

ANGUS COUNCIL

PLANNING AND TRANSPORT POLICY COMMITTEE

17 JANUARY 1996

SUBJECT: RURAL SCOTLAND - PEOPLE PROSPERITY AND PARTNERSHIP

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF PLANNING, TRANSPORT & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Abstract: This Report summarises the Government's Policies for the Rural Communities of Scotland as contained in the recently published White Paper entitled People, Prosperity and Partnership.

1 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Committee -

- i notes the content of this Report and refers this to the Member/Officer Group considering the Rural Strategy;
- ii requests the Director of Planning, Transport and Economic Development to continue to assess policies and initiatives in the White Paper as part of the Councils general approach to ensuring that there is a Rural Strategy in place which is appropriate to the circumstances in Angus and having particular regard to the need to:-
 - a maintain viable communities through a wide range of measures including houses, jobs and services.
 - b protect and where appropriate improve the environmental quality of the rural area including promotion of the concept of sustainable development.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Scottish Office, in December 1995, published the Governments Policies for the Rural Communities of Scotland in the White paper 'Rural Scotland: People, Prosperity and Partnership'. A copy of the White Paper has been placed in the members accommodation at 7 The Cross.
- 2.2 The White Paper sets out, for the first time in one document, the Government's policies for rural communities and the ways in which they are put into practice in Scotland. It is, therefore, an important part of a process begun in 1992 to address a range of rural issues and includes a commitment to further work such as a review of indicative forestry strategies and natural heritage designations and new work on the Scottish coast and on the design of rural housing.
- 2.3 In parallel with the issue of the White Paper, COSLA has been finalising Guidance for new Councils for the preparation of strategies and programmes for rural

development. This guidance recognises the broader community government role of local authorities in representing the interests of local communities and coordinating the activities of other agencies in meeting community needs.

3 RURAL SCOTLAND: PEOPLE, PROSPERITY AND PARTNERSHIP

3.1 The White Paper is presented in five main sections and includes an Action Programme summarising the steps the Government plan to take in the first year following publication of the White Paper. A copy of the Action Programme is attached to this Report as Appendix 1.

3.2 The first section 'Founding on Framework' is an introductory section referring to earlier publications such as 'Rural Framework', the role of the Rural Focus Group and the main conclusions from the public consultation exercise.

3.3 'Rural Life' discusses the pattern and quality of rural life, rural communities, the delivery of services in rural areas and Scottish culture.

3.4 The third section discusses 'Scotland's Working Landscape's and concentrates on the importance of sustainable development, it discusses the resources of rural Scotland in terms of its environment including agriculture, recreation, forestry, country sports, wildlife conservation, the coast and its history. It also emphasises the importance of strategic planning as a framework for rural development.

3.5 The fourth section entitled 'Prospects for Prosperity' concentrates on the opportunities for the rural economy in both the primary sectors and in relation to other industries. This section also discusses travel in rural areas.

3.6 The final section 'Shaping Partnerships' contains the main policy statements in the White Paper and also the main action points. The Government's Policies for the Rural Communities of Scotland are:

"We will work in partnership to enable rural Scotland to be:

- economically prosperous, with a range of job opportunities which will enable those who live in rural communities, native or newcomer, to enjoy worthwhile ways of life.
- vigorous in its community life supported by good local infrastructure and quality services.
- culturally confident, cherishing local traditions and distinctive ways of life, and able to adapt to and benefit from changing circumstances.
- able to protect, conserve and enhance its outstanding environment.

3.7 The main thrust of the proposals in the White paper is on the establishment of a new Scottish Rural Partnership which will operate at three levels:

- Scottish Local Rural Partnerships
- The Scottish National Rural Partnership

- The Scottish Rural Partnership Fund
- 3.8 It is intended that the National Rural Partnership would be based on the existing Rural Focus Group but with a strengthened representation of landowning and land-user groups. This national group would be responsible for:
- “as its main task, support and advice to the local *Rural Partnership Groups*;
 - encouraging and co-ordinating the establishment of local rural partnerships throughout Scotland;
 - advising Ministers on the disbursement of the new *Scottish Rural Partnership Fund*;
 - keeping under review progress towards the overall aims of rural policy;
 - sponsoring and overseeing a programme of research, using the wealth of relevant talent in Scotland, with the aim of identifying and disseminating information on good practice in local rural development.”
- 3.9 Scottish Local Rural Partnerships as suggested are very similar to the partnership already existing in Tayside and whilst it is not recommended that local authorities would necessarily take the lead it is expected that they would be represented on these partnerships. Representation from the local community is also recommended through community councils or other relevant groups. It is suggested that these local partnerships might:
- prepare a local strategy
 - consider the scope for more effective local service delivery; and
 - provide a focus for promoting and responding to community-led initiatives.
- 3.10 The Government intends to publish guidance on how local partnerships might operate and also to establish a new *Scottish Rural Partnership Fund* to provide pump-priming assistance to local partnerships. It is suggested that *Local Rural Partnerships* might encourage greater community involvement in a number of ways including making information and advice available to local communities, increasing the numbers of community development agents and identifying training for existing animateurs.
- 3.11 The Scottish Rural Partnership Fund will bring together the administration of the Special Grants (Environmental) Programme, The Rural Transport Innovation Grant and funding for rural and semi-rural Councils of Voluntary Service. In addition it will support innovative or small projects proposed by local partnerships on behalf of local community groups, it will provide assistance to local partnerships for secretarial and administrative costs and it will contribute towards the employment of community development agents by local rural partners.
- 3.12 The final major proposal in the concluding chapter is for the preparation of a Rural Services Charter Checklist for Scotland which will assist service providers to assess whether they are meeting the needs of rural people and make changes to improve rural services.

4 DISCUSSION

- 4.1 Responses reported from various groups and bodies to the White Paper have been mixed including concern that a proliferation of organisations may emerge without an appropriate focus or funding. Support for the document has also been forthcoming including its role as a policy framework for Rural Scotland.
- 4.2 From an Angus perspective the White Paper includes a number of welcome proposals and initiatives including the setting up of national and local partnerships and a Scottish Rural Partnership Fund. Various local initiatives already underway are also commended including Rural Grant Schemes (Report No. AC 164/95 refers).
- 4.3 Many of the issues raised in the White Paper will require further work at National and Local levels. In Angus priority will continue to be accorded to an integrated approach to the development of policies for Rural Areas. In addition to Structure and Local Plans work this demands a corporate vision and the development and implementation of the Rural Strategy ensuring this is integrated with the statutory land use framework including promotion of the concept of sustainable development.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial implications directly arising from this Report.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The Director of Law and Administration, Finance, Education and Social Work have been consulted in the preparation of this Report.

Alex Anderson
Director of Planning, Transport & Economic Development

NOTE

The following background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, (other than any containing confidential or exempt information), were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above Report -

Rural Scotland, People, Prosperity and Partnership: The Government's Policies for the Rural Communities of Scotland.

AA/CGR/EH

Angus Council
Department of Planning

11 January 1996

APPENDIX 1

THE FIRST YEAR'S ACTION PROGRAMME

We summarise here the steps we plan to take in the first year following publication of the White Paper.

The Government's Policies for the Rural Communities of Scotland

We will work in partnership and within the objectives of sustainable development to enable rural Scotland to be:

- economically prosperous, with a range of job opportunities which will enable those who live in rural communities, native or newcomer, to enjoy worthwhile ways of life.
- vigorous in its community life supported by good local infrastructure and quality services.
- culturally confident, cherishing local traditions and distinctive ways of life, and able to adapt to and benefit from changing circumstances.
- able to protect, conserve and enhance its outstanding natural environment.

THE SCOTTISH RURAL PARTNERSHIP

Scottish Local Rural Partnerships

We will encourage and assist the establishment of *Local Rural Partnerships* drawn from the most relevant local interests, providing a basis for making local input to decisions affecting local areas.

The Scottish National Rural Partnership

We will establish a national body, building on the success of the Rural Focus Group, and providing coordination of national action to match that undertaken by the *Local Rural Partnerships*.

The Scottish Rural Partnership Fund

We will establish the fund which will use a challenge funding approach to provide resources to support the new groups, contributing to the costs of servicing them, assisting the employment of community development agents, contributing to the funding of consultancies and filling gaps not covered by the wide range of existing support.

Guidance on the Scottish Rural Partnership

We will publish guidance on the operation of local partnerships and the new Rural Partnership Fund. This will be part of the overall support we intend to give to the establishment of the *Scottish Rural Partnership* system.

Scottish Rural Partnership on the Internet

We will be exploring the benefits which the superhighway can bring to rural communities through increasing use of the Internet and World Wide Web.

The Rural Charter Checklist

Within the framework of the Citizen's Charter, we will ask the Scottish National Rural Partnership to consult on and prepare a Rural Services Charter Checklist for Scotland which will assist service providers to assess whether they are meeting the needs of rural people and make changes to improve rural services.

PROGRESS SINCE FRAMEWORK

Rural Framework: A Progress Report

The work of the Rural Focus Group is described in "*Rural Framework: A Progress Report*" which is published simultaneously with the White Paper.

Reporting the Consultations

Rural Forum organised the consultation exercise across Scotland. Its report on the consultation and the many helpful and interesting things said in that process is published as "*The White Paper Consultation: the Rural Forum Report*".

RURAL LIFE

Scottish Rural Life 1995

A new edition of *Scottish Rural Life* will be published incorporating information drawn from the 1991 Census.

"Living in Rural Scotland"

We will publish the report commissioned on rural services.

Access to Information and Advice

We will publish the results of research on how access to information and advice might be improved. Tayside Regional Council's booklet on rural grants, which was sponsored by the Scottish Agricultural College, will be extended to cover the whole of rural Scotland, with assistance from The Scottish Office.

Change in Small Schools

We will fund new research on "The Management of Change, including Devolved School Management, in Small Primary Schools".

Rural Crime

We will mount a study of crime in rural areas and its effect on local people.

PROSPECTS FOR PROSPERITY

Keeping the Shop Open

We intend to bring forward a scheme to reduce the burden of rates on the village shop which is providing a service to isolated communities.

A Rural Business Use Class

In order to ensure that the planning system continues to play its full part in business development we intend to include proposals for a Rural Business Use Class in the consultation on the Use Classes Order.

Rural Business Units

We are considering the case that commercial activities associated with a rural estate whose predominant activity is husbandry should be assessed as a single trading unit for income tax, capital gains tax and inheritance tax purposes.

Opening Up Rural Opportunities

We will produce guidance on rural development intended to encourage positive provision for employment and community purposes using the development plan and control systems. We will also issue guidance on planning for small towns in rural areas covering.

Planning Careers

We are planning a conference on the issues and problems facing rural careers offices in Scotland. It will involve careers service staff from rural areas, local enterprise companies and others and offer the opportunity to share good practice, to identify and address problem areas and explore possible solutions.

Rural Water and Sewerage Grants

In place of the previous grant schemes, we have placed on the new Water Authorities a specific duty to have regard especially to the interests of rural customer and we will take account of this duty in providing resources to the Authorities. Thus the interests of rural customers will be central to the arrangements for service provision put in place by the authorities. We will review the effectiveness of these arrangements after the first year of operation.

Collection of Commercial Waste

We intend to identify examples of good practice in dealing with the particular problems of commercial waste collection in small towns and villages. This will be published as guidance for the new local councils.

SCOTLAND'S WORKING LANDSCAPE

The Review of Designations

We will review natural heritage designations with a view to simplification and de-regulation consistent with over-arching nature conservation objectives.

Indicative Forestry Strategies

We will review the Indicative Forestry Strategies produced under the 1990 guidance with a view to increasing their usefulness.

"Scotland's Coast"

We will publish a discussion paper on coastal issues which will set out proposals for improving present management, building on the successful approaches already being used in parts of Scotland based on the voluntary principle and partnership working.

Native Woods Management

The Forestry Commission will build on its partnerships within a wider programme to encourage management of native woods, including the establishment of a broadleaved marketing development group to help woodland owners realise the economic potential of their woods.

Community Participation in Forest Management

We will consider how to increase the scope for local community participation in forest management, in the light of research commissioned by the Forestry Commission and taking account of the points raised in the FAPIRA discussion document.

The Scottish House

We wish to see a new standard of rural housing design emerge as a defining symbol for a new and vibrant rural Scotland and have asked for a report on what might be possible. The Enterprise network will consider how best to further encourage the production, use and marketing of traditional materials for new building.