



CRC 2/07

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## Affordable Rural Housing: Making the Goodman Report work

More urgent action is needed to implement the recommendations of the Affordable Rural Housing Commission (ARHC), chaired by Elinor Goodman in 2006. That's the message coming loud and clear from a key national conference held today (7 February) at Dunchurch Park, Rugby.

According to the rural watchdog, the Commission for Rural Communities (CRC), better joining up of policy and practice is needed. Although significant progress has been made on national planning policy, much remains to be done to secure sufficient funding for new affordable housing, and to make sure that regional and local bodies use all the tools at their disposal.

Two of the CRC's Commissioners, Professor Mark Shucksmith and John Varley will be reiterating the action needed in rural areas for the delivery of much needed affordable housing at today's conference 'The Future of Rural Housing and Regeneration', organised by the National Housing Federation.

Professor Mark Shucksmith, CRC Commissioner and former ARHC member said:

"Many rural communities are now facing a housing crisis, with market housing becoming less and less obtainable to young households, and limited numbers of affordable homes being available for rent or shared ownership. Our ARHC report recommends a series of recommendations that we believe are needed to ensure that in years to come we will have rural communities that are genuinely mixed and sustainable."

John Varley, CRC Commissioner and CEO of Clinton Devon Estates, said:

"Innovative solutions are needed to meet the housing needs of rural communities. In particular, it is a combination of both the more familiar public sector methods of delivering affordable housing, together with delivery through the private sector that is required to ensure needs can be met. Tax incentives, for example, could encourage many rural landowners that over the years have traditionally been the providers of much housing, to once again be able to play a key role in the delivery of homes for their communities."

The CRC has now undertaken to work with stakeholders to track progress of the ARHC's recommendations, and is planning a 'One Year On' conference in June 2007.

The Government set up the ARHC, chaired by Elinor Goodman, in July 2005 to identify ways of improving access to affordable housing for people in rural areas. The ARHC reflected on-going concerns over the gap between house prices in rural many rural communities, and difficulties in the delivery of new affordable rural housing. The CRC's own research estimates that between 14,000 and 19,000 new affordable homes are now needed annually to meet needs in rural communities. The ARHC made a number of practical recommendations for Government and independent bodies at all levels, that together have the potential to allow rural communities to benefit from the small developments of affordable housing that could make a real difference to their viability.

The ARHC report, launched at a CRC conference in May 2006, has been well received across the sector and by Government itself. The CRC welcomed the changes in planning policy

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announced by the Government later in 2006, however, it is essential that momentum is maintained, and there are real changes in the funding of affordable rural housing, the implementation of planning policy and the approaches used to understand rural needs. Only through implementation of the ARHC's recommendations in each of these key areas will the additional rural affordable homes needed be delivered. The 'One Year On' conference is being planned to assess whether the much needed changes are taking place and, in particular, to encourage the close joint working and strategic approach that are needed at all levels to deliver for rural communities.

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For further information please contact Nick McClelland, Commission for Rural Communities, on 020 7932 5814 or 07900 608 045.

**Note to Editors:**

**Contact::**

1. More information about the Affordable Rural Housing Commission and a full copy of the report can be found at [www.defra.gov.uk/rural/housing/commission](http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/housing/commission)
2. Statistics are taken from the publication Calculating Housing needs in Rural England, CRC 28/ May 2006 available at [www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk](http://www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk)
3. The Commission for Rural Communities was established initially as an operating division of the Countryside Agency in April 2005, and became an independent body on 1 October 2006, following the enactment of the NERC (The Natural Environment and Rural Communities) Act 2006. Our role is to provide well-informed, independent advice to government and ensure that policies reflect the real needs of people living and working in rural England, with a particular focus on tackling disadvantage.

We have three key functions:

- Rural advocate: the voice for rural people, businesses and communities
- Expert adviser: giving evidence-based, objective advice to government and others
- Independent watchdog: monitoring and reporting on the delivery of policies nationally, regionally and locally

Further information about the Commission for Rural Communities and it's work can be found at [www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk](http://www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk)