

**Appendix 1:**  
**Drivers of Countryside Change**  
(Work Package 2.1)

**Rural Sustainability and Countryside Change**

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## **RURAL SUSTAINABILITY 1988-1998**

### **(A) EU level developments**

#### **(1) Models of Sustainability**

The integration of ideas of 'sustainable development' into EU policy has been slow, with an emphasis on environmental and economic rather than social aspects. Within the Single European Market Act of 1987, Article 130r "*urged*" the community to incorporate environmental considerations into all aspects of policy. The article was amended five years later in the 1992 Maastricht Treaty which "*requires*" the commission to do so (Cobb, *et al*, 1999:210). The Fifth Action Plan for the Environment 1992 was titled *Towards sustainability*, and had 'sustainable development' as its guiding principle. Its aim was "to initiate changes in the current trends and practices which are detrimental to the environment, so as to provide optimal conditions for socio-economic well-being and growth for the present and future generations". The focus was on policy integration (economic, environmental and social objectives) in 5 key areas: agriculture, energy, industry, tourism and transport (Wilkinson, 1997). The principle of subsidiarity and shared responsibilities of stakeholders was stressed but the social aspects of sustainable development (such as poverty) were not substantially addressed. However, while this represented an important shift from policies responding to environmentally-damaging events to policies addressing fundamental causes of environmental damage and was the key vehicle to deliver on Rio commitments, it was not a legally binding document for either Member States or the Commission (Butt Philip, 1998; Collier, 1997). Only as late as June 1997 in the Amsterdam Treaty did the EU commit itself institutionally to the principle of sustainable development. Article 2 was amended to include a commitment to sustainable development of economic activities as well as sustainable and noninflationary growth and a new Article 3c strengthened the integration of environmental protection into all community policies and activities (Cobb, *et al*, 1999; Haigh, 1998). While it is generally agreed that these changes have emphasised environmental protection and sustainable development within the EU, the European Environment Agency review of the Fifth Action Plan was scathing, criticising the non-attainment of objectives across the board (ENDS, 1996; Cobb, *et al*, 1999)

#### **(2) Land Use and Planning Policy**

During this period land use planning was left to individual member states and a variety of approaches are found (Reynolds, 1998: 239). One important piece of legislation in this area is the 1985 EIA Directive (85/337) which applies to major development projects. However, Reynolds (1998) reports that "there have been more complaints to the European Commission about the failure to implement the EIA Directive than any other piece of European legislation" (p.241). There is no landscape policy as such in the EU, as Reynolds (1998) argues "not least because of the lack of a Europe-wide constituency for the concept of 'landscape'" (p.237). Wildlife legislation has developed from the Birds Directive of 1979 (79/409) (see Dixon, 1998). However, while the EU has been responsible for the development of a considerable amount of wildlife and other environmental legislation, implementation in member

states has been patchy due to a lack of commitment to directives by individual governments and a lack of enforcement powers within EU structures.

### **(3) Rural Development Policy**

The EU has tended to regard the CAP as the main vehicle for rural development strategies, based on an exogenous model of rural development and the idea that agriculture lies at the heart of the rural economy. Problems of rural development were to be addressed principally through agricultural industrialisation and specialisation and the encouragement of labour and capital movement between rural and urban areas (Lowe *et al.*, 1998). From 1979 there was some modification of this approach through the pursuit of Integrated Development Programmes in Less Favoured Areas.

However, by the late 1980s it was recognised that employment in agriculture and other primary industries was in widespread decline in rural Europe but that new industrial and service sector jobs were increasing. This together with mounting pressures to reform the CAP in the face of food mountains, emerging environmental criticisms and the Single European Act led to a major new statement on rural policy by the CEC *The Future of Rural Society* in 1988. This laid out the basis of EU rural policy for the 1990s. The statement highlighted the need to target specific problems in specific areas rather than focusing on individual sectors. The emphasis was strongly upon the locality and bottom-up development:

“Local rural development does not mean merely working along existing lines. It means making the most of all the advantages that a particular local area has: space and landscape beauty, high-quality agricultural and forestry products specific to the area, gastronomic specialities, cultural and craft traditions, architectural and artistic heritage, innovatory ideas, availability of labour, industries and services already existing, all to be exploited with regional capital and human resources, with what is lacking in the way of capital and co-ordination, consultancy and planning services brought in from outside” (CEC, 1988:48).

The major vehicle of this new rural regional development emphasis was a reformed and expanded European Structural Funds package. This involved the evolution of the Structural Funds from its beginnings as a modest regional policy in the 1970s to a more substantial programme which aimed to meet specific, spatially-targeted, development objectives (Ward and Woodward, 1998: 4-5).<sup>1</sup> Five objectives dealing with specific aspects of uneven development were devised and three of these have had made available substantial funds for development in rural areas. These were Objective 1, aimed at the poorest regions of the EU; Objective 2, aimed at those regions suffering from de-industrialisation; and Objective 5b which was specifically targeted at the economic diversification of vulnerable rural areas (Ward and Woodward, 1998:5).<sup>2</sup> Two phases of funding were proposed: 1989-1993 and 1994-1999. The second phase

<sup>1</sup> The Structural Funds had three components: the Regional Development Fund (ERDF); the European Social Fund (ESF); and the European Agricultural Guarantee and Guidance Fund (EAGGF).

<sup>2</sup> To qualify for Objective 5b status, as Ward and Woodward (1998: 5) highlight an area had to demonstrate: “a below average level of economic development; employment dominated by the agricultural sector; and poor levels of agricultural incomes”. Supporting secondary criteria included “problems of peripherality; depopulation; and a susceptibility to economic pressures in the face of further CAP reforms”.

involved the further enlargement of funds, accounting for about 30% of EU budget, and the spatial expansion of area designations (Ward and McNicholas, 1998:28). For example, the Objective 5b programme expanded to a budget of approximately £5.722 billion (ECU 6.869 billion), covered 32.7 million people (8.8% of the total EU population) and just over a quarter (26%) of the EU territory (McNicholas and Woodward, 1999:10). However, there have been questions raised over the environmental implications of Objective 1 and Objective 5b policies, with criticisms over the extent of integration of environmental and socio-economic aspects (Reynolds, 1998: 241).

At the same time as the Structural Funds were reformed and expanded, a smaller range of 13 Community Initiatives were introduced by the EC. These were deemed to be experimental and operated at a smaller scale. LEADER (Liaisons Entre Actions de Developpement de l'Economie Rurale) was the most important rural initiative of this type. However, LEADER was strongly linked to Objective 1 and Objective 5b as each designated LEADER territory must fall within an Objective 1 or 5b area and only 10% of resources can be spent outside these territories (McNicholas and Woodward, 1999:16-17). LEADER was also based on ideas of bottom-up/endogenous rural development. This led to new development structures in rural areas incorporating local community organisations, private interests and public agencies. The first programme ran to 1994 and has been judged to have been limited in scope and effectiveness but with some successes in rural participation (Lowe *et al*, 1998). The second programme, LEADER 2, ran from 1994-1999.

The profile of rural (as opposed to explicitly agricultural) development was also raised in EU circles by the 1996 Cork Declaration, *Rural Europe - Future Perspectives*. This set out a 10-point rural development programme to "promote rural development which sustains the quality and amenity of Europe's rural landscapes (natural resources, biodiversity and cultural identity) so that their use by today's generation does not prejudice the options of future generations", stating that "in our local actions we must be aware of our global responsibilities".

## **(B) British level developments**

### **(1) Models of sustainability**

The UK interpretation of 'sustainable development' was strongly influenced in the late 1980s and early 1990s by neo-classical environmental economics approaches to reconciling environmental and economic concerns which revolved around the recasting of parts of nature as natural 'assets' and suggesting market-led mechanisms for giving them a price. The most prominent example was the work of Pearce, *et al* (1989) *Blueprint for a green economy*, commissioned by the Thatcher government in the late 1980s. This helped established a strong and persistent tendency to play down the social aspects of sustainability in British policy. The 1990 White Paper on the Environment, *This common inheritance*, set out Britain's environmental strategy to 2000 in preparation for the 1992 Rio Conference but focused on environmental protection rather than sustainable development. It was, nonetheless, the UK's first attempt at a coherent policy strategy on the environment. Most of the key developments were institutional, including

the establishment of two ministerial environmental committees, the appointment of green ministers in each government department and the instigation of annual departmental reporting. However, one of the ministerial committees was soon abandoned and there was little evidence of the routine use of appraisal documents. In a review of the White Paper in 1992 a new presumption in favour of economic instruments rather than regulation was set out (Voisey and O’Riordan, 1997). In the judgement of Voisey and O’Riordan (1997), by 1996 the White Paper process had had “little real effect in terms of integrating environmental considerations into other policy areas, and even less with regard to sustainable development”. However, they note that it had established a “significant institutional structure for the implementation of sustainable development in the future” (p.29).

In 1994 the DoE published the UK’s first sustainable development strategy (*Sustainable development: the UK strategy*) which was part of UK commitment to reporting progress with Rio initiatives. It set out the UK’s national strategy for implementing sustainable development to 2012. This document also gave legally-based regulation a secondary role, in this case to voluntary adoption of environmental good practice. Nonetheless, it did accept the concept of demand management concept, established a new landfill tax, and set up new institutions outside government departments (for example, the British Government Panel on Sustainable Development, the UK Round Table on Sustainable Development and ‘Going for Green’). However, it lacked targets and budgetary commitment. For example, Local Agenda 21 responsibilities were given to local authorities but with no extra finance provided. In 1996 the second combined review of the White Paper and Sustainable Development Strategy again highlighted the use of voluntary agreements in achieving sustainability.

Despite this, the UK was a prominent player in international sustainable development processes after the Rio Conference. It had a good record on Agenda 21 and was one of only 13 countries reporting on progress by 1996. Furthermore, in Environment Minister, John Gummer, it had a recognised environmental champion. Nonetheless, the UK’s prominence at international level has been heavily reliant on its reporting efficiency and record of institutional reforms rather than on evidence of changes in either administrative culture or policies. Where it proved to be most innovative and active was at the local level in the creation of LA21s (Voisey and O’Riordan, 1997). In 1995, nearly three-quarters (71%) of Local Authorities were committed to the LA21 process and by 1997 73% were pursuing LA21 strategies with 50% having begun work on Sustainability or State of the Environment reports (Tuxworth and Carpenter, c.1995; Morris and Hams, 1997). Yet, as Christie (1994) has noted, due to cuts in the power and resources of local government, early policies were characterised as “strong on imagination and commitment and short on resources and powers of coordination” (p.17). In his opinion the early 1990s were characterised in the UK by “a policy culture of dis-integrated centralism, in which local government has been shorn of powers and resources, central government and its agencies find it hard to coordinate policies, and the operation of the minimally-regulated market is given priority” (p.17)

In March 1996 a preliminary set of 120 sustainable development indicators were produced by the DoE. However, these mainly dealt with economic and environmental aspects of sustainability and downplayed the social elements. For example they did not consider issues such as crime, culture and social cohesion. Thus, Voisey and O’Riordan

(1997) conclude that in the mid-1990s in the UK sustainable development was “defined narrowly with little recognition of the implications for wider society and individual behaviour, and the radical agenda of equity, democracy and empowerment” (p.27).

## **(2) Rural Policy and Rural Institutions**

A number of changes were made to key rural institutions during the 1988-1997 period. In 1989, the management of water systems in England and Wales was reorganised. The former Regional Water Authorities were replaced by new private water companies and a new national regulatory organisation, the National Rivers Authority. Privatisation led to significant amounts of former publicly owned land being transferred into private ownership (Richardson *et al*, 1991; Maloney and Richardson, 1994). The NRA challenged established British approaches to environmental protection, characterised by informality and negotiation, by pledging to act as “a tough and effective regulator” (quoted in Seymour *et al*, 1999). However, in practice there was greater continuity than change in the way it dealt with industry in general and agriculture in particular (Seymour *et al*, 1999). In 1996 the NRA was incorporated into the Environment Agency along with Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Pollution (HMIP), the Waste Regulatory Authorities and some small units from the DoE. This new cross-source agency was a major institutional step in facilitating government goals of integrated pollution control. The new organisation focused strongly on issues relating to waste management in its early years.

In 1991 the Nature Conservancy Council (which covered England, Wales and Scotland) was broken up and replaced by English Nature, the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH). While this represented a devolution of responsibilities, there were fears from a range of environmental groups that environmental standards and objectives would be diluted, particularly in Scotland (Winter, 1996:216).

In England and Wales, privatisation pressures also affected the operation of MAFF from 1987 when ADAS was given powers (under the 1986 Agriculture Act) to charge for its advice and the government indicated that a strongly commercial approach would be adopted. As Winter (1996) notes, this move removed one of the key pillars of post-war agriculture settlement, free advice. While this can be seen as a legitimate move in light of surpluses of agricultural production, it has been judged as “profoundly inappropriate” in terms of the wider restructuring pressures faced by agriculture at this time (Winter, 1996:239). The mid to late eighties saw farmers being encouraged by government schemes, social pressures and, in some cases, economic signals to adopt more environmentally-friendly practices (for example the ESA scheme from 1987), to diversify their businesses (for example the 1986 Interdepartmental working party on Alternative Land Use and the Rural Economy (ALURE) and the 1987 DoE and MAFF statement, *Farming and Rural Enterprise*) or to address rising concerns over agricultural pollution. The government came under criticism from a range of environmental pressure groups and academics to revise its intentions and promises were made to continue free provision of ‘public good’ advice. However, subsequent studies have highlighted significant budgetary limits to this ‘public good’ advice (Winter, 1996:239; Lowe, *et al*, 1992 and 1997). In 1992 ADAS became a ‘next steps’ agency which was subcontracted to provide ‘public good

advice' by MAFF. In addition, MAFF partially funded FWAG to provide conservation advice to farmers. This has produced concerns that pollution and landscape issues were only weakly covered as FWAG has little tradition of expertise in these areas. There is also evidence that this division in the delivery of 'public good' advice between FWAG, "based firmly on the principles of voluntarism and compromise" and ADAS and other statutory agencies with a conservation, landscape or environmental protection remit, has been strained (Winter, 1996:243). Winter (1996) attempts to provide an overview of the total provision of advice given in 1993/4. This suggests that Northern Ireland and Wales were considerably less well covered than England and Scotland in terms of holdings coverage and that Scotland and Wales were the worse off in terms of area coverage. On average, 13% of farmers in Britain had received a FWAG visit and over 20% a visit from ADAS. However, the rate of coverage in the early 1990s for ADAS and FWAG combined was about 4% of holdings a year. Winter (1996:249) concludes that policy greening in this area was slight and that resources for advisory services were "small" with only a "relatively low proportion of farmers" affected by advisory efforts.

In 1997 the Farming and Rural Conservation Agency (FRCA) was created as a specific agency with the remit to deliver public good advice. With around 480 staff covering England and Wales this would appear to offer an increase in resources spent on such advice. An added responsibility of FRCA was the administration of the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, taken over from the Countryside Commission in 1996. This represented a strengthening of MAFF's role in the delivery of agri-environmental initiatives.

In 1995 the government issued the first comprehensive statements of policy towards the countryside (rather than just agriculture) of England, Wales and Scotland since the Scott Report of 1940s (DoE/MAFF, 1995; Scottish Office, 1995; Welsh Office 1996). They can be seen as indicative of an emerging attitude towards the countryside as a rural rather than an exclusively agricultural space and are indicative of the challenges posed to the authority of MAFF over countryside matters from the mid-1980s (for example over agricultural pollution, where the challenge came from the NRA, and over BSE and other public health matters). All three Rural White papers are characterised by the theme of government through 'community'-led initiatives. Central government is cast as an 'enabler' in the economic sphere and a 'partner' in the social sphere, not as a manager in its own right (Murdoch, 1997; Edwards, 1998). Such an emphasis sits clearly within the rhetoric of the Rio conference and neo-liberal economics. The emphasis placed on rural people helping themselves draws particularly on ideals of strong rural communities:

"Self-help and independence are traditional strengths of rural communities. People in the countryside . . . do not expect the Government to solve all their problems for them . . . . In any case, local decision-making is likely to be more responsive to local circumstances than uniform plans. Improving the quality of life in the countryside starts with local people and local initiative." (DoE/MAFF, 1995:16)

However, there was no substantial new money to encourage this community action and the approach set out in the White Paper has been criticised as a "covert withdrawal of the state" (Murdoch, 1997). As Martin (1999) has highlighted, bottom-up approaches run the risk both of legitimising spending reductions by government agencies and of allowing particular 'community champions' powers which may undermine traditional local representative politics.

### (3) Rural development

As in the EU, Britain has tended to equate rural development with agricultural development. Rural development *per se* has taken a back seat both institutionally and in terms of budgetary power. While the Rural Development Commission (RDC) (an agency of DoE) has a history stretching back to the early years of the twentieth century, it has lacked power and resources in relation to the agricultural (MAFF) and planning lobbies (DETR). Rural Development Programmes were the principal area-based initiative by which the RDC set out to achieve its objectives. By 1984 there were 27 such areas in England. The principal strategy of the RDC up to the early 1990s was to promote employment provision (Bowler and Lewis, 1991:164). However, the objectives of the RDC were pursued principally through the funding of a network of voluntary organisations, most notably the county-based Rural Community Councils. Some writers (such as McLaughlin, 1987) have argued that this voluntary approach has played down the importance of government-led strategies in other rural agencies and allowed them to by-pass responsibility for rural development. Others, such as Cherry and Rogers (1996), have argued that it is “quite difficult to point to formal policies of rural community development in Britain” (p.174).

The RDC has nonetheless played a key role in highlighting issues of rural deprivation, the lack of affordable housing, threats to local services and social exclusion (Martin, 1999:170). It has encouraged local appraisals at parish level and funded community development workers in some of the most deprived areas (Martin, 1999:171). A notable example of its work is ‘Rural Action for the Environment’, a bottom-up rural environmental initiative set up under the government’s ‘Action for the Countryside’ programme which was launched in 1992 and funded by the Countryside Commission, English Nature and the RDC. Although it had only a modest budget of £3.2 million over three years, by 1995 all of non-metropolitan England was covered by one of its 40 network teams, offering expertise to local communities and a commitment to the bottom-up ethos of the initiative (Martin, 1999).

However, the RDC’s initiatives are small compared to the rural development schemes funded under the EU regional development initiatives (although it is a key provider of matched funding for EU initiatives – McNicholas and Woodward, 1999:20). The first round of Objective 5b funding in 1988 led to the designation of four areas: Dyfed-Gwyness-Powys in Wales; the Scottish Highlands and Islands; Dumfries and Galloway; and parts of Devon and Cornwall. In 1994 the designations were extended to create 11 Objective 5b areas in the UK, as set out in Table 1. In addition, the Scottish Highlands and Islands were redesignated as an Objective 1 region (Ward and McNicholas, 1998).

**Table 1: Objective 5b regions of the UK 1994-1999**

<i>Region</i>	<i>Area</i> (sq km)	<i>Pop</i>	<i>Funds</i> (£m)
Rural Stirling & Upland Tayside	6900	71000	21
North & West Grampian	4193	149000	33
Borders	4714	103881	25
Dumfries & Galloway	6400	147800	39
East Anglia	2410	230770	50
Lincolnshire	3094	190878	44
Marches	3200	148000	34
Midlands Uplands	1000	41305	10
Northern Uplands	14286	374000	90
South West	7350	775304	183
Rural Wales	14271	623828	153
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>67818</b>	<b>2855765</b>	<b>682</b>

Source: Ward and McNicholas, 1998:32

Under the LEADER 2 initiative, 66 areas of the UK were approved for the receipt of funds, twenty in England, eight in Wales, 14 in Scotland and 24 in Northern Ireland (McNicholas and Woodward, 1999:17).

#### **(4) Population change**

Between 1981 and 1991 the combined national populations of England and Wales underwent a slight decline of -0.1%. However, this disguises a trend of decline in Wales and of increase (by 3.8%) in England. Strong trends of counterurbanization in the preceding decade (1971-1981) were dampened but general trends of a decline in the populations of Inner and Outer London, metropolitan areas and large cities and an increase in the populations of non-metropolitan areas, including remoter, mainly rural areas, continued (Lewis, 1998:138-141). In fact, remoter, mainly rural areas were the fastest growing areas of England and Wales from 1981-91, growing by just over 6%. However, significant regional and local differences were found and most of this rural growth was confined to areas south of the Wash. Some rural areas continued to experience population decline, some at district level, some in particular parishes. From the early 1980s regional rural population increase occurred mainly in a growth belt extending from "East Anglia through Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire to Wiltshire, Dorset and Hampshire" (Lewis, 1998: 141). Outliers of significant rural growth (5-10%) were also found in parts of the South West, mid-Wales and the Welsh Marches. Much of the change is due to in-migration. The overall growth rate for rural areas was 6.9% compared to 3.8% for England as a whole (1981-91).

**Table 2: Population and Population Density in Scotland, 1999**

<i>UA</i>	<i>1999 Population</i>	<i>Population density</i>	<i>%age Change in pop: 91-99</i>
Rural			
Highland	208,600	0.08	2.2
Western Isles	27,560	0.09	-6.3
Argyll & Bute	89,730	0.13	-3.9
Shetland	22,740	0.16	0.9
Orkney	19,600	0.20	0.2
Scottish Borders	106,400	0.22	2.2
Dumfries & Galloway	146,800	0.23	-0.3
Perth & Kinross	134,030	0.25	5.0
Aberdeenshire	212,650	0.34	4.5
Stirling	84,700	0.39	4.0
Moray	85,210	0.38	1.2
Angus	109,840	0.50	1.3
S Ayrshire	114,250	0.95	0.6
E Ayrshire	120,940	0.97	-2.4
<b>RURAL SCOTLAND</b>	<b>1,497,840</b>	<b>0.21</b>	<b>1.4?</b>
<b>SCOTLAND</b>	<b>5,119,200</b>	<b>0.98</b>	<b>0.2?</b>

Source: Scottish Executive Central Research Unit, 1999

Between 1991 and 1998 rural Scotland's population increased by 1.3%, whilst the population of Scotland as a whole was relatively stable, rising by only 0.3%. The major reason for this was urban-rural migration. Although most migration was found to be within a given locality, this migration has reversed the long-term trend of depopulation. Rural districts close to the central belt experienced the most in-migration (see Table 2) (Scottish Executive Central Research Unit, 1999).

Drawing on a survey of 700 respondents, the Scottish Executive Central Research Unit (1999) found migrants to be younger, more economically active, wealthier and better educated and in-migration was judged to have brought many benefits to rural Scotland. Long-term residents (resident since at least 1981) were generally found to welcome in-migrants.

Reasons for the continued attraction of rural areas were numerous. A growth in rural employment opportunities (see below), enhanced by new forms of communication (encouraging migration to more remote areas) and cheaper sites for industrial development (mainly in more accessible rural areas) has encouraged both employees and individual entrepreneurs into the countryside. The greater ability to commute longer distances from home to work due particularly to rising car ownership has also enabled the increased use of the countryside as a residential space, despite rising rural house prices (see below). People have also been encouraged to the countryside by rural ideals, which include the perception of a cleaner, healthier environment in rural areas, and ideas of urban areas as places of crime and pollution, exacerbated by weak urban regeneration policies. This has led to a continuing preference for a rural life style, particularly amongst young families and rising numbers of increasingly wealthy

and mobile retirees. The nature of the 'rural idyll' was summarised by Little and Austin (1996) in the following way:

"Rural life is associated with an uncomplicated, innocent, more genuine society in which traditional values persist and lives are more real. Pastimes, friendships, family relations and even employment are seen as somehow more honest and authentic, unencumbered with the false and insincere trappings of city life or their associated dubious values." (p.10)

A survey by the Countryside Commission in 1997 reported that over half the population expressed the desire to live in the countryside (cited in CA, 1999:8).

By 1998 about 20% of the population of England lived in rural areas. Most rural settlements in England are very small (over three-quarters have populations of less than 500) but most of the rural population (over two-thirds) lives in settlements of 1,000 to 10,000 people (CA, 1999: 7). The rural population is older, on average, than the national population (CA, 1999: 7 citing ONS Mid Year population estimates, 1996).

### **(5) Land use and planning policy**

The key elements of the planning system of England and Wales were set out in the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act. This aimed to contain the development of urban areas and protect the countryside from 'inappropriate developments'. Key policies have been the designation of green belts, designed to prevent 'urban sprawl', and the omission of many agricultural changes from the system of planning permission. The planning system has a strong tradition of local (county and district) control and discretion in planning. Preservationist attitudes, strongly influenced by ideas of the countryside as a place of scenic beauty, free from industries apart from traditional (non-industrialised) agriculture and suitable for residential and rural recreational activities, characterise the planning system in England.

Murdoch and Marsden (1994), however, report that an "increased emphasis on a *laissez-faire* approach was evident in DOE planning circulars of the mid-1980s" and ascribe this to "tentative moves" by central government to "free up" the planning system (p.26). This coincided with the 'crisis' of productivist agriculture in the 1980s, which led to government calls for diversification of the rural economy. Policy statements such as *Farming and Rural Enterprise* (1987) suggested that restrictions on industrial and residential development of agricultural land might be loosened and the Farm Diversification Grant Scheme (1988-92) encouraged farmers to diversify into new agricultural or non-agricultural activities.

Murdoch and Marsden's (1994) case study work in Buckinghamshire suggests that local planners were generally more likely to give planning permission for developments (such as golf courses, light industrial units, housing) during this period but that action from local residents was important in influencing the location of such developments. For example, Murdoch (1993) reports evidence that the development of areas for aggregate extraction is restricted by preservationist pressures in the SE of England whereas it is much more extensive in Scotland where such pressures are less acute despite a greater potential for environmental impact (p.237).

By the late 1980s, lobbying of central government by a range of countryside and environmental groups central led to a renewed commitment to “protecting the land from sporadic development” (Murdoch and Marsden, 1994:26). Thus, the 1991 Planning and Compensation Act strengthened the planning process by bringing all rural areas under the local development plan-making process for the first time (Murdoch and Marsden, 1994). It also set out to regulate local discretion further through regional government office scrutiny of plans and MAFF and RDC comments with respect to rural diversification (Elson *et al*, 1995:ii)

Revised Planning Policy Guidance note 7 (PPG 7) *The Countryside and the Rural Economy* was published in January 1992. The guidance gave priority to building re-use (Elson *et al*, 1995: v). In a 1995 analysis of this policy based on 32 case study authorities, it was argued that “Plans in the more ‘accessible’ areas, those closer to the main urban areas, were more advanced than those in the more ‘remote’ rural areas” (Elson *et al*, 1995: i). Most plans were found to have regard to the need to balance and integrate conservation and development, although “strong priority” was given to restrain development in statutorily designated areas and on the “best and most versatile” (presumably in agricultural cropping terms?) agricultural land (Elson *et al*, 1995: ii).

In a subsequent study undertaken between October 1997 and July 1998 to assess the position of rural development in land use planning policies it was concluded that local rural planning strategies tend to prioritise environmental protection over the meeting of economic and social needs (Elson *et al*, 1998). While planning application approval levels are generally high, clear variations in the rates of approval of non-residential applications were found according to different types of rural areas. Areas defined as “deep rural” had a 90.7% approval rate, whereas for “mixed rural areas” the rate was 86.4% and for urban fringe areas, 80.9%. Even wider variations were found between individual planning authorities (Elson *et al*, 1998: xii). The most frequent reason given for the refusal of planning permission was argued to result from “an outdated view of what are appropriate uses in the countryside”. It was concluded that “Many authorities continue to operate a very strong presumption against uses not directly related to farming the land”, including equestrian uses, a range of types of farm diversification, and recreation, tourism and transport uses (Elson *et al*, 1998:94). Such an approach seems out of step with the changes to the industrial and employment mix of the countryside which have resulted in a “multi-use, multi-activity environment” (Elson *et al*, 1998:94), and contrasts with national DETR sustainable development policy (DETR, 1999).

A DoE report covering land use changes from 1985-1994 indicates that only about 2% (285,000 ha) of the area of England was affected by change. However, the most important type of land use change over the period was the transfer of land **between** different rural land uses (defined as agriculture; forestry, open land and water; minerals and landfill; and outdoor recreation) and this affected 130,000 ha. There was a further net change of 60,000 hectares of land from rural to urban uses (defined as residential; transport and utilities; industry and commerce; community services; vacant) (this constituted about 0.5% of all land classified as in rural land use) (DETR, nd).

In relation to land use change between rural land uses, agriculture experienced the greatest losses of 29,000 ha to other rural land uses. The top five trends were: a shift of 27,000 ha from agriculture to forestry, open land and water; a shift of 21,000 ha from one type of agriculture to another; a shift of 18,000 ha from forestry, open land and water to agriculture; a shift of 17,000 ha from agriculture to outdoor recreation; and a shift of 14,000 ha within the category of forestry, open land and water. Agriculture was also the greatest loser in terms of transfers of land from rural to urban uses. The five top trends here were: a shift of 28,000 ha from agriculture to residential use; a shift of 13,000 ha from agriculture to transport and utilities; a shift of 7,000 ha from agriculture to industry and commerce; a shift of 3,000 ha from agriculture to community services; and a shift of 2,000 ha from outdoor recreation to residential. However, there is evidence of a slowing trend of land moving from rural to urban land use classes. The annual net change fell from 8,000 ha in 1987 to 6,500 ha in 1992 (DETR, nd).

### **(6) Housing**

While the population of Britain has witnessed a slight decline since 1981, it has been projected that 4.4m new households will form between 1991 and 2016 (DETR Website). The early years of this projection have witnessed considerable demands being placed on rural areas for residential development.

By 1996, there were nearly 4 million dwellings in rural England. This constitutes a fifth of the country's total housing stock. Five per cent of this stock was built between 1991 and 1996 (DETR, 1996). Regional variations in house-building are strong. For example in the South East (excluding London) the projection is for 1,103,000 new households between 1991 and 2016, with the expectation that 25% of these will be related to in-migration (DETR, 1999). Housebuilders in the South East also expressed a marked preference for building on green field land as this was felt to be both easier and safer (DETR, 1999).

The percentage of land for new residential development taken from rural land uses fell from about 53% in 1985 to 43% in 1997 (of this 37% was from agriculture, with the remaining 6% from a mix of other rural land uses). In terms of residential development in urban and rural areas in 1997, however, 54% of the land used had not been previously developed. There were also wide regional variations linked to such averages, for example in 1995 the figures range from 81% in London and 54% in the North West to 37% in the East Midlands and 32% in the South West (DETR, nd). Continued demand for rural dwellings has resulted mainly from a growth in households due to more people living alone and also due to the ongoing growth in the rural population, the need to provide affordable housing for the significant proportion of rural dwellers on low incomes (about a quarter of rural residents in England and Wales are in or on the margins of poverty according to Cloke *et al*, 1995 and Milbourne, 1997), a lack of residential properties in cities, and demand for second homes. Although less than 1% of rural homes are second homes, there are considerable spatial variations with some districts in National Parks having considerably higher levels (CA, 1999:23-4).

In more peripheral areas of Scotland the demand for housing has mainly been met through the sale of vacant agricultural dwellings or the upgrading or conversion of

older rural properties. In areas closer to the central belt, however, the stock of such buildings is limited and the greater rates of in-migration has resulted in increasing house prices and the need for increased provision of social housing (Scottish Executive Central Research Unit, 1999).

### **(7) Changes in rural industries**

By the 1990s employment patterns in the rural areas of Britain were similar to those of the whole country. The Countryside Agency recently reported that, by 1991, rural areas in England had a “similar mix of employment sectors” as the country as a whole (CA, 1999:13) and Doyle (c.1999) reports “a convergence in the employment profiles of rural and urban areas in Scotland” from the 1980s (see also Scottish Office 1999). Generally, there has been a decline in traditional land-based rural industries and a growth in service industries in rural areas. This on the whole mirrors national patterns, with some minor variations. For example, Doyle (c.1999) reports that from 1980, rural areas recorded a “faster fall in employment in primary industries, a slower decline in manufacturing employment and a faster growth in service sector jobs than Scotland as a whole”. The major exception relates to manufacturing in rural England. Whereas nationally there has been a decline in manufacturing employment, rural England has experienced significant rates of growth .

Most businesses in rural areas are small or medium sized. In Rural Development Areas 91.4% of all VAT-registered businesses in 1997 had fewer than 10 employees (CA, 1999: 15). Some rural areas also have low levels of GDP. In 1996, the English county with the lowest level of GDP per person was Cornwall, ranking below all metropolitan counties. Other mainly rural counties in the bottom 10 include Durham, Isle of Wight, East Sussex, Northumberland, Devon and Somerset (CA, 1999:17). However, rural unemployment levels are generally no higher than national averages and are lower than average in parts of England and Scotland (Doyle, c.1999; CA, 1999).

Table 3: Employment Profile of Rural Scotland (c.1992)

	Rural Areas	All Scotland
Primary	6.4%	4.4%
Manufacturing	18.4%	20.4%
Construction	6.9%	6.8%
Services	68.3%	68.4%

Source: Doyle (c.1999) and Scottish Office (1992).

NB Figures exclude the self-employed.

#### ***i) Rural manufacturing***

Between 1960 and 1991 when Great Britain as a whole lost nearly 43% of its manufacturing employment, rural areas were exceptional in experiencing growth in this sector. By 1991 rural areas had about 250,000 more manufacturing jobs than in 1960, an increase of 45% (North, 1998:167). Townsend (1993) argues that rates of growth in rural manufacturing slowed during the 1980s and he reports only a 4.6%

increase in remoter rural areas from 1981-89. Nonetheless, rural England, in particular, contains areas which have been recognised as important elements of the international economy and are placed among the leading investment frontiers (North, 1998). This growth in rural areas has been attributed to a number of different causes: the availability of spacious and lower cost sites, the attraction of rural environments to employees in terms of rural ideals and the quality of life, the availability of cheaper and less unionised or militant (often female) rural labour, the impacts of telematics (telecommunications and computer technology) and government and EU policy (North, 1998). While several authors ascribe considerable significance to telematics (eg North, 1998 and Doyle, c.1999), Grimes (2000) argues that although teleworking was “widely hyped as the best prospect for rural areas” it “continues to be predominantly an urban or suburban phenomenon” (p.13).

Townsend (1993) argues, using a shift-share analysis, that this shift has occurred in both southern and northern areas of Britain. Remoter rural areas of southern Britain gained about 40,000 more manufacturing jobs between 1981 and 1989 whereas those in the north gained 33,000. The implication of these findings is that the urban-rural shift is independent of industrial structure (North, 1998).

Shifts have been particularly marked with respect to high technology industries (synthetic materials, pharmaceuticals, electronic goods, scientific and medical instruments and telecommunications). However, here strong regional concentrations of change are apparent. Rates of growth are highest in East Anglia, the South-West and central and northern Wales. Nonetheless, the bulk of high technology industry remains in the South East region. Even in rural regions where high growth rates have been experienced, growth tends to be strongly spatially concentrated. For example, Gould and Keeble (1984) in their study of new firms in East Anglia, reported that three-quarters were located within 48kms of Cambridge.

### ***ii) Rural services***

The greatest growth in rural based industries over this period has been in the service sectors, not traditionally associated with rural areas.

In Scotland, Doyle (c.1999) reports that from 1981-91 there was “an increase of 36000 jobs in schools, hospitals and social services” and of 5000 jobs in business services (excluding hotels and catering), and that evidence points to the continuation of these trends in the 1990s (Scottish Office, 1999).

### ***iii) Rural tourism***

Tourism is one of the world’s largest and fastest growing industries and rural tourism is a growing industry in Britain in terms of both land use and employment (Butler *et al*, 1998). In 1996, it was reported that there were 1.3 billion day visits to English countryside in 1996 (UK Leisure Day Visits Survey). Walking is the single most popular recreational activity in the countryside (CA, 1999:32). However, there has been a growth in both some more traditional (eg walking, watching wildlife, visiting country houses) and novel recreational activities (eg mountain biking, rock climbing and water sports) in the countryside.

In Scotland, Doyle (c.1999) reports that tourism is widely considered to be the biggest potential source of rural development and is seen as an essential component of any development strategy (Scottish Office, 1998). Figures available for Scotland as a whole indicate that tourism-related activities provide around 177,000 jobs and create revenue of £2,655 billion pounds and thus are more important in these terms than agriculture where the comparable figures are 68,000 jobs and £1943 million (Doyle, c.1999).

Although tourism has been recognised to have considerable economic benefits, it also has a number of ecological and social problems associated with it. A report by the Scottish Tourist Board in 1992 highlighted five main pressures from tourism in Scotland:

1. Pressure from people, leading to footpath damage, disturbance to wildlife and trampling effects on vegetation.
2. Pressure from traffic, leading to congestion and pollution.
3. Visual intrusion, caused by inappropriate design and siting of facilities.
4. Untidiness, caused by litter and wastes.
5. Conflicts between different users.

(cited in Murdoch, 1993)

#### iv) Agricultural change and diversification

In 1997 there were 144,777 farm holdings in England and Wales, covering 92,233km<sup>2</sup> (CA, 1999:18). A total of 417,400 people were employed in agriculture (1.7% of national workforce) in 1997. This represents an average of 4.4% of the population of rural districts (1991). However, again there are strong regional variations, with some areas much more reliant on agricultural employment. For example, in South Holland (Lincolnshire) and Leominster (Herefordshire), 15% of employment was in agriculture (1997). The longer-term decline in agricultural employment continued over the period, with a 14% decline in agricultural jobs from 1987-97, mainly amongst agricultural employees. Farm incomes followed a pattern of “fluctuating decline” from the 1970s (CA, 1999:21). A pattern of low incomes in the late eighties and early nineties was followed by a recovery in the mid-1990s and sharp decline in 1997/8 (CA, 1999:21).

There is considerable debate over the extent of farm diversification in Britain. This is partly due to differences in definitions, partly to varying levels of commitment to the idea of a ‘post-productivist transition’ dating from the mid-1980s/early 1990s and partly to a lack of comprehensive data (Morris and Evans, 1999).

In a study of three English counties Evans and Ilbery (1992) estimated that only 6% of farms had accommodation enterprises and only “a fraction” of these “generated significant income” (Morris and Evans, 1999: 353). Subsequent studies, however, have suggested higher levels of agricultural diversification. For example, Ilbery *et al* (1997), in a 1994 survey of 1,250 farm businesses in three areas of England, found three out of ten had some form of business diversification, although most had only one. There were also considerable variations between the areas. In the Oxfordshire lowlands 33% of farm businesses had diversified whereas the figure for the West

Midlands urban fringe was slightly lower (29%) and considerably lower for the Northern Pennines uplands (23%).

Studies adopting a pluriactivity perspective report even higher levels of diversification albeit dominated by off-farm employment. For example, in a Scottish survey of 1989 Dalton and Wilson found that 40% of farms had adopted some form of diversification with the majority accounted for by off-farm employment. Similar results were found in the 1993 Scottish survey by Dent and colleagues who reported that 59% of all farm households were engaged in either on-farm diversification or off-farm employment, with most of the activity having been initiated since 1987. Once again off-farm employment was dominant, constituting 60% of all diversification activity. Thus, by 1995, 41% of employment on full-time holdings and 85% of work on smallholdings was of a part time nature (see Doyle, c.1999).

A recent English survey by Gasson and colleagues (1998) which surveyed 491 farmers in 1997 which asked about measures taken in response to the financial uncertainties of the 1990s found that while most had relied on conventional productivist responses, most notably increasing production from existing enterprises (65%), nearly a fifth (18%) had started non-farming enterprises (Winter and Smith, 2000).

Overall most work suggests that farm diversification has been limited to date, with particular spatial concentrations relating to market opportunities, local opposition and planning policies (Ilbery and Bowler, 1993; Murdoch and Marsden, 1994) although some of this diversification has led to the multiple use of land defined as agricultural.

## **Rural Sustainability 1998 to date**

### **(1) Models of Sustainability**

In November 1998, DETR (established under the new Labour government in 1997) signalled its broader understanding of sustainability when it issued 13 'quality of life' indicators which included environmental, economic and social indicators. Its revised UK sustainable development strategy of 1999, *A better quality of life: a strategy for sustainable development* took this understanding a step further. Unlike the earlier strategy, this places importance on the social as well as the environmental and economic dimensions of sustainable development and is much more in line with the ideals of sustainability established at the Rio Conference. Its main aims are as follows:

- social progress which recognises the needs of everyone
- effective protection of the environment;
- prudent use of natural resources; and
- maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth

### **(2) Rural Policy and Rural Institutions**

Major changes in British rural institutions are related to the devolution of powers from Whitehall. In 1999 the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly were established and given responsibility for rural

affairs in their respective countries. In England Regional Development Agencies were established and given responsibility to deliver 'sustainable development' at the regional level. England also witnessed the disbanding of the Rural Development Commission whose responsibilities were divided between the RDAs and a new national organization, the Countryside Agency which replaced the Countryside Commission. There have also been calls for the reform of MAFF or its replacement by a new Ministry of Rural Affairs which would better reflect the changing priorities of rural areas (UK Round Table on Sustainable Development, 1998).

Consultations have recently been issued for new rural policy documents (DETR/MAFF, 1999; Scottish Office, 1998). *Rural England: A Discussion Document* contains a strong emphasis on sustainable development based on economic, environmental and social aspects and embraces a vision of a living and working countryside:

"The White Paper will look at the longer-term future for the English countryside and at how policies on the economy, health, transport, education, the environment, crime, agriculture, planning and many other areas will support a sustainable countryside and rural communities in the future. . . It will look at how social, economic and environmental objectives can be integrated to ensure there is sustainable development." (para 1.5)

It includes a greater stress than the 1995 Rural White paper on the interdependence of town and country and rural areas as 'countryside for all'. This latter element is also embodied in the *Countryside and Rights of Way Bill* issued in March 2000 in which public access to about four million acres of mountain, moor, heath, down and registered common land is proposed.

Another significant development is the inclusion of a new Rural Development Regulation in the Agenda 2000 CAP reforms. This will entail the compulsory formulation of Rural Development Plans by all member states and is an indication of an albeit slow shift away from ideas of rural areas as purely agricultural spaces.

### **(3) Population**

For comprehensive data it is necessary to wait for 2001 census for national level changes which could then be cross-referenced with CS2000 information). However, most local authorities have made population projections and have planning application data. This would allow evaluation of the impacts of population changes and new housing development on environmental quality. The trends in England suggest that while the national population is likely to fall slightly, counterurbanisation is likely to continue.

### **(4) Housing**

It has been estimated that 1m more homes will be built in rural areas of Britain by 2011. In February 1998 the government issued a policy document entitled *Planning for the Communities of the Future*. This set out a pledge to "raise the national proportion of new homes to be built on previously developed land to over 60% over the next 10 years". It also included this target as one of its headline indicators of sustainable development (see DETR 1999). It is thus likely that the transfer of undeveloped land in rural land uses (principally agriculture) to residential land use will continue to decline slowly. However, it should be noted that the government has chosen to use the less demanding target of the proportion of homes built on previously

developed land rather than the proportion of previously developed land used for residential development.

### **(5) Agriculture and farm diversification**

The likely trends are for a further decline in agricultural employment and a modest increase in agricultural diversification. Several recent surveys have found that farmers are planning for more diversification. For example, a postal survey of 1,925 farmers in the south west of England by PROSPER (1998), found that 21% planned to start non-agricultural enterprises to secure their futures (Winter and Smith, 2000).

Likewise an ADAS (1999) survey of 2,352 farmers in England and Wales (a response rate of 37%) found that expansion and diversification were the most important future survival strategies reported by farmers. Forty per cent of farmers hoped to survive by purchasing more land, 54% are seeking to rent more land, 64% envisage developing non-farming sources of income and 50% are looking to diversify (Winter and Smith, 2000).

A Scottish study by Allbrooke *et al* 1998, comprising a postal survey in March-April 1998 of farms in Dumfries and Galloway with 119 responses found 19 farmers (16%) planning to increase income through diversification. Another Scottish study by Ramsay *et al* (1999) based on a postal survey of 429 farmers in the Borders area of Scotland found that nearly a half (46%) envisaged a need to develop non-agricultural sources of income, with holiday accommodation and off-farm employment the most likely developments (Winter and Smith, 2000).

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