

Community involvement in rural regeneration partnerships in the UK

Evidence from England, Northern Ireland and Scotland

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Dedication

In fond memory of Kathleen McLaughlin Senior

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List of abbreviations

B&DCA	Broughshane and District Community Association	NCVO	National Council for Voluntary Organisations
B&DPFA	Broughshane and District Playing Fields Association	NFU	National Farmers Union
BEST	Broughshane Enterprise Support Team	NIPB	Northern Ireland Partnership Board
BIC	Broughshane Improvement Committee	NSI	Newton Stewart Initiative
CARD	Community Action for Rural Devon	PPP	public-private partnership
CBI	Confederation of Business and Industry	RDA	Regional Development Agency
CIRRP	community involvement in rural regeneration partnerships	RDC	Rural Development Commission
CoSLA	Convention of Scottish Local Authorities	RDC (NI)	Rural Development Council (Northern Ireland)
CVS	Council of Voluntary Service	RRP	rural regeneration partnership
DELDAF	Devon Local Development Agency Forum	RSSF	Rural Strategic Support Fund
DGC	Dumfries and Galloway Council	SCP	Sustainable Communities Project
FOG	Funding Opportunities Group	SEDG	Scottish Enterprise Dumfries and Galloway
GOR	Government Office for the Regions	SNRP	Scottish National Rural Partnership
LA 21	Local Agenda 21	SRB	Single Regeneration Budget
LDA	Local Development Agency	SRPF	Scottish Rural Partnership Fund
LRP	Local Rural Partnership	TDT	Torrington Development Trust
MDP	Moyle District Partnership	VCO	voluntary and community organisation
NACN	North Antrim Community Network	WestDEN	West Devon Environmental Network

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Responsibility for the content of this report lies with the authors alone.

Community involvement in rural regeneration partnerships in the UK

Introduction

This report is about the involvement of communities in rural regeneration partnerships in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. It explores the structures of these partnerships and the processes and impact of community involvement in them. The purpose is threefold. First, to examine the different institutional and policy contexts of these partnerships across these three nations of the UK and their impact on community involvement in them. Second, to examine the influence of rurality on this involvement. Finally, to highlight ‘best practice’ in facilitating and supporting such involvement in the UK. Taken alongside the previous reports which derived from other research funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (Edwards et al, 2000; Shucksmith, 2000), these three reports together provide a detailed review of the policy and practice both of regeneration partnerships in the UK and of community involvement in them.

Increasingly over the last two decades, public–private partnerships (PPPs) have become a core element of area regeneration in general (Geddes, 1997) and of rural regeneration in particular (Shucksmith, 2000). Such partnerships are seen variously (for example, Chanan et al, 1999; CPPP, 2000) to have the capacity:

- to broaden support for area regeneration;
- to lever in a range of resources from the private and non-profit sectors;
- to coordinate disparate initiatives and agencies all working towards local regeneration;
- to promote social inclusion.

Increasingly a corner-stone of such rural regeneration partnerships (RRPs), and local area development, has been the involvement of local communities in them (CDF, 1995; Edwards et al, 2000). However, Shepherd (1998) has argued that “in much of rural development, ... thinking about participation has remained at a very idealistic and ideological level”, while Macdonald (1993) has suggested that, for such participation to take place in rural areas, appropriate structures and fora must be established.

Warburton (1998) has detailed a number of fundamental issues which need to be addressed in developing community involvement in rural regeneration partnerships (CIRRP), including:

- What is meant by the ‘community’?
- What level of involvement is being sought, from consultation through to community ownership?
- What is the policy context for community involvement and its import?
- To what extent is community involvement a means to achieving another end, or an end in its own right?
- What structures and skills are required to support such community involvement?

Reviewing the existing literature on CIRRP, Warburton concluded that it was:

... now a mainstream concept in public policy programmes ... [but] participation in practice is still a minority activity ... and conventional technical and professional solutions remain the norm. (p 25)

This failure in practice has occurred despite the existence of a plethora of normative and

prescriptive guides to CIRRP, both in general (Chanan, 1997; Chanan et al, 1999) and in relation to rural communities in particular (CDF, 1995; LEADER EU Observatory, 1997). To date, however, there has been only limited independent evaluation of the nature, process and impact of CIRRP. Both Edwards et al (2000) and Shucksmith (2000) explore the wider context of this involvement and its role in the overall management of regeneration partnerships, but both these important studies have a far wider remit than would allow a detailed exploration of the issue. An important knowledge gap, therefore, is that of the contingencies affecting CIRRP in terms of their focus, planning and management. This present study is intended to fill this gap. It reveals contingent factors that enhance, or diminish, the likelihood of effective community involvement and participation in rural regeneration partnerships.

The research process

This report is based on a two-year research project involving active collaboration between researchers based in three universities in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The research investigated if there were specific rural factors which impacted on the development and management of CIRRP. The trends and processes of community participation in such partnerships were also examined, and the project explored the policy implications of these comparisons, from

the standpoint of similarities and differences. In each national setting local level cross-sectional case studies were supplemented by interviews with senior informants in the government, voluntary and community sectors. At the outset it is important to note that the project actually took six months longer to complete than had originally been envisaged. This was because of the intervention of the foot and mouth epidemic of 2001. Notwithstanding the scale of the tragedy of this epidemic, it did, in itself, provide an important perspective on the work of these partnerships in times of extreme stress.

The research process involved a number of distinct stages:

- a review of the literature on rural regeneration in each of the jurisdictions;
- discussions with key stakeholders at local, regional and national level, to clarify the policy context and focus the key research questions for that region;
- the collection of documents to clarify the policy context and to trace the development of rural regeneration in each country; and
- three cross-sectional case studies, one in each of the three nations.

Table 1 details the local partnerships focused on in each of the three nations as part of the cross-sectional case studies. For each partnership, interviews were conducted with the key organisational stakeholders involved and with the local community. Where appropriate,

Table 1: Location and name of the selected partnerships

Country and county	Partnership name
<i>England</i>	
Devon	LEADER II programme (Sustainable Communities Project [SCP] of the West Devon Environmental Network [WestDEN])
Devon	Key Fund of Community Action for Rural Devon programme (CARD)
Devon	Torrington Development Trust (TDT)
<i>Scotland</i>	
Dumfries and Galloway	LEADER II programme (Groundbase)
Dumfries and Galloway	Luce 2000
Dumfries and Galloway	Newton Stewart Initiative (NSI)
<i>Northern Ireland</i>	
County Antrim	LEADER II programme (North Antrim)
County Antrim	Moyle District Partnership (MDP)
County Antrim	Broughshane and District Community Association (B&DCA)

documentary evidence was also collected (such as publications, planning documents and local project evaluations). While the overall focus of the report is on the comparative lessons from these cross-sectional case studies, it would be impracticable to report on examples from each partnership throughout the report. In the chapters that follow, therefore, different partnerships are selected for illustrative discussion in relation to different themes.

The three nation comparative element was important in this study for three reasons. First, it was intended to highlight the impact of differing national institutional contexts, and their contrasting policy frameworks, on CIRRP. This is important for policy making in the UK. All too often, it seems, policy has been made and evaluated on the basis of English experience alone. This research was intended to remedy this imbalance.

Second, and more generally, it was intended to contrast CIRRP in the presence of three different modes of power for local government. In Northern Ireland many such partnerships are funded supranationally, such as the District Partnerships established under the EU Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (Williamson et al, 2000), with local government having comparatively limited powers and resources. In Scotland the reorganisation of local government has decentralised much decision making to the local government level, and has emphasised the importance of partnerships as policy instruments on behalf of local government. More recently, local authorities in Scotland have also been given the lead role in relation to community planning across the nation. Finally, in England, local government is, at best, 'first among equals' in local plural power structures, while regional bodies (such as the Government Offices for the Regions [GORs] and the Regional Development Agencies [RDAs]) have begun to exert considerable power and influence (Stoker, 2001; Lowndes and Skelcher, 2002). Some critics have argued that this has led local government in England to abnegate its role of strategic leadership in regeneration, with a subsequent loss of direction (Murdoch and Abram, 1998). The research design here allowed the exploration of the extent to which these differing national regimes have influenced the opportunities for community involvement and participation.

Key themes

The key themes that are addressed in this report are:

- What varied types of rural partnership were found, and how were these partnerships formed and managed?
- What is the impact of rurality on CIRRP?
- What is the meaning of 'community' in these partnerships? Does this differ from its meaning in non-rural settings and if so, how? Are there special challenges in the case of rural partnerships concerning the involvement of local people in RRP?
- What is the contribution of community leaders to CIRRP and the role of partnerships in the development of community leaders?
- How do rural community leaders, and their organisations, learn?
- What is the nature, role and impact of intermediary organisations and their contribution to the sustainability of CIRRP?
- What is the overall evidence emerging from this project about the sustainability of CIRRP?

Policy relevance is a central feature of this report. It presents and discusses the key similarities and differences across the range of nine partnerships in the cross-sectional case studies. It discusses and highlights the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to engaging rural communities in regeneration initiatives. It also provides a basis for policy makers and local managers to consider the impact of CIRRP for which they have a responsibility.

The structure of the report

The remainder of this report is in six chapters. Chapter 2 outlines the EU and UK policy context of CIRRP. Chapter 3 then examines the differing structural options for RRP and their effect on community involvement.

Chapter 4 explores the import of rurality on CIRRP and questions whether there are specific rural, as opposed to urban, contingencies which effects this involvement. Chapter 5 investigates the importance of intermediary organisations for CIRRP. Chapter 6 considers the nature and significance of community leadership in

promoting and developing CIRRP. Finally, Chapter 7 pulls together the conclusions and implications for practice arising out of this report.

Rurality, community and regeneration

Before commencing this report it is important to be clear what we mean by *rural*, *community* and *regeneration*. In 1996 the House of Commons Environmental Committee argued that *rurality*:

... is a difficult concept [to define]... [M]ost attempts to define what is rural will start by contrasting what is perceived as rural with what is perceived as urban, thus defining it by what it is not. (HoCEC, 1996)

Varied attempts have subsequently been made to define rurality along a number of sophisticated dimensions (such as accessibility and settlement patterns). However, a more pragmatic approach has inevitably come to dominate public policy for rural areas. The Countryside Agency, the English agency responsible for advising the government on rural issues and for promoting rural matters, defines a rural community as having a population of 10,000 persons or less (Countryside Agency, 1999). Using this definition there are, for example, 16,700 such rural communities in England – 78% of them with populations of less than 500 persons. Local facilities are notoriously poor in such communities – 70% have no village store, 49% have no school, 75% have no daily bus service and 83% have no locally-based GP (Countryside Agency, 1999). This is the definition that will be employed in this report.

Community is an equally difficult term. Shucksmith (2000) has argued that traditional community development approaches view community as “a group of people with common interests, living in the same geographic area, and frequently feeling a sense of belonging to the community” (p 48). However, this is problematic for rural areas. In urban areas, deprivation is invariably found concentrated into deprived areas or ‘communities’. In rural areas, on the other hand, poverty and affluence often exist side by side in villages, while geographic communities can often be riven by conflicts of interest or power differentials.

In this study, community is used in two ways – to denote ‘communities of place’, based on a shared geographic location, and to denote ‘communities of interest’, based on a shared issue or need. Both can be problematic. ‘Communities of place’ can be subject to imbalanced power relationships, while ‘communities of interest’ can be hard to sustain over large rural areas. A key issue to be explored in this report, therefore, is the extent to which these two versions of community support one another or are in conflict in rural areas in the UK.

Finally, it is important to be clear what is meant by *regeneration*. In this report we use it to denote programmes and policies intent to lead to the social, economic and/or community development or rejuvenation of a local area – and particularly where this area has recently suffered significant decline or depopulation.

Community involvement in rural regeneration partnerships: the policy context

The role of voluntary and community groups in rural areas

There is currently a debate within the UK government and in the voluntary and community sector about the role of this sector in delivering public services and in promoting citizenship. In June 2001 the UK Treasury announced its priorities for the 2002 Spending Review. One of these was “improving the quality of life in both urban and rural areas”. As part of the work on these priorities one of a series of seven cross-cutting reviews is investigating the role of the voluntary sector in providing services in rural areas.

This topic is also being addressed by research being undertaken by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) in England, into the scope and impact of rural voluntary action. The report (NCVO, 2002; see also Countryside Agency, 2002) notes the overall decline in basic services in rural areas and draws attention to the extensive contribution to rural life and social welfare that can be made by voluntary organisations. It points out that rural areas tend to have a larger number of local voluntary groups relative to their population than urban areas, but that they are often smaller, with few paid staff, and are highly dependent on volunteers. Despite this, in rural areas, voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) deliver services and fill gaps in existing statutory provision, including health and social care services, community transport, childcare, youth projects, education and skills training and the development of community businesses.

In rural areas VCO networks are often weak, and sometimes non-existent. Moreover, by contrast with groups in urban areas, rural VCOs are often less well funded and have more limited support structures. This led the NCVO report to conclude that:

The cross-sectoral and partnership working which can be required to support voluntary sector delivery of certain public services may ... be harder to achieve in some rural areas due to this lower institutional capacity. Lower levels of institutional capacity may also affect the ability of organisations to negotiate contracts for delivering services and meet complex monitoring requirements. (NCVO, 2002, p 4)

The later chapters of this report will explore the implications of this for CIRRP. This chapter will lay out the policy context for CIRRP in the UK.

The policy context of CIRRP

Regeneration policy and funding in the UK is notoriously complex. Recent research has shown that it can be both a force to encourage CIRRP and it also constitutes a block to CIRRP (Hall and Mawson, 1999; Purdue et al, 2000). It is a patchwork of varying EU and national policy initiatives and funding regimes, which invariably require applicants to put together a number of partners for any one bid and to include a number of different funding sources. Such regeneration partnerships have increasingly become predicated on community involvement as a prerequisite for receiving funds. This chapter provides a brief overview for this policy context.

The EU context

In the early 1990s the EU developed a policy of engagement with local communities and since then this has been a central principle of its funding programmes (McCall and Williamson, 2000). This new approach to area regeneration was influenced by participative emphases in development theory and policy that were part of a world-wide debate and reflected experiments in the United States such as the Empowerment Zones Initiative and the Enterprise Communities Initiative, and insights from the developing world such as the Health for All movement of the World Health Organisation. They reflected a growing awareness of the potential contribution of community organisations to their own development and as facilitators of local democracy. They also reflected the emergent concern with sustainable development which followed the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and which led to the development of Local Agenda 21 (LA 21) in the UK (Whittaker, 1995).

In the field of regeneration, EU policy has recently been dominated by the *structural funds* approach, which concentrates resources in areas of greatest need, emphasises coordination and partnership, expects significant additionality and leverage and places a strong emphasis on monitoring and evaluation (Roberts and Hart, 1996; Armstrong, 1998). For rural areas, the most significant of these funds is Priority 5(b) for regions requiring rural development (Ward and McNicholas, 1998a, 1998b), although the Common Agricultural Programme is also significant (Lowe and Ward, 1998).

There are mixed views on the effectiveness of these structural funds. Roberts and Hart (1996) concluded that they have “acted to forge new relations between local actors and [have] led to new ways of working becoming developed across a wide front”. In contrast, Armstrong (1998) has criticised them for offering “all things to all people” while Martin (1998) has also argued that these funds are most successful in engaging businesses in regeneration, rather than local communities.

A second particularly influential strand of EU rural regeneration policy has been the LEADER programmes (in the case of this study, LEADER II), which aim to develop small-scale local partnerships to encourage participation and

development in rural communities (LEADER EU Observatory, 1997). A key tool employed by LEADER projects is the ‘animateur’, working with and inside local communities. Black and Conway (1996) have argued that LEADER offers a real potential for CIRRP, although Martin (1999) is again more critical. LEADER II has now concluded and, at the time of writing, work is underway on the development of the LEADER+ programme.

English policy context

In the 1980s and early 1990s, area regeneration was characterised by a commitment to community involvement through the use of the market mechanisms, which in practice meant that community involvement was seen through the proxy of the use of voluntary organisations as service providers, relegating genuine community involvement to the margins (McLaughlin and Osborne, 2000).

The prime vehicle for area regeneration policy in England has long been the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB), which has more recently come under the remit of the RDAs. The SRB has been widely criticised for its impact on community-led regeneration. Hall and Mawson (1999) have argued that the lack of a proper policy framework for the competitive bidding process that is at the heart of the SRB has meant that regeneration initiatives have often taken “place in a vacuum” and that this has “reinforced the trend for local regeneration to be resource-led” (1999, p 9).

A more specific criticism from a rural perspective has been its over-concentration on urban areas. The most recent SRB initiative has attempted to take this into account by dedicating 20% of the budget to rural regeneration. Central to this is community involvement:

It is crucial to ensure the active participation of local communities in the regeneration of their areas.... [It] ensures that the schemes are better focused on their needs and priorities. It also helps to ensure that the benefits last over the long term by encouraging ownership ... and identity with the area. (DETR, 1999, para 1.4.1)

Beyond the SRB, rural regeneration has long been the province of the Rural Development

Commission (RDC) until its absorption, in 1999, into the new Countryside Agency. This sponsored a wide variety of rural regeneration programmes, including the Rural Development Programme, Rural Challenge and Rural Action.

Again, criticism of the RDC has been made for its top-down and bureaucratic approach to rural regeneration (for example, Martin et al, 1990). However, it has also been praised for some of its smaller-scale schemes, and, notably, Rural Action, which have provided small amounts of accessible funding to local communities. Bovaird et al (1996) have argued that Rural Action significantly “strengthened the infrastructure of support for local communities” (p 102). Some of these lessons are pursued further below. However, not all views are so positive. Martin (1999) has been particularly trenchant in his criticism:

To date much of what has passed for community involvement has been a re-packaging of relatively conventional small-scale actions, which neither challenge prevailing assumptions nor threaten existing power bases. This has offered important improvements at the margins but not addressed the systemic problems facing many [rural] areas. (p 178)

Northern Ireland policy context

In Northern Ireland, the policy framework has been shaped by the EU Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, the community infrastructure measures of Northern Ireland’s Single Programming Document and the Rural Development Programme of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (Murtagh, 1998). Taken together, these released a virtual avalanche of funding for the voluntary and community sector in rural areas (and in contrast to the much weaker and less well funded local government agencies). The looming end of much of this funding (2005-06) is causing considerable concern in Northern Ireland about the sustainability of some organisations created with this funding and about the likely subsequent contraction of the voluntary and community sector.

In early 1993 the Northern Ireland government developed new policies to support voluntary

activity and community development. A core element of this was the Strategy for the Support of the Voluntary Sector and for Community Development in Northern Ireland. Subsequently in Northern Ireland, local voluntary and community bodies became closely engaged with statutory authorities, and with business, and had a ‘place at the table’ as equals, in the 26 locally based District Partnerships established in 1996 under the EU’s Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (Williamson et al, 2000).

This Strategy broke new ground by providing a clear statement of the strategic aims of government departments in Northern Ireland in support of the voluntary and community sector. It contained many elements that were subsequently incorporated into the Compacts negotiated by New Labour following its coming to power in May 1997.

Scottish policy context

The 1990s have been characterised as a period when the Scottish Office (now the Scottish Executive):

... developed its rural policy to determine that people in rural communities should be enabled to take more control of their lives. (Brown, 1998, p 7)

The 1995 Rural White Paper for Scotland (Scottish Office, 1995) has also been described as the first comprehensive and integrated review of policy for rural Scotland (Bidwell and Downie, 1996). It was also argued that it encouraged greater involvement of rural communities in the programmes and projects that affected them. Furthermore, the then Conservative government emphasised the aim to work in partnership for the benefit of rural Scotland through the establishment of the Scottish National Rural Partnership (SNRP).

The SNRP was to act as an advisory body to ministers on rural matters. The membership of SNRP currently includes representatives from the Confederation of Business and Industry (CBI) Scotland, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA), Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Communities Scotland (formerly Scottish Homes), VisitScotland, Scottish National Heritage, Scottish Council for

Voluntary Organisations, National Farmers Union (NFU) Scotland, Scottish Landowners Federation, Scottish Environment LINK, Scottish Crofting Foundation, Federation of Small Businesses, the Scottish Agricultural College and the Scottish Executive.

In addition to the establishment of SNRP at a national level, the government encouraged the establishment of local rural partnerships to promote rural development in local communities, with funding available from the Scottish Rural Partnership Fund (SRPF). To date, over 50 such partnerships have been registered and have received support from this fund.

In autumn 2000 their funding was continued by the Scottish Executive, in order to:

... build capacity within local communities through the format of Local Rural Partnerships. [They] enable all those who have a stake in the rural community – agencies, organisations, the voluntary sector and the community itself – to make an active contribution to the future of the local community. (Scottish Executive, 2000a)

In the Highlands and Islands, Social Inclusion Partnerships have also begun to develop. There are currently such partnerships in Moray, Argyll and the Highlands and Islands. These partnerships put a particular premium on community involvement.

Devolution in Scotland and the creation of the Scottish Parliament and Executive is also significant. Respondents in this study argued that these bodies were now more close to the local level in Scotland, and this enabled rural perspectives to be argued more persuasively than previously.

UK-wide initiatives

Finally, it is important to highlight three other key initiatives that impact on rural regeneration across the UK:

- LA 21 initiatives, which seek to embed issues of sustainability within all regeneration (and other) initiatives (Whittaker, 1995; LGMB, 1995);
- the social exclusion/inclusion policy initiative of the current Labour government (SEU, 1998);
- the impact of the Community Fund (previously the National Lottery Charities Board) on the growth and import of VCOs across the UK.

Partnership structure and its impact on community involvement

This chapter explores the influence of rural regeneration partnership structures on community involvement, and also considers their impact on local democratic structures and processes. Slee and Snowdon (1997) argue that the structure of a rural partnership should enable “efficient administration and decision-making, encourage consideration of local views, and ensure effective action through work programmes and projects” (p 12). They also suggest that community involvement in partnerships can be achieved in two ways:

- through community representatives becoming board members and/or
- through representative structures being established to allow local views to be heard.

Shucksmith (2000) has also argued that the structure of partnerships in rural areas is one of their distinctive features, reflecting the distinctive institutional topography of rural areas.

This chapter explores this distinctive topography. Table 2 below demonstrates the different nature of CIRRP in this study, related to the level of RRP.

Table 2: Levels of CIRRP (i)

Key task of RRP	Nature of community involvement	Examples
<i>Strategic level</i>		
Funding and/or planning partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation • Involvement by proxy through intermediary agencies and community activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dumfries and Galloway LEADER • South Devon LEADER • Community Action for Rural Devon (CARD)
<i>Intermediate level</i>		
RRP management level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement of community activists • Bridging role for intermediary agencies in representing and advocating for community needs to the strategic level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Antrim LEADER • MDP • Key Fund
<i>Community level</i>		
Community regeneration activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services planned/owned by communities with support of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ professional community development worker employed by the community initiative ▸ professional community development worker employed by the local authority or other agency ▸ amateurs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Luce 2000 • TDT • NSI • B&DCA

Rural regeneration structures

Three structural levels of partnerships were identified in this study: *strategic* (both in the sense of partnerships which planned regeneration initiatives at a regional level and of regional funding partnerships), *intermediate* and *community*. However, the complexity of structures and funding arrangements did sometimes mean that these levels elided.

The strategic level

Groundbase in Dumfries and Galloway (the LEADER project) was an associated company funded by Scottish Enterprise, Dumfries and Galloway (SEDG), the local authority and the EU, covering the whole region. It took a more strategic approach compared to the smaller North Antrim LEADER. Its objectives were primarily economic given the balance of local funding – 75% (Groundbase) and 25% (Antrim) from the local council.

Scottish Enterprise's Objective 5(b) Areas Operational Programme, to develop a prosperous and sustainable rural economy in Scotland, guided Groundbase's business plan. However, there was also a commitment to community development seen most clearly in its support of community initiatives. As a result there was "a spectrum between economic development and community social development" (Groundbase employee).

This partnership was described as working well, and it was argued that the joint working between SEDG and the local council had assisted their partnership working elsewhere. Indeed, the strength of partnership working generally in Dumfries and Galloway was seen by one local councillor as critical in helping the region respond so cohesively and effectively to the foot and mouth crisis in 2001.

The Groundbase board comprised eight directors: three councillors representing the council, three SEDG representatives, and two others (one who chaired a local community initiative). It was claimed that the latter two represented the community, although they were invited to join the board rather than being nominated or elected by sectoral groups. There was a growing demand that any future LEADER programme should have

greater community and voluntary sector representation:

"We should be saying that we want a seat on the board. We want to be there as an equal. We're not carrying any money but we are carrying the voluntary sector. So we should be saying we want in there from the start. From devising the programme to implementing it throughout the region.... If LEADER wants to be inclusive it's got to include the voluntary sector." (Voluntary sector representative)

While there was limited community involvement on the board of Groundbase, therefore, its actual operations were believed to be accessible. Community initiatives such as those in Newton Stewart and Langholm and Eskdale not only welcomed the financial support of Groundbase, but also equally valued the moral support provided by Groundbase staff, an important capacity-building element that is difficult to quantify.

The structure of Groundbase had little community involvement at the strategic level, with the SEDG and local authority dominating. This is consistent with a recent review of LEADER in Scotland (Local and Regional Development Planning, 1998) which concluded that many Scottish Local Action Groups, most of which were serviced by Local Enterprise Companies, were dominated by the larger institutional partners and did not necessarily seek to maximise wider community participation.

Unlike many other LEADER companies, Groundbase, South Devon LEADER and North Antrim LEADER all took the decision to locate in rural and separate premises from their respective local authorities:

"We've helped to penetrate further into the local community I think by deliberately having our office in Newton Stewart. It would have been very easy after LEADER I to go back to Dumfries. It was a deliberate policy because we wanted to keep our office here because we're a rural organisation. We're accessible, we're on the high street, people are happy coming in and speaking to us." (Groundbase representative)

The experience of Groundbase (and the other two LEADER programmes in this study) demonstrates well the *structural vulnerabilities* of RRP dependent on external funding – particularly EU funding. This generally successful LEADER programme ended due to delays in decisions about LEADER+ funding. As a consequence considerable human capital for community capacity building and micro-business development may be lost to the region.

The intermediate level

In North Devon the Key Fund demonstrates very well the structural complexities of RRP at this level, with competing and conflicting perspectives emerging from its different accountability lines – to the key regional agencies through the CARD steering group, to the local community level where it was based, and to its own steering group of lead agencies. That this did not end in chaos was as much a tribute to the agencies and individuals involved as to anything else.

An important element here was the Fund's ability to act as a conduit between the different structural levels. It enabled information to flow upwards, to CARD and beyond, and it enabled money to flow downwards, towards community projects. It also acted as a crossover point, where ground-level community activists could interface with the strategic planners and funders.

In contrast, Northern Ireland's very different political context provides a unique example of another type of intermediate RRP, in the shape of the District Partnership Initiative. MDP in North Antrim was the smallest of Northern Ireland's 26 partnerships. Distinctively, it worked *across* an area with a population that was divided by historical, political and religious loyalties.

The extent to which MDP was considered to have contributed to peace and reconciliation is problematic and hard to quantify. The fact that people from radically different backgrounds worked together harmoniously was seen as a positive development, although many questioned its sustainability. With regard to the effectiveness of the board one respondent claimed that: "It is the money that is effective, not necessarily the partnership". However, the chair of the MDP, who stressed its role in trust building, challenged this limited perspective:

"In our work the MDP board has sought to be representative of the community and to build up personal trust and relations in a spirit of reconciling differences."

MDP appears to have been successful in allowing the strategic level to become engaged with community groups. It claimed to have made a strong positive contribution to the development of community infrastructure, resulting in 15 new community groups being formed.

MDP, like many RRP, did have structural problems, both external and internal. These included the relationship between MDP and the Northern Ireland Partnership Board (NIPB) in Belfast. There were complaints about the very tight time-scales imposed by this board, followed by delays in decisions. It was also suggested that there was a lack of equity in the power balance between the MDP and the NIPB. Having established a decentralised and bottom-up structure for supporting local development, it appeared that the NIPB had denied MDP the means to follow through on its work. No doubt reflecting the imperatives of accountability and audit from the EU, all local decisions had to be ratified by the NIPB, leading to delays and frustrations.

With regard to internal factors there was a perception that the board of MDP was too large (with over 20 members) and that partnership boards had been forced to pursue inclusivity at the cost of effectiveness. There was also considered to be a lack of accountability on the part of both the board and its voluntary and community sector representatives.

Some respondents stated that although initially there had been a lot of work to involve people in the community, many of the local population were unaware of the existence of MDP or of its membership.

The community level

Four local community-level partnerships were investigated in this study (see Table 2). All were perceived as 'bottom-up' local initiatives that arose out of direct community action. B&DCA will be the focus here, because of its long history of community involvement and the insights that this offers.

B&DCA's roots go back to 1969, to the onset of political violence in Northern Ireland. This saw the creation of the forerunner of B&DCA in the shape of the Broughshane and District Playing Fields Association (B&DPFA) that focused on the creation of community facilities. Its founder outlines below that its original vision went beyond merely the creation of facilities:

“It [B&DPFA] was conceived as an umbrella organisation whose role was to secure collective benefits, not just for a particular group but for the whole community, thus indirectly promoting community relations and communication between the various groups within our society where it really counts, that is within the home, all age groups, the employed, the unemployed, the villager, the farmer and the newcomer.”

Today B&DCA in North Antrim is a local umbrella organisation involved in rural regeneration in partnership with Broughshane Improvement Committee (BIC), Broughshane Enterprise Support Team (BEST), and the Village Garden, Broughshane Ltd.

Its approach is described as follows by a member of its board:

“Every effort has been made to maintain a thoroughly open and welcoming framework. Meetings are announced well in advance. Bulletins and a news-sheet have acted as a conduit between the Association and the community. The Community Centre has been maintained as a neutral venue, open to all. The media has been used to tremendous effect by an organisation conscious of the need to manage publicity in a strategic way.”

Through the association, and the work of BIC in particular, the village has won a range of prestigious national and international floral awards. These floral activities culminated in the village hosting the 25th anniversary of the prestigious EU Entente Florale. As BIC gained more successes in these floral competitions Broughshane's residents became more interested in, and committed to, the goals of B&DCA:

“Quite spontaneously gardens were improving, houses were being painted, hedges were being trimmed, until every

street became a showcase that bonded the community around the efforts of the BIC. This in turn led back into the other activities of the Association which now included a real drive to boost the area's economic profile and capitalise on whatever tourist potential it might have, or be able to construct, around the Glens, Slemish Mountain and 'flower power'.”

One of most impressive outcomes of community development in Broughshane has been the development of Houston Mill, a disused flax mill, over the last three years. A total of £900,000 was raised from a range of funders. Work is ongoing to raise the balance of £100,000 from the community. The self-help ethos of the Association's early days is still a strongly held value:

“We have never been nor ever will be, dependent on grants. For 27 years up until that [the onset of outside financial support] the Community Association had done everything themselves. The transformation of the village had been well under way before any money came from Europe.”
(committee member of B&DCA)

Another major achievement of B&DCA is its efforts in building community relations in what has been an area of sectarian division. For example, both cultural traditions are represented in its activities through music and dance:

“Most people have little or no contact with people from the opposite tradition or opposite denomination. Put them in a fishing situation or in a bowling situation or in a cultural situation ... and they feel quite comfortable.... Peace and reconciliation can happen by accident.” (committee member of B&DCA)

B&DCA has taken its cross-community working very seriously and was one of the first predominantly Protestant groups to join North Antrim Community Network (NACN):

“... [NACN has] broadened our thinking. Groups from other towns and villages visit Broughshane and we go and visit them. That is part of our thinking to try and connect up with other communities. Now we have close associations with Roman

Catholic [*sic*] communities like down the Glens and we work very much in harmony and it is great to see it.” (committee member of BIC)

Finally, the model of the Development Trust, utilised in Torrington in Devon, is also worthy of note. While this approach had only a limited impact on the strategic level, it did provide an innovative approach both to bringing community representatives together with the public and business sectors and to developing community assets for use in regeneration partnerships:

“The Trust has provided a framework, if you like. It has provided an arena for the community and the authorities and business to sit down together. It’s not easy of course, but it is a focus. People understand what [the Trust] is and see how it can bring the community to the table with the other players. And they see it as their Trust, not something imposed from elsewhere. That’s important, I think.” (staff member of the TDT)

This cross-sectoral partnership was not without its own tensions, however:

“The civil war project is important. It is something visible, that is true. But more importantly, it gives us assets that we can use for regeneration projects elsewhere in the community. This can make it a bone of contention though. Is it there as a business or as a resource base for other community projects? I’m not sure and I don’t think there is any agreement on this either. The business people on our board want a profit and loss bottom line, but the community activists say this doesn’t matter – what does matter is its impact on the community as a whole. I have to say, I don’t know the answer.” (Staff member of the TDT)

Conclusions

A number of conclusions emerge from this study’s exploration of the structure of RRP. The first is the complex nature of advisory and line management linkages around each RRP. Each is embedded in its own complex web of

interorganisational networks. The strength of this is the potential for innovative ideas to emerge from the interaction, and, at times, conflict of different organisational perspectives within these partnerships. The weakness is the premium that it puts on the negotiating skills of the ‘partnership managers’ and the incredible transactions costs involved, in terms of time and resource commitment.

The second conclusion is the comparative lack of community involvement in the strategic levels of many of these partnerships. In the Key Fund, the SCP and Groundbase, the community is essentially represented by proxy, by the existing professional community development agencies and/or the ‘professional’ community activists. There is genuine community involvement in TDT, Luce 2000, NSI, and B&DCA, although the context is different – community involvement here is in the strategic planning of local level RRP and not at the strategic levels of funding/policy making for the region.

Two views were expressed on this: one was that community members could not be expected to operate within the strategic policy making arena, because they lack the skills to do so, and one was that these arenas were structured to exclude them. Certainly regional regeneration policy, and the strategic management of region-wide RRP, remains dominated by the professionals and pre-existing agencies of community development and regeneration. It may be that genuine community involvement at this level is indeed an unrealistic aspiration of community involvement in such partnerships. Many respondents argued that not many community members are actually interested in the strategic level – they are more interested in the real services delivered to their community and their regeneration. This can be seen in the second phase of development of community planning in Dumfries and Galloway. Following the development of the Community Plan for the region as a whole, which did have input from intermediary bodies such as the Federations of Councils of Voluntary Service and Community Councils, local areas are now in the process of developing area community plans, with local Councils of Voluntary Service (CVSs) playing a lead role in this process.

It is clear that the strategic level needs linking to community levels to perform three tasks:

- to enable an efficient and effective flow of regeneration funds to communities;
- to facilitate accountability for decisions made at the strategic level;
- to establish routes for community members to develop and to operate at the strategic level.

The third conclusion relates to the funding of RRP. As is seen in a number of examples in this study, such as Luce 2000 in Dumfries and Galloway and the SRB in Devon, the multiple sources and time-scales of funding could present problems to community-level regeneration partnerships. It is suggested here that the challenges of coping with complex and changing funding arrangements contributed to the partnership and regeneration fatigue that was beginning to emerge in some of the case studies:

“Well, what a year, all the roller coasters that seem common place in voluntary sector life, playing piggy in the middle with debtors and creditors, having too much work and not enough staff hours to cover, but project targets to deliver ... the uncertainty of funding of voluntary organisations like ours certainly does not help in being able to be responsive to local needs and confident in the future of the organisation. If government documents such as the active citizenship, social inclusion and Learning Communities reports are to be taken seriously then the funding to the delivery mechanisms must also be serious to match the government pressure for action and change. Otherwise, small organisations like Luce 2000 spend an alarming number of hours sourcing funds and keeping records.” (Luce, 2000)

In this context, the impact of bodies such as the Key Fund in Devon was striking. These schemes were able to act as ‘honest brokers’ between the strategic and community levels, dealing with funding and auditing issues and providing a fast and effective service to local communities:

“From a community perspective, these funds are really important. They are accessible. They get support from community workers. It’s also one route in – no need to put in multiple applications to different funds, which drives communities potty! I think that is the first time ever there has been an accessible route for local communities to

develop [regeneration] partnerships.” (Devon county councillor)

Fourth, with regard to upward mobility this study was inconclusive. There was evidence (in the SCP and in Luce 2000, for example) of community members developing sufficient skills and interest to work at a more strategic level than they were first involved at. However, there was limited evidence of them being able to participate in the higher strategic levels in the English studies. In Northern Ireland members of the NACN were key players in their area’s LEADER programme.

Finally, a theme of the nature of accountability and mandate emerged. Representatives of public agencies within local partnerships invariably acted with the mandate of their agency. However, this was more problematic for community representatives. Few often had a formal mandate from their community, or sometimes it could be contested. At the least, there needed to be time allowed for community representatives to report back and to consult with their constituency – yet both the time-scales and processes of partnership management militated against this. This was particularly apparent in Dumfries and Galloway in this study.

Again, this problem was exacerbated in remote rural areas. If the key public agencies (such as the local authorities, and the RDAs and the GORs in England) are to be serious in their commitment to community involvement in RRP then these issues of mandate and time-scale must be addressed.

In conclusion, it is argued here that the diverse organisational structures described above suggest that effective partnership structures are contingent on locality, circumstances and purpose of partnership. There is no one ‘best-fit’ model.

The impact of rurality on community involvement in rural regeneration partnerships

This chapter explores the impact that the local social and geographic context of rural areas can have on community involvement in RRP. Previous research into area regeneration (Purdue et al, 2000) has suggested that this local environment can often be a key parameter of such community involvement in regeneration. This current research study does indeed confirm this finding as being especially significant in rural areas – both because of the impact of local geography on rural economies and because of the political and organisational complexity that the sheer size of rural areas engenders. This chapter will commence by highlighting the rural contextual factors that were found to be common across the three national studies in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. It will then highlight the differences.

Common contextual factors across the three nations

At the most general level it is worth reiterating that rural areas in the UK face a distinctive policy context, as well as a local socioeconomic and environmental context. Chapter 1 highlighted this context for these three national regions, as well as the different funding structures and programmes. Shucksmith (2000) has also highlighted well the distinctive challenge that regeneration and social inclusion face in rural areas:

It is apparent that most poverty and exclusion in rural areas are not concentrated in deprived areas, where area-based regeneration strategies can address their needs in a straightforward way; instead

poverty and affluence exist side-by-side in rural areas, making it much harder to engage with rural communities using traditional community development approaches. (p 39)

As a result of this specific rural context, regeneration policy in the UK has created what Bennett et al (2000) have called “a complicated context of programmes, targeted at a tangled mosaic of partially overlapping areas, spearheaded by different departments”. This context has made partnership working particularly key in rural areas – indeed more so than in urban areas, argues Shucksmith (2000). The issues to be resolved may be similar, but regeneration also has a distinctive terrain in rural areas that is a key factor in both inhibiting and facilitating community involvement in regeneration partnerships. We return to this in more detail below.

Four factors for community involvement in regeneration partnerships were identified across the three nations in this study as key rural contexts:

- physical geography;
- the extent and complexity of regeneration programmes and agencies in the area;
- the nature of human and social capital and social exclusion;
- the strength of the local voluntary and community infrastructure.

Geography

The three case study regions all have extensive coastlines and distinctive geographies that make transport and communication problematic. Devon

includes two significant moors which are a block to communication, while County Antrim has a mountain mass in its centre, which is a similar block. Dumfries and Galloway also possesses genuine elements of rural geography, covering 6,500km² with a highly dispersed local population.

The isolation and concomitant communication and transport issues of such rural areas, moreover, militates against the presence of sizeable private sector firms within the local economy. The impact of this is to reduce both the economic vitality of the region and the potential resources that can be donated 'in kind' by the business sector to local community activities.

Three geographic factors in particular were found to have an influence on community involvement in rural regeneration across the three nations. The first of these was, not surprisingly, that of *accessibility* and *transport*. Inevitably, at the strategic level, any involvement in RRP required travel to one of the key 'hub' towns of the area and the lack of a good local public transport infrastructure made this difficult. This is especially true for community members. Even at the local level, poor private and public transport resources could hamper CIRR. The Devon experience offers particularly good examples of the impact of this factor. In Torrington, for example, the poor local public transport infrastructure made the issue of involving community members from outside the actual town of Torrington in TDT a real problem:

"Well, we are *Greater* Torrington Development Trust – the district, not just the town. But it is an issue for us whether that is a reality. It has to be said that most of our members come from within Torrington and that is where most of our activity is. We want to involve the smaller communities but it is hard for them – there are school buses but not much else. We tried rotating our meetings around some of the villages but that didn't work either. A few people came to meetings in their own village, but transport is even worse *between* these villages, so the overall effect was worse. I'm not sure how we can deal with this." (manager of the TDT; their emphasis)

A representative of Highlands and Islands Enterprise also made the point that these

difficulties are exacerbated the more remote that a rural area of community is.

Not surprisingly, therefore, community transport often became a core element of many partnerships to support CIRR. One project in Devon being supported by the Key Fund saw this issue of transport as a key activity for itself in supporting community involvement in its regeneration activities. This was a community resource centre based in one of the market towns on Dartmoor:

"We want to be a resource centre for communities all across the locality but transport is awful! The bus service is non-existent really. There is a community transport scheme but that really only relates to transport for people with health or disability needs. So a key issue for us in having an impact across the area, and not just in the town, was to provide accessible local transport. Better transport increases our usage! It underpins all our community development and community involvement work. In a real sense, transport is part of the social capital needed here. We take a very flexible approach – we buy petrol, we support volunteer drivers, we even loan out mopeds. Anything to get people involved and to keep them." (coordinator of a community resource centre supported by the Key Fund)

In Northern Ireland, community transport was highlighted in the MDP as a core element of its strategy to enhance community involvement in RRP. It established the North Antrim Community Transport Consortium. Not only was this seen as a core element of the infrastructure to promote community involvement, but also as central to the social inclusion strategies of regeneration partnerships in Northern Ireland. The MDP described it as "paramount to peace and reconciliation in the region" (Donaghy, 2000).

The second influential factor was the *presence and impact of market towns* on community involvement. Inevitably, perhaps, many RRP were actually geographically based around such towns. They were seen as having a critical mass of people who could become involved in projects and were most accessible, by both private and public transport. Moreover, the regeneration of market towns was itself seen as a critical element

of rural regeneration, because of their geographic and economic importance:

“An area of emerging work for us is with market towns. They are so important for the health of the rural areas, but they seem to have lost their way. We want to help them find a new role for themselves with their communities. They can lead new growth for their communities.” (officer of the Countryside Agency in Devon)

This latter perspective was argued strongly by regional strategic bodies both in Dumfries and Galloway and in Devon, which had both identified them as a key element of their regeneration strategies (SSEP, 2000; SWERDA, 2000).

This focus on market towns could be a mixed blessing, however. On the positive side, many respondents did identify these towns as the natural focus for regeneration projects. They were the hubs that local communities related to in their rural area, and what public transport there was, was inevitably linked to them. Without the market towns, argued the director of the Community Council of Devon, it would be very hard to see how to engage local communities, because they provided such a natural focus.

In practice, however, there is difficulty in sustaining links between the smaller rural communities and these market towns. The transport issue identified above was crucial here, but so was the issue of community identity. Many respondents highlighted the strength of local attachment to their own village by community members – an initiative based in a market town, even if a very local one, could be perceived as of limited import to them.

The final significant geographic factor is a development of this latter point: the impact that the *strength of community identity* could have on CIRRP. The two sides of this impact were particularly well articulated by the coordinator of the SCP in Devon:

“Yes, many of the rural communities we work with have a very strong identity of their own. It is a real identity of place – and a very local one. People look to their own community for support. Now this can be a real strength. There are some very strong communities we work with. But it can also

make them very inward looking. They say ‘That’s not relevant to us, it’s in ‘X’ village’ – but it may only be a few miles away. It can be exclusive as well – people will help each other in their little village but won’t help others. This makes it hard to bring villages together in larger forums.”

In Northern Ireland, this strength of community identity was given a special edge by the sectarian interests of, and divide between, the Protestant and Catholic communities, with different villages or communities inevitably linked to one side only of this divide. In Broughshane, for example, the vice-chair of BIC noted how this strength of community identity, and separation, took on a physical manifestation:

“[Because this is] mainly a Protestant village, there has been a lot of kerb painting, flags going up, and graffiti on the roads. I can remember 10 years ago [for example] all the kerbstones were painted red, white and blue.”

This made linking these communities together an almost impossible task. This point is returned to below, in relation to social exclusion.

The complexity of rural regeneration and of agency involvement

As discussed above, and like many other areas in the UK (Hall and Mawson, 1999), all three case study sites had a complex pattern of EU, national and local regeneration funding programmes and a plethora of regeneration agencies. In Devon, for example, at the regional level the GOR and the RDA have become increasingly important, with responsibility being transferred to them from local government, respectively for LEADER funding and the SRB. In addition, there are several layers of local government (see below), the Community Council, a range of CVSSs, and regional offices of such bodies as the Countryside Commission, the Community Fund and the Development Trusts Association. As one frustrated community council worker commented:

“We need less agencies and less partnership. There is too much planning and enabling going on and not enough action. And it’s all the same people at each other’s meetings. Where’s the beef?”

In Scotland much of the strategic level is focused on the Scottish National Rural Partnership, a network of local rural partnerships across the nation and supported by the SRPF. The range of partners involved in these networks included the CBI Scotland, CoSLA, the Forestry Commission, the NFU of Scotland, Scottish Enterprise, Scottish National Heritage – and more! Despite this complexity, however, respondents still complained of the ‘usual suspects’ syndrome, identified in Devon:

“There is a real danger that it is the usual suspects that get wheeled out, there is a real danger that it is those with loud voices and who are always seen [who get heard] ... you’ve got to work very hard to bring in the silent majority. But equally you can’t reject the people who are actually getting on and doing the work.” (representative of CoSLA)

The situation in Northern Ireland is the most complex. Since 1990 this has been focused around the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme, and supported by the RDC (NI), the Rural Community Network and the area-based strategies. In addition to this framework, the EU programmes for regeneration include both the LEADER initiative and especially the Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation – itself an extremely complex programme of seven sub-programmes and 24 individual measures. A major review of this policy framework conducted in 2000 concluded that this policy complexity was itself a problem for developing CIRRP and recommended a “far reaching appraisal which spans all [government] Departments, agencies and professions” (Hart, 2000) in order to try and reduce this complexity.

Respondents across the three nations highlighted five issues as especially important to them in this policy context. The first was the *growing impact of regionalisation*. This was especially so in Devon, where the growing importance of the regional agencies such as the GOR and the RDA was felt to have shifted the balance of local power and accountability away from the local authorities. While no one suggested that they had become irrelevant, there was a feeling that they were now one of many players, without their previous pre-eminent position.

Second, there was a widespread feeling, as the above review in Northern Ireland suggested, that

there were *too many* regeneration programmes. Moreover, there was also a concern that they had *too exclusive* an economic focus, to the detriment of community and social priorities. The RDA itself echoed this view in Devon:

“Yes, I think that we are becoming more economically focused. That is where our strength is and where we can make the greatest contribution to regeneration locally. But I do acknowledge that this is at the cost of less focus on social and community issues. Now I am not saying that we can take the lead here as well – or that we should do. But there has been a vacuum created by the restructuring of regional responsibilities across England. I do worry who is going to fill that, if anyone.” (officer of the RDA)

All respondents emphasised the importance of economic regeneration, but equally, many commented that this had to go hand-in-hand with social and community regeneration, rather than instead of it. The reality at present was that those concerned with community regeneration often had to find ways to ‘translate’ this into economic terms, in order to secure funding. However, a good example of where this worked well was in the development of the Village Garden in Broughshane in Northern Ireland. This brought together three existing community networks with funding from nine national and EU sources, to establish a renovated mill as a focus for both community and economic regeneration in the area.

Third, the sheer number and complexity of agencies led to *confusion* and *ignorance*, even among the professionals working in the field. One key programme manager in Devon, for example, admitted that she did not really understand the way that the Community Fund worked or what it funded – yet it had provided over £20 million funding to social projects in the region in 1999/2000! In Northern Ireland, a local LEADER board member also complained of this complexity, with no common systems existing for the management or auditing of partnerships.

In Scotland, concern was also expressed that no national body comparable to the English RDC (now incorporated into the Countryside Agency) existed, that could mediate the competing regional voices and link them to the national

policy making structures. As a result, there is “a number of fairly loud sectoral voices but no one voice that tries to give voice to a range of [generic] rural issues in Scotland” (CoSLA representative).

Fourth, a fundamental issue was that *community involvement* can itself have a plethora of meanings, including community ownership, consultation and management, as well as service recipients. Building on the earlier seminal work of Arnstein, on the ‘ladder of participation’ and also of Wilcox (1994), on models of community participation in regeneration partnerships, the Community Development Foundation (1995) helpfully combines these approaches to codify five potential roles for the community in RRP:

- as beneficiaries of a RRP and as users of a service;
- as consultees and representatives of local opinion;
- as a pool of community resources for regeneration projects;
- as a potential delivery agent for regeneration initiatives;
- as a full partner in the planning and management of regeneration programmes.

While many examples of good practice in community involvement in RRPs were identified at the former level, the reality was that widespread community involvement at the final, strategic level was often extremely circumscribed:

“[In the Community Planning process] community groups felt they weren’t being brought in until the end of the process so that once the plan had been drawn up in draft by the big decision makers at the top table, they then had to feed it down so that community groups felt they were only being brought in at the end to rubber stamp [it].” (member of the Scottish Executive)

“We do block other people coming in and it’s all very well ... we’re enthusiastic, motivated and think we know what’s going on but we can be seen as to the detriment [*sic*]. We can be seen as an elite like a controlling Mafia.” (chair of North Antrim LEADER)

“Let’s be honest. Those involved at the strategic, or programme, level are one of

two groups – and neither is the local community. They are both proxies. They are either the community development professionals employed by one of the agencies, like me, or the community activist professionals – those who make their career out of *representing* a community, if you see what I mean. No, we all consult and talk, but are we ‘the community’? I don’t think so.” (Devon community council staff member; their emphasis)

CARD and the Key Fund represented one way this issue was addressed in Devon. These programmes recognised that *different types* of community involvement were needed at each level. The community development professionals of the agencies in CARD represented community needs at the strategic level. At the intermediate level, these professionals then supported and facilitated the growth of local community leaders and projects aimed at supporting local involvement in actual regeneration projects. Finally, at the local level, genuine community members were involved in these projects. The Key Fund manager argued that community involvement at the strategic level was just not possible. What was possible were clear links between each of the three levels above, and two-way communication and learning between these levels. (Responsibilities at the upper levels could provide support and advice to those at the lower levels, while experience of successful partnership working at one of the lower levels could encourage community members to become involved in the next level up.)

By contrast, in Scotland, the community planning process (Rogers et al, 2000) was used as an essential framework to draw local community members into strategic discussions (CoSLA, 2000), through such mechanisms as information provision, surveys, citizens’ panels, local focus groups and road shows. A representative of the Dumfries and Galloway Council also argued that this process:

“... actually says quite a lot about the ways that organisations should work and the culture within organisations and things like consultation and changing the emphasis to involve local people and local communities to a greater extent [than in the past].”

This important issue is returned to later in this report.

The final issue identified here was the importance of *small-scale funding schemes*, such as the Key Fund in Devon and the Scottish Rural Partnership Fund in Dumfries and Galloway, as a means to *involve* local communities in RRP. The large-scale schemes such as the SRB in England and the Community Fund inevitably paid grants in arrears and this was not appropriate for local communities, who often had no other financial resources to put into schemes (although it is important to note that, in response to this criticism, the Community Fund has now initiated its own small grants scheme, 'Awards for All'). The small-scale schemes could provide project funding 'up front', while also providing two other essential elements of local capacity-building – they provided successful experience of acquiring and managing resources for community regeneration and developed community confidence in their ability to act successfully in the complex fora of regeneration partnerships. An additional important small-scale element was the impact of 'Village Appraisals' (and latterly 'Parish Plans'), in providing community members with the essential information about their community needs that they needed to enter into regeneration initiatives (Osborne and Tricker, 2000).

The substantial influence of these small-scale funds was emphasised by many respondents in this study:

"LEADER II helped groups establish credibility ... to do a small project and to get into the heart of the community. This is in some ways more important than a major funding programme." (member of B&DCA)

"A new group cannot establish credibility in the early days unless they are doing something. Because [LEADER II] money was accessible ... it was a small amount ... [but] the important thing is that it did allow them to happen. Once a group was allocated a small amount of funding it gave it strength to seek funding from different sources." (officer of NACN)

"The [Key] Fund is best working with smaller established groups but who have never had any regeneration funding before.

You can take them through the process. You see the effect that giving a small amount of money to people in the community has. The skills are there to work in partnership for their communities, they are just not used. It's a confidence thing. Having a worker alongside the group helps these things to come out. Then they are able to go forward and maybe get involved in a larger partnership or project." (Key Fund coordinator)

"From a community perspective, these [small-scale] funds are really important. They are accessible. They get support from community workers. It's also one route in – no need to put in multiple applications to different funds, which drives communities potty! I think that it is the first time that there has ever been an accessible route for local communities to develop [regeneration] partnerships." (county councillor in Devon)

Human capital and social exclusion in rural areas

At the outset, this chapter noted the different terrain of deprivation in urban and rural areas, and the way that deprivation and affluence can co-exist side by side in rural areas. This is a real challenge for regeneration and the engagement of local communities in partnership working. Three key issues were identified here in the maintenance of *human capital* in rural communities:

- the specific nature of social exclusion in rural areas (see below);
- the low population density, which made it hard to maintain a critical mass of social capital;
- the communication difficulties of rural areas.

This often led to the dominance of the 'usual suspects' phenomenon, where a limited number of people were involved as community representatives in an increasing number of partnerships. This meant that these partnerships were laid open either to charges of elitism and 'cronyism' or to 'burn-out' by these overworked individuals.

Combating *social exclusion* also faced specific challenges in this study, echoing the previous

more detailed work of Shucksmith (2000). RRP can be beset by power imbalances between community members and the professional agency representatives, and this is even more of a problem for excluded groups (Mayo and Taylor, 2001).

A common theme of social exclusion in rural areas is the *migration of young people* away from rural areas, because of the lack of permanent career opportunities, affordable housing and social outlets. A Scottish Executive spokesperson emphasised that “if rural communities are to be successful they need to hang on to their young people and to find work for them”. If this is a key issue, however, this study also found examples of good practice in engaging with young people. The NSI, for example, achieved Community Fund money to develop a youth resource in its area, including training for involvement in partnership working. Even this project, however, found that once young people had gained transferable skills they then left the area for better education and/or employment prospects elsewhere.

This specific problem for young people also echoed the more general one of the *lack of employment* in rural communities. Moreover, any employment opportunities that do exist are invariably concentrated in the market towns, and, given the poor level of rural transport identified earlier, this is a core issue. Groundbase in Dumfries and Galloway has tried to combat this by providing unemployed people with driving lessons, as part of employment skills training.

Another problem in rural areas is the *isolation of women*, and this study found their involvement in RRP to be especially problematic. Network West in Dumfries and Galloway has tried to address this issue by developing self-help and mutual support for women and by linking local women into other networks nationally. There is also evidence of other projects in the region (such as Luce 2000) learning from this model and replicating it elsewhere.

Older people face particularly intractable challenges of exclusion in rural areas. A total of 16% have difficulties in getting to a doctor, for example, and 33% only rarely speak to or see relatives (RDC, 1998). The projects in this study all voiced their frustration at not being able to do more to help older people. *Travelling*

communities have also traditionally faced exclusion and isolation in rural areas (for example, Stewart and Kilfeather, 1999). This study as well found little evidence of any change in this pattern.

A distinctive issue of social exclusion in Northern Ireland was the *sectarian divide*. Not surprisingly, therefore, social inclusion initiatives were a core element of community involvement in RRP in Northern Ireland – not least those funded by the Peace and Reconciliation Initiative. The LEADER programmes were said by one respondent to have “made me realise that [sectarian issues were] a complete irrelevance to everybody involved” – a most radical thought in the context of the fraught recent history of Northern Ireland. The B&DCA took very seriously its role in breaking down sectarian divides and by explicitly using community involvement and events to do this:

“Most people have little or no contact with people from the opposite tradition or opposite denomination.... It’s only someone like myself who is directly involved in community work can see this. Peace and reconciliation can happen by accident.” (committee member of B&DCA)

Finally, a unique issue for rural areas is the existence of *the farming community* and the difficulties of engaging it in regeneration work. By the nature of their employment, farmers often work in isolation from their rural communities, which can lead to their counterposing their needs to those of the community. In North Antrim, for example, the community focus of the LEADER I programme had led the local farming community to feel excluded from its focus. This in turn caused this farming community to be reluctant and ill-prepared to become involved in LEADER II. Similarly the NSI found that some farmers hindered local tourism and regeneration initiatives, if it involved access to their land.

Several initiatives have tried to address this issue by engaging farmers through their self-interest. Luce 2000 in Dumfries and Galloway has developed an IT training programme for farmers as part of its community development strategy. There was also evidence in North Antrim that the tension between the community and local farmers, exacerbated during the foot and mouth epidemic in 2001, was breaking down. One local

farmer, now a member of the LEADER II agriculture sub-committee, argued that farmers must get engaged:

“I hope that we will be strongly positioned for LEADER+, not just as farmers either, but as the main protagonists in the rural community, as rural citizens.”

Local voluntary and community sector infrastructure

An especially influential factor in all three cases was the strength of the local voluntary and community infrastructure, which took several forms:

- the work of the ‘traditional’ Local Development Agencies (LDAs), such as the CVSs and (in Devon) the Rural Community Council in local communities;
- the cross-regional forums of all local development agencies, such as the Devon Local Development Agency Forum (DELDAF), the Federation of CVSs in Dumfries and Galloway and the Rural Community Network in Northern Ireland, which coordinated and/or supported the work of local VCOs;
- cross-agency programmes (such as CARD in Devon) that offered support to local communities.

The overwhelming evidence in this study, and from all three nations, was that this range of effective infrastructure was essential to the success of CIRRP. It provided technical assistance and expertise, supported small-scale funding schemes, which built local expertise and confidence (see above), and helped to develop the capacity of individuals and groups to participate in regeneration.

A minority of respondents did worry about the sheer number of intermediary bodies, however. Some felt that there was too much overlap and competition between them and that this was confusing for local groups and communities. However, the overall judgement was highly positive. Because of the significance of this issue, it is returned to in greater detail in Chapter 5.

Differing contextual factors across the three nations

The nature of local political relationships

As highlighted in the introduction to this report, the structure and impact of local government across the three nations was strikingly different, and this impacted on both the nature of local regeneration partnerships and on the place of local government within them.

In Devon, in common with much of England, regeneration existed within complex plural networks of agencies and interests. Within these networks, local government was significant but certainly no longer enjoyed the hegemony of influence that it once had. In this context Shucksmith (2000) has argued that:

... [rural] government is no longer dominated by local authorities, and instead we find a whole host of agencies involved in rural governance, drawn from the public, private and voluntary sectors. This decline in local authority power, and the associated fragmentation of responsibility and resources, along with privatisation, deregulation and the growth of non-elected bodies, has necessitated the construction of a range of partnerships that increasingly govern rural England. Important questions arise of how well ... do such partnerships empower and assist active citizenry?” (p 38)

A particularly significant example of this phenomenon was found in Devon, with the replacement of the local authority by the GOR and the RDA as the main conduit for EU and SRB funding. Moreover, through such initiatives as CARD, there was now the possibility of local community groups relating, directly and indirectly, to the regional level, without the need for local government intervention. One local government officer was concerned that local government, with its traditional lines of democratic accountability, had been sidelined and replaced by a combination of appointed regional bodies and self-appointed community leaders. While this was probably too pessimistic a view of the situation, it did raise the concern felt by local government.

In Dumfries and Galloway, by contrast, local government maintained the hegemony that was typical of local relations in Scotland. It continued to play the lead role, as the democratically elected public agency, in mediating community involvement. The best example of this was its control of the community planning process in the region – and the extent to which local groups felt their own activities as subservient to this process. Tellingly, much of the discussion about the community and regeneration partnerships was in terms of ‘consultation’ rather than ‘participative involvement’.

Devolution in Scotland has also been important. This has created closer links between the local level and the Parliament and Executive than existed previously to Whitehall, allowing rural issues to be argued more forcibly at the Scottish level.

A good example was the concern expressed by an official of the Scottish Executive about the accountability of many local partnerships. The solution to this was, in their opinion, the central involvement of local councillors in these partnerships to ensure their accountability through the traditional conduits of local government. In Moyle in Northern Ireland, by way of contrast, local community groups saw the District Council as parochial and often sectarian in its loyalties, while they considered that they had a far more inclusive agenda:

“In our work Moyle [District Partnership] has sought to be representative of the community and to build up personal trust and relations in a spirit of reconciling differences.” (officer of the Irish Congress of Trades Unions)

Across the three nations, other key issues highlighted were:

- the tension between different levels of government;
- the challenge to the traditional roles of councillors as community leaders;
- the challenge to the professional expertise and knowledge of local government professionals;
- the tensions between representative and participative democracy;
- the danger that local government could use community involvement for its advantage, to bolster its own credibility and legitimacy;

- the relationship between local government and local power relationships within communities, particularly where individuals were wearing more than one ‘hat’.

Conclusions

The evidence from this study is that the *rural geographic* and *local context* of RRP is an essential mediating factor in the involvement of local communities in these partnerships. The study has found much commonality across the three nations in terms of these factors, while also highlighting differences in terms of local political relationships. Deprivation, social exclusion and the nature of local communities are distinctive in rural areas. The hegemony of partnership as a mode of strategic planning and service delivery is also especially distinctive to rural areas. This makes the challenge of community involvement in RRP a significant challenge in its own right.

5

The role and impact of local voluntary and community sector infrastructure on community involvement in rural regeneration partnerships

Local voluntary and community infrastructure

Previous research has identified the significance of such infrastructure, in the form of Local Development Agencies (LDAs), for the promotion of local voluntary and community action in general (Osborne, 1999). This present study, as discussed briefly in the preceding chapter, has confirmed the importance of such infrastructure in particular for enabling community involvement in RRP.

This infrastructure can take a variety of forms:

- the work of the ‘traditional’ LDAs, such as Devon Community Council in England and the CVSs in both England and Scotland, and the work of the RDC (NI) in Northern Ireland;
- the cross-region forums of all LDAs, such as DELDAF, and the Dumfries and Galloway Federation of CVSs which linked the work of all the LDAs in their regions;
- bodies which focused specifically on issues of funding allocation, such as the Funding Opportunities Group (FOG) in Devon, which supported applications to the Community Fund in one area of Devon, the NIPB, which acted as a conduit between local communities in Northern Ireland and the EU Commission, the SRPF in Dumfries and Galloway, and LEADER programmes across the three nations (although the role of these programmes could sometimes be confusing, where they acted both as an intermediary body and as a main project funder for local regeneration initiatives;

- cross-agency programmes in a region (such as CARD in Devon and Local Rural Partnerships (LRPs) in Dumfries and Galloway), which managed complex regeneration programmes across the region;
- smaller-scale local groups which acted as independent infrastructure bodies (such as the SCP in Devon and the B&DCA in Northern Ireland).

The overwhelming opinion in this study was that this infrastructure was essential to the success of CIRRP. It facilitated the links between the different structural levels of regeneration partnerships, provided technical assistance and expertise, supported small-scale funding schemes which built local expertise and confidence and which helped to develop the capacity of individuals and groups to participate in regeneration. The Community Fund in Devon expressed this as a reverse compliment:

“In Devon you have very dispersed rural communities, but really good local infrastructure, to help their funding applications. They glue it all together and develop local expertise. It’s a problem for us, though, as they are too successful! Other parts of the region get jealous if they

see Devon getting even more money. CARD is a good example of this.” (officer of the Community Fund)

In Dumfries and Galloway, one local voluntary sector representative believed that the LDAs had given the sector a genuine voice in discussions about regeneration:

“The statutory agencies’ point of view had been traditionally that the voluntary sector is not professional, not organised and they’ve no resources. I think what [LDAs] have done, even if we don’t have more resources, is to be seen as challengers, who want a fair say and now we want the community to have their say. There is nothing that happens in the region now that we are not invited to....”

A representative of the Scottish Executive concluded that infrastructure bodies “are really important players in the local community”.

Finally, in Northern Ireland, the view of the LEADER programme support was equally positive:

“LEADER II reached the very heart of people trying to help themselves. With LEADER there is a proven basis for administering funds in a fair fashion.” (Larne Borough Council officer)

“The benefits of LEADER were not to do with money at all (which was only a small amount of three quarters of a million pounds). The benefit of LEADER was that the community, private and statutory sectors learned to work together. The money was incidental. The cash we handed out didn’t make a big difference, but it gave people confidence to bid for other, non-LEADER, funding.” (member of NACN)

A minority of respondents did worry about the plethora of intermediary bodies, however. Some felt that there was too much overlap and competition between them and that this was confusing for local groups and communities. This was felt to be a particular problem in Northern Ireland, where the Peace and Reconciliation fund had led to the growth of a plethora of LDAs.

The concern was also expressed that they could become a self-perpetuating elite, who took the

place of the community in partnerships, rather than facilitating its involvement. This concern was voiced in the previous chapter, by the CoSLA representative (p 18). However, the overall judgement on their work was positive.

Respondents in this study stressed five factors as essential to community involvement in RRP:

- the nurturing of community involvement in the different structural levels of regeneration partnerships;
- the facilitation of funding to local communities and the managing of these funds;
- supporting key individuals to develop local capacity;
- training;
- the experience of success through direct community involvement in regeneration projects.

Underlying all this was the fundamental idea of community involvement in RRP as a *process* to be managed and supported.

Key roles

Nurturing and linking involvement at different structural levels of partnership

As discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, this study found that it was unrealistic to expect the same type of community involvement at different structural levels of regeneration partnership. Community members, for example, were often simply not interested in sitting on the arcane strategic bodies which decided the overall structure and funding of regeneration partnerships – although they were very interested in the outcomes of these deliberations!

It is also true that barriers existed to such involvement, such as the development of the necessary personal or language skills to participate in these strategic-level discussions. With regard to upward mobility for community leaders, this study was inconclusive. Two views were expressed on this in this study: one was that community members could not be expected to operate within the strategic policy making arena, because they lack the skills to do so, and one that these arenas were structured to exclude them. A

representative of the Scottish Executive brought these issues together:

“There is a general issue about how many people you bring in.... You could have a steering group with voluntary groups involved, the local community councils, the health councils, etc. You could then get a very messy big group that you can’t get decisions out of.... I suspect that most [partnerships] will go [a] with fairly tight knit group to begin with and they will go with the big money spenders and that’s only to be expected ... once we’ve done that, we need to get the local voluntary and community groups involved and we need to sit down with them and work out a way in which their interests can be represented....”

CARD and the Key Fund in Devon represented one way that this structural issue was addressed, as was discussed in Chapter 3. The Key Fund manager argued that the reality of community involvement at the strategic level was just not possible. It was the clear links between each of the three levels (strategic, intermediate and community) that was important, and two-way communication and learning between the levels. (Community representatives at the upper levels could provide support and advice to those at the lower levels, while experience of successful partnership working at one of the lower levels could encourage other community members to become involved in the next level up.) One LEADER manager in Devon argued that in CIRRP, “the key issue is language – the community does not understand what [they] are talking about – and vice versa!”. Her role, she said, was therefore one of “translation”. She both helped local groups to translate their ideas into a format that was understood at the strategic level and helped the strategic groups to talk meaningfully to local communities. “I’m an expert at translation”, she concluded, ruefully.

However, such a structural role for the intermediary infrastructure bodies did not come without a cost for those involved:

“There is a tension between sitting on strategic bodies and working in local communities. Part of this is to do with the time involved – there’s not enough. However, there is also one of credibility. If local people see you spending too much

time at the county level they start to wonder if you care about them. It’s not a conflict from my point of view of course – but it can be seen as one. I have to admit my preference is for the community level. I have a huge network of community links and this is a real resource.” (LEADER manager in Devon)

Certainly, regional regeneration policy, and the strategic management of regional-wide RRP, continues to remain dominated by the professionals and pre-existing agencies of community development and regeneration across the UK. It may indeed be that genuine community involvement at this level is an unrealistic aspiration of community involvement in RRP. Not many community members are actually interested in the strategic level – they are interested in the real services delivered to their community and the regeneration of their community. What is undoubtedly important, however, is that the strategic level needs to be linked to the community levels to perform three tasks:

- to allow an efficient and smooth flow of regeneration funds to communities;
- to facilitate accountability for decisions made at the strategic level;
- to establish routes for community members to develop and to operate at the strategic level, if they wish to.

Table 3 summarises these levels and the nature of community involvement at each one.

The impact of funding on CIRRP

Respondents identified two financial factors as essential components of the work of intermediary infrastructure bodies – and which the intermediate level in Table 3 needed to ensure were available. The first of these was, simply, *money*. This allowed communities to act on their own and to use it to lever more money from other sectors. It had to be available in an accessible form, however. The greatest drawback to community involvement was often the time-scale of many funding packages, as detailed above. Moreover, the overriding concern of many regeneration programmes was with pump-priming alone. This was seen as highly detrimental to longer-term sustainability. Many respondents

Table 3: Levels of CIRRP (ii)

Key task of RRP	Nature of community involvement
<p><i>Strategic level</i> Planning/funding partnerships</p>	(i) consultation (ii) involvement by proxy through intermediary agencies (such as the Community Council of Devon) and community activists
<p><i>Intermediate level</i> RRP management level</p>	(i) involvement of community activists (ii) bridging role for intermediary agencies in representing and advocating for community needs to the strategic level
<p><i>Community level</i> Local community regeneration projects</p>	Services planned/owned by communities with support of either professional community development staff or 'animateurs'

argued that a lot of community projects arising out of RRP's actually spent most of their money looking for further money! To its credit, the Community Fund had recognised this in Devon and was actively looking at ways to offer sustainable funding to community projects in the future.

The second issue identified here was the importance of *small-scale funding schemes*. This was discussed in detail in Chapter 4. That discussion will not be reiterated here. However, it is important to re-emphasise that the provision and management of these small-scale funding schemes was one essential way in which the local intermediary bodies promoted and supported CIRRP:

“We would not be as advanced in our development without Groundbase’s support in the early days with peppercorn money to get started and then funding for projects.” (member of Langholm and Eskdale Initiative)

It is also important to recognise that the provision and management of these small-scale funds, as significant as they were to local communities, did not come without their own cost to the local intermediary bodies:

“Local communities like the small and delegated funds. They are much more community friendly and easier to access. They don’t need to deal with the problems of retrospective funding and really bureaucratic monitoring processes. But for

us, I have to say, they are really onerous. We have to take the burden of the retrospective funding and heavy monitoring. It’s good because it’s something that we can give back to local communities – but it’s a real pain.” (Coordinator of Key Fund in Devon)

Supporting key individuals to develop local capacity

The third role for infrastructure bodies was the *development and nurturing of individuals at the intermediate levels* who could act to develop local capacity. These might either be professional community development workers or volunteer ‘animateurs’ based in local communities and trained by an intermediary body. Neither seemed more successful than the other in this project, and it is likely that both are needed in different circumstances. The professional workers bring important expertise, especially in relation to funding applications and managing projects, and were best at working with existing groups:

“[It] is best working with smaller established groups who have never had any regeneration funding before. You can take them through the process.... The skills are there to work in partnership for their local communities, they are just not used. It’s a confidence thing. Having a worker alongside the group helps these things to come out. They are able to go forward and maybe get involved in a larger partnership

or project.” (coordinator of the Key Fund in Devon)

The animateurs, by contrast, were able to spend most time with small and ‘half-formed’ groups developing their confidence. They were often less threatening to these communities or groups at the early stages of involvement in RRP. In isolated rural communities, the status of animateurs as ‘real’ community members would offer them an important level of credibility. However, because of the nature of the small pool of social capital in such communities, the availability of individuals prepared to act as animateurs was limited. Both these issues were expressed by the coordinator of the SCP in Devon:

“We work alongside communities to their agenda. We enable their ideas to happen. If the community really is to learn then it has to retain ownership. This is real progress, even if ... progress is slower than if we did it for them.... [But] it can be hard to find your local animateurs. You do need a local face to push things forward, we find. We look to members of the Parish Council, or in schools or churches, or just find out who has the ideas, maybe in the local pub. They are so important though – local people know them and will listen to them. Professional community workers can be intimidating – but local people will go to local people.”

A third model, being piloted by the Community Council in Devon, was that of a local *School for Social Entrepreneurs*. This combines formal training (see also the next section, below) and support with elements of the ‘animateur’ approach:

“I think the WestDEN approach is right ... but have the right animateurs been forthcoming ... [and] have they been in the right places? With the [School for Social Entrepreneurs] we have been able to select seven motivated individuals, who have important existing community or regeneration projects to work on, and provide them with bursaries for a year and undertake a combination of tutor-led learning with supported project development.” (chief executive of Devon Community Council)

Projects supported in this fashion included a community recycling centre, a project using the arts as a means of community engagement, and the redevelopment of a derelict school into a community resources centre.

Training

The fourth element was *formal training* for community members, either in technical skills (such as IT skills) or in the nature and working of RRP. The provision of such training in rural areas is a challenge, however, because of the issues of transport and access. The LEADER officers in Devon saw this as a particularly important role for themselves – although acknowledged that it could be difficult to actually get community people to participate in formal training programmes:

“It is chicken and egg. We ran a training programme for community members on project building but not that many people participated. Then of course when people are involved in a project they say that they want training – and it’s no good then to tell them that they missed the last programme six months ago. Everyone wants it when it is important to them, not when we schedule it. I don’t know a real solution to this yet.” (LEADER manager)

Members of the NSI in Scotland found the impact of training on their partnership work to be especially beneficial:

“By undertaking training and having a good proper business plan and having got our core funding from the Scottish office all the other local funding bodies began to look at us as a serious group.”

Building capacity by direct involvement in projects

The final element is the *building of skills* by direct involvement in a project. This was a particular element of all the RRP studied here, and is a core component of the ‘catalytic approach’ to supporting voluntary and community action (Osborne, 2000).

“Our money is important. It allows real projects to happen which just wouldn’t. And then people learn. I mean they don’t become whiz kids, or anything, but they develop skills and confidence. There is no substitute for experience.” (coordinator of project supported by Key Fund in Devon)

The impact of the Key Fund on direct community involvement in regeneration partnerships was well illustrated by a member of one community project that had received support from it:

“This is the first funding that we have received. We’ve had 20-odd years of surviving by the skin of our teeth. This funding allows us to plan and think where to make a difference. Before the local council wasn’t interested in us, but now we have money – they are!”

Despite its undoubted strengths, this model did have one significant limitation. It worked only with established community groups. While it had thought about working with communities with no organisational focus, the Key Fund had not been pursued as yet (as much because of the need to focus its own effort as for any other reason). Moreover, some respondents criticised it for its top-down approach to community involvement.

Conclusions: the key role of intermediary bodies

One issue that virtually all respondents across the three nations were unanimous on was the central role that intermediary bodies have to play in enabling community involvement in RRP. This was not limited to the traditional LDAs alone, such as the Community Councils and the CVSs, but also included the issue-based intermediary groups, such as the SCP in Devon and the B&DCA in Northern Ireland, and also the area offices of the Development Trusts Association and the local programme offices of the EU LEADER programme.

It is also useful to delineate two roles in the work of these intermediary bodies. The first is *horizontal capacity building*. This is about building the capacity of communities across rural areas to develop and participate in projects and partnerships to regenerate their communities.

Many examples of this have been given already. The key tasks here include:

- identifying and developing community leaders in disadvantaged communities;
- helping local communities identify their needs (such as through Village Appraisals and Parish Plans);
- being a conduit for funding, especially through small-scale schemes, which allow communities to develop projects, community work expertise and confidence with the minimum of bureaucracy;
- providing support and expertise in issues such as writing funding proposals and managing budgets in a way which allows communities to develop their own expertise;
- being a source of information about funding and partnership opportunities in the region;
- enabling communities to learn lessons through evaluation.

The second role is *vertical capacity building*.

This is about building the capacity of communities and of community activists to participate in the strategic level of partnerships. The key tasks here are to:

- identify those community activists who have the interest and potential to make a strategic contribution;
- provide opportunities for these individuals to take on strategic roles;
- ensure that the views of the widest available number of communities and community members are fed up to community representatives on regional strategic partnerships and to ensure that the diversity of views is properly represented;
- ensure information flow back to communities about the decisions made and their impact.

Both these roles are underpinned by what has been termed previously as a *catalytic approach* to the work of intermediary bodies (Osborne, 2000). That is, by undertaking one piece of work (such as helping a local group to put together a successful funding bid) it contributes to another objective also (such as building the capacity of community groups to make such funding bids in their own right in the future).

In conclusion, it is argued here that it was the effectiveness of these intermediary infrastructure bodies which determined the success, or

otherwise, of CIRRP in all three nations. The key tasks that they undertake include:

- promoting communication, both with the community in an inclusive way and between the community and strategic levels of the partnership;
- procuring resources to fund small-scale community oriented funding schemes that will work to encourage community involvement;
- ensuring the availability of trained facilitators to support community involvement – both the models of the professional development worker and the enthusiastic ‘animateur’ have their advantages, and neither should be seen to preclude the other;
- feeding key information both to communities about regeneration initiatives and to strategic agencies about needs;
- providing infrastructure resources to support communities, including technical assistance and professional advice;
- enabling training in skills for community members, both about regeneration and about the skills of partnership working, at both the community and strategic level.

Key skills for community leadership in rural regeneration partnerships – and their development

This chapter identifies the skills and knowledge that are required at the local level for effective partnership working and community involvement in RRP. It then evaluates the learning processes used to develop these skills and knowledge.

Skills in rural partnership working

It has long been recognised that specific skills, at the individual level, are required to facilitate and lead the process of partnership working (for example, Chanan, 1997; DETR, 1997; Purdue et al, 2000). In the rural context, Edwards et al (2000) have reinforced this view, commenting that:

As yet, unfortunately, many places lack such [community] leaders and building capacity that will allow them to emerge may take both time and change in attitudes towards ... the community. (p 53)

A recent review of LRPs in Scotland has also recognised the need for training to facilitate effective partnership working between agencies and communities (Scottish Executive, 2000b). Finally, at the UK level, the Social Exclusion Unit has highlighted the development of community leadership skills as an essential prerequisite for combating social exclusion (SEU, 1999).

Slee and Snowdon (1997) have differentiated further the training needs of both the paid and unpaid members of rural partnerships, while maintaining that both are important and should be

identified early in the establishment of a partnership.

... individual partners may benefit from training in interpersonal and negotiating skills which are important features of multi-agency working. Particular attention should be given at the outset to any training needs of the chairperson and project manager.... There may be a need to train individuals who do not work directly for the partnership, such as amateurs who work with community groups. Amateurs that are 'parachuted in' can be a liability because they lack local knowledge. Participants in local projects, often local residents, may also require training for example in administrative and computing skills. (p 19)

Hutchinson and Campbell (1998) have identified three types of skills that are required for effective partnership working: team building, community capacity building and operational management. The most critical concept for effective community involvement that came through this study, however, was that of community leadership (see also Purdue et al, 2000).

Models of community leadership

Three different sets of community leadership skills emerged from this study. The first was the currently in-vogue model of **social entrepreneurship** (this role often elided with

that of the *inspirational champion*, referred to in Table 5). Waddock and Post (1991) define this as:

... private sector citizens who play critical roles in bringing about catalytic changes in the public sector agenda and perception of certain social issues. (p 393)

Bennis and Nanus (1985) have also suggested that social entrepreneurs possess three skill elements – vision creating, personal credibility and an ability to generate followers (see Table 4).

Examples of this approach were especially evident in Devon. Both the chief executive of TDT and the general manager of WestDEN, which the SCP was situated within, were described by a number of respondents as being “enthusiastic entrepreneurs” and “wheeler-dealers”. This role was not one always described positively, however. One regeneration worker in Devon complained that such social entrepreneurs were “great at getting the money and enthusing people ... but less good at delivering the goods”.

B&DCA also provided examples of inspiration, motivational leadership, and entrepreneurial skills in action:

“[The Chair and Secretary of B&DCA] are get up and go people and nothing will dissuade them or get them down. They’ll always keep fighting, both of them, for the good of their community and they have been recognised for that.” (community development worker of B&DCA)

While rural areas clearly need such strong community leadership there may be a danger, however, that this assertive type of human capital can sometimes be too strong and may potentially inhibit the confidence of others to participate. There is also both a danger that community groups can become reliant on one individual for their success and a potential danger of an elite, unelected, controlling group from the voluntary and community sector preventing others from gaining access to the experience necessary to engage in strategic decision making for their locality:

“... when you have strong personalities it dwarfs anyone else being able to raise their head ... once you have been used to working together and you know how to operate the system which is all very well ... it makes it flow but it’s not in the long term a good thing.” (committee member of NACN)

Second, the growing importance of **managerial skills** as a core component of community leadership in RRP is reflected in the way that funding agencies are increasingly asking about these skills in bids for funds:

“Our cross-section of skills is important. The lottery form that we just filled in asked ‘What skills does your management committee have?’ Well when you look at the cross-section we’ve all got tremendous and very diverse skills to put into the pot.” (NSI committee)

Table 4: Social entrepreneurial skills

Skill element	Example
1. <i>Vision creating</i>	In most cases the social entrepreneur is faced with significant social problems that are entirely complex and provide the impetus for action. The social entrepreneur is able to create a vision that encourages others to change their perceptions and to act
2. <i>Personal credibility</i>	The social entrepreneur builds and sustains a wide and varied network, thus gaining access to resources to help address complex social problems
3. <i>Ability to generate followers</i>	This is achieved by presenting the project/cause in social terms and gains, rather than emphasising the numerical economic gains of the work, thereby generating followers who are committed to the same aims and objectives

Source: Based on Bennis and Nanus (1985)

The NSI management committee is a good example of these skills in action. They allowed it to achieve success quickly. After just two years, NSI had developed over £200,000 of inward investment to the community:

“Several [committee members] were business people who had experience of running their own business, so therefore they brought that kind of ethos, the necessity of having good financial systems and managing those. One particular individual is a qualified accountant, now wouldn't it be wonderful if every committee had a qualified accountant on board? One was an environmental engineer so for environmental projects that kind of background information and the ability to talk the same language as the experts in this field is obviously a very useful skill to have. The chairperson was formally a schoolteacher. Schoolteachers have to have a whole range of skills. These skills relate to a network that you can tap into relatively easily. So individual representatives brought good skills with them, applicable skills and that was important.” (local council employee)

Consequently, NSI is now recognised as a ‘maturing organisation’. Another example of this approach is the way in which the TDT in Devon also sought out specific individuals with specific skills (such as accounting or strategic management skills) to take lead roles in its management.

Monitoring and evaluation skills were recognised as a critical subset of such managerial skills. The Community Fund in Devon identified these as an essential (if difficult) component of their funding of CIRRP, while the NACN also highlighted their importance in their partnership work:

“[Our] board is very interested in evaluation but it is struggling with how to do it effectively. We are working towards this. We have a database [of projects], but it is tangled up in technology. Progress is needed. We're running to catch up with ourselves. Our information is just not in a form that we can use. We need resources, skills and time. We're still so new though – I'm sure it will come. Do you have any

ideas?” (programme manager for the Community Fund in Devon)

“People always seem to think that voluntary organisations are not concerned about monitoring and evaluation but we have, from the start, considered this to be extremely important. At the start the one thing the [government] department would have said is ‘You're full of energy, you're full of vision but do you know how to run a programme? Can we trust you with it?’ One of the things that they have learned from us is that, if they put structures in place, we will work with them and do every bit as well as they do.” (committee member, NACN)

To date, however, there was limited evidence only of the development of approaches toward the evaluation of the process of community involvement itself, as opposed to the evaluation of the outputs of such partnerships. As part of an overall evaluation of its projects, the LEADER programme in South Devon did consider community participation. This was limited through a comment that 67% of its completed projects “show added value by involving community participation in some form” (Shears, 2001). WestDEN had also produced its own *Sustainability indicators report*, which considered community involvement in relation to LA 21. This found 35% of local people as actively involved in local community projects (WestDEN, 1999). Again, however, there was little more in the way of any sophisticated evaluation of CIRRP or its impact. In this context the work of Yorkshire Forward (2000) on benchmarking community participation in regeneration partnerships is particularly interesting and important.

Finally, ***governance skills*** underpinned much of the role of community leadership. Respondents noted *negotiation* as a crucial skill. Nowhere was this more pertinent than in Broughshane when the Loyalist marching season coincided with when the Floral Village and Best Kept Village competitions are judged. BIC approached this by negotiating with the people putting up Loyalist decorations, such as union flags and red, white and blue bunting, and arranging their removal when the competitions were being judged.

“You know, we have helped to make sure that it's decent bunting, not old ripped stuff.

Table 5: Community leadership roles and RRP stages

Stage	Role	Key skills
Initiation	Inspirational champion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising profile on issue (in community and with agencies) • Inspiring involvement
Development	Entrepreneurial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquisition of partners and resources • Developing a key role for all parts of the community in the partnership
Implementation	Managerial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinating community involvement and managing local service/project provision • Negotiating with community groups and partner agencies • Being accountable to community and partners for action
Sustainability	Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building/maintaining relationships with partners • Evaluation, reflecting and learning from partnership process

We try to work with them when we can, rather than alienate them because you don't get anywhere that way." (community development worker, B&DCA)

A further element identified for this governance role was that of *trust building*. Ostrom (1990) has argued that where people communicate and interact in a localised setting, they can learn who to trust and what effects their decisions will have on each other, and they can learn how to organise themselves to gain benefits. The importance of this was emphasised here in the evaluation of the Community Planning Pathfinder Project in Scotland:

"... if the [Community Plan] is going to be effective and genuine, and it is really going to deliver results for the community it has to be based on very firm foundations of mutual trust, and it is building up the trust between relationships, and that takes time and it takes a certain amount of tact and diplomacy." (Local Government Division, Scottish Executive)

The experience of Luce 2000 also found it a challenge to build trust between agencies, while the Government Office in Devon highlighted the issue of trust between the statutory agencies and the local community:

"Trust has been built by delivering what we say we are going to do and keeping our word and that seems to go for quite a lot for some reason. That seems to hit the right spot so we have got a lot of support from the local authority. In fact, I don't think

there is anybody that we have come across that we haven't had a lot of support from." (Luce 2000 worker)

"How to get trust [between the agencies and the community]? Well, not by meeting at our offices, that's for sure! Both the local authority and us [*sic*] have realised that just puts people off. Best contact is through the voluntary and community sector, as a sort of intermediary. Local people feel more comfortable in that context. And these groups know how to relate to the community – and how to work with us as well!" (officer of the Government Office for the South West England Region)

Table 5 provides an overview of these community leadership roles, as they were uncovered in this study, and relates them to different stages of the life cycle of RRP.

Developing community learning in the partnership process

The RDC of Northern Ireland (RDC, 2000), while acknowledging that local communities are best placed to identify their needs and to propose solutions, argues that they require significant facilitation. This includes mentoring, technical support and training. The pre-eminent challenge in developing such skills for partnership working may be in getting those involved in RRP to recognise their need for skills development, or, when they do, ensuring that there is effective provision to meet those needs. Oakley (1991) has

suggested that the starting place for such development must be the existing skills and knowledge of local people. This current research has highlighted five approaches as being effective in developing community leadership in RRP.

The first approach is the *effective delivery of formal training*, in such things such as technical skills or partnership governance. This formal approach can be problematic, however, because of the issues of transport and access in rural areas. It can also be difficult to provide formal training at the time that community members want and need it (these difficulties were expounded on earlier, by the Devon LEADER manager in Chapter 5, and so will not be restated here).

There were, however, positive examples of RRP members at the community level engaging in formal training. The experience of the NSI management committee in Dumfries and Galloway discussed in Chapter 5 is one good example of this impact. Another example is that of the Luce 2000 committee and staff members. They participated in committee development workshops, facilitated by a local resident with training experience. These sessions encouraged committee members to reflect on past experience, and to consider future plans. In addition, a council officer provided financial management training to these committee members and another member of staff was undertaking a work-based Diploma in Community Education.

An element of training particularly valued by the NSI committee members was the *on-going advice and support* provided by a DGC community development officer, who:

“... helped us with all the funding applications initially when the forms were almost like a foreign language to us ... we were all doing it voluntarily and none of us had any experience of this kind of work.”
(NSI committee member)

Finally, an innovative approach to training for community leadership has been developed by the Community Council in Devon, through its local School for Social Entrepreneurs. This combined training with project support and, claimed the director of the council, was focused on key individuals who were undertaking important

regeneration partnership working. (This was discussed further in Chapter 5.)

Second, a common experience across all the RRP in this study was the *importance of early, often small-scale, successes* in developing the confidence of community activists. NSI, for example, had built on the experience gained from a previous project where they had been involved in saving the town's cinema, which was now operating as a community business.

“They got started on one or two fairly small-scale projects but it had a sizeable impact ... ‘We can do that’. They're now able to speak to a range of partners, and a range of levels within these organisations including chief executives.” (Groundbase employee)

Glenravel Community Group has also had similar experiences, although perhaps on a smaller scale:

“They had a package of refurbishment of various little villages like Martinstown, Cargin and Newtowncrommelin. They came together and had a package of small things: a picnic site here, fix a wall there, plant some trees there. I hear they recently got £50,000 from the Lottery for various other work. All of this came out of an initial success, giving confidence to seek additional funding.” (economic development officer, Ballymena Borough Council)

In this context, the impact of *small grants schemes* can also be profound, as discussed in Chapter 5. This allowed community groups to participate in partnerships at a limited level, and to develop skills and confidence in doing so.

Third, the value of *experiential learning* gained through participation in community activities has been recognised as contributing to the development of social capital. Osborne (1999) describes this as a core component of the ‘catalytic approach’ to supporting voluntary and community action. The impact of this was graphically illustrated both in Cushendall in Northern Ireland and in the Key Fund in Devon:

“[As compared to 10 years ago] there's a confidence about rural areas. People are much more prepared to try different things. There are more facilities and resources.

Psychologically communities within villages, and within rural areas, have developed enormously. There have been quite dramatic changes and villages have taken on projects they would never have dreamed of, be it Cushendall, be it Broughshane or Loughiel. There are now structures in place. People in rural areas are prepared to go into partnerships with government bodies. They want to be part of the decision making process, not simply to be dictated to.” (committee member of Cushendall and District Development Group)

“Our money is important. It allows real projects to happen which just wouldn’t, but they also develop skills and confidence. There is no substitute for experience.... So it’s not my role to say [this project] is crap – because it’s a process, as I say. I help people to explore their projects themselves and make their own decisions. I get them to talk to other groups that do similar things, and sometimes to learn from failure – success isn’t everything in this job. My contribution? I inject realism!” (coordinator of a project supported by the Key Fund)

The value of experiential learning was not only identified as significant for community members but also for the professional staff of public agencies working with community groups:

“They [the civil servants] have done a lot of learning. In our case there has been a lot of continuity with civil servants. They have done a lot of learning. Different issues have come to the fore, issues that we both feel are relevant.” (committee member of NACN)

“Some of them had their own learning curve for about two years when the funding came about. Once the government people came on board and began to get out on the ground and when that’s happened I think they learned a lot and now have a good feel.” (committee member of B&DCA)

Fourth, it is important not to underestimate the impact of the financial cost of community leadership and involvement for the individuals involved. For the staff of the public agencies, these financial issues are covered by their agency, but for community members they often fall on the

individuals themselves. A core element of developing community leaders has to be, therefore, *financial support* of the costs of their participation in RRP.

Fifth, *networking* at a national and international level was identified as another component of effective community learning. A particularly valuable experience for community groups supported by LEADER in Dumfries and Galloway, for example, was transnational exchanges. TDT in Devon was also a member of the national network of Development Trusts. As well as learning through contact with these other trusts, TDT used the local offices of the network to gain advice and support. This ‘network effect’ was also identified in earlier research as an essential element of the catalytic work of LDAs, as discussed previously in Chapter 5 of this report (see also Osborne, 1999).

Conclusions

A number of clear findings about the development of key skills and knowledge for effective community involvement in RRP have emerged from this study. First, participants need time to learn how to work together and to learn to trust each other. The formal objectives, targets and funding regimes of RRP can often inhibit this important aspect of partnership development. Another limitation is that the short-term nature of many posts funded through regeneration partnerships can mean that the learning embodied within a particular individual can be lost when their funding ceases and they move on.

Second, partners need to recognise that they all have development needs, and not just the community members alone. Third, formal training programmes received a mixed response from the RRP studied here. While some groups welcomed such training, in other areas logistics and timing appeared to be particularly problematic. Fourth, across all the RRP the importance of early successes was critical to the development of confidence of local groups. Fifth, experiential learning was recognised as playing a vital role in the development of social capital in rural areas. Finally, networking opportunities, including international exchanges, enabled community groups to gain exposure to a diverse range of knowledge and experience.

Conclusions

Goodwin (1998) has pointed to the ‘increasingly noticeable silence’ about rural governance. The research on which this report is based was intended to address this silence, in the context of community involvement in RRP and their governance. This concluding chapter will now draw together the key lessons and conclusions, which will be considered under seven headings:

- What does ‘community involvement in rural regeneration partnerships’ (CIRRP) really mean and what are the processes and structures involved?
- What is the impact of rurality on CIRRP?
- Are there significant differences between the three national regions in this study, in terms of the processes and impact of CIRRP?
- What funding structures best work well to encourage CIRRP?
- What is the best way to build the community and individual skills required to make a reality of CIRRP?
- What is the import of local voluntary and community infrastructure on CIRRP?
- What is the best way to ensure the sustainability of CIRRP?

Community involvement in RRP

As was made clear in the introduction to this report, for a variety of reasons, CIRRP is an oft-sought component of area regeneration and development strategies. These include the leverage of resources, planning information and community ownership and sustainability. However, the range of policy initiatives is also characterised by a lack of clarity about what is meant by ‘community involvement’, and sometimes by what is meant by ‘community’.

This report began by differentiating between ‘communities of place’ and ‘communities of interest’. Both these definitions were in play in the partnerships examined in this study – as well as their confluence. To take the experience in Devon, partnerships were organised around a specific geographic area (TDT), around a specific need or interest (many of the projects supported by the SCP served a particular need, such as those of people with disabilities), and around a specific need within one locality (many of the transport projects in Devon reflected this approach). Many of the partnerships in Northern Ireland, however, such as B&DCA, were concerned with avoiding working with sectarian communities of interest, because of the past history of conflict, and they sought instead to build communities of place that spanned these sectarian interests.

It is unnecessary to assert the dominance of one of these definitions above the others – all clearly have meaning in rural communities. It is important, however, to be clear about the type of community being involved and its implications both for the processes and inclusiveness (or not) of CIRRP.

It is also important to emphasise that ‘community involvement’ can mean different things at different structural levels of partnership. At the strategic (regional planning and funding) level, CIRRP often means a proxy representing the community (perhaps a community leader or a community development worker), while at the community level of actual regeneration projects, it involves the direct participation of individual members of that community in partnership-based projects. Linking these two levels together is the intermediate level, through which ‘community proxies’ can be held accountable to their actual communities and through which local projects

and partnerships can be linked to funding and planning at the regional level.

Different types of partnerships are also appropriate to these different levels – and work with different types of community involvement. Again, using the Devon example, CARD was effective in working at the strategic level. At the intermediate level, the Key Fund and the SCP both linked these strategic partnerships to local communities and encouraged/supported involvement at the community level. Finally, at the community level, TDT provided a good example of a local partnership founded on genuine community involvement and leadership.

The key lesson here is not to counterpose these differing types and levels of CIRRP, but rather to ensure that upward and downward linkages between them are in place. Similarly it would be wrong to assert a normative hegemony of one of these types/levels of partnerships over the others. Each makes a different contribution to CIRRP: the strategic level coordinates this involvement into the overall needs of the region and establishes funding regimes; the intermediate level links communities to this strategic level and nurtures community projects at the local level; and the local level provides opportunities for direct involvement by individuals in regeneration projects and partnerships, and the opportunity to develop skills that could enable them or their community to operate at one of the other levels.

The impact of rurality on CIRRP

This study found many of the same issues current for community involvement in regeneration projects in rural areas as for urban areas (such as linking the community and strategic levels and the need to develop community leadership skills). However, it is true to say that the *rural context* gave these issues a distinctive edge not found in urban areas. Three elements were found to be particularly influential:

- the influence of local geography (such as a mountain mass which needs to be negotiated), and of the sheer size of rural areas, on community involvement – not least through transport and communication difficulties;
- the influence of rural demography on the human capital available for CIRRP – and

particularly the low population densities of many rural areas and the loss of young people to the educational and work opportunities of the urban areas;

- the strength of community (of place) identity in isolated villages which can often militate against their joining with, or learning from, other local villages (and where economies of scale may mean the difference between the sustainability, or otherwise, of a regeneration partnership).

Cross-national differences

As with the urban–rural comparison, this study found that the three nations involved all faced similar challenges in promoting and supporting CIRRP. However, it would be a serious mistake to conclude that national differences did not exist. This is untrue and would replicate a common error in much policy making in the UK. Each nation had a distinctive context and these contexts were essential to the process and outcomes of CIRRP.

This study identified four differences that were fundamental to the nature of CIRRP across these nations, and quite probably to other public policy initiatives. First, the institutional contexts are dissimilar. In England, the Countryside Agency acts as a body to raise rural issues at the national level. No such body exists in Scotland (although latterly the SNRP has attempted to take on this role), and this gap has posed a major problem for the other rural regeneration bodies. Similarly in Northern Ireland, there is not the history of the existence of LDAs as in England and Scotland – many are a product of recent EU funding initiatives. This impacts both on their skills base and on how they are regarded by the other regeneration agencies and partnerships, and on their sustainability.

Second, the policy context is also different. The rural White Papers of 1995-96 show distinctive concerns – community regeneration receiving a much greater emphasis in the Scottish White Paper, for example, while the English version placed greater emphasis on economic regeneration. In Northern Ireland, moreover, rural regeneration is inevitably linked into the Peace and Reconciliation Initiative under the auspices of the EU.

Third, and continuing from the above, the funding structures for rural regeneration in general, and CIRRP in particular, are profoundly different. In Northern Ireland, as suggested above, it is dominated by the Peace and Reconciliation Programme which provides substantial funding direct to the community sector, and which has presided over a significant growth in this sector over the past decade. In England, funding is now allocated at the regional level with the growth of importance of the GORs and the RDAs – both with particular concerns for economic models of rural regeneration. Finally, in Scotland, the local authorities continue to dominate the process, with a long-standing belief in the supremacy of public provision over other models.

Fourth, and underlying all of these differences, are the different models of local governance across the three national regions (Martin and Pearce, 1999). Scotland has continued a tradition of the hegemony of local government in the governance of its communities. While arguably threatened recently by devolution and the desire of the Scottish Parliament to exert its own powers, the model is still one of the hegemony of the state (national and/or local) in rural governance. In Northern Ireland, by contrast, local government has historically been much weaker, and often seen as serving sectoral interests alone. In this context, it has often been bypassed in regeneration initiatives, with money (particularly EU money) flowing directly to the community organisations. Finally, in England, the model is one of plural patterns of governance. Local government has become one of many players at the regional level, with much power moving upwards to the GORs and the RDAs. It now has to negotiate multiple relationships to maintain its position and influence.

The impact of these differences was found to be acute in this study. They affected accountability mechanisms, funding structures and the locus of power within regeneration partnerships. *It is to be hoped that this report will encourage the recognition within UK policy making of these national differences in modes of policy implementation and their significance for the impact of public policies at the regional and community level.*

The impact of funding regimes

The available resources for rural, as opposed to urban, regeneration are more limited. In England, for example, the major tranches of the SRB in particular are reserved for the regeneration of urban areas. A total of 80% of this budget is reserved for “large comprehensive schemes in the most deprived areas” (Chanan et al, 1999) – and as a representative of the (then) DETR made plain in an interview in the early stages of this study “... [the SRB] has to focus on the urban areas – these are the most deprived parts of the country after all”.

This comparative dearth of funding lays a greater import on that funding which is available for rural regeneration. This study found two issues of worth for the funding of CIRRP. The first is the comparative importance that EU funding makes for rural regeneration. This is a major source of funds in this context. The impact of the Peace and Reconciliation Programme in Northern Ireland has already been noted. However, the Structural Funds, as were, and LEADER, have also had a major role to play in encouraging CIRRP in the UK. This was evident in all three case study sites.

Second, this dearth of funding means that comparatively small-scale amounts of funding can have a far greater impact in rural areas than elsewhere. In this context the small-scale funding schemes (such as the Key Fund) found in all three case study sites are of great importance.

The intermediary bodies, acting as a conduit for funds from the regional, or above, levels, invariably managed these schemes. The impact of these funds cannot be overstated. *They were found to be one of the most effective ways to promote and develop CIRRP.* They:

- could target funding directly to local communities;
- could spare them the disproportionate burden of managing the bureaucratic requirements of large-scale funding schemes;
- could be utilised by intermediary bodies as a tool for capacity building and development in rural communities.

Building community skills

This study explored the nature of community leadership and its development in/through CIRRP. Three points stand out. First, three key leadership roles were identified in this study – each required at different stages, and in different forms, of CIRRP. These were *inspirational leadership and entrepreneurship*, *managerial and administrative leadership* and *the governance of complex networks*. Thus, while the entrepreneurial role is often essential at the outset of a project, these skills can often become a block at later stages, where more managerial and governance skills are required.

This was apparent in the TDT in Devon. The founding director had indeed been an entrepreneurial individual who had been able to garner resources and enthuse community involvement. By the time of this study, however, it was becoming apparent that this was no longer sufficient. It was now becoming more important to manage income streams and govern multiple relationships with other partners. The entrepreneurial director had discussed, as part of this study, whether this new role was one that he was happy with. He subsequently left the Trust to take another entrepreneurial role with another organisation, allowing the TDT to appoint a new manager more suited to its current stage of development.

Second, a range of approaches to developing both individual skills and community capacity to engage in CIRRP were identified in this study, including ‘animateurs’, formal training and experiential learning (often based around the small-scale funds mentioned above). *Each model had its own advocates and critics and it is not the intention here to assert the significance of one model above the others – although the influence of the small-scale funds discussed above was particularly impressive. What is important is that a range of these approaches are employed – and often at different levels of CIRRP.* Formal training is perhaps more effective at developing strategic skills in individuals, while experiential learning has most impact at the community project level.

Finally, some respondents in this study questioned whether professional community development workers inhibited or enhanced community leadership skills and capacity. The

evidence here is that they did not – as long as their role was focused clearly on the *process* of developing community skills rather than on simply achieving given project outputs.

Local voluntary and community sector infrastructure

The study found this to be a vital component in achieving CIRRP. This was a core theme running through it, and it is necessary:

- for building skills in the community;
- for linking together the different levels of CIRRP and ensuring both upwards and downwards accountability;
- for promoting and supporting individual community partnerships;
- for the representation of community views in strategic level regional partnerships;
- for ensuring the accountability of strategic-level community representatives;
- for managing small-scale funding schemes in a way which removed the substantial transaction costs from small community based groups – and which often would not be able to cope with such costs;
- for using such small-scale funding schemes as a tool to develop community skills and community confidence and ability to engage in CIRRP.

It would be wrong to impose one model of infrastructure organisation across diverse rural communities. This study found a range of different types of such organisations and each had a differing role to play. In some areas traditional, area-based, LDAs (such as Dumfries and Galloway Federation of Councils of Voluntary Service in Scotland) predominated, while in others newer, issue- or interest-based, organisations (such as the SCP in Devon) were dominant. What they had in common was an ability to promote and sustain local voluntary and community activity (Osborne, 1999). *It is clear from this study that strong infrastructure is essential to the promotion, development and sustenance of CIRRP.*

Sustaining CIRRP

It would be wrong to conclude this report without discussing sustainability. Many respondents in the study were concerned that too great an emphasis, in policy and in funding regimes, was placed on encouraging CIRRP in its early stages, while at the same time not paying sufficient attention to its sustainability. Many also highlighted this as a particular issue of CIRRP in rural areas. They argued that the small pool of human capital available in rural areas could often lead to over-commitment, over-work and burnout. This study found no easy answer to this problem, bar the promotion of initiatives (such as the small-scale funding schemes referred to above) that encouraged the growth of human and social capital.

The study has, however, identified six components of good practice that it is believed will enhance the long-term sustainability of CIRRP. First, there is a need to get the *right type of individual*, in the *right project*, at the *right level* of partnership – and at the *right stage* of its ‘life history’. This study identified a range of roles and levels of leadership for CIRRP.

Second, there is a need to *utilise different organisations and structures* to develop CIRRP at different levels within the region – and to ensure that there are good upwards and downwards links between these levels. The needs of CIRRP at the level of community projects are quite different from those at the strategic planning and funding level.

Third, it is also important to *clarify the nature of community involvement* sought. At the community project level, direct community ownership of a project and involvement in partnership management is needed. At the strategic level, more appropriate structures that represent the views of local communities and are accountable to them are needed – but where individual members of these local communities may not have the confidence – or interest – to be involved in these strategic level discussions. The intermediate level links these two levels together.

Fourth, it is important to ensure that *appropriate funding* is available to support CIRRP. The impact of small-scale funding schemes has been emphasised time and again. Their impact is

maximised where there is a catalytic element to the funding. Not only does it enable the development of a particular partnership or project, but it also enables individuals in the community to gain skills and confidence in CIRRP. This study identified the need to support individuals financially, to cover their transport and other essential costs, to enable their involvement. Sadly, however, this element was often apparent by its absence.

Fifth, *strong local voluntary and community sector infrastructure* is essential to promote and support CIRRP. This not only acts to promote individual and community learning, but also to provide the essential links between the different levels of CIRRP identified previously.

Finally, *evaluation is vital* – not just of the impact of particular projects but more particularly of the *process* of CIRRP. Without this there is a danger that important lessons will be lost, as the membership of local communities change. This was the area of greatest weakness identified in this study. There was undoubtedly a plethora of evaluative mechanisms in play in the partnerships explored in this study. The overwhelming majority of these, however, were concerned with accountability mechanisms for public money. This is an important issue in its own right, but none of these mechanisms was focused on enhancing community learning and the sustainability of community involvement in RRP in the long term (although the work of Yorkshire Forward [2000] elsewhere in the UK does offer important lessons in this context). This is the key challenge for the future.

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Appendix: Sketches of the partnerships studied

The County Antrim case study

County Antrim is located in the north east of Northern Ireland and has an extensive coastline to the Atlantic and the Irish Sea. The North Antrim 'rural area' has a population of some 31,000 people spread over four local authority districts. A large part of the county, particularly to the north and east, is composed of hill and moorland where subsistence farming is predominant. The eastern and northern seaboard features some isolated villages and scattered farms. The rural area is characterised by low population densities, sharp sectarian divisions, scattered farms and low income levels.

Moyle District Partnership (MDP) was one of the 26 District Partnerships established in 1995 under the EU's Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, replaced in 2001 by EU Local Strategic Partnerships. The primary function of each of the District Partnerships was to administer and allocate Peace Programme funding, much of which was distributed to community and voluntary organisations.

The development and work of the District Partnerships was overseen by the NIPB, an EU intermediary funding body, based in Belfast. A professional project officer worked as the partnership executive, serviced the board and acted as facilitator to community groups and organisations.

MDP had three main programmes that addressed the themes of youth, community capacity and community transport. The promotion of cross-community relationships was also an important outcome of the work of MDP. One of its main

achievements was its success in developing and in engaging with community groups and in enabling them to become involved in proactive local measures. As the work of the Partnership developed, some local groups grew in confidence and experience and became better connected with other groups. The fact that people from radically different backgrounds had worked together harmoniously was seen as a positive development, although the extent to which the partnership was considered to have contributed to peace and reconciliation was thought to be problematic and hard to quantify.

North Antrim LEADER II was approved by the EU in March 1995 and ended in 2001. The LEADER offices were quite deliberately situated at Cushendall, a small village on the eastern coast of County Antrim. The initiative to develop a LEADER II bid for North Antrim came principally from NACN, a vigorous and umbrella community network.

LEADER II was organised around five sub-groups responsible for agriculture, environment, rural innovation, tourism, and small business enterprise. Particular features of North Antrim LEADER II were the effective and proactive role of the voluntary and community sector in its inception and leadership; the close and productive relationship that developed between the wider voluntary and community sector and local government; and its highly successful community development programme.

Broughshane and District Community Association (B&DCA) is an umbrella organisation that provides representation to local community organisations within the local area of Broughshane. This is located near Ballymena in

the western part of County Antrim. The local organisations and groups span the cultural, sectarian and ethnic divides within the community.

The Association is closely linked with several partner bodies, most of which were established by its leaders. These include BIC, BEST, the Village Garden, and Broughshane Ltd. BIC was formed in 1987 as a semi-autonomous group under the umbrella of the Association.

Community spirit is very high. Economic regeneration has ensued and in 2000 the Association completed the renovation and development of Houston's Mill, a £1 million project that attracted £900,000 of public funds with the balance contributed by the community.

In a predominantly rural and politically polarised setting, where many people have few contacts with people from the 'other' sectarian community, the Association has pioneered links between its (mainly Unionist community) and community organisations in Nationalist areas. Its leaders play an active role in NACN, the umbrella body for community associations and groups. The Association has been successful in forging strong links with the local authority and with the government's Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

The Devon case study

Devon is a large rural county in the south west of England, covering an area of 670,343 hectares (2,588m²). It has a total population of 1,009,950 – although just over a third (36%) live in the urban concentrations of Plymouth and Torbay. The population is overwhelmingly white (99%).

Devon has an extensive coastline along its northern and southern borders and two large moors (Dartmoor and Exmoor) within its boundaries. Large parts of the rural area of Devon are designated either as Rural Development Areas (RDAs) or as a regeneration priority under the EU objective 5(b).

Its political geography is complex, with a mix of town, district and county council levels, as well as unitary authorities. The current county council is under 'no overall control', with the Conservative

and Liberal Democrat councillors sharing 80% of the council places between them.

Key Fund of Community Action for Rural Devon (CARD) was driven forward and steered by the Community Council of Devon, an LDA dedicated to the support of community and voluntary action. CARD was a local RRP that included the community council, the county council and several other local regeneration agencies. Again, it aimed to support local communities to develop and deliver local regeneration plans and partnerships.

A key element of CARD was the Key Fund. This provided relatively small grants to local community groups, with the twin intentions of stimulating the development of local community-led regeneration projects and of using this experience to develop the skills and capacity of local community members to enter into more large-scale partnerships in the future.

The Key Fund application process was supported by professional workers who assisted local community groups in preparing their applications, assessed these when they were submitted, and gave support in obtaining the frequently required 'matching funding' for projects. Like its parent body, CARD, the Key Fund aimed through this process both to develop much needed local projects and to develop the capacity of local groups to participate in other RRP in the future, by helping them to develop key management and participation skills. Such a *catalytic* approach to community development (that is, meeting a specific need and using this process to build essential skills within the community) is a particular feature of the work of LDAs (Osborne, 2000). Projects supported included a community resource centre in Tavistock and the renovation of a Quaker Burial Ground, which provided both a focus for community activity and a source of tourist income for that community.

The Sustainable Communities Project (SCP) of West Devon Environmental Network (WestDEN) arose out of an LA 21 initiative to promote sustainable community development. At the time of this research, the project was over two years into a three-year grant regime, with 50% of its funding coming from the LEADER II programme and 50% from the Community Fund.

The remit of SCP was both to promote and to support community involvement in local regeneration partnership projects. These projects included a Credit Union and projects to renovate local community resources (such as a local bus shelter or play park). A particular feature of this initiative was its focus on sustainability.

SCP was rooted very much within a radical version of community development. Traditionally, this approach has employed professional community development workers to address issues of development and regeneration in RRP. SCP took that process a stage further by using trained local residents ('animateurs') rather than the professionals.

Torrington Development Trust (TDT) offered a different approach to community involvement in RRP. It was very much a 'bottom-up' local initiative, which arose out of direct community action, rather than through the intervention and promotion of a third agency. It arose out of the need in the early 1990s to address serious economic and social decline in the market town of Torrington and its hinterland. The vehicle it chose to promote this regeneration was that of a Development Trust. Such trusts had originally developed in urban areas, although by 1999, 53 rural Development Trusts were in existence – 22% of the membership of the Development Trusts Association (Horton and Potts, 1999).

Development Trusts seek to combine economic, social and cultural regeneration within a partnership between the local community, local business and local government (DTA, 1997a). A distinctive feature of them is their frequent use of a formal legal structure ('company limited by guarantee') as a means to enable them to earn and own assets and to enter into further partnerships (DTA, 1997b; Wilcox, 2000).

Following its formation in 1996, TDT was successful in obtaining significant Rural Challenge funding which allowed it to embark on a range of activities aimed at the regeneration of the Torrington area. These included economic initiatives (a new tourist attraction and a renovated pannier market for local small businesses), and community events and carnivals. TDT was itself both a RRP based on community involvement and also sought to develop other such partnerships. The community was thus involved in the ownership of TDT, its

management and as members and users of its various projects, themselves often based on further partnership arrangements.

The Dumfries and Galloway case study

Dumfries and Galloway is situated in the south west of Scotland in an area of 6,500km². The region has a dispersed population of 145,000, of whom a high proportion are elderly. The region has only two towns with a population over 10,000. Wages and household incomes are among the lowest in the UK. Economic activity is centred on agriculture, forestry, ferry services, tourism and the public sector. There have been recent large-scale losses in manufacturing jobs. There is a high level of dependency on car ownership. There is also a strong history of community and voluntary activity in the region.

Groundbase provided the management for the LEADER II programme in Dumfries and Galloway. This was launched in 1995, concluding in December 1999. (LEADER+ is currently being launched in Dumfries and Galloway.) Groundbase's aim was to develop a prosperous and sustainable rural economy in Dumfries and Galloway (based on Scottish Enterprise's Objective 5(b) LEADER II Operational Programme). To achieve this aim three objectives were formulated:

- to develop a support framework to provide advice and technical assistance to individuals, small businesses and rural communities in order to identify, develop and implement innovative programmes and projects;
- to stimulate the delivery of innovative rural development programmes and projects;
- to promote the exchange of innovative ideas within Scotland's LEADER II areas and elsewhere within Europe.

To achieve these objectives, Groundbase adopted a twin track approach – micro-business development and rural development. A key decision made by the Groundbase board was to locate in Newton Stewart, a small market town, rather than in the administrative centre of Dumfries, and in premises separate from the council. Table A1 below demonstrates the proportion of its budget spent on a range of activities.

Table A1: Groundbase budget commitment (1995-99)

Activity	% of spend
Rural tourism	26
Business development	29
Farming/fishery/forestry	9
Environment/community/culture	6
Transnational cooperation	1
Technical support	19
Training	10

Outcomes of Groundbase's work included:

- over 400 grants awarded to 300 micro-businesses;
- generation of £3.2 million of new turnover;
- creation of 330 new jobs (after first year of operation);
- financial and moral support to community initiatives.

Luce 2000 is a community initiative and local rural partnership, covering the parishes of Old and New Luce in Wigtownshire (10 miles east of Stranraer). The area's population is 1,624.

Luce 2000 emerged in the autumn of 1997 when Glenluce Business Association recognised that it needed to widen its membership if it was going to be able to facilitate Luce's regeneration. As a business association, and self-interest group, it was restricted in terms of accessing public funds.

The mission of Luce 2000 is *to improve the economic, social and environmental conditions for the people within the Parishes of Old and New Luce through cooperation, innovation and partnership*. Its objectives are to:

- stop and reverse economic, social and environmental decline;
- increase community confidence;
- stimulate community enterprise;
- attract more tourism;
- promote economic, physical, environmental and social generation;
- develop and manage a phased programme of partnership with appropriate local, national and EU agencies.

To achieve these objectives the underlying philosophy developed by Luce 2000 is to build and strengthen community links, thus generating

sustainable growth. Underpinning the project is the principle that developing and strengthening the life of local communities is central to achieving a successful economic balance.

Its activities include a business advice and information point, computer access, publication of tourism materials, a youth club, environmental improvements and IT training. Luce 2000 also provides support to its member organisations. To support these activities it has been successful in achieving funding from local, national and EU sources.

The driving force behind Luce 2000 has been the business association working in partnership with a wide range of community groups, each of which is represented on the management committee. Luce 2000 stresses its 'bottom-up' approach and while it is prepared to engage in partnership with external agencies, it tends to be initiated by Luce 2000 rather than as a response to external initiatives.

Newton Stewart Initiative (NSI) was selected for this study because it was identified by four regional bodies (the local authority, Local Enterprise Council, Groundbase and the 5(b) EU partnership) as a 'best practice' community initiative. In the autumn of 1995 there was increasing recognition that Newton Stewart, the market town for Mid-Galloway with a population of 3,673 was suffering a general decline, as a consequence of a road bypass, resulting in:

- a decrease in tourist numbers;
- local people shopping in newly built supermarkets in larger towns;
- poor physical appearance of the town centre;
- nine empty shops on the main thoroughfare.

In response to this decline the Newton Stewart Business Association and Cree Valley Community Council, with the support of the local authority, Local Enterprise Council, Groundbase, the local school and other local groups, established the NSI.

NSI has three aims:

- to halt and reverse the economic and environmental decline of Newton Stewart;
- to attract and retain additional visitor spending to support the retention of local businesses;
- to engender civic pride.

Over a three-year period, NSI, working in partnership with a wide range of local partners, has developed a range of initiatives:

- small-scale environmental projects;
- a youth project – including the establishment of a dedicated youth facility managed by young people;
- a facelift scheme in the main shopping area;
- development of a Riverside Walk and construction of a footbridge;
- rehabilitation of the town hall;
- comprehensive town signage.

Funding and practical support has been received from Dumfries and Galloway Council, Groundbase, the Scottish Office Rural Challenge Fund, Scottish Enterprise Dumfries and Galloway, Solway Heritage, the Community Fund, the Territorial Army, the EU Objective 5(b) partnership – and many local organisations.

NSI has calculated that over the three-year period the local community has gained from the input of £600,000 from this effective multi-agency partnership. The key to Newton Stewart's success has been their recognition of the need to start small-scale to establish credibility with both the local community and potential funders, and to consult and communicate widely with all stakeholders.

