

# Adult learning in rural areas

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This paper argues that the 'rural proofing' of government policy in England has failed to protect formal learning opportunities in rural areas. It argues for adult learning in rural areas for work, personal development, community development and sustainability, delivered through both statutory and voluntary effort.

Emerging issues include support for voluntary community organisations involved in learning, support for Lantra (SSC for land-based and environmental industries) in addressing needs of adult employees as well as young entrants, and learning needs related to other aspects of public policy such as land use, sustainability and health.

Challenges include diverging life-styles within rural areas, and diverging access to basic services such as housing, shops, education and training, and transport. How can public policy support both formal and informal learning? What are the learning needs of some 400,000 migrant workers in rural areas? How can Lantra support the needs of micro-businesses as well as large agribusinesses.

## Introduction and Summary

### Introduction

In the introduction to his 2002 collection of papers published as *Landscapes of Learning* (Gray, 2002), Gray rightly reflects the relative absence of 'the rural' in adult learning discourse or policy-making. Why should this be? While this paper will explore some of the constraints which make provision of formal learning opportunities in rural areas problematic, the slipperiness of the concept of 'the rural' is itself a problem. The 2001 census revealed that 19% of the population of England<sup>1</sup> lived in rural areas, some 9.5m people, a figure which cannot be easily ignored (CRC, 2007, p. 14). However, of those only 600,000 lived in sparsely populated areas (idem). Put simply, not all people who live in rural areas enjoy and/or suffer the characteristics of what one might call a 'rural life style'. While Payne (2000, p.2) warned of the dangers of a 'simplified distinction between wealthy incomers and poverty-stricken locals', he also argued the case for taking account of the 'wide diversity of life-styles and life chances in rural areas' (idem). Public policy must take account of both those well educated rural people commuting to well paid jobs in towns and cities (including major centres such as London) and those dependent on a rural economy characterised by poorly paid jobs, limited services, and relatively low levels of education and training. This contrast comes out especially strongly in the Sussex case study in Clarke et al (2002). As Gray (2002, p.4) puts it: 'ideas and notions of 'the country', 'the rural' and 'rurality' are complex, changing ... and often intensely contested.'

### Summary

This paper will consider the nature of the agendas for adult learning in rural areas (section 1). It will then consider the use in recent government policies of the notion of 'rural proofing', its 'defensive' and 'offensive' uses, and suggest the applicability of the concept to adult learning (section 2). It will consider the nature of the policy-making

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<sup>1</sup> In general, this paper restricts itself to England. The percentage of people living in sparsely populated rural areas is greater in both Scotland and Wales, while administrative and policy responses are increasingly divergent.

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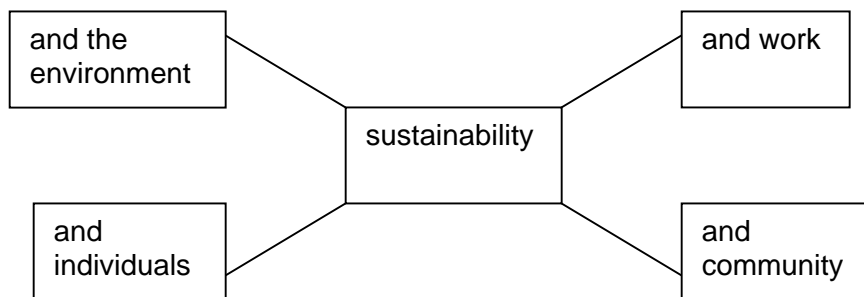
process, and the wide variety of stakeholders either closely involved in that process or keen to have a share of the policy-making cake (section 3). The paper will then summarise a number of issues that merit consideration in developing strategic responses to adult learning in rural areas. It will suggest that taking forward these agendas depends not only on public policy, but also on the actions of individuals and employers, the activities of a wide variety of voluntary community organisations in rural England, and the wide availability of opportunities for informal learning in a globalised, networked world<sup>2</sup> (section 4).

### **Section 1: The Agendas for Adult Learning in Rural Areas**

There are four sets of agendas for adult learning in rural areas. They are interlocking, but the placing of the emphasis (the central box in each diagram) subtly alters the way in which the other factors are understood. Implications for learning are at the individual level but also the social level (learning needs of enterprises, communities, families, voluntary community organisations).

#### *1. Learning for sustainability*

The context here is not just global warming but our ability to develop harmonious communities in which individuals feel secure and fulfilled. We look to rural areas to provide us with a rich, diverse environment, yet often rural areas are the settings for environmental conflict. Nuclear power stations are usually located in rural areas; proposals for renewable sources of energy (tide, wind) can have negative impacts on rural areas. The type of non-sustainable agriculture practiced by many producers leads to outbreaks of disease, land degradation and the pollution of rivers and lakes. Large numbers of migrant workers (especially from Eastern Europe) keep the rural economy afloat, while many rural residents travel long distances to find profitable employment in urban areas. Rural communities are often fragmented and conflictive.



#### *2. Learning for the Economy*

Learning needs relating to work may respond to the characteristic small size of rural employment units (including self-employment), the needs of urban workers who choose to live in rural areas, the ongoing learning needs of land-based industries and basic skills needs (notably ESOL for migrant workers and literacy/numeracy for indigenous workers). An emphasis on the economy raises issues:

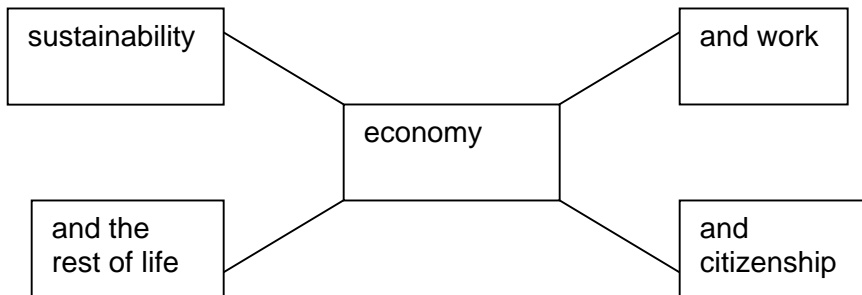
- about social inclusion (e.g. those excluded from employment by long-term illness or disability);
- about groups such as retired people not in paid employment;

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<sup>2</sup> 62% of households in rural areas (defined here as 'villages, hamlets and isolated dwellings') have internet access compared to 61% in small towns and 58% in larger towns. (CRC, 2007, p. 30)

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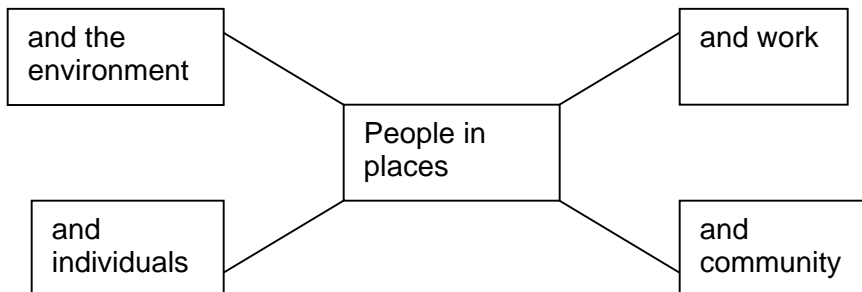
- about the other roles that workers perform in families, communities and voluntary organisations;
- about the poor quality and unsustainable nature of some rural work.



### 3. Learning for community

Despite tendencies towards the privatisation (individualisation) of life in recent years, most people recognise obligations to a wider community and experience moments when that wider community may impinge on their lives. These are at best shared experiences of learning and empowerment, at worst quite the opposite. Examples might include:

- nuisance caused by heavy traffic in a quiet village;
- a decision to locate an incinerator or wind-farm close to a village;
- planning permission for new houses or barn conversions to provide workshop employment;
- a project to set up a community shop or pub;
- fund-raising to enhance village facilities such as a village hall.

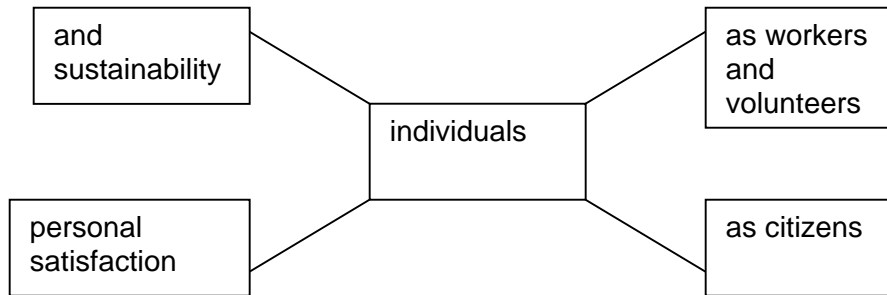


### 4. Learning for personal motives

NIACE knows more than any other organisation about the personal interest and enthusiasm that drives individual learners to take on learning projects in relation to the world about them. NIACE has also struggled over the years with the competing claims of different adult interests to public funding. Adult educators have described the particular problems and difficulties affecting access to learning for people living in rural areas, especially those on low incomes and without their own cars (Lowerson and Thomson, 1994; Payne, 2000; Gray, 2002; Clarke et al, 2002). Simply putting individuals at the centre of the learning system does not solve problems about equity and the competing demands of learning for sustainability, for paid and voluntary work, for the community

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and for personal satisfaction. Equally, putting learners at the centre obliges policy-makers to think seriously about *all* the roles adults perform in society.



### Agendas for Learning and Sustainable Development

Each year, the Commission for Rural Communities (CRC; previously Countryside Agency) publishes its *State of the Countryside*. Together these make up the most complete account of what is happening in rural England. Additionally, in 2003 CRC published *The State of the Countryside 2020*, which examines scenarios for the future of rural England. This publication argued that: 'The most critical issue is whether environmental, social and economic development can be combined to achieve lasting, positive change – sustainable development.' (CRC, 2003, p.36) Drawing on the innovative work of Van de Heijden (1996), and using a bi-polar model (see appendix), a number of scenarios were suggested for the future of rural England:

1. 'The countryside means business' implies an emphasis on economic considerations at the expense of both environmental sustainability and social cohesion.  
Example: 'The need both for key skills and low-cost labour is met not by improving the skills of low paid workers and recruiting from the margins of the labour force, but by bringing in temporary workers and skills from abroad.' (CRC, 2003, p.29)
2. 'Go for green' implies an emphasis on environmental sustainability but without careful consideration of knock-on effects.  
Example: a sudden decline in quarrying activities puts low-skill workers out of work.
3. 'All on board' is a scenario which improves social cohesion at the expense of environmental sustainability.  
Example: poor quality, energy-inefficient housing relieves the housing crisis, but carbon emissions continue to climb, while traffic congestion increases.
4. 'The triple whammy.' In this scenario, economic, environmental and social dimensions are held in balance.  
Example: 'Skill shortages become more acute and are met by strenuous efforts to draw in older workers, disabled people, those on invalidity benefits and others on the edge of the labour market. Government and employers spend a lot more on training, making the rural labour force more skilled and attractive to investors.' (CRC, 2003, p.35)

While the emphasis on skills, and especially on upskilling those with poor levels of skills, is most welcome, the CRC publication underestimates the learning and skills needs of non-work dimensions of rural life. For example, the concern with environmental sustainability has been supported largely through informal learning processes in voluntary community organisations. It also ignores the learning involved as rural communities familiarise themselves with complex scientific arguments to formulate

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responses to planning applications in the countryside, changing priorities in agriculture<sup>3</sup>, or the processes involved in village appraisals (Payne, 2000, p. 74). Many of the arguments about 'sustainability' are themselves controversial: for example the growing of industrial crops for bio-fuels is both upheld and opposed by different environmental groups. The same applies in the case of nuclear power.

In arguing for its 'Triple whammy' scenario, there is also an admission that the dependence on government intervention raises problems: 'Its inherent weakness is the high level of government intervention required. This may not be sustained across governments.' (CRC, 2003, p.34) Clarke et al (2002, pp.23 et seq) charted in some detail the various government bodies and agencies involved in decision-making that affects rural areas, and this paper will not duplicate that material. It is worth adding, however, that many decisions are made at European Union level, while international agreements such as the World Trade Organisation and Kyoto protocol further complicate policy-making. While there have been some changes since 2002, the overwhelming impression is one of complexity. Under these circumstances, the tendency for policy itself to be a contested arena in which different departments and agencies may be pulling in different directions cannot be underestimated. It is not just a question of the 'high level' of intervention required to achieve balanced and sustainable policies in rural England, but how such interventions can be made to pull in the same direction. The situation is complicated further by the question mark now hanging over the Regional Development Agencies, once seen as strong drivers of change and integrators of policy in the English regions. In the light of the 'No' vote in the first referendums on regional government, RDAs may well have an uncertain future.

### **Section 2: Rural Proofing and Adult Learning**

Jargon shifts but problems persist. The problem identified at the end of section 1 was once called 'lack of joined-up thinking'. The new jargon, at least in the countryside, is the notion of rural proofing, defined in a government publication as an obligation on government departments 'to consider and report on how their policy decisions will impact on rural communities' (DETR, 2000, p.6). This was subsequently refined by a parliamentary committee as an obligation to 'adjust the policy, where appropriate, with solutions to meet rural needs and circumstances' (House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, 2003). Rural proofing can therefore be seen both as defensive posture (ensuring that other government policies do not adversely affect the countryside) and a more positive (offensive) approach that seeks to take account of the specificities of rural life. There is, of course, room for slippage. The recent 'Question-and-Answer briefing for FE sector on the machinery of government changes' has the following exchange:

Q: Won't rural issues be even less likely to be addressed as shire counties generally get lower funding than urban authorities?

A: All new policies have to be rural proofed to ensure they do not have a damaging effect on rural communities, thereby ensuring equitable arrangements for urban and rural communities alike.

The word 'thereby' is misleading, suggesting as it does that there is an automatic run through from 'not damaging' to 'equitable treatment'. As the examples below suggest,

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<sup>3</sup> The shift from an emphasis on food production to environmental sustainability is a massive shift for the agricultural industry. It is beyond the scope of this paper but has many learning implications for the initial training of entrants to the industry and the retraining of mature workers.

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rural equity is something that has to be worked at in a positive manner. Certainly rural proofing has been taken seriously by the voluntary sector, with the NCVO issuing advice on how voluntary community organisations can rural proof their activities (Grieve, 2007).

In terms of rural adult learning, the 'defensive posture' might be said to have been the less successful. As both local authority and LSC budgets have tightened this century, there is little doubt that there has been a significant reduction in formal adult learning opportunities in rural areas. At the same time, there have been some continuing attempts to address specific rural concerns and issues. Some of these were reported to a NIACE conference held in 2006 (Adult learning in Rural Areas: Learning, Employment and Rural Need, Sheffield 15 November 2006) and form the subject of a forthcoming publication, *Landscapes of Change*, which aims to report 'the findings of a range of innovative research and development projects' (Bill Jones, NIACE press release, 13 November 2006).

Turning now to the 'offensive posture', Pilkington (2005) reported on some exemplary work done by university continuing education students and which reflects something of the interest and enthusiasm of an environmental movement located largely outside the confines of formal adult learning. As part of its promotional work, NIACE also published the *Rural Journal*, a learner tool which includes a number of brief case studies of innovative learning projects in rural areas. The Adult Community Learning Fund at the end of the last century had included a number of successful schemes in rural areas, characteristically involving partnership between statutory and voluntary agencies. In the rural West Midlands, the LSC has since 2004 promoted widening participation schemes, recognising the well known and often repeated problems of rural communities (Selby et al, 2006, pp. 2/3). Of particular note was the link-up with a broad range of agencies in the 'Switch on Shropshire' project, designed to bring the learning and economic benefits of broadband to Shropshire. This achieved the remarkable result of increasing broadband take-up in Shropshire from 1% to 35% between December 2003 and January 2007, as against national figures of 5% and 31%. (Switch on Shropshire, 2007, p.6) However, such operational successes must be set against the observation that 'the LSC's capacity to fund community-based learning deteriorated in the period after WAPAF [the Widening Adult Participation Action Fund]'s inception' (Selby et al, 2006, p. 21).

### Skills and jobs

Lantra, the Sector Skills Council (SSC) for environment and land-based, covers 1.5 million employees in 160,000 businesses. Of those, 90% employ less than 10 employees, while 40% employ no staff at all. There are 300,000 volunteers in the sector (Lantra, 2007a). In their response to the draft Leitch implementation plan, they further emphasised the specificity of condition in their sector:

The sector supports a large number of voluntary and community-based organisations whose development needs are no different from other organisations. Additionally, up to 400,000 migrants, the majority from EU-25 countries, are employed in the sector. Lantra has stressed the need for the implementation plan to be equally applicable to the wider labour market in the UK. (Lantra, 2007b)

Lantra also pointed out that a skills strategy must address training needs of current (adult) workers as well as new (young) entrants. In August 2007 Lantra signed an agreement with the trade unions Prospect and T&G to secure their support in tackling skills shortages in the environmental and land-based industries.

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Learning needs are complex. If we take the migrant workers as a single group, some of them may require basic ESOL to function effectively in the UK; others may have a high level of English as part of a good general education, and be working to save money and return to their country of origin; some may have higher level skills of value in other parts of the economy if their English could be improved and/or overseas qualifications recognised. While employers will be concerned with skill levels required to 'do the job', public policy might well stress the wider educational needs of such a group.

Most people who live in rural areas are *not* employed in land-based industries. We might note:

- For workers who live in the countryside and commute to urban jobs, training needs will be met (or not) by those urban-based employers and the relevant SSCs. They will also have access to publicly-funded urban FE and private training agencies.
- For the rural unemployed or those wanting to return to work after illness or family responsibilities, it can be difficult in rural areas to access either information, advice and guidance (IAG) or courses.
- A third group comprises those high tech businesses and self-employed individuals who have relocated to the countryside to run businesses, whether from cottages or from converted agricultural buildings. The search for suitable training can add to the stress of entrepreneurship.

### **Section 3: Policy and Stakeholders**

This section will make a general point about policy, and review the various stakeholders in the light of the four areas of learning defined earlier in the paper: economy, sustainability, community, individuals. They will be taken in this order as representing the order of priority most prevalent in recent government thinking.

#### **Policy**

If the *State of the Countryside 2007* was an attempt to cover the broad sweep of rural policy, its reception by the media concentrated on a more limited range of stories. Of the 43 new stories logged on the CRC web-site ([www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/content/stateofthecountryside2007presscoverage](http://www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/content/stateofthecountryside2007presscoverage)), 20 related to the exodus of young people from the countryside and 10 to the related subject of the crisis in affordable housing. In general, media stories reflected the difficulty of operating broad-based public policy in a society where individual and corporate decision-making operate in a free market economy. The 'This is Cornwall' web-site (covering 4 newspaper titles) headed its story '44% of buyers are not farmers'. It explained:

Almost half of people buying farmland in the South West are not farmers, the report by the Commission for Rural Communities shows. Farming is "changing rapidly" and a significant area of land is now being bought by non-farming interests for housing and development as well as "agri-business".

[www.thisiscornwall.co.uk/new/util/](http://www.thisiscornwall.co.uk/new/util/)

Attempts to develop and communicate comprehensive rural policy, in all fields including rural learning, is continually distracted by the latest headline-grabbing crisis.

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### Stakeholders

#### *The economy*

The government has recently referred to 'the new economic mission of FE' (LSC/DfES, 2007, p.6). There is little doubt of the primacy of the economic agenda and I shall leave other writers of papers in this series to go into detail on this.

It is government, through the skills agenda, the LSC and the FE sector, which has the most impact on the availability of formal opportunities for learning in rural areas, as in urban areas. The most significant difference is that learners in rural areas may have to travel further, and spend more time and money, to meet their learning needs. In addition, a major difficulty is that the plethora of micro-businesses in rural areas (both land-based and high tech) means that an employer-based and employer-led initiative seems almost bound to fail. Self-employed people, for example, have no choice but to take responsibility for their own learning. The one bright spot here is that the emphasis on 14-19 year olds goes a small way to counter the drift of young people from rural areas. There are now excellent training schemes for young people on the land, but they have little of the glamour of higher education and the 'student life'. If at one level young people crave the bright lights, they also have very practical needs, and the continuing inflation of rural house prices, fuelled by older people escaping from the pressures of urban life, and the lack of social housing in rural areas, provides another practical motive for leaving rural areas.

One policy that may favour rural areas with the high percentage of self-employed and micro-businesses is the reintroduction of individual learning accounts under their new name of learner accounts. Lantra (2007a and b) has highlighted the problem of financing learning for these groups. Millard (2005) has proposed a new model for bringing together members of agricultural communities 'to work cooperatively on local initiatives by matching existing local skills to ventures that have identified a support need.' (Millard, 2005, p.4)

#### *Sustainability*

Sustainability is understood in different ways by different groups. Some environmentalists would relate it to the notion of 'carbon neutral' activities, i.e. movement towards an economy and lifestyle that uses less non-renewable energy. Others would emphasise the finite nature of the world's resources. Most useful is the use of 'sustainable' to indicate a world for future generations that will be no worse, and hopefully better, than what now exists. Exactly how this is to be achieved is highly debatable. While most observers would support re-forestation in order to provide carbon sinks and managed supplies of timber, there is more debate over the use of land to grow bio-fuel rather than food, and over the development of both wind power and nuclear power, both of which have their noisy opponents. The development of bio-fuel is a good example of the complexity of these issues: the UK now grows less than 60% of its food, and imports from abroad use up large amounts of energy and produce pollution (the argument referred to as 'food miles'). It is argued that becoming more self-sufficient in food, linked to more efficient use of existing fuel, is the way forward. The intelligent discussion of such issues involves a better understanding of science than most adults possess, yet as observed above, Pilkington's 2005 book is a very rare example of a publication in this field.

The most significant educational intervention in this field is Every Action Counts. This is a £4m programme running in England 2006-9, funded by Defra and delivered by a

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consortium of voluntary and community sector organisations. Its primary focus is climate change, and there are five themes:

1. Energy and climate change
2. Transport
3. Waste minimisation and recycling
4. Care for local environments
5. Fair trade and ethical shopping

A scheme to recruit and support 1,300 'community champions' who would receive training and work with groups in their own area is being run by BTCV. While the Educational Centres Association is involved (in East Anglia), one disturbing feature is the lack of involvement by those whose primary interest is adult learning. The skills of outreach, of creating learning materials, of dealing with diversity are all potential contributions that adult learning professionals might make. There is particular concern that learning materials that have been produced so far are not accessible to the full range of community groups and individuals who might benefit from them. Overall responsibility for Every Action Counts lies with the Community Development Foundation: [www.cdf.org.uk](http://www.cdf.org.uk).

Two more organisations that have an interest in the sustainability agenda are the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) and the New Economics Foundation (NEF). Both of these organisations succeed in delivering powerful messages despite their relatively small size and limited resources. CPRE was responsible for the ground-breaking 'tranquillity' map which measures freedom from light and noise pollution in England. This was taken up by CRC and reproduced in their *State of the Countryside 2007* (CRC, 2007, p. 133). Rather more radical are the positions taken by NEF. While NEF is not a distinctively rural organisation it has taken a particular interest in food, farming, and the rural economy. A good example of its work is the Exmoor Sustainability Strategy (Sander-Jackson, 2007; cf Ward and Lewis, 2002) which seeks to demonstrate how environmental wellbeing and economic prosperity can be achieved by emphasising local resources. Neither NEF nor CPRE are educational in their remit, but both produce imaginative material that could be used for learning purposes, especially in the context of community learning.

### Community

At government level, the work of the CRC (now part of Natural England) develops policy in relation to rural communities, and its work has already been discussed in this paper. A significant player in the active promotion of community in rural England is Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE). ACRE is the national umbrella organisation for the county-based Rural Community Councils (some use different names). They produce a wide range of publications and have worked closely with NIACE in the past. ACRE has been associated in particular with the promotion of village halls, and this concern with community-owned assets now extends to community-owned shops and pubs. ACRE is a partner in Every Action Counts, while its 21<sup>st</sup> Century Village initiative seeks to explore with rural communities the development of sustainable village communities in the future.

Tried and tested ways of developing community learning leading on to action include village appraisals. These are discussed in Payne, 2000, p.53, and a number of relevant resources listed at p.74. Increasingly, voluntary community organisations are employing facilitators to review their activities and plan for the future. In a number of rural counties, there are active voluntary sector learning consortia<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> [www.niace.org.uk/projects/learningfromexperience/casestudies](http://www.niace.org.uk/projects/learningfromexperience/casestudies)

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### Individuals

Individuals in rural areas can no longer look to government action to secure learning for their own individual purposes. What safeguarded funds there are in the future will almost certainly be allocated to towns and cities where such learning can be provided and supported more efficiently in colleges and adult education centres. This means that in most cases people living in rural areas will be expected to travel to such provision. Exceptions are likely to cover basic education and qualifications up to Level 2 affecting people's employability, where some ongoing outreach initiatives in rural areas may be anticipated. In the face of this, there is likely to be an increase in provision through private fee-paying organisations, voluntary community groups, distance learning of all sorts, especially using the internet, and the kind of informal self-provisioning of learning that has always existed in rural areas. It is not credible that simply because colleges or local authorities no longer provide courses or workshops in village halls or village primary schools, learning will somehow cease. Indeed, the very existence of village halls, schools, parish rooms and club rooms in public houses will ensure the survival of a shared, social element in individual learning. One organisation that works exclusively in rural communities is the Arthur Rank Centre. It has an explicit Christian commitment. Its magazine *Country Matters* did a special in 2006 on lifelong learning. One contributor wrote: 'While the term 'lifelong learning' may sound like a prison sentence, the reality is that it is a prerequisite for engagement in the modern world – and it can be fun'.

### **Section 4: Taking Forward the Agendas for Adult Learning in Rural Areas**

Educational levels are rising in both urban and rural areas. We know from all participation studies ever conducted that previous successful experience of education and training is the single most important factor that influences adults to participate in learning. At the same time, some adults will continue to miss out on initial education and training for whatever reason, with all the well known implications for individual and family wellbeing, and for ability to participate in the labour market. While it seems unlikely that the demand for continuing learning from the successful group will be a matter for general public policy, learning will continue to be of public concern for those groups who have experienced failure in initial education and training. In addition, there will be priority areas for learning connected with issues such as global warming, healthy living, global instability and migration, which will continue to attract funding. Characteristically such funding is likely to involve partnerships between statutory and voluntary sector organisations, and to emphasise flexibility of response.

From a strategic point of view, support for learning in rural areas is likely to continue in the future, but in ways which are at once more diffuse (involvement of more agencies) and more focused (specific subject matter or agreed purposes for learning felt to be deserving of support by the state or by other agencies). This is summarised in table 1, below. The concept of 'rural proofing' for adult learning is replaced by a 'rural reality check' which involves drawing on successful experience of supporting learning in rural areas, and those facilities and organisations active in this field.

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*Table 1: A Rural Reality Check*

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Relevant examples</b>
The cost of learning (fees, travel, childcare)	Dedicated funding in colleges to pay for travel and childcare for rural learners (or mobile projects including childcare) considered a priority, as in first steps learning, basic skills and the Level 2 entitlement.	Mobile projects run by colleges and LAs. Special funds allocated by LSCs.
ICT, distance learning and personal learning projects conducted through ICT	The use of ICT, and especially broadband, to provide learning opportunities. This includes learning accessed through public buildings such as village halls and schools, learning centres in market towns (including libraries) and mobile projects.	'Switched on Shropshire'. Electronic Village Halls. learndirect. Evolve South West ( <a href="http://www.evolvedsouthwest.org.uk">www.evolvedsouthwest.org.uk</a> ). See also Payne, 2000, pp. 32-35.
Securing learning and progression through partnerships	More use of partnerships, including voluntary-statutory partnerships, to secure progression from informal learning in rural areas to formal learning in urban areas. Ongoing promotional work by organisations such as NIACE, ECA, WEA.	Rural Learning Journal. The Sussex and Northumberland case-studies in Clarke et al, 2002.
Innovation in response to changing economic, environmental and social conditions in rural England	NIACE to continue to act as key agency in promoting adult learning in both urban and rural areas.	Adult Community Learning Fund. Work by NIACE and partners in the West Midlands Every Action Counts.
Use of ESF funds, Lottery funds and other forms of fund-raising	Guidance by (e.g.) NIACE, local authorities, rural community councils on how to secure and use external funding.	Clarke et al, 2002.
Learning venues	Continuing support by ACRE for village halls, for use by voluntary and profit-making learning groups. Instructions by LAs re. use of village school facilities by learning groups. Ongoing support through	ACRE. learndirect.

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	learnirect and other agencies for learning centres in market towns.	
Learning about health	NHS initiatives through PCTs such as Expert Patient programmes, healthy eating, exercise classes.	FIVE A DAY and successor programmes.
Targeted learning at rural pressure points	Action to support groups in rural areas with specific learning needs, e.g. workers in declining industries such as quarrying or fishing, migrant workers, those involved in agricultural diversification.	Lantra. Work of land-based colleges. Use of ESF funds.
Emphasising the positive	Public promotion and celebration of adult learning, but emphasising the variety of ways in which this can happen. Production of material that can be picked up by local press and radio in rural areas.	Adult Learners' Week.
IAG	Continues to be the oil required to help the learner to make sense of the whole field of adult learning. Will increase in importance as provision becomes more diverse and complex.	

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Appendix: four scenarios for the future of rural England (CRC, 2003)

## Four scenarios

Four scenarios for the future of rural England are outlined. All assume sustained economic growth and are constructed around the extent to which the countryside becomes environmentally sustainable and socially cohesive.

- In 'The countryside means business' rural England develops in an environmentally unsustainable direction and is socially fragmented.
- 'Go for green!' describes a more environmentally sustainable future, but one in which the countryside is also more socially fragmented.
- 'All on board!' is a scenario in which greater social cohesion combines with less environmental sustainability.
- In 'The triple whammy', environmental, social and economic sustainability are combined.

