



***THE ARKLETON TRUST***

**REPORT OF THE ARKLETON TRUST 1997 SEMINAR  
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**TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED RURAL POLICY FOR THE UK**

The seminar was chaired by Professor Howard Newby, Vice-Chancellor of Southampton University and facilitated by Professor John Bryden, Joint Director, The Arkleton Centre, Aberdeen University

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## TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED RURAL POLICY FOR THE UK

July 1997

### 1. Introduction

The Arkleton Trust was set up in 1977 to study new approaches to rural development and education and to stimulate discourse between policy makers, academics and practitioners.

The 1997 seminar was organised following indications that there could be radical changes in EU agricultural and regional policies as we enter the new Millennium, and these indications were confirmed at the European Conference on Rural Development "Rural Europe - Future Perspectives" (The "Cork Conference") held in November 1996<sup>1</sup>.

The seminar focused on the implications of such changes for the UK, and had participants from development agencies, land use agencies, government departments, LEADER groups, NGOs and Universities in Scotland, England, N. Ireland and Wales. It was chaired by Professor Howard Newby, Vice-Chancellor of Southampton University, and facilitated by Professor John Bryden, Programme Director of the Trust and Joint Director of the Arkleton Centre for Rural Development Research, who also wrote the background paper for the seminar. The participants at the seminar are listed in Annexe 1.

In order to encourage open discourse, it was agreed that the seminar would proceed under Chatham House rules: remarks and ideas would not be attributed to individuals - a long-standing tradition of the Trust. This report is not a complete record of the lively debate, but rather a synthesis of the main background thinking and conclusions. It is not suggested that there was complete agreement amongst participants on either the background or the conclusions, but given the diverse backgrounds and interests of those involved a remarkable degree of consensus was reached on the main issues to be tackled.

A draft report was circulated to participants, most of whom provided helpful comments which have, largely, been incorporated. However, some comments reflect basic differences on key issues which might be briefly summarised as:-

- whether local authorities should take the central role in local co-ordination of integrated rural development plans, or simply be one of the partners. It is important to note that there are very different structures of local government in England & Wales, Scotland and N. Ireland, and there are genuine differences of view about their scale,

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<sup>1</sup> Which produced The Cork Declaration: A Living Countryside. The main points are summarised in Annexe 2.

effectiveness, and representativeness in differing contexts. This links to the general question of governance in modern democracies - concerning in particular the legitimacy and accountability of public actions - which the sustainable development debate has clarified and sharpened.

- whether the scope of 'integrated RDPs' should be wider or narrower. In the wider vision of 'holistic spatial policies', purely sectoral policies largely disappear, being subsumed in various spatial frames and programmes which allow for different priorities in different locales. In this vision, the state/EU simply decides how much financial resource should go to each region or locality, and what general rules should be attached to that financial resource (for example regarding conditions of competition or environmental impacts) which can only be settled at national or international level (under subsidiarity principles). In the narrower vision, sectoral policies remain and integration means trying to get these to respect common overall rural development aims and objectives which are developed through partnership-type arrangements. The latter is perhaps less theoretically satisfactory than the former, and may also fail on subsidiarity and democracy criteria. It may, however, be more realistic given that sectoral policies are likely to remain.
- whether the aims and objectives of an integrated rural policy relate to 'land use' or to people. As yet there is no agreement on this, but it is fundamental to reaching agreement between the different agencies and interests involved in rural development. A people-focused view is openly anthropocentric - the purpose of land use (and land use policy) is not for an abstract entity 'the land', but rather for the people who live off, or enjoy, that land in various ways. A land-use perspective gives priority to land and the environment. It also leads to a focus on land use, land managers, and land occupiers and users, when many of those living and working in the countryside are mainly engaged on other kinds of activity. The question is closely linked to new interpretations of 'sustainable development' which place environment, economy and society on equal footings.

To the extent that this report takes a position on these questions, this is not intended to deny the legitimacy of other views, nor the presence of disagreement.

## **2. Background: The Changing EU Rural Policy Framework and the Cork Declaration**

The EU Conference on Rural Development, held in Cork in November 1996, was only the second such conference to be initiated by the EU, the first being held in Inverness in 1992. Some 500 people came to it, and demand for places was much greater than supply. This indicates a rapidly growing interest in the subject<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> During 1995-6 there was a flurry of activity to re-assess rural policy, and a number of *ad hoc* groups worked inside and outside the Commission on this topic, including Alan Buckwell's group, Liam Hyland's group in the European Parliament [Liam Hyland, MEP, Rapporteur on 'European Rural Policy and the Creation of a European Rural Charter'], and a separate group working on a Charter for Rural Areas within the Council of Europe. The Agricultural Strategy Paper, dealing with issues related to Eastern Enlargement, is also highly relevant [Fischler, 1994].

Even if the ideas promoted at Cork have not had an easy passage subsequently, either in the preliminary debates on the next 'reform' of the structural funds, or within the Agricultural Council, Cork was a significant event. It represented a confirmation of trends in policy thinking which started with the experiments in Integrated Rural Development in the early 1980's, and evolved following the reform of the Structural Funds in 1987, publication of 'The Future of Rural Areas' in 1988, the launch of the LEADER Community Initiative in 1990, and the specific objectives of sustainability and rural development introduced in the Treaty of Union in 1993. These trends were towards a more 'integrated', spatially differentiated, and 'bottom up' rural policy.

The mid-term review of the Structural Funds operations takes place in 1996-1997, and EU Structural Policy is being re-assessed in 1997-1998<sup>3</sup>. The regional and local programmes which implement structural policies (including LEADER) in Objective 1, 5b and 6 regions following the reform of the Structural Funds in the late 1980's, have provided the basis for thinking about new ways of implementing rural policy. Such programmes and initiatives stressed the need for integrated programming, partnership and the development of strategies and measures which reflected the particular circumstances of different regions.

The CAP is also under review as a result of the forthcoming round of GATT trade talks starting in 1999, the passage of the FAIR Act in the USA, the challenges of eastern enlargement, and internal criticism of the CAP. Clearly if further reform of the CAP was inevitable, then the Commission was concerned to have some alternative policies to offer, and rural politicians were anxious that the 'money would not be lost' to rural areas. Although there are difficulties foreseen in the next GATT Round with any policy measure which is restricted to farmers as a 'client group', (since all of these could be argued to have production effects whichever 'box' they may be in), general measures aimed at rural development actors, including farmers, would not be subject to the same objections. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that reform of the CAP has previously proved expensive in budgetary terms, and large savings which could be applied to new integrated rural development policies seem unlikely in the short run.

Some important themes and issues which arise from the ten points in the Cork Declaration (see Annexe 2) are:-

*\* A move to 'Rural Preference'?*

It is not clear whether the issue here is about 'rural preference' as a possible replacement for 'agricultural preference' in the Treaty of Rome, or a counter-argument to those who argue that urban problems should have priority in terms of additional structural spending.

Farmers' lobbies will resist moves to transfer resources from policy measures directed mainly at them, to measures for which the whole rural population, or worse the whole population in selected target rural areas, is the client group.

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<sup>3</sup> The First Report on Economic and Social Cohesion in the EU was published in 1996, and a Cohesion Conference was held in April 1997 at which Mrs Wulf-Mathies outlined her ideas for the revised structural policies.

***\* Integration, Co-ordination and the Single Rural Fund.***

It is not clear whether 'integration' involves the integration of *all* Community policies affecting rural areas, although the emphasis has been on structural elements of the CAP (including Agri-Environment measures) and the structural funds. Questions also remain about the integration of policies which are the competence of the EU, and those which remain the competence of nations and regions, for example land tenure and physical planning.

It is proposed that 'integration' should be 'in the same legal framework', picking up the idea of a single Rural Development Fund which can bring together resources currently managed (with different rules) by DG-VI, DG-V, DG-XVI .

Implementation would be through a single (IRD) programme for each rural 'region' (Point 7). The issue of the role of small towns and villages, and mention of village renewal, is also significant given their place in diversified rural labour markets and service provision. However, important questions remain about how rural regions are going to be defined and prioritised for policy purposes, and how these will relate to urban areas with which they may have important economic and other links.

***\* A 'bottom up', participatory, approach.***

The stress on 'bottom up' development involving both horizontal and vertical co-operation and partnership, suggests a combination of structural fund (Objectives 1/5b/6) and LEADER mechanisms for planning and implementation of integrated rural programmes. This is reinforced in Point 6, which stresses decentralisation, subsidiarity, and the need for flexibility. However, in many regions, despite the rhetoric, there is little sign of a 'bottom up' approach or of public participation in development planning and processes. Moreover, administrative Regions are usually too large to make 'bottom up' participatory approaches feasible. Most likely, 'bottom up' will be a philosophy or approach to development on the one hand, and a set of eligible measures (on the LEADER model) on the other.

For most nations and regions in Europe 'locally integrated, sustainable, bottom up' development is a new approach, quite different to previously centralised and 'top down' approaches. It requires more accountability and transparency at local levels than is usually evident, and different forms and styles of support. Relationships between local development bodies and democratic institutions and processes need to be reviewed if sustainable rural development is to be approached.

***\* Rural Development as a 'horizontal' policy.***

The Cork declaration proposed that rural development policy should apply 'to all areas', and not simply those designated as priorities under the structural funds, i.e. it should be a 'horizontal' policy. However, in order to respect 'cohesion' principles it should be 'modulated' according to some system of prioritisation. While a horizontal policy may give some assurance to farmers that reductions in CAP support would be 'compensated' by new rural policies, those in richer regions may doubt whether there will be a 'juste retour' in monetary terms.

*\* Sustainability and fiscal austerity.*

The stress placed on the need for 'self-sustaining' private and public initiatives, may reflect a concern in some quarters that some initiatives funded by the Structural Fund programmes, and perhaps also LEADER, have not been viable following the ending of public support, or have had recurrent expenditure implications which are not sustainable in the longer term, especially in an era of fiscal austerity. The switch from CAP to rural development also raises the problem of matching national funding at a time when many countries and regions face increasing problems in this regard.

Concerns were raised about the mechanisms for mobilising local savings for local development, and also about the effects of fiscal austerity. The mention of 'financial engineering' may be significant in terms of future mechanisms for infrastructure financing, perhaps involving the EIB.

*The Prospects for Rural Policy*

The short-term outcomes from the Cork and the Structural Policy debate are not yet known in detail, although the recent Agenda 2000 paper gives the outline. Although there appears to be little enthusiasm in the Agricultural Council, or amongst lobby groups, for the kind of CAP reform being suggested by Commissioner Fischler and others at, and prior to, Cork, Agenda 2000 proposes a reform which continues the main lines of the 1992 reform in further cutting support prices for cereals, meat and milk and partly compensating farmers through direct income support. However, Europe is still likely to be isolated on agricultural protection at the next WTO trade talks starting in 1999. Nor has there been much enthusiasm for the Cork rural development agenda within the Commission - DG-XVI has argued strongly against the idea of a horizontal rural policy and in favour of greater targeting of the structural funds on priority rural and urban regions. The recent Agenda 2000 paper suggests the following probable outcomes with respect to structural and rural development policies:-

- A 'cohesion' Objective (*Objective 1*) based on a clear income criterion, and covering the poorest regions of the EU, both rural and urban. None of these are likely to be in the UK. However, in these areas there will be better integration of regional, social, agri-structural and agri-environmental policies.
- A 'human resources' Objective (*Objective 3*), which will remain largely horizontal.
- A general Objective covering areas in need of structural adjustment outside the Objective 1 regions (*Objective 2*), targeted on the basis of criteria relating to income, unemployment, and population density/trends, whether urban or rural (based on existing Objective 5b and 2, but with fewer eligible areas).
- A horizontal 'integrated rural development policy' financed by combining Objective 5a (especially the Less Favoured Areas Scheme) and the Accompanying Measures under the 1992 CAP reform within a new budget line in the Guarantee Fund. This policy will be co-financed at different rates (according to national and regional prosperity) and include an enhanced agri-environmental measure as well as the kind of rural development measure funded by EAGGF under Objective 5b (village renewal, protection of rural heritage, rural infrastructure linked to agriculture, rural tourism and craft investment, environmental protection, landscape renewal). It will not include investment in large scale infrastructure or larger enterprises supported by

Regional policy. It will be voluntarily implemented by Member States in a decentralised way.

- A continuation of a LEADER-type Community Initiative.

Irrespective of the final outcomes at EU level, seminar participants felt that there was an overwhelming need to reform the rural policy framework within the UK itself, and that the recent change in Government might provide an opportunity for such reform. The Cork principles were felt to be a useful starting point and, in any event, it would be important for any UK rural policy to be consistent with likely policy reforms at EU level. Most discussion and comment was therefore about the development of an integrated rural policy framework in the UK and Northern Ireland.

### **3. Towards an Integrated Rural Policy for the UK: Rationale and Objectives.**

Given the uncertainty about agricultural and spatial policy outcomes at EU level, and the need to review UK rural policy in any event, the seminar focused on what the key elements/ characteristics of an Integrated Rural Policy [IRP] within the UK might be in the medium and long term. Three main questions arose, namely:

- (i) What should be the rationale and objectives of an IRP?
- (ii) What should be the content and scope of an IRP?
- (iii) What support and delivery mechanisms should be adopted by an IRP?

#### ***IRP Rationale and Objectives***

The key questions debated here were

- why do we need rural policy?
- why should it be integrated or holistic?
- what should be the objectives of an IRP?

It was felt that the *rationale* for rural policy must be based on the following key elements:

(a) Rural areas contain important resources - environmental, landscape, cultural, natural, human - which can contribute to the economic welfare and quality of life of the whole population. [Not only through the provision of food, timber, minerals and other raw materials, but also fresh air, clean water, rest and recreation, cultural diversity, economic surplus and human labour].

(b) Many of these resources are in the nature of public goods which can provide both economic opportunities and improved quality of life for all, but which also require public resources, collective action, and regulatory frameworks for their maintenance or

development. Although the most commonly mentioned public goods in England are landscape, wildlife, history and access<sup>4</sup>, others concern rural culture, and social capital in general. They are crucial elements in the distinctiveness of rural areas, not only worthy of attention for their own sake, but also because they are important elements in new competitive advantages of rural areas and provide contributions to the quality of life of both rural and urban residents.

(c) Around a third of the UK's population lives in predominately or significantly rural areas (as defined by the OECD Rural Indicators Project). They not only have expectations and needs regarding their own economic welfare and quality of life - they are also needed by the rest of the population if the foregoing benefits are to be realised. The countryside needs to be managed, visitors need to be serviced, goods and services need to be produced, and so on. The inter-relationship between rural and urban people and places is of increasing importance.

(d) Rural people, enterprises and organisations need help to adjust to rapidly changing circumstances in rural areas, which result largely from outside factors, such as globalisation of the economy, and changing policy frameworks. In particular, there is a need to make rural regions globally competitive.

(e) There is a continuing - indeed intensifying - need to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public policy and to extend democratic practice in rural areas.

In terms of *Objectives*, some key ideas were:-

- everyone (not just locals, or visitors, but also urban people) is affected by rural policy: it must contribute to national, regional and local needs.
- one aim must be to build 'competitiveness' of rural areas in order to meet the needs of sustainable livelihood in an increasingly competitive, global, economy.
- another must be to build economic and social cohesion within rural areas and between rural and urban areas; this means tackling social exclusion, including a range of related access and equity issues.
- an overarching goal must be to increase the social, economic and environmental sustainability of rural areas.

Rural UK is extremely diverse, not only in terms of ecological, physiographic and climatic variations, but importantly in cultural, institutional, economic, demographic, historical, linguistic and locational characteristics. Because of this diversity, and because development goals are essentially value-based and hence also variable, there will be multiple pathways to sustainable rural development in different parts of the country.

An over-arching objective which was proposed was:-

*To contribute to national, regional and local needs, whilst also providing for the needs of people in rural areas, with the aims of:*

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<sup>4</sup> Since access can usually, in principle and practice, be denied in England, the costs of exclusion and revenue collection may be too high to allow a price to be charged in practice. Moreover, merely the idea of access can provide welfare gains. Therefore we might think of 'access' as a *quasi* public good.

- *competitiveness*
- *cohesion*
- *social, economic and environmental 'sustainability'*

*To allow these Objectives to be pursued differently in varying contexts and locales.*

In the context of land use policies, this might mean, for example, that the current policy focus on types of landscape or habitat would have to shift to one in which the focus is mainly on the function of different types of landscape and habitat within different economic and social contexts. However, certain key types of landscape and habitat are of over-riding importance at National, European or Global levels and these may in some cases continue to need special designations which are 'imposed' on localities<sup>5</sup>. Where the grounds for designation are other than related to international priorities regarding life-support (impacts of climatic change, biodiversity, human health etc.), and where they can be shown to have actual or potentially adverse economic and social impacts on localities (rather than individual landowners or economic interests), then there is a case for compensating the region or locality concerned from public sources<sup>6</sup>.

Economic sustainability (and creation of competitiveness in rural spaces) means a shift away from permanent subsidy and towards an 'investment' approach, which creates positive economic, social and environmental outcomes in future, and removes the need for continuing subsidy. This investment can concern economic, social and environmental 'capital', and in the rural context will include investment in a wide range of public goods and quasi-public goods going beyond landscapes and habitats on the one hand, and private business on the other. Lessons about how this can be done in particular rural regions and locales are emerging from such programmes as LEADER, Objective 1, Objective 5b, and Objective 6, although there is clearly room for improvement.

Objectives must be set at local and regional levels, which reflect specific contexts, and related needs and goals. Such local objectives might, for example, be:

- To achieve, through participation, broadbased ownership of a shared vision of sustainable rural development at the lowest levels of democratic governance. This vision, being people-centred, will provide the framework for the content and prioritisation of local objectives and targets.
- To sustain the quality and diversity of rural areas:
  - Economic, including wealth creation, employment, public goods, resources for the nation, national welfare;

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<sup>5</sup> Where there are links between the local character of landscapes, villages, etc. and competitive advantages of localities, one would expect measures to be general in any locality and not require special designation. One can nevertheless envisage situations where certain features of a local environment are highly valued nationally or internationally, but not greatly valued locally. Agreements between central and local levels would be needed to secure protection in such cases.

<sup>6</sup> Of course, in many if not most such cases it may be possible to argue that the 'external' benefits associated with a designation will be greater than the losses to local interests, and therefore no compensation should be paid. The point is not really about whether cases of this kind exist or not in reality, but rather about the identity of the real 'losers' should such cases occur, and hence who should be 'compensated' by the 'gainers'.

- Environment, including bio-diversity and landscapes, as well as the quality of the water and air;
- Quality of life, including 'balanced' communities, transport, housing, health, education and training, and other services.

These are inter-connected.

Some related keywords seem to be:

Sustainability

Income and employment

Shift from an assistance to an investment philosophy and approach

Emphasis on participation & democracy

Improve efficiency and effectiveness

Holistic approach

Programming

Competitiveness

Cohesion

Varying priorities at regional and local levels

Subsidiarity

Flexibility

These words and concepts reflect ideas which are sometimes contradictory. A key idea emerging at the seminar was that a new planning paradigm was required which could encompass the notions of sustainability (economic, social, environmental), integration, participation, and subsidiarity, and resolve the inherent contradictions within a democratic framework.

#### **4. The Content and Scope of an IRP.**

The main point to be made here is that 'rural' is a type of space (actually many different types of space) and not a sector. A spatial policy approach is quite different from a sectoral approach. The transition to a spatial approach marks a radical change which challenges existing structures and approaches.

Spatial rural policy needs a holistic approach - it is contradictory to sectoral approaches. For example, if grazing livestock are critical for certain landscapes, then it is essential that farming families, who wish to remain in these landscapes and keep grazing livestock, have their economic and social needs catered for; this implies investment in sustainable livelihoods, and links between any subsidies needed and actual management practices which produce desired outcomes ('cross-compliance').

The key to a holistic spatial approach lies in the notion of 'sustainability', which has the following main elements:-

- economic sustainability - by creating long term competitive strengths to withstand globalisation. The market test seems critical, and this means moving available

resources for public support away from long term subsidies and into support for investment (human and material capital) and collective action with respect to a series of public goods (environmental, cultural and social capital);

- social sustainability - by tackling problems of interpersonal, spatial, and inter-generational equity (exclusion, poverty, etc.), democracy and legitimacy of public action;
- environmental sustainability - maintaining and enhancing environmental capital, including the prevention of adverse impacts on (and encouraging improvements to) air, water, soils, wildlife and landscapes.

It is thus necessary to integrate the main elements of policy which affect rural economy, society and environment. Partial integration would be very much a 'second best' situation. It was suggested that the following (currently fragmented) policies should desirably be integrated:-

agriculture, forestry and fishing  
manufacturing  
r&d and technology policy  
tourism and recreation  
social welfare  
social services  
environment and landscape  
transport  
housing  
telecommunications  
planning  
education and training  
taxation

Although at first sight a daunting list, it is in fact derived from the principles already identified, in particular those concerning:-

- \* Inclusivity
- \* Spatial approach
- \* Holistic approach
- \* Sustainability in economic, social and environmental terms

That is not of course to argue that it would be feasible to have separate and distinct policies on telecommunications, education, taxation etc. at each spatial level; clearly there will be a continuing need for principles on sectoral regulation and support to be settled at higher levels. However, the lowest level of spatial planning should have some room for manoeuvre, and something to say, on all of these 'sectors'.

## **5. How should an IRP be organised?**

Key principles discussed were:-

- Subsidiarity: decisions to be taken at the lowest possible level of governance;

- Legitimacy & transparency: decisions to be open and accessible, and legitimate in political terms - i.e. supported by those who ultimately pay on the one hand, and those who are ultimately affected on the other;
- Programming: a new approach to planning and programming is needed;
- Accountability at EU, National, Regional and local levels;
- Flexibility, to meet different contexts and needs;
- The need to extend democratic practice through involvement and participation;
- The need to tap local and regional resources (including knowledge resources) more effectively;
- A holistic and integrated approach at all levels, but most importantly at the lowest level of action;
- The need to improve effectiveness and efficiency of public action;
- The need to improve access to local resources including finance, knowledge, skills.

The first thing to sort out is the respective roles of the EU and National governments, regions, and localities.

The role of the EU and national governments must concern the setting of overall frameworks for public action which derive from overall policy objectives and priorities (including those derived from international agreements and obligations) in the economic, social, and environmental spheres. These include, for example, policies for economic and social cohesion and convergence, competitiveness, employment, sustainability, research and technology development, international trade, internal competition, the global environment, rights of citizens, enlargement and relations with third countries. They will set overall standards through regulatory frameworks, provide funding for public sector activities (desirably through single 'pipes'), ensure the monitoring and evaluation of these frameworks and activities, seek to avoid duplication of effort and encourage learning and transfer of experience. In terms of rural and regional development, they provide commitment over the medium and long term, set principles and frameworks for integrated planning and programming at regional and local level, provide a 'menu' of permissible public activities in the investment sphere, and set limits to public assistance in different regions to ensure compliance with competition rules and cohesion objectives.

Regional and local governments, as the lowest levels of democratic governance, must have a key role in planning and programming. The new planning paradigm which the seminar participants felt necessary should be strategic, pro-active, and inclusive of physical, economic, social, environmental and spatial planning, whilst also being participatory and inclusive of all interests. This can learn from the experience (strengths and weaknesses) of current physical planning, Objective 1 and 5b area planning and programming, LEADER, and Local Agenda 21, which have often involved innovative and sometimes 'bottom up' approaches and methods. Whilst the co-ordinating and management role must lie with the democratically elected local authorities, they in turn must involve other partners including the environmental, training, and development agencies, as well as relevant government departments and representatives of local entrepreneurs (including farmers) and voluntary organisations.

Key principles include subsidiarity, participation and involvement of the local population, partnership, transparency and accountability, a 'bottom up' approach, strategic and holistic planning and programming.

The question which remains is how are we going to move towards where we want to be, from where we are at present? In recent years Scotland has attempted to approach better integration of sectoral policies in two main ways:

- encouraging the various sectoral policies to have more regard to a shared set of overall aims for rural Scotland, namely the economic, social, cultural and environmental aims set out in the Scottish Rural White Paper;
- establishing structures to encourage the various public sector bodies which affect rural Scotland to come together with representatives of the private sector and local communities to discuss overall priorities for rural areas, particularly through 'partnership' arrangements at Scottish and local level.

This type of approach could be extended and deepened, for example by giving local authorities a key role in a new system of integrated and participatory rural planning and programming in partnership with other agencies and interests. In this way, sectoral policies would remain at a national/EU level which would determine general objectives and principles, together with resource commitments, but retaining considerable flexibility to allow these to be adapted and integrated at local levels within integrated local programmes. It may be unrealistic to secure freedom of manoeuvre in sectoral policies

## **6. Conclusions.**

The foregoing may seem radical, even revolutionary, possibly utopian. Undoubtedly the over-riding and over-arching goal of promoting more economically, socially and environmentally sustainable development in the face of globalisation and increased market competition has considerable implications for rural policies, delivery mechanisms, and governance. There is an increasing need to make local regions globally competitive, a driving force behind the increasing interest in regions and regionalism. Moving from a 'top down' policy framework which has been largely dominated by mainly independent sectoral approaches (the CAP, Regional Policy, Planning Policy, Environmental Policy), to one which is holistic, locally and regionally focused, participatory, and focused on sustainability in all its inter-connected dimensions, will not be an easy process. There will be conflicts and contradictions - for example between sustainability and competitiveness. Appropriate support frameworks, institutional arrangements, delivery mechanisms, research, networking, and skills will need to be developed, and will take time. Nevertheless, we do not need to start from scratch. Relevant, if partial, experience has been gained through the EU structural funds (Objective 1, 5b and 6 planning and programming; LEADER) and through national and regional initiatives, often involving partnerships.

## **Annexe 1: Seminar Participants**

- Elizabeth, Lady Higgs    Chairman, The Arkleton Trust, Enstone, Oxon OX7 4HH  
Tel: 01608 677255 Fax: 01608 677276
- Caroline Higgs    Hon Secretary, The Arkleton Trust, Milligansbush, Gretna, Dumfriesshire  
DG16 5HN  
Tel/Fax: 01461 800259
- Prof John Bryden    The Arkleton Centre, University of Aberdeen, St Mary's, Old Aberdeen  
AB24 3UF  
Tel: 01224 273 901 Fax: 01224 273 902  
e-mail: jbryden@aberdeen.ac.uk
- Prof Mark Shucksmith    The Arkleton Centre, University of Aberdeen, St Mary's, Old Aberdeen  
AB24 3UF  
Tel: 01224 272360 Fax: 01224 273487  
e-mail: lec015@abdn.ac.uk
- Prof Howard Newby    University of Southampton, Highfield, Southampton SO17 1BJ  
Tel: 01703 592801 Fax: 01703 593159
- Bill Bawden    West Cornwall Leader Project, Rosewarne, Camborne, Cornwall TR14 0AB  
Tel: 01209 716674 Fax: 01209 612215
- Carola Bell    LEADER Project, 3 Harbour View, Cromwell Street Quay, Stornoway, Isle of  
Lewis HS1 2DF  
Tel: 01851 703703 Fax: 01851 701701  
e-mail: carola.bell@sprite.co.uk
- Margaret Clark    RDC, Dacre House, 19 Dacre Street, London SW1H 0DH  
Tel: 0171 340 2903 Fax: 0171 340 2941
- Dr Roger Clarke    Countryside Commission, John Dower House, Crescent Place,  
Cheltenham GL50 3RA  
Tel: 01242 521381 Fax: 01242 584270
- Martin Cox    Rural Development Division, DOE, Eland House, Zone 3/B4, Bressenden  
Place, London SW1E 5DU  
Tel: 0171 890 5603 Fax: 0171 890 5579
- Prof Michael Dower    Cheltenham & Gloucester College, Francis Close Hall, Swindon Road,  
Cheltenham GL50 4AZ  
Tel: 01242 534031 Fax: 01242 543273  
e-mail: mdower@chelt.ac.uk
- Niall Fitzduff    Director, Rural Community Network (NI), 45 James Street, Cookstown, Co  
Tyrone, Northern Ireland BT80 8AA  
Tel: 016487 66670 Fax: 016487 66006
- Tony Fitzpatrick    Policy Officer, European Affairs, Dumfries & Galloway Council,  
English Street, Dumfries DG1 2DD  
Tel: 01387 260005 Fax: 01387 260034
- Frank Gaskell    Head of European Affairs, Highlands & Islands Enterprise, Bridge House,  
20 Bridge Street, Inverness IV1 11QR  
Tel: 01463 234171 Fax: 01463 244469

Dermot Grimson Rural Forum Scotland, Highland House, St Catherine's Road, Perth PH1 5YA  
Tel: 01738 634565 Fax: 01738 638699  
e-mail: rural@post.almac.co.uk

Prof Philip Lowe Centre for Rural Economy, Dept of Agricultural Economics & Marketing,  
University of Newcastle upon Tyne, King's Road, Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE1 7RU  
Tel: 0191 222 6887 Fax: 0191 222 6720

Dr Terry Marsden University of Wales, Dept of City & Regional Planning, P O Box 906,  
Cardiff CF1 3YN  
Tel: 01222 874000 Fax: 01222 874845

Richard McIvor MAFF, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London SW1P 3JR  
Tel: 0171 238 5655 Fax: 0171 238 6308  
e-mail: r.mcivor@env.maff.gov.uk

Dr Malcolm Moseley Cheltenham & Gloucester College, Francis Close Hall, Swindon Road,  
Cheltenham GL50 4AZ  
Tel: 01242 533557 Fax: 01242 543273

Dr Sian Phipps CPRE, Warwick House, 25 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1W 0PP  
Tel: 0171 976 6433 Fax: 0171 976 6373

Peter Pitkin Scottish National Heritage, 12 Hope Terrace, Edinburgh EH9 2AS  
Tel: 0131 447 4784 Fax: 0131 446 2212

John Randall Rural Affairs & Natural Heritage, Scottish Office, Pentland House, 47 Robb's  
Loan, Edinburgh EH14 1TY  
Tel/Fax: 0131 244 4071  
e-mail: ranh.so.ph@gtnet.gov.uk

Philip Rycroft Scottish Office, Pentland House, 47 Robb's Loan, Edinburgh EH14 1TW  
Tel: 0131 244 6363 Fax: 0131 244 6511

Dr Sally Shortall Dept of Sociology & Social Policy, The Queens University of Belfast,  
BT7 1NN  
Tel: 01232 245133 Fax: 01232 320668  
e-mail: s.shortall@queens-belfast.ac.uk

Stephen Wright GRCC, Community House, 15 College Green, Gloucester GL1 2LZ  
Tel: 01452 528491 Fax: 01452 528493

## Annexe 2. The Outcome of the Cork Conference: The Cork Declaration

### Figure . The Cork Declaration

**1 Rural Preference.** Sustainable rural development must be put at the top of the EU Agenda, and apply to all areas. The aims are to reverse rural out-migration, combat poverty, stimulate employment and equality of opportunity, and respond to growing requests for more quality, health, safety, personal development and leisure, and improving rural well-being. This must be integrated with improvement of the quality of the rural environment and be integrated into all Community policies that relate to rural development. There must be a 'fairer balance' of public spending, infrastructure investments and educational, health and communications services between rural and urban areas. A 'growing share of available resources' should be used for promoting rural development and securing environmental objectives.

**2. Integrated approach:** Rural development policy should be 'multi-disciplinary in concept, and multi-sectoral in application, with a clear territorial dimension'.. 'apply to all rural areas in the Union, respecting the concentration principle through differentiation of co-financing to those areas more in need.... 'based on an integrated approach, encompassing within the same legal framework: agricultural adjustment and development, economic diversification -notably small and medium scale industries and rural services - the management of natural resources, the enhancement of environmental functions, and the promotion of culture, tourism and recreation.

**3. Diversification:** Support for economic and social activity must focus on providing the framework for self-sustaining private and community-based initiatives: investment, technical assistance, business services, strengthening the role of small towns as integral parts of rural areas and key development factors, and promoting the development of viable rural communities and renewal of villages'

**4. Sustainability:** policies should promote RD which 'sustains the quality & amenity of Europe's natural resources, biodiversity and cultural identity so that their use by today's generation does not prejudice the options for future generations.

**5. Subsidiarity:** Rural Development policy must be as decentralised as possible and based on partnership and co-operation between all levels concerned (local, regional, national, European). Emphasis must be on participation and a 'bottom up' approach, which harnesses creativity and solidarity of rural communities. It must be local and community-driven within a coherent EU framework.

**6. Simplification:** there must be greater coherence of what is done through many separate channels; a limitation of EC law on general rules and procedures, more subsidiarity of decisions, decentralisation of policy implementation and more flexibility....

**7. Programming:** RD programmes in practice must be coherent and transparent, integrated into one single programme for rural development of each region, and a single mechanism for sustainable and rural development

**8. Finance:** Use of local financial resources must be encouraged ... more encouragement for financial engineering and rural credit techniques etc.

**9. Management:** Need to enhance capacity and effectiveness of regional and local governments and community-based groups via tech assist, training, exchange of experience, better communications, sharing of research networking etc.

**10. Evaluation & research.** Monitoring, evaluation and beneficiary assessment will need to be reinforced to ensure transparency of procedures, guarantee good use of public money, stimulate research and innovation, and enable informed public debate. Stakeholders must be involved in design and implementation as well as in monitoring and evaluation.