



Commission for  
Rural Communities  
Tackling rural disadvantage



## **What does your council do for your community?**

Media Release

2 March 2006

The Commission for Rural Communities (CRC) has launched the inaugural Community Empowerment Awards, in association with the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). The search is now officially on, across four categories – for the innovations and best practice from parish and town councils in the areas of housing; young people; older people and Gypsies, Travellers and migrant workers.

The CRC are looking for councils who help to facilitate the provision of services and engagement within rural communities. The projects and process do not have to be wholly owned by the town or parish council, but the council must be helping as a facilitator and promoter in the specific area.

The awards are split into four categories (which are listed above), and eight regions. With awards being presented in each of the English regions: North West, North East, Yorkshire and Humber, East Midlands, West Midlands, East, South West and South East. Regional award winners will receive a contribution of £250 towards a scheme designed to help rural communities, with national award winners receiving £750.

All regional winners will also be invited to take part in an experience sharing session at the NALC Annual Conference and Exhibition on 23 September 2006 in Liverpool Adelphi Hotel.

Speaking about the awards Dr Stuart Burgess, chairman of the Countryside Agency and rural advocate said: "The Commission for Rural Communities recognises the important role that parish and town councils play in rural areas. Encouraging these councils to share their experiences and lessons learnt will benefit others who are working to make life better for rural communities across England. These awards will recognise, reward and share the experience of best practice."

While Cllr Ken Cleary, chairman of NALC, commented: "NALC are very proud to be involved in these awards which will showcase the best practice talent

exhibited daily by parish and town councils. We urge all parish and town councils to get involved in these awards and for other community, charity and voluntary groups to help in the nominating process.”

### **Notes for Editor:**

1. As set out in Defra’s Rural Strategy in July 2004, the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Bill, currently under consideration in Parliament, will establish the Commission for Rural Communities as an independent statutory body. Pending legislation, the Commission is operating as a distinct division of the Countryside Agency, across three main roles:

**Rural advocate:** the voice for rural people, businesses and communities.

**Expert adviser:** providing evidence-based, independent advice to government and others.

**Independent watchdog:** monitoring and reporting on the delivery of policies nationally, regionally and locally.

See also the website: [www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk](http://www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk)

2. The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) is a powerful body, speaking for some 10,000 Parish and Town Councils in England and Community Councils in Wales. NALC is committed to making this primary level of local government more effective, more democratic and better able to take a leadership role in local communities.

3. The Community Empowerment Awards sponsored by the Commission for Rural Communities are designed to recognise, reward and share the experiences of best practice as performed by parish and town councils in England. The essential criteria for success in the awards are where parish and town councils show in their projects: engagement and participation, understanding and building community relations, sustainability, facilitation, identification of issues and needs, and action.

4. For full details on how to enter the Community Empowerment Awards, the Commission for Rural Communities or the National Association of Local Councils please visit [www.nalc.gov.uk](http://www.nalc.gov.uk) or [www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk](http://www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk).