Rural priorities 2010

In the New Year edition of *Action* we identified ten rural priorities for 2010. These are:

1. Recognition of rural deprivation
2. Access to services in rural areas
3. Rural economy – a focus on growth
4. Rural broadband provision
5. Affordable rural housing
6. Addressing fuel poverty
7. Services for the ageing population
8. A future for rural young people
9. Support for community buildings and assets
10. Rural public and community transport provision

Climate change

We have now added climate change as an overarching challenge that needs to be a fundamental consideration in any strategy or policy making. We have made some specific recommendations on climate change that match the approach taken with the other ten priorities.

Action in communities

In this edition we are focusing on how individual communities are addressing some of these issues with a series of pages that put the spotlight on local community action. The centre pages provide a focus for one community, Balcombe, that through its Parish Action Plan is implementing a range of projects and initiatives that meet the needs of that community. All of the examples featured reflect the wealth of community activity that is taking place in villages and communities across rural Sussex. Action in rural Sussex is pleased to play its part in assisting these community actions.

We will focus on the remaining rural priorities in the next edition of *Action* due out in July.

Wealden Deprivation Research Project

There has been an increasing recognition and awareness within Wealden Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), as in other areas of Sussex, that there are many people that live in the countryside who may be experiencing problems in relation to their education, employment, housing, health and access to services. However, identifying how many people are disadvantaged and where they are located has historically proved to be problematic due to the area based methods traditionally employed to identify deprivation.

Action in rural Sussex is currently working in conjunction with Wealden District Council on behalf of Wealden Local Strategic Partnership to undertake a new and innovative piece of research into rural deprivation in order to address these issues. This work seeks not only to identify how many people in rural areas of the District are in need, as has been undertaken elsewhere, but also seeks to explore with stakeholders how solutions may be developed.

Image from East Sussex HOSC Rural Health Event

The project intends to:

- raise an awareness of the issues surrounding deprivation in the rural areas of Wealden District
- use existing mainstream datasets to demonstrate that deprivation exists in rural areas of Wealden District and identify where it is located
- identify opportunities for stakeholders and service providers to work together through shared service provision or other methods to respond to this deprivation
- lever additional funding or resources into the District which can be used to target deprivation.

To date, work has been undertaken in partnership with NHS Downs & Weald and East Sussex County Council to identify relevant datasets and to analyse these using techniques which draw out the detail related to rural needs. In addition to this data, opinions and experiential data are also being gathered using stakeholder focus groups and one-to-one interviews with a varied sample of residents. All of this information will then be fed back to the LSP and other stakeholders in order to inform their activities.

For more information, please contact:
Simon Kiley Research and Policy Officer, AirS, on 01273 405451 or email Simon.Kiley@ruralsussex.org.uk
Tom Stuart, Policy Officer, Wealden District Council, on 01323 443186 or email tom.stuart@wealden.gov.uk