



DISADVANTAGE IN RURAL SCOTLAND

How is it experienced and how can it be tackled?

Summary Report

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Rural Forum and the Scottish Consumer Council have long been concerned about the problems facing people who live, work and raise families in rural Scotland. This report represents a further contribution towards understanding the complexities and needs of rural areas and will, I believe, help to inform public policy.

In 1989 the Scottish Consumer Council published a report - "Changes in Rural Services Provision in Scotland" - which showed that while there had been an increase in the population of rural Scotland, mainly through increased numbers of retired people, there had been a decline in rural service provision. The decline was not uniform and arose most sharply in the public sector, notably education and public transport. At that time the expectation was that these services would continue to decline.

This Summary Report is based on a substantial research project which will be published separately. What is important about this report is that it very firmly looks at disadvantage from the perspective of those who live their lives in rural areas. It is not a report "about" rural people: it is an account of their experiences in dealing with the disadvantages they encounter in day to day life, as articulated by rural people themselves.

Two-thirds of the heads of households surveyed had incomes below the Low Pay Unit Poverty Threshold. By any objective assessment it would appear that many rural people are disadvantaged, yet because of the compensatory advantages that they perceive in the rural way of life, they do not describe themselves as disadvantaged.

And yet the report clearly shows that the problems are there. For example, there is not enough housing - many young couples start their married life in a caravan or a winter let; there is insufficient variety of tenure and houses may well be too expensive, often put beyond the means of local people by those migrating into the area. Equally, employment and income are significant issues: many of the employment opportunities (such as agriculture) are in low paid sectors, and there is a shortage of the sort of quality jobs that would persuade young college leavers to remain in their community. There is a need for improvement in the provision of services and the low take-up of benefits suggests a shortfall in the provision of information and advice.

I hope that this Summary Report will underline the need to recognise the extent of poverty and disadvantage in rural communities. There is no justification for assuming that it is satisfactory for people living in the countryside to have a different material standard of living to those in towns and cities or that their choices should be severely restricted in such areas as housing, childcare, basic welfare advice and access to services.

Tackling the problems effectively is a challenge which will require imaginative and varied techniques which should seek to include ways of retaining the advantages that the respondents value as well as finding ways of addressing the serious issues that are identified. One of the threads running through the research is the feeling of powerlessness that people feel about the future of their own communities

PREFACE

and any solutions that are proposed must seek to engage the energy and commitment of those living in rural Scotland.

The development of public policy has frequently been hampered by a lack of information and I am very pleased that Rural Forum and the Scottish Consumer Council have been able to commission such a comprehensive survey which should do much to redress the inadequacy of our knowledge and understanding.

There is a quote from one of the participants in the main report which says :

“.....they haven't a blooming clue”

All those who make, influence or execute policy will, I hope, have a better understanding of the nature and extent of the disadvantage experienced by people living in rural Scotland once they have read this report.

Deirdre Hutton

Chairman - Rural Forum

Chairman - Scottish Consumer Council

- 1.1 A number of recent reports have drawn attention to the inadequacy of our knowledge of rural disadvantage in Scotland. Such information as exists tends to be urban-oriented and derives from secondary sources. There has been no comprehensive survey in Scotland which would allow an understanding to be gained of how rural disadvantage is actually experienced. This lack of information continues to hamper attempts to formulate an effective strategy for tackling rural disadvantage
- 1.2 This study is intended to remedy this deficiency, leading both to a better understanding of rural disadvantage, and to a more appropriate response by policy makers and service providers. The detailed aims are as follows :
 - to quantify and define the extent of rural poverty and disadvantage;
 - to gain an understanding of how poverty and disadvantage are experienced in rural areas of Scotland;
 - to explore, from a client's perspective, how rural poverty and disadvantage might be addressed by public policy and voluntary effort;
 - in the light of these research findings, to suggest options for future policymakers.
- 1.3 The primary focus of this report is therefore the perceptions and needs of disadvantaged people living in rural Scotland, rather than the policies and activities of local authorities and other statutory and voluntary bodies.
- 1.4 The research has been commissioned by Rural Forum (Scotland) and the Scottish Consumer Council, and supported by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Scottish Homes, the Royal Scottish Agricultural Benevolent Institution and the Scottish Consumer Council. The project began in January 1993 and finished in August 1994. This is a summary report of the research findings : a full report will be published as a book by HMSO (Scotland) in April 1995.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

- 2.1 'Disadvantage' in the sense used in this report refers to the inability of individuals or households to share in styles of life open to the majority. It does not imply any failing on their own part. This is very close to the concept of social exclusion, developed during EU discussions of poverty and disadvantage, which emphasises the forces of social and economic restructuring and the exercise of systematic power in society in disadvantaging or excluding people.
- 2.2 Poverty may be both a predisposing factor and an outcome of disadvantage. Little information is available on rural poverty in Scotland, but two major studies in England are illuminating. In 1980 a survey of 5 case study areas suggested that 25% of rural households were living in or on the margins of poverty, with elderly households and low-paid workers prevalent. In terms of relative poverty, 51% earned less than 80% of the mean local household income (McLaughlin and Bradley). Incomes were found to be highly polarised. A similar survey in 1990 of 12 study areas shows that issues of poverty and deprivation are still important in rural England in the 1990s. It found that in 9 of the 12 areas 20% or more households were in or on the margins of poverty, with a range from 39% in Notts. to 6% in West Sussex. In terms of relative poverty, again 51% of households earned less than 80% of the mean local income, with a range from 62% to 44%. The 1990 figures thus accord closely with those observed in the 1980 surveys, revealing widespread rural poverty in both absolute and relative terms, especially among elderly households and low-paid households. Analysis of census data in Scotland has suggested that in rural Scotland, too, "a disproportionate number of the poor are elderly and a disproportionate number of the elderly are poor".
- 2.3 Several attempts have been made to construct quantitative indicators of multiple deprivation, and these have been influential in guiding resources to areas where disadvantage is concentrated. Rural disadvantage is not well captured by such indicators which tend to suffer from an urban bias in their construction. Studies using these have been interpreted in misleading ways, and have concealed the existence of large numbers of disadvantaged households in rural areas. Moreover, the derivation of such area indicators tends to obscure the processes underlying disadvantage and to deflect research from exploration of such processes.
- 2.4 In rural research, few writers have attempted to unravel the processes causing rural poverty and disadvantage. Newby et al. (1978) have emphasised the role of elite groups in exercising power to create and reinforce inequalities in rural society. Another approach is Shaw's (1979) concept of "opportunity deprivation" which relates low income to immobility. Unfortunately, both of these approaches have remained undeveloped, and instead the simplistic view that rural disadvantage is predominantly a result of the well-documented decline in services has dominated thinking.
- 2.5 In the principal English studies, and in the more limited Scottish reviews, three factors stand out as being associated with rural poverty :
- old age
 - low wages
 - employment opportunities.

- 2.6 The English studies also highlight the importance of social networks and social isolation in relation to disadvantage. Loneliness and marginalisation affect a significant minority of people in rural areas in ways that are little understood and seldom recognised. There is a need for qualitative research which will explore people's own feelings about living in the countryside.
- 2.7 Most previous studies have emphasised the need for a client-based approach to rural disadvantage, rather than an area-based approach, given that rural disadvantage tends not to be concentrated, in the manner of urban poverty, but dispersed. Shucksmith (1990) argued that if the dimensions of rural disadvantage can be understood, and those affected identified, then it will be more efficient to target policies at those groups and at the problems which face them, rather than at the areas in which they (and many others) live. Cloke et al. (1994) have gone beyond this to argue for community-level involvement (a 'bottom-up' approach) in the response to disadvantage (through rural community action workers), so as to enable a connection to be made between material help and the localised experience of living and coping with rural change. The articulation of policies to combat social exclusion with those promoting 'bottom-up' rural economic development will be a crucial issue for policy.
- 2.8 Further household surveys are clearly required to increase our understanding of what constitutes rural disadvantage, which groups are affected, and how policies can contribute towards relieving their disadvantage, preferably through instruments oriented towards specific target groups. The remainder of this report presents the results of such a survey.

- 3.1 The research was conducted in 4 case study areas: Harris, Wester Ross, Angus and North Ayrshire. The areas were selected to include a range of types of rural areas in relation to remoteness, population density, strength of the local labour market, and other social and cultural variables. The areas were tightly defined so that their total populations were less than 5,000 in each case at the 1981 Census.
- 3.2 Within each locality, a common research design was employed. This involved 3 elements, combining local contextual information with quantitative data on the extent of rural poverty and disadvantage and with qualitative insights into the nature of disadvantage. The only variation was in Harris where the quantitative survey was administered in collaboration with a community group, leading to a higher overall response but some non-comparability.

Contextual Information

- 3.3 Contextual information about local labour markets, housing market conditions, transport, the availability of services and many other issues was gathered prior to the surveys from public authorities. This information provided essential background information for the development of the quantitative questionnaire and was particularly useful in the qualitative phase of the project. Disparities between client and official perspectives were common and provided a valuable insight into clients' perception and experience of disadvantage.

Quantitative Questionnaire Survey

- 3.4 Between March and May 1993 a questionnaire survey of 125 households in each of 3 study areas was conducted. The Harris survey was undertaken with a community development group in Harris (the Harris Integrated Development Programme or IDP Group) and is discussed separately below. The questionnaire sought basic information on employment status and place of work, education, household composition, occupation, income group, car ownership, housing tenure and condition, access to services, health and perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of rural life. The survey had 2 functions: it aimed to provide a quantitative assessment of the nature and extent of 'hard' rural disadvantage; and it facilitated the selection of sub-samples for the qualitative phase of interviewing.
- 3.5 The survey took roughly 10 minutes to complete, and was implemented either through telephone survey (63%) or personal visit (37%). The use of closed, formal questions minimised any inconsistency arising from this dual approach, which worked well. The Post Office Address File was used as the least biased sampling frame. A high response rate (90%) was essential since those least likely to respond were expected to be those most disadvantaged. Due to the researchers' persistence and the enthusiasm shown for the project by respondents, an overall response rate of 92% was achieved. The low rate of refusal is remarkable for this type of research.

Harris

- 3.6 In Harris the methodology was slightly different. The quantitative survey in Harris was undertaken in collaboration with the Harris IDP Group. A questionnaire was devised by their consultant which incorporated key questions from the main questionnaire, and this was taken by local volunteers to all households on Harris. A total of 881 households were sampled and 342 households returned usable questionnaires, giving a response rate of 39%. While this is much lower than the 92% achieved in the other 3 areas, it remains a reasonable response rate, and comparison of the survey statistics with census data suggests that the returns came from a representative cross-section of the Harris population.

In-depth, semi-structured interviews

- 3.7 The qualitative phase was the main focus of the research project. Between 25-30 households in each of the 4 study areas were selected for qualitative interviewing. These were selected to reflect a variety of experience and forms of disadvantage. The aim was not to gather more quantitative data but to elaborate with respondents their perceptions of their disadvantage and poverty (and of rural life), and to seek their views on how these might be ameliorated. The sample was not representative, but deliberately reflected aspects of rural disadvantage.
- 3.8 Qualitative interviewing took place between August and December 1993, with 3-4 weeks spent in each research area. The response to the project was remarkably enthusiastic. Respondents were mainly selected from those who had already spoken to the researchers and they tended to remember not only the project but also their previous discussions. The rapport, trust and goodwill established in the first phase proved crucial when seeking a second-phase interview. Many had *enjoyed* their first interview and were keen to continue their involvement in the study.
- 3.9 Most interviews were conducted one-to-one, and were semi-structured. The respondents were encouraged to 'set the agenda' and to raise issues that they felt were important to their lives or their communities. This encouraged respondents to talk personally and at length on diverse issues without being constrained by providing 'answers' to the researcher. Prompts, however, were used to ensure all issues of interest were covered. Further interviews took place with Ministers in all areas, representatives of the Scottish Women's Rural Institute, the Scottish Agricultural College, the National Farmers' Union of Scotland, and several community leaders.
- 3.10 Wherever possible, interviews were taped, and the majority of respondents were at ease with tape recorders. The interview tapes were catalogued and transcribed before detailed analysis was carried out. The qualitative analysis was linked to the issues highlighted by quantitative statistics, provided in the first phase of research, and to new themes raised by respondents during the interviews.

Feedback Meetings

- 3.11 In April 1994 feedback meetings were held in all 4 study areas, to which all service providers and respondents in all phases were invited. Researchers summarised the findings of the research and raised issues for discussion. At each meeting the report findings were given strong approval, confirming that the research had succeeded in seeing rural disadvantage from the clients' perspective. It should be borne in mind, nevertheless, that there is much heterogeneity between respondents' lives : the expression of 'conflicting voices' from the countryside is vital to an understanding of rural disadvantage in the 1990s.

- 4.1 A major finding of the research, and a problematic aspect of it, is that rural people's subjective assessment of their poverty or disadvantage is often at odds with objective definitions. The vast majority of respondents asserted that they were *advantaged* by their rural lifestyle rather than disadvantaged by it, and presented remarkably similar representations of 'rural life' and 'rural communities', namely that rural life provided: a better moral, social and crime-free environment; good communities; a willingness to share resources; an atmosphere of self-sufficiency and self-reliance; space and freedom from the problems of urban life, and also freedom from the restrictions of close neighbours; a better quality of life; good support networks and neighbourliness in times of individual or family crisis; and significantly, child safety.
- 4.2 Many households experiencing poverty and disadvantage rejected the objective assessment of their position. Moreover, people generally feel there is little "real" poverty, deprivation or disadvantage in their rural communities, despite the survey evidence collected of a high proportion of people who would fall within standard definitions of poverty. This accords with Cloke et al.'s recent findings (1994) that in rural England :
- "survey respondents were, on the whole, reluctant to admit the existence of poverty and deprivation in their areas. Although an average of 33% did perceive there to have been disadvantage and deprivation in their areas, the qualitative comments from the survey suggested that the notion of deprivation was stigmatic for some respondents and often 'out of sight, out of mind' for others" (Cloke et al, 1994, Executive summary p.3).
- 4.3 The majority of respondents presented rural communities as inherently 'good', 'caring', 'safe' and advantaged, and presented urban communities as inherently degenerate, dangerous and disadvantaged. Rural communities and rural people were presented by many respondents as "the same everywhere", and it was widely asserted that rural people had a "different way of looking at the world".
- 4.4 Several respondents, however, emphasised that any discussion of rural areas should go beyond the dominant discourse of rural advantage. The dominant and somewhat 'romantic' view of rural areas was found to be flawed. The research revealed that it was dangerous to endorse a false rural/urban distinction, and whilst many respondents expounded the benefits of rural living, they were at pains to point out that rural communities were not immune to the social problems afflicting wider society. Service providers, volunteer carers, and a minority of respondents were unable to make any urban/rural distinction on issues such as alcoholism, domestic violence or safe sex.
- 4.5 The allegedly homogenous nature of rural society is changing, and a disparate range of rural biographies were recorded in the course of the research revealing an increasing diversity of

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values, traditions and cultures in rural areas. Respondents were aware of the dis-benefits of rural living, notably in relation to housing and employment opportunities, but many felt that the advantages of rural living always outweighed the disadvantages.

- 4.6 An understanding of how people evaluate their rural circumstances is critical to any consideration of rural poverty and disadvantage. The alleged advantages of rural living enabled many respondents to evaluate rural poverty and disadvantage in a positive way. The research found that an assessment of the disadvantages *and* advantages of rural living was vital. Without the advantages of rural living, it is unlikely that the objective levels of poverty and disadvantage revealed by this research would have received such a benign subjective interpretation by rural residents.

- 5.1 In recent years there has been an increased awareness of housing problems in rural areas, especially in terms of a shortage of rented housing for low-income households. Households in all four of the study areas spoke about the over-emphasis on owner-occupation in their area and the concomitant lack of housing to rent, especially public housing. It was widely perceived that this limited the options for local people wishing to stay in the area, and especially affected newly-formed households. A further factor mentioned is pressure on the housing market from new groups, whether commuters, retirement buyers or holidaymakers. Local people were not in a position to compete with wealthier incomers when trying to purchase a house, it was pointed out, and very few other options were open to them. Waiting lists for council housing were perceived to be prohibitively long. Especially in Wester Ross and Harris it was very common for respondents to have started off their married life in a caravan or winter let. The other option is to remain in the parental home, and this tends also to be the only option upon relationship breakdown. Within the private rented sector, there were frequent dissatisfactions about the condition of properties and the insecurity of the tenure.
- 5.2 Around 32% of all households said that their property needed major repairs in the near future, and in Harris this requirement was much higher. Almost half of all households had undertaken major repairs in the previous 5 years. Both figures are well below those found in the 1991 Scottish House Condition Survey, suggesting fewer repairs made and less awareness in rural Scotland of the need for major repairs. Within the owner-occupied sector, those who perceived the need for repairs were often concerned about the cost and their ability to pay for the work, particularly since many were elderly. Privately rented properties were most in need of repair, but tenants were often afraid to raise this need with their landlords for fear of eviction. Council tenants were satisfied with the quality and speed of repairs, seeing councils as good landlords, and housing association properties were too new to need repairs. Care and Repair schemes were universally held in high regard.
- 5.3 Respondents expressed great concern over high levels of housing, both for house purchase and for assured tenancies. The reasons for high housing costs varied from area to area. The consequence was perceived to be that certain groups were excluded from the market for house purchase, and that alternative housing options for these groups were few. Either concealed homelessness would result (e.g. caravans, winter lets, living with parents), or the household would be forced to leave the locality.
- 5.4 In Harris and Wester Ross many respondents lived on registered crofts. Access to crofter housing grants and loans from the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department (SOAFD) depended upon acquisition of a croft, and there was general concern that croft land was lying idle. There was much sympathy expressed for the Crofting Entrants Scheme which seeks to make such crofts available to young people willing to croft. To young people keen to stay, having a croft would mean the ability to get a house as well as the chance to supplement their income. In the meantime, the requirement to wait until inheritance before

being eligible for SOAFD housing assistance leads to the presence of multi-generation households or emigration. The introduction of Scottish Homes' Rural Home Ownership Grants (RHOGs) should alleviate these problems, although these grants are perceived as failing to meet crofters' need for a house for life which can also be the location of home-based economic activity.

- 5.5 Young families and single person households were frequently seen as being groups with the most restricted housing choice in rural areas. Respondents were anxious that young families should remain in their area because they represented reproduction of the community, and justified the survival of the school with its importance as an arena for social interaction. To this end, two approaches were favoured : respondents felt that more council housing should be made available for young people, and that more should be done to assist low-cost home ownership, perhaps through self-provisioning.
- 5.6 Equally, most respondents felt that elderly people should be able to remain in their own community rather than have to move elsewhere to find suitable accommodation. Elderly people needed to be surrounded by their friends and community, and a familiar way of life. Related to this is the issue of the isolation felt by many retirement immigrants once they reached old age.
- 5.7 The difficulties experienced by local people in trying to find accommodation were known to most respondents. This research, by its very design, was not able to interview those in search of housing. However, respondents that had experienced homelessness tended to have turned to family or friends rather than to the local housing authority. Moreover, "homelessness" was generally taken to mean living on the street, and so this was not recognised as existing in rural areas even though a lack of a house was commonplace. Living in a caravan was the principal option in Wester Ross and Harris, while in the less remote areas people had the option of moving away to a nearby town.
- 5.8 In different areas, resentment was felt against second home owners and retirement migrants (Wester Ross) and against commuters (Angus and North Ayrshire) for inflating house prices and so excluding local people. Another subject of frequent criticism was council house sales, for exacerbating local housing difficulties and reducing options for those seeking housing.
- 5.9 Respondents wanted more housing built locally, but this should be done sensitively and on a small scale. This should include both public and private housing. Many respondents were critical of planning departments for preventing house building on farmland which would have boosted smaller communities, in their opinion, and sustained local services. These criticisms were not always well informed, since in some areas local plans did encourage such developments (e.g. in Angus). There was general agreement that more local authority building was urgently required.

- 6.1 In addition to the data gathered during the formal questionnaire survey, all interviewees were asked to provide a detailed work history for themselves and to explore issues that affected the employment choices and options open to their families. The accounts provide a dramatic testament to the economic forces that have driven demographic and social change in rural areas.
- 6.2 Overall, in the three mainland study areas 47% of heads of household were in full-time employment, 12% were self-employed and only 2.5% were registered as unemployed (a figure consistent with government statistics for the study areas). 30% of heads of household were retired. Notwithstanding the low rate of unemployment, respondents made it clear that there were very limited employment opportunities in rural areas : 65% felt that there was a lack of *any* opportunity for work.
- 6.3 A distinction may be drawn between patterns of employment in the lowland communities studied (Angus and North Ayrshire) and the scattered communities (Wester Ross and Harris). Opportunities and options were severely constrained in the scattered communities, whereas the access to urban centres provided a favourable range of employment opportunities to respondents in the lowland areas. This difference in opportunities, together with the presence of crofting, engendered a very different attitude to work in the highland and lowland communities. Particularly in Harris and to a lesser extent in Wester Ross, there was a strong work ethic and many saw "life as work and work as life".
- 6.4 In both scattered and lowland communities, there was a recognition that very limited work options were now a fact of rural life. Individuals who chose to stay in rural areas did so in the knowledge that they would be facing low-paid, insecure jobs, and those who chose to migrate there generally had strategies to enable them to survive economically - such as tele-working or artisan work in remote areas, or commuting from lowland areas.
- 6.5 Lack of youth employment choice and options was perceived to be the most serious problem facing rural communities, and youth unemployment was blamed as one of the reasons for an increase in crime and vandalism in Angus and North Ayrshire. School leavers were further disadvantaged by limited public transport which prevented their journeying to workplaces outwith their home areas. Beyond employment issues, however, the aspirations of young people are changing and not only lack of jobs but also the socially limiting rural environment and the *type* of jobs may be affecting their migration away from rural areas. Graduate employment options were seen as non-existent in Wester Ross and Harris, for example, and parents accepted that by encouraging their children in school and University they were in fact educating their children "out" of the area. "Educating out" was viewed with a mixture of pride and regret.
- 6.6 Women respondents felt that their role and position in rural society had changed considerably in recent years, and many felt that this had come with increased involvement in the wage

economy and changing expectations of women's role in the work force. In scattered communities, women's main involvement in the work force was tourism-related work, notably B&Bs, but in the lowland areas access to urban employment greatly improved the range of jobs available - even so, work tended to be in the caring professions or the service industry. The majority of women accepted that given the better pay and greater security accorded to male employment in rural areas, women's aspirations, by necessity, had to take second place to their male partners or male peer group. Women's generally limited employment aspirations were further constrained by woefully inadequate childcare provision in all areas.

- 6.7 Crofters generated little income from crofting activities. The highest contribution to household income was quoted by a respondent as 15% and many others claimed to be making a loss on their crofting enterprises. All crofters interviewed stressed that crofting was, above all else, "a way of life", which was a hard but rewarding way of living and working. Many found the changes in crofting activity profoundly depressing and an overwhelming majority of respondents expressed a desire to see the land brought back into "good heart", with more cattle rearing, fewer sheep and more tree planting. Sentiments about improved crofting practice were inextricably linked to an ideology of community and the past, but the parents of the "young people" charged with restoring the crofts were generally encouraging their children out of crofting. Given the limited rural employment opportunities, the majority of crofting respondents felt that it was more important for their children to secure employment outwith the area, than to remain in the area to engage in the occupational pluralism of the crofting lifestyle.

The key issue raised by all respondents in relation to crofting was that young people with a commitment to the local community, whatever their origin, should be enabled to access crofting land (and hence housing grants), rather than crofts being left to lie empty or derelict and the land idle. The three key priorities for the survival of the crofting community were perceived to be: community retention of young people; grants for crofter housing; and access to more land for crofts to accommodate rural people who were currently unable to gain crofting tenancies.

- 6.8 In Angus and North Ayrshire, the agricultural economy had dominated employment in the past, but respondents commented on the dramatic changes within farming over recent years. Farming advisers in both areas estimated that over the next 10 years a further 25% of farm households would be forced out of farming, notwithstanding the relative buoyancy of dairying in North Ayrshire at present. Employment is now largely restricted to family members, and often to the farmer and one successor. An increasing number of farming wives were now seeking off-farm work to supplement the farm household income. The apparently bleak future of farming households in lowland Scotland was viewed with some alarm both by the farming community and others, largely because of its symbolic importance in terms of tradition, cultural continuity and the land. All farmers interviewed were enthusiastic about farming as a "way of

life”, but most considered that theirs would prove to be the last generation of family farm concerns.

- 6.9 North Ayrshire and Angus were both strongly affected by commuting, and road improvements were bringing Wester Ross within range of Inverness. Lifestyle considerations were the principal motivation for commuters’ choice of rural residence, together with access to small rural schools. Many respondents were concerned that villages would mutate into dormitory settlements and that escalating house prices would exclude low income first-time buyers. Most felt that rural distinctiveness would be maintained nonetheless because *all* residents demonstrated a commitment to the rural community and to the rural ‘way of life’. For many commuters the most attractive aspect of their new rural lifestyle was perceived to be the *community involvement* that set rural life apart from the alleged anonymity of urban or suburban living. This raises issues of competing constructions of community and rurality, with different groups within rural societies having contrasting notions of what a rural area or a rural society should be.
- 6.10 Tourism was seen to have high development potential in all areas and it was already a vital part of the rural economy in Wester Ross and Harris. B&B was a lucrative household enterprise in all four areas, but notably in Wester Ross. There was also a high demand for self-catering holiday accommodation in both Harris and Wester Ross. Seasonal work in tourism was again especially important in Wester Ross, notably in hotels and tourist shops, where local women found low-paid employment. Whilst all respondents acknowledged the vital role that tourism played in the local economy, many expressed reservations about its sustainability if over-development took place.

- 7.1 Rural development was perceived quite differently in the lowland research areas from the scattered communities in which there is more awareness of development institutions and initiatives, and of EU funding. On the other hand, respondents in Harris and Wester Ross exhibited a pervasive sense of powerlessness to effect change or to modify development, whereas in the lowland areas most people felt that they could influence local development. In Harris there was a sense of 'waiting' for change from the outside - a change which would fundamentally alter the islands for better or worse, and which was outside any community control. This somewhat fatalistic attitude generated what could be characterised as a culture of disempowerment, notably in respect of the proposal for a superquarry in South Harris.
- 7.2 Local Enterprise Companies (LECs) and other development agencies were subjected to much criticism, even though few respondents had had actual dealings with these agencies. The key priorities respondents wanted to see for such agencies were widely held to be: grant aid for low-income entrepreneurs without assets; small-scale endogenous rural development projects; and measures to promote youth employment opportunities. In the lowland areas, the main focus of concern was preventing inappropriate housing or road development.

- 8.1 Poverty is not just about income but also about living costs or the purchasing power that a given income provides. The research reveals conclusively that poverty is widespread in rural Scotland. 65% of heads of households had incomes below the Low Pay Unit Poverty Threshold of £200/week (2/3 of the median Scottish wage), ranging from 46% in Angus to 83% in Harris. This compares with a figure of 55% for Britain as a whole. Moreover, 49% of the sample had incomes below half the median Scottish wage (below £7,800). It should be borne in mind that these were often intermittent incomes.
- 8.2 Respondents were asked to estimate the lowest income on which their household could survive comfortably, and two main points emerged from this. The first is the low subjective expectations of living standards. The second is that respondents in Wester Ross and Harris, where incomes are lowest, perceive a higher minimum income to be necessary, either reflecting the higher cost of living in a remote area or a more realistic attitude to costs.
- 8.3 Some groups were more likely to be on a low income : these were the elderly, especially those relying only on a state pension, and those in low-wage occupations such as agriculture and tourism, as well as the unemployed. Self-employed workers may also receive low incomes. A further group identified as on low incomes was single person households : 38% of low income respondents lived alone. In a few, very remote areas, such as Harris, almost the whole population can be considered a low income group.
- 8.4 Respondents often had sources of income other than a wage, ranging from state benefits to non-monetary sources such as peat for fuel. The uptake of state benefits was found to be very low in all areas, and lower than would be expected given the levels of low income, especially in Wester Ross. Overall, fewer than half the respondents were in receipt of any benefits, and if child benefit is discounted then fewer than 30% received benefits. Respondents are often confused about the benefits that are available and their entitlement. Access to advice in urban centres is problematic, with DSS offices seen as highly intimidating quite apart from the social stigma of claiming benefit.
- 8.5 Previous surveys have documented the extent to which the cost of living is higher in rural areas. Transport costs are higher and a car is a necessity. The costs of heating and fuel, food and shopping, and housing were all perceived to be higher in rural areas. While higher costs affect all rural residents, those affected most are low income groups. Cost differentials were seen as growing due to the trend towards shopping away from the rural location.
- 8.6 The combination of a low income with a high cost of living has pervasive consequences, restricting choices and opportunities in many areas of life. Travel becomes problematic, restricting choice of food and other goods, and limiting access to leisure and entertainment facilities. Access to training or further and higher education may also be precluded. Many respondents, especially the elderly, felt socially isolated because of the distances and costs

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involved in travelling to family and friends. Some could not afford a phone. For those people on low incomes that are unable to afford a car, there is a feeling of a loss of independence.

- 8.7 Most respondents conceived of poverty in relation to the biological needs of humans, and associated it with starvation, destitution and rooflessness. Almost all looked back to a point in the past when poverty had been much more commonplace and obvious: rather than comparison being made with the lifestyles of the majority, people compared their situation with lifestyles of the past, when conditions were much harsher. For this reason very few said there was much, if any, poverty in their area. Respondents identified some groups who might potentially be poor (single parents, the elderly, the unemployed and farmworkers), but members of these groups did not consider themselves to be poor or deprived (or would not admit to it). There is thus a considerable gulf between objective and subjective disadvantage.
- 8.8 One of the reasons for this is that most respondents felt that the benefits of living in a rural area outweighed the disadvantages. They were "rich in spirit, poor in means". Many rural residents placed a high value on non-monetary aspects of rural life, but materialism increased across the study areas from Harris to Wester Ross to Angus, and then North Ayrshire. Values are changing rapidly, however, in all areas, as material expectations rise and community values are eroded. Nevertheless, respondents perceived themselves to have a different value system from urban dwellers, whom they saw as selfish and closed unlike their own characteristics of generosity, openness and respect for others.
- 8.9 The research also examined the divisions that respondents perceived in their own communities. Some respondents asserted that rural society was egalitarian and classless, whilst others felt that there were sharp divisions between land owners and the working classes. The dominant middle classes asserted that class divisions no longer existed in rural areas, whereas some rural people felt that the migration of the middle classes to the countryside had created a new social order - notably in the lowland areas. In both cases deference was found. Respondents were far more aware of differences in wealth and income than of class, and such differences were seen to result in very different lifestyles, associated with material displays. The gap between rich and poor was seen by many respondents to be widening, and this was a source of concern.

- 9.1 The majority of respondents (72%) saw room for improvement in service provision, and transport emerged as the main area of concern, especially in Angus. A strong sentiment in the scattered communities was that there was *no* service provision in rural areas, for example, no street lighting or sewage disposal. In the lowland communities, perceptions were focused on very localised issues. The majority of respondents in all areas had very low expectations of service provision. Many felt that their priority services (medical services and education) were good, and that the other problems with services could generally be resolved. Despite this many respondents experienced difficulty accessing a variety of services, notably chemists. The key factor in satisfaction with service provision was private car ownership. Many respondents stated that they expected a decline in the future levels of *in situ* service provision in rural areas.
- 9.2 The crucial transport disadvantage was not solely access to public transport but also the cost of maintaining private transport provision. Transport is essential for accessing services, visiting family and friends, and for access to work. Few respondents made regular use of public transport, with the exception of the elderly in all areas, and commuters in North Ayrshire. The majority, however, felt that public transport was essential in rural areas, notably to meet the needs of the elderly, teenagers and households without a car. Respondents endorsed the 'dial a bus' schemes and taxi subsidies offered in the lowland research areas, which appeared to respondents to be offering "tailor-made" public transport solutions to the problems experienced by vulnerable members of rural society.
- 9.3 In total, only 16% of households had no car, and half of these had access to a car owned by another household. Households with no access to a car were, however, perceived by other respondents to be disadvantaged. Private car ownership was considered to be a pre-condition of rural employment and access to social activities. In this respect young people in their late teenage years who had neither a driving licence nor access to a car were reported to be severely disadvantaged. The majority of respondents were not optimistic about the future of public transport provision in rural areas. Respondents favoured: wider access to transport schemes tailored to the needs of individuals; and the introduction of reduced 'rural liability' for road tax; and government subsidies to reduce the cost of petrol in rural areas.
- 9.4 In both phases of the research, respondents emphasised the importance of education. In rural areas a good education was still referred to as the key to success, even though such success generally equated with leaving a rural area. Many commented on the virtues of a *Scottish* education, and respondents were particularly proud of the high achievement rates in the rural schools. The majority considered that the academic standards, quality of teaching and 'moral environment' in rural schools was far superior to that of urban schools.
- 9.5 The local schools were also valued as a vital part of the social and cultural life of rural communities. In consequence, concern for the future of rural primary schools far outstripped

the small number of households (16%) with children at primary school. In all areas it was felt that schools were under-resourced by the local education authority. In some areas the ability of different households to make financial contributions to the shortfall in funding highlighted economic inequalities between children in small schools. Many respondents highlighted what they considered to be a rural crisis in access to higher education. Parents considered that their children were extremely disadvantaged by cuts in student grants because in the majority of cases rural students could not reduce the costs of higher education by staying at home while attending college or university.

- 9.6 Gaelic medium units for primary school education were available in Harris and Wester Ross, and whilst the majority gave their wholehearted support to the *principle* of Gaelic medium education, many respondents (including native Gaelic speakers) expressed their reservations about the practical implications of Gaelic medium education. Many respondents feared that children educated in Gaelic would 'fall behind' English speaking pupils, and many parents felt that children should not be educated in Gaelic because the language of the workplace and the 'language of opportunity' was English (or other European languages). Parents also feared that the "isolation" of Gaelic medium pupils would inhibit development of their social skills. Many parents were passionate about their support of the Gaelic language, but were afraid that Gaelic medium education would somehow disadvantage their children in the competitive world of education and work. The majority of respondents, however, supported the introduction of some Gaelic component into the primary school curriculum.
- 9.7 Only 9% of the survey sample contained households with children under 5 years of age, and these households were questioned about pre-school activities. The majority were able to attend some form of pre-school activity, most commonly a playgroup. Playgroups were hosted by parents, often in church halls, and suffered from a lack of funding. Nursery education, or the lack of it, was perceived by respondents in all areas to be a major problem: state provision was only accessible to households in North Ayrshire and the cost of private nurseries in Angus was described as "outrageous".
- 9.8 Childminders were expensive, if available at all. The most common form of childcare was informal childcare by friends, neighbours or relatives, notably to cover trips to doctors, dentists or unforeseen emergencies. The importance of ideology must not be overlooked in this respect: the majority of respondents with pre-school children expounded on the pleasures of caring for pre-school children and suggested that they would 'miss out' on too much if their children spent too much time in child care or nurseries. Working mothers were strongly criticised by their non-working peer group and many respondents alleged that it was not possible to be a 'Good Mother' and to pursue a full-time career. Many women, however, had aspirations to combine part time work during school hours with parental responsibilities. Economic necessity

forced many rural women to return to the workplace regardless of ideological preferences. Employment options open to these rural women were extremely limited and were further constrained by limited childcare options.

- 9.9 The majority of respondents expressed high levels of satisfaction about the services provided by general practitioners, district nurses, health visitors, and maternity care, and pre-or post-natal care. Access to family planning advice and contraception, however, was considered to be difficult in all areas. In the scattered communities, the provision of advice, confidentiality, and access to contraceptives (notably condoms) were seen as major problems, particularly for young women. In the lowland areas women commented on the limited choice of contraception options offered to rural women. In relation to other health care, the greatest difficulty was experienced in accessing services provided by opticians. Moreover, 35% of respondents in Wester Ross, and 20% overall, experienced difficulty in accessing a chemist for non-prescription medical products.
- 9.10 Access to hospitals and the quality of hospital care were major issues in all areas. The majority (81%) had no difficulty in accessing hospital care but in the scattered communities people expected to travel long distances and accepted the disadvantages this engenders. Isolation from family and friends at key points in the life cycle such as giving birth, times of serious illness, or death, was accepted as a fact of rural living. In Angus the majority of respondents strongly opposed proposals to close hospitals that currently served the rural communities, and many expressed concern about the effect any closures would have on vulnerable groups in rural society, notably the elderly.
- 9.11 Respondents made considerable comment about policing and rural crime. Those in the scattered communities perceived their areas to be essentially 'crime-free' environments. Houses were frequently left unlocked and cars left with keys in the ignition. Conversely, in the lowland areas, and particularly in North Ayrshire, respondents felt they had been the victims of a notable increase in rural crime. The lowland communities felt that they were vulnerable to organised criminal gangs from the urban centres, but were also concerned about the increase in petty crime and vandalism caused by rural residents. Respondents reported that many rural residents had made lifestyle changes as a result of the increase in crime.
- 9.12 While advisory services were seen as very helpful, the research revealed a very low use of welfare and benefits advisory services. In general it was felt that rural areas suffered from a lack of information, and the majority relied on word of mouth or hearsay. Respondents in all areas suggested that rural people, and particularly the elderly, were reluctant to take up welfare benefits because of what they perceived to be a dominant rural ideology of self-reliance. While some migrants from urban areas may have seen benefits as a right, many rural residents viewed

the welfare benefits system (and in some cases even calling in the doctor) as a 'shameful last resort'. This suggests that the *approach* to the elderly, and other vulnerable groups, is crucial in promoting the take-up of benefits. The majority of respondents felt that the "deserving poor" were unaware of their entitlements, and would often be reluctant to approach welfare agencies.

- 9.13 Shops and Post Offices were considered to be important social centres in rural areas, but in the lowland areas shops were viewed as under threat. Most respondents felt that it was essential to keep open the local shops and post offices, but most did the bulk of their shopping in urban centres. Urban shopping was an option preferred by all social groups apart from the elderly. Range and choice were important issues for the rural consumer. Notwithstanding this, respondents felt that the importance of rural post offices extended far beyond their role as post offices per se, in that they acted as a focal point for receipt of benefits and fulfilled a social service and information role, especially for elderly households. The Royal Mail's daily delivery and uniform postal rates were also seen as fundamental to the ability to live and work in rural areas.
- 9.14 Many residents felt that leisure and recreation facilities were very limited in rural areas. Access to sports facilities and swimming pools were identified as particular problems for rural people, notably in the scattered communities. Children's opportunities for leisure and sports depended on their parents' access to a car, and their willingness to provide what one parent described as "a 24 hour taxi service". Respondents in all areas identified teenagers and the elderly as the main groups for whom leisure provision was inadequate, but few could suggest economically viable activities that could be provided. Teenagers were regarded as a 'bad risk' in venues and on transport. In the scattered communities, drinking alcohol was viewed by many as an important leisure activity.
- 9.15 The Church and the Ministers were seen as important service providers, in a practical and spiritual sense, in all rural areas. Many respondents viewed the Church as the centre of the community, and church buildings in all areas provided venues for a wide range of activities ranging from pre-school playgroups to badminton and other sports groups, and senior citizen luncheon clubs. Respondents asserted that the majority of rural residents necessarily had some involvement with the rural church because the church buildings often offered the only *in situ* social venue. Other respondents that did not belong to the Church, however, felt that they were excluded from many social activities because they took place in Church buildings. Respondents and Ministers themselves reported that rural Ministers were facing an increasing 'informal social work' load in rural communities. Many respondents identified the Minister as the only high profile 'service provider' who could be approached *locally* for help or advice.

- 10.1 The social construction of countryside, in accordance with dominant rural ideologies, is a pervasive influence on perceptions of rural life. In the quantitative research, respondents were able to state what they considered to be the main advantages and disadvantages of living in their local area. Among the advantages, two dominated: peace and quiet was mentioned by 55% and pleasant surroundings by 35%. Lack of transport was the most commonly cited disadvantage (35%), although this was most frequently mentioned by respondents in Angus (51%).
- 10.2 Many respondents felt that living in a rural area gave them a freedom that they did not think would be available elsewhere, a freedom from material values, from crime, from the pace of urban life and from urban environments. It was apparent, though, that in some parts of Scotland rural life also imposes restrictions on behaviour through the very close-knit nature of rural communities: many respondents felt that it was necessary to make regular visits to towns or cities to 'escape' from the sometimes claustrophobic atmosphere of rural life. In the scattered communities the two sides of rural life were epitomised by a respondent on Harris who stated that rural people enjoyed "freedom from" the pressures of urban life, whilst forfeiting their "freedom to" participate in the wider social and cultural opportunities of urban areas. Conversely the majority of respondents in lowland areas were adamant that they had discovered "the best of both worlds" - enjoying a rural lifestyle within easy reach of urban areas.
- 10.3 Apart from the community itself, the beauty of the landscape and the rural environment was very important to respondents. For many, the feeling of having space around them was a fundamental attraction of living in a rural area, giving a sense of privacy, allowing views across the countryside, and giving people a sense of openness around themselves.
- 10.4 One respondent defined characteristic of rural communities is an unwillingness to seek official help in times of difficulty and a reliance instead on family and community support networks. Respondents felt that the support available in rural communities is far greater than in urban areas, and that this increased the quality of rural life. However, support networks in rural communities were equally seen as a necessary response to the lack of certain services. The greater the difficulty in accessing services (perhaps because of remoteness) the stronger and more comprehensive were the networks of support. Support was available at two levels, both from the family and from the community.
- 10.5 Family support was relied upon for childcare and transport. The majority of children required parents and other family members to transport them to social and leisure activities, and child care by family members was essential to enable women to enter the labour market. The family was considered to be the centre of rural society and the extended family network was seen by many as an essential part of caring for the elderly in rural society, and ensuring social stability. Many respondents felt that out-migration from rural areas was causing increasing social isolation for elderly residents whose families had moved to urban areas, and many felt

that women who had formerly assumed an (unpaid) 'caring' role within the family, were now prioritising their own aspirations, and seeking paid employment in preference to caring for elderly family members.

- 10.6 Strong family links were alleged to extend into community networks and respondents made constant reference to "community spirit", "community values", "a sense of community" and "neighbourliness" to describe many forms of behaviour, from helping with lambing or shopping to merely greeting one another in the street. The word "community" was used as a unifying symbol (Cohen 1985), and held different meanings for individual respondents. Some respondents felt that the movement of the middle classes to rural areas had created a declining sense of community, whereas the middle class respondents themselves felt that they had re-invigorated a "dying community". Communities and social groups, by definition, create boundaries, and the research revealed competing definitions of community, exclusion and inclusion. In all areas the social group/community that revolved around the rural primary school and playgroups (which was generated and sustained by young mothers), was considered to be the essential community group to be involved with. The focus on children as the centre of "community" again emphasised the importance of 'family values' in rural society.
- 10.7 'Isolation' in rural communities was defined in a variety of ways, and again was the subject of competing definitions. Many respondents felt that regular contact with people was an important way of alleviating feelings of isolation, and took it upon themselves to visit people in the community that lived alone, whereas others excelled in the "splendid isolation" offered by rural communities and felt that isolation (notably from neighbours) was critical to maintaining their quality of life. Teenagers, single young people, the elderly (notably widowed), and mothers with children under five were identified by themselves, and other respondents, as those who would be most vulnerable to isolation. Many respondents felt that more facilities should be provided to occupy teenagers, and to provide elderly residents with more opportunities for social interaction. Favoured suggestions were improved access (notably bus provision) for young people to attend sports or leisure events in urban centres, and an increased number of drop in centres or lunch clubs for the rural elderly. Respondents who were forced to stay in their homes through illness or lack of transport emphasised their feelings of isolation. Many respondents stressed the importance of the local shop and post office as an arena for social interaction.
- 10.8 Power was seen as devolving downwards from the EU and central government, to local government, then to community councils, the churches and ad hoc social groups, and finally to the individual. It was universally felt that those most likely to have access to power, through election to local committees, are either the middle class members of the community, or those with life-long 'local' connections - notably in the election of local councillors. Others with power were felt to be local landowners, community council members, and those who were

perceived to be spokesmen or women for the 'authentic' local community - notably crofters in the scattered communities.

- 10.9 What could be described as a 'culture of powerlessness' was considered to be a problem in all areas, although most noticeably in Harris. Respondents in Harris felt they had little ability to influence decisions and consequently took little action. In the lowland areas many respondents felt that they too possessed limited ability to effect change - a view which contrasted sharply to the attitudes of the incoming middle class residents. The new rural residents, typified in North Ayrshire and Angus as 'commuters', were active and well organised and promoted 'community action' and initiatives as a means by which rural communities can shape their own future. In all areas, however, many rural residents felt there were obstacles to their own involvement in local representation and/or politics and these ranged from cost, lack of information and lack of motivation, to feelings of inadequacy and 'inauthenticity', and other cultural barriers.

- 11.1 An original objective of the research project was to explore households' experience of poverty and other related disadvantages *which prevented them sharing in the lifestyles of the majority*. Most respondents, however, were clear that they did not seek to share in an urban lifestyle, instead expressing a strong preference for rural living, with all the advantages *and* disadvantages that it entailed. A definition of disadvantage which compares rural lifestyles with those of the urban majority is therefore seen as inappropriate. The rural world was presented by some respondents as unchanging with communities bound together by enduring social and moral values. Conversely, others suggested that rural communities were being threatened by the forces of development, progress and social change.
- 11.2 Change was a dominant theme in all areas and many felt their communities had changed beyond recognition, and frequently expressed disbelief at the changes they had witnessed in their own lifetimes. The majority thought that material and social changes were due to influences from outwith the communities. Some considered that social changes were part of a natural cycle of renewal in rural communities, whereas others viewed social change as an essentially destructive force.
- 11.3 Many suggested that their communities now were the last repositories of folk memory of an 'authentic' rural past. The motif of change dominated discussions and the key theme was loss. Many respondents asserted that the dramatic changes in rural employment and population were resulting in: a loss of distinctive rural culture, 'way of life', and identity; a dilution of rural dialects; a decline in the Gaelic language; and the loss of a myriad of other intangible 'rural' qualities. Allocating responsibility for this loss was a key source of ideological conflict.
- 11.4 In all areas social change was presented as a *process*. In Harris, people felt on the edge of dramatic social change: there was an expectation of an impending crisis or turning point over which they had no control. In Wester Ross, respondents felt that dramatic social changes had occurred in a short space of time : too much had changed too quickly, and the community had not been strong enough to resist the external forces and material values that were perceived to be alien to respondents' view of the traditional way of life in Wester Ross. In the lowland communities, social change was considered less of an all-embracing phenomenon. Social change was perceived to have been a more gradual, if insidious, process. The sense of social and cultural dislocation and disadvantage induced by social change was not as pronounced as that expressed in the scattered communities.
- 11.5 Women identified themselves as the sole beneficiaries of social change in rural areas and felt that, in general, they had greater equality and freedom than previous generations of rural women. Women respondents considered that social changes in the wider society had made it possible for women to enjoy a more independent lifestyle in rural society and respondents asserted that many rural communities revolved around voluntary work and social activities dominated by women. Many women, however, were keen to maintain the traditional role of

rural women, and aspired to a future for rural women which would combine the 'best of both' what might be termed 'feminism' and 'traditional family values'.

- 11.6 Migration and retention, and counter-stream migration, were major issues in all research areas. Many respondents felt that out-migration of 'indigenous' rural people was widespread, and respondents expressed concern about de-population in rural areas, and the consequent reduction in service provision. Respondents of all ages in scattered communities, however, identified a dominant ideology which encouraged young people to do well at school and "to get on and get out". Many respondents presented an image of young people being forced to emigrate from rural areas, due to educational and career pressure, and of them carrying forever "a sense of loss". Respondents who had returned after working in urban areas, however, indicated that the appeal of the rural situation only arose for them when they had children of their own, or in middle age. It was clear that many rural young people are attracted by urban lifestyles, and still feel that they can achieve their own potential and self-expression *only* in the urban areas. Nevertheless, the minority of young people who wanted to stay or to return were often denied that choice in all the study areas because of the lack of affordable housing and employment. Respondents in all areas identified the social problems caused by youth out-migration.
- 11.7 Counter-stream migration, and the complex debate that surrounded the issue, was viewed as a serious issue by the majority of respondents. Respondents considered that new rural residents were a powerful force in rural communities, but the majority of respondents were reluctant to discuss issues of counter-stream migration in terms of class, power or economics. Respondents categorised new rural residents by use of ethnic, cultural, behavioural, or geographical labels. All the ills of a changing rural society were, at some point in the research, blamed on new rural residents, and respondents rarely linked what they often perceived to be the negative *social* impact of new residents with the underlying causes of out-migration of the indigenous population, notably lack of affordable housing or employment opportunities.
- 11.8 The dominant discourse on new rural residents presented by respondents was generally negative: "incomers" were: the 'white settlers'; wealthy; English; not interested in rural social life or rural work; elderly and reclusive; determined to take control of community organisations; pre-occupied with 'organisation'; not committed to rural life and rural culture; and 'inauthentic'. New rural residents, ranging from wealthy second home owners to low income single parents, were perceived to be 'taking housing' from local residents. New rural residents who had moved to scattered communities for no clearly apparent reason were viewed with considerable suspicion, but those who moved to take up existing jobs (e.g. teachers, policemen) were viewed more positively.
- 11.9 As with caricatures the representations of new rural residents contained elements of truth, but many respondents highlighted the disparity between the rhetoric about new rural residents

and their effect on the rural communities and the apparently high levels of community spirit, integration and social well-being. Overall, new rural residents were criticised for what they represented - notably a new rural middle class with the economic power to dominate the housing market - rather than who they were as individuals.

- 11.10 Many respondents, however, presented the positive effects of “incomers”, and contradictory views about their impact in rural communities. “Incomers” were alleged to be making important ‘inward investment’ in rural areas, and many were perceived to be trying *too hard* to become involved in rural social life. Their ability to organise and ‘get the job done’ for the benefit of the community (be it a major fund raising project, or organising meals on wheels for the elderly) was widely appreciated. In all areas, new rural residents (notably the elderly) were keen to use their urban networks for the benefit of the rural community, and many new rural residents expressed the view that an engagement with rural living and rural culture was the prime motivation for their migration to a rural area. Many respondents considered ‘English’ to be a ‘way of behaviour’ and highlighted that many of the alleged ‘English’ migrants in Angus and North Ayrshire were in fact ‘lowland Scots with [English] middle class habits’.
- 11.11 In all areas the influence and social impact of counter-stream migration and new rural residents themselves, was the subject of competing debates, definitions and classifications. Respondents who had not travelled outwith their own area showed a tendency to interpret the problems facing rural Scotland as principally related to the migration of powerful social groups and individuals (notably “the English”) into rural areas, whereas new rural residents commented on a “rural” predicament and focused on nation-wide issues of rural change and disadvantage. In the scattered communities the majority of respondents felt that the ‘indigenous’ population, notably crofters, still represented the ‘authentic voice’ and the ‘moral high ground’ in rural affairs, and many felt that their lack of “localness” excluded them from participation in local politics and access to representation. Conversely in the lowland areas new rural residents were perceived to have assimilated into the existing rural middle class, and many ‘indigenous’ respondents outwith this group now felt excluded from community affairs.
- 11.12 Concepts of belonging and integration were raised as important cultural and social issues in all of the research areas. Respondents offered wide ranging interpretations of what it meant to ‘belong’, and offered conflicting assessments of the levels of integration in their communities. Some presented their communities as harmonious, whilst others presented a picture of communities split between ‘locals’ who belonged by virtue of kinship connections and ‘others’ who did not belong by virtue of having no ‘blood’ connection with the area. In general terms the rural communities were represented as exhibiting all the advantages of rural life: notably community spirit, neighbourliness, and social integration. Many respondents, however, emphasised that the bucolic representation of life in a rural area masked some serious underlying tensions.

- 11.13 Overall issues of integration and belonging had greatest currency in the highland areas. While the lifelong residents felt free to make stereotypical and often highly prejudiced statements about incomers, new rural residents refrained from any direct criticism of local people and deferred to them by use of phrases such as “well I’m only an incomer”. Therefore despite the alleged economic and political power of new rural residents, it was clear that ‘culture’ and an ideology of ‘authenticity’ were important forces in scattered communities.
- 11.14 In the lowland areas the migration of middle class households who were eager to participate in ‘rural life’ had bolstered the power and influence of the existing rural middle classes, and issues of integration and belonging were not identified as arenas for conflict by the majority of lowland respondents. Social groups without power, however, (notably low income groups and households excluded from the housing market) emphasised issues of ‘belonging’, provided definitions of ‘authentic rural people’, and occasionally reduced complex ‘class’ conflicts to ethnic or cultural divisions notably between “incomers” and locals.
- 11.15 Culture and tradition and their role in social cohesion were considered to be very important in all areas. Respondents provided a wide range of definitions of rural culture and tradition, ranging from ‘Robbie Burns’ to whisky consumption. ‘Traditional’ rural activities such as crofting, farming and fishing were seen as vital to maintaining the character of rural areas, and many respondents felt that changing work patterns in rural areas would inevitably erode rural ‘traditions’. The majority of respondents felt it was important to maintain ‘rural culture’, although outwith the Gaeltacht few were able to identify specific action that would ensure the survival of the respondents’ various versions of rural culture.
- 11.16 The Gaelic language and culture was considered to be extremely important in the scattered communities, and in the lowland areas respondents viewed Gaelic as a national cultural resource. Respondents expressed conflicting views about the current condition of the Gaelic language and the prospects for its survival, views which ranged from extreme optimism to extreme pessimism. Many respondents felt the survival of Gaelic and the associated ‘Gaelic culture’ and Gaelic ‘way of life’ was extremely important, and there was overwhelming support for Government funding for the Gaelic language, Gaelic Television and the principle of Gaelic medium education. Despite these views, however, many respondents felt very reluctant to use their Gaelic in mundane social situations, and many feared that Gaelic would become a ‘cultural’ rather than ‘everyday’ language in the near future.
- 11.17 The rural Churches were considered to be extremely important in all rural areas. The Presbyterian Churches dominated life in Harris, where everyone was considered to be involved in the church through their residence there. If a respondent was not involved in the church directly, this was taken to be involvement through a statement of social non-conformity. In the other areas the Presbyterian Churches were perceived to provide a focal point for religious

and secular activities. The majority of respondents felt that the Church was performing a vital role in rural areas, and in Angus and North Ayrshire many respondents considered that rural people identified with their parish Church, and felt a sense of 'ownership' of the Church and buildings regardless of their religious beliefs. The Ministers were similarly viewed in all areas as an essential part of the rural community, and with the exception of Wester Ross (where it was alleged that large numbers of new rural residents found difficulty in relating to the west coast Churches), the majority of respondents welcomed Ministers' involvement in the rural schools, and expected the Ministers to undertake many civic responsibilities in addition to their Ministerial duties, and increasing 'unofficial' social work role.

- 11.18 In the scattered communities the Churches were considered to be very important, but the differences between the Presbyterian denominations, and the history of Church 'divisions' did not encourage respondents to think of the Churches as having a role in encouraging social integration. In the lowland areas, however, the majority of respondents viewed the Church as the centre point of many social and community networks, and many felt that it played a vital role in encouraging social integration within villages and between the villages and the landward rural community. Other respondents, however, felt that the important position of the Church in rural communities had led to their exclusion from the community, and made it very difficult for them as newcomers to the area to integrate. According to the respondents who saw themselves as being in this position, their exclusion had come about because they did not belong to the Church or the social group associated with it.
- 11.19 In the scattered communities respondents expressed concern over the future of the church because of social and demographic change. For many the decline of the churches was symbolised by the gradual erosion of Sabbath observance. Some respondents felt that the Church in scattered communities was not responding to changes in wider society, although in Harris the overwhelming majority felt that the strength of the island congregations lay in their resistance to change.
- 11.20 In the lowland areas many respondents favoured what some individuals described as a more 'progressive' or 'pragmatic' approach to religious observance. Many respondents involved in the Churches in the lowland areas felt that the Church should encourage a philosophy of social responsibility and practical social action. These individuals felt that religious worship and personal belief should be integrated with Christian 'witness' (notably practical assistance and advice to those in need) in the wider rural community.

The Future of Rural Areas

- 11.21 Despite a recognition of objective disadvantage, respondents felt that their lifestyles were more rewarding than those of the urban majority. Respondents' concerns about social change and the future of rural areas largely related to maintaining the high quality of life that they

claimed to experience. In the scattered communities many respondents felt that their way of life was a “well kept secret”, and were wary of any change that would threaten the status quo. In the lowland areas maintaining the status quo - notably in relation to low crime levels was considered to be a priority for rural communities. In general respondents in lowland areas were more confident about the future of their communities than respondents in scattered communities.

12 CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 This report has revealed much about the way in which people live in rural Scotland today, and what people themselves perceive to be the advantages and disadvantages of rural living. In all areas there was a pervasive feeling that things had changed, were changing and would continue to change in marked contradiction of the myth of an inherently unchanging countryside. One important finding of this work relates to the distinction which those interviewed made between rural life and urban life. Urban life was widely perceived as being characterised by an *anomie* from which the countryside was free. A number of policy implications arise from this perceived distinction between rural and urban life, and indeed from the perceived superiority of rural life, including justifications for social and economic subsidies, and material help for individuals who enjoy a very high quality of life.
- 12.2 A more profound issue for policymakers arising from this perception of rural life is how such a construction of "countryside" can be sustained by public policy, and to what extent policymakers' perception of rural areas and rural life accords with this. Policies are now being amended to reflect rapid changes taking place in rural economies and societies, notably in agricultural policy. Related to this is the issue of whose competing representation of rurality will prevail in policy formulation and implementation, as each interest seeks to present its representation of rural as authentic.
- 12.3 A further set of policy issues surrounds the social changes which have been observed to operate in rural Scotland. In the scattered communities respondents expressed considerable concern over social and economic change and in Harris and Wester Ross, the sense of powerlessness over externally-induced change must be worrying in the context of policies which espouse local accountability and empowerment of rural communities. Those interviewed for this study spoke of a huge gap between people and policymakers, and of powerlessness. In the lowland areas policy issues were less to do with the powerlessness of whole communities but rather attached to social divisions (notably class divisions) and social exclusion. It is vital that policies reflect the realities of rural change and any emerging divisions.
- 12.4 The issues arising from counter-stream migration are particularly complex. The real issues underlying the scapegoating of new rural residents were the same as those affecting rural areas throughout Britain: these were issues of class, status and power which were manifested especially in inequalities in housing and labour markets.
- 12.5 The most challenging finding of the research is that rural people's subjective assessment of their poverty or disadvantage tends to be at odds with objective definitions. Poverty by objective criteria is widespread in rural Scotland, with 65% of heads of household receiving incomes below the Low Pay Unit Poverty Threshold of £200 per week (2/3 of the median Scottish wage). Moreover, 49% of the sample had incomes below half the median Scottish wage (£7,800). Yet many households experiencing poverty by these definitions would reject such an assessment of their position. A number of policy implications follow from this divergence

between objective and subjective assessments of rural poverty and disadvantage. First and foremost, any suggestion that rural people's lower material expectations justify lower levels of support or provision must be unequivocally rejected. It is our view that people should have equal material opportunities wherever they live. There is as great a responsibility towards citizens in the country as in the town.

- 12.6 While objective standards must apply in determining levels of support and service provision, their delivery should reflect the subjective assessments encountered in this research. Related to this is the question of whether policymakers can influence the cultural construction of poverty and disadvantage. Overcoming resistance to entitlement is a fundamental task for those involved in policy design and implementation. The failure to recognise the existence of poverty and disadvantage in rural communities, for whatever reason, militates against assistance and support being given, either by public agencies or by neighbours and community groups. The invisibility of the excluded in rural areas is another important policy issue. Raising the visibility of excluded groups, without stigmatising people, is a necessary preliminary to addressing rural disadvantage and exclusion.
- 12.7 Housing was perceived to be a major concern in all areas. Notable respondent concerns were the over-promotion of owner-occupation with concomitant lack of affordable housing to rent for low-income households, especially public housing. Respondents' top priority was affordable rented housing for families, and preferably public housing allocated to those who they considered deserving.
- 12.8 In relation to employment, the principal finding is that, notwithstanding the low rates of unemployment encountered, respondents made it clear that there were very limited employment opportunities in rural areas. In all areas there was a recognition that very limited work options were now a fact of rural life. The principal policy issue then is the need to create a broader range, and a higher quality, of jobs in rural areas. The lack of youth employment choices and options was perceived to be the most serious problem facing rural communities. Together with the socially limiting rural environment, young people experienced a daunting combination of housing, employment and transport difficulties which encouraged their migration away from rural areas. An integrated approach to the retention of young people is required from policymakers if those who wish to remain are to be allowed that choice.
- 12.9 Women's role had changed in rural areas as elsewhere, as expectations of their involvement in the wage economy have changed, but opportunities were very limited both by a lack of jobs, and a lack of transport, and by woefully inadequate childcare provision. Each of these obstacles to women's employment needs to be tackled by policymakers and economic development agencies. Childcare provision in rural areas is a very important policy issue both from the viewpoint of equal opportunities and to allow rural economies to benefit fully from women's contribution.

12 CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 12.10 This report has shown that poverty is widespread in rural Scotland. Some groups were particularly likely to be on a low income : these were the elderly, especially those relying only on a state pension, and those in low-wage occupations such as agriculture and tourism, as well as the unemployed. Self-employed workers may also receive low incomes.
- 12.11 Poverty in rural Scotland requires a range of policy responses. Clearly more advice must be offered and in a more proactive and sympathetic manner, with a special effort made to target elderly people relying only on state pensions and unaware or unconvinced of their other entitlements. The research suggests that the *approach* to the elderly is crucial in promoting the take-up of benefits. Specific policy changes may impact adversely on elderly people, such as the imposition of VAT on domestic fuel, and thought should be given as to how to mitigate such effects. The circumstances of those receiving low wages may be worsened by the abolition of minimum wage legislation, and there are clear advantages which would arise for workers in tourism, farming and forestry if Britain were to apply the provisions of the Social Chapter of the Treaty of European Union in this respect. Many opportunities for casual and part-time work in rural Scotland may not be open to those on the lowest incomes because of poverty trap effects, and here it would be helpful if people were enabled to undertake more such work without penal loss of benefits, either through a raising of the levels of earnings allowed or through a more gradual tapering of benefit loss. For those in low-wage occupations and the unemployed, as well as those in unfulfilling employment, training opportunities are crucial.
- 12.12 The majority of respondents (72%) saw room for improvement in service provision, and transport emerged as the main area of concern. The crucial transport disadvantage is not access to public transport but rather the cost of having to have private transport in such a car-dependent context.
- 12.13 In education there was a general pride in the quality of rural schools, and a recognition of their social and cultural value in relation to rural communities. There was great resistance, therefore, to school closure proposals, and in all areas it was felt that schools were under-resourced by the education authority. Nursery education, or the lack of it, was perceived by respondents in all areas to be a major problem. These concerns raise policy implications for education spending both at local government and, especially, at central government levels. It is also relevant to note that cuts in student grants were seen as discriminating against rural children's access to higher education, since they are not able to save money by living at home while attending university or college.
- 12.14 Other issues of service provision included the difficulties of accessing family planning services, and chemists for non-prescription medical products, such as for children's needs. Maintaining rural hospitals was another theme for many respondents, as was the cost of transport to hospital. Respondents made considerable comment about policing and rural crime, seeking more effective policing to prevent petty crime. Most respondents felt it essential to keep open their

local shops and post offices, but did the bulk of their shopping in urban centres because of the greater range and choice. Options for leisure and recreation were particularly important issues for young people, and there was general recognition of the lack of provision for teenagers.

- 12.15 In examining these issues individually and by sector, there is a danger of losing sight of their interconnectedness. Indeed, above all, rural disadvantage is characterised by the interconnections which exist between the various facets of rural living. More housing for young people must go hand in hand with employment opportunities, transport and childcare, for example, and while it may result in a rural school and post office surviving it may also lead to environmental loss and a change in the social composition. The complexity of these relationships means that it is hard to frame recommendations, given both the breadth of the issues and that for each remedial action there is likely to be a disbenefit and a counter-argument. A clear need, however, is that policies must offer a multi-faceted, integrated response to such intricate relationships and multi-faceted issues. The Scottish Office's Rural Focus Group and its Rural Framework paper suggest a recognition of the need to move in this direction, and this could be further strengthened through the creation of a fund to support integrated programmes for empowerment and investment. The absence of any budget analogous to that of the Rural Development Commission in England, the Rural Development Council in Northern Ireland, or the Development Board for Rural Wales is especially notable.
- 12.16 In any consideration of rural disadvantage it is clear that three social groups are consistently affected by rural disadvantage, namely: the elderly; the young; and low income households.
- 12.17 Finally, the results of this research permit some re-examination of the standard indicators of disadvantage or deprivation which are commonly employed in Scotland, and which have influenced the distribution of resources in the past. It is clear from the complexity of the accounts of rural living that such indicators fail to capture most dimensions of rural disadvantage. It is not just that they do not cover such issues as gender, culture, isolation and powerlessness; even on issues such as housing and employment the dimensions of disadvantage are not reducible to ratios of overcrowding and unemployment rates. In any event, an area-based approach is inappropriate to tackling rural disadvantage. Instead, a diversity of policy responses is needed. Some action is required at higher levels, for example to allocate resources for affordable housing, for childcare provision, and for adequate benefits. But action is also required at local level to reflect the diversity of rural circumstances, to involve the local community in the response to disadvantage, and (as Cloke et al have argued) to enable a connection to be made between material help and the localised experience of living and coping with rural change.



Figure 1 shows the four case study areas.
A brief description of the research areas is given below.

1. ANGUS

Introduction

The Angus research area was chosen as being typical of an agricultural area with an anticipated decline in the population, due to capital - labour substitution in the agricultural industry. The study area lies between four towns - Forfar, Brechin, Montrose and Arbroath. There are two main settlements within the study area, the villages of Letham and Friockheim. In addition there are a number of hamlets and scattered farm and estate settlements. Dundee (to the south) and Aberdeen (to the north) are within commuting distance of the research area, an aspect which has recently been enhanced by the improvement of the A90 trunk road which passes to the west of the research area. In addition, the main east coast rail line passes to the east of the research area.

Population and age structure

The population of the area increased by 10.8% between 1981 and 1991, rising from 4,986 to 5,525. The increase was accounted for solely by migration, as there was an excess of deaths over births over the same period. The age structure of the research area is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Age structure (1991 Census)

<i>Population</i>	<i>Angus %</i>	<i>Scotland %</i>
- aged under 16	20.8	20.2
- between 65 and 74	7.9	11.6
- over 75	6.3	6.5

Housing

The study area contains a relatively high proportion of privately rented housing, and a high proportion of this tenure is accounted for by housing rented from an employer, or "tied" housing. Table 2 below shows the tenure distribution in the area.

Table 2 Tenure distribution (1991 Census)

<i>Tenure</i>	<i>Angus %</i>	<i>Scotland %</i>
Owner occupied (outright)	23.7	16.4
Owner occupied (buying)	33.0	35.7
Rented privately (including tied housing)	27.5	10.0
Rented from local authority	14.5	37.9

Employment

The rural Angus economy is based primarily on agriculture, despite declining employment within this sector. The proximity of the study area to the main towns of Angus, and Dundee and Aberdeen, has fostered the development of commuting. Figures from the 1991 Census show that 6% of economically active males and 5% of economically active females were unemployed.

Education

Pre-school education is provided at one primary school, with a further ten nursery classes. Primary education is well catered for by 13 primary school catchments covering the area. There are no secondary schools in the research area, with pupils having to travel to one of the four local towns.

Health Services

Health care in rural Angus is heavily dependent upon health centres and GPs based in nearby towns. The only village in the research area with its own GP is Friockheim. A hospital is located in the research area, at Stracathro, and there is one in nearby Arbroath. Proposals that threatened the future of these two hospitals during the course of the research have been withdrawn. Outside the research area, hospitals are provided in Aberdeen and Dundee.

Shops, Banks and Post Offices

Despite the recent increase in population in the study area, the level of local service provision has tended to decline. The Local Plan for Angus states that there are around 20 shops in the rural area, 13 shops having closed between 1976 and 1991. Within the research area, there is only one bank, located in Friockheim.

Recreation and Leisure

Library services are based in the four main towns around the research area, and there are part time libraries in Letham and Friockheim. Two mobile libraries also operate in the district. There are only two play parks in the area, in Friockheim and Letham. Sports facilities are located in the main towns of Angus.

2. NORTH AYRSHIRE

Introduction

North Ayrshire was selected as an example of an area which has undergone recent social and economic change as a result of an influx of commuters. The study area is situated 20 miles south east of Glasgow, and three miles north of Kilmarnock. There are three main settlements; the villages of Fenwick, Dunlop and Waterside. The landscape consists of mainly moorland and agricultural land used for livestock and dairying. The A77 runs through the area from Glasgow to Ayr. The area is also served by rail running from Glasgow to Kilmarnock, through Dunlop.

Population and age structure

The 1991 Census gave a population of 3538 for the area. Although the 1981 population figure for the research area was not available, it is anticipated that between 1981 and 1991 there has been an increase in the population of the area, as there has been substantial local housing development. The population structure of the area is shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3 Age structure (1991 Census)

<i>Population</i>	<i>North Ayrshire %</i>	<i>Scotland %</i>
- aged under 16	20.5	20.2
- between 65 and 74	8.0	11.6
- over 75	6.8	6.5

Housing

The area has a high level of owner occupation, and a correspondingly low level of public rented housing. A large proportion of the original public stock has been bought through "Right to Buy". Table 4 below details the tenure distribution for the area.

Table 4 Tenure distribution (1991 Census)

<i>Tenure</i>	<i>North Ayrshire %</i>	<i>Scotland %</i>
Owner occupied (outright)	26.5	16.4
Owner occupied (buying)	44.0	35.7
Rented privately (including tied housing)	9.8	10.0
Rented from local authority	19.7	37.9

Employment

The majority of people living in the area commute to Glasgow, Ayr or Kilmarnock, there being very few employment opportunities within the research area itself other than farming. The 1991 Census

shows that 8.4% of economically active males, and 4.3% of economically active females were unemployed.

Education

Although there are no pre-school facilities in the research area, residents do have access to nurseries in the nearby towns. Primary education is provided in Fenwick and Dunlop. Secondary education is provided at schools outwith the research area.

Health Services

Within the research area there are no hospitals, clinics or health centres, these being located in the larger towns adjacent to the area. Crosshouse Hospital, in Kilmaurs, is well placed to serve the research area. There are part time Doctor's surgeries in Dunlop and Fenwick.

Shops, Banks and Post Offices

Both Dunlop and Fenwick have a selection of local shops, and there is a bank in Dunlop. At the time of the research there were post offices in both these villages, although the Fenwick office has recently closed. Stewarton and Kilmarnock, which are both within three miles of the research area, are well provided with shopping facilities.

Recreation and Leisure

Library services are based in the towns surrounding the area, although there are part-time facilities in both Dunlop and Fenwick. There is a play park in Fenwick, which was built using funds raised by local people. Sports facilities are provided in the adjacent larger centres.

3. WESTER ROSS

Introduction

Wester Ross was selected as a remote mainland area with a strong reliance on seasonal tourism and a high level of counter-stream migration, notably by groups of retirement age. It is also a crofting area. The area follows the coastline from Loch Carron in the south to Loch Inver in the north. Wester Ross is sparsely populated with crofting townships and small settlements mainly located along the narrow coastal strip. The largest centre is Ullapool in the north of the research area, though this does not act as a regional centre. Inverness is the nearest city to the area, being between 50 and 90 miles away. The area is mountainous and the coastline indented by deep sea lochs. The main land use is moorland, or "deer forest", for deer stalking. The area was recently classified as eligible for Objective One funding by the European Union (EU).

Many of the roads in the area are single track, the only trunk road being the A835 which links Ullapool with the A9 to Inverness. This brings Inverness within one and a half hours drive from the Ullapool ferry terminal (for Stornoway in the Western Isles). A rail line runs from Inverness to Kyle of Lochalsh located south of the area.

Population and age structure

The area has witnessed a population increase of 10.55% between 1981 and 1991, with an increase from 4,976 to 5,322. This increase was due to both migration and an excess of births over deaths. The age structure of the population is given in Table 5 below.

Table 5 Age structure (1991 Census)

<i>Population</i>	<i>Wester Ross %</i>	<i>Scotland %</i>
- aged under 16	21.0	20.2
- between 65 and 74	10.2	11.6
- over 75	4.1	6.5

The 1991 Census shows that almost one third of the population were Gaelic speakers.

Housing

Crofting tenure, which is classified as owner occupation, is of great importance in the Wester Ross research area, and this goes some way to explaining the high level of owner occupation within the area. Private renting is also higher than for Scotland as a whole due to the importance of tied properties. In the 1991 Census, 24.1% of household spaces in the area were properties not used as a main residence, indicating the importance of tourism to the area. Table 6 below gives the tenure distribution for the area.

Table 6 Tenure distribution (1991 Census)

<i>Tenure</i>	<i>Wester Ross %</i>	<i>Scotland %</i>
Owner occupied (outright)	36.4	16.4
Owner occupied (buying)	26.4	35.7
Rented privately (including tied housing)	15.7	10.0
Rented from local authority	18.4	37.9

Employment

The local economy of Wester Ross is heavily weighted towards tourism, although the primary sector is also significant. Industries include crofting, forestry, fishing, fish-farming, and quarrying. Two local military installations provide employment at Loch Ewe and Applecross. Self-employment is important in Wester Ross, and the 1991 census shows that 23.6% of males in the area are self-employed, this being more than twice the Scottish rate of 9.9%. The census also shows that of economically active males, 7.4% were unemployed, as were 8.1% of economically active females.

Education

Although there is no nursery education provision in the area, childcare facilities are provided in Ullapool, Lochcarron and Gairloch which were established in order to allow local people to work after having children. There are eight primary schools in the research area. These feed into three secondary schools, two within the research area at Ullapool and Gairloch, and one in Plockton to the south.

Health Services

There are five doctors' surgeries within the study area. Hospital care is provided at Raigmore Hospital in Inverness. There is one chemist in the research area, located in Ullapool.

Shops, Banks and Post Offices

Banking facilities are available in Ullapool, Gairloch and Lochcarron, although mobile facilities operate throughout the area. Local shops exist in all the larger settlements, although the nearest supermarket is in Inverness. Post offices are situated throughout the research area.

Recreation and Leisure

Library services are provided on a part time basis in five locations within the research area, and a mobile library is also in operation. There are two leisure centres in Wester Ross, in Gairloch and Ullapool. There is a swimming pool in Gairloch, and one is planned for Ullapool. Play parks exist in eight of the settlements.

4. HARRIS

Introduction

Harris (which includes the island of Scalpay) was selected as a research area as it represents a remote island area. Harris lies off the north west of Scotland, being part of the 130 mile long chain of islands which make up the Western Isles, or Outer Hebrides. Like much of the Highlands and Islands, Harris is a crofting community. The island is physically connected to the Isle of Lewis to the north, although they are considered to be distinctly separate.

Harris extends to some 51,319 Ha of mainly lowland peat bog with some higher heather and rock mountainscape. The west of the island has many sandy beaches and the characteristic "machair" of flowers and grasses. The east coast is considerably less fertile, consisting of rocky terrain and an indented coastline. The capital of the island is Tarbert in the north, the other main settlement being Leverburgh in the south. The island is sparsely populated, with small crofting townships located along the coast. Stornoway, on Lewis, is the nearest large centre to the research area, being between one and two hours drive away.

Other than by road from Lewis, access to the island is either by ferry from Uig (Skye) or Lochmaddy (North Uist). The air and ferry services which connect Stornoway in Lewis with the mainland are also important communication lines for Harris. Scalpay is reached by ferry from the Kyles of Scalpay on Harris, although there are plans to build a bridge across the narrow sound.

Although the road between Stornoway and Tarbert is almost double track all the way, the majority of the other roads on the island are single track. There is essentially one road which circles the island, following the coastline.

There is a proposal to build a superquarry on the island at Lingarabay, and the decision on this is pending.

Population and age structure

Between 1981 and 1991, there was a 14.4% decrease in the population of the island, from 2,598 to 2,222. The decrease was a result of an excess of deaths over births, and outward migration. Harris has a high proportion of elderly people compared to the rest of Scotland. Table 7 below details the age structure of the area.

Table 7 Age structure (1991 Census)

<i>Population</i>	<i>Harris %</i>	<i>Scotland %</i>
- aged under 16	18.2	20.2
- between 65 and 74	16.6	11.6
- over 75	12.3	6.5

The 1991 Census shows that 81.7% of the population of Harris were Gaelic speakers.

Housing

As would be expected in a crofting area, crofting tenure is of great importance in Harris, which accounts for the very high levels of owner occupation given in the table below. The table also shows that public sector housing is considerably less significant than elsewhere in Scotland. The 1991 Census showed that 9.6% of all household spaces were second homes, and a further 9.2% were vacant. Table 8 below gives the tenure distribution for the area.

Table 8 Tenure distribution (1991 Census)

<i>Tenure</i>	<i>Harris %</i>	<i>Scotland %</i>
Owner occupied (outright)	57.3	16.4
Owner occupied (buying)	19.0	35.7
Rented privately (including tied housing)	6.8	10.0
Rented from local authority	16.9	37.9

Employment

Harris is one of the economically most fragile areas of Scotland, having a GDP per capita in a region which has recently been classified as eligible for Objective One status funding by the EU. The economy is mainly based on the primary sector, particularly crofting in combination with fishing, contracting, tourism, or in some cases the manufacture of "Harris Tweed". The 1991 Census shows that 21.5% of economically active males and 8% of economically active females were unemployed.

Education

There is no state provision of nursery education in Harris, although pre-school education is provided on a voluntary basis by three Gaelic Playgroups based in Tarbert, Scalpay, and Leverburgh. Primary education is provided at six schools on Harris, and two of these had less than 10 pupils in 1993. There are three secondary schools, although only one, in Tarbert, provides secondary education to sixth year. At the secondary schools in Scalpay (5 pupils) and Leverburgh (Leverhulme Memorial, 11 pupils) secondary education is provided to third year level only.

Health Services

The nearest hospital to the research area is in Stornoway on Lewis. The need for a geriatric unit on Harris had led to a campaign by the Harris Council for Social Services, but so far without success. There are three doctors on Harris, located in two practices.

Shops, Banks and Post Offices

The nearest supermarket to Harris is in Stornoway. Tarbert is the main retail centre for the island, with six shops and a bank. There is also a shop and part time bank in Leverburgh. A mobile bank facility is also provided. There are twelve post offices on Harris, and several of these also sell basic goods. Mobile shops also operate in the area. There is no chemist on Harris.

APPENDIX - AREA PROFILES

Recreation and Leisure

There is a part time library in Tarbert, and a mobile service operating out of Stornoway. Sports facilities are provided in the schools, although there is no full size swimming pool available. A small trainer pool (5 metres wide by 15 metres long) however, is located in Tarbert. There is also a nine hole golf course on the west of the island.