



CRC 15/08

Tuesday 2 December 2008

Commission for Rural Communities' Chief Executive plans to retire

The Commission for Rural Communities (CRC) has today (Tuesday December 2, 2008) announced that its Chief Executive, Graham Garbutt, plans to retire on 31 March next year.

Mr. Garbutt was appointed Chief Executive of the Countryside Agency in 2005, charged with bringing about major reorganisation. He played a leading role in the Government's programme of change across its rural agencies which involved closing down existing bodies, transferring work and people, and establishing new organisations including the Commission for Rural Communities.

In 2006 he was appointed as the first CEO for the Commission for Rural Communities with unanimous support of Commissioners, and in the past two years he has shaped its work with a strong focus on economic and social disadvantage in rural England. The Commission's successful policy interventions on issues such as dispersed poverty, affordable housing, rural planning, access to healthcare and devolved decision making flow directly from this. He has given particular priority to understanding and supporting rural economies through the new challenges they face.

Mr Garbutt's impact in this role has been considerable and reinforced by his broad experience in central, regional and local government. Past jobs have included those as head of the Government Office for the West Midlands and chief executive of Gloucester city council. He has been president of the Europe-wide association of government regional heads, and worked with the OECD on rural and regional issues.

Commission members joined the Chairman and Rural Advocate, Dr Stuart Burgess in saying: "It has been a real pleasure to work closely with Graham and we shall miss him. His knowledge, intellect and integrity through a complex and challenging period for rural communities have been vital to develop greater understanding and generate positive solutions. His skilled leadership has enabled the Commission to grow quickly in recognition and impact and he leaves an organisation ready to build further on this very sound base."

ENDS

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Notes for editors:

1 The CRC was established in April 2005 and became an independent body on 1 October 2006, following the enactment of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act, 2006. The role of the CRC is to provide well-informed, independent advice to Government and ensure that policies reflect the real needs and circumstances of people living and working in rural England. We give particular focus to tackling disadvantage and economic under-performance.

We have three key functions:

- advocate: the voice for rural people, business and communities;
- expert adviser: providing evidence-based, objective advice to Government and others; and
- independent watchdog: monitoring and reporting on the delivery of policies nationally, regionally and locally.

Further information about the CRC and its work can be found at:

www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk