

## Wychavon District Council

### Notes of the Meeting of the Agriculture and Migrant Workers Policy Development Panel held at 3.00 p.m. on Monday, 15 September 2008 in the Committee Rooms, Civic Centre, Queen Elizabeth Drive, Pershore

**Present:-** Councillor Mrs A Steel – Chairman

**Councillors:-**

Mrs J C Dowty  
Mrs J A Pearce  
K N Wright

**Officers:-**

Gill Collin  
Phil Merrick  
Chris Brooks  
Chris Wilkes

**Guests:-**

Andrew Billie  
John Mathews  
Sheila Moorcroft  
Andrew Myers

**17. Apologies for absence.**

An apology for absence had been received from Councillor Mrs E K Stokes.

There was not a substitute.

**18. Declarations of Interests.**

There were none.

**19. Notes.**

The Notes of the meeting of the Panel held on 28 July were received and noted.

**20. Presentation from Andrew Billie, Evesham Vale Growers.**

The Panel received a verbal presentation from Andrew Billie, Evesham Vale Growers. The following main points were covered:-

- An explanation of the gangmaster system before the introduction of recent legislation was given. This had worked well with workers being shipped in from Birmingham.

- The Gangmasters Licensing Authority has appeared to shift its enforcement policy. Growers were told initially that to comply they would only have to use a licensed gangmaster. The reality is that users of gang labour have to check every individual's legal status each morning before work can start. They even have to check the conditions of the gangmasters vehicles. If they fail to do these checks and any irregularities are found, it is the grower/farmer/user of labour that is pursued and not the gangmaster.
- Progressively fewer and fewer local people were interested in working in the industry and were now almost non existent except for office staff.
- Workers were now Eastern European and to attract and keep them good working conditions, accommodation and pay were required. Also with the fall of the pound against the Euro the accommodation provided had to be cheap and affordable or workers would move on for little more pay.
- Workers comprised those who wanted to stay in England and those who were here for a short period to earn money and then go back home. In both cases money was sent back home.
- Generally workers now had their own transport or access to it so when entering England tended to stop in Kent where jobs were available rather than travelling further north. This meant that it was increasingly difficult to attract workers to Worcestershire.
- The difficulty in obtaining labour meant that further measures such as the introduction or extension of mechanisation to make the job more attractive by reducing lifting and generally improving conditions inside pack houses was necessary.
- Advertising was undertaken but most workers found out about jobs through word of mouth. Regardless of county of origin some would only stay for 3 months or just use accommodation as a base whilst looking for other jobs. Attracting workers to pick tomatoes was not too bad as the work was inside, but this was more difficult with Spring Onions which involved some outside work.
- Each time the minimum wage was raised it increased the costs of the operation.
- Accommodation comprised portakabins with communal washing and kitchen facilities on site, or houses in multi occupancy with facilities. There were a few kabins on site measuring 12' by 9'.
- The different nationalities had to be managed when living or working together.

Members asked questions as follows:-

- Why was local labour not used? The Blackminster operation had 180 workers but hardly any local ones except office staff. Locals did not like the hard work involved and whilst attending job interviews to maintain benefits did not take jobs. Supermarket deadlines meant that labour had to be flexible and available. The local labour market was tight with very low unemployment which meant some workers had to be shipped in from Birmingham. The economic situation and falling exchange rate meant it was cheaper to import from Mexico than grow in Evesham.
- The business was affected by size and scale of operation and degree of mechanisation. This in turn affected the price of produce.
- Former legislation meant that workers were tied to the business for 6 months and the older ones were the best. Now workers could go where ever they wanted. This meant that continuity of labour was now more difficult.
- The inclusive weekly charge including gas and electricity for accommodation was just £30. This charge applied to all locations including Town ones.
- The firm employed 25 office staff, 160 production staff. Some 50/60 staff lived in Evesham with 40/50 living on farms. The rest were at Blackminster.
- There was a core of 10-12 people who could speak several languages and who had been employed for five years or so.
- There were few antisocial incidents, but there was occasional late night drinking. Accommodation was checked weekly and there was a small core who told others what would be tolerated. The Spring Hill operation had no problems, but there were a few at Bretforton.
- Workers mainly cooked for themselves and looked for savings on costs wherever possible.
- Employing workers was now more onerous because the employer had to check that they were legally entitled to be employed. The GLA had its own Audit System.
- The GLA was currently undertaking a consultation with all growers, but this just involved users, not providers of labour. Gangmaster Audits could just involve 2 or 3 workers, but the licence could be for 100 workers even though the vast majority had not been checked.
- The latest scam was to get bona fide details from abroad and then duplicate them here for another person.

- The industry would in future have to provide even better facilities, offer better pay, motivate workers to stay within the industry and provide better management.
- Generally the 40 plus years of age workers were the best. Many came to England to help pay off debts so had commitment to the job.
- There was now evidence of an influx of Eastern European gypsies working in Kent. Kent tended to have an advantage over Worcestershire because it was nearer to the channel. Further given that the Eastern European gypsies are prepared to work outdoors it means growers in Kent have lower overheads.
- Many workers spent there recreation time in Town or using the Inter Net.

Mr Billie offered an open invitation for the Panel to visit his Blackminster operation whenever they wished.

The Chairman thanked Mr Billie for his presentation.

21. **Presentation from Sheila Moorcroft and Andrew Myers (Research for Tomorrow, Today).**

The Panel received the attached presentation from Sheila Moorcroft.

Sheila Moorcroft and Andrew Myers answered members' questions.

The Chairman thanked Sheila Moorcroft, supported by Andrew Myers for her presentation.

**Agreed**

That Chris Brooks be asked to ask Elaine Salter to check her statistics on property condition within the District as the figures now given with regard to the percentage of properties in poor condition seems unduly high.

22. **Presentation from Chris Brooks**

The Panel received a presentation from Chris Brooks based on the attached information.

Chris Brooks advised that further information was available on the DEFRA Web Site.

The Chairman thanked Chris Brooks for his presentation.

23. **Agricultural Workers' Caravans, Glasshouses, Packhouses since 2001.**

The Head of Planning advised the Panel that this paper was for information, but that she could not guarantee the accuracy of its contents was 100 per cent.

24. **Business to be transacted at remaining meetings and final report.**

It was noted that the final 2 scheduled meetings would take place at 2pm on 6 and 27 October 2008 at a suitable venue. It was also noted that the Chairman, in consultation with the Officers would call an extra meeting if and when required.

The Meeting closed at 4.49 p.m.

CEW

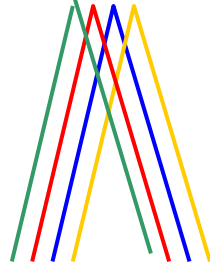
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# Wychavon migrant workers mini scenarios project overview

September 15<sup>th</sup> 2008

Presentation by

Sheila Moorcroft



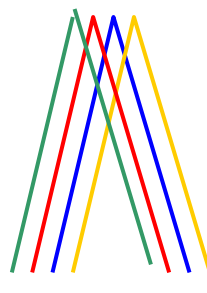
Research for Tomorrow, Today

# Background and aims

- Part of the wider I&DeA project on Migration
- Aims
  - To integrate wide range of trends and issues
  - To develop mini scenarios of outcomes / implications
  - To highlight impacts for housing, employment and general population
  - To set issues in a wider context

# Our approach

- Review published data sources
- Interviews with key stakeholders
- Trend analysis and develop mini scenarios



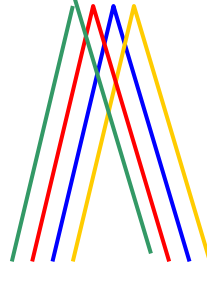
# Framing the scenarios /1

## Critical uncertainty

- The economic differential / 'feel good factor'

## Uncertainties around migrant population

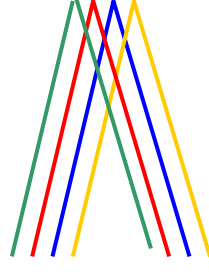
- How many stay or go
- Composition
- Length of stay
- Numbers of dependants
- Job types



# Framing the scenarios /2

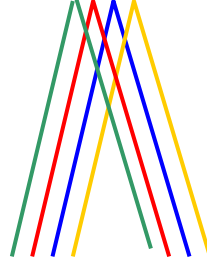
## Other significant trends and developments

- The continued attractiveness of Wychavon
- Outward migration of younger people
- The overall ageing of the resident population



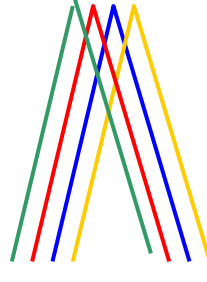
# Scenario 1: Serious shortfall

- Sharp reduction in migrant workers
- A8 economic growth stronger relative to UK
- EU competition for migrant workers
- UK quotas and controls tighter
- Wychavon population growing overall
- Continued exodus of young work age population
- Local economy in difficulty
- Housing market static and tight



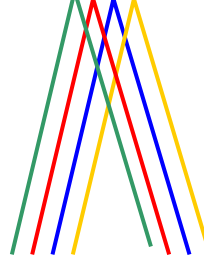
## Scenario 2: Slowly but surely shrinking

- Year on year reduction
- A8 growing faster than EU
- More controls on immigration in UK
- Local population in Wychavon ageing / growing
- Migrants very much part of local economy
- Increased use of gang masters
- Some reduction in local commuting
- Pressure throughout the housing market



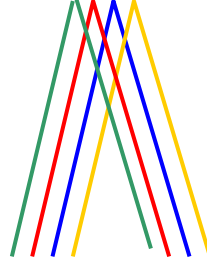
## Scenario 3: Different revolving door

- Overall numbers relatively stable
- UK economy doing better than other EU
- Gang master regulation strengthened
- Population to urban areas
- Food security concerns benefitting agriculture
- Migrants lower skilled
- More rented accommodation, but less affordable



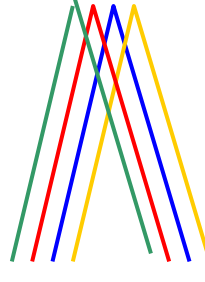
## Scenario 4: A steady rise

- A steady rising flow of migrants
- UK remains popular
- UK inflow continues to local urban centres
- Local economy generally buoyant
- Wychavon successful strategies to attract
- Innovation and renovation of housing stock



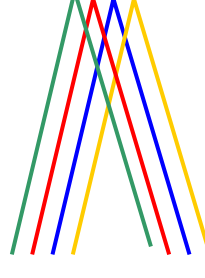
# Our conclusions

1. Gradual growth in the overall population in Wychavon
2. Population growth will be uneven across the age ranges
3. UK nationals moving to Wychavon - significant
4. Local urban centres - pressure from population growth
5. Smaller villages popular in the short term
6. Very rural areas may face a down turn in house prices
7. Wychavon economy very dependent on migrant workers
8. A significant drop in migrant workers –serious consequences
9. Current quotas - constraints on the local economy
10. Food security & climate change targets - an opportunity



# Our conclusions

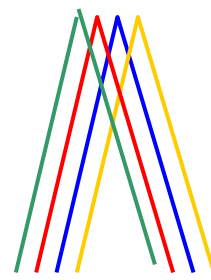
11. Loss of migrant workers biggest threat to local economy
12. Lack of appropriate housing is a significant constraint
13. Housing demand in local urban areas continue to grow
14. Strategic opportunities for local collaboration
  - ESOL and other skills development
  - Proactive marketing of/ recruitment to Wychavon
  - Housing innovation and renovation
15. Encourage people to work locally rather than commute
16. The 'young old' present an opportunity and a challenge
17. Lack of consistency re GLA / gangmasters – a burden
18. Gangmasters not a preferred source of employees



# Our recommendations

- A. Market / promote Wychavon strongly
- B. Invest to attract
- C. Provide a range of ESOL /training/ work experience offers
- D. Identify and examine migrant dependant 'hot spots'
- E. Work with local migrant communities
- F. Use the scenarios to examine other impacts /implications
- G. Use the project as a model for elsewhere
- H. Explore a range of housing options
- I. Capitalise on issues - food security, food miles, local supply
- J. Ensure clarity and consistency of gang master regulation

# THANK YOU



Research for Tomorrow, Today

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WYCHAVON

	2001	2007	Difference
<b>Farm Types</b>			
Cereals	179	210	31
General Cropping	86	77	-9
<b>Horticulture</b>	255	231	-24
Pigs & Poultry	37	5	-32
		34	34
Dairy	48	35	-13
Cattle and Sheep (LFA)	0	0	0
Cattle and Sheep (lowland)	274	282	8
Mixed	88	67	-21
Other	419	689	270
<5	591	729	138
<b>size group</b>			
5 <20	335	408	73
20 < 50	210	212	2
50 <100	122	144	22
>=100	126	137	11
<b>TOTAL</b>	1384	1630	246
<b>HORTICULTURAL CROPS</b>			
1 peas_and_beans_v	502.5011	#	
2 peas_and_beans_c	92	#	
3 allover_vegsalad_v	1210.016	1568.0	357.9
4 allover_vegsalad_c	141	124	-16.9
5 totveg_inopen_v	1712.517	1982.9	270.4
6 totveg_inopen_c	161	150	-10.7
7 area_glass_plastic_v	#	51.1	51.1
8 area_glass_plastic_c	#	98	98
9 topfruit_v	601.866	458.6	-143.2
10 topfruit_c	154	122	-32.1
11 smallfruit_v	42.66005	37.9	-4.8
12 smallfruit_c	29	23	-6.4
13 total_fruit_v	644.526	496.5	-148.0
14 total_fruit_c	169	159	-10.2
15 hardynursery_v	54.15382	62.6	8.5
16 hardynursery_c	39	38	-0.6
17 bulbs_flowers_v	#	#	

	#	Bulbs & flowers	[Holdings]	#
18 bulbs_flowers_c	2463.967		[Area]	2600.2
19 hort_v	369	Total Horticulture	[Holdings]	317
20 hort_c	873	LABOUR		
farmers_full_v	593	Farmers, Director	[Number]	746
farmers_full_c	998	Farmers, Director	[Holdings]	520
farmers_part_v	740	Farmers, Director	[Number]	986
farmers_part_c	115	Farmers, Director	[Holdings]	715
managers_full_v	64	Managers full time	[Number]	117
managers_full_c	28	Managers full time	[Holdings]	64
managers_part_v	28	Managers part time	[Number]	41
managers_part_c	28	Managers part time	[Holdings]	38
emp_male_full_v	385	Male workers full	[Number]	253
emp_male_full_c	169	Male workers full	[Holdings]	141
emp_male_part_v	147	Male workers part	[Number]	136
emp_male_part_c	76	Male workers part	[Holdings]	100
emp_female_full_v	109	Female workers full	[Number]	74
emp_female_full_c	48	Female workers full	[Holdings]	41
emp_female_part_v	232	Female workers part	[Number]	148
emp_female_part_c	100	Female workers part	[Holdings]	82
casual_v	754	Casual workers	[Number]	674
casual_c	159	Casual workers	[Holdings]	94
labour_v	3640	Total Labour	[Holdings]	3174
labour_c	1182	Total Labour	[Holdings]	1058

136.2  
-52  
-127  
-73  
-12  
-25  
2  
0  
13  
10  
-132  
-28  
-11  
24  
-35  
-7  
-84  
-18  
-80  
-65  
-466  
-124