



CRC 14/09

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Watchdog unveils strengthened approach to 'rural proofing' of government policies

The Commission for Rural Communities (CRC) is committed to reporting on the progress of rural proofing within government. Rural proofing is the method used to ensure the needs of rural communities are reflected within mainstream government policies and in their delivery. Rural proofing is the tool for delivering this mainstreaming objective.

Although rural proofing is in place, and has been a requirement on government departments since 2000, it has not been applied consistently. The CRC is therefore introducing a new, strengthened rural proofing toolkit.

Gill Payne, Chief Executive of the CRC, said "I am pleased to announce the introduction of the revised rural proofing toolkit, which will assist policy-makers to consider how their decisions affect our rural communities."

"We hope this will provide policy-makers at all levels with a practical understanding of rural proofing." Ms Payne continued. "In support of this, we have included a number of good practice case studies within the toolkit to highlight the good progress that is possible when departments get it right."

The revised rural proofing toolkit:

- builds on learning from use of the previous model;
- includes more specific practical advice concerning the needs of rural areas;
- emphasises that 'sparsity' and 'rurality' are essential considerations of good policy making; and
- highlights examples of effective rural proofing within government.

"We fully support the Government's position that it is the responsibility of individual departments to ensure that policies and delivery arrangements are applicable to people in both rural and urban areas." Ms Payne said. "That is why we have included guidance on a broad range of policy areas within the toolkit."

"Rural proofing is a key part of good policy development, and that is why we need to ensure policy-makers have access to this comprehensive resource. Staff at the CRC and colleagues in Defra are ready to provide advice and support on all aspects of the toolkit and the principles underlying rural proofing and mainstreaming in general." Ms Payne concluded.

The CRC is also sponsoring a conference taking place on 19 May, which is an opportunity for policy-makers to learn about rural proofing and discuss and share best practice. Both Rural Affairs Minister Huw Irranca-Davies and Schools Minister Jim Knight are speaking at the conference to reaffirm the Government's commitment to rural proofing.

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Notes to editors:

- 1 Further information about the revised rural proofing toolkit can be found at: www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/files/rural%20proofing%20toolkit.pdf
- 2 Examples of effective rural proofing by government include:
 - In 2008, DCSF committed £70 million to help provide improved transport for rural school children;
 - In 2009, Sport England has dedicated £10 million to improve sporting opportunities for people in rural areas; and
 - In 2008, the National Policing Improvement Agency developed a comprehensive guide to delivering policing in rural areas, building on the experience of policing on the ground.
- 3 Further information about the 'Policy making for places – rural proofing the work of government' conference taking place on 19 May can be found at: www.ruralproofing.co.uk
- 4 The CRC was established in April 2005 and became an independent body on 1 October 2006 following the enactment of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. The role of the CRC is to provide well-informed, independent advice to government and ensure that policies reflect the real needs and circumstances of people living and working in rural England. We give particular focus to tackling disadvantage and economic underperformance.

We have three key functions:

- Advocate: the voice for rural people, business and communities;
- Expert adviser: providing evidence-based, objective advice to government and others; and
- Independent watchdog: monitoring and reporting on the delivery of policies nationally, regionally and locally.

Further information about the CRC and its work can be found at: www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk