

AFFORDABLE RURAL HOUSING COMMISSION
'ONE YEAR ON' CONFERENCE
QEII CENTRE, LONDON 14 JUNE 2007

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1. LEADERSHIP – some courage and vision required.

- a. Strategy/Framework/Policy overload
 - i. A “cocktail” of national, regional, sub-regional and local policies and strategies – diversification of message – who's leading?
 - ii. Need for leadership from the Housing Corporation's Rural Housing Advisory Group (RHAG) and see SMART translation into action.
- b. ARHC Report
 - i. Evidence of record numbers of people needing access to affordable rural housing.
 - ii. CRC playing its part by monitoring progress made against the Commission's recommendations and DEFRA and CLG must play their part.
- c. Regional Rural Affairs Forums (RRAFs)
 - i. RRAFs can work with regional Govt Offices on their review of Regional Rural Delivery Frameworks (RRDFs) and take lead in addressing this issue.
 - ii. Partnerships with Regional Assemblies to encourage progress through Regional Housing and Spatial Strategies and with regional offices of the Housing Corporation to promote joint initiative e.g. East Midlands Rural Housing Practitioners Group.
- d. Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3)
 - i. Makes provision for affordable rural housing targets to be set at regional (RSS/RHS) level and sub-regionally (Housing Market Areas) – Secretary of State should intervene at Examination in Public if necessary to make sure this happens.
 - ii. PPS3 states, “. Planning at local and regional level adopting a positive and proactive approach which is informed by evidence, with clear targets for the delivery of rural affordable housing” (Para 30)

2. NEEDS EVIDENCE

- a. Strategic Housing Market Assessments (SHMAs)
 - i. EMRAF produced 'Building a Rural Dimension into SHMAs - District or HM Areas numbers may disguise rural characteristics.
 - ii. Regional/sub-regional HMAs useful to give broad information on:

1. – General mix
 2. - Identify areas of affordability stress. RHE bottom-up surveys can add details to.
- b. CRC/Three Dragons research
 - i. Highlighting limitations in current RHSs & RSSs
 - c. 'Bottom-up' Rural Housing Enablers (RHEs)
 - i. Demonstrates community engagement & identifies needs through local surveys
 - ii. Why is there not 100% coverage of RHEs in stressed rural HMAs?
 - iii. Growing concern over continuation of funding for RHEs post March 2008.
 - d. RHEs – honest brokers (independent):
 - i. Link communities with the local authorities
 - ii. Link planners with housing officers
 - iii. Link land with finance
 - iv. Link communities with other communities demonstrating good practice.
 - v. Collate information sub-regionally, regionally and nationally to provide collective voice/evidence base.

3. PARTNERSHIP/ JOINING THINGS UP

- a. Sustainability Appraisals
 - i. For RSSs address levels of service provision and Travel To Work access and so on but neglect social & economic characteristics of rural sustainable communities.
 - ii. For Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) there's need for CLG/CRC/National Planning & Housing Advisory Unit to sort it out.
- b. Sub-Regional Level is Critical
 - i. LA areas and HM Areas more important than regions
 - ii. Where top-down meets bottom-up: where projection targets meet actual needs
 - iii. Where to bring together local authority service functions (planning, housing, economic development, social services) with democratic legitimacy and political choices
 - iv. For example, Peak District Sub-Regional Partnership demonstrates a 'fit-for-purpose' housing strategy:
 1. DDDC + HBBC joint community strategy
 2. Joint staff & bids to Housing Corporation
 3. Joint HMA & RHB bidding
 4. Working with PDNPA & Peak RHT

4. CLOSING REMARKS

- a. Food, Warmth & Shelter – Housing is basic need fundamental to people's quality of life.
- b. Sustainable communities need to have mixed housing and choice but growing evidence of failures to achieve this in rural areas.