

Corporate Objective:

1. Engage communities and support them in shaping their future (Priority level 2)

The Live and Work Rural Programme was established in 2009 to deliver rural development initiatives aimed at helping businesses and communities in the Peak District to live and work in sustainable ways. During 2009-10 the project has engaged with 20 villages/communities assisting in a variety of ways from guiding recipients to specialist advice or funding sources right through to initial engagement in a more complete village planning exercise. In addition, Peak Partners for Rural Action has strengthened the project as they have been engaged in helping the programme to identify villages/communities to target in the future. The nature of advice includes topics such as community allotments, a recreation pavilion, toddler groups, village halls and recreational spaces.

Working alongside Live and Work Rural, a partnership with Sheffield City Council has been established to develop community planning in the Sheffield area of the National Park, resulting in a Village Officer working in the rural parts of Sheffield such as Bradfield, Dungworth and Midhope. The focus of this work so far has largely been around local foods.

During 2009 the Authority conducted a survey of residents of the National Park to help us improve the way we work with communities. The survey covered a range of issues including planning, the support given to communities and local businesses and the way we deal with enquiries from members of the public. This has generated a useful source of information to improve service, to better understand community needs and to provide an evidence base for projects such as Live and Work Rural.

During 2009/10 we gave planning permission for 35 affordable housing dwellings. We continued to work with Parish Councils, the Rural Housing Enabler and district Housing Authorities to identify local needs. We played an active role in the recent joint bid to the Homes and Communities Agency for investment for affordable homes in the Peak Sub-region. This is the first wholly rural investment plan to be approved by the region, and is a trailblazer of how the Homes and Communities Agency (Single Conversation) proposes to work to support rural affordable housing. The government introduced the fast-track householder appeals system during the year and all householder appeals are now dealt with by this system.

Looking ahead to 2010/11

We will have been successful if we keep the business plan for the community planning outputs of the Live and Work Programme on track.

Key actions for 2010/11:

- *Delivering the community planning outputs of the Live and Work Rural programme including using the Sustainable Development Fund*
- *Developing a Local Development Framework statement on how the Authority works with partners to deliver affordable housing*
- *Implementing the action plan following on from the residents survey*

Responding to our residents

A recent survey among residents of the National Park has highlighted that most feel informed about why the National Park is a special place and value its natural beauty and distinctive character. Approximately half feel informed about the work the Authority does and approximately a third believes the Authority supports the local communities and businesses in the Park. While outdoor recreation facilities were judged to be good, nearly a half of respondents believe the Authority makes poor planning decisions (though only 7% made a planning application in the past year).

A survey of planning applicants in January 2010 revealed that 71% were satisfied by the service provided. This represents an 11% improvement on a similar survey carried out 3 years ago.

A range of measures are being implemented by the Authority to listen and respond to the concerns of residents on the issues that matter to them. These include:

- Holding regular community visits by the Authority's Chair and Chief Executive to listen to the views of local people. This follows a successful pilot project last year
- Widely publicising recent improvements to the planning service for residents, including evening planning surgeries
- Developing new leaflets, letters and website information to explain in plain English how to make a planning application, comment on one, or find out about a decision
- Continuing community planning work to assist local people in applying for grants and carrying out major projects to improve village life and the local environment
- Helping members of the authority play a bigger role as ambassadors for the National Park
- Developing the use of social media, such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, to communicate with residents, particularly younger people
- Continuing to develop the community section of our website at www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/community to share good practice among residents about issues like setting up a village website, applying for grants and introducing energy efficient measures in their homes and communities.