



**Affordable Rural Housing  
Commission: One Year On  
14<sup>TH</sup> June 2007 - The QE2 Centre, London**

Commission for  
Rural Communities  
Tackling rural disadvantage

## **Speaker Biographies**

### **Morning Chair and Speakers**

#### **Chair – Stuart Burgess, Chair of the Commission for Rural Communities and Rural Advocate**

Stuart Burgess chairs the Commission for Rural Communities having been Chairman of the Countryside Agency, and the Government's Rural Advocate, since 2004. For 15 years he was a regional, national and international Church leader in the Methodist Church, including President of the Methodist Church of Great Britain in the millennium year. He has represented the Church at national level with government and ecumenical partners.

He is a member of the ethics committee for the Department of Work and Pensions, the BMA Patient Liaison Group, and of the University Courts of Nottingham and Hull. He has been involved in rural and social regeneration in the East Riding and North Yorkshire and is co-author of a study booklet on the countryside entitled "Presence".

Cancellation of debt for poor countries is important to him and to this end he has worked with the Presidents of Zambia and Malawi, the IMF, the World Bank and the Treasury.

He has also worked with the Metropolitan Commissioner of police, Sir John Stevens, arranging conferences around the theme "safer neighbourhoods" in the London Boroughs.

As Chairman and Rural Advocate, Dr Stuart Burgess leads the Commission for Rural Communities in its efforts to persuade Government to take account of the particular characteristics of rural areas (such as levels of disadvantage, the sparse population, the lack of local services, distance from the main centres of population, limited public transport, the absence of large scale businesses etc.) when making and implementing policies.

#### **Why 'Rural' Matters – Barry Gardiner, MP, Minister for Biodiversity, Landscapes and Rural Affairs**

Barry Gardiner is Parliamentary Secretary (Commons) (Biodiversity, Landscape and Rural Affairs). He was born in Glasgow in 1957. He studied at St. Andrews University and Cambridge. In 1983, he won a John F Kennedy scholarship to do research at Harvard.

In 1987 he entered business and ran a company of international maritime arbitrators for ten years before entering parliament as MP for Brent North in 1997.

Barry was a City Councillor in Cambridge where he chaired the Finance Committee and became the youngest mayor in the City's 800 year history. In Parliament, he has served on the Public Accounts Select Committee, and on the Broadcasting and Procedure Select Committees. He stood on the Finance Standing Committee that scrutinised the budget for 3 years in a row. He has chaired the All Party Group on Sports and Leisure and the All Party Group on Commonhold and Leasehold Reform. He founded and chaired Labour Friends of India and is a regular contributor to the Gujarati and Asian press.

Barry was Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland from April 2004 to May 2005. In May 2005 he became the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Competitiveness at the Department for Trade and Industry.

He is a keen hill-walker and birdwatcher, and greatly enjoys getting out in the

countryside.

Barry and his wife, Caroline, have three sons and a daughter.

### **Progress so Far – Margaret Clark, Commission for Rural Communities**

Margaret joined the Countryside Agency, and then the Commission for Rural Communities (CRC) as a member of its executive team upon its inception in April 1999, having previously been Director of Policy in one of the Agency's predecessor bodies, the Rural Development Commission. She is a member of the Commission Management Board and leads on the CRC's policy work, including external and international relationships.

She has a particular interest in housing and is a member of The Prince of Wales's Affordable Rural Housing Initiative, the Housing Corporation's Rural Advisory Group and was a member of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's Rural Housing Policy Forum. In a personal capacity she is a member of the Executive Committee of Hastoe Housing Association, which specialises in rural housing.

She helped to establish Business in the Community's Rural Action programme and is still a member of its Leadership Team. In July 2004, she was appointed as a personal rural ambassador by HRH The Prince of Wales.

She has been involved with the OECD's rural development work since the early 1990s and has been chair of its international Working Party on Territorial Policy in Rural Areas since 2002. Since 2004 she has been a member of the Carnegie Commission for Rural Community Development.

She is an honorary fellow of the Centre for Rural Economy at the University of Newcastle, a trustee of the Arkleton Trust and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. She was awarded the OBE in 1999 for services to rural development.

### **Panel Member – David Fursdon, Country Land & Business Association**

David Fursdon has been President of the CLA since 2005. He farms in Devon and has diversified into tourism. He manages several rural properties let to local people. He read Geography at Oxford and then entered the Civil Service (MOD) working in Whitehall and Geneva before qualifying as a rural chartered surveyor and becoming a partner in a West Country Auctioneers firm. In addition to his work on the Affordable Rural Housing Commission he has also worked on the Government's Heritage Protection Review and the Rural Climate Change Forum. He also conceived the 'Just Ask' campaign which he launched at Downing Street in January.

### **Panel Member – Neil Sinden, Campaign to Protect Rural England**

Neil Sinden has been Policy Director of the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) since April 2002. He was a member of the Government's Affordable Rural Housing Commission and previously Head of Policy and Research at the urban regeneration charity ROOM where he managed the Government-funded Positive Planning Project. He has also worked for the arts and environment charity Common Ground, with whom he organised the first national Apple Day in 1990. Neil is a keen cyclist and lives with his partner and 3 children in east London.

### **Panel Member – Helen Williams, National Housing Federation**

Helen Williams is Assistant Director of Neighbourhoods at the National Housing Federation. She aims to influence a wide policy agenda nationally to create the conditions for associations to flourish and to ensure they have a strong and positive reputation for the difference they make to the lives of neighbourhoods and

communities.

Helen heads a team of people whose work covers land policy, development and house building, low cost home ownership, rural issues, asset management and maintenance, environmental sustainability, equalities, neighbourhood regeneration and social inclusion, community engagement and tenant involvement, housing and neighbourhood services, landlord and tenant law, regulation and inspection, care and support, disability, older people, homelessness and access to housing.

As well as working at the National Housing Federation, Helen has managed the policy team of a large housing association and held housing management roles in associations and local government. She also spent a year in central government.

## **Afternoon Chairs and Speakers**

### **Chair - Elinor Goodman, Commission for Rural Communities**

Elinor Goodman was for 23 years political editor of Channel Four News. After leaving television, she chaired the independent [Affordable Rural Housing Commission](#) which last year made recommendations to the Government on how to improve the supply of affordable housing in the countryside. She joined the board of the Countryside Agency and then became a Commissioner of the Commission for Rural Communities.

She is now a freelance journalist, specialising in rural and political issues, and a parish councillor for her village in Wiltshire. She also sits on the boards of the [Thomson Foundation](#) and the [Hansard Society](#)

Elinor was formerly a member of the Wiltshire Community Trust and the Government's Hill Farming Taskforce, and has a longstanding interest in the countryside which has always been her home.

### **To Hills and Beyond – Peter Dixon, Housing Corporation**

Peter Dixon was appointed Chairman of the Housing Corporation in October 2003. Before that he was a Board Member of Anglia Housing Group and London & Quadrant Housing Trust. He has been Chairman of University College London Hospitals NHS Trust since April 2001. He was previously the Chairman of Enfield & Haringey Health Authority. He is a Trustee and Council Member of the NHS Confederation and a lay member of the Information Tribunal. He was appointed Chair of the Office for Public Management in February 2007. His business career includes running a variety of industrial companies as well as extensive experience in banking and corporate finance.

### **Workshop Chair – Michael Winter, Commission for Rural Communities**

Professor Michael Winter is Director of Centre for Rural Research and Professor of Rural Policy at Exeter University. He is also Chair of the South West Rural Affairs Forum, President of the Devon Rural Network and Vice-Chair of the Hatherleigh Area Project.

Professor Winter is also a member of the Governing Body of the Institute of Grassland and Environment Research, a member of Defra's Agricultural and Environmental Economics Academic Panel, a former member of Home Office Committee of Inquiry into Hunting with Dogs and the Environment Agency's South West Regional Environmental Protection Advisory Committee.

### **Workshop Chair – Mark Shucksmith, Commission for Rural Communities**

Professor Mark Shucksmith is Professor of Planning at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. He was formerly Professor of Land Economy and Director of the Arkleton Centre for Rural Development Research, Aberdeen.

From 2004-2008, he was First Vice-President of the International Rural Sociological Association and Programme Chair for the XI World Rural Sociology Congress in 2004. Professor Shucksmith is an expert on rural housing and social exclusion in rural areas. From 1997-2003 he was Programme Director for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's Action in Rural Areas programme. He is also a member of the Scientific Advisory Board for the Scottish Executive's Environment and Rural Affairs Department, and served as a member of the Affordable Rural Housing Commission.

### **Workshop Chair – Alison McLean, Commission for Rural Communities**

Alison is a freelance consultant specialising in rural policy and programmes and in cross-sector partnership working. She was formerly Director of the Rural Regeneration Zone in the West Midlands.

Previous to that Alison led the development of the Local Strategic Partnership and Community Strategy for Herefordshire. She was also responsible for Herefordshire Council's economic development policy. Alison has experience in a variety of rural development programmes, including European programmes.

Alison has occupied several roles in the voluntary sector, including community based housing and employment projects.

### **Workshop Speaker – Jo Lavis, Rural Housing Solutions**

Jo Lavis has been involved with rural affordable housing in England for over 20 years. She is a qualified planner but her work has always focused on the links between planning and housing. Beginning as a community development worker in rural Essex, Jo has since worked as a Rural Housing Enabler, for a private planning consultancy and for nine years worked on rural housing and planning issues at a national level for the Rural Development Commission, eventually heading up the affordable housing work of the Countryside Agency. This was followed by employment as an Investment Manager for the Housing Corporation, focusing on the rural districts of the East Midlands. Jo then returned to national policy as lead for Defra's work on affordable housing and joint head of the secretariat for the Affordable Rural Housing Commission. Since the end of October she has started working independently as a consultant specialising in providing, research, policy development, mentoring support and lobbying for rural affordable housing.

### **Workshop Speaker – Trevor Cherrett, Commission for Rural Communities**

Trevor Cherrett is currently Head of Planning, Housing & Transport with the Commission for Rural Communities (CRC), recently launched officially as a successor to the Countryside Agency with a remit as advisor, advocate, and watchdog on the real needs of people living and working in rural England.

His career spans local and central government, teaching and research, rural community development and consultancy, with a focus on rural community development issues. These include affordable housing, parish planning and community planning. He is also a consultant on the Carnegie UK Trust Rural Action Research Programme

He was the author of the Housing Corporation funded Good Practice Guide on Meeting Affordable Rural Housing Needs and has contributed substantially to the preparation of the recent Affordable Rural Housing Commission's report, and its subsequent follow up.

He is also currently working on the CRC's policy thinking on the concept of sustainable rural communities, and the implications for rural policy.

Other major research publications include the EU PRIDE project on European rural

partnerships, the BRIDGES project on community-led planning (both with the University of Gloucestershire) and *Taking Part*, an evaluation of rural participation.

He is a Visiting Research Fellow at the University of Sussex and a member of the [RTPI@ROOM](mailto:RTPI@ROOM) working groups on Housing and Community Planning.

He has extensive international experience spanning Canada, the USA and Europe, and is the UK Observer on Rural/Environment/Development, (R.E.D.), the European NGO campaigning for rural development policies within the EU.

He was recently made a Fellow of the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust for a study of the social and economic impacts of national parks and other protected areas on local communities in New Zealand and Australia. He is also one of the authors of a major new book on the South Downs to be published later this year.

### **Workshop Speaker – Kirstine Riding, Commission for Rural Communities**

Kirstine worked for the Countryside Agency, prior to establishment of the Commission for Rural Communities, since 2003. With the Countryside Agency she worked as policy advisor for Housing and Services within the NW regional team based in the Penrith office.

Her role with the Commission is now to act as Housing lead within the Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities. She has a keen interest in affordable rural housing and has worked within both the public and private sectors. Her experience is varied, having worked; as the Cumbrian Rural Housing Enabler; within homelessness and housing advice for a rural local authority; and, as housing manager for a rural housing association, which included running the tenant participation and training programme.

### **Panel Member – Andy Lloyd, Dorset RHE**

Andy has worked as the Rural Housing Enabler for West Dorset and Purbeck since 2003 which apparently, due to the turnover in RHE posts, makes him the longest serving RHE nationally! To date 38 parish surveys have been completed showing that 564 households meet the Local Authority's criterion on housing need.

He contributed evidence to the Affordable Rural Housing Commission enquiry last year and recently co-ordinated a letter from the South West Rural Housing Enabler Group to the Regional Assembly which collated survey and population evidence from the group to lobby for an increase in grant to rural schemes to reflect need and population distribution, and that exception sites need to remain additional to Spatial Strategy build allocation numbers.

Locally he has summarised the percentage of need which was met for urban and rural communities in the 2006 – 2008 bid round, highlighting the need to focus on low grant or no grant delivery solutions for the future. With this in mind he established the support of the LSP for two Community Land Trust pilots which are attempting to deliver a total of 15 affordable housing units without grant by combining low land value with cost effective modern sustainable construction methods. Both pilots have obtained planning permission (with reserved matters) and hope to be occupied this winter.

He will talk briefly about the need to view rural affordable housing as a total package of costs, and about the enabling of exception sites.

Andy became involved in affordable housing by chairing the Housing Group of the Bridport Coastal and Market Towns Initiative from 1999 to 2004 and will touch on the need for regional support for local decision-making.

Andy has had a few different jobs in the past - running a rural pottery for many years, working as a secondary school teacher and a short time as a carpenter in Scandinavia.

**Panel Member – Jack Ellerby, Chair NWRAF**

Jack Ellerby was a professional planner for twelve years specialising in National Parks and broader rural policy. He developed innovative local needs affordable housing policies, raised the profile of rural housing & second homes nationally and established a Rural Housing Enabler initiative in Exmoor, West Somerset and North Devon. Currently based in Cumbria as Policy Officer for Friends of the Lake District, he became Chairman of the North West Rural Affairs Forum in August 2006. Jack is currently contributing to the CRC Three Dragons Research on Regional Housing and Planning Strategies and is a member of the Housing Corporation's Rural Housing Advisory Group.

**Panel Member – Anthony Ball, Penwith DC**

Anthony Ball is the Housing Manager for Penwith District Council. Anthony has worked for Penwith since May 2002, firstly as the Housing Strategy and Enabling Officer and since July 2005 as the Housing Manager. Penwith is situated in West Cornwall and is well known for St Michaels Mount, Land's End and the towns of St Ives, Hayle and Penzance.

Penwith, although classed as rural, faces both urban and rural issues and receives Objective One and Neighbourhood Renewal Funding. Anthony was instrumental in setting up the Affordable Homes Task Force which has dramatically increased the delivery of affordable homes with partners from 20 homes a year to 100 homes a year. The area faces high housing shortages combined with low average earnings, and pressure from the tourism industry and demand for second homes as Cornwall's popularity increases due to its quality of life.

Prior to that he worked for Kerrier District Council and Bristol City Council. He has been responsible for delivering new affordable homes in Penwith and Kerrier to meet the huge demand for homes that people can afford, making use of empty homes for local housing use and for tackling Rough Sleeping in Bristol.

**Closing Speech – Yvette Cooper MP, Minister for Housing and Planning**

Yvette Cooper, MP for Pontefract and Castleford, was appointed Minister for Housing and Planning at the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister on 9 May 2005, and remains in the same role at the newly formed Communities and Local Government from 5 May 2006.

Yvette Cooper previously held the position of Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. From May 2002 to June 2003 she was Parliamentary Secretary at the Lord Chancellor's Department and from October 1999 she was Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Public Health.

She has been MP for Pontefract and Castleford since 1 May 1997. Before being appointed as Health Minister, Ms Cooper was a Member of the Education and Employment Select Committee and the Intelligence and Security Committee.

Ms Cooper was economic columnist and Leader writer on the *Independent* newspaper. She worked as Policy Advisor to Labour's Treasury Team in opposition between 1990-94 and as Policy Advisor to the Bill Clinton Presidential Campaign in 1992.

She was educated at Eggars Comprehensive, Alton Sixth Form College, Oxford University, Harvard University and the London School of Economics.

She is married to Ed Balls, MP for Normanton, and they have three children.