

The Leicestershire Rural Partnership

The Leicestershire Rural Partnership (LRP) consists of 16 diverse organisations who work together to improve the quality of life of those living and working in rural Leicestershire. Their aim is to deliver a better quality of service to rural areas and to use resources more effectively. The LRP includes many of the key organisations delivering services to rural Leicestershire. The vision of the Partnership is that rural Leicestershire will be made up of thriving and inclusive communities where there is access for all to a range of services and facilities, the prosperity of the rural economy is strengthened, poverty addressed and the natural environment protected and enhanced.

The UK Centre for Economic and Environmental Development

Founded in 1984 in response to the UN World Conservation Strategy, UK CEED is an independent charity and a company limited by guarantee. Over the last 17 years its high quality and innovative environmental research, policy development and project management and facilitation has earned it an international reputation.

The Centre focuses on the following programme areas:

- Business and environment
- Information and communications technologies
- Water, leisure and tourism
- Public engagement
- Information and education

UK CEED works in partnership with, and is funded by, European, national, regional and local government; business; environmental organisations, charitable trusts and academic bodies

Contact details:

Leicestershire Rural Partnership
Policy and Research Group
Department of Planning and Transportation
Leicestershire County Council
County Hall
Glenfield
Leicester
LE3 8RJ

Tel: (0116) 2656977

UK CEED
Priestgate House
3-7 Priestgate
Peterborough
PE1 1JN

Tel: (01733) 311644
Fax: (01733) 312782
Website: www.ukceed.org

Contents

1	Executive Summary.....	1
2	Introduction.....	5
3	The Citizens' Jury Process.....	8
4	Witnesses.....	12
5	The Event.....	14
6	Appendix	42
7	Index.....	100

1 Executive Summary

This summary provides an overview of the Citizens' Jury on rural services held in May 2001. It provides background on the decision to hold the Jury by Leicestershire Rural Partnership and briefly describes the process used by the organisers of the Jury, the UK Centre for Economic and Environmental Development (UK CEED). It then summarises the main findings of the Jury arising from the 3-day public hearing. A more detailed description of the Jury process and a complete account of the hearing and the Jury's conclusions can be found in the full report.

The decision by Leicestershire Rural Partnership to hold a Citizens' Jury on rural services arose from concern over the future of post offices and other key services in rural areas. The Jury was organised, managed and facilitated by UK CEED, an independent charitable foundation with expertise in public engagement processes.

The Citizens' Jury involved the recruitment of a citizens' panel of 15, chosen to reflect a variety of socio-demographic criteria, such as gender, age, education, occupation and geographical location. The Jury was selected from those who responded to an invitation to take part – the invitation was sent to 3000 people from across the county chosen at random from the electoral roll.

The Jury was set a remit and acquainted with the subject of rural services through the provision of briefing material and over the course of a three-day hearing. The panel questioned expert witnesses on rural issues during the hearing, assessed the responses, discussed the issues raised, and reported its conclusions.

The issues considered by the Jury were based around three core elements:

- current initiatives concerning the provision of rural services
- consulting and communicating with members of the public
- potential future initiatives concerning the provision of rural services.

Following two and a half days of public hearing, the Jury had produced a significant amount of detailed material covering the key issues. Various over-arching themes emerged. Using the remit to provide the basic framework, the Jury constructed an overview report that reflected these themes to provide the core of a presentation to the sponsors of the event and other interested parties.

The Jury's conclusions are presented in summarised form below, grouped around the key issues. The original report written by the Jury itself during the hearing can be found in the full report.

1.1.1 Rural Services: Definitions

The Jury felt that the term 'rural' could cause confusion and may hinder debate over the provision of services. For example, some peripheral urban areas suffer from poor services in the same way as traditional rural villages and therefore the level of service provision should not be determined by whether or not a location is defined as rural.

1.1.2 The Realities

The Jury recognised that not every village could (or would) have every service. It suggested some ideas for extending the existing reach of rural services, including

greater use of mobile services, rotation of staff to different physical locations (possibly based on a 'hub and spoke' approach) and the provision of call centre-type services.

In any assessment of future provisions, the Jury recognised that there are likely to be winners and losers. In particular, initiatives in one location may well produce an adverse effect elsewhere. The Jury felt that service providers had a duty to consider the potential impact of these displacement/distortion effects in advance. In any new schemes, there needs to be an early and detailed assessment of these effects.

It was felt that changes in service provision (particularly where these involve the withdrawal of staff) could not be compensated for fully by the introduction of simplistic methods of information provision ([e.g. leaflets). Instead substitute provision of services should be based on more effective alternatives. The use of call centres (as used for NHS Direct) was highlighted as providing a possible route for more effective assistance for those areas which do not benefit from on-the-ground services.

1.1.3 Strengthening the Rural Community

The effectiveness of transport infrastructure was considered by the Jury to be a major factor in supporting the rural community. Those areas which have poor or no public transport services suffer from isolation.

There was a very strong perception amongst the Jury that exclusive 'executive' home developments were being built in rural settlements at the expense of affordable starter-homes. The Jury felt that this had had a major impact on the composition and nature of the local community. They felt strongly that those members of the community who were unable to access services elsewhere should be accommodated and provided for in their immediate locality. Such people were seen to provide the bedrock of the community, as they tended to be in the villages more often, knew what was going on and relied more on locally-based services. It includes the young, without access to transport, young families, as well as the older members of the community. For the latter, services may need to include the provision of sheltered accommodation.

There was considered to be a need for more activities that bring communities together. There was concern that the increasing focus on internet and computer-based approaches, whilst useful in the right place, have the potential to increase polarisation.

1.1.4 Rural Services and Post Offices

The Jury considered that the physical location of services, and to some extent the delivery mechanism, was less important than the availability of, and access to, the service. Developments in information technology provide new opportunities for service delivery, although they should not be used indiscriminately.

Confidentiality and privacy were recurring themes in connection with information provision. It was felt that whilst there were many benefits of being able to access a wide range of information on health, tax, benefits or other topics at a local post office, many people in rural communities would feel uncomfortable about using such information in the proximity of people who know them. Concern was also expressed over who would choose the information to be made available and whether censorship would be involved (for example the use of Section 28 guidance to limit access to sexual health information).

The Jury expressed concern about the future of rural post offices on a number of levels. It was felt that the Government, whilst apparently supporting the post offices through its policy of grants provision, was at the same time threatening the future by withdrawal of over-the-counter benefits payments. The policies of Royal Mail and the Post Office also seemed to be conflicting – for example the use of franking machines is encouraged by

the Royal Mail even though they take away business from post offices. Similarly, the Post Office rations certain profitable services, such as vehicle excise duty payments, thereby depriving many post offices of an important revenue stream.

The Jury acknowledged that the lack of space tended to restrict the range of services which rural post offices could physically offer. It was also felt that the post offices themselves were inflexible in responding to consumer demands, particularly in relation to the inconvenient opening hours and the range of services offered.

The Jury felt that the present information kiosk initiatives within rural post offices offered some merits but would be unlikely to make much of an impact on the overall situation. It was felt that the information needed to be very up-to-date and imaginatively presented to encourage people into the post office just to access it. The way in which staff were trained to facilitate use of the kiosks would also need to be addressed. It also raised questions about the future identity of post offices: were they service providers that had to operate on a strictly commercial basis - or was there scope to consider their wider community and social role in rural communities? If so, how would that be provided for? And how many more would close in the meantime?

In relation to the provision of rural services generally, a model emerged based on a hierarchy of services, with planned additions to their availability determined in the first instance by the size of the local population, and also influenced by the proximity of other services in the area and the availability of good transport connections.

1.1.5 Engaging with the Community

People in communities want to be involved from the outset in defining the issues which need to be addressed. They do, however, need the assistance of appropriate professionals in articulating their needs and in developing approaches that are relevant to their particular community. The Jury felt that rural communities want to be involved at an earlier stage of the planning process - they don't want to have to only choose between a number of pre-established options. It is not necessarily a question of more consultation – it is more about the timing of the consultation and the method to be used. Consultation at an earlier stage is likely to reduce the overall length of the process by achieving consensus earlier on.

On a practical point, it was said that public meetings weren't always held at the most convenient times for local people to attend. Also the Jury made the point that it would be wrong to assume that Parish Councils were the most effective way to engage with the community as many people felt remote from them and unengaged.

Whilst some future initiatives and developments will require funds, many of the themes and ideas generated were more concerned with the 'how' - with attitudes and approaches. The implication is that, with greater levels of insight gained from the local community, more opportunities for low-cost or no-cost solutions might well emerge.

1.1.6 Levels of Public Awareness

It was evident throughout the event that there was virtually no public awareness of any of the initiatives considered as part of the exercises. Therefore, the Jury suggested that more needs to be done using a variety of different approaches to inform people. Lack of awareness means that everyone loses out and the initiatives go largely untested by those they were designed to assist.

1.1.7 Organisational Effectiveness and Use of Resources

The Jury felt that cross-Departmental cooperation and liaison between local agencies needed to be improved to ensure synergies in relation to the design, resourcing and delivery of services. This would avoid duplication of resources (e.g. between schools and libraries). People are not particularly interested in hearing of the administrative complexities and divisions within the provider organisation/s which lead to such duplication – they would rather those responsible got on with removing the barriers.

One example of the lack of joined up thinking which prompted concern was the way in which the local authorities provide support for the post office kiosks to include information on jobs at the Employment Service. Unfortunately, the same local authorities do not use the Service for advertising their own jobs. It was also suggested that local authorities should allow their own bills to be paid through the post office.

1.1.8 Jury Outputs : Key Implications /Opportunities for the Sponsors

The key messages arising from the Jury for the Leicestershire Rural Partnership and other Agencies working in rural areas would appear to be centred on:

- Make a more concerted effort to find out, and subsequently be more responsive to, the needs of those living in rural areas
- Use a variety of different approaches for engaging with the public – the use of novel techniques such as Citizens’ Juries and Planning for Real was warmly welcomed by the Jury
- Engage with the public early on and look first for community supported actions which often incur no-cost/low-cost to address particular issues
- Ensure that the results of engagement exercises are fed back to appropriate staff throughout the agencies to ensure a consistent approach to policy
- Develop cross-Departmental approaches to the identification, resourcing and management of projects – internal engagement can be as important as external
- Adopt a strategic approach to the provision of rural services and avoid piecemeal implementation of projects – particularly where knock-on effects are likely
- Ensure projects are better promoted amongst the target user groups
- Picking up on many of the themes raised by the jury, one idea might be the introduction of a widely-publicised community engagement ‘helpline’. This would be for people to ring if they were concerned about any aspect of developments (or lack of) in relation to local services or amenities. If their concern was one that was likely to require wider community involvement, there could be a ‘starter pack’ sent out that detailed ways of initiating wider local community interest in the issue.

2 Introduction

2.1 Background

In May 2000, Leicestershire Rural Partnership held a seminar on the future of rural post offices. The seminar brought together postmasters and other interested parties to discuss the threats and opportunities posed by the announcement that the government would switch to bank credit transfer of benefits payments from 2003. The seminar also considered possible actions by the Rural Partnership, National Federation of Sub-Postmasters, Post Office Counters and the government to improve the delivery of post office services in rural Leicestershire and safeguard the future of the network.

A number of possible initiatives were suggested at the seminar, including the holding of a Citizen's Jury to investigate measures to ensure the future viability of rural post offices. This suggestion was adopted by the Partnership, although the scope of the proposed Jury was widened to include discussion of other rural services.

This report covers the process involved in establishing the Citizens' Jury and describes the outcome of the event itself.

2.2 What is a Citizens' Jury?

A citizens' Jury is a public event designed to explore the views of an informed public on a particular issue. It involves the recruitment of a citizens' panel, who are acquainted with the subject of the Jury through the provision of briefing material and over the course of a three day hearing. The panel questions expert witnesses on the topic during the hearing, assesses the responses, discusses the issues raised, and reports its conclusions.

Experience shows that citizens' juries take an independent line and give a unique insight into the way in which issues are perceived by members of the public who have had the opportunity to fully consider the evidence. The citizens' Jury's decisions and observations are not binding on the various parties it consults as part of the process, or any other body, but the conclusions of juries in the past have proved influential in the subsequent development of policy.

2.3 Ensuring Independence

The UK Centre for Economic and Environmental Development (UK CEED), an independent not-for-profit foundation, with considerable expertise in public engagement activities, managed the project on behalf of Leicestershire Rural Partnership. UK CEED was responsible for developing the structure of the event, recruiting the panel, facilitating the public hearing and providing the final report. The Centre worked closely with the Partnership throughout the project's development.

2.4 Recruiting the Citizens' Jury

Since the Citizens' Jury itself is central to the process, fair and independent recruitment is essential. For this project a Jury of 16 was selected to reflect a variety of socio-demographic criteria, such as gender, age, education, occupation and geographical location. Jury members were not chosen on the basis of any significant prior involvement with the issue - they were chosen in their capacity as citizens, not as professionals or specialists. The Jury is too small to be a statistically representative sample of the

population, but was nevertheless selected to represent a genuine cross-section of the general public of Leicestershire, reflecting as wide a range of views as possible.

To recruit the Jury, UK CEED selected 3000 members of the public randomly from the electoral register in Leicestershire using accredited market research techniques. A letter was sent to each of the 3000 inviting them to take part in a Citizens' Jury on "rural services in Leicestershire". A post-paid card was enclosed for those wishing to respond, including questions designed to provide for socio-demographic profiles. The Jury selection was made from those who responded to the mailing. The final selection involved sample 'stratification' (grouping) into the various socio-demographic criteria before random selection from each of those groups.

Participants were offered £150 compensation payment for loss of earnings subject to their attendance on all three days. Nearly 100 responses were received – a response rate of over 3%. A group of 16 people were selected reflecting a variety of socio-demographic criteria such as gender, age, education, occupation and geographical location. The geographical spread of the Jury members is shown in appendix 2.

Of the 16 people originally selected to take part, one person was unable to attend at short notice and the Jury remained at 15 members.

2.5 Citizens' Jury preparation

In order to be able to fulfil their role as informed citizens, the Jury was given time to prepare before the actual hearing. UK CEED provided introductory briefing materials to jurors one week before the hearing. The briefing pack was prepared by UK CEED from materials supplied by Leicestershire Rural Partnership and other key stakeholders.

The introductory material outlined the essential aspects of the subject under consideration. The information was intended to provide a balanced and neutral introduction to the subject, since this was likely to have been the first in-depth encounter with the subject for the panel members. This included a timetable of events and background information on Citizens' Juries, the Rural Partnership, rural services, and rural Post Office initiatives. The roles of the facilitator, witnesses, Jury and observers were also included in this pack. The information pack is reproduced in appendix 3.

2.6 The Citizens' Jury Remit

The sponsors and organisers set the Jury the following remit:

"To recommend ways of ensuring that appropriate, sustainable services are available to people in rural communities in Leicestershire. These recommendations should be presented in the form of 'Key Messages for Policy-Makers' and should include:

- *Views on current initiatives that are taking place*
- *Proposals for new services and service delivery in the future*
- *Ways of increasing the involvement of members of the public"*

2.7 Facilitating the process

Throughout the lead up to the hearing and during the hearing itself, UK CEED provided independent facilitation services to support the Jury through the process. The facilitator was responsible for monitoring group dynamics, ensuring all Jury members had their fair say, and assisted in report writing. Throughout the whole process, it is crucial that the Jury is seen to be free of all pressures and influences that might jeopardise their independence and the facilitator plays a major role in ensuring the Jury's independence of action.

Specifically, the facilitator:

- Attended the hearing
- Attended necessary meetings with the clients
- Liaised with the project manager and the Jury over the programme for the hearing
- Worked with the Jury to develop the group dynamics
- Managed the discussion within the Jury to ensure fair and balanced input
- Ensured that the Jury achieve the tasks set for them within the time available
- Alerted the organisers to any potential problems
- Provided the necessary assistance to the Jury in writing the report
- Remained neutral at all times and not influence the deliberations of the panel in any way

3 The Citizens' Jury Process

The content of the Jury discussions and the outputs of the process form the major part of this report. This section aims to provide an overview of the process that was followed. Information on the witnesses involved in the Jury is provided in section 4..

3.1 Event Preparations

The planning process focused on the aims of the event, the remit of the Jury (section 2.6), the desired outputs, event structure and measures of success. The remit provided the Jury with a clear focus throughout and also a framework for their final report / presentation.

Detailed discussions between the Rural Partnership and the organisers defined the various elements of the process. Included in these discussions was a consideration of the purpose and content of the 'briefing pack' (appendix 3) that was sent out to jurors ahead of the event. Included in the pack were details of the various roles of those involved in the event, including Jury members, witnesses and 'observers'.

Importantly, a large number of observers were present throughout (including people from the sponsoring organisation as well as people who were generally interested in the process) and were thus able to see the Jury at work, gain a better sense of the process and of what was involved.

3.2 Structure and Management

The event was held on three days of the same week: Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. Each day had four 'working sessions' within it, each of an hour and a quarter in length. The outline timetable is included in appendix 4. The introductory session, the presentation/closing session and the various witness sessions were chaired by the 'chair'; the remainder of the Jury sessions [i.e. the exercise / workshop / 'closed' Jury discussion sessions] were facilitated by the 'facilitator'.

3.3 Content

The event was based around three core elements of content:

- current initiatives concerning the provision of rural services
- consulting and communicating with members of the public
- future potential initiatives concerning the provision of rural services.

Within each theme, the following sequence or cycle of activities took place:

- positioning of the topic
- sub-group exercise for the Jury
- sub-group feedback from the exercise
- Jury discussion
- witness presentation/s
- discussion with witnesses
- sub-group and Jury review.

3.4 The Exercises

In total, nine exercises were undertaken by the Jury over the course of the three days - the exercises are detailed in Appendix 5. Some of these exercises were designed to be very open-ended; others were much more detailed and were structured to link to specific, ongoing initiatives on a range of rural services, including those involving post offices.

3.4.1 Outputs from the exercises

The flip-chart outputs from each of the exercises and from the discussion/feedback sessions were word-processed as soon as possible and copies made available to members of the Jury. By the third day, these were being processed in 'real time' in order to ensure that the Jury had all of the outputs available for reference when it came time to construct the final presentation.

3.4.2 Sub-group working

Given the size of the juror group (fifteen people), there was a need to establish some smaller sub-groups for at least a proportion of the time in order to promote more effective inter-personal working and enhance the range and depth of discussion of the issues involved. Clearly, appropriate opportunity for whole-Jury discussion was also an important consideration and there was increasing scope for this as the event progressed.

The room layout was organised around three juror tables (seating five people each), with a fourth, longer and narrower table for the Chair and others. This was designed to promote 'whole-group' involvement but within a 'sub-group' structure. Appropriate wall space for flip-chart material and space for the sub-groups to move around to view the outputs from the other two groups were also factors to be taken into account.

The composition of the sub-groups was changed from day to day to promote the sense of there being just one Jury rather than three distinct sub-groups. Towards the end of the first day and using a process based on random selection, two people per sub-group/table were identified to move clockwise around the room to the next table to form part of a new sub-grouping.

These sub-groups then operated throughout the second of the three days. For the third day, and using a similar selection process, two of the three people per table who were

still at their original tables were identified. They then moved to the next table, thus ensuring that each member of the Jury had worked in sub-groups involving every other member.

3.5 The Report Presentation

After two and a half days, the Jury had produced a significant amount of detailed material covering all nine of the exercises. Various over-arching themes had begun to emerge. Using the remit to provide the basic framework, the Jury constructed an overview report that reflected these themes to provide the core of a presentation to the sponsors of the event and other interested parties.

3.6 Initial Feedback

At the outset, it had been stressed that one of the measures of success of the event was that it needed to provide jurors with both a sense of enjoyment and a sense of achievement. Feedback from the Jury members immediately following the end of the event was very positive; this was augmented by a more formal evaluation process in relation to the jurors [see below]. Similarly, initial feedback from the sponsors was also very encouraging.

3.7 Post-event Activities

An evaluation form (Appendix 6) was sent out to the jurors. The results are detailed in Appendix 7.

Nine out of the ten members of the Jury who returned the feedback forms also wanted to be listed as members of an informal network in order to have the opportunity to maintain contact with each other on these issues.

4 The Witnesses

4.1 Selecting the Witnesses

The witnesses were identified by the Leicestershire Rural Partnership following early meetings to discuss the content of each of the sessions. The aim of the witness sessions was to provide the Jury with more in-depth information via a short (five minute) presentation and a question and answer session with the Jury members.

Some of the witnesses are members of the Leicestershire Rural Partnership and already closely involved with local projects. Others represent external organisations specifically involved with areas of work that the Jury was asked to consider over the three days.

The topic area “rural services” covers a wide range of different services and service provision issues and the witnesses were therefore carefully selected in an attempt to provide a balanced overview of each of the three areas under consideration.

4.2 Witness Profiles

4.2.1 Introduction:

Professor Preston

Chair of the Leicestershire Rural Partnership
County Councillor representing the Fosse division in Charnwood, which includes eleven rural parishes
Professor Preston is on The Cabinet and is one of the Economic Well-Being Lead Members

4.2.2 Witness session 1: current rural services initiatives

Ian Toye

An independent Retail Consultant
At the moment he is involved in the Leicestershire Rural Partnership’s Village Centres Improvement Project, which involves visiting rural businesses and investigating potential for improvements, and the Village Shop Development Scheme – a grant scheme aimed at single village shops in villages with a population of less than 3,000.

Julie Belm

From Leicester and Leicestershire’s Learning and Skills Council (LSC), formally the Training and Enterprise Council (TEC)
Julie’s work involves making training more available to rural communities and she has helped introduce training facilities into villages through new and innovative means

Julian Crewe

Based at the Leicestershire Library in Melton Mowbray
He is also the manager of a new project called Asfordby Connection, an Information Technology facility based at Asfordby Village Hall.

4.2.3 Witness session 2: Rural post office initiatives

Phil Bowdery

From the Stakeholder Team working on the Government General Practitioner pilot.
Stakeholder manager for the Leicestershire pilot area.

Andy Robinson

Chair of the Services and Resources Programme Team – one of the seven programme teams working on the Leicestershire Rural Partnership's Rural Strategy, the strategic level policy document for rural areas in the county

Sue Parkinson

Postmistress at Great Glen Post Office and Secretary of the National Federation of Subpostmasters (Leicestershire Branch). Sue has been involved in all of the work undertaken by the Partnership recently in relation to rural Post Offices and is a member of the Post Office Co-ordination Group, a subgroup of the Services and Resources Programme Team.

4.2.4 Witnesses session 3: consulting with members of the public

Nicole Rickard

Rural Officer from the Policy Team at Leicestershire County Council.
Before joining the team at County Hall she worked at the Rural Community Council for seven years.
In both roles she has organised and been involved in various types of community consultation events, as well as having been involved in a range of work to support and improve rural service delivery

Diana Cook

From the Rural Community Council (Leicestershire and Rutland)
Diana works to organise consultation events in villages all over the County. She has first hand experience and in-depth knowledge of many consultation methods, in particular Public Meetings, Village Appraisals, Visioning and Village Design Statements

Margaret Wilkinson

From the Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation, who run, among other things, Planning for Real events all over the country.
Margaret is part of a team that organises Planning for Real events and, like Diana, has first hand experience, and an in-depth understanding of, this form of consultation.

4.2.5 Witnesses session 4: Communication techniques

Natasha Atkinson

From Leicester and Leicestershire's Learning and Skills Council (LSC), formally the Training and Enterprise Council (TEC)
Natasha works in the PR section of the LSC, promoting and raising awareness of the work of her organisation, she is experienced in using various means of communicating with the public

5 The Event

Day 1

5.1 Introduction: Professor Preston

The decision to hold a Citizens' Jury on rural issues arose from concern over the future of rural Post Offices. Much of the concern stemmed from the government's decision to pay benefits and allowances through bank account transfers rather than through the Post Office. A seminar was held in May 2000 by Leicestershire Rural partnership in order to identify ways in which the Leicestershire Rural Partnership could help the rural Post Office network to survive.

The Citizens' Jury is very important to the rural partnership as it is a sophisticated way of finding out the views of informed members of the public on key policy issues. A Citizens' Jury allows people to speak freely on issues and the organisation seeking their views has less influence than in other consultation techniques.

The Leicestershire Rural Partnership is made up of 16 organisations including representatives of the seven Borough Councils, County Council and Health Authority. A grant of £1.5 million was gained from the East Midlands Development Agencies SRBG scheme to support rural projects over the next five years.

Thanks to the hard work of the officers involved in the Partnership, it has achieved a great deal. This success has been recognised nationally by achieving second prize in a field of 120 entries for the TNT Modernising Government Partnership Awards sponsored by the Cabinet Office.

The Partnership invites the Citizens' Jury to discuss openly and frankly their views on rural services. It is hoped that the event will be interesting and enjoyable for all concerned.

On the final day of the Jury, there will be a meeting of the Leicestershire Rural Partnership Members Board and the Jury will have an opportunity to talk to them about future plans. There is a lot of interest in this event and people will turn up to listen at various points. The aim is to use feedback from the Jury within the future plans of the Partnership.

5.2 Exercise 1: What do you think helps and what hinder the provision of rural services in Leicestershire?

The Jury were arranged in three equal groups in order to discuss this exercise and these sub-groups were asked to report back to the rest of the Jury at the end of the session with the use of flip charts.

5.2.1 Group 1:

Group 1 recognised the need for an integrated and reliable transport system in rural areas. If the number of buses was to increase, more people would use them resulting in a reduction in the cost of travelling by public transport and improved access to services. But, if better services are provided, people need to support them – increasingly public services need to cover their costs/make a profit, otherwise they will be removed. However, a major problem arising from the current bus services is that on the whole they don't go where people want to go.

One idea the group had was that the transport system could come more under council control to ensure the needs of the people are provided for rather than left to private provision.

The group wondered how such improved services would be paid for and whether it would involve higher taxes.

5.2.2 Group 2:

Group 2 also saw the current level of transport services as a major hindrance to the rural way of life, particularly in terms of its cost and the location of bus stops. Some areas have no public transport provision at all. It was acknowledged that many people actually choose to live in rural areas but nevertheless they would like a similar level of service as in urban areas.

Another hindrance identified was the provision of emergency services – they were felt to be spread too thinly and often take too long to arrive.

The group felt that villages are losing their identity and becoming sterile largely due to an influx of wealthy people, which tends to increase house prices and can drive out local people. The group saw the preservation of the rural way of life as being linked to the provision of affordable housing, and a better transport system. At the same time, it was important to realise that rural areas are able to adapt and change – some incomers seem to want to preserve a village as they are – rather like museums – and do not want to see any new developments.

A “dial and ride” service was suggested as a way of providing a more flexible and popular approach to transport. Ideally, villages should have a community core providing voluntary services and support within the village.

5.2.3 Group 3:

Again this group saw transport services as a hindrance to rural life. It was thought that the transport system had deteriorated over the years and partly this was due to a cycle of poor services leading to a decline in use, which further reduced service provision.

This group also identified the negative impact of the influx of wealthy people into villages. This can contribute to a significant decline in community spirit – commuters tend to be out of the village during the day and therefore they do not contribute to the vitality of local services. At the same time villagers are being driven out by high house prices.

Schools were seen as a help to rural life as they bring influxes of people into the village. This results in more people using local services such as public transport and local shops when they bring their children to school.

A youth club or centre was also seen as a positive addition to rural life as this would help in keeping people in the village and using local services rather than travelling out of the village.

5.3 Exercise 2: Identifying key services, their importance and their most effective location.

Within their sub-groups, the Jury were asked to consider a range of services and potential locations for them within a village. Each member of the Jury was given 10 stickers to place on the services they felt were the most important within the community.

5.3.1 Group 1

Group 1 selected banking and transaction facilities, and medical and chemist facilities as the most useful services in rural areas.

The table below shows the way in which group 1 prioritised and clustered the services around different locations.

Location	Services
School	Training facilities
Medical Centre	Visiting doctors and chemists
Library	Internet facilities, Information points, Photocopying and fax facilities
Pub	
Village Hall	Visiting police representatives, organised clubs
Post Office	
Village shop	Range of retail goods/local produce, banking facilities, post office facilities

The group discussed whether a cash machine at the post office would be placed inside or outside. This was seen to be important, as the post office opening hours were not often very convenient. Therefore, if placed inside it may be better to have this service associated with a shop which may have more convenient opening hours.

The group didn't think that businesses would want to provide collection facilities for on-line retailers, unless they could make a profit out of it – this was considered unlikely.

A problem with putting internet services within a library was that there often was a lack of privacy when using it – fellow villagers would know your business.

A mobile Post Office was seen as a good resource which could call at villages at certain times and provide additional services such as fax and internet facilities.

The group decided not to put any services in the pub as they thought pubs will only support their own services as they are motivated by the brewery's policies rather than community needs. The group also thought that information points should be put in as many places as possible within the village.

5.3.2 Group 2

Group 2 selected transaction facilities, and police medical and chemist facilities as the most useful services in rural areas.

The table below shows the way in which group 2 prioritised and clustered the services around different locations.

Location	Service
Pub	
Village Hall / <i>Redundant buildings</i>	Internet facilities, training facilities, visiting police representatives, organised clubs, post office facilities
Village shop / Post office	Photocopying and fax facilities, information points, banking facilities, transaction facilities, collection points for goods, range of retail goods/fresh produce
School	
Library (<i>mobile?</i>)	
Medical centre	Visiting doctors and chemists, <i>additional health services</i>
<i>Mobile facilities</i>	<i>Fresh produce</i>

(Locations and services written in italics indicate the group's own suggestions)

Group 2 felt that redundant buildings in villages could be used as a base for services – this would reduce the need to build new facilities. This would also solve the problem of gaining planning permission as well as making more effective use of existing buildings.

The group also highlighted the need for a permanent police presence, not just a village bobby who would turn up every now and again.

The post office and the village shop were seen as being able to supply the same type of services but a lot of post offices don't have user-friendly opening hours so the village shop may be a more appropriate choice.

5.3.3 Group 3

Group 3 selected organised clubs and Post Office facilities as the most useful services in rural areas

The table below shows the way in which group 3 prioritised and clustered the services around different locations.

Location	Service
Village Hall	Visiting doctors and chemists, organised clubs, visiting police representatives.
Post office	Collection point for goods, banking facilities, transaction facilities.
Village shop	Range of retail goods, local produce, post office facilities.
School	Training facilities
Medical centre	
Pub	
Library	Internet facilities, information points, photocopying and fax facilities.
Church	

(Locations and services written in italics indicate the group's own suggestions)

Group 3 thought that this was a hard exercise due to lack of information regarding the type of village to be considered - i.e. its size. The size of the village would determine the number of locations within a community that could provide services. There were

concerns about using transaction facilities within the Post Office relating to confidentiality, especially within a small community.

The group thought that mobile Post Offices and libraries would be very useful within the rural community. They also thought that existing buildings such as the church should be used a lot more than it is, especially for community activities.

5.4 Services

Following the initial exercise, the services were then ranked in order of importance. The following table shows the combined rankings from all three groups (the rankings provided by each group were added together for each service to provide the value)

Service	Value
Doctors and chemists	21
Banking facilities	20
Transactions facilities	19
Organised clubs	14
Post Office facilities	13
Police representatives	13
Range of retail goods and local produce	12
Internet facilities	9
Information points	9
Photocopying and fax facilities	7
Collection points for goods	5
Additional health services	4
Fresh produce/ Retail range	2
Training facilities	2

5.5 Witness session 1 Current rural services initiatives

Three witnesses were invited to provide short presentations describing the organisations they represent and the initiatives in which they are involved concerning rural services.

5.5.1 Witness 1: Julie Belm (Leicester and Leicestershire's Learning and Skills Council)

The Leicester and Leicestershire's Learning and Skills Council (LSC) focuses on life-long learning programmes aimed to get people into learning throughout their lives, not just when they are young. Lifelong learning involves all kinds of learning, from informal lessons in a village hall to night schools and internet courses. It looks to develop skills during people's work lives. There are different forms of learning, one is called "Learn Direct" and is largely internet based. The LSC give communities access to the internet in order to provide the mechanisms to support learning.

Presently there is a pilot being set up in a Post Office consisting of a learning centre where people can access online learning as well as go there for support and help.

5.5.2 Witness 2: Julian Crewe, based at the Leicestershire Library in Melton Mowbray, manager of a new project called Asfordby Connection, an Information Technology facility based at Asfordby Village Hall.

Presently the town of Asfordby does not have a static library as there are less than 3000 people living there. Therefore the Parish Hall acts as an IT facility and study centre providing information. It is part of the DeMontfort University study centre to promote distance learning and can be used as an information resource by students, as well as being an access point for Open University courses. Books and resources can be requested at the study centre and then delivered to either the study centre itself, the mobile library or to Melton Mowbray library.

5.5.3 Witness 3: Ian Toye, An independent Retail Consultant involved in the Leicestershire Rural Partnership's Village Centres Improvement Project.

The two main projects Ian is involved in concern village shops and village centres. Free consultancy is provided to shop owners regarding how they can compete and modernise their stores. This includes updating stock ranges, the shops image, its equipment and services, accounts, opening hours, hygiene and technology. After the assessment, a business plan is produced for the shop keepers to improve their store and increase turnover. The second project regarding village centres is similar and shows the larger villages what services are missing and how individual businesses could be improved. This will help improve tourism in the area. A report is produced and sent to the district council with suggestions for improvements.

5.5.4 Jury questions

An open question and answer session led by the Jury followed the presentations

1. *What feedback do you get from the shopkeepers? Are they willing to accept the business plan and change their ways?*

Primarily a visit is organised in advance so that the shopkeepers know who is coming. A business plan is produced and after a certain amount of time, a revisit takes place. Every shop visited so far has made improvements and improved its turnover. This is through ideas such as adjusted opening hours, home delivery etc. (Ian Toye)

2. *Are there any plans to extend the study and information centre initiative? What area does the current initiative cover?*

Yes, there are plans to add a home delivery service where someone can request a book and have it delivered to their home. Study groups for parents are also being looked at as well as the provision of services through schools and community halls. The current initiative covers Asfordby and targets villages within a 10 mile radius. At the moment this is only a pilot scheme and is the only one of its kind. (Julian Crewe)

3. *It seems that there is a duplication of IT facilities. Instead of investing in computers at a study centre, why can't schools open their doors to the public after school hours?*

The equipment is owned by different people and therefore causes a logistics problem. (Julie Belm)

4. *Does the "Life Long Learning" programme face problems of lack of equipment?*

Yes, there is a need for equipment. As part of the programme, a mapping exercise has taken place finding out what facilities were available. (Julie Belm)

5. *Do primary schools only have a basic level of IT?*

No, the technology available to primary schools is very up to date, it is only the software which is basic. Children attending the study centre know exactly how to use the equipment. (Julie Belm)

6. *Will all this equipment actually benefit the community in the future?*

As part of a joint venture with Age Concern, facilities are being provided in sheltered housing so that older people can email friends and relatives for free. This is particularly helpful when the person has family abroad. Laptops are also taken out into the community so that people can learn how to use them. This also brings together a community. (Julian Crewe)

7. *How much is "Lifelong Learning" actually linked to the community? Do you assess which skills are needed within that community?*

Yes, businesses are asked to think about the types of skills they will need in the next 5 years. In the past, these links have not been made as much as they should, but this is being rectified. (Julie Belm)

8. *Within groups of shops, are shopkeepers willing to put services such as the internet into their shops?*

Yes, shopkeepers realise that the more services you provide, the more people will come into their shops. It is inexpensive if you see the benefits these services bring with them. It all needs to be properly advertised though, as it is pointless having a service if no one knows about it. (Ian Toye)

5.5.5 Feedback

Within their sub-groups, the jurors discussed and debated the outcomes of the question and answer sessions.

5.5.6 Group 1

Group 1 thought it was important for services not to become too internet- based as this may make people more isolated and run contrary to the need for greater community integration and socialising.

Access to information shouldn't be restricted and there shouldn't be censorship, as this would increase feelings of isolation.

5.5.7 Group 2

This group felt that communities need to make use of services already existing in order to sustain them. Ultimately, it should be down to communities to decide what they want within their community.

The group felt there was a need for increased co-ordination across departmental barriers so that facilities can be opened up to the public. For example schools facilities are not used after 4pm and therefore could be used by the community in the evenings.

The group also felt that there is a need to organise activities which bring communities together and facilitate community spirit.

5.5.8 Group 3

Group 3 thought that the advertising of existing services and resources should be looked at as no-one had heard of the "life-long learning" scheme. They thought that many services are based too much on the internet which does not improve community spirit. The modernising of community shops was seen as a good way forward. One Jury member had seen his local shop change in this way and it had become very successful as a result.

5.6 Exercise 3: The main challenges to the future of rural post offices

The Jury were asked to discuss what they thought were the main challenges facing rural Post Offices. This exercise was carried out within their sub groups and the groups were asked to write down their main points on a flip chart which were then presented to the rest of the Jury.

5.6.1 Group 1:

Group 1 saw the main challenge to the future of rural Post Offices as their opening times. They wondered if there was a legal stipulation regarding opening hours as Post Offices always seemed to close at lunch times and quite early in the afternoon. The issue as to who would pay for extra staff if Post Offices opened longer hours arose, especially as longer opening hours would be likely to involve unsociable working hours. The group also wondered whether the Post Office site could be extended to accommodate any extra services, and if it could, who would train and pay for the extra staff required. In order to compete, the Post Office must provide more services, but this can be very costly. A solution to this could be that rural Post Offices get a premium payment.

5.6.2 Group 2:

The main problem for Post Offices identified by group 2 was that government departments had changed the methods of central and local government tax and benefit payouts. The increasing use of BACS transactions has also reduced the role of Post Offices in carrying out these transactions. Supermarkets are beginning to sell stamps at less than face value so people are more likely to go there to get their stamps. However, there is still a place for Post Offices as people still need cash. People should be able to access their bank accounts through the Post Office.

Another problem for Post Offices is that there has been a large decrease in passing trade. This is partly due to the lack of parking facilities in villages.

The group saw Post Offices as a vital aspect of village life. People still need personal interface from time to time, especially older people who are less mobile and may be unable to travel out of the village. The Post Office needs to gear their services to meet community needs, for example being able to collect pensions and pay bills. This would get people through the door initially and they could then see what else the Post Office has to offer.

5.6.3 Group 3:

The deregulation of postal services was seen by group 3 to be a major problem in the survival of rural Post Offices. Now it is possible to buy stamps in supermarkets and with competition planned from TNT and the Dutch postal service, the Post Office is becoming more open to competition. Therefore the Post Office should provide more banking services as this will result in more customers. Unfortunately, the new Government payment systems will reduce the number of people needing to visit the Post Office.

The group asked whether Post Offices were only interested in profit. Post Offices also provide important social needs through becoming a meeting place for pensioners and those who live alone. The question was asked as to whether rural Post Offices are able to provide the same services as town Post Offices.

The group also wondered if the Post Office would lose its identity if more services were added. If the Post Office wants to provide competition for banks, it should be prepared to change its image and become more open like a bank. The question was asked as to whether the Post Office would do this.

Finally, the group said that to become more competitive, the Post Office opening hours should be more flexible, and include later closing times to catch people when they come home from work.

5.7 Exercise 4: Current Post Office initiatives

In exercise 4, the Jury were presented with information regarding a pilot GPP post office information scheme providing information on retirement, employment and the community. They were asked to discuss 3 questions in their sub groups:

- Were you aware of this initiative before today?
- What's your general response to it?
- What particular comments do you have about the three topics that have been selected for this pilot?

Again, the sub groups were asked to present their answers to the rest of the Jury through the use of flip charts.

5.7.1 Group 1

None of the group was aware of the pilot GGP scheme. They were uncertain that it would be able to bring in any extra trade. For example, if more information was provided in Post Offices, people would look at it whilst they were in the Post Office, but they wouldn't necessarily make a special effort to go there just because of it. A lot of the information provided would only be needed once - for example information on retirement, and therefore this would not provide a constant supply of customers. The scheme based on work related information being available would only be successful if it was internet based so people could get up to date information on jobs. It would be pointless just having a jobs board as this would quickly become out of date.

It was pointed out that pensioners were quite happy at the moment receiving their pensions from the Post Office but over the next few years, this number will decrease. An incentive to use the Post Office as a banking facility would be if people were able to withdraw cash from there.

5.7.2 Group 2

Only one person was vaguely aware of the GGP scheme within group 2. This group asked whether Post Offices were going to become like call centres or whether the staff would be fully trained to answer questions themselves. If so, who would be responsible for this training and who would pay for it? The group thought it was a good initiative but were unsure how well thought out it was. Leaflets alone were not thought to be of benefit to the community as there needs to be someone to talk about it face to face. If this were in the Post Office, there is a potential confidentiality problem. People may not want to discuss their personal problems with someone they know personally.

It was asked whether the Post Office is trying to take on the role of a type of Citizens Advice Bureau. This was seen as a good idea as people didn't then have to go into the towns and cities to get this advice. However, it was stressed that Post Office workers need to be specially trained for this. The group wondered whether these initiatives were primarily geared to get people into the Offices. It was recognised that face-to-face contact would be a better way to give information rather than just providing leaflets, and this would be expensive when it comes to the training of staff. One solution might be that people could make appointments with Post Office staff and government agency's so people could get informed answers to their questions.

Finally the group concluded that this seemed a good initiative but didn't seem particularly well thought out. They thought that the initiatives regarding work and retirement were a completely separate issue from the one regarding community information.

5.7.3 Group 3

This group thought that a fundamental question that needed to be answered was "why are Post Offices under threat of closure?" Is it because they are not financially viable or another reason. The group asked who actually owned the Post Offices and where the profits came from.

No one had heard of the pilot scheme within the group, and it was thought to be very useful in making people go through the Offices. However, this would not generate money. The scheme needs to be promoted more, maybe through the DSS, NHS, media advertisements and other government departments, and staff need to be trained to answer questions on the leaflets. This group also asked whether the work related information would be linked to the job centre as a type of "sub branch". This was seen to be important as "postcard in the window" job offers may lead to exploitation.

5.8 Exercise 5: Possible future initiatives for the Post Office

The Jury were asked to consider a list of potential topics that the Post Office could provide information on in the future. These included: health, families and children, education, travel and transport, voting and polls, legal and crime, local authority, small and medium sized traders and any other suggestions the groups thought appropriate. Each member of the Jury was given 5 stickers to place on the topics they thought would be of most use.

5.8.1 Group 1

Group 1 felt that all the initiatives would be constrained due to the small size of the majority of Post Offices. The group wondered who would pay for and be responsible for the training of staff to provide the service. It seemed that Post Offices may be turning into "one-stop-shops" and there was concern that larger Post Offices providing all of the new services may push out the smaller ones, forcing them to close. This would attract people into the larger villages and away from the smaller ones.

The following table shows the priority ranking group 1 gave to the types of information which could be made available at post offices.

Potential Topics	Value
Health	6
Families and Children	1
Education	1
Travel and Transport	6
Voting and Polls	1
Legal and Crime	1
Local Authority	3
Small and Medium Sized Traders	0
Other Suggestions	0

5.8.2 Group 2

Group 2 believed that Local Authorities should support the Post Offices by letting people pay bills and get their benefits through the Post Office. There was concern over the type of leaflets which would be available in the Post Office - for example the group thought it would be pointless to provide information on education as this should be done via schools rather than the local Post Office. The group wondered whether the Post Office would just be an information centre or whether it would continue to deliver services.

The group thought that a prescription service offered by the Post Office presented a real security issue as there would need to be a very secure place to store them.

Group 2: Information rankings

Potential Topics	Value
Health	6
Families and Children	4
Education	0
Travel and Transport	3
Voting and Polls	4
Legal and Crime	0
Local Authority	7
Small and Medium Sized Traders	0
Other Suggestions	0

5.8.3 Group 3

Group 3 found the issue of the size of Post Offices very important as they did not think most Post Offices would be big enough to fit in new services. Also, it would be hard to get any privacy in such a small space, as people would be forever looking over your shoulder. The group also asked whether information would only consist of a leaflet or whether it actually meant that there would be people there available to give advice.

The group wondered what type of information would be made available in the Post Office and who would decide on this. For example would the Post Office give advice on needle exchange programmes etc and would they censor official NHS publications.

The image of the Post Office was seen to be changing as it was taking on different identities. It could turn into a shop or a bank rather than a Post Office as a result of the proposed new services. There was concern that maybe the Post Office was doing too much at this stage and maybe it would be better to concentrate on a couple of things rather than such a wide range of services. The group interpreted the initiative as giving the Post Office the opportunity to provide lots of leaflets, but they felt that this will not save the Post Office as it will not generate income.

Group 3: Information rankings

Potential Topics	Value
Health	2
Families and Children	4
Education	3

Travel and Transport	7
Voting and Polls	1
Legal and Crime	2
Local Authority	5
Small and Medium Sized Traders	0
Other Suggestions	1

The following table shows the combined rankings from all three groups on the prioritisation of information provision at the Post Office (the rankings provided by each group were added together for each service to provide the value)

Potential Topics	Value
Travel and Transport	16
Local Authority	15
Health	14
Families and Children	9
Voting and Polls	6
Education	4
Legal and Crime	3
Other Suggestions	1
Small and Medium Sized Traders	0

5.9 Witness Session 2 – Rural Post Office Initiatives

5.9.1 Witness 1: Andy Robinson, Chair of the Services and Resources Programme Team

This presentation gave general background information on the Partnership's role concerning the Post Office. The Leicestershire Rural Partnership aims to improve facilities within Post Offices. In a recent survey, Parish Councillors and community organisations, such as the Women's Institute, were asked about what services they considered to be essential within their village, a neighbouring village and the nearest town. The Post Office was rated 11th out of all village services, with two thirds of all people considering it an essential aspect of village life. The Post Office was considered even more of an essential service when respondents were asked to consider how important it would be to have in a neighbouring village if it didn't feature in their own village. This shows that people would like easy access to Post Offices but that it was not necessarily essential to have one in each village.

When the problems facing the Post Office first became apparent, the Rural Partnership held a seminar for about 100 people concerning the key challenges facing Post Offices and what could be done to support them. One of the key outcomes was Partnership lobbying to get the pilot GGP scheme introduced in Leicestershire, and other developments include grants to improve Post Offices and a programme of training for Post Masters. This training programme included sessions on health and safety, trading

standards, and marketing. It also looked at the best use of space within the Post Office itself rearranging the Post Office to fit in new services.

5.9.2 Witness 2: Sue Parkinson, Secretary of the Leicestershire branch of the National Federation of Sub Postmasters

The witness suggested that the session might begin by considering whether there is actually a future for rural Post Offices at all. These have been closing at an alarming rate, and since Christmas, there have been about 7 Post Office closures in Leicestershire alone. It is important to point out that despite perceptions, these Post Offices are actually being closed by their owners themselves rather than the post office or government. A Post Master is self-employed and gets paid per transaction made. If there are not enough transactions going through the Post Office, there will not be enough money being generated to continue running the Office.

Most Post Offices have a retail side to them to help bring in money. Presently few people want to buy a Post Office as there is not enough profit potential. The Post Office would often be worth more money sold for conversion as a house rather than as a going concern. Some Post Offices close due to vandalism and attacks and again few people would want to take it over.

About 18 months ago, the benefits agency decided not to pay benefits through Post Offices anymore. The Post Office Federation lobbied against this. The government's Performance Innovation Unit (PIU) report suggested various ways of saving Post Offices from closure. The report stated that rural Post Offices were an essential part of the community especially for elderly and isolated people. The government agreed with all 24 of the report's recommendations. There was a suggestion that there should be a subsidy for rural Post Offices, however this would not be available until 2003 when benefits will be only paid into bank accounts.

There will be an option of an 'artificial' bank account set up at the Post Office where people can chose to receive their benefits. This has the potential to keep some business in the Post Office.

5.9.3 Witness 3: Phil Bowdery, Stakeholder Team working on Government General Practitioner pilot.

The Government General Practitioner Programme (GGP) covers Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland where there are around 287 Post Offices. This is a 6-month programme funded by the DTI with no direct cost for the Post Offices themselves.

230 of these Post Offices have been identified for the installation of information kiosks. These will offer touch screen access to information on various topics. However, it is not internet-based and will have only one live link, to the Employment Service. The kiosk will be supplemented by leaflets and a hotline phone within the Post Office. They will also be able to handle transactions, such as housing Benefit. It has been proposed that surgeries will also be provided for the provision of confidential information to customers.

All different elements will be bought together in one area and all this will be customer tested. Customers must actually like and use the services and it has to make commercial sense. This is only a pilot though and the results will be looked at in detail to judge the success of this scheme.

5.9.4 Jury questions:

1. *Are you able to tell by looking at rural populations how many Post Offices are needed and where will these be?*

No, as part of the PIU process, the Post Office network is being reviewed. This looks at the amount of Post Offices needed but generally the only place where Post Offices are in abundance is urban rather than rural areas. The Rural Partnership specifies that the best solution is to have one Post Office per village but acknowledges that this isn't always practical in smaller villages. One solution is to have one Post Office, which is open 2-3 days in one village, and for the other days in a neighbouring village. (Sue Parkinson)

- 2. What sort of Post Offices will receive these facilities? Some Post Offices aren't large enough to hold these facilities. Also, would providing services in one village take away trade from others?*

It is generally accepted that people will go where they want to go for post office transactions. It is hoped that all Post Offices would have the same services and products and this would generate new business rather than taking it away from other Post Offices. Ultimately it is the size of the Post Office which will determine what services will be included, but 230 have already been recognised as sites to hold the kiosk. Any other Post Offices will still have leaflet provision. (Phil Bowdery)

- 3. What is your view on superstores selling stamps less than face value?*

There is nothing that Post Offices can do about it. The superstores are actually making a loss by selling these stamps at a lower price. Franking machines also take away a lot of trade from Post Offices. This is encouraged by Royal Mail but not by Post Office counters. These two businesses are independent of each other and operate separately. (Sue Parkinson)

- 4. You stated that the Post Office would see a 40% loss of income through benefits being paid into bank accounts. Will the new services be able to recoup this 40%? How will they do this?*

People are choosing now to have benefits paid into their bank accounts rather than to the Post Office. The prospect of a "Universal Bank" is still in the air and due to the forthcoming election, work may either stop on this or it will go forward. The Universal Bank will provide the facility to use the Post Office as a banking centre, but it is up to the Post Master to encourage people to use it.

The provision of information services through the pilot will generate 13p for each transaction carried out. (Sue Parkinson)

- 5. Are there any legal restrictions for Post Offices to open certain hours?*

The problem is that it is not economically viable for Post Offices to open longer hours and they cannot afford to pay staff for those extra hours. Once the Post Office begins to generate more income, they will be able to afford to open extra hours. It is a bit of a 'Catch 22' situation. (Sue Parkinson)

- 6. Couldn't the Post Offices change their opening times?*

Postmasters are self-employed and are therefore responsible for deciding their own opening times. Maybe as a result of this Citizens' Jury, Post Offices will take notice of what you are saying and open at times more convenient to their customers. There are a lot of shops which include a Post Office that open for longer hours. However, even in these shops the Post Office facility often closes earlier than the shop as there is a lack of trained people to work the extra hours. (Sue Parkinson)

7. *With regard to the leaflets and information provided through the kiosk, who would be responsible for the content and information supplied?*

The information included here would be information which fitted in with the Post Office's strategies and community need. There will be continuing consultation and research as to what the customer actually wants and needs. (Phil Bowdery)

What support and community group information would be made available?

The information will focus on three main themes. These are work, retirement and community. With regard to community support groups, the Post Office will be able to put them in contact with the appropriate group. (Phil Bowdery)

8. *Wouldn't there be an issue of privacy if you had to ask for information about personal problems in the local Post Office?*

The Postmaster will have training to help guide people to the appropriate organisation or he/she could find out for you. (Phil Bowdery)

9. *How big is the kiosk? Would it be easy for people with arthritis to use?*

Yes, it will have a touch screen. (Phil Bowdery)

10. *Is the kiosk actually a kiosk, or is it just a screen for everyone to see?*

It is really just a screen. It is up to the Postmaster to position it so that privacy can be increased. Some Postmasters would prefer it nearer the counter for security reasons. The pilot will show whether there is a problem with privacy. (Phil Bowdery)

11. *Will Post Offices actually be able to accommodate the kiosk as many Post Offices are very small.*

Post Offices are making use of all their retail space at the moment and they are willing to take out some goods in order to accommodate the kiosk, providing this would generate extra income. (Sue Parkinson)

12. *The only live link is to the Employment Service. Not everyone uses the employment service to advertise their job (e.g. many local authorities do not use it).*

If this project takes off, more businesses may want to use this method. So far the response has been good and will be even better if the project takes off nationally. Hopefully the local authorities involved in the pilot will be encouraged to advertise their vacancies via the Employment Service. (Phil Bowdery)

13. *What is the future for rural Post Offices? Now there are mobile phones, and emails, what is the long-term outlook?*

The days of a self-sustaining Post Office are nearly over. The Post Offices must look at retail as their main source of income. The Post Office Federation are looking at setting up the Post Office as a buying group in order to compete with the shops. People are fed up with a lack of human contact in today's society which is where the Post Office has an advantage. It can win people over on this aspect. (Sue Parkinson)

5.10 Feedback

5.10.1 Group 1:

The group felt that there are problems with the cost of the project in general and they were concerned about how the project would be funded after the pilot scheme has finished. It was asked whether this pilot scheme would actually bring people through the doors and generate new income. The whole scheme needs to be publicised more and people need to be shown relevant information.

It was also pointed out that these new facilities will not benefit the Post Offices which have already had to shut down.

5.10.2 Group 2:

There are winners and losers in this process. The smaller Post Offices may not be able to survive if the larger Post Offices get these new services. The group hoped that there the number of losers would be minimised. It was asked as to how useful this pilot would be in the long term survival of the Post Office. Will the public be informed of the results of this pilot? The group wondered who would fund this initiative after the pilot.

5.10.3 Group 3:

There is a question as to whether the Post Office would in fact take on a new identity as a result of all the changes. Would it become a bank or shop instead? The traditional view of the Post Office is old-fashioned and obsolete and the group wondered if there is a future at all for it. Will it be known as a Post Office or would it be called something else?

5.11 Exercise 6: Getting people involved

The Jury were asked what would encourage people to get involved in shaping the future of rural services. They were also asked what might get in the way of this. This was discussed within sub groups and then presented on flip charts to the rest of the Jury.

5.11.1 Group 1

Group 1 thought that there was a need to improve community spirit and this could be achieved through asking people to become involved in local issues. It was acknowledged that the dormitory status of many villages does not help and people are unwilling to become involved either through laziness or lack of time.

Organisations often cease to operate when someone moves on and other people are unwilling to take on the responsibility. If people were asked verbally and personally to participate in something they would be more likely to do it.

5.11.2 Group 2

Group 2 highlighted the difference between incomers and indigenous people. Incomers generally don't need to use the village services and therefore do not have a strong interest in promoting these services. The group estimated that about 10% of indigenous people care, 30% say they care but are unlikely to do anything about it, and the rest don't really have an interest. It was acknowledged that there will always be cost restraints which would get in the way of promoting services.

The group felt that in order to make people feel part of the process of saving their local services, they must be given a sense of empowerment and to feel part of things.

Through creating a common goal, a sense of community is achieved and this will mix indigenous people with incomers.

5.11.3 Group 3

Group 3 said that it is hard to get people involved in community issues if there isn't a sense of community in the first place. If people don't feel involved, they tend not to care as much about the issues. There is a "them and us" attitude when it comes to people moving into villages. They are regarded as "incomers" which immediately labels them as outcasts from the community.

The group thought that by having town and village meeting with council representatives, people can discuss issues and this may bring them closer together as a community. There needs to be a lot of advertising of community events and people need to receive feedback on what they have done in order to show that their input has been useful.

Group 3 thought that local councils are not as approachable now as they were in the past and public meetings are often held at inappropriate times. They recognised the fact that constituencies have got bigger and therefore it is harder for councillors to see everyone.

5.12 Witness Session 3

5.12.1 Witness 1: *Nicole Rickard, Rural Officer from the Policy Team at Leicestershire County Council*

There are five types of consultation methods, which involve speaking the views of local people. All five of these have been tried in Leicestershire. Firstly there is the "Village Appraisal" where a written questionnaire is sent out to everyone in the village and then collected. A steering group within the community designs the questionnaire themselves so it can be tailored to suit each individual village.

The second consultation method is called a "Village Design Statement" and the main aim of this is to manage change to the village rather than prevent them. This document is developed, researched and managed by the local community and the Local Authorities can refer back to these when making decisions about the development of a community as the aim is that they are adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance.

Planning for Real is a more "hands on" approach. People look at a 3D model of their village and can make comments by placing cards on this model. Everyone is able to get involved in this approach.

The fourth consultation process is called Visioning and consists of a 5-stage process. Firstly participants take part in a review of the past events either personal, community based or global. Then they look at the present and create a mind map of the key issues, including things they are proud of and things they are sorry about. The next stage looks at the future and the community's vision for the future, including any barriers which may prevent this being achieved. The fourth stage includes the identification of common ground through working primarily in small groups and then in a larger group specifying a vision for common ground. The final stage involves the production of an action plan taking into account the outcomes of the previous four stages.

The fifth consultation process is called a Future Needs Event and asks key questions for example "what do you like/dislike about living in the community?" using interactive displays. This is based on a map or plan of the community and people are able to mark out places they like or dislike in the area. These are then discussed with other members of the community either in small groups or at a public meeting.

Overall, whatever consultation process is used, it should be inclusive and needs to include as many views as possible.

5.12.2 Witness 2: Diana Cook, Rural Community Council for Leicestershire and Rutland

The Rural Community Council (RCC) is a charity funded by the Leicestershire Rural Partnership and the Countryside Agency and also has received some lottery funding. Both the village appraisal and village design methods of consultation involve a steering group made up of the public and the RCC has some funding available to support the cost of these groups. Everyone on the steering group is a volunteer and they formulate their own questionnaires, with advice from the RCC and other partners. The questionnaire is then delivered to every single household in the village. This includes questions on any relevant topics such as health and education. The group could also produce newsletters, to update the community as to progress as the key to this success is publicity. The final report is presented back to the village at a social event within the community. In Leicestershire there is a protocol where the results of this are fed back to local service providers through the final report and any questions will be answered and fed back to the village. This method of communication can help the village to help themselves and it can improve community spirit.

The Village Design Statement is not about preventing development; rather it aims to find out whether the village can sustain what is being proposed. A steering group is set up to decide what they want protected and meetings are held with the whole community where people can put forward their views. A report is produced and presented to a local planning department. It is treated as a planning application and can be adopted as a supplementary planning guideline.

5.12.3 Witness 3: Margaret Wilkinson, Neighbourhood Initiative Foundation

The NIF is a small charitable foundation involved in projects in Leicestershire and nationally. The principle tool used by the NIF is Planning for Real. The Foundation's aim is to maximise the participation of local people in decisions that affect them, as they know the local area best. There is often a thought that decisions have already been made before the public are consulted and this is where Planning for Real comes in. Planning for Real offers the genuine engagement of a community through becoming part of the process and making it happen. This method is not new, and has been around since the 1970's, and a schools pack has also been produced recently.

An image of the local area is presented in 3 dimensions and therefore is recognisable to the public. The idea is for people to put down cards and ideas on the map and therefore everyone can have a say. These cards and ideas are anonymous and therefore people are more likely to contribute.

People can then work in smaller groups to sift and promote ideas and place them in categories. If people disagree with any decision, the card can be placed face down. The Planning for Real method of consultation is all about finding and building consensus. The outputs of all this should include answers to the following questions:

Who do we need to help us?

What is the next stage to look at?

This will help people to see who they need to make things happen and what to do next.

5.12.4 Jury questions:

1. *How long have these initiatives been in place? A couple of years ago we came across some environmental issues within our community and we tried to make people aware of them. We came up against a brick wall.*

The NIF has been in existence since 1988. Whenever the Foundation engages a community, they don't undertake the process unless there is a general enthusiasm for it within the community. Village appraisals have only really taken off in the last four years. The key to the problem of feedback is the new Protocol in Leicestershire which has only been in place for a year. This has made a real difference in terms of service providers working with communities to address areas such as transport, and things are improving all the time as a result. (Margaret Wilkinson)

2. *What is your relationship with Parish Councils?*

The NIF are often invited by Parish Councils to look at issues within the community and work closely with them. Any results are normally fed back to the Parish Councils for implementation. (Margaret Wilkinson)

Is a Village Design Statement actually a design statement or is it a planning statement?

If there is a feeling within the community that people want to stop a new estate being built, a village design statement can help - not by stopping the estate being built but by allowing the community to write into the design statement key issues in relation to structure and design. (Diana Cook)

3. *But that is on a planning level. New houses etc are often dated and people want more modern buildings. These are not offered to the community as an option.*

Villages have evolved over the years and now have better equipment and services. The design statement is about letting people choose what they want in their community, and it reflects what the whole community want as a consensus. (Margaret Wilkinson)

4. *You say that you talk to key members of the community. Who are these "key members"?*

Parish Councillors, the WI, Scout groups etc. Generally people and groups who are involved in the community already as it would not be feasible to visit every household in the community. (Diana Cook)

5. *Where is the starting point for all this? Who initiates it? Is it the community or the government?*

Planning for Real brings people together to look at issues and contrive an action plan. Help is only given to communities who ask for it and often the NIF work alongside community groups. The village is encouraged to look within its community and identify the skills already there and use them rather than looking externally. (Margaret Wilkinson)

5.13 Exercise 7: Communicating with the Public

The sub groups were asked to discuss different methods of consultation processes and then come up with the three best methods of communication with members of the public about developments relating to rural services. These were then written down on flip charts and presented to the rest of the Jury.

5.13.1 Group 1

Group 1 thought that the best way to communicate with the public would be through the use of flyers and newsletters. This way everyone could receive information as they could be delivered to people individually. The internet is useful for communicating with the world but is not necessarily good for contacting the person next door. Not everyone has access to the internet.

People often don't pay attention to television or radio so it would probably be a waste of time advertising through this media. The Post Office could be used as a resource to put notices up.

5.13.2 Group 2

This group also thought that flyers would be the best method to communicate with the public. It was thought that the size of the village would dictate what the best ways of communication were but the internet was not seen to be able to play a useful role in this. A newsletter produced by the church or Parish Council would be very useful in informing the public. The use of notice boards, especially within the Post Office, would be an effective method of communication. Another idea the group came up with was electronic bus stops. The electronic boards could be used to convey information connected with the area they are in.

5.13.3 Group 3

Again, this group thought the most effective way of communication was through flyers and newsletters which are delivered house to house. It was recognised that the internet is not readily available to everyone but it is useful for those who do have it, especially email facilities. This could be used in conjunction with other methods rather than as a stand alone method. The problem with using television and radio to communicate information is that people must be listening at the right time. Finally the group thought that there should be a regular village meeting and this would be a very good way of communicating information.

5.14 Witness session 4

5.14.1 Witness 1: *Natasha Atkinson, Leicestershire Learning and Skills Council*

There are a range of options available to target specific audiences, and in this case the targeted audience is local people. It is possible to pick and mix ideas to meet specific needs of a group of people. Firstly the audience needs to be looked at and their needs defined as well as what information needs to be put across. There needs to be a marketing mix. It's not a case of all or nothing but this is largely dependent on the budget available. A newsletter is a good way of conveying information but someone needs to be responsible for writing and delivering it. The aims and objectives of a project need to be looked at as well as any weaknesses it may have and this all needs to be put into a plan.

5.14.2 Jury questions:

1. *The idea of using flyers and newsletters helps people get involved. TV and radio are expensive and may not reach the right audience. Shouldn't we concentrate on using local resources in the production of newsletters and leaflets?*

You don't have to stick to one point or medium. Not all the methods would apply to everyone - it all depends on what issues are being discussed.

2. *Who is supposed to be communicating with who? Is it the community or the service providers?*

The service providers should communicate their services to the community.

3. *An important factor is the demographics of the target audience. In this case we are only talking about a small concentrated audience.*

If you live in a village then you are probably the best person to say what method will work the best, but you might want to try new things as well as keeping to the traditional methods.

4. *With regards to the internet, people have to be told what is available for them there before they will look for it. Therefore, there is still a need for a flyer or newspaper.*

It is true that more literature has been produced as a result of the internet.

5. *It is hard to explain everything on an A5 flyer and people must be careful what is put in the flyer. It cannot be too patronising or too intense. The community needs to look at skills within it.*

The community needs to maximise the resources available to it and therefore increase efficiency. Once something is up and running, the community may like to look at the possibility of producing something else as well. (Natasha Atkinson)

5.15 Exercise 8: Service Developments For the Future

Each Jury member was given 10 stickers to allocate to services which could be developed / improved in the future. They were also asked to note down on flip charts any assumptions or factors which were important to the group in deciding on additions and priorities.

5.15.1 Group 1

Group 1 felt that bus services need to be added to the list as it would be a very worthwhile service to enable people to access the larger towns and villages where more services were on offer. The group also felt that there was a need to increase community spirit and keep the community together. By getting the community involved in one thing, they are more likely to stay together and do other things. However, all this is dependent on funding as well as voluntary input from the community.

5.15.2 Group 2

The services considered important by group 2 included services which involved people who were confined to one location every day. For example this would include young parents, elderly people and disabled people. The main difficulties would be the location of the service and the training of staff. Bank facilities were considered essential and it was thought that a cash point would be ideal as it would be relatively easy to maintain.

The services supplied within the community would depend on the size of the population. If a mobile service was provided for a library, opticians and doctors, costs would be cut as they wouldn't have to find new buildings.

5.15.3 Group 3

Group 3 said that villages would not survive unless more life was injected into them. Introducing younger families to the village could do this and the only way to attract them would be to provide more affordable housing. The group thought that the rest of the services would follow if the community were thriving.

A question was asked as to the relationship between planners and the council as only larger houses seem to be being built at the moment in villages. All the Jury felt strongly that large and profitable housing are being built but not affordable housing. It was asked whether the council were responsible for this or the planners.

5.16 Exercise 9 – The Delivery and Sustainability of Services

The Jury looked at the 'top services' identified in exercise 8 which were: police, pharmacy, banking services, services for older people, starter homes and facilities for young people. Transport was considered a special case by the jury and was therefore included as well. Each sub group discussed two services with one group discussing three. The sub groups presented answers to the following questions on flip charts.

- How the service should be delivered
- The merits of the suggested approach
- The factors that are likely to promote the sustainability of the particular service
- Any aspect of community consultation that might be important

The rest of the Jury were then asked to give their comments on what had been written.

5.16.1 TRANSPORT

The Jury considered consultation as very important so that the community have a chance to give their opinions. This would include people's wants/needs as identified in consultation and it also adds sustainability issues. If it meets the communities needs, other issues would need to be looked at such as how the service would be paid for, and would it be subsidised.

The main points covered in transport were that the size and times of the bus needed to be looked at so that they could operate much more efficiently. The actual destinations of the buses should also be looked at because often buses don't seem to go where the public want to go.

The Jury suggested a "dial-a-ride" service that would operate within gaps in the bus services so would not interfere with these. Car sharing was also considered something which could be promoted within communities.

5.16.2 POLICE

With regard to the polices service, the Jury thought that service delivery should be local, with police officers being easily accessible and visible. The Jury also thought there was a need for volunteer community police and special constables.

Police officers could use cycles or trail bikes to have high visibility presence and to cover a larger area. The merits of this would be that there would be a greater community spirit and co-operation and the police would become more approachable, building better relationships between police and community. Another advantage of the police service is that it sustains itself.

The Jury said that the community should set its own policing priorities and it should be up to the community to decide what their money is spent on rather than the police force itself.

5.16.3 PHARMACY

A mobile pharmacy service would be very effective within small communities. This would work by the doctor emailing a prescription to the pharmacy service, which would then deliver it to the village. The pharmacy van could visit on regular days which could be set by the community.

This service would be cost effective and would also help elderly people stay at home in the village, providing them with an alternative to other types of care.

5.16.4 BANKING SERVICES

With regard to banking services, the Jury thought that a hole in the wall machine would be the most effective. The best location for it would be outside the Post Office and therefore would enable people to use other facilities during opening hours. However, if there is not an appropriate Post Office then it would need to be located in an external location which is safe and well lit.

The benefits of this would be that readily available cash in the area may have a secondary spin off of people spending at other local services and therefore support them. People passing through the village may also stop to get cash and then use other services. However, for this to work effectively, there would need to be adequate parking facilities nearby.

This service would be sustainable as people always need money and therefore the machine will always stay open.

Consultation with the villagers is required to see how many people would use it. This could be done through a questionnaire. There would also need to be signage for tourists.

5.16.5 SERVICES FOR OLDER PEOPLE

The Jury identified an important service for older people as a village hall which could be used for socialising as well as many other events. Older people also need good access to shops and the Jury thought that maybe a minibus could be provided for this.

It was recognised that meals on wheels was a very good service but it would need to be conducted on a daily rather than weekly basis, as it is often company which older people look forward to. Other services which would benefit the older community are a chiropodist, doctor, a pharmacy and a benefits advice service. These could all be mobile services and visit the village on set days.

Benefits of these services would be the elimination of loneliness, an influx of money back into the community and the creation of community spirit.

The services are also sustainable as everyone will eventually get old and will enjoy and use such a system. The facilities do not have to be confined to the elderly population though and therefore will benefit the whole community.

The services would need to be promoted and this could be done through leaflets about the scheme or notices put up on a community notice board.

5.16.6 STARTER HOMES

The Jury thought that the community should become mobilised where land becomes available for development.

A “Planning for Real” process should be carried out before any work begins and therefore when planning permission is sought planner should be aware that Planning for Real has taken place and that it is agreed by the majority of the community.

The Jury recognised that Leicestershire County Council and District/Borough Council co-operation is imperative.

An advantage of this is that any work carried out is done with the agreement of the community and because the community instigate the idea they will buy into it. This will create an injection of young people into the village and therefore it will become sustainable.

5.16.7 FACILITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The Jury said that young people living in a village would like modern activities to take part in, for example skateboarding and BMX. A young persons “Planning for Real” process should be carried out to involve and give control to young people. This would create a healthy environment for the young whilst encouraging good citizenship values.

A Youth Planning for Real Youth Service Department could be set up to provide guidance and support with setting up and maintaining groups dealing with youth issues. Mobile activities could include computers, a disco, indoor sports and films.

The Jury pointed out that everything that had been talked about costs money and asked who was going to pay for it and who was willing to pay. Solutions to this problem included the better use of money already available and providing access to existing facilities. For example, it was pointed out that school buses are often half empty but are not able to accept the public as passengers. Through the integration of services such as these, money can be saved and better services offered.

5.17 Section 4: The Citizens' Jury Report

The outcome of the exercises and sessions reported above was brought together in the final report of the Jury. This was constructed by the Jury, in their own words, midway through the third day of the hearing. It was presented to the sponsors and other interested parties in the final session of the day. The report is produced in full below.

5.17.1 INTRODUCTION

- We are pleased to be part of the citizens' Jury.
- We need to recognise that the future is different from the past – priorities have changed
- We recognise that apathy exists in modern society and that people are no longer supportive of local service provision
- We must also recognise that “dormitory syndrome” exists and causes additional problems in getting community support.
- A starting point for any community initiative must be the provision of affordable housing which should lead to the regeneration of community spirit.
- In all our deliberations it must be remembered that we don't want services to be expanded in larger communities to the detriment of smaller communities.
- A minimum level of provision should be available for all communities.

5.17.2 CONCERNING THE CURRENT SITUATION AND INITIATIVES

Current Situation

- A cohesive network of services should be provided – the level would depend on settlement size – for small villages, services could be pooled/grouped across several villages
- It is important to acknowledge that natural wastage may occur, particularly where services are being integrated
- There is often inefficient use or duplication of resources
- Post offices are ideally placed to provide additional services for the community but their role in the community needs to be more defined. In particular, profit versus social policy issues need to be addressed.
- Restricted hours of opening are a constraint on their (Post Offices) use, as is the range of services they provide – regulation / the Postmaster General should ensure that village Post Offices are able to offer the same range of services as those available from town post offices
- Councils should set the right example by ensuring that all payments can be conducted through the post office.
- Executive homes are being built in rural locations at expense of affordable houses
- Relationship between planners/council and land developers needs to be clarified
- Consultation leads to raised awareness and community ownership of a project/idea

Current initiatives:

- Present initiatives are not widely publicised
- Essential services in each village focusing on improving quality of life should be identified according to village size and supplemented by planned services in neighbouring villages
- Communities need to know what consultation took place prior to their implementation?
- There should be more publicity as to what assistance is available to service industries/retail outlets
- A pilot mobile library/internet is being carried out in an area not rural enough to fully evaluate its success
- Life long learning should be a priority given current stretched resources

5.17.3 FUTURE VISION AND SERVICE PROVISION

In terms of future provision, the priorities identified by the Jury were:

- Starter homes (19 points)
- Services for older people (18 points)
- Banking (16 points)
- Pharmacy (13 points)
- Facilities for young people (13 points)
- Police presence (12 points)

(For further information, see section 5.16 – Exercise 9)

In addition, we recognise that transport is a special case because of the need for transport to cover the services not available within walking distance.

The general principles which need to be applied are a) the importance of community and b) the community being involved in deciding:

- What services they want
- How those services will be provided
- Setting priorities

Furthermore;

- A lot of these services need to be cross departmental.
- The service users must take priority, not the service providers
- We recognise that for smaller communities mobile services will be of particular importance.

5.17.4 4.4 INCREASING THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE PUBLIC

One of the most important issues is involving the public in generating or re-generating a sense of community spirit in rural areas

Key areas:

- *Communicating:* The Jury identified flyers, newsletters and notice boards as key forms of communication, leading to early consultation.
- *Engagement:* This is needed in order to generate a sense of communal pride

It was also thought that maintaining general awareness of both present and future initiatives is crucial. In time, this will help promote integration and encourage the development of an inclusive society

5.17.5 CONCLUSIONS

There is a need to recognise;

- That there are limitations to the provision of services. Not all villages can be provided for individually; there may be a need to cluster villages in some way
- The importance of funding and taxes
- That there are winners and losers. Identifying these should be part of the consultation process
- The importance of effective use of resources
- That bureaucracy exists and this can get in the way
- There needs to be a defined minimum level of service dependent on size of community (i.e. a hierarchy of services)

APPENDICES

Click here for the appendices: <http://www.oakleaves.org.uk/text/wscitizensjuryapp.rtf>