, and related purposes; and*
- *improve derelict land.*" (2.6.2)

7.62 PPW also states that new settlements on greenfield sites "*are unlikely to be appropriate in Wales*" (para 9.2.13, p 103) and should only be proposed where they would offer significant environmental, social and economic advantages.

7.63 Such an essentially hierarchical approach to rural settlement planning has prevailed for decades and is therefore well represented in the UDPs.

7.64 Considering both PPW and the UDPs, the findings question the broad focus on larger settlements for most new development.

7.65 The findings discussed above, particularly those for housing and employment development, add an extra dimension here. The strong desire to see new development meet existing needs, and not cause adverse change, suggests a need for a different sort of policy approach. Policy for new development needs to be more closely rooted in detailed understanding of local needs, and hence be more differentiated. PPW 3.1.6 does recognise the ability for such differentiation, but the planners tend to view such deviations as exceptional.

7.66 It is a logical step to suggest that closer working with local communities as to their priorities for new development would greatly assist in such a new approach. This would also offer a way of unlocking some of the apparent ambiguity in the findings. Here the community strategy seems the most effective model to build upon.

Flintshire UDP Deposit Draft: Location of Development, para 2.8

creating a sustainable settlement pattern whereby:

1. *"most new development will be directed to the main towns (category A settlements which have an indicative potential growth band of 10% - 20%) which have existing infrastructure, jobs and services, subject to environmental and other constraints;*
2. *new development will be directed to those semi-urban villages (category B settlements which have an indicative potential growth band of 8% - 15%) which have existing facilities, jobs and services subject to environmental and other constraints;*
3. *new housing is restricted in rural villages (category C settlements have an indicative potential growth band of a maximum of 10%) due to the general lack of existing facilities, jobs and services and presence of environmental and other constraints".*

Sustainable development and local communities

7.67 The findings suggest that the term "sustainable development" still has to be universally understood by the public. Yet the public comments convey its broad principles as reflected in calls for integrated development based on 'needs' and 'capacity'. In addition the emphasis on locality as the 'place' where sustainable development should matter is highly significant.

7.68 Planning for sustainability is a major theme of PPW. The planning system is seen to have a fundamental role in delivering sustainable development in Wales. Nine principles and 18 objectives for planning for sustainable development are set. Sustainable development is then woven as a structuring theme throughout the document.

7.69 Sustainable development has been in use for long enough for all of the UDPs to give it due prominence. Sustainable development is a clear theme of all nine UDPs examined. Versions of the Brundtland definition of 1987 are common and the four UK objectives for sustainable development are often repeated[10].

7.70 Cross references are also made to other strategies prepared by authorities such as Local Transport Plans, the Biodiversity Action Plans, the Countryside and Economic Development Strategies, Housing Strategies and the emerging Community Strategies.

[10] The definition states that sustainable development should meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) *Our Common Future*; OUP

7.71 However, a detailed working out of what rural sustainability *means* for a particular area, and hence which of the functions of a multifunctional countryside should be supported through planning, has yet to appear in the UDPs. Similarly no integrated rural development strategies were encountered.

7.72 The acid sustainable development test is whether the gap between rhetoric and action can be closed. Most of the responses were not criticising policy - they were asking for better operationalisation of policy through integration and public engagement, and they were asking for more action or evidence of the pursuit of sustainable development, particularly at the local level.

7.73 Arguably PPW and the UDPs are not terribly helpful as they do not define what sustainable development actually means for particular places. It is this level of engagement that seems to be desired but it is conspicuous by its absence.

7.74 These issues are also relevant to the repeated concern in the findings that rural communities are in decline and that the public sector is losing touch with them. Again housing issues are seen as central to such concerns but they range more broadly through employment, transport, service provision and use to more prosaic issues such as litter and rubbish dumping. Sustainability is also interested in bringing together and reconciling difficult collections of issues such as these, centrally focussed on the future of individual communities.

7.75 The Community Strategy process already recognises these important linkages, and envisages close involvement with planning in its work. But evidence of these processes, and particularly linkage with planning, was not very apparent across the findings, including the community visioning exercises and planners' workshops held during this study.

7.76 So a crucial element of planning for sustainable rural development in Wales appears to be the need to engage more effectively with local sustainability, particularly with local communities, and better integration of policy and work.

7.77 It was interesting that when these ideas were explored with the planners at the planners' workshops they were generally receptive to more locally determined development policies and better engagement with local communities. The idea of pooling planning gain funds to support non land use aspects of rural communities was also suggested and strongly supported.

The Welsh language

7.78 Mixed views on this topic were gathered, though it was agreed that this was an important issue. Views ranged from defence of the language as the first consideration for rural development to suggestions that over zealous protection of the language were actually hampering progress.

7.79 Concerning the planning system's engagement with the Welsh language PPW notes:

"The Welsh language is part of the social and cultural fabric of Wales. The future well being of the language across the whole of Wales will depend on a wide range of factors, particularly education, demographic change, community activities and a sound economic base to maintain thriving sustainable communities. The land use planning system should also take account of the needs and interests of the Welsh language and in so doing can contribute to its well being." (2.10.1)

7.80 More detailed advice is given in TAN 20. The UDPs generally reflect these concerns.

Eryri UDP Deposit Version: Policy PS4 and PC1

"Communities with an inherent Welsh identity will be safeguarded from change which threatens their cultural integrity".

7.81 The specific relationship between the Welsh language and planning was not evident in the public perception findings. So these issues were given particular consideration at the planners' workshops.

7.82 It was agreed that though it was a relatively easy issue to identify, what to do about it was far more difficult. It was also stressed that Welsh rural culture and the Welsh language were not necessarily interchangeable.

7.83 Concern was also expressed that local planning is not being allowed sufficient space or flexibility to try and address these issues. They were an integral part of local distinctiveness, and too rigid 'top down' policy (housing was again cited) prevents them being addressed more successfully. These findings tend to challenge those emanating from the Second Homes study carried out by UCL (2002).

SUMMARY

7.84 The overall thrust of the findings give support to the more sophisticated rural policies in the recently revised PPW, and its central concern with sustainable development and countryside protection. However, it is also clear that more is expected of planning than it is currently delivering. Some of this expectation cannot be met by planning alone and there is need for more public sector integration. There is strong support for an enhanced role for planning in the Welsh countryside.

Support for existing policy

7.85 Planning policy's longstanding stance of protecting the countryside from the impacts of development is robustly supported. That National Parks and AONBs should be afforded the strongest protection is also endorsed. So is the established policy that new development in rural areas should be of appropriate scale and design.

7.86 Other elements of existing policy are given only qualified support. Policies for rural and farm diversification are supported but there is a strong desire to see the planning system being more proactive in its work, and more locally differentiated and integrated.

7.87 Similarly policy for tourism and recreation is broadly supported but needs to be enhanced through greater emphasis on green tourism and on improved informal recreation opportunities for local people. Both again call for greater integration of planning with other public sector activities.

7.88 The prevailing approach to settlement strategy is also supported – particularly restricting development in the open countryside and new settlements. But there is again a desire for policy to be more locally differentiated and better connected with local community needs.

7.89 Planning policy on the Welsh language and culture is also supported as far as it goes. But there are varying expectations that it should go further and be allowed to vary more locally. Fuller national guidance on these issues is needed.

Challenges for existing policy

7.90 Planning policy appears to be generally supporting the public concerns identified with overdevelopment of the countryside through its generally protectionist stance. But there are also significant calls for a range of necessary developments based on identified needs.

7.91 Welsh planning needs to find a way of reconciling these tensions. The interest in more locally distinctive policy may provide one answer. A focus on local solutions to meet local needs, with greater inclusion of local communities in preference to an overly prescriptive and centralised policy set, seems worthy of further investigation.

7.92 The findings on housing set a clear challenge for national policy. The policy emphasis should be adjusted to give increased importance and explicit support to housing which would meet the established local needs, including need for affordable housing, based on sound evidence. Conversely, housing not meeting established local needs should be more clearly discouraged in rural areas. Consequently, local planning authorities should be more explicit in justifying the "types" of housing required. Such is the scale of response to these issues that it is not unreasonable to suggest that housing to meet local needs should be made a more explicit priority for development in rural areas.

7.93 Transport is a problematic issue. Again there is a strong dissatisfaction with the current situation, but planning can only do so much to address this. Other public sector tools and rural specificity are arguably much more influential, and proper integration with these is planning's main contribution.

7.94 The overriding importance of local countrysides also sets a significant challenge to the existing policy set and approach, suggesting in particular that planning should be far more responsive to the views of local communities in their desired and actual uses of their local countryside.

7.95 Last, sustainable development perhaps offers the greatest challenge of all to rural planning. In theory it should be *the* means by which all these issues are reconciled to guide beneficial development locally across rural Wales. But there is a persistent gap between policy and outcomes which the findings have highlighted. If the potential of planning for sustainable development is to be maximised a change of gear in planning may be needed.

8 DISCUSSION: WHAT KIND OF COUNTRYSIDE SHOULD WE DELIVER?

RATIONALE

8.1 In this final section of the report we progress the key themes arising from the results sections to assess the implications for the main elements of Welsh rural policy with special regard to the mechanisms needed to foster sustainable development of the Welsh countryside. We then propose a series of recommendations which are grouped according to their areas of application.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT

8.2 Sustainable development is placed at the centre of Welsh planning policy in PPW. It is also placed at the centre of the governance of Wales through the *Government of Wales Act* 1998, which states in section 121:

The Assembly shall make a scheme setting out how it proposes, in the exercise of its functions, to promote sustainable development.

8.3 Across the findings it is striking how much consensus there is around issues readily identified with rural sustainability such as:

- support for a multifunctional and diverse countryside
- protection of environmental assets
- farming and forestry to have a more diversified future, better linked to the environment, tourism and recreation
- evidence-based planning for needs not demands, and therefore more locally distinctive policy
- smaller scale development targeted at helping local communities
- local communities taking a more active role in policy and decision making
- a better integrated approach to rural development
- simplification of the complexity and duplication of organisational structures engaging with the countryside for better delivery of results

8.4 Also, respondents readily identified the integration implicit within rural sustainable development, even if there was a degree of confusion as to what the actual term meant.

8.5 The apparent tension in the findings between protection of the countryside and the need for necessary development also speaks of sustainability as these points can be readily equated with the notion of meeting local, social, environmental and economic needs. Here the issue of capacity is crucial and yet remains significantly unexplored in planning strategies and policies.

8.6 The lack of empirical data informing policy is clearly a cause for concern. Issues such as concern over loss of countryside, 'executive' housing favouring commuters or retired people (incomers) have clear sustainability content when placed against the widely voiced desire to maintain the characteristics of rural communities.

8.7 There is a clear desire for appropriate economic development based on a rural model to create and support local jobs; support housing for local people who, in turn, can support local services and wider rural infrastructure. Such "joined up" thinking was consistently encountered as locally derived solutions, but there was little evidence of this actually happening on the ground.

8.8 Priorities do appear to be locally distinctive. In the household survey Tregaron was dominated by concern about incomers. Here the perceived rapid increase in English incomers buying houses for retirement, without any concomitant increase in jobs or housing for locals, was seen as a direct threat to the culture of the town and Welsh language. However, in Rhyl the lack of investment and economic development was seen as hampering the much needed re-vitalisation; yet new housing development in the countryside within the urban fringe, largely for commuters, was perceived as booming. In St Asaph the perception was of a town bypassed by traffic and jobs with a large industrial estate allowing new companies to come in, without any investment to help local businesses that were struggling. All these stories highlight the need for joined up thinking, understanding and action at the local level.

8.9 Indeed, throughout the research this perceived lack of integration was a consistent and emphasized theme, from a national to a local level across all the different publics interviewed. The notion of integrated rural development, highlighted in PPW as key to solving complex rural problems, is already well-founded in rural Wales. Again, what is now needed is that it is operationalised with clearer guidance and support mechanisms.

8.10 The planning system forms only one part of any reformulation of countryside policy. Currently, the perception is that the planning system is firmly rooted in "land use" matters and is therefore constrained to operate within other social, economic and environmental priorities and strategies. Some commentators have argued that the planning system can/should embrace this wider agenda while others view this as problematic due to obvious resource and duplication issues. We are of the opinion that the planning system needs to be more integrated with other economic, social and environmental imperatives reflecting a more "common vision".

8.11 The stakeholder consultations revealed widespread concern at the plethora of agencies each pursuing their own piece of the countryside agenda which leads to a fragmented and *ad hoc* approach. This is compounded as the stakeholder and community visioning studies highlight that much policy appears to be made on simplistic assumptions or presumptions without empirical data, evidence or local consultation.

8.12 PPW uses sustainable development as its main integrating theme. The remainder of PPW's treatment of rural development is essentially thematic, though protection of the natural and built environment, the rural economy, tourism, recreation, services, retail and design are all familiar enough policy headings, but the integration which PPW itself identifies as a crucial task for rural planning policy is present only in the form of occasional cross references. How to make sense of, and get greatest benefit from, a multifunctional countryside remains unclear. The current Wales Spatial Plan pursues an integrated approach, set within its five thematic priorities in different spatial zones. As yet, it is too soon to evaluate the likely impacts of this new approach to policy formation other than to say that the concept and rationale does operationalise sustainable development using themes that support the public views encountered in this research.

8.13 Consequently the agenda for a sustainable countryside is endorsed by the public and planning documentation in this research. However, what the public want to see is the practical application of this within their landscapes. Rather worryingly, this appears not to be happening; rather the public are expressing disquiet about a countryside that has a development focus seemingly based on market demands; does not connect between housing, jobs and transport and alienates local people from decision making. This universal view verified across the different survey methodologies identifies a significant divergence between the theory and practice of planning for sustainable development.

THE ROLE OF PLANNING

8.14 The findings elucidate a clear view that the planning system has a pivotal role to play in helping deliver the kind of countryside we want in Wales, although it is recognised that large parts of the countryside (agriculture and forestry) still remain outside the control and jurisdiction of planners. This cautions excessive reliance on the planning system alone to deliver the countryside we want.

8.15 Nevertheless, the views of the public accord with many of the primary policies for the countryside as contained in PPW and within UDPs. Policies that are aimed at protecting the wider countryside and landscape, nature conservation, encouraging diversification and engaging with local communities are strongly supported.

8.16 Yet clear dissatisfaction remains based on peoples actual experiences of planning decisions on the ground. The strong concern with "overdevelopment" cited as a problem by all kinds of respondent, regardless of background, professional status or place of residence is a good example of this mismatch of planning policy with practice. These findings support other public perception studies currently being undertaken across Wales in the LANDMAP exercises. The often-voiced view that planning practice is unduly restricting development is given little support in the findings, although clearly it might actually be inhibiting the desired rural development by its lack of overall integration with local needs.

8.17 Planning in practice is clearly not making an acceptable local case for development. So to explain this lack of connection with local communities, are policies within plans contradictory, ambiguous or are decisions favouring of certain influential interests? Furthermore, how well do large scale strategic Welsh Assembly planning projects accord with local development priorities and plans?

8.18 The development of Strategic Environmental Assessment will hopefully be an important tool for ensuring consistency of plan policies, but there is equally a case to focus on the political dimension of planning decisions particularly with respect to the use and application of material considerations. There remains a key priority to help clarify the perceived mismatch between theory and practice of planning as experienced by the public in this research.

8.19 Untangling these issues requires a different approach to look at the potential contribution of planning rather than its current, more limited, engagement. As the firm attachment of Integrated Rural Development Strategies to land use planning in PPW suggests, it may be that planning needs to be repositioned more centrally in the rural policy landscape. Planning is an unusual discipline in seeking a holistic view of the future of a given rural area, and the development necessary to deliver the most beneficial and sustainable outcomes. This is why planning has been linked so closely

with the Community Strategy process. But it is important to grasp that planning's role in implementation may be considerably less significant than other avenues of public policy and support. Planning's key contribution is arguably a perspective of spatial and policy integration. At the local level this mirrors the macro thinking behind the Wales Spatial Plan. Integrated rural development strategies could be the key tools to deliver such an approach.

8.20 There are emerging examples within some of the newer UDPs where community plan policies and visions are providing a more strategic spatial approach. The UDPs for Cardiff, Flintshire and Neath Port Talbot provide such examples. In the case of Flintshire the Plan indicates that it has to be read as a whole and policies should not be considered in isolation. This is encouraging innovation, but more development is required, particularly around the vexed issues of necessary development and transport. Again, an effective integrated local policy approach is something that the Welsh Assembly Government needs to push for.

POLICY SUBSIDIARITY AND LOCAL DISTINCTIVENESS

8.21 The results from the stakeholders, surveys and visioning exercises reveal consistent support for local communities to be more actively engaged in shaping and delivering policy. The current system, despite the rhetoric about public involvement and engagement, does appear to be heavily top-down with national solutions applied to localised problems, in many cases without specific rural models or community engagement. For example road improvements in Rhyl and St Asaph and new housing developments in Landrinio and Tregaron, all reflected significant local disquiet at imposed developments. Furthermore, a key theme relating to the lack of engagement with the needs of youth suggests that policy makers rarely consider such matters.

8.22 Two key themes are evident from the results. First, there is a clear disquiet with national planning policy (PPW) which is perceived as "forcing" particular planning responses rather than setting a more generic framework within which local communities can articulate and respond to their own needs.

8.23 Second, that national planning policy (PPW) like much rural planning policy is essentially unattached in that its aims and aspirations are clear, but what is necessary to achieve them in a particular place, is not. As one planner commented, they were '… *all very well but could just as well apply to Tasmania*.'

8.24 A more explicit facilitator role for national policy has logical appeal as overarching objectives for the countryside can then be interpreted and *attached* locally to *particular* parts of the Welsh countryside. This recognition of different countrysides in Wales means that the answer to the kind of countryside we want in Wales is, quite simply, a locally derived one. Such an approach questions the current arrangements for local representation and governance.

8.25 The 'local' dimension then becomes central in addressing many of the problems facing the countryside, whether it was affordable housing, employment, food, rural services and recreation. The term "local" clearly has intrinsic appeal but there is a dilemma with many identified problems in the countryside being associated with globalisation. There was clear concern that inappropriate policy solutions were being imposed without recourse to the local dimension and local needs. Here it is clear that 'needs' need to be articulated more explicitly.

8.26 The problem for policy makers is to address this localisation issue without being accused of infringing peoples human rights (housing for local needs); idealism (getting people to sacrifice the supermarket for the local shop) or developing and eroding the special qualities of the countryside (developing theme parks).

8.27 We believe it is important to work with and improve existing structures rather than propose additional complexity. Logically therefore more effective policies can be made through a situation where the 'top down' agency approach meets and engages with 'bottom up' approaches. Here the Community Strategy[11] concept seems ideally placed to respond to this policy subsidiarity ethos. The Community Strategy is a statutory requirement and visibly linked with planning and sustainable development as a leading element for its delivery. We believe that the full potential of these strategies has yet to be realised in Wales.

8.28 A more localised vision can be used as a tool to develop new products, businesses or leisure/conservation environments and to engage with the range of agencies. This strategic focus allowing detailed planning policies and plans to be designed and operationalised at the local level would deliver real power and influence to local communities addressing the rather sceptical views encountered over current planning consultations and perceived overdevelopment.

8.29 By devoting more resources to community strategies and plans within a more proactive and innovative consultation process that engages and motivates local people, the plan can serve and feed the multitude of organisations involved in the shaping, management and delivery of countryside policy[12]. The community strategy would then have an importance and commitment that is currently lacking in Wales.

8.30 But this is no small task. Better planning for the sorts of countrysides Wales wants cannot rely on hitching a lift on the Community Strategy process for three reasons. The first is the simple variability and low level of development of the process at present. Second, the extremely wide remit of Community Strategies means that the necessary focus on integrated rural development may not be sufficiently strong (as this is arguably one of the components of the broader Strategy). The third is the crucial issue of how the "top down" structures meet and engage with the "bottom up". Here an improved and re-invigorated role and status for community councils/associations is an important pre-requisite. Perhaps it is most helpful to think of this as a meeting in the middle. National policy should expect to be bent to fit local circumstances, and similarly local policy should expect to be influenced by national objectives. This is a dynamic process which is subject to continual negotiation and discourse reflecting a true partnership approach that is clearly lacking at present.

8.31 The importance of such a meeting point is not recognised in either PPW or the Community Strategy process, both of which are arguably too concerned about their own particular 'scale' of operation. Addressing this situation needs a change in

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[11] Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2000 placed a duty on each principal council in England and Wales to prepare a community strategy to promote and improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of their areas and to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development in the UK.

[12] We are not advocating replacing the current statutory requirements or public participation phases in a UDP; rather the planners will have at the outset of a plan/plan review important local information about the kind of place people want. Plan policies can then build on this foundation.

emphasis on both sides, possibly through the development of an updated national rural strategy.

CAPACITY BUILDING

8.32 The appeal of policy subsidiarity is not without its problems. Both the public and the agencies need information, support and enthusiasm to work within a more devolved system of planning and to address the sustainable development agenda for the countryside. Throughout this research we found evidence that stakeholders and the public do understand the sustainability agenda but with significant structural difficulties in its operationalisation.

8.33 Consultation and engagement has to go beyond the "usual suspects". Herein lies the need for capacity building on all sides to ensure that the necessary information is made available to both public and agencies to ensure that there is an effective dialogue and debate over key issues and that resultant policy reflects empirical research and local needs. Participation is more than asking the public questions, it is a managed process about how and what information is exchanged, who is listened to and how the subsequent dialogue develops and how conflicts are resolved. At present we perceive that the short term tick box culture works against a more long term perspective and engagement that is compelling.

8.34 Participation is all too often limited by the level of information out in the public domain and the need for quick responses. Furthermore, it is fragmented so the plethora of different strategies and plans out there all go individually for consultation. Agencies and the public are literally being swamped with vast amounts of real and virtual paper. There has to be a more strategic and co-ordinated approach to consultation.

8.35 However, this participation process needs to be long term, planned and command the necessary resources of people, time and money. Agencies will need to restructure and join forces to support this venture in a way that has not happened so far, as their own plans should respond to the community strategy. Agencies will need to review their working practices and be more accountable for their policy development by responding to and informing the local perspective in a more managed and open discourse. However, we do not see a need to merge countryside agencies in the same manner as Haskins has suggested in his review of rural policy in England (DEFRA, 2003). Essentially the issue becomes one of ensuring that top down meets bottom up in a more planned and engaging process. Merely creating a new agency will not address the root cause of the countryside problems as revealed in this research.

9 RECOMMENDATIONS

NATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Sustainable development and integrated rural development

9.1 It is recommended that the Welsh Assembly Government produce an updated rural strategy which sets out a new framework for the countryside within which agencies and the planning system will work. Such a document has to address all the constituent parts of countryside policy and how the planning system fits in. It also should address the need for policy subsidiarity at the heart of the sustainable agenda developing themes inherent within the Wales Spatial Plan. In particular how top down agencies can re-engage with their local communities through proper local differentiation and attachment of policy. Integrated development strategies and community strategies are seen as important tools to achieve this.

9.2 It is recommended that the Welsh Assembly Government provide guidance on how sustainable development can be operationalised in both the planning system and the countryside. This particularly applies to Integrated Development Strategies. The development of rural proofing within all policy making is one mechanism to improve "joined up thinking" about countryside matters throughout Wales. Furthermore, the use of Strategic Environmental Assessment and State of the Countryside reports are recommended to ensure consistency and monitoring of policy/plans more generally.

9.3 It is recommended that the Welsh Assembly Government, through PPW, request revised policies for the countryside (housing, employment and transport) to be developed on robust empirical evidence and needs analyses to address the current presumption in policy formation. In addition, a set of countryside indicators should be developed to track change in the Welsh countryside. A useful model is provided by the recent work on Countryside Quality by Nottingham University (2003).

9.4 It is recommended that the Welsh Assembly Government evaluate the role that LANDMAP can play in providing quality verified data to improve the sustainable development of the Welsh countryside.

9.5 In all of the above, the newly established Rural Observatory and Wales Rural Partnership[13] have key roles in implementation and evaluation.

[13] £300,000 a year will be available to fund the Rural Observatory to monitor long-term trends and changes in the countryside and provide solutions to issues identified. The contract for provision of this service has been let to the University of Wales and work will commence late in 2003. The Wales Rural Partnership was established in November 1998 and is an advisory body that brings together a wide range of organisations to contribute to the future development of rural policies and programmes. Its remit embraces the economic, social, environmental, equal opportunities and cultural issues of concern to rural Wales.

Town and country planning

9.6 It is recommended that the Welsh Assembly Government should provide fuller guidance in the revision of TAN6 on the sustainable development of the Welsh multi-purpose countryside and the use of integrated rural development strategies as a mean for achieving this. A particular focus should be on economic development (of all sorts) and its relationship with the provision of housing and transport. Planning Delivering for Wales should also address these issues.

9.7 It is recommended that the Welsh Assembly Government should provide fuller guidance in the revision of TAN6 on identification of rural development needs through appropriate evidence (including the views of local communities), including for housing and employment, and the circumstances in which this can lead to policies which depart from the general guidance of PPW. In turn PPW should also make clearer the circumstances in which policies for rural development might depart from its general guidance.

9.8 It is recommended that the Welsh Assembly Government, as part of Planning – Delivering for Wales, should give greater guidance on the relationship between Community Strategies/Local Development plans and development control. In particular how to marry strategic imperatives and community aspirations in support of sustainable rural development.

9.9 It is recommended that the Welsh Assembly Government should encourage better coordination of work on rural transport through Local Transport Plans, Community strategies, setting integrated solutions to transport problems, including addressing the impacts of rural car use.

9.10 It is recommended that the Welsh Assembly Government should consider pooling planning gain funds to support non land use aspects of rural communities.

9.11 It is recommended that PPW should give greater emphasis to the provision of affordable housing and housing to meet local needs in rural Wales. It should also make clear the circumstances in which housing does not meet recognised local needs should be resisted. The revision of TAN 2 Planning and Affordable Housing should address both affordable housing and housing to meet local needs in rural areas. Uptake of the approaches outlined in *Local Housing Market Analysis: An Advice Note To Welsh Local Authorities From The Welsh Assembly Government (2002)* should be encouraged in rural Wales.[14]

9.12 It is recommend that PPW should also make clearer that assumptions of settlement hierarchy and functional relationships may vary with local circumstances and that local policy should reflect such variation, based on sound appropriate evidence.

9.13 It is recommended that PPW should give more guidance on planning's role for improving opportunities for informal countryside recreation, especially for local

[14] The findings of the Environment and Planning Committee's report *Planning aspects associated with the provision of affordable housing and sustainable communities in the countryside* are of great relevance here.

communities, and the necessary connections with other activities, particularly community strategies.

9.14 It is recommended that TAN 12 Design should be better cross referenced with PPW and give greater emphasis to the design of new rural buildings *per se* and their contribution to distinctive Welsh rural landscapes, not just the location of new development. Clearer linkage should also be made to LANDMAP as the key tool for understanding/interpreting Welsh rural landscapes.

9.15 It is recommended that when TAN 20 The Welsh Language and Unitary Development Plans and Planning Control is revised, it should give particular consideration to the issues raised by planning in rural Wales, drawing on other current research[15]. The TAN should support the development of different policy approaches to suit differing local circumstances.

Local distinctiveness

9.16 It is recommended that the Welsh Assembly Government review the roles and responsibilities of community councils in order to respond to the policy subsidiarity agenda.

9.17 It is recommended that the Welsh Assembly Government support the development of community strategies as a means to generate local distinctiveness and use this as a vehicle to ensure effective engagement of the local communities with top down agency programmes.

Capacity building

9.18 It is recommend that the Welsh Assembly Government give sufficient resources and support for capacity building for organisations and communities to improve and re-invigorate community strategies and integrated rural strategies and work attached to them such as formulating local planning policies and promoting informed discussions about key issues in the countryside. The resource (time and cost) implications should not be overlooked. The agenda drawn out from the public surveys in this research: overdevelopment, litter, future of farming, transport and field sports offer a useful and justified starting point.

LOCAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Sustainable development and integrated rural development

9.19 It is recommended that local authorities and agencies should recognise the place and role of planning work in other public sector work and programmes. In particular the current failure to utilise integrated rural development strategies and community strategies should be addressed.

9.20 It is recommended that local authorities and agencies address work programmes to clean up the countryside and to generate a greater culture of respect for those that visit or pass through countryside locations. Responding to the widespread

[15] The Welsh Assembly Government and a consortium of local planning authorities and the Welsh Language Board, led by Denbighshire County Council have commissioned research titled *Linguistic Impact Assessment: Welsh Language Impact Research*. The aim of the study is to assist local planning authorities to produce practical solutions to implementing national planning policy and advice related to the Welsh language (PPW and TAN 20), including a Welsh Language Impact Assessment methodology.

perception of countryside full of litter/rubbish is an important priority emerging from this research.

9.21 It is recommended that local authorities, in conjunction with other agencies, should seek more integrated approaches to rural development, including the use of local visions and integrated rural development strategies. In some cases there is a role for regional strategic policy development such as that developed in South East Wales. This should not be necessarily dependent on the fuller Welsh Assembly Government guidance, though this will be of obvious importance.

9.22 It is recommended that Local Authorities and associated agencies should seek to develop/foster local entrenpeneurship in rural development activities. Current training initiatives and business support should be audited to identify any gaps and highlight examples of good practice such as Farming Connect.

Planning

9.23 It is recommended that Local Authorities should consider making better use of the strategic capabilities of planning to pursue a more pro-active and integrated approach to rural development, particularly as expressed through community and integrated rural strategies.

9.24 It is recommended that Local Planning Authorities should seek to develop more locally distinctive planning policies based on local evidence (including the views of local communities). It is envisaged that LANDMAP data can help inform such policies which should be supplemented by pro-active public surveys. Such material can then inform the proposed local development plans as part of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill.

Local distinctiveness

9.25 It is recommended that local authorities utilise the community strategy process as a tool for proactive consultation which identifies local needs across the spectrum of social, economic, cultural and environmental interests. This then provides the foundation for agencies to set their agendas in a more integrated and sustainable manner thereby reducing consultation fatigue.

9.26 It is recommended that support be given to community based projects highlighting local distinctiveness. Parish maps, plans and village design statements should all be encouraged. The public perception component of LANDMAP is seen as a useful vehicle within which to locate such activities.

Capacity building

9.27 It is recommended that local authorities, as part of an agency consortium, promote informed local discussion and debate over key countryside issues, making information publicly available.

9.28 It is recommended that participation in the community strategy is managed and co-ordinated to meet the needs of other public sector strategies in order to reduce the burden of current consultations.

9.29 It is recommended that more consideration is given to the involvement of youth in local matters. Their voice is often marginalised within community consultations. Their voices are often unheard with presumptions made about the kind of facilities/activities they want. A significant first step would be provision for youth to be appointed to community councils.

FURTHER RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

9.30 Research is needed to support better guidance on the identification of rural development needs through gathering of appropriate evidence (including the views of local communities). Housing, transport and employment are key issues but there is a widespread lack of systematic use of evidence to support local rural planning policies. It is recommended that the Welsh Assembly Government should provide a lead in improving this situation. This is particularly important as a component of closer working with local communities. Policy development needs a better platform.

9.31 The research has highlighted a pivotal role for community strategies and integrated rural development strategies to secure a sustainable countryside. It is the authors' views that these processes are not yet delivering their full potential and it will be important to identify the "why" "how", "where" and "what" answers through examination of practice and scoping of new methodologies of working practice.

9.32 The research has led to some tentative findings (based on a small sample size) that ethnic minority and retired peoples' use of the countryside is less than that of other categories. Productive research might investigate whether there are significant differences in expectations and use of the countryside for these groups and how these might be addressed.

9.33 The research has sampled across a range of social and economic circumstances and it would appear that there are some subtle differences emerging in the way different groups are attracted to certain types of countryside. Research might like to investigate how different social classes construct and use the countryside.

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