

# **A Bottomless Pit? The Local Community as a Resource**

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## **State of the Countryside 2010**

Drawing on a 'Place Survey' conducted by England's district and unitary authorities

(Large sample; 326 districts x c1000 respondents)

### **SATISFACTION**

'I am satisfied with the local area as a place to live'

Rural.....about 84% said 'yes'

Urban / Met...about 78% said yes

### **BELONGING**

'I feel I belong in the immediate neighbourhood'

Rural.....about 64% said 'yes'

Urban / Met...about 55% said yes

### **INVOLVEMENT**

'I have given unpaid help...at least once per month'

Rural.....about 27% said 'yes'

Urban / Met...about 21% said yes

# **‘Messages’ from Parish Plans and Market Town Health Checks’ (2005)**

## **Parish Plans** (sample of 80 parishes)

### **Top Five Issues Cited:**

- 1 Road Traffic Issues (56 parishes)**
- 2 Housing Issues (36 parishes)**  
(affordable housing; anti speculative housing development)
- 3 Facilities for Young People (35 parishes)**
- 4 Law and Order Issues (20 parishes)**
- 5 Public Transport Issues (17 parishes)**

# Market Town 'Health Checks' (sample of 40 towns)

## **Top Issues cited:**

- Road Traffic Issues
- Deficiencies of Town Environment
- Range and Quality of Local Shops
- Leisure and Recreation facilities (esp. for Young People)
- Facilities and Support for Business

# Strengthening the Role of Parish and Town Councillors (2008)



**FOUR** main sets of issues to address ...

## **1 Powers and Resources**

‘Power of Wellbeing’

Devolved Delivery of services ( for some parishes)

## **2 Governance Structures and processes**

Clustering or mergers of small Parishes

Better ‘Bridging’ to principal authorities

## **3 Communication between councillors and constituents**

Councillor Education / training / ‘Job descriptions’

Community-led, socially inclusive, planning

## **4 Councillors – their Qualities and Quality**

The ‘is it worth it?’ Syndrome

Target Under-Represented Groups (e.g. ‘under 40s’)

## **The “SCARP” project: ”Social Capital and Rural Areas” (2007)**

**‘Social Capital’ meaning ‘Mutual Trust and Connectedness’**

### **Four Case Studies**

- Bishops Castle ( Shropshire)
- Combe Martin (Devon)
- Kiveton Park ( South Yorkshire)
- Pershore (Worcestershire)

## **FACILITATED BY**

- Welcoming and open local culture
- Good lines of communication
- Support of external agencies
- Community leaders
- Success breeds Success' .....Visible 'Pay-off'
- Fun !!

## But **ERODED / CONSTRAINED BY**

- Faithful Few' syndrome – Burn out
- Volunteering the domain only of the over 50s
- Factions, cliques and 'war lords'
- Protracted and unsuccessful funding applications
- Bureaucracy / petty regulations
- Sense of 'duty' not of 'fun'

## **What about Community Involvement in the Wider Countryside and the Farmed Environment?**

### **Evaluation of an Approach that Enables Local Communities to Help Deliver National Environmental Targets (2010)**

(Christopher Short & colleagues at CCRI, for Natural England and FWAG)

The 'approach' involves working with local people to:

- ❖ undertake an initial scoping of the area
- ❖ understand who the key stakeholders are and how decisions are made

#### **Key success factors include:**

- ❖ facilitation in the early stages
- ❖ grounding of the local management group within the local administrative structure (e.g. as a sub-committee of the parish council) to ensure transparency and accountability

# Thank you for your attention

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