



CRC 6/07

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Housing nightmare is already here, says Rural Watchdog

Recent predictions that house prices will reach 10 times average salaries by 2026 are already the reality in many rural areas, says the Commission for Rural Communities (CRC).

Speaking on the eve of the CRC's 'Affordable Rural Housing Commission: One Year On' conference, Commission Chairman Stuart Burgess said: "For rural England, the housing nightmare predicted at last week's launch of the National Housing and Planning Advice Unit has already come true. In some parts of the country, especially the National Parks and other hotspots, prices have risen to as much as 13 times average local earnings. Our research shows that only about 55% of households can afford to buy housing on the open market in many rural towns and villages. In the South East that figure worsens to 30%."

Dr Burgess continued: "To illustrate the problem a recent survey of England's market towns showed that Helston (138%) in Cornwall and Pickering (128%) and Selby (124%) in North Yorkshire are amongst those having the biggest house price increases in the last five years. Bakewell (18%) in Derbyshire has the second biggest house price increase amongst market towns over the past year and is the fifth most expensive market town in the country with an average house price of £305,975. Six of the 10 most expensive market towns were in the South East of England."

Turning to the work of the Affordable Rural Housing Commission (ARHC), he added: "Whilst there was general support for their analysis of the situation in rural areas and recommendations for action, the crucial point is what has happened since. The results show that their report raised the profile of rural housing and there have been some positive steps forward nationally with the publication of new planning guidance. However, there is still much to do in planning, funding and the 'rural proofing' of housing policies, particularly at regional and local level."

At the conference, to be held at the QEII conference centre in Westminster, the CRC will launch the preliminary results of its survey of progress made and will discuss what more needs to be done. Delegates will hear from a number of organisations concerned with the delivery of housing in rural areas, including the Housing Corporation, the Country Land & Business Association and the Campaign to Protect Rural England, as well as speeches from Barry Gardiner, the Rural Affairs Minister, and Yvette Cooper, the Housing Minister.

"Many of those who responded to our consultation called for a detailed action plan to be drawn up to implement the ARHC's recommendations. Our conference will help us to identify what more needs doing and by whom", said Dr Burgess.

ENDS

For further information contact Chris Wynne-Davies, Commission for Rural Communities, on 07900 608030 or Nick Milton on 07900 608349

Notes to Editors:

1. The CRC's 'Affordable Rural Housing Commission: One Year On' conference is being held in London on Thursday, 14 June, and will review progress since the Government's Affordable Rural Housing Commission, chaired by Elinor Goodman, reported in May 2006.

2. The CRC is monitoring progress on ways of improving the supply of affordable rural housing and has consulted a wide range of bodies at national, regional and local levels to find out what they have done since the Affordable Rural Housing Commission's report was published and what differences they have seen emerging.

3. Calculating housing needs in Rural England, CRC28/ May 2006 is available at www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk

4. Taking Forward the Recommendations of the Affordable Rural Housing Commission Progress so Far, CRC WEB 20/ June 2007 is available at www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk

5. Information about the National Housing and Planning Advice Unit can be found at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1510755>

6. Halifax Estate Agents' press release 'Market towns have higher prices than neighbouring towns', Friday 3 November 2006

7. The Commission for Rural Communities is an independent government body established in October 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 and economic under-performance.

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 its work can be found at www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk