

FINAL REPORT

July 2009

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE CURRENT AND FUTURE ROLE, MANAGEMENT
AND FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS FOR RURAL HOUSING ENABLERS IN
THE NORTH WEST

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Regional Rural Delivery Framework

In April 2006 regional partners signed off a Regional Rural Delivery Framework (RRDF) for the North West. RRDFs were a key part of the implementation of the Government's Rural Strategy 2004, and were intended to:

- articulate clear priorities for rural delivery in each region, set within the national policy context but reflecting regional, sub-regional and local needs and opportunities;
- simplify the way services are delivered to customers through improved working between delivery organisations;
- secure greater coherence between rural policy and other regional strategies and delivery plans;
- better align regional policy and delivery with local priorities and actions.

In the North West, the RRDF is an enabling framework that integrates and joins up delivery across the full range of partner activities impacting on rural areas and communities. It:

- Provides greater clarity and focus on the priority issues;
- Encourages greater collaboration between partners;
- Marshals existing resources better;
- Ensures existing programmes better address the issues and gaps;
- Simplifies delivery arrangements.

The RRDF has six priorities:

1. Maximising the economic potential of the region's rural areas
2. Supporting sustainable farming and food
3. Improving access to affordable rural housing
4. Ensuring fair access to services for rural communities
5. Empowering rural communities and addressing rural social exclusion
6. Enhancing the value of our rural environmental inheritance

In November 2007 a number of task groups were established to take forward delivery of each of the priorities. 4NW with its responsibility for preparing the Regional Housing Strategy and the Regional Spatial Strategy were asked to champion priority 3 - improving access to affordable rural housing.

One of the first tasks identified was a need to better understand the role of Rural Housing Enablers (RHE) in the region and their contribution to the delivery of rural affordable housing. In particular there was a need to understand the uncertainty over current funding arrangements for RHEs and the changing context within which RHEs work.

In response 4NW, with the Rural Strategic Group, commissioned research to:

- Provide an analysis of the different aspects of an RHEs role;
- Understand the qualitative and quantitative value placed on those roles by the different groups and organisations that RHEs work with;
- Explore possible funding options, looking at existing funding mechanisms in the North West and other Regions and the positive and negative aspects of those mechanisms;
- Provide recommendations for a funding model/package which could be used to support the work of RHEs in the North West.

This work was consultant team led by Rural Innovation, working with Rural Housing Solutions and Heritage Housing.

A Steering Group with membership from GONW, NWDA, the Rural Strategic Group (RSG), Lake District National Park Authority, Cheshire Community Action and the National Housing Federation, have overseen the research. However the views contained within the report are those of the consultant team.

1.2 Structure of the Report

The report brings together findings of the research and offers proposals for the future role, management and funding of RHEs in the three "rural" sub-regions (Cumbria, Lancashire and Cheshire). It divided into sections as follows:

- Policy Direction And Drivers For Change
- Rural Housing Enabling in the North West to 2009
- The Rural Housing Enabling Function
- Line And Programme Management
- Funding of RHE Posts
- Delivery of Rural Affordable Housing in the North West to 2009
- Lessons Learnt and Challenges
- Conclusions and Recommended Approaches for the Future of Rural Housing Enabling

The report opens by highlighting changes in the policy and practice of delivering rural affordable housing that have been introduced since the RHE programme was established and their implications for RHE programme.

This is followed by sections which draw on the evidence collected to describe the current RHE arrangements in the North West. Complementing this, the report highlights alternative approaches being used in other regions. Drawing these elements together key lessons learnt are identified and challenges which they pose for the different parts of the North West are highlighted. The next section considers the delivery of affordable rural housing in the three sub-regions between 2004 and 2009.

The final sections bring this material together, along with the points raised at an options workshop that followed the interim report, to offer proposals around the role and structure of a rural housing enabling function in each sub-region. The ultimate objective of the recommendations being to improve the supply of rural affordable housing.

1.3 Methodology

The findings and recommendations of this report are based on collection of quantitative and qualitative data.

Each RHE currently working in the region was interviewed to gain an understanding of their current role. They each completed a spreadsheet providing a quantitative assessment of the outputs and outcomes of their work. Former RHE's were also consulted.

The views of communities and organisational stakeholders were explored in workshops to gain an understanding of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities

and threats of the RHE role. Two meetings were held, one in the north and one in the south of the region. Over 15 community representatives attended, the majority of whom had experience of working with Rural Housing Enablers. A total of 30 organisational stakeholders attended, drawn from local authority housing and planning departments, Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), Rural Community Councils and the RHEs. This consultation was supplemented by an electronic survey for those who were unable attend. A short report on the outcomes of these consultations is included within the Annexes.

1.4 Comparative Analysis

Comparative analysis has been carried out of the rural housing enabling function in four areas outside of the North West region. These were Devon, Hampshire, the Peak sub-region in Derbyshire and North Yorkshire. These areas were chosen because they have all adapted the initial RHE model introduced by the Countryside Agency in 2000 and have subsequently tailored working practices to achieve the most effective use of their rural housing enabling function. The four areas share a number of commonalities; in particular the embedding of the RHE within a sub-regional partnership. There are also key differences between them, particularly in line and programme management arrangements. A brief explanation of the approaches each has adopted is provided in Annex 4. After an initial contact to discuss the purpose of the research, the respondents, usually the strategic housing manager, completed a short questionnaire. This explored the weighting of tasks within the RHE's role, their geographic remit, line and programme management arrangements, and sources and security of funding. The consultants also sought advice on the principles that should underpin an effective RHE post and whether it could be extended to urban areas.

1.5 Options Workshop

The interim findings of the research were collated and used to define three options for a future approach to rural housing enabling in the region. These were discussed at an Options Workshop attended by organisational stakeholders, with representation from each of three sub-regions. Recognising the diversity of existing arrangements, the workshop was divided into sub-groups for the three respective counties. Each sub-group was invited to consider a 'preferred option' in terms of its applicability to their county. They were then asked to come up with a bespoke approach for their area which responded to the challenges and opportunities identified through the evidence collected. The outcome of this workshop has been factored into our final recommendations.

2. POLICY DIRECTION AND DRIVERS FOR CHANGE

2.1 Policy Context

The delivery of rural affordable housing does not operate in a vacuum. It has been the subject of intense investigation over the last four years, leading to a number of changes in national policy and supporting guidance. Alongside this have been significant changes in the circumstances and structures for the delivery of affordable housing, notably the establishment of the Homes and Communities Agency, the economic recession and associated credit crunch. The key changes are:

- PPS3 (November 2006) places a statutory requirement on planning authorities to take a positive and plan-led approach to the provision of rural affordable housing. In particular it advises that local planning authorities should allocate sites in villages and market towns that provide either a mix of market and affordable housing, or 100% affordable housing, alongside use of the rural exception site policy.
- The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) (set up in December 2008) will introduce a new approach to investment, the “Single Conversation”. It plans to use its capital funding to support a rolling programme of delivery that will complement other activity to create sustainable communities and support economic regeneration. The HCA brings new powers and funding that can be used to support land purchase and capacity building.
- There is a move towards sub-regional and higher tier working, for example the introduction and increasing focus on Local Area Agreements and Multi-Area Agreements as a route to improved and co-ordinated service delivery.
- The quality of evidence and intelligence available to housing and planning authorities has been considerably strengthened and, although not always sufficiently detailed to report on needs in specific villages, is now robust enough to indicate where interventions to improve affordability should be targeted.
- The Government’s response to the Matthew Taylor review (March 2009) promotes a more rounded approach to development in rural areas, with emphasis on community led delivery and engagement.
- The North West Regional Housing Strategy¹ highlights the seriousness of affordability problems across the region and identifies an indicative net annual affordable housing need of around 38,000 dwellings a year. It goes on to estimate that 22% to 27% of new housing developed in the region each year will need to be affordable if it is to achieve its objective to create balanced housing markets across the region².
- The credit crunch and recession is changing the quantity and type of housing development and spurring consideration of new models of delivery that include the private sector and use of smaller sites in rural areas.

¹ North West Housing Strategy, 4NW, May 2009, paragraph 3.7

² The figures are based on the Regional Strategic Housing Market Assessment for the North West published in August 2008. It is important to read these alongside paragraphs 6.38 and 6.39 in the final report (http://www.nwrpb.org.uk/downloads/documents/sep_08/nwra_1220339193_Final_RSHMA_Main_report_at_28-.pdf).

- The Regional Housing Strategy identifies the likelihood of a backlog in the provision of new affordable housing due to economic circumstances. Its response is focused on the planning system; “it is essential that the planning system continues to be used for maximum effect to secure affordable housing”.
- The use of National Indicator 155, Number of Affordable Homes Delivered, as the key indicator to measure performance of Sub Regional Housing Partnerships against regional objectives to meet the need for affordable housing.

2.2 Local Authority Lead Responsibility

All these factors have implications for the way in which rural housing is delivered. One key consequence is that the lead responsibility for meeting rural affordable housing needs rests firmly with the local housing authority. Affordable housing is critical component of any sustainable community however, so the imperative to increase its availability is shared by other public sector partners, in particular the County Councils in Cumbria and Lancashire.

2.3 Core Drivers

These changes coalesce into two core drivers which affect the future of the delivery of affordable rural housing; the imperative to address rural delivery as part of a strategic approach to mainstream housing activity, and the Home and Community Agency’s new “Single Conversation”. Indications are that this process is picking up speed, so time is now of the essence.

2.4 Strategic Approach

Driving any approach to rural affordable housing delivery is the need to respond to changes in policy and the statutory responsibilities placed on local authorities. PPS 3, the Matthew Taylor report and the Government’s response to its findings, all require local planning authorities to adopt a positive, pro-active, plan -led approach to rural affordable housing, in villages and market towns. Local authorities are required to base their policy and strategies on robust evidence and support communities in finding solutions to their problems. In effect policy requires local housing authorities to take strategic responsibility for meeting rural affordable housing needs. This is in line with their wider statutory duty of well being and the requirement for them to co-operate in delivering the Local Area Agreement.

2.5 Sub-Regional Working

Increasingly, in a number of parts of the country these changes are resulting in rural local authorities working together as sub-regional partnerships, sharing scarce resources and providing a consistent policy and process framework to speed up delivery. Examples include all four areas explored for comparison; Devon, Hampshire, Peak sub-region and North Yorkshire.

This approach has been adopted in the North West. The Regional Housing Strategy provides a framework for the 5 sub-regions to shape their housing strategies and work with their local authorities with housing responsibility to “establish market interventions that will create balance across their housing markets”³.

³ Paragraph 6.9

2.6 Strategic Imperative

The Regional Housing Strategy specifically recognises the threat to communities posed by lack of housing affordability in rural areas: “there are some parts of the North West, in particular the rural areas, where the supply of affordable housing is now so inadequate that the sustainability of communities is threatened as workers key to local economies and people with strong local ties simply cannot find anywhere to live”⁴.

In response the Strategy directs the 5 Sub Regional Housing Partnerships to “make provision to meet rural housing needs and sustain rural communities, using the rural exception policy where necessary to allow affordable housing on sites which would not otherwise be developed”⁵.

In many areas the Strategy is pushing at an open door. The Sustainable Community Strategies in Cumbria, Lancashire and the Corporate Plans of the two new unitary authorities in Cheshire⁶ include objectives (or pledges) around improving access to affordable housing.

The four Local Area Agreements covering the three “shire” sub-regions all include National Indicator 155 as one of their 35 Improvement Targets. It is interesting to note however that none have dis-aggregated the “whole” LAA target between urban and rural areas or focused on geography below the LAA territory.

At district level the provision of affordable housing is adopted as a key driver for corporate performance in several local authorities including Eden, South Lakeland and the Lake District National Park in Cumbria and Ribble Valley in Lancashire.

2.7 Transfer to Urban Neighbourhoods

One of the issues which the brief for this work sought to address was the extent to which the RHE concept could be applied to urban areas. A review of the Corporate Plans and Housing Strategies of urban local authorities shows that affordability is often recognised as an issue. It is interesting to note for example that the Corporate Plans of Wirral and Sefton council recognise the need to provide more affordable homes. The Strategic Housing Market Assessments for both these districts identify the need for a substantial proportion of new housing to be affordable over the next few years in order to achieve balanced housing markets. However there is little attention paid to rural areas within those documents, and neither mention the use of rural exception sites. This omission may be partly down to the fact that so little of these districts are officially rural as defined by the Defra rural / urban definition - the Sefton SHMA quotes a figure of only 1.2% of the population living in the rural area for example. However both districts include settlements that are “rural” in form and nature, and where affordability is an issue. This “rural blindness” is likely to have implications for the way that affordable housing is delivered in this type of local authority area.

2.8 Homes and Communities Agency ‘Single Conversation’

In 2008 the Homes and Communities Agency was set up to bring together the funding role of the Housing Corporation and the regeneration work of English Partnerships. Its stated mission is ‘creating the opportunity for people to live, work

⁴ Paragraph 5.5

⁵ Paragraph 6.10 (final bullet)

⁶ Making it Happen, Cheshire West and Chester Council Corporate Plan 2009 – 2011, page 4; Improving Services Together, Cheshire East Council Corporate Plan, 2009 – 2010, page 15

and enjoy life in places that they desire and that they can afford'⁷. It has significant powers and resources for investment, land assembly, improving practice and increasing the skills of those responsible for delivery.

The Agency's prime business process to achieve these aims is known as the "single conversation"⁸. This dialogue will be undertaken across local authority areas, (or groups of local authorities), with local authorities and partners from the private and housing association sectors, drawing in economic development and other groups relevant to meeting the social, economic and environmental needs of an area. Taking its lead from the Sustainable Communities Strategy, Local and Multiple Area Agreements and spatial planning documents, the "conversation" will seek to identify challenges and opportunities for meeting local visions and ambitions. The findings will be used to define and appraise a set of development interventions which will become the "Local Investment Plan". To deliver this the HCA will sign up to a Local Investment Agreement, which will support local affordable housing delivery. Its intention is to do this through a rolling programme of activity.

A statement of joint working has been agreed between Regional Development Agencies and the Homes and Communities Agency which recognises that the Responsible Regional Authorities (the RDA Board and the Regional Leaders Board) will work closely to develop the Single Regional Strategy which will provide the key context within which the programmes and investments of the HCA and other partners will be identified⁹.

2.9 Overarching Challenges

These drivers present a number of challenges to the way in which rural affordable housing has been delivered and in consequence to the future shape and management of RHE programmes. In particular:

- How to bring delivery of rural affordable housing into the strategic enabling work of a local housing authority, marshalling their resources and those of the RHE to develop a pipeline of delivery, set within an increasingly important sub-regional framework.
- How to ensure that the rural dimension is considered and addressed at all stages of the 'single conversation' process; indeed how to define the rural dimension in some "urban" local authority areas.
- How to move from what has largely been an opportunistic approach to delivery to one which is strategically directed and with sufficient mass to provide a rolling three year programme of rural schemes

⁷ An Introduction to the Homes and Communities Agency (2008)

<http://www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/public/documents/HCA%20Corporate%20Brochure.pdf>

⁸Homes and Communities Agency 'Single Conversation Guide' June 2009

http://www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/public/documents/HCA_single_conversation.pdf

⁹

http://www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/agencies_pledge_build_prosperous_places

3. RURAL HOUSING ENABLING IN THE NORTH WEST

3.1 Current Sub-Regional Arrangements

There are significant differences in the approach taken to rural housing enabling across the North West. These are reflected in the scope and role of the RHE post, and in the hosting, funding and management arrangements. Understanding the nature of these differences is crucial to developing options for future RHE arrangements.

As at the date of writing, specific Rural Housing Enabling activity is taking place in Cumbria and Cheshire. Parts of Lancashire have previously hosted RHE posts:

3.2 Cheshire

There are currently two part time posts which respectively cover the Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester administrative areas. These posts are dedicated to rural housing enabling. These posts have been in place since 2007. Previously the RHE function was provided by the Cheshire Rural Community Council.

3.3 Cumbria

The picture is more complex. Cumbria Rural Housing Trust (CRHT) is a registered charity which campaigns for affordable housing to be provided where it is needed. Its members and trustees work alongside officers to influence policy and local communities. The Trust provides part of a rural housing enabling function as a service provider to local authorities. Currently this consists of a research function around local housing needs in parts of rural Cumbria, together with a community support function. The Trust is funded by a number of organisations including supporting local authorities (Eden District Council, South Lakeland District Council and Lake District National Park Authority) and housing associations.

CHRT delivers its enabling function through a combination of full and part time officers and the involvement of members and trustees.

Other rural housing enabling activity is also undertaken in Cumbria by members of Local Authority housing or planning teams. For example Eden DC Housing Officer has a rural remit, as has a Housing Officer in South Lakeland.

3.4 Lancashire

There are currently no dedicated Rural Housing Enabler posts within Lancashire. Previously there were RHE posts in Lancaster district and a shared post between Ribble Valley and Pendle. These operated for two to three years. Subsequently the enabling function has been taken 'in house' by the local authorities.

In Pendle there is no longer a dedicated officer for rural schemes, instead the work forms part of the wider responsibilities of the authority's housing enabling staff. Currently the Council reported that they do not have the staff capacity to dedicate to rural delivery, because of the high level of engagement work needed to gain community support for rural affordable housing.

In Ribble Valley the role has been split between two council officers. The council has one officer who undertakes housing need surveys with associated community engagement work on a part-time basis. Site identification, enabling delivery and liaison with the RSLs is the responsibility of the Council's Housing Manager. In future the Council intends to use the SHMA, the Housing Need Register and

Affordable Housing Register to identify housing need and to target where more detailed housing need surveys are required.

Table One provides a summary of how and where the different agencies engage with the different elements of the rural housing enabling function across those parts of the North West where it has taken place. It shows who takes the lead in the development of rural affordable housing. It should be noted that the balance of activity can vary between organisations depending on local or site specific circumstances

Table One: Engagement in Rural Housing Enabling Function

Local authority	Identifying needs secondary data	Identifying needs local housing surveys	Site ID	Securing scheme funding	Negotiating planning permission	Community engagement LHS	Community engagement site ID
Cheshire East	LA/RHE	RHE	RHE	RSL/LA	LA/RHE	RHE	RHE
Cheshire West	LA/RHE	RHE	RHE	RSL/LA	LA/RHE	RHE	RHE
Pendle	LA	Not done	LA	RSL/LA	RSL/LA	Not done	Not done
Ribble Valley	LA	LA	LA	RSL/LA	LA	LA	LA
Eden	LA	CRHT	LA/CRHT/RSL	LA	LA/RSL	CRHT	LA
South Lakes*	LA	CRHT	LA/CRHT/RSL	RSL/LA	LA/RSL	CRHT	LA/CRHT
Allerdale (outside National Park)	LA	LA	LA/RSL	LA/RSL	LA	LA	LA
Copeland (outside National Park)	LA	LA/CRHT	LA	LA/RSL	LA	LA	LA
Lake District NP	LA	CRHT	LA/CRHT/RSL	RSL	LA/RSL	LA/CRHT/RSL	LA/CRHT
Carlisle	LA	LA	LA	LA	LA	Not done	LA

RHE = dedicated Rural Housing Enabler post

CRHT = Cumbria Rural Housing Trust

LA = Local Authority

RSL = Registered Social Landlord

Note: South Lakeland includes part of the Yorkshire Dales National Park for housing but not planning purposes
Eden also includes parts of the Lake District National Park area, but both Eden DC and the Lake District National Park work closely with Cumbria Rural Housing Trust

4. THE ROLE OF THE RURAL HOUSING ENABLER

The rural housing enabling function developed over the last several years includes a number of identifiable elements:

- Identifying and proving local housing need
- Identifying and bringing forward development sites to meet local housing need
- Facilitating development to meet local housing need including community liaison / engagement, sourcing of funding, liaison / engagement with local authorities and registered social landlords
- Wider influencing and championing of rural housing needs

4.1 Identifying Housing Need

The two part time posts in Cheshire have adopted different approaches to undertaking housing need surveys. They both estimate that this task takes up about 20% of their time.¹⁰

Cheshire East RHE deals with parishes as clusters and systematically completes surveys within neighbouring parishes. Since the post began in June 2007 3 housing need surveys have been completed across 27 parishes. The average return rate for the surveys is 35%, the highest rate recorded was 48%, and the lowest rate 23%. On average 20 households were identified within each parish as being in need of affordable housing provision. These results are checked against the housing register for correlation.

The Cheshire West and Chester post originally contacted all parish councils in their geographical area in order to promote the role, raise awareness of the need for affordable rural housing and then worked with parish councils who were interested in pursuing a scheme. 14 housing needs surveys have been completed since the post was established in July 2007. The average return rate for the surveys is 26%, the highest recorded was 39% and the lowest rate 12%. On average 20 households were identified within each parish as being in need of affordable housing provision. The results are checked against the housing register, although the RHE advised there is little correlation because the Housing Register figures are low compared to the numbers identified as being in housing need.

In Cumbria, CRHT works with Parish Councils to promote the need for a housing needs survey. Administration and analysis of the survey is undertaken by three part-time officers employed through CRHT. In Eden district, the RHE role also includes discussions with the local authority to establish other key characteristics of the parish, including the broad nature of the housing supply and demand. On completion of a housing needs survey CRHT discusses findings with the Parish Council and advises on how the community could attract a housing scheme to meet identified need. The average return rate for the surveys is 36%, the highest recorded was 62% and the lowest rate 16%. Results are checked against the local allocation criteria, but they are not linked to data from the Housing Register.

Since 2007 CRHT has undertaken 48 housing need surveys across 5 local authority areas (including the area covered by the Lake District National Park Authority), all

¹⁰ Borough and District Wide Housing Need Surveys are available dating back to 2004/5 (prior to Unitary status) and these are used to direct the work of the RHE.

of whom provide funding to CRHT specifically for this task. In these districts secondary data is used to target where the RHE should undertake local housing needs surveys. Outside of these areas, the RHE responds to individual parish requests, although capacity to do this is limited because no funding is available to support work beyond the contributing local authority districts.

4.1.1 Stakeholder Views of the Role of an RHE in Identifying Local Housing Need
Community representatives placed a great deal of importance on the capacity of the RHE to undertake housing need surveys within their parishes. In Cheshire, their involvement or intervention was viewed as being directed by the local authority, as part of their statutory duty to assess and meet housing need. However, in Cumbria the role of the local authority in this process and the linkages between them and the RHE were less well understood by communities, despite the lead of the local authorities in targeting communities.

Local authorities also, placed particular importance on this aspect of RHE activity. Indeed for most of them it is the basis on which funding for the post is provided.

Across community and organisational stakeholders in both areas, the RHE's independence from the local authority or a housing association was considered to bring neutrality to the process and so provide a bridge between communities and the statutory sector.

In Cumbria it was felt that the process offered consistency. However, at both workshops, stakeholders raised concerns about the "shelf life" of the surveys and the robustness of the data collected.

4.1.2 Stakeholder Views and Comparative Analysis on the Use of Secondary Data to Identify Local Housing Need

Strategic Housing Market Assessments are underway in both Cheshire and Cumbria. In both areas the value of secondary data as evidence of local housing needs was acknowledged. Sources identified were SHMAs, SHNAs and stock management data, including that from Choice Based Lettings. However, concerns were raised that these sources would not provide needs intelligence at a sufficiently local level to fully identify rural housing needs, and that their findings could be misinterpreted.

In Cheshire it is not certain whether the approach being taken in the SHMA for analysis of rural need will provide intelligence at a sufficiently local level of geography. If however, local data is provided it was felt that the weighting of RHEs time is likely to move towards community engagement and site identification. In Cumbria the Strategic Housing Market Assessment is due to be completed in August 2009. Whilst some data will be provided at parish level, the majority will be presented at ward level. Eden DC do not consider this to be sufficiently accurate so they have commissioned CRHT to undertake housing need surveys to supplement the SHMA.

Amongst the comparator RHE arrangements there has been a shift from the focus of an RHE task being on community wide housing needs surveys. On average this now accounts for only 30% of RHE time, and there is intent in two areas to reduce this further. Secondary data is increasingly being used to direct and prioritise where the RHE works. In some instances, the secondary data is considered sufficient evidence to support development of a scheme, in others the role of the

RHE is to collect more detailed information on local need which will complement secondary data and inform scheme design.

4.2 Site identification

In Cheshire the RHEs take an active role in site identification, calling for sites as part of the housing needs survey process. In addition the Cheshire East RHE has access to the SHLAA (Strategic Housing and Land Availability Assessment) to help narrow the search for sites and identify landowners. Both RHEs play a key role in initiating contact with landowners, discussing options and arranging for an RSL to contact the landowner for more detailed negotiations. Cheshire RHEs also play a pivotal role in initial meetings between the RSL and planning authorities. This facilitation is considered to significantly reduce the amount of time RSL and Local Authority planning staff need to spend identifying suitable sites. The average time from sites being agreed as suitable to planning permission being achieved on schemes in Cheshire has been 10 weeks.

In Cumbria the RHE (CRHT) plays a lesser role in site identification. Through the housing needs survey communities are encouraged to identify sites, the RHE then provides advice on the next steps that the community can take to secure new housing development. This includes providing them with contacts with other communities who have embarked on an affordable housing scheme and sign posting good practice from elsewhere. If problems and conflict arise during the site identification process the RHE will provide a brokering role to try and find a solution.

In the four areas where alternative practice was explored between 20% - 30% of the RHEs work is devoted to identifying sites. This is usually done in collaboration with the local authority, the community and to a limited degree with RSLs. In all instances the expectation is that this element of the RHE role will increase, particularly as effort is put into developing a pipeline of deliverable schemes to fit the HCA Local Investment Programme approach. In Hampshire the partnering local authorities have adopted a common process to bringing rural schemes forward and are taking steps to ensure that this is applied consistently across the HARAH area. For three of these areas the closer engagement of planners, through programme and in some instances the line management arrangements, has provided RHEs with technical advice and support, and speeded up site selection. In North Yorkshire RHE's are further supported by the availability of an agreed protocol and process for assessing the financial viability of potential sites.

4.2.1 Stakeholder views of the involvement of the RHE in Site Identification

Community representatives partially understood the over arching role of local authorities to advise on appropriate development (within local plans), call for new sites and assess the suitability of rural exception sites. The role of the RHE was seen as facilitating the process between all parties concerned; communities, Registered Social Landlords, landowners and the planning authority.

Organisational representatives viewed the local knowledge and contacts compiled by RHEs as they engaged with the community as essential in bringing appropriate sites forward. It was considered that RHEs can draw on this to open negotiations, using their impartial position to maximize the possibility of success, both with the site owner and the local community.

A number of weaknesses were also identified however. It was perceived that RHEs sometimes lack the technical and planning policy knowledge necessary to assess site suitability. There were concerns that their work in this area was reactive, rather than strategic or plan led, and that there was scope for considerable duplication of effort where this task is also undertaken by RSLs or Local Authorities. Stakeholders also recognised that the large geographical areas covered by RHEs and the continuous drive on housing needs identification, reduces the time available for RHEs to work with communities to identify sites.

It was acknowledged that the effectiveness of the RHE role in site identification was in part dependent on a number of external factors including: whether the local planning policies were supportive of rural affordable housing development; the strength of local opposition to affordable housing; landowners expectation of land value; and the willingness of local authorities to use available powers to release sites at less than open market value.

4.3 Positive Community engagement

Community engagement undertaken by the RHEs in Cheshire involves making initial contact with the community and attending parish council meetings; facilitating community involvement in the pre-development process; and arranging events and open evenings to enable networking between different parties (landowners, community groups, RSLs and Local Authorities). Both RHEs estimated that approximately 25% of their role was dedicated to this work. They are assisted in this task by the good relations with Cheshire Community Council officers who promote an affordable housing element within parish plans.

In Cumbria, community engagement work is seen as an implicit element of the RHE's work on local housing needs surveys. Within some communities, where blockages and obstacles are identified the RHE has a more direct input to broker solutions. Overall, CRHT's approach is to encourage Parish Councils to solve their own problems. This position is advanced through the RHE's attendance at Neighbourhood Forums where they encourage greater involvement from parish councils. Good relations exist with the local Rural Community Council (Action with Communities in Cumbria) and as in Cheshire the two parties work closely together on the housing element of parish plans.

In the four comparator areas community engagement accounts for between 20% and 30% of the RHEs role. It is seen as an integral part of the job, being a thread that runs through the enabling function. Importantly, all four areas have explored alternative ways of engaging the wider community and gaining local political support for rural affordable housing. This has included running surgeries which provide the opportunity to collect from, and provide information to, those with a housing need; collecting evidence and providing information on affordable housing schemes at village 'fun days', and providing training events for councillors.

It is interesting to note that previously in North Yorkshire there were concerns that the community development work of the RHE was detracting from delivery. In response, and increasingly across the country, there is evidence of RHEs only working in those communities who are openly supportive of affordable housing. In Leicestershire for example, this has been formalised by the requirement that parishes sign a protocol of involvement before the RHE begins any intensive work with that community.

4.3.1 Stakeholder views of the involvement of an RHE in community engagement
Community stakeholders valued the support that the RHEs provide to parish councils highly. They also supported the encouragement an RSL can give to RSLs and local authorities to engage with the wider community. However, the majority had no experience of the RHE engaging directly with the wider community and generally felt their capacity to do so was limited because of the large geographic area covered by the RHEs. If this element of the RHE role was to be expanded, community representatives suggested that more resources would be needed.

This point was reiterated by organisational stakeholders who were very clear that the ability of RHE's to improve their community engagement activity is limited by a lack of resources. RHEs were credited with attaining parish and ward councillor support, providing good quality evidence to encourage community engagement and bridging the policy and end user information gap. It was recognised that these benefits could be increased if the opportunities provided by the Community Empowerment Bill were used, driven by the use of qualitative indicators in the National Indicator Set and the inclusion of appropriate improvement targets within an LAA.

4.4 Scheme Funding

Across the Region the RHEs involvement in attracting scheme funding is limited to the provision of the evidence base to support funding bids and inform regional and local investment strategies. This was also the case in the four areas where alternative RHE arrangements were reviewed.

4.4.1 Stakeholder views of RHE involvement in scheme funding

Communities had very little understanding of the funding process and were unable to comment.

Organisational stakeholders saw no direct role for an RHE in scheme funding. However, it was considered that RHEs did have a role in alerting communities, local authorities and RSLs to alternative ways of delivery that did not rely on public funding, such as Community Land Trusts. Looking to the future it was felt that the RHEs should be invited to take part in the HCA's 'single conversation' discussions.

4.5 Influencing

Within Cheshire the RHEs have used evidence collected to influence policy at a local authority level. Examples of policy influenced include Housing Strategies, the Sub-regional Housing Strategy, and Local Development Plans.

In Cumbria influencing around rural affordable housing is a core function of the CRHT, but not necessarily specifically the RHE function. Influencing other organisations to improve the supply of rural affordable housing is a core aim of the Cumbria Rural Housing Trust. The charities manager attends around 20 different groups working on rural housing issues in Cumbria, the region and the north of England. Strategies influenced include: Lake District National Core Strategy and Housing policies, Local Authority Housing Strategies and Local Development Frameworks and influencing Cumbria County Council to use their land assets to support affordable rural housing. CRHT has helped to organise visits by HRH Prince of Wales, the Defra Rural Affairs Minister and representations to the Matthew Taylor review. Currently the CRHT manager is also a member of the CLG working

group looking at ways to encourage private landowners to release sites for rural affordable housing.

In the four comparator areas RHE involvement in influencing policy ranged from 4% to 15% of their workload, with levels of less than 10% the norm. To a large degree this reflects the delivery focus of the RHE role in these areas. However, it is also worth noting that in two of the four areas, the influencing role is carried out by a rural housing partnership, and in the other two areas the RHEs are part of a sub-regional team whose work contributes to the development of policy within the sub-region. In Hampshire steps have been taken to ensure that the experience of the RHEs in delivering schemes is captured and fed into a housing officers group so that this information can be used to help unblock local barriers and influence other relevant strategies.

4.5.1 Stakeholder views of RHEs involvement in wider influencing

Community representatives felt strongly that an RHE has a duty to use the evidence they collated to influence policy makers at a local and regional level. This view was shared by organisational stakeholders who recognised the value of a dedicated, independent and informed 'rural voice' who can help shape policy. However, concerns were expressed that RHE views were afforded less weight than those of others. In Cheshire it was considered that the new unitary structure and the advent of the HCA 'single conversation' afforded an opportunity to give the RHE a stronger influencing role.

4.6 Other Areas for Inclusion within the Rural Housing Enabling Function

The brief for this study introduced three other areas for consideration as part of a future rural housing enabler function. These are considered below:

4.6.1 Local Economic Development

A thriving local economy and availability of a range of housing are core components of sustainable community. In recognition of this and the interplay between them, the research explored the feasibility and value of extending the RHE's role to include promotion of economic development. This could include collection of data on local businesses and the local economy and provision of workspaces alongside affordable housing, helping to understand the impact of a lack of affordable housing on communities.

Currently, the main link of RHEs to economic issues is through the collection of income data as part of the housing needs assessment. In Cheshire further links are made by distributing survey forms to schools and local employers, for employees to complete. Subject to funding, the CRHT is due to do a business survey in partnership with Eden District Council as part of the parish survey work to inform the Eden SHMA.

Communities saw the links between housing supply and the health of local businesses. They identified a range of economic related data that could be collected from local businesses as part of a broader based housing needs survey. However, they concluded that this information was probably best collected through Parish Plans, and were uncertain how they would specifically use the data to support local businesses.

Organisational stakeholders could see the benefits of collecting local economic data, possibly as part of a Local Economic Assessment. They suggested this could be used to raise awareness and understanding of the importance of affordable housing in supporting local economies and be used to lever in resources and jobs to support local economic activity.

However, they also raised concerns that the time, skills and salary required for a dual housing and planning post would be difficult to find. More significantly, they considered that RHE involvement in economic development would detract them from the housing element of their work. This could reduce the willingness of existing funders to support the post, so outweighing any additional funding that might be drawn from local economic development agencies such as sub-regional Economic Partnerships and Tourist Boards.

4.7 Opportunity for Graduate Internships

The research explored the potential role of graduate internships, both in helping to ensure RHE support in the North West and creating job opportunities in the region.

Only the Cheshire East RHE had experience of a graduate within the local authority, but the post was shared and time available for the RHE was limited. In both Cumbria and Cheshire it was felt that in principal that graduate internship was a good idea but that the post would need to be fairly structured, with adequate support and mentoring for both the RHE and the graduate internee.

4.8 Urban Affordable Housing Enabling

The research explored whether the Rural Housing Enabler concept is transferable to urban areas and what the benefits would be.

In Cheshire, both RHEs undertake housing needs assessments in urban/rural fringe wards, but extension into more urban areas is considered to be outside their remit. In Cumbria, the RHE (CRHT) has worked in Windermere and Keswick, but consider that to work in larger settlements would require extra staff resources and funding.

The same stance is taken in the four comparator areas.

There was a clear view expressed during consultation that the **principles** of an RHE role, particularly supporting community engagement could be applied and bring benefits to urban areas, but that this was not the role of existing RHEs. There is some latitude to include settlements of more than 3,000 population, but not into centres of more than 10,000 population.

We would recommend therefore that officers tasked with promoting the delivery of affordable rural housing should continue to focus on settlements of primarily up to 3,000 population, but extending to 10,000 population if need be. However it may be helpful to set out clearly the work that RHEs do in terms of engaging with communities and share that with less rural authorities as a way of sharing best practice. This might be particularly helpful for authorities who have a large urban fringe area.

5. LINE AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT OF THE RHE FUNCTION

5.1 Line management

There are significant differences in the current line and programme management arrangements across the NW.

5.1.1 Cheshire

The situation in Cheshire is very different and has changed with the establishment of the two unitary authorities. Here both RHEs are hosted and line managed within their respective unitary authorities. This has offered a more streamlined approach, compared with the earlier division of this task between the authorities where the RHE worked. Like the Cumbrian RHE, the national RHE network is cited as a source of external support.

5.1.2 Cumbria

The Cumbria Rural Housing Trust (CRHT) acts as a service provider (primarily of Housing Needs Surveys) to Eden District Council, South Lakeland District Council and the Lake District National Park. Line management of the CRHT staff is provided by the vice chair of CRHT, who is a voluntary trustee. This line management is heavily supplemented by support, technical and policy advice, which the RHE seeks from local authority officers and other external organisations. The contracts with the local authorities are managed by the CRHT manager.

5.1.3 Lancashire

Up until recently an RHE post was shared between Ribble Valley BC and Pendle BC. The post, and therefore the line and programme management, was split equally between the two funding authorities.

5.1.4 Comparator Areas

In all four comparator areas RHEs receive 1:1 support, appraisal and training on a regular basis, often supplemented by team meetings. In Devon and Hampshire the line management function is undertaken by the Rural Community Council whilst in North Yorkshire and the Peak sub-region it is provided by local authorities.

Line management is vested in the Rural Community Council in Devon because it is felt that responsibility for this task should be by the organisation that holds the legal employment contract. From the RHE perspective this arrangement underlines the independence of the role and works well because of the interest and commitment of the Assistant Chief Executive who provides this function. In Hampshire, as part of the Hampshire Alliance for Rural Affordable Housing Partnership (HARAH), line management is provided by the RCC because this is where the post started and to date this has not changed. Again the independence that this gives the role is seen as a benefit.

Importantly, there is a common factor that distinguishes these arrangements from others across the country where the RHE is line managed by the RCC. In Devon and Hampshire, there are close ties between the management of the programme and the line management function. This brings the benefits of underpinning line management with a clear performance framework, facilitates closer working with the local authorities, offers opportunities to gain professional support and has been instrumental in securing funding for the RHE posts. This is further enhanced in Hampshire by the adoption of a common county wide process for bringing forward

rural affordable housing schemes, which has served to embed the RHE within the 'enabling team' of the local authorities. However, in Hampshire there are still some frustrations, with one LA recently threatening to withdraw funding because they considered the RHE was working to their own, rather than the local authority's agenda.

In contrast, in North Yorkshire, the four RHEs are all employed by one local authority, but the posts are hosted in the individual local authority where each RHE works. Line management is provided by a designated manager in the host local authority, or where the RHE covers two districts it is assigned to one authority. In all but one case the line manager is a housing officer. To provide some consistency of approach a Senior RHE has been appointed who meets with all the RHEs regularly, and has developed a performance framework for the programme that cascades down into each RHEs appraisal targets and personal development plan. In addition, an RHE Network has been established whose membership includes the local authority line managers and which is chaired by a member of the Strategic Housing Board. This group is responsible for oversight of the RHE process, and is accountable to the North Yorkshire Strategic Housing Board. This arrangement was devised to retain an element of local support/direction to the work of the RHE's, within a sub regional framework, and in order to achieve efficiencies.

Interestingly, when reflecting on this experience, the North Yorkshire respondent proposed there should be local deployment of RHEs but with a single point of line management from the sub region, accountable to the Network. The line management and control of the RHEs' work would be carried out in partnership with a local mentor or champion from within the placement LA, but would in essence mean that the lead employer discharged their management responsibilities through a single point, and the Network managed the programme through a single point.

In the Peak sub-region, one RHE covers two district councils and the constituent part of the Peak District National Park. Here line management is provided by the Head of Housing at one of the District Councils. This office holder also heads up the strategic housing work across the sub-region. This arrangement has been adopted because ultimately the identification and accountability for meeting housing needs rests with the district council. It is often the head of housing that attends planning committee and who has to affirm the local housing need and support often controversial development. The view in the Peak Sub-region is that the further away the post is from the District Council, the harder making this robust justification becomes. As in North Yorkshire respondents considered that this approach has delivered value for money as it avoids the high overhead costs which were incurred when the RHE was based and managed by the Rural Community Council.

For both North Yorkshire and the Peak sub-region one of the major benefits of this approach is that it legitimises the RHE role. This has led to much closer working between the RHEs and planners, housing officers, councillors, and RSLs. In terms of the impact of this arrangement on relationships with the communities, neither sub-region has experienced a negative reaction, thus questioning just how important the perception of independence is. This was confirmed in independent evaluations undertaken in North Yorkshire and Hampshire where the majority of communities interviewed either did not know where the RHE was based or presumed it was with the local authority. The key for them was that the RHE was available as a dedicated resource which they could draw on to provide information

and advice and to act as a broker when necessary. Key to this working successfully is that in North Yorkshire and Peak Sub-region meeting affordable housing needs is a corporate priority for the local authorities, identified and supported by their Sustainable Community Strategy and evidence base. This reduces any conflict or tensions that might arise where there is a divergence between the objectives of the RHE and the priorities of the local authority.

5.1.5 Stakeholder views of RHE Line management arrangements in the NW

The contrasting line management arrangements in the NW were reflected in the views of the stakeholders.

In Cumbria organisational stakeholders emphasised the independence afforded to the RHE function by the involvement of CRHT. However, they also commented that reliance on a volunteer as a line manager for staff carrying out this function meant that time and resources for this task were limited and dependent on the skills of the volunteer trustees.

Amongst organisational stakeholders in Cheshire the benefits of providing line management through the local authority were cited. This includes a more focused and consistent line management approach, supported by a clear performance framework. It was seen as cementing stronger links with the relevant professionals within the local authority, which assists delivery. On the downside it was suggested that it may result in the post lacking independence and that being part of a political organisation might be a limitation.

We asked community members at the workshops if it mattered where the RHE desk was based. There was a view that they should not be based with RSLs or developers. However being based within local authorities was seen as a good choice as it relates to the local authority statutory duty to assess housing need. Independence was seen as important, however none of the respondents felt that being based within local authorities would affect this. It was felt independence was achieved if the RHE was spread across several authorities.

5.2 Programme Management

Like line management there are significant differences in the programme management of the RHE's work

5.2.1 Cheshire

In Cheshire programme management is provided through team meetings and discussions between the line manager and RHE. There is no input from RSLs, however there is interest from some RSLs to fund the post which should give them some input into work programme management.

5.2.2 Cumbria

In Cumbria programme management of the function provided by CRHT is through a sub committee of the trust, supported by input from other partners, particularly RSLs, and through Trustee meetings. Discussion and review of the Trust's work programme takes place on a monthly basis and will also respond to opportunities as they arise. Concern was raised that the RHE role provided by CRHT is overtly influenced by the availability of funding. This has meant that CRHT have been extensively involved in housing needs work, but have had limited access to resources to support their involvement in site identification, detailed community facilitation work or influencing.

5.2.3 *Comparator Areas*

In all four comparator areas programme management is provided by a sub-regional partnership, although the form of this partnership varies.

In Devon this takes the form of the Devon Rural Housing partnership (DRHP) which itself sits under and is accountable to the Devon Strategic Housing Group Executive. DRHP is drawn from local authority housing and planning staff, RSLs, the Devon Housing Partnership and HCA. The RHEs are tied to delivering LAA targets and progress on this is reported to the DRHP, DHP and the County Council. Quarterly meetings with each local authority provides the opportunity to agree, monitor and review the work programme, which provides the flexibility for the weighting of the tasks that will deliver the programme to be sensitive to the individual local authority's circumstances.

This is similar to the membership that constitutes the Rural Housing Delivery Group of the Peak Sub-region. Here the focus of the work is derived from the sub regional needs assessment, which prioritised urban and rural needs, set against the previous 2 to 3 year bidding rounds and the pattern of recent investment in rural affordable housing. It is recognised that the RHE needs to undertake housing surveys targeted on those areas in need and because of the complexity of delivery that the RHE has a development focus to identifying sites and working with the community. Of particular relevance is the establishment 4 years ago of joint commissioning arrangements which have resulted in three RSLs being responsible for rural delivery.

This was taken a stage further in Hampshire where a key element of the Hampshire Alliance for Rural Affordable Housing (HARAH) was the appointment through competition of a single RSL to deliver rural exception site schemes. In consequence programme management of the RHEs is undertaken in tandem with that of the RSL. The local authorities agree priority parishes, but with flexibility to respond to site offers and parish council requests. A Memorandum of Understanding, which binds the HARAH partnership, sets out targets but RHEs decide on weighting of the tasks to deliver these targets. Review and monitoring is achieved through monthly progress meetings with the local authorities and RSL, which involve planning and housing officers. Every two months progress reports are submitted to the HARAH officers group which has the overarching programme review role.

North Yorkshire too has adopted a sub-regional approach. Here programme management is undertaken through a single point of contact in the form of the RHE network, which is supported by the senior RHE and the North Yorkshire Housing Strategy Manager. This has allowed them to develop a consistent approach to programme management, given the potential for targeting and sharing available resources and built in the opportunity to respond to changing circumstances. For example, changes in market conditions have required a shift in emphasis in one local authority from quota to rural exception sites to deliver rural affordable housing.

Common to all these areas was a view that the sub-regional, cross professional arrangements had strengthened the strategic alignment of RHE work. This was particularly the case in Devon where it was felt that the initial community led approach had resulted in frustrations for both communities and local authorities. All acknowledged that such arrangements had increased local authority

engagement. For example in the Peak Sub-region the Head of Development Control now attends the village 'walk-about' to identify possible sites. In North Yorkshire it is seen as a way of disseminating and sharing good practice and has helped embed voluntary sub-regional protocols for negotiations and viability assessments, which provide consistency of approach across the sub-region. Finally, all these areas considered that their programme management arrangements helped to build the capacity of RHEs, by providing opportunities for them to develop their technical skills and expertise.

5.2.4 Stakeholder Responses to Programme Management of RHE's work in the NW

In Cumbria organisational stakeholders cited the value of independence and the fact that the current structure allows funders to participate in managing the RHE function, without dictating policy. However, stakeholders also expressed concern that consequently funding was allowed to direct the focus of the work. The reliance on voluntary trustees for line management of technical staff was also raised as a concern.

The views of organisational stakeholder's in Cheshire mirrored those that they offered on line management arrangements; that programme management by the local authority brought closer professional working, but it could undermine perceptions of independence.

6. FUNDING THE RHE FUNCTION

6.1 Background to Funding

Since its creation rural housing enabling has relied on grant and short term funding. The majority of funding originally came from national sources, initially provided by the Countryside Agency and latterly from Defra. Local sources provided the remainder, usually raised from local authorities, housing associations, and sometime charitable trusts. The national programme was designed with tapering central government funding and an expectation that local sources would in time cover the full cost. This was rarely, if ever, achieved. In March 2008 Defra funding ceased, leaving a number of RHEs posts inadequately funded. However, this lack of central funding has also spurred the search for alternative sources, in the form of grant and income.

6.2 Sources of Funding

The RHEs in North West have experienced significant difficulties with maintaining funding for their posts. Table two sets out the sources and security of the funding for the present posts in 2009/2010.

Table Two: Sources and security of NW RHE funding

CRHT Funding	Access to work - Support worker funding 1.16%	09/10
	Eden DC - Survey funding yr 1-3 26.4%	09/10
	Eden DC - Core crht funding 1%	09/10
	Eden DC - CLT Funding 6.6%	09/10
	SLDC - Survey funding 3.5%	09/10
	SLDC - CLT funding 4.62%	09/10
	SLDC - 08/09 Carried forward survey funding 4.82%	08/09
	South Lakeland LSP - CLT funding 1.45%	09/10
	Eden HA - Core CRHT funding 2%	09/10
	Eden HA - CLT funding .66%	09/10
	Impact HA - core CRHT funding 2%	09/10
	Mitre HA - Core funding .65%	09/10
	Home HA - Core CRHT funding	09/10
	Westfield HA - Core CRHT funding 2%	09/10
	LDNP - Core crht funding 2%	09/10
	LDNP - Survey funding 22.77%	09/10
	LDNP - Enabling funding 6.6%	09/10
	LDNP - CLT funding 6.6%	09/10
	Two Castles HA - Core CRHT funding 2%	09/10
	Copeland BC - Core CRHT funding 2%	09/10
Arthuret HNS .53%	09/10	
Lamplugh HNS 1%	09/10	
Cheshire East	Local authority 100%	September 09
Cheshire West	Local authority 100%	September 09

Within Cheshire the RHE posts were due to end in March 2009 following the end of the Defra Rural Social and Community Programme funding which, together with match funding from the local authorities housing budgets, has supported both part time posts. The posts have now been extended till September 2009, paid for by housing department budgets, pending the outcome of this research and completion of the SHMA. Responsibility for securing this funding lies with the respective officers of the unitary authorities.

CRHT raises funds to support its core activities. The Trust receives contributions for core funding from local authorities and housing associations. It also generates revenue by providing a housing needs research and community engagement service to some (but not all) of the counties local authorities.

Uncertainty relating to future funding is common across the region. None of the organisations involved in rural housing enabling have yet secured funding for 2010 - 2011. The Cheshire RHE posts have been extended to September 2009.

The salaries of existing RHE posts range between £25,000 and £29,000 pa FTE, although both posts in Cheshire are part time. In Cumbria this was considered an appropriate pay scale. An equivalent local authority post would be an "enabling officer". A development officer post in an RSL was considered to require more specific technical skills, warranting a higher salary.

6.3 Sources of Funding in Comparator Areas

Table Three sets out the funding packages in the comparator areas. Interestingly, in three of the four areas the County Councils make a significant contribution, but only in Derbyshire is this funded from the Second Homes Council Tax. In two areas the Regional Housing Board supports the posts. The small contributions of RSLs are noticeable, apart from in HARAHA where Hyde Housing match the local authority funding. This reflects the fact that Hyde is the sole RSL in HARAHA and that one of the criteria for selection was that the chosen RSL would bring dedicated resources for the partnership. Only in Devon has a service charge been used. Here the RSLs make a contribution out of 'on-costs' from funded schemes. Agreeing the level of funding was the subject of some detailed discussion and is confirmed through a service level agreements. However, it was also recognised that such funding was 'back loaded' and that funding was required for the early stages of work, hence the additional grant funding from RSLs.

Table Three: Sources and Security of Funding in Comparator Areas

Devon	LAs - 5k each	2009 - 11
	County Council £43k pa	2009 -11
	RSLs £2k each + an amount for each scheme pa	Negotiated annually
	Devon Rural Community Council	
HARAHA	LAs £19k each for next 3 yrs	2009 - 12
	County Council £40k next 3 years	2009 -12
	Hyde £114k next three years	2009 - 12
North Yorkshire	LAs 10%	To 2011
	RSLs & National Park 26%	To 2011
	Regional Housing Board 63%	To 2012

Peak sub-region	LAs 10%	2011
	*County Council 100%	2011
	Regional Housing Board 40%	2011

* the county council funding is from Second Homes Council Tax and is used to support a range of housing enabling activity within the Peak sub-region

In none of these areas is the RHE responsible for raising funding, instead it is undertaken by the employer.

6.4 View of Stakeholders to Funding Arrangements in the North West

The stakeholders recognised the risks that the funding situation poses, in terms of the future of the role, and that the level of pay and uncertainty may in the future affect the calibre of applicants.

There were contrasting views on the benefits of mixed funding. For some it re-enforced independence and reduced the risk of failure if a sole funder was to withdraw. Countering this others felt that the different priorities of funders could result in tensions and lack of clear direction for the RHE.

7. DELIVERY OF RURAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN THE NORTH WEST

Ultimately, the purpose of enabling activity is to support the delivery of affordable housing to meet identified need. Having considered the make up of the rural housing enabling function, and its application in the North West, the paper now considers delivery of affordable rural housing in the region during the period when rural housing enabling activity has taken place.

7.1 Monitoring and Reporting

The consultant team found that it unexpectedly difficult to identify and track delivery. Finding the data on targets was a difficult task as they appear in different documents for each authority. Ultimately we have had to compare figures on the completion of new rural affordable homes provided by the HCA with targets for affordable housing (not specifically in rural areas) set by local authorities in Local or Sub-Regional Housing Strategies. The figures presented have been devised from differing evidence bases and cover different time periods. Only in Cheshire has a separate target been set for rural affordable housing.

It has not been possible to link the development of new housing with earlier RHE activity because of the time lag between surveys and housing being completed and the limitations in recording and monitoring. For these reasons although it is possible to compare need with delivery on a district or county basis, it is not possible to make comparisons across the region, or make any but very tentative conclusions about how delivery relates to the work of the RHEs.

This position should be improved. We recommend that a simple and consistent approach to monitoring of delivery of affordable rural housing is introduced which incorporates the whole journey of a development over time. This could include; the provision of targets for affordable rural housing in Housing Strategies, Local Authority Corporate Plans and Local and Multi Area Agreements, and the inclusion of rural and urban reporting in the local housing authorities Annual Monitoring Report.

7.2 Delivery in Cheshire

Table Four Shows that on average 27% of the average annual affordable rural housing target for Cheshire was met between 2004 and 2008. In total this resulted in 127 new rural affordable homes during this period. However, delivery is very uneven. Output was very low but with a gradual increase between 2004 and 2006 and a significant jump in 2007-08 in both east and west Cheshire. Of equal interest is that this later increase was the result of two large developments. In terms of the number of schemes, the output actually dropped.

The RHEs did not come into post until 2007. Between 2007 and 2008/09 the number of local housing needs surveys has increased from 1 to 9 in Cheshire East and 1 to 7 in Cheshire West, although in 2008/09 this fell back to 6 in Cheshire West.

Table Four: Cheshire Affordable Housing Targets and Delivery 2004 - 2009

Local authority area Cheshire*	Average annual rural affordable housing target	Average annual rural units delivered	Actual number of rural units delivered	Number of RHE local housing needs surveys
2004/2005	100	27	10	1
2005/2006	100	27	18	1
2006/2007	100	27	19	1
2007/2008	100	27	80	10

Sources:

Cheshire Housing Strategy 2004 -08

HCA completions in settlements of less than 3,000 population - provided by HCA

** Rural housing target county wide*

7.3 Delivery in Cumbria

Table Five shows actual and average rural delivery against the average total affordable housing targets for each district, as set out in the Cumbria Housing Strategy. In total 173 new rural affordable homes were completed between 2005/06 and 2008/09. Given the variation in district targets some differences in distribution would be expected. However, the much higher levels of delivery in Eden and South Lakeland are notable. The unevenness of delivery over time is also significant, with a considerable increase in delivery in these two districts in 2007/08, falling back again the following year.

Between 2005/06 and 2008/09 CRHT undertook 64 local housing needs surveys. The majority (30) of these were in South Lakeland. Interestingly, Allerdale, Eden and Copeland disitricts each had 11 local housing needs surveys during this time. Unfortunately the data available does not allow us to identify whether those settlements where units were completed are also those where a survey was undertaken, or where these do coincide what the period was between survey and scheme completion.

Table Five: Cumbria Affordable Housing Targets and Delivery 2005 - 2008/09

Local authority area	Year	Average annual district affordable housing target	Average annual rural units delivered	Actual number of rural units delivered	Number of RHE local housing needs surveys
Allerdale incl LDNP	2005/2006	48	8	8	4
	2006/2007	48	8	5	0
	2007/2008	48	8	9	7
	2008/2009	48	8	14	0
	Total 2005-2008/09			36	
Carlisle	2005/2006	7	.33	1	0
	2006/2007	7	.33	1	0
	2007/2008	7	.33	0	0
	2008/2009	7	.33	0	1
	Total 2005 - 2008/09			2	
Copeland	2005/2006	10	0	0	1
	2006/2007	10	0	0	0

incl LDNP	2007/2008	10	0	0	8
	2008/2009	10	0	0	2
	Total 2005-2008/09			0	
Eden incl LDNP	2005/2006	27	17	10	4
	2006/2007	27	17	7	0
	2007/2008	27	17	30	3
	2008/2009	27	17	13	4
	Total 2005-2008/09			60	
South Lakeland Incl LDNP	2005/2006	42	15	0	4
	2006/2007	42	15	2	4
	2007/2008	42	15	45	15
	2008/2009	42	15	28	7
	Total 2005 - 2008/09			75	

Sources:

Cumbria Housing Strategy 2003- 09

HCA completions in settlements of less than 3,000 population - provided by HCA

7.5 Delivery in Lancashire

Tables Six and seven provide information on delivery in the two Lancashire districts that in the past have hosted a dedicated RHE post. Unfortunately, there is no annual target for affordable housing for Pendle for the period when the RHE was in post. As a reference the annual need identified in the 2006 Housing Needs Assessment has been used, but usual practice is for targets to be lower. Even with this caveat, rural delivery in both districts is very low.

Table Six: Pendle Affordable housing need and Rural Delivery 2003 - 2008

Local authority area	Year	Annual affordable housing need	Actual number of rural units delivered	Average Number of RHE local housing needs surveys *
Pendle	2003/2004	unknown	0	0
	2004/2005	unknown	0	6
	2005/2006	223	0	6
	2006/2007	223	0	6
	2007/2008	223	7	0

Pendle Housing Needs Assessment 2006

HCA completions in settlements of less than 3,000 population - provided by HCA

** the figure for completed local housing needs surveys was provided by the ex RHE*

Table Seven: Ribble Valley Affordable Housing Target and Rural Delivery 2003 - 2008

Local authority area	Year	Average annual affordable housing target	Average annual rural units delivered	Actual number of rural units delivered	Average Number of RHE local housing needs surveys *
Ribble Valley	2003/2004	100	2	0	0
	2004/2005	100	2	0	6
	2005/2006	100	2	1	6
	2006/2007	100	2	6	6
	2007/2008	100	2	3	unkown

Sources:

Ribble Valley Housing Strategy Delivery Plan 2004 -08

HCA completions in settlements of less than 3,000 population - provided by HCA

** the figure for completed local housing needs surveys was provided by the ex RHE*

8. LESSONS LEARNT AND CHALLENGES

8.1 Lessons Learnt

8.1.1 RHE Role

Currently in the North West, the majority of the RHE's time is spent undertaking local housing needs surveys. An approach will need to be found which combines the "formal" evidence gathering process of the local housing authority with the local survey work necessary to support the design of schemes and achieve planning consent. The value attributed by consultees to the "independence" of local needs evidence generated by the engagement of an organisation outside the local housing authority should be noted.

Whilst evidence of need is of critical importance in the planning stage, this reduces the time available for site identification and engaging the wider community. However, in Cheshire, as in other parts of the country, this is becoming a greater element of their work, assisted by the RHE being embedded in the wider local authority 'enabling team'. As the HCA moves towards investment in a rolling programme of schemes, it will become imperative that more of an RHE's time is given to site identification.

Integral to all these tasks is the RHE's role in supporting the positive engagement of the community. To extend this beyond working with Parish Councils will require additional resources and greater alignment with Parish Plans. However, it will be important to ensure that this activity increases, not reduces, the speed and quantity of delivery.

The research explored whether the RHE role could be expanded to take on economic development and be extended into urban areas. The consensus was that whilst better use could be made in economic and tourism strategies of information collected by RHEs, the complexity of such a role would be too great to include within a single post. Similarly, whilst there was recognition that there would be benefits in applying the RHE model to urban areas, it was considered that extending a post to cover both types of areas would result in a diversion of resources away from rural areas and a loss of expertise.

8.1.2 Line and Programme Management

The research identified that the speed and certainty of rural delivery is increased when an RHE is embedded in the local authority 'enabling team' and receives high quality line management from within a local authority. Where the programme extends across a sub-region it is important that this is provided on a consistent basis.

Performance is enhanced when the programme is managed by cross-professional /cross sectoral programme sub-regional management group who take responsibility for setting realistic targets and being ultimately responsible for their delivery. In turn this sets a performance framework that can be used as a RHE line management tool.

Whilst concerns have been raised that line management within a local authority may undermine independence, experience in other parts of the country indicate

that this has not been a barrier to RHE's gaining the confidence of rural communities. However, this and the success of embedding the RHE role in the LA enabling team, requires that the local authority accept and implement a corporate responsibility to deliver rural affordable housing

8.1.3 Funding

The uncertainty of funding for RHE posts is a problem experienced across the country. Since the withdrawal of central government funding a range of sources for investment and provision of resources have been used to support a rural housing enabling function. Most notable has been the increase in funding from county councils and higher tier local authorities as they recognise the importance of affordable housing to meeting their strategic and LAA objectives around sustainable communities. Local authorities remain the major source, however for most, a mix of funding has been secured, reducing risk and supporting partnership 'buy in'. The most radical approach found is the selection of one or a few RSLs who in return for assurance that the RHE's work will contribute to their stock and operations, dedicate financial and staff resources to the RHE programme.

In response to the uncertainty of time limited grant funding and unlikelihood of gaining more permanent funding from core staff budgets, some RHEs have secured 'revenue' funding paid on scheme completion. Whilst this brings greater security, it is "backloaded" and does not cover work where a scheme does not progress.

8.2 Challenges

From the findings of the research a number of challenges emerge for the North West. Some of these are common to Cheshire, Lancashire and Cumbria, but given the diversity of current arrangements some are specific to particular areas.

8.2.1 RHE Role

The greater availability of secondary strategic data, such as that from SHMAs, offers the opportunity to reduce the time RHEs spend on local housing needs assessments and to prioritise the communities in which they should work. The over-arching challenge will be for collection and analysis of secondary data to generate evidence that can provide an understanding of housing markets and needs at a sufficiently low (geographical) level. The appropriate scale is likely to differ with the nature of the locality, however it is unlikely that analysis at say ward level will be of sufficient detail to support a planning application for a small scheme on a rural exception site. It must be probable therefore that local housing needs analysis will still be required in some instances, but that secondary evidence will help to target resources to areas where further work is required.

Across all three sub-regions there is a need to build a seamless and integrated rural housing enabling service which brings together communities, registered social landlords and the housing authority. To a large extent this has been achieved in Cheshire. The challenge in Cumbria is greater, where there is incomplete engagement across all housing authorities and where pre-development tasks are split between the Cumbria Rural Housing Trust (as service provider) and local housing authorities. Part of the challenge here will be to ensure that roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and people empowered to take forward their respective elements of the rural enabling function.

For those authorities where the RHE role is undertaken internally as part of their wider enabling work the challenge will be around attracting and retaining sufficient resource and capacity to make rural housing enabling a dedicated role. There may be benefits in two districts sharing the function, but consideration should be given to whether the size of territory could undermine an individual RHE's effectiveness.

8.2.2 Line and Programme Management

The HCA's new approach to sub-regional investment will require a cohesive structure for the management and delivery of a rolling programme of rural affordable schemes. To meet the targets of the LAA and the Local Housing Investment Strategy a performance management framework will be required which helps shape the work of the RHE and holds partners to account. This will need to include specific rural targets for affordable housing and related reporting. The challenge is to ensure that available structures, such as the Cumbria Housing Group, are willing and able to take on this role. In Cheshire there is a need to expand the housing partnership (Cheshire Housing Alliance) to include other key players, in particular Registered Social Landlords.

8.2.3 Funding

The greatest challenge of all remains how to attract stable, long term and ideally mainstream funding for the RHE function.

In Cumbria the funding challenge largely arises from the split in the function between local authorities and Cumbria Rural Housing Trust. There is currently some overlap between the use of funding received to deliver part of an RHE function (as service provider) and the wider activities and management of the Trust. Going forward it is critical that these issues are separated. Local Authorities (and the sub-regional housing group) will need to be clear around the use of funding to deliver their statutory housing function (via enabling). It is of course open for any organisation or body to support the wider work of the Trust, but any such support must not be confused with contract payments for enabling services.

Partners in Cumbria need to develop a funding package which will maintain an enabling function in those areas considered a priority for rural affordable housing. These need not require contributions from all local authorities in the sub-region, but it should be able to respond to identified need throughout the territory.

For Cheshire and Lancashire the funding challenge is somewhat reduced by the fact that the RHE task is already funded, or partly incorporated within local authorities. However, pressure on discretionary funding makes the situation precarious and limited capacity can result in a loss of time dedicated to rural enabling. In these areas the challenge will be around the need to widen a funding partnership without losing the benefits that come from the RHE function being included within a housing authorities' enabling team.

To date the County Councils in Cumbria and Lancashire have not financially supported the the RHE function. The reason given is that housing is not a statutory responsibility of county councils. The challenge here is to make the widely acknowledged case that the provision of good quality affordable housing is fundamental to achieving county council and LAA objectives around health, welfare

of older people, and most importantly the creation and maintenance of sustainable communities.

9. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE APPROACHES TO RURAL HOUSING ENABLING IN THE NORTH WEST

9.1 Conclusions

The research shows the diversity of the rural housing enabling function, and related arrangements for the line, programme management and funding. It is clear that these roles are already changing, largely as a result of the new local government arrangements in Cheshire, loss of funding in Lancashire and the wider availability of secondary data.

Two underpinning questions emerged that have shaped the recommendations. Firstly, is the RHE role still needed? Secondly, are the role and the arrangements for managing and funding the work able to respond to the new challenges and opportunities which will impact on the delivery of rural affordable housing?

The answer to the first question, is “yes”, an enabling function to drive the delivery of new rural affordable housing is still needed. This work has identified a shortfall in the delivery of rural affordable housing against every conceivable target over the last five years. Secondary evidence continues to show an affordability gap in most rural areas of the North West. This is acknowledged in various strategies where the provision of affordable housing is stated as a priority. Allied to this is the recognition given to the need to support and create sustainable rural communities, of which affordable housing is a core component. At the community level, there remains suspicion, even prejudice, against provision of new affordable housing in some settlements. In others there is a lack of knowledge or expertise to secure the affordable housing they need.

The ability of current arrangements to respond to changes in policy and delivery practice, is less clear. Most notable is the challenge presented by the HCA’s “Single Conversation” as its main business process, and its move to investment in a rolling programme of activity across higher tier local authority or sub-regional areas. To improve the provision of rural affordable housing it will be essential that rural needs are raised and addressed in the development of the Local Investment Plan. Equally, it will be necessary to devise a rolling programme of deliverable rural schemes which offer good value to the public purse.

Our view, based on the findings of the workshops and experience from the comparator areas, is that greater weight should be given to site identification and supporting positive community engagement, with a mutually enforcing link between the RHEs experience of delivery and the development of policy. We therefore go on to make proposals around the future shape and structure of the rural housing enabling function. These proposals are based on the learning offered by our analysis of the rural housing enabler function in the North West, the views of stakeholders and experience of the way rural housing enabling is delivered in the four comparator areas.

In Cheshire and Lancashire it is proposed that the RHE function becomes embedded within the wider enabling team of the local authority, with dedicated officer responsible for rural affordable housing. This team may need to consider if they need external support in some instances, for example in acquiring “independent” evidence of local needs to support particularly contentious applications.

For Cumbria, it is proposed that the value offered by the involvement of Cumbria Rural Housing Trust be retained if possible, but that the respective roles played by CRHT and local authority officers in the enabling process should be clearly set out and formalised within a sub-regional enabling resource. To create a seamless enabling service we propose that the position is recorded through a detailed protocol incorporated within a Memorandum of Understanding which can be completed and exchanged by all parties.

Central to the success of these proposals in all three counties is that rural affordable housing is accepted as a corporate priority for local authorities (including the higher tier / county): that the secondary evidence base, in terms of need, site supply and viability, is of appropriate sophistication to remain relevant to rural communities; and that there is a move to a more plan and programme led approach to the delivery of additional rural affordable housing.

Changes to the role of the RHE within the enabling function are only part of the way forward. As importantly, the research recommends adaptations to the existing structures that provide programme management of rural affordable housing delivery. Recognising the current diversity of arrangements and drawing on experience from elsewhere it offers three options, one for each county. These build on existing arrangements, seeking to strengthen the enabling of rural affordable housing, whilst providing a sharper focus to a broader rural delivery partnership.

These changes should create access to other potential streams of funding. In helping to deliver Sustainable Community Strategy objectives and contribute towards LAA targets, funding could be secured from County Councils or Local Strategic Partnerships. By providing a mechanism for rural delivery to be part of the Single Conversation and Local Investment Plan, resources could be drawn from the Regional Housing Board and the capacity building funds of the HCA. Potentially, by giving more certainty to RSLs that they will be able to deliver rural schemes, there is an incentive for them to help fund the predevelopment work needed to bring rural schemes forward. These sources, combined with local authority contributions, could provide a more stable package of funding.

It is our view that these recommendations can enable the provision of rural affordable housing to move from a 'rural' issue to being part of the core business of local authorities, reflecting that ultimately meeting housing needs and securing the future sustainability of communities is their strategic responsibility. These changes, including the strengthening of the rural dimension to sub-regional housing partnerships will go a long way to meeting the Regional Housing Strategies vision:

"to create balanced housing markets across the North West that support economic growth, strengthen economic and social inclusion and ensure that everyone has access to appropriate, well-designed high quality, affordable housing in sustainable, mixed and vibrant communities."

9.2 Future Approaches for the Rural Housing Enabling Function in the North West

Three approaches are proposed, one for each sub-region. They have been developed to take account of the diversity of current approaches across the region; and the consequential differences in the role, management and funding of the RHEs posts; existing sub regional/county structures; the availability and sources of funding; and the need to complement or strengthen existing rural housing enabling activity being undertaken by local authorities and RSLs. Their development has been supported by an analysis of learning from existing delivery of the RHE function and consideration of the challenges relating to future delivery of the function in the North West¹¹.

In all three sub-regions the approach has been devised to respond to eight common drivers

- A clear acceptance within policy and corporate plans that the unmet need for affordable housing is threatening the sustainability of communities in most rural areas of the region
- The strategic responsibility for meeting affordable housing needs, including that in rural areas, lies with the local housing authority (with responsibility for housing, but shared with the National Parks in those areas where they have the statutory planning role)
- The responsibility for ensuring the balance and sustainability of communities and neighbourhoods does not rest solely with the housing authority in Cumbria and Lancashire but is shared by the County Council and Local Strategic Partnership; improving provision of affordable housing is a key part of meeting this challenge
- Delivery of rural affordable housing is complex and beset by prejudice and misunderstanding, heightened by the use of the rural exception site policy. There is a need to move to a plan-led approach in which the community are engaged, but not in the 'driving seat'.
- Local authorities and RSLs have limited capacity to become involved in the necessarily time intensive pre-development work associated with providing rural affordable housing in many rural communities, especially via exception sites
- Local authorities face budgetary constraints/cuts
- Effective delivery is dependent upon a strong 'enabling team', which has the necessary skills and operates in a supportive policy framework.
- The HCA business approach, based on the 'single conversation' that seeks to invest its resources in a rolling programme of activity, will radically alter the way in which investment in affordable housing is made.

¹¹ See Section 8

9.2.1 Cheshire

- *Shift of focus to solutions from identifying housing need*
- *RHE function within each local authority*
- *Cheshire Housing Alliance as programme development and management group*
- *Package of funding from local authorities, Regional Housing Board, HCA and potentially partner Registered Social Landlords*

Role of the RHEs

The weighting of the RHE role away could shift from a focus on housing needs surveys towards site identification; engagement of rural communities, not just parish councils; and involvement in strategic influencing. To do this, greater use will need to be made of a range of secondary data, such as the SHMA, that collected as through Choice Based Lettings and Annual Monitoring reports, to target areas where housing needs surveys are required to supplement that evidence base. For all of these it will be necessary to provide an analysis at a geographical scale relevant to understanding housing needs in the rural parts of the respective unitary authorities.

Line and programme management

The RHE posts would continue to be based within the Unitary authorities, which helps position the post within partnership working at a sub-regional level. The respective local authorities would continue to provide good quality line management, with the RHE post graded at a level that allows them to operate strategically within the authority.

The Cheshire Housing Alliance, whose membership is drawn from local authorities and RSLs, would have a role in agreeing the overall work programme and targets for the RHE posts. Ultimately it would be accountable for delivery of the work programme's targets. Sub regional working would introduce more opportunities to strengthen the work of the RHE in terms of influencing and removing blockages to delivery. This could include a move to more positive planning policies for rural areas, with less reliance on rural exception sites.

Funding

The financial involvement of RSLs is a natural progression to complement the Unitary Authority funding and follows from their involvement in the management of a RHE/Rural programme through the Cheshire Housing Alliance. The Alliance and the input it hopes to have into the HCA's single conversations could also provide a means of leveraging in funding from the HCA and other regional resources, for example from the Regional Housing Board.

9.2.2 Cumbria

- *Enabling function delivered by sub-regional partnership of statutory bodies and third sector*
- *Cumbria Housing Group as programme development and management group*
- *CRHT as service provider of part of the enabling function (via service level agreement with local authorities)*
- *"Solution" based elements of the enabling function embedded within local authorities core enabling team*

The proposed option for Cumbria aims to support and strengthen the existing arrangements for enabling rural affordable housing across the county. In particular it seeks to clearly define the role of CRHT as service provider of part of the enabling function and ensure separation between this and its wider charitable activities. The option seeks to achieve a formalised management and delivery structure for the sub-region, led by the Cumbria Housing Group, which can respond to and work alongside the HCA and Regional Housing Board to deliver regional and sub-regional priorities.

Role of the RHE

It is proposed that CRHT is commissioned by the local authorities to provide a dedicated staff resource to provide independent evidence on local housing need and undertake community engagement work to support the development of solutions to meet identified and prioritised housing need. This should be a discrete function and not be confused with the charities wider activities. This work should be targeted on those communities identified as priorities by the Cumbria Housing Group.

Other elements of the enabling function will be undertaken by the respective local authorities, but with an agreed process for hand over of evidence and responsibility from CRHT. This arrangement should be set out in a protocol and confirmed in a memorandum of understanding completed by CRHT, the Cumbria Housing Group and participating local authorities. The protocol should provide for the possibility of the allocation of responsibilities (between CRHT and a local authority) changing, and allow the Housing Group to direct a partnering approach to deliver the enabling function in targeted areas of need where the "host" local authority lacks capacity.

It would be helpful to make this protocol available to communities involved in affordable rural housing so they are aware of what will happen next, who to contact and how they can engage with the process.

Line and Programme management

Line management of CRHT staff will be the responsibility of the Trust. Operational targets for the Cumbria rural housing enabling function should be informed by the performance framework agreed by the Cumbria Housing Group.

Programme management should be provided by the Cumbria Housing Group (CHG) whose membership is drawn from the local authorities and RSLs. It should include representation from CRHT and the National Park given its planning responsibilities. CHG's role would be to identify where to target the breadth of enabling activity. The membership would take responsibility for applying their staff and policy resources to their assigned element of the enabling process.

Such an arrangement would strengthen the Group's ability to identify and take action to overcome barriers to delivery. By drawing the enabling activity together it would be possible to develop a rolling programme of rural schemes which would fit with the HCA's new approach to investment. Ultimately, the Group would be accountable to meeting the targets set out in the Cumbria Housing Strategy and the LAA.

Funding

Funding for the enabling function will need to come from a combination of sub-regional and regional sources. The bulk of funding / resource should be provided by the local authorities (housing authorities and if possible the County Council). Representations should be made to the County Council to explain the need for the enabling function to achieve objectives around sustainable communities and local economic development set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy, the targets for provision of affordable housing in the Cumbria Local Area Agreement, and the fundamental connection between provision of additional affordable housing in Cumbria's rural communities and the Council's corporate priorities and duty of well-being.

The Cumbria Housing Group should ensure that a programme to deliver new affordable housing forms a major part of the sub-region's "single conversation" with the HCA and resulting local investment plan. This may enable it to access funding to support enabling of rural affordable housing from the HCA and the Regional Housing Board. The group may also like to consider a partnership relationship with preferred Registered Social Landlord(s) as a means of attracting additional resources.

The needs assessment element of rural enabling would be funded by the local authorities, commissioning surveys and community engagement work from CRHT. The remaining pre-development tasks would, as now, be undertaken by local authority staff and would continue to be paid for as part of core staff costs.

The partners will also need to consider if they wish to support the valuable wider work of CRHT, around raising awareness, carrying out research into the barriers and solutions to delivery and influencing policy. If so, any support would need to be clearly separated from service level agreements relating to the rural affordable housing enabling function.

When assessing costs associated with CRHT's work it will be important to apply an approved full cost recovery model appropriate for contractual relationships with a registered charity.

9.2.3 Lancashire

- *Rural affordable enabling within local authority enabling function*
- *Develop a sub-regional programme for rural affordable housing as part of the HCA "single conversation"*
- *Develop rural targets and reporting within sub-regional housing group, the Lancashire Local Area Agreement and local authority monitoring reports*

In Lancashire the challenge is how to secure a rolling programme of rural affordable housing delivery, given that there is currently no specific RHE post.

Role of the RHE

In Lancashire the RHE role would be undertaken as part of the broader enabling activity of the local authority. However, steps would need to be taken to ensure that the role retained its rural focus. It would need to be supported by the adoption of a plan-led approach to rural affordable housing and an evidence base that was relevant to understanding and implementing delivery in rural communities.

Line management

Line management would be provided by the employing local authority. If as a consequence of limited resources the role was to cover more than one local authority, one council would have to take responsibility for this task. A performance framework, based on the LAA targets and single conversation's rural priorities would need to be adopted that ensured that the work of the RHE delivered the targets and objectives for a rural programme.

Programme delivery

The existing LAA 'Housing Matters' group provides a means of managing a rural programme. It could provide a useful 'bridge' between the local authorities, who have the statutory housing responsibility, and the County Council with its broader objectives. Particularly as the achievement of many of these are dependent on the supply of a range of affordable housing. The Group's commitment and accountability for delivering rural affordable housing could be strengthened by the adoption of a Memorandum of Understanding similar to that currently adopted by Ribble Valley for generic affordable housing delivery.

Funding

Funding for these posts would in part come from the local authorities, as part of their strategic responsibility for meeting housing needs. The programme management arrangements would bring alignment with the Single Conversation process and the LAA, and provide a basis for securing additional funding. This could include County Council funding through a Service Level Agreement using 'reward' funding attached to the relevant LAA targets, including housing's contribution to wider sustainable community objectives, and Second Homes Council Tax. As in Cheshire and Cumbria, these arrangements would also provide a basis for leveraging in funding from the HCA and Regional Housing Board.

It may also be possible to explore the potential to attract funding from a "partner" RSL.

It was proposed at the Options Workshop that this approach could be piloted in one or more of three sub-regions: East Lancashire, West Lancashire, Fylde Coast and Lancaster.

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July 2009

ANNEX 1

THE VALUE OF RURAL HOUSING ENABLERS FROM A COMMUNITY'S PERSPECTIVE

Two regional morning workshops were held with representatives from Parish Councils and Parish Plan Groups, to explore with the community:

- Perceptions of who is responsible for the different aspects of delivering rural affordable housing
- What is the RHE role
- What is the community role and how could this be supported

Staveley, Cumbria (5th May) four parish members attended; Claife, Euxton, Sedbergh and Kirby Ireleth Parish Councils.

Comberbach, Cheshire (11th May) eleven parish members attended; Cranage, Comberbach, Great Budworth, Mickle Trafford, Oakmere, Plumley with Toft, Ribby with Wrea Green, Saughall, Weaverham parish councils and Lancashire County Council Parish and Town Plans Officer.

I. **Biggest challenges facing rural communities in the North West**

Participants were asked to write down the three greatest challenges currently facing their communities, the greatest housing challenge and the biggest obstacle to them being able to overcome their greatest housing challenge.

1. **Three greatest challenges**

The two workshops varied considerably in their response to the three greatest challenges.

In the North of the region, of greatest concern were;

- Lack of local employment opportunities and the decline of traditional industries such as agriculture,
- Maintaining a sustainable community and a social structure,
- Providing affordable and appropriate housing to meet the needs of residents, i.e single people and elderly residents.

In the South of the region of greatest concern were;

- Road safety, (speeding, parking and traffic management),
- Lack of community involvement and interest,
- Youth nuisance.

2. **Greatest housing challenge**

Both workshops referred to the lack of affordable housing as their greatest housing challenge, with the mismatch between house prices and incomes, cost, suitability and availability of land. Other concerns were building on the green belt and the tension between conservation and the need for new development, and a need to use the existing housing stock better (reference to private and public landlords).

3. Biggest barriers

Both workshops were in agreement about the biggest two barriers faced in providing their greatest housing challenge. Firstly, planning policy and the tension between local need and strategic policy requirements referring to the lack of support or direction they receive from their local planning authority. Secondly, tackling local opposition to any kind of development (NIMBYISM) and engaging with the wider community as a whole.

II. Value placed on the current roles of Rural Housing Enablers

We asked each workshop to consider the three main roles of a Rural Housing Enabler:

- 1 Identification of housing Need
- 2 Site identification
- 3 Gaining positive involvement from the wider community.

In terms of:

- The role of the Local Authority
- The role of the Community
- How does the RHE role help them
- How could the RHE role help them

1 Identification of housing needs

- Role of Local Authority

Community groups were aware of the statutory responsibility of local authorities to assess and meet housing need within their rural communities, with a need to ensure they focus below ward level to parish level. Local authorities were also seen as having a role to empower parish councils to kick start the process to identifying housing need within their communities, encourage the local voice to be heard and facilitate organisations needing to work together within each community.

Communities assumed the evidence collected at their local level did inform the local planning and housing strategies within their areas and at a regional level.

There was concern that local authorities need to better inform communities about how evidence collected informs the policies and procedures local authority staff work within, in order to pacify community wants and needs with the appropriate level of support that can be effectively resourced, by local authorities.

The role of Local Strategic Partnerships was also discussed at this point and it was felt they need to become more proactive in ensuring housing need at a parish/village level does inform relevant strategies that intend to enable affordable housing. There was uncertainty as to how parish councils and community groups are able to influence the work of Local Strategic Partnerships.

- Role of the Community

Communities need to be self responsible and respond to consultations and surveys to ensure they are represented. They also need to be proactively involved in initiating and contributing to parish planning and village design statements. Without their involvement nothing will happen. Size of communities and commitment of parish councillors was raised as a barrier due to capacity and capability issues.

- How does the RHE help?

The RHE role was seen as conducting housing need surveys to ensure all members of a community have the opportunity to be involved. Once a survey is complete they will then analyse the results and advise on the number, type and design of properties to be built.

Their involvement was to cultivate interest to identify housing need issues, whilst remaining neutral and independent from the local authority and housing association. They provide the link from the community to organisations that work to enable affordable rural housing; local authorities, housing associations, developers and landowners

The knowledge, expertise, networking and signposting work of RHEs was viewed as important to facilitate development. They were seen as the first point of reference for advice on assessing housing need for parish councils with access to best practice and innovative approaches by communities elsewhere.

How could the RHE help?

1. Proactively work with parish and district/borough/unitary councillors
2. Housing advice surgeries alongside the survey so people can access support and advice in a rural housing context
3. Illustrate best practice and innovative approaches elsewhere
4. Think in terms of the existing housing stock rather than new build solely and possible mix of tenure, renting, LCHO and market housing
5. Engage with businesses and difficult to reach groups that don't always see a housing need survey as relevant to them, ie owner occupiers
6. Promote role of affordable housing in supporting the local economy

2 Site identification

- Role of the Local Authority

Communities saw the role of local authorities around site identification as advising on current sites in local plan, calling for new sites and other potential sites they may consider for planning permission for affordable housing. They also had a role to consider the needs of local employers when identifying sites to encourage local employment opportunities that allow businesses to diversify and grow.

Their role was also to ensure new sites are suitably located to allow new developments to form part of the village and be aware of the village infrastructure and service needs. Communities felt the rural exception site policy was not

delivering sufficient housing to meet their current housing need within realistic timescales.

- Role of the Community

The communities' role is to put sites forward and publicise the need for new sites. The parish council's role was to be prepared to sell land for affordable housing and identify possible sites and the landowner. Communities need to understand the evidence from a housing need survey and the implications on the future viability of the community if sites are not put forward to be considered and be involved in that process by sharing plans and community and local authority views in an open public way

- How does the RHE help?

The RHE role was seen as taking the contentious and complicated issue of site identification out of the hands of the parish council by facilitating the process between all parties; Communities, RSLs, landowners and Local Planning Authority. Using their expertise and contacts they advise on sites where planning permission is more likely or sites that are more suitable for development and encourage the existing community to accept and understand the need for change.

- How could the RHE help?
 1. Link parishes together as sites are identified – those with a need could live in neighbouring parishes
 2. Advise on affordable housing element within parish plans
 3. Advise on a process approach for parish councils to undertake to enable affordable housing and site identification
 4. Identify existing landowners and sites
 5. Promote a plan led rather than site led approach
 6. Liaise with businesses when doing housing need survey as could provide sites or economic support for development
 7. Negotiate restrictive covenants on sites to ease landowners and communities concerns
 8. Facilitate parish councils in neighbouring parishes working collaboratively

3 Gaining the positive involvement of the broader community

We asked what techniques communities had used to gain more involvement from the community?

- Parish plan and Village design statement
- Public meetings
- Parish surgeries
- Village newsletter
- Posters on village notice board, shops, local hub, post office, pubs, churches
- 'Quality' council status through NALC
- Websites –time consuming and expensive
- Assist in delivering and collection house to house survey

- Which organisations help you?

Support to engage with the wider community had come from a variety of sources. Local authorities have given financial and practical support (photocopying and printing). Communities had accessed grants from regional government agencies such as the NWDA and Countryside Agency. Cheshire and Cumbria Community Actions had played a key role in focussing communities' attentions via the parish planning process. Membership organisations had become involved on particular issues for example, CPRE supported a parish council to re-route a public footpath. Communities saw a bigger role for CALC, LALC and CHALC the county representatives of National Association of Local Councils if more parish and town councils could be encouraged to sign up.

- How does the RHE help?

Most community members had no experience of the RHE engaging directly with the whole community and it was generally felt their capacity to do so, covering too large an area, would be unlikely. Their roles were seen very much as interpreting information and using their knowledge and expertise to mediate with the anti position, driving the process of delivering affordable housing forward.

How could the RHE help?

- Some communities need more support than others – tailor RHE support where needed the most
- Get housing associations along to parish meetings
- Manage false expectations from within the community
- Enable mentoring from district or borough councillors and other communities that have done a survey and enabled development - network of strong community Ambassadors'
- Drive process forward liaising with local authority, community and RSLs by monitoring progress community has taken and flag up where possible blockages - waste of organisations time and resources if plans and evidence not carried through into action
- Housing advice surgery when undertaking survey as shows connection with the community rather than just another survey from an anonymous source
- Attend public meetings and advise on presentations and exhibitions
- Advise parish councils and landowners

III. Value placed on the future roles of a Rural Housing Enabler

1. Understanding and using evidence on a community's economy

We asked community members to think about how businesses in and around their communities were affected by the housing supply and if the RHE was to collect information on the economy, for example, travel to work distances, average salaries and type and number of jobs available, how would or could they use this information.

In the North of the region discussions centred much more on the future of the rural economy and respondents felt the economy was an area they would have less ability to influence, due to the down turn in the global economy. They felt entrepreneurs are not coming into their rural areas, as planning restrictions would not enable their businesses once established to grow and that more and more their communities were becoming dormitory as people commuted longer distances to find better paid employment.

They could see some purpose in the RHE gathering evidence about employment opportunities in the parish; type, level of educational attainment needed, salaries and business history and resources available for local businesses. This information could then be tied back to housing available and whether this resource is allowing people to move into the parish that the local economy needs.

In the South of the region, the discussions focussed much more on practical assistance of the RHE role in supporting business needs. It was felt RHEs should advise and facilitate involvement of local businesses and ascertain how many residents use the existing facilities with the aim of encouraging more local 'spend'. As in the North of the region the communities felt knowing more about local employment opportunities, how many and type would help the parish council work with local businesses to retain local staff.

2. Scheme Funding

We asked communities to think about resources in terms of land or funding that are available within their communities to help gather evidence or deliver affordable housing and what support would the community/parish council need to bring these resources to bare and if the RHE had a role in enabling this.

This was a very difficult concept for the communities to accept, as many didn't see their role as finding resources to fund what is essentially the statutory responsibility of local authorities and housing associations. There was some discussion on raising the 'precept' to pay for survey work, but concern that in future years they would be unable to spend to the new precept level.

However, the suggestions for 'in kind' support were wide and varied, from local knowledge on potential sites, (even donating land), use of village halls for public meetings and voluntary effort to distributing survey forms. The only difficulty could be in trying to 'tap' into this in kind of assistance. This type of support is more relevant to actually funding the RHE post, not the development.

3. Influencing policy that affect a community's future

We wanted to ascertain from communities whether or not they think policy makers take account of the needs of your community and how they think policy makers could improve the way communities needs directly inform policy, particularly planning and funding policy. We also asked them to consider how the evidence gathered by the RHE could be used to ensure policy makers take into account a community's needs better.

As with scheme funding this was again a very difficult concept for community members to understand, resulting from an apathetic approach to the actual role they could have to influence policy makers. Some felt that sometimes they influenced policy makers, some felt local authorities are too strongly urban focussed and on a positive note some felt policy makers do try to take into account the needs of rural areas but often the resources present a barrier.

At both workshops it was felt the RHE does have a clear role to influence policy makers, as they are the source of evidence gathered within numerous rural communities. It came out strongly that people felt the work of an RHE is more of a passion, rather than job and passion can only get so far, without strong reliable evidence to make the argument, to influence policymakers at a local and regional level.

However, the email respondents felt that the RHE cannot take on political parties and they should concentrate on; 'removing local obstacles and making schemes happen, not wittering on about policy'.

4. Who should employ the RHE?

We attempted to find out from the communities represented whether it not it mattered who employs the RHE, would their view of the role and their purpose for working within their community be influenced by the organisation they work within. We also asked if there should be a community representative on any steering or management groups.

Views differed at both workshops on this issue. In both the North and South of the region, and on the email responses, it was felt it didn't matter where the post was based. If the RHE post wasn't in place, a similar enabling post across local authority boundaries would still be needed and suggestions included within a local authority, group of housing authorities and within the community councils. Communities were fairly clear that their independence from the developer or housing association was important.

The issue was raised that the RHE if they are influencing local policy makers, could not be too outspoken and there could be a danger they could be viewed as supporting one local authorities approach above another. The post-holder would need to view themselves as independent from the organisation they are based within, be funded from several sources and representing rural communities.

5. Funding the RHE role

We wanted to find out if communities would be prepared to pay for some of the services offered by an RHE with money or in kind, for example, a survey and report and running a community event.

'In kind' support suggestions were similar to those discussed under scheme funding, local knowledge, use of local community services and voluntary support.

There was evidence that some communities had already paid for their surveys to be completed, but still viewed the function of assessing need as a key role for local authorities.

ANNEX TWO - ORGANISATIONAL STAKEHOLDER'S ASSESSMENT OF THE RURAL HOUSING ENABLER ROLE

Identification housing needs – Cheshire

<p>Strengths Knowledge of local area – geography, communities, issues Independence Ability to engage communities Brokering role can help access needs Skills, drawing from RHE network</p>	<p>Weaknesses Perception of communities, not viewed as independent being LA based Limited time Parish housing needs surveys are only a snapshot in time Some information held on RSL housing registers</p>
<p>Opportunities Secondary housing needs evidence to supplement local housing needs Strategic housing market assessments – help prioritise target areas of need Provide accurate source of housing needs for other organisations eg RDA, RSLs, Parish Plan groups Shows true extent of need and therefore need for RHE</p>	<p>Threats Strategic Housing Market Assessments and how analysed/interpreted – this may conflict with local survey Housing needs information is interpreted incorrectly Receiving incorrect information from housing needs survey Dependent on how up to date survey are – doesn't react quickly enough to current market and market changes.</p>

Identification of housing needs – Cumbria

<p>Strengths Community engagement and participation Effectiveness of surveys Consistency and objectivity gives credibility – allows benchmarking Perceived impartiality and independence Advocacy role Ability to provide information about affordable housing Only a strength if you have a willing audience</p>	<p>Weaknesses General view of robustness of housing need (by whom?) Can only do what they are being paid to do – geographic focus Focus on need surveys can distort the job Impacts on the view of the assessment Largely funded by LAs who want an assessment of need.</p>
<p>Opportunities LAA NI 185 – included in Cumbria - RHE commissioned HCA rural target acts as a driver to assess housing needs Delivering local assessment of need to complement strategic assessment Look at possible new methods of assessing housing needs – eg local housing registers/ CBL?</p>	<p>Threats Local community has a strong view on how the survey should be undertaken – influences the survey questions and results If elected members and planners do not accept the methodology used to assess need , the process can be undermined Communities are saying that the situation is changing fast – need changes</p>

Site identification – Cheshire

<p>Strengths Local knowledge Local contacts Contact with planners/LA to establish if site viable and there is housing need Independent – not tied to RSL/LA Influencing parish councils to help financially contribute to housing needs survey work Single point of contact – saves confusion and time Coverage by attending RSL/LA liaison meetings</p>	<p>Weaknesses Technical knowledge to set up site Lack of knowledge of planning policy ? Independence neutrality (possibly goes to one RSL, not more) Lack of resources – ie budget for surveys Coverage – no one to cover meetings if RHE off on hols/ sick Possible duplication RSLs also work to identify sites</p>
<p>Opportunities Credit crunch – developers willing to build affordable housing RHE to become more opportunity led (proactively working with developers) RHE educate Parish councils over housing and sustainability issues (keep village alive) Tap into planning process – encourage landowners to come forward and talk to planning department Community Land Trusts</p>	<p>Threats Credit crunch – land not being sold Landowners expectations (unrealistic expectation of land price) Area decline lack of employment/schools - population decreasing Public apathy/nimbyism (don't want affordable housing) lack of understanding Fear of change Excessive infrastructure costs</p>

Site identification – Cumbria

<p>Strengths Information from housing needs surveys on potential sites, more detail on community aspiration RHE will gather feedback on sites that have been developed RHE can be more of a local connection to the parish council rather than a RSL who are sometimes viewed with suspicion Engagement with community can help to resolve NIMBYism and also encourage owners to bring forward sites</p>	<p>Weaknesses RHE suffers from a lack of resources Site identification is difficult for a RHE to undertake due to other time pressures Guided by Parish council 'whim' on some sites which may not be actually be suitable for housing development May not be seen as strategic from a long term planning perspective Can be a reactive activity</p>
<p>Opportunities RHE more likely to hear about potential sites due to their on-going dialogue with the parish council LAs will have a land asset base and 5 year Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment which the RHE can feed into RHE can ensure that the RSLs do not compete against each other on sites Can bring forward rural exception sites</p>	<p>Threats Lack of co-ordination from large landowners such as district councils who need to obtain open market value on site they dispose of (what?) (<i>ed this is not what statute says</i>) Time resources issue. RHE will operate in large rural areas and its difficult to follow up every site RHE can sometimes be frustrated by landowner 'hope' value on their land.</p>

	Lack of funding to undertaken site identification Role of local planning authorities ' land allocations Development Plan Document
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Securing scheme funding – Cheshire

<p>Strengths Obtaining community support to support application to Homes and Communities Agency Knowledge of commuted sums Knowledge of other sources of funding (rural pots, community money etc.)</p>	<p>Weaknesses No direct RHE role Lack of national and regional evidence to make the case for RHEs</p>
<p>Opportunities Homes and Communities Agency regional rural completions target New unitary authorities – fresh look at housing enabling Better value for money could mean that available funds go further</p>	<p>Threats Current economic climate Lack of clarity about levels of funding available from Homes and Communities Agency If RHEs having to find funding for their own role – therefore takes away from RHE role</p>

Securing scheme funding – Cumbria

<p>Strengths Promoting Community Land Trusts Pulling in funding partners Spreading/sharing good practice – eg Coniston Land reclamation funds Supporting innovative approaches Other funding sources outside usual housing sphere</p>	<p>Weaknesses No pot of money to directly support schemes</p>
<p>Opportunities Independence therefore allows RHE(on behalf of the community) to negotiate with landowners lower land value (takes LAs/RSLs out of the equation Encourages local empowerment to find solutions to local problems Economy of scale – (They have no barriers to size of development that they get involved with) Single conversation – Homes and Communities Agency – sub regional dialogue – rural issues = role for the RHE</p>	<p>Threats Resources – not time available to spend on development finance Priorities – other activities/locations Priorities – do RHEs have a role? Mono tenure (100% rent) arising from credit crunch therefore scheme costs increasing Possible future problems - policy issues Must be funded in the long term RHE needs capacity and funding and to feel confident that participating in single conversation is in their remit.</p>

Supporting community Engagement – Cheshire

<p>Strengths Independence Good quality information Local housing needs surveys Parish council support Links to ward and parish councillors Providing evidence of community engagement Addresses NIMBYism</p>	<p>Weaknesses Lack of resources Lack of independence if sited in LA/RSL</p>
<p>Opportunities Building up relationship/rapprochement with local communities and parish councils Regular feedback on potential affordable housing projects to communities Encourages parish councils to be more proactive about affordable housing Incorporate into the Parish Plan</p>	<p>Threats Direct opposition to the scheme by the community Waste of staffing and financial resources Reputation of RHE role Future financing of RHE role Lack of continuity</p>

Supporting community Engagement – Cumbria

<p>Strengths Independent Objective Flexible hours/ attendance at evening meetings Parish housing needs surveys National regional policy development and lobbying Community enabling work 'Gap Bridger' Community v perceived bureaucracy Harnessing local voluntary activity Can spread examples of good practice from one area to another</p>	<p>Weaknesses Resource implications – personnel, funding Management issues Lack of certainty of money/core funding Too many masters</p>
<p>Opportunities Homes and Communities Agency funding for rural housing – recognised target Homes and Communities Agency funding for CLTs - mainstreamed Credit crunch potential opportunities in service centres from private house builders (perhaps) Community Empowerment Bill – pushing power to local communities – how will this work on the ground Community development or engagement? LAA targets eg NI 4 = % of people believing they influence decisions that affect them CAA – perception based assessment of LA performance</p>	<p>Threats Funding - lack of core funding (Govt.) No consistency/certainty of availability of the RHE in the long term Threat of LA/LPAs?RSLs etc. not being able to support in the future Lack of recognition by Homes and Communities Agency Credit Crunch Raising local expectations when funding may be uncertain</p>

Influencing local and sub-regional strategies – Cheshire

<p>Strengths Direct contact with the local community voice RHE network Strong connection with all stakeholders ie communities, Las, RSLs, landowners</p>	<p>Weaknesses Lack of power or authority Lack of political influence</p>
<p>Opportunities New unitary authorities developing strategies in the months ahead New LAA 'Single conversation' needs to include rural Strong locally based evidence to draw on from local needs surveys</p>	<p>Threats Funding constraints Stringent planning considerations New unitary could also be a threat – eg will rural exception site policy be treated more or less favourably Rural not an issue for powerful local authorities in NW</p>

Influencing local and sub-regional strategies – Cumbria

<p>Strengths Bringing together information to use as lobbying tool Supporting innovative approaches RHEs are independent but informed by policy advisors</p>	<p>Weaknesses No funding for advocacy role Low status among other funding agencies If financially supported by one organisation then less able to challenge approaches</p>
<p>Opportunities Encourages local empowerment to find solutions to local problems Policy issues – role of the RHE to raise awareness of rural issues/politics/policies, in particular Community Land Trusts</p>	<p>Threats Needs long term funding to support this role</p>

Line and Programme Management – Cheshire
(RHE now part of Local Authority)

<p>Strengths Access to resources eg planning, housing etc. Consistency of approach Performance management frameworks in place – must take into account outputs and outcomes</p>	<p>Weaknesses Part of political organisation may have limitations May be seen to lack independence</p>
<p>Opportunities Greater input into policy and decision making within the LA More focused line management Improved access to training and resources Better internal links with planners, highways etc. to help delivery</p>	<p>Threats Lack of independence Uncertainty about on-going funding Line management may be based in different location</p>

Line and Programme Management - Cumbria
(Cumbria RHE is also the CRHT manager)

<p>Strengths Employed by an independent charity adds to the perceived independence of the RHE Agreed priorities and purpose give a clear picture within which the RHE works Trust status engenders independent thought Structure supports participation by funders without dictating the direction of policy (?) Human resources processes dealt with through external organisation Management arrangements do add to the recognised independence of the role</p>	<p>Weaknesses Having to find grant funding to support work Incoming resources directs the focus of future work Board members of Trust are volunteers therefore the time allocated for line management is limited Technical and professional skills may not be directly available</p>
<p>Opportunities (Using an independent position to influence strategic policy?) Cumbria Rural Housing Trust could re-invent itself as a regional organisation to provide services across the NW – it has the flexibility to adapt Opportunity to work with other organisations focusing on economic issues and still retain independence</p>	<p>Threats Very dependent on the quality and small number of staff/trustees</p>

RHE post funding arrangements

<p>Strengths Prioritising of funding may be easier now it's a unitary authority Mix of funding can suggest a degree of independence</p>	<p>Weaknesses Mix of funding can lead to confusion Uncertainty of long term funding Can affect quality of candidate – but no evidence now Can be destabilising and affect relationship building Levels of funding often inadequate Fragmented way that the posts are funded – many contributors - problems of one of the funders withdraws Fragmented way that the posts are funded can lead to contributors asking what they get back and whether it provides them with value for money Are salary levels adequate? Often only part-time posts How is the effectiveness and value for money of the RHE role measured, globally and on individual contributor basis</p>
<p>Opportunities Selling valuable data (housing needs information) Seeking alternative funding opportunities eg landowners/developers Parish Councils to pay for housing needs surveys Local employers to contribute to RHE work/funding</p>	<p>Threats No security of funding Subject to RSL cutbacks RHE move on to permanent employment, lose links with Parish Councils etc. Perception that not independent as funded by Las/RSLs</p>

RHE post funding arrangements - Cumbria
(Cumbria RHE function is delivered by Cumbria Rural Housing Trust)

<p>Strengths Independence – funded from different sources therefore not dependent on one organisation ‘Buy In’ from many organisations as there may be many funders Process in place to manage funding – agreed with partners (District Councils, Planning Authority etc.)</p>	<p>Weaknesses 30% of time spent chasing funding Managing organisation/staff – with no guarantees of future funding Staff retention Too many masters – competing priorities Funding available for housing needs surveys – not core funding for RHE or lobbying work Funding comes from the District Councils that are already proactive in enabling affordable housing – communities outside these areas need or more support but can’t access it Reliant on unsustainable source of revenue (Defra), councils funding reducing, council tax capped, investments worth less At the mercy of external factors</p>
<p>Opportunities Ability to consider other/better ways of working – flexible such as.... Other partners, student placements Cumbria Vision – economic vehicle County Councils (link to housing /economic development remit) Further research projects Subsume RHEs into host organisation eg National Park, District Council. ACT, other Contract out the RHE services to other areas – is this a good thing? Host organisation to take on HR, financial issues, health and safety, IT etc, leaving RHE to enable rural affordable housing – ie at the moment it is double the job Joint working with planning authorities to relay the Housing needs surveys findings and how this will help deliver affordable rural housing Opportunity for Las to fund RHE role, rather than just housing needs surveys</p>	<p>Threats No guarantees of longer term existence (The End) Reduced to doing tasks simply to bring in funding eg housing needs surveys No lobbying/policy development work</p>

RHE role in economic development – Cheshire

<p>Strengths</p> <p>Establish employment opportunities to investors</p> <p>Help funding opportunities for employers</p> <p>Encourage LA/RSL/Parish Councils and local people to look at the bigger picture</p> <p>Parish Plans establish employment, transport needs in area</p> <p>Structure in place to expand remit of the role</p> <p>Economies of scale and obvious link to safer stronger communities agenda</p> <p>Could bring in 'new funding' from other resources</p> <p>Would facilitate jobs and stimulate the general rural economy – could raise awareness of need or opportunities</p> <p>Much more holistic approach to rural issues</p> <p>May lead logically to a ventrally funded and structured role</p>	<p>Weaknesses</p> <p>May detract from housing role</p> <p>Too much information to deliver complete picture for long term scheme</p> <p>Duplication of work –part of LA strategic work/Parish Planning, rather than RHE role</p> <p>Suspicion about motive and what will be done with the data collected</p> <p>Honesty of information given</p> <p>Capacity to undertake a wider role – only part time at present</p> <p>Will existing funding sources be happy that money is being used for other purposes</p> <p>Multi skilled job needing a lot of knowledge and experience</p> <p>Levels of salary would need to be much higher</p>
<p>Opportunities</p> <p>Promote home/work units</p> <p>Potential opportunities to identify commercial as well as residential land</p> <p>Housing Needs surveys can assist in identifying local employment opportunities</p> <p>Sustainability between rural housing and rural employment</p> <p>Access to RDA funding – potentially</p> <p>Raising awareness of the importance of affordable housing for economic development</p> <p>Need separate assessment of impact of RHE intervention in terms of economic development</p>	<p>Threats</p> <p>Conflict between land use needs – housing v commercial</p> <p>Lack of local employment may result in migration away from rural village (links to need to consider housing and jobs as part of a sustainable rural community)</p> <p>Dilute housing role</p> <p>RHE role developed as community development role – economic development role may not fit</p> <p>Limited skills and time resource of RHEs.</p>

RHE role in economic development – Cumbria

<p>What added value would the RHE bring?</p> <p>Already involved as link between housing affordability and jobs – affordable housing supports businesses/schools etc. CRHT – already asking employees for details re: link between lack of affordable housing and business development Delivering affordable housing is a key to improving economic activity – RHE knowledge could be beneficial – engaging at local community level about what local business views are on housing issues (BUT need to be clear that no one else is collecting this information)</p> <p>Could help provide a more appropriate definition of what is a key worker in specific areas</p> <p>Add value to Local Economic Assessment process by providing fine grained information.</p> <p>In real terms any affordable housing development (especially with RSL) contributes to local economy through local purchasing and employment initiatives therefore any public subsidy stays in the local economy</p> <p>CLT – not just housing – also community development trust – brings economic benefits for the community</p> <p>RHE could also encourage development of community plans to look at wider economic issues – RHE becoming the conduit, looking for housing, employment, open space opportunities</p> <p>The work of the RHE allows people to stay in community therefore reducing dependence on Agencies – giving and receiving care of children and elderly relatives</p>	<p>What resources would RHE need to do this role?</p> <p>Yes more funding for this Acknowledgement from economic development agencies (Cumbria Vision NW RDA) that this function is important and justify funding More ‘buy in’ / partnerships with economic development agencies and other organisations eg Tourist Board.</p> <p>Some of this role could be dealt with without extra resources, but it depends on the scale of tasks eg could ask additional questions as part of existing survey process. If a larger or separate survey is needed then additional funds will be needed.</p>
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ANNEX THREE - ANALYSIS OF THE DELIVERY OF THE RHE FUNCTION IN OTHER AREAS

Geographic area	Devon RHE	County 2 RHEs and 1 Rural Housing Officer (Rural Housing Officer is employed to do most of the housing need assessment work)	
	Devon MR	county	
	HARAH	County (rural districts) – 2 FTE posts	
	North Yorks	Sub –region (6 Las 2 NPs)	
	DD	Sub region	
Settlement size where RHE works	Devon RHE	<3k with some flexibility	
	Devon MR	<3k	
	HARAH	0-10k	
	North Yorks	0-10k	
	DD	0-10k	
% of time on tasks	Devon RHE	Id HN 30%	30%
		Id site 25%	35%
		Includes helping RSLs and communities progress sites to planning permission.	
		Secure funding 10%	0%
		Supporting com eng 20%	20%
		Influencing 15%	15%
	Devon MR	50%	30%
		20%	30%
		1%	Not RHE role
		20%	30%
		9%	Much of this work done by DHP co-ordinator freeing RHEs for delivery
	HARAH	Id hns large %	3
		Id sites – Large %	5
		Securing scheme £ - Little % RSL task	1
		Supporting com eng – Fair%	2
		Influencing - some	4
	North Yorks	Id hns 30	20
		Id sites 40	40
		Securing scheme	10

		£ - 5	
		Supporting com eng 20	20
		Influencing 5	10
	DD	Id hns 30	20
		Id sites 30	40
		Securing scheme £ - 5	5
		Supporting com eng 30	30
		Influencing 5	5
How is work managed	Devon RHE	Steering group of Devon RHP +LAs Qtrly meetings with each LA to agree yr work programme and monitor Weighting of tasks varies from LA to LA depending on where they are eg on site id. RHE s tied into delivering LAA targets – progress reported to DRHP/DCC and DHP	
	Devon MR	<i>By a Steering Group comprising RSL and LA reps from the Rural Housing Partnership and the Community Council (who sit on the Steering Group) Ultimate accountability is the overarching Devon Strategic Housing Group Executive.</i>	
	HARAH	Local Authorities agree priority parishes but also respond to site offers and PC requests; Memorandum Of Understanding sets out targets but RHEs decide on weighting of tasks within this; annual review meeting to monitor progress together with 2 monthly update report to HARAH officers meetings and members meetings	
	North Yorks		
	DD	Focus is derived from the sub regional needs assessment, which prioritised urban and rural needs, set against the previous 2 to 3 year bidding rounds plus take in to account settlements which have had previous development and those that have not had any housing for some time. Strategic assessment quite high and much of SR = protected landscape therefore require robust needs information. <i>(new approach being developed that focuses local survey</i>	

		<p><i>100% on those with a housing need – linked to CBL system)</i></p> <p>In addition complexity of delivery of schemes requires that there is a a development focus to identifying sites and working with the community.</p>
Who provides programme management /why this way	Devon RHE	SG + DRHP made up of LAs/HCA/DHP – broad membership deemed to be able to take unbiased decisions
	Devon MR	<p><i>Bringing the RHE work under the overall umbrella of Devon Strategic Housing Group helps:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o <i>Strengthen the strategic alignment of the work (initially work was very community led which led to frustrations for both communities and LAs)</i> o <i>Strengthen LA engagement and support</i> o <i>Builds RHE capacity</i>
	HARAH	<p>Projects are reviewed at monthly liaison meetings between RHE, RSL and LA (In Winchester this meeting now includes the dedicated DC officer); RHEs provide 2 monthly update as above, RSL also provides 2 monthly update.</p> <p>HARAH officers group replaced the RHE steering group and took over programme review. HARAH has only one development partner so their progress on projects is monitored alongside the RHEs</p>
	North Yorks	<p>The RHE Network – supported by the Senior RHE and the NY Housing Strategy Manager</p> <p>In order to develop consistency and to provide the potential for sharing and targeting available resources. This provides a single point of accountability to sub regional governance.</p>
	DD	Review of work is undertaken by the former steering group, which has changed to become a rural housing development group within the sub region.

		<p>Previously the post was with the DRCC. But brought in house to provide better supported by housing colleagues within the district council, there is a certain amount of 'safety in numbers', given that the housing team in rural LAs is small. In addition the post has easy access to planning and council tax (important for survey work). There are some VFM issues as well, Under DRCC £10k of RHE funding was going on DRCC overheads.</p> <p>This decision has been justified by the significant ideas and opportunities that arise when the 3 key housing officers within the council get together and look at key issues.</p>
Impact of PM on working with LAs	Devon RHE	Because the programme management arrangements are designed to be fairly flexible it allows each local authority to work out their own working relationship with the RHE team based on current strategic priorities. Works in most areas
	Devon MR	<i>See above. Planning Reps sit on the DSHG Executive, RHEs meet and network with Planners at DSHG training events and seminars which helps RHEs understand planning perspective and hopefully vice versa.</i>
	HARAH	There is good liaison between the RHE and Housing department. Liaison with the planning departments is variable but improving. However the RHEs are well known to the planning departments.
	North Yorks	There is the opportunity for best and innovative practice to be shared and disseminated. Sub regional protocols have been developed around negotiation and approaches to viability assessments – whilst these are not proscriptive they do offer the opportunity for consistent approaches to be developed across North Yorkshire, and for housing and planning officers to support each other in this work. The monitoring and review of the programme allows for flexible responses to changing conditions to be promoted within LAs by the RHE's – for example the increased emphasis last

		year on enabling for rural exception sites in areas that traditionally relied on quotas to achieve affordable housing provision.
	DD	These are positive in that the direction has been clearly set and housing and planning officers add their support to the work of the RHE, e.g. by the Head of Development Control attending village walk rounds to identify sites.
Impact of PM on working with communities	Devon RHE	It is important that RHEs are perceived as independent by local communities and this arrangement supports RHEs independence.
	Devon MR	DK
	HARAH	Rural communities are often unclear who the RHEs work for – they are often thought to work for the LAs – however this is not necessarily a negative perception.
	North Yorks	There is no evidence that the loss of ‘independence’ from the LA has impacted on communities’ views of RHE’s – when questioned about this in Hambleton many communities responded by saying that they always thought the RHE worked for the LA anyway!
	DD	None so far. There was some people would see the shift in the post as affecting the impartiality of the post, but no evidence of this has yet presented itself.
Who provides line management /why this arrangements	Devon RHE	Assistant Chief Executive of the Community Council of Devon – seen as being independent of LAs and that rural interests are seen as their priority
	Devon MR	CCD – this is where the legal employment contract is, so legal responsibilities are clear
	HARAH	Community Action Hants - CAH secured the initial funding for the RHEs; to maintain the independence of the RHEs;
	North Yorks	Local line management arrangements apply – so each RHE is line managed by a designated manager in the

		<p>Housing (in all but 1 case – in this case it is planning policy) department of the respective LA. We are striving to achieve consistency in the approach to enabling work through the role of the Senior RHE who meets with all RHEs regularly, and has developed a performance framework for the programme that cascades down into each RHEs appraisal targets and personal development plan. The RHE Network – a group comprising LA line managers and chaired by a member of the Strategic Housing Board is responsible for oversight of this process, and is accountable to the NY SHB.</p> <p>In order to retain an element of local support/direction to the work of the RHE's, within a sub regional framework, and in order to achieve efficiencies.</p>
	DD	<p>Head of Housing at DDDC (also leads SR housing strategy work)</p> <p>The identification of housing need rests with the district council and its often the head of housing that attends planning committee and has to look members in the eye and say "yes there is a need for these homes to be built". The further away the post is from the District Council, the harder this becomes. Plus it is very important that housing staff, particularly in LSVT councils are working closely together. There is often very little technical support available with RCCs.</p>
What is included in line management support	Devon RHE	<p>1:1 only if requested Formal appraisal quarterly Training – yes Other – regular team meetings / support with budget/influencing work</p>
	Devon MR	<p>1:1 Formal appraisal Training</p>
	HARAH	<p>1:1 Formal appraisal Training</p>
	North Yorks	<p>Day to day line management and support, the administration of the lead employers' terms and conditions, performance management and personal development of the RHE (with the support of the Senior RHE)</p>

		1:1 Formal appraisal Training
	DD	1:1 Formal appraisal Training
What is the impact of LM on RHe working with LAs	Devon RHE	DK
	Devon MR	<i>Since we brought the Rural Housing Partnership under the umbrella of DSHG the Community Council has had a seat on the Executive which again builds understanding and engagement between the 3 sectors(LA, RSL and Voluntary) and definitely made the difference in securing mid term funding for the programme and getting Member support for even expanding the team.</i>
	HARAH	RHEs are viewed as independent. However recently one LA nearly cut the funding for the RHEs. Sometimes there is frustration that the RHEs are doing what they want to do rather than what the partners would like them to do.
	North Yorks	It allows for local control and direction of the RHE, and enables them to legitimately represent the LA and thus facilitate positive relationships with others – e.g. planners, housing officers, members, RSL partners
	DD	Positive, in as much that housing provision is our top priority and key services are set up to support the RHE. The head of housing acts as a mentor and supporter of the post providing advice where necessary but the current post holder is more than able to deliver the post. <i>(note salary and certainty)</i>
What is the impact of LM on RHe working with communities	Devon RHE	Enforces perception of independence.
	Devon MR	DK
	HARAH	Perception is that they are considered to be more independent – but would be useful to ask the rural communities themselves. [DN – check evaluation]
	North Yorks	I would suggest that they are perceived as having more influence/access to key LA decision

		and policy makers via local line management arrangements
	DD	Not so far, but the housing enabling role is relatively well understood by most rural parish councils and ward members.
Where is post located and why + impact generally and on communities	Devon RHE	Located with RCC – central location and where line management provided – re-inforces perceived independence
	Devon MR	Exeter – central location - <i>Easy access to RHEs and many partnership meetings are in Exeter so efficient use of RHE time - DK</i>
	HARAH	CAH – see line management responses
	North Yorks	In each LA To promote effective relationships with policy and decision makers, planners, housing officers and members Having a locally based RHE enables more productive working – In Hambleton the RHE is placed within the Housing team and is well aware and able to advise on a range of rural housing options available for people, and is enabled to contribute to the allocations process. The relationship with development management and planning policy is enhanced as the RHE is perceived as a trusted member of ‘the team’ as well as a source of expertise and advice to other officers. Communities tend to welcome the accessibility and availability of RHEs based locally in their areas.
	DD	DDDC offices Very positive in that the RHE is part of the corporate body and has direct access to housing and planning colleagues. This helps co-ordinate meetings with Highways in relation to affordable housing developments. Monthly surgeries take place between the RHE, Highways and Planning to ensure affordable schemes get plenty of pre application advice and support. Benefits with admin support also happen to assist with parish surveys. Also it is easier to provide access to the council’s website so the RHE can update and manage sections of the

		<p>site relating to affordable housing.</p> <p>No detrimental impact on relationship with communities that we are aware of</p>
Who funds and security of funding and who is responsible for raising the funding	Devon RHE	<p>LAs £5k each CC £43k (not 2nd homes) RSLs £2k each plus cost per unit, CCD</p> <p>LA and CC for next 2 yrs – nothing agreed after RSLs negotiated annually CCD if other funding in place</p>
	Devon MR	<p>As above</p> <p><i>The Rural Housing Partnership, with DSHG. Led by RHE line manager and DSHG Affordable Housing Coordinator.</i></p>
	HARAH	<p>LAs 19k over 3 yrs, NFNPA 3k pa, CC £40k pa, Hyde £114k over three years</p> <p>Funding negotiated by HARAH officers group</p> <p>Sustainability - Depends on individual partner's annual budget, but MOU ties each partner in for 12 months contributions</p>
	North Yorks	<p>LAs 10% RSLs&NPAs 26% RHB 63% LA and RSL – 2011 – RHB – 2012 – thereafter unsure</p> <p>Funding raised by Hambleton as lead employer</p>
	DD	<p>CC 2nd homes CT and RHB 60:40 (LA contribution seen as being part of 2nd Homes £) Funding secure for next 3 years – and hopeful of continuation thereafter</p> <p>Funding raised by DDDC</p>
Use of graduate internees?	Devon RHE	No
	Devon MR	No
	HARAH	Yes – graduate trainee RHE supported by Snr RHE
	North Yorks	No
	DD	No
Advice	Devon RHE	<p>CCD provides administration and data input of surveys Dedicated officer for housing survey work, freeing up RHEs to id sites and progress sites Linemanagement works because committed person at CCD – may not</p>

		universally be so Ideally 1 RHe per district, max = 2 districts
	Devon MR	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Continuity of programme is important 5 years minimum to build a pipeline of schemes and build momentum.</i> 2. <i>Having a small team helps retain knowledge and capacity within the organisation</i> 3. <i>I would still like to separate line management and 'professional' management of RHEs as community councils don't have the organisation knowledge of the complexities of housing deliveries and so technical support of RHEs can be weak.</i>
	HARAH	Maximum job security is required for the RHEs to keep them in post and retain their expertise (which is critical to maintaining a pipeline of schemes) CAH do not have expertise to provide best Line management, but no LA willing to take this on, and ? whether this would compromise independence
	North Yorks	Of course, it would be ideal to secure mainstream and sustainable sources of funding for the programme. I would recommend local deployment of RHEs but with a single point of line management from the sub region, accountable to the Network. The line management and control of the RHEs' work would be carried out in partnership with a local mentor or champion from within the placement LA, but would in essence mean that the lead employer discharged their management responsibilities through a single point, and the Network managed the programme through a single point.
	DD	Having a range of funders is good to reduce risk if one or more pulls out, but there seems to be a danger in some places that the RHE spends a lot of their time chasing funding for their post rather than development work. I feel we responded to the DEFRA evaluation report from a few years ago, we pay well and the post holder has essential

		<p>car user allowance. Ideally the post should be on the establishment of the local authority with long term financial support from partners. But very few new permanent posts are being created in LAs.</p> <p>In terms of the position of the post within a host organisation, the benefits of the RHE were not maximised when it was in the DRCC. The post needs support from a range of statutory agencies and with less need to present an independent broker image, the post sits better with the LA.</p>
Advice on principles	Devon RHE	<p>Close links with strategic housing group. EG in Devon we have benefited from close links with DSHG and the DSHG co-ordinator. Targets embedded in the LAA Rural housing is a priority for the county council and all the district councils.</p>
	Devon MR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o <i>Embed in any wider sub regional housing partnership.</i> o <i>Need to invest in training for the individuals as salary levels often mean you recruit staff with less experience of development than you would wish for. Risk is of course, once trained and functioning well they are attracted by larger salaries in RSL sector</i>
	HARAH	<p>Independence means RHE reputation dependent on their individual skills and professionalism – need appropriate Y and security to attract and retain staff with the right skills. – need to provide continuous training – this is difficult to achieve</p>
	North Yorks	<p>Impartiality, commitment to delivery, support from housing and planning teams of LA</p>
	DD	<p>The strategic role of the LA needs to fully support the post. Stronger links need to be developed between the development and letting of homes to ensure LA allocation policies complement the development process.</p>

	Devon RHE	DK
	Devon MR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o <i>nothing immediate other than importance of building the trust of communities on the ground. Could transfer learning to communities of 3-10,000 where District LAs have insufficient in-house enabling capacity.</i> o <i>We focus on under 3000 settlements as lack capacity to extend focus wok more widely.</i> o <i>Sometimes I think having a small team of RHEs helps us see how a shared enabling team as a shared service across Devon or clusters of LAs in Devon would bring benefits. There are lessons in terms of joint working, working across very different planning contexts/policies etc.</i>
	HARAH	<p>Not sure. Looking at my own LA, we have community development officers that do work to engage communities and we have a development officer working on urban capacity sites. RHEs have an important role in developing schemes that are small complex and often costly and therefore need someone to both engage the community and keep the project progressing. Controversial urban schemes may benefit from an independent enabler post.</p>
	North Yorks	<p>, The reality that housing markets are not constrained by administrative boundaries, that most successful housing solutions involve an empowered community who are supported to contribute to and feel ownership of the project, that small can be beautiful – even if it feels like a lot of hard work for just a few new homes! And that high quality design and the careful management of an enabling project can bring community benefits that exceed the bare meeting of housing need.</p>
	DD	<p>Yes, there is a case for urban enablers but it's the enabling and development focus which needs to be the core of the post</p>

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