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Rural Advocate visits flood-hit communities in rural Gloucestershire

On Thursday 11 and Friday 12 October, Dr. Stuart Burgess, Chairman of the Commission for Rural Communities and the Government's Rural Advocate, is visiting communities and businesses in rural Gloucestershire to assess the mid to long-term affects of this year's unprecedented summer floods. He will also be meeting with a number of key local organisations who are dealing with the aftermath of the flooding.

Speaking ahead of his visit Dr. Burgess said: "I visited Gloucestershire and Worcestershire at the height of this summer's devastating floods. I am now looking forward to returning to Gloucestershire to meet those individuals and businesses who have been so badly hit and to hear how they have fared. It is only when you see these areas and talk to people first hand that you can fully appreciate the severity and scale of what has happened. It is important to understand that the effects of the floods will extend over several months or even years, far beyond the immediate physical damage to homes and property.

"The Prime Minister has asked me to prepare a report on ways in which the rural economy can be strengthened in the light of recent flooding and foot and mouth disease incidents. My visit to Gloucestershire, along with my visits to other communities affected by the floods, will be invaluable in helping me to prepare my report. In my role as Rural Advocate I shall continue to ensure that the needs and concerns of rural communities, businesses and farmers are fully represented to government".

As part of his Gloucestershire visit Dr. Burgess will be meeting people providing help and support to elderly people living in isolated rural communities. He will then visit an elderly woman who is now forced to live in a mobile home in her garden, after her home was flooded by the wash from vehicles on the M5 motorway.

Dr Burgess will also meet people from Gloucestershire Fairshares, who put community volunteers in touch with people needing help. In partnership with Gloucester FM Community Radio, they set up the Good Neighbour Scheme to provide practical help to those affected by the flooding. He will meet local farmers and businesses in Tewkesbury and on the Isbourne trading estate, near Winchcombe hit by the flooding. The visit will also include a working dinner where Dr. Burgess and his senior colleagues will meet with key regional and sub-regional organisations who are working hard to continue to provide relief to the victims of the flooding.

ENDS

For further information Chris Wynne-Davies on 01242 534070 or 07900 608030

Notes for editors:

1. Following his visits to flood-hit rural communities in the summer, Dr. Burgess wrote to Hilary Benn, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs:

www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/files/70726%20flooding%20letter.pdf

2. Information about the Commission for Rural Communities and its work can be found in our current Annual Review at:

www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/files/Annual%20Review%202006-7.pdf