

Wychavon District Council Agriculture & Migrant Workers Policy Development Panel

Report of the panel - June 2009.



Foreword by the Chairman of the Panel, Councillor Mrs Audrey Steel

Once again it is my pleasure to present to you the ongoing work undertaken by members and officers at Wychavon and again I was elected Chairman of the Panel.

The remit of the Panel on this occasion was to take up, in particular, the issues of housing and employment in relation to migrant workers and their families, the impact on the local population, what changes had taken place since the first report in 2004 and what trends could be expected in the future.

I should make it clear that the Panel was not a decision making body of the Council, but rather an information gathering group which then informed the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Executive Board who both gave this second report their full support.

Our findings - as in the original Panel report - were not always in line with popular opinion but rather reflect the actual scenario.

We met at regular dates during the summer of 2008 and managed to meet our deadline for completion, but due to pressure on officers' time this final report has been delayed.

I would like to thank the Panel members, Cllrs. Mrs Jean Dowty, Mrs Judy Pearce, Mrs Emma Stokes and Keith Wright for their commitment to this work and particularly Wychavon officers for all their support in setting up meetings, visits, getting representatives to come and give us evidence from a wide range of organisations and businesses and for putting all of the information we gathered into a readable form so producing this final version.

Finally may I remind readers that this work is ongoing and as there are issues still to be addressed there may well be a call for further updates in the future.

I trust you will find this report useful.

Councillor Audrey Steel

Executive Board Member for Community
Engagement and Rural Affairs

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1. Introduction

The Development Control (Policy) Committee considered the re-appointment of the former Vale of Evesham Agriculture and Food Distribution Policy Development Panel at its meeting on 13 December 2007. As nearly four years had passed since the production of the original report and recommendations, it was felt that it was time to review the progress of the earlier recommendations and to review current agriculture and food distribution matters in the Vale of Evesham.

The Executive Board agreed that the Panel be re-established and asked that the original Terms of Reference be reviewed by the Head of Planning in consultation with Councillors Mrs Audrey Steel, Mrs Jean Dowty and Mrs Judy Pearce.

The revised Terms of Reference were recommended for approval by the Development Control (Policy) Committee on 21 February 2008 and agreed by the Executive Board on 4 March 2008.

The revised terms of reference for the Panel are:

- To improve awareness of the scale and characteristics of migrant workers in the area and examine their impact on local communities and services, including housing, employment, health and education. Measures to manage this impact will be examined.
- To continue to investigate, and to promote, best practice in dealing with lorry generating uses in the distribution sector, including options for relocation, such as Vale Park.
- To further analyse the implications that high volume food packing and distribution uses have on the character of rural areas and provide an evidence base for the development of the policy framework for these uses through the South Worcestershire Joint Core Strategy.
- To continue to ascertain the effect, in terms across the board, of the continually changing practices of growers and employers in the District.

It was agreed that Panel Members be appointed and that the Panel report back to Development Control (Policy) Committee and Executive Board in addition to Overview and Scrutiny.

The Panel was constituted of 5 Members:

Councillor Mrs Audrey Steel (Chairman)

- Executive Board Member for Community Engagement and Rural Affairs and Ward Member for Inkberrow.

Councillor Mrs Jean Dowty

- Chairman of Development Control Committee and Ward Member for Ombersley.

Councillor Mrs Judy Pearce

- Deputy Leader, Executive Board Member for Planning, Housing and Health and Ward Member for Dodderhill.

Councillor Mrs Emma Stokes

- Vice-Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Team Leader of Performance & Monitoring Scrutiny Team, Vice-Chairman of Standards Committee and Ward Member for Bengeworth.

Councillor Keith Wright

- Ward Member for Bretforton and Offenham.

In order to reflect the changes in issues relating to the agriculture and food production industry in the Vale of Evesham over the last four years or so, the Panel decided at its first meeting that it should be renamed. The Panel subsequently became known as The Agriculture and Migrant Workers Policy Development Panel.

The Panel met on eight occasions, on 14 April, 12 May, 23 June, 14 July, 28 July, 15 September, 6 October and 27 October. Appropriate guests were invited to address the Panel on associated issues, as detailed in the minutes of meetings available as appendices, and the Panel spent a very interesting and informative day in June in Herefordshire in the company of Officers and Members of Herefordshire Council. The day included a visit to an established fruit grower there.

During 2008, Wychavon District Council participated in the Improvement and Development Agency's 'Migration Excellence' programme. This resulted in the production of a 'Mini Scenarios' Report, highlighting four possible future outcomes for the District based on migration patterns. The panel were very keen to incorporate this work, by Sheila Moorcroft and Andrew Myers, within this report. The summary is therefore re-produced at section 4, and the full report and data appendix are at Appendix I.

2. Summary of recommendations

The following is the full list of recommendations. In the main report, these are set out under the relevant part of the terms of reference.

1. We believe that the government's methods of calculating the number of migrant workers at the national level, let alone the local level, is poor and needs overhauling. In particular, the government needs to introduce a system of counting migrants departing the country so that more accurate statistics can be made available to support local authorities and partners in planning the delivery of services.
2. We acknowledge that local employers face stiff competition from other parts of the UK and abroad. Both employers themselves and the Local Authorities have a role to play in ensuring that Wychavon and Worcestershire are seen as attractive places to live and work. We support the welcome development of the Welcome to Worcestershire website and expect employers to help in the development and ongoing support.
3. We support the Government's aim to encourage highly skilled migrants to come to the UK to help fill the 'skills gap' but we urge the Government to re-consider its decision to stop the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme from 2010. There is clear evidence that the loss of students through this scheme has resulted in difficulties for growers and this will get worse should the decrease in Eastern European migration continue.
4. We consider that the public, private, and voluntary sectors have an important role to play in community cohesion as does the church and in particular the Catholic Church. Parish Councils could, for instance, organise events in villages together with local employers to help break down barriers. Where appropriate, the District Council and other bodies should support these activities. We support the developing proposals for funding from Sport England to help integrate migrant workers into sports activities and expect that employers, parish councils and other organisations are made aware of this project and actively participate.
5. We encourage the production and sharing of best practice and clear messages on communications throughout the county in relations to the positive impact of migration both on the economy and on the cultural benefits to the county. We note and welcome the development of the Worcestershire Partnership Emerging Communities Theme Group which is pursuing this in line with its terms of reference.
6. In order to attract and retain migrant workers to the area consideration should be given to the development of an accredited employer scheme which would give appropriate recognition to standards of working conditions, accommodation, social and health well being support. This could be developed in co-operation with the Gangmasters Licensing Authority (GLA). Wychavon District Council would be willing to participate in this as a pilot with the GLA.
7. In light of evidence received from employers we consider that the GLA should consider less frequent inspections for those employers who reach a high standard of compliance as set out in recommendation 6. We note the BERR regulators compliance code advises that businesses should not have to provide information twice, and it appears that the GLA may not be compliant with this code at the present time.
8. We encourage the GLA to meet on a quarterly basis with local growers and Wychavon DC officers to ensure that there is a clear understanding of policies and operational issues.
9. We urge local colleges and other providers of tuition in English as a second language to work with Wychavon District Council to develop a flexible approach to work based English language tuition.
10. That the Council investigates houses shared by multiple households in a co-ordinated manner across service areas to help ensure compliance with statutory requirements e.g. planning, Housing Act, Building Regulations, Fire Regulations etc., balancing the need to ensure the provision of adequate and safe housing, the need to preserve our heritage, and the need to regenerate our less economically successful areas. In particular a task group should be set up to investigate the housing situation in the Port Street area, and work closely with the

Townscape Heritage Initiative to ensure there is a joined up approach to regeneration in the area.

11. That employers ensure that any accommodation - whether temporary or permanent - they provide for migrant workers complies with all statutory requirements.
12. In making development control decisions, the District Council and the relevant highway authority should have due regard to the unique characteristics of the road network and the pattern of lorry movements in the Vale and moreover, the implications for traffic growth away from the limited principal road network.
13. All those involved in the industry that approach us regarding future plans and proposals should be made fully aware of the amenity problems caused by 24 hour traffic movements off the principal road network and where rural communities are affected, and they should be encouraged, in conjunction with their principal clients (the supermarkets) seek to regulate such movements.
14. That a review of highway signage in the Vale of Evesham and the affected strategic road network in the area (including the M5 and A46 linkages) should be undertaken by both the affected highway authorities possibly via the Freight Quality Partnership and in conjunction with and supported by the industry itself with the aim of rationalising and clarifying road signage on a strategic basis.
15. The Council's general approach to not allowing residential development on vacated sites be continued as it represents a sound basis for good development control and also reflects the district's housing supply situation in strategic planning policy terms. Any exceptions to this approach would need to be very extenuating and have substantial benefits for local communities. The Panel recommends that an appropriate policy be developed through a Development Plan Document or a Supplementary Planning Document in the Local Development Framework.
16. The County Councils commitment to solving the need for good, large, secure, overnight lorry parking in the vicinity of Evesham is welcomed. Any proposals for lorry parks in the Vale should be based on a sound strategic case supported by the Freight Transport Association and other representative bodies. Such proposals will be considered favourably if sufficient demand is proven locally and the site conditions in development control terms are favourable.
17. That the work of the Cross boundary Issues Group continue to be supported by the Council and the 6 participating Councils be encouraged to work together to limit the impact of HGV movements throughout the Vale of Evesham by securing an agreed common approach.
18. That the Local Highway Authorities be encouraged to take note of the concerns of the industry about the lack of co-ordination in the execution of road maintenance projects, and the consequent effects upon businesses.
19. That Local Highway Authorities be encouraged to lobby producers of satellite navigation systems for HGVs to remove routes unsuitable for HGVs from their systems.
20. The Panel recognises the importance of a number of 'primary' suppliers to the supermarkets and the Council should be particularly aware in decision making about the planning and community issues when such businesses have to expand. Where suppliers/ producers are not located on the principal road network, the Council should give support (especially to primary suppliers) to find more suitable sites for expansion.
21. That any new packhouses should be constructed adjacent the main road network to ensure satisfactory access by HGVs unless it can be demonstrated that there are overriding reasons that they need to be located on a farm holding. The need to consider such developments outside of established settlement boundaries will need to be considered.
22. That extensions to existing packhouses and food processing premises shall only be allowed where it can be demonstrated that the development will not result in an increase in HGV movements, or they are required to serve the adjacent land holding. Section 106 agreements should be required to ensure the packhouse remains linked to a farmholding.

23. That applications for new or improved facilities at the premises of established growers are considered on their merits, taking into account the needs of the industry, the impact of the development on local residents, and the ability of the local road network to accommodate any additional traffic likely to be generated by the development.
24. Haulage and other HGV-generating businesses in the Vale of Evesham should continue to be encouraged to relocate to Vale Park, and incentives for them to do so should continue to be investigated. The Council should ensure that such vacated sites are only occupied in the future by appropriate businesses and activities that generate minimal HGV movements. The potential option of negotiating the freehold interest of such sites is seen by the Panel as a good way of ensuring the Council retains control over future uses of such sites, and recommends this as a way forward.
25. The Panel recommends that the Council should produce a guidance leaflet strongly advising that farmers and other stakeholders in the food production business always seek advice from the Council on the siting of mobile homes and any other potential developments or changes on their sites, whether planning permission is required or not, in the interest of the character of the rural area. Issues regarding siting and landscaping are very important, as is the need for the development of transport plans utilising appropriate local and strategic routes suitable for accommodating HGV traffic away from centres of population within the Vale of Evesham. The guidance should make quite clear the need to obtain planning permission for all accommodation other than that removed at the end of each growing season.
26. That all applicants for development affecting new or existing processing or distribution facilities, including packhouses, are advised to submit transport assessments and, where appropriate, workplace travel plans and lorry control plans with any planning applications to enable the Council to properly consider the proposals. The absence of such comprehensive information could result in a refusal of permission if the Council is not satisfied with the impact on traffic movements.
27. That when granting planning permission for large development schemes in the countryside, conditions be attached requiring the implementation of structural landscaping schemes in advance of commencement of the development
28. That the implementation of landscaping conditions imposed upon major developments be vigorously monitored.
29. That a pilot scheme for the "Whole Farm" approach be identified and progressed to allow the Council to assess its benefit in relation to the assessment of large scale farm developments, including accommodation for workers, glasshouses and polytunnels, taking into account the potential staff resource implications
30. That the Council should support the principle of small scale, on site permanent accommodation for resident casual workers where a robust case has been made. On site accommodation proposals, or those nearby to premises in the rural areas, should be assessed against the countryside protection and residential amenity planning policy framework. This should be subject to new build facilities being controlled by way of a planning obligation to prevent unrestricted residential usage. If there is a continuing demand for such accommodation the Council should consider the adoption of a Supplementary Planning Document to facilitate development control decisions.
31. That the industry is advised to have due regard to the requirements of the Council's Housing Services Unit, planning and any other legislative implications of any change of use of properties to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), especially in the urban areas, and that advice is always taken from the appropriate bodies prior to the commencement of any use.
32. That an electronic database of temporary planning permissions for on-site accommodation for temporary farm workers is established to enable the farmers or producers to be contacted towards the end of the temporary period. The farmers or producers will be reminded of the need to remove the accommodation, or of the need to apply for further planning permission if they wish to retain them. A further aspect of this monitoring will be a request for written confirmation of the agricultural status of the occupants.

3. The report

Considerations of the Panel Against The Terms of Reference

As a Panel we have sought to limit our investigations to reviewing the 2004 report recommendations and to those matters set out in the revised terms of reference. To some extent this has been difficult because of the wide-ranging nature of the topic area and because many individuals with whom we had dealings had particular issues that they wanted to be conveyed. This report cannot deal with all such issues and it concentrates on the matters relevant to the terms of reference. It is clear that we devoted a large proportion of our time to labour and migrant worker related issues.

Recommendations carried forward from the February 2004 report of the Vale of Evesham Agriculture and Food Distribution Policy Development Panel.

Progress made against the recommendations of the previous Panel, as at April 2008, is detailed in Appendix III (Minute Item 9, meeting 12 May 2008). It was recognised that whilst many of the earlier recommendations had been implemented, some had not progressed as well as had been hoped, and others were beyond the control of the Council. Where considered appropriate, it was agreed that some of the outstanding recommendations from February 2004 be reviewed and carried forward in this report. Some have been slightly reworded to reflect changed circumstances since 2004.

The Findings and Recommendations of the Panel

3.1 To improve awareness of the scale and characteristics of migrant workers in the area and examine their impact on local communities and services, including housing, employment, health and education. Measures to manage this impact will be examined.

The panel heard from a variety of organisations when considering this element of the terms of reference.

At the meeting of the 12th May, the panel met with Andrew Rudd, Worcestershire County Council Principal Research Officer, Sergeant Phil Stayte, West Mercia Police, and Jamie Jacobsen, Job Centre Plus. Additionally, Dee Bough, Andrew Billborough and Kirstie May-Jones were present from

Wychavon District Council's Housing team. On June 23rd, the panel met with Members and officers from Herefordshire Council and then went to Withers Farm near Ledbury

On July 28th the panel met with John Paxton, the Social Responsibility Officer for the Diocese of Worcester and Paul Southall of DS Southall and Sons who farm at Crossway Green in the north west of the Wychavon district. The panel also received a report on the focus groups carried out with members of the Polish community in Evesham as part of Wychavon District Council's involvement in the Improvement and Development Agency's Migration Excellence Programme.

On the 15th September, the panel heard from Andrew Billie and John Matthews of Evesham Vale Growers and also from Sheila Moorcroft and Andrew Myers of Research for Tomorrow Today, who have produced a 'mini-scenarios' report as part of Wychavon District Council's involvement in the Improvement and Development Agency's Migration Excellence Programme. At the same meeting, the panel were also provided with a report from the agricultural census by Chris Brooks, and with a record of planning applications relating to agriculture and horticulture since 2001 by Kath Smith.

3.1.2 Provision of data

Some of Andrew Rudd's presentation we are unable to append to this report due to restrictions placed on the publication of statistics by the Border and Immigration Agency.

The main ways to calculate numbers of arrivals are by using National Insurance Number registrations, the Workers Registration Scheme and those people who come via the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme.

From A8 accession May 2004 until 06/07, there had been 2,540 National Insurance registrations within Wychavon. Almost 60% of these were of Polish. This information is available to be published in the appendix.

The information we are unable to publish relates to the Workers Registration Scheme. This scheme applies to all A8 nationals intending to work in the UK for longer than one month. However, anyone self-employed does not need to register, and there is no obligation on any A8 national to notify any Government department should they leave the country.

Work permits are used by employers to bring people in for specific vacancies when no suitable resident worker is available. In 2006, 80 work permits were granted in Wychavon.

The Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme has been in existence since the end of the Second World War. As a controlled scheme with specific numbers of people who arrive and leave in a co-ordinated manner, it has been a great help to agriculture and horticulture for many years. From 2008, the Government restricted it to people solely from Romania and Bulgaria, the A2 countries. The scheme is due to cease altogether by 2010.

At the meeting in September, the panel received a presentation from Sheila Moorcroft and Andrew Myers of Research for Tomorrow Today. Their report is included as an appendix.

The report includes a baseline of statistical information and builds on the work done by Andrew Rudd. It demonstrates that internal migration to Wychavon – ie by UK nationals from other parts of the UK – has been taking place at higher levels than international migration.

3.1.3 Police information

Sergeant Phil Stayte informed the panel that he did not consider there to be any significant crime issue relating to the number of migrant workers in Evesham. The main difficulty the police face is the resources required to translate when offences are committed. The most common offences are traffic related, either drink driving, or an unawareness of the different regulations that apply to vehicles in the UK. There is occasional trouble within a community group, and there have been a few incidents relating to issues in night clubs that are common to all groups of young people. Sergeant Stayte added that he found the new shops in Port Street in particular to be very helpful with informal translating, and in general very co-operative to the police. The police have also translated material into different languages and circulated this to local communities via these shops and other outlooks.

3.1.4 Employment

Jamie Jacobsen from Job Centre Plus reported that there is no evidence of Eastern European migrants claiming unemployment benefits. On the contrary, local companies and particularly within agriculture and horticulture depend on migrants to fill jobs that are not taken by local people. Unemployment in Evesham was well below 2% at the time of the meeting with the panel.

3.1.5 Housing issues within Evesham

The panel heard there was some concerns relating to private sector housing, particularly in the Port Street area of Evesham. The Housing Enforcement Team have powers under the Housing Act 2004 and the Environmental Protection Act 1990, however in order to investigate a property a complaint needs to have been received by the local authority. The Housing Team are then obliged to request an inspection in writing giving 24 hours notice to the Landlord. This makes it impossible to investigate cases of overcrowding with any element of surprise. The Housing Team also licenses Houses of Multiple Occupancy; however this is limited to 3 storey properties and or with 5 or more persons. This means the vast majority of properties occupied by migrant workers are not required to be licensed and without complaints the Housing Team do not have any powers to inspect them. There is anecdotal evidence of landlords behaving unethically, and also some evidence of planning regulations being flouted by property owners, but the Panel recognised there was little the Council could do in most cases.

At the focus groups held in July, and reported to the panel in July, there were allegations made by Polish people of abuses by landlords and agents in the provision of private sector housing. These allegations were followed up by a member of the team, however these were not proved either way. Despite these, Polish people remained, in general, very happy in Evesham.

3.1.6 Accommodation issues – on site

The panel visited Withers Farm in June, and were impressed by the standard of accommodation provided. Whilst there were a number of caravans, there was also a hostel on the farm. This housed just under 100 of the seasonal workers on the farm, in shared rooms. There was also a large shared kitchen, and the overall impression was of a building that looked like a ski chalet and felt like a youth hostel.

The owner of the farm, Mr George Leeds, provided on site facilities such as a football pitch, and also took workers on shopping trips into Ledbury. Mr Leeds was an advocate for the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme and for the use of migrant workers in general, without whom he stated his business would suffer.

At the panel's meeting in late July, they heard from Mr Paul Southall of DS Southall and Sons, of Norchard Farm, Crossway Green, in the north west of the District. As with Mr Leeds, Mr Southall is concerned about the future of his farm once he is no

longer able to use students via the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme. Mr Southall also arranges football matches for his workers, shopping trips on a weekly basis and also provides pool tables, internet access and various other social and pastoral care. The panel was particularly impressed by the way in which DS Southall and Sons integrate their staff with local activities and believe that other employers in the District could learn from this and replicate such activities together with Parish Councils.

The panel was concerned that much of the on-site accommodation in the Vale is provided by 'portacabins' and caravans. Whilst the vast majority of this accommodation is well maintained and meets statutory requirements, it is considered by many to be unsightly and basic. The 'mini-scenarios' report produced by Sheila Moorcroft and Andrew Myers of Research for Tomorrow Today, which was presented to the panel in September and published in mid October, recommends that good quality hostel accommodation is developed in order to keep attracting migrant workers into the Wychavon. The report also recommends investing to attract migrant workers and recognising the economic impact they make to the District.

3.1.7 Legal advice, social and cultural issues, and provision of English language tuition

The panel heard from the Rev John Paxton on July 28th about the role played by Ethnic Access Link in Worcester and its current funding concerns. Rev Paxton also highlighted the critical function that can be played by access to tuition in English language for migrant workers. At a meeting with local growers and gangmasters, Wychavon District Council's Regeneration Manger asked whether growers would support the provision of work-based English language tuition. The answer was positive, and Pershore College, which was also represented at the meeting, indicated a willingness to consider this rather than a classroom approach to the issue. The Rev Paxton also raised the issue of the welcome to Worcestershire website which will be developed as a tool to provide information to people intending on working within the county. It will be based on the successful welcome to Herefordshire website. We look forward to this website coming on stream in 2009.

The focus groups held with Polish people in Evesham at the end of June highlighted access to legal advice as the most pressing need for migrant workers.

3.1.8 Economic contribution of migrant workers

Both the farmers already mentioned spoke about the valuable economic contributions made by migrant workers as customers and tax payers in addition to the economic necessity of employing them because of the reluctance of local people to do the jobs on offer. This point was made again at the meeting on September 15th by Mr Andrew Billie and Mr John Matthews from Evesham Vale Growers. EVG always advertise in the job centre, but believe that some people only come to interviews to satisfy the requirements of their benefit entitlement. They have supermarket contracts to fulfil and need to have a flexible labour force to satisfy these demands. Along with the other farmers they have suffered because of the phasing out of the SAWS scheme and one of the consequences of this is that they are increasingly using Gangmasters again. This use had faded to a great extent as people were employed directly by the company, but with the reduction in SAWS students and the drop in numbers of Eastern European migrants as the UK economy declines, there is once again an increased reliance on gangmasters. Mr Billie also highlighted the vast logistical operation and the complexity involved in supplying supermarkets throughout the year. When unable to grow salad onions, either because of the time of year or, as happened both in 2007 and 2008 because of poor weather and flooding, they must be imported. EVG import salad onions from Senegal, Mexico and Egypt. In some cases, it is cheaper to import than to grow locally which is unsustainable from an environmental and economic point of view in the long term.

The panel acknowledges the vital input to the local economy of migrant workers. It is clear that the numbers of workers in the Vale in what are generally seen as unskilled jobs has supported and sustained an increase in other areas of work, including marketing, legal, personnel and back office staff. A decrease in numbers, whether through the changing economic circumstances or through the ceasing of the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme, would be detrimental to the local economy beyond agriculture and horticulture.

The 'mini-scenarios' report also highlights the importance of migrant workers to the local economy, and goes on to make recommendations on the importance of investing to attract and of improving conditions for migrants so that Wychavon remains an attractive destination in the face of competition from other parts of the UK.

3.1.9 Role of Gangmaster and the Gangmasters Licensing Authority (GLA)

Mr Billie and Mr Matthews explained that the GLA have made frequent visits to their farms and packhouses. EVG also have to comply with many other ethical trade initiatives and supermarket audits. Furthermore, the GLA are auditing both the labour supplier, or gangmaster, and the end user. This appears contrary to what was stated at a meeting chaired by Mr Peter Luff MP in November 2006 at the Northwick Hotel in Evesham. When asked the question 'what does a labour user have to do in order to comply with the GLA's licensing scheme?' the answer was given – 'use a licensed provider'. In practice this appears not to be the case, and local companies have to, amongst other things check their suppliers' vehicles and check each person's legal entitlement to work in the UK before they can be allowed to start a shift. This appears to be contrary to advice provided by BERR in their code of practice to regulators. It also has financial implications in terms of time and personnel input for employers.

3.1.10 Likely future scenarios

The Mini Scenarios report, attached as an appendix to this report, includes an executive summary, baseline information and the mini-scenarios. Sheila Moorcroft and Andrew Myers, the report authors, met the panel on the 15th September. The report clearly sets out the economic value of migration to the Vale of Evesham and the wider district. The great benefit of the mini-scenarios is that it takes the baseline information and third party interviews and turns them into four plausible scenarios that could take place in five years time. This report makes it clear that investing to attract, including the provision of good quality hostel accommodation and marketing the District as a desirable destination are all important factors in supporting the local economy in the future. The recommendations of that report should be read alongside the recommendations of the panel.

Recommendations

1. We believe that the government's methods of calculating the number of migrant workers at the national level, let alone the local level, is poor and needs overhauling. In particular, the government needs to introduce a system of counting migrants departing the country so that more accurate statistics can be made available to support local authorities and partners in planning the delivery of services.
2. We acknowledge that local employers face stiff competition from other parts of the UK and abroad. Both employers themselves and the Local Authorities have a role to play in ensuring that Wychavon and Worcestershire are seen as attractive places to live and work. We support the welcome development of the Welcome to Worcestershire website and expect employers to help in the development and ongoing support.
3. We support the Government's aim to encourage highly skilled migrants to come to the UK to help fill the 'skills gap' but we urge the Government to re-consider its decision to stop the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme from 2010. There is clear evidence that the loss of students through this scheme has resulted in difficulties for growers and this will get worse should the decrease in Eastern European migration continue.
4. We consider that the public, private, and voluntary sectors have an important role to play in community cohesion as does the church and in particular the Catholic Church. Parish Councils could, for instance, organise events in villages together with local employers to help break down barriers. Where appropriate, the District Council and other bodies should support these activities. We support the developing proposals for funding from Sport England to help integrate migrant workers into sports activities and expect that employers, parish councils and other organisations are made aware of this project and actively participate.
5. We encourage the production and sharing of best practice and clear messages on communications throughout the county in relations to the positive impact of migration both on the economy and on the cultural benefits to the county. We note and welcome the development of the Worcestershire Partnership Emerging Communities Theme Group which is pursuing this in line with its terms of reference.

6. In order to attract and retain migrant workers to the area consideration should be given to the development of an accredited employer scheme which would give appropriate recognition to standards of working conditions, accommodation, social and health well being support. This could be developed in co-operation with the Gangmasters Licensing Authority (GLA). Wychavon District Council would be willing to participate in this as a pilot with the GLA.
7. In light of evidence received from employers we consider that the GLA should consider less frequent inspections for those employers who reach a high standard of compliance as set out in recommendation 6. We note the BERR regulators compliance code advises that businesses should not have to provide information twice, and it appears that the GLA may not be compliant with this code at the present time.
8. We encourage the GLA to meet on a quarterly basis with local growers and Wychavon DC officers to ensure that there is a clear understanding of policies and operational issues.
9. We urge local colleges and other providers of tuition in English as a second language to work with Wychavon District Council to develop a flexible approach to work based English language tuition.
10. That the Council investigates houses shared by multiple households in a co-ordinated manner across service areas to help ensure compliance with statutory requirements e.g. planning, Housing Act, Building Regulations, Fire Regulations etc., balancing the need to ensure the provision of adequate and safe housing, the need to preserve our heritage, and the need to regenerate our less economically successful areas. In particular a task group should be set up to investigate the housing situation in the Port Street area, and work closely with the Townscape Heritage Initiative to ensure there is a joined up approach to regeneration in the area.
11. That employers ensure that any accommodation – whether temporary or permanent - they provide for migrant workers complies with all statutory requirements.

3.2. To continue to investigate, and to promote, best practice in dealing with lorry generating uses in the distribution sector, including options for relocation, such as Vale Park.

3.2.1. Transportation Matters

This is one area in which the Panel considers there has been little progress since 2004, and over which Wychavon has limited direct control but many concerns. The overall road infrastructure inadequacies, amenity issues, concerns about foreign lorry movements, road maintenance and traffic management issues all, to a large extent, remain as before. As a result, the Panel agreed that it was appropriate that a number of recommendations relating to transportation matters should be pulled through from the previous report.

The Panel benefitted from a written update of the work of the Vale of Evesham Freight Quality Partnership (FQP). By working together, Officers of Worcestershire, Warwickshire and Gloucestershire County Councils have been able to produce a traffic flow map which helps to identify those routes with the greatest heavy goods vehicle (HGV) movements. Subsequently a Vale of Evesham Advisory Lorry Route Map has been produced which has been distributed to all known operators and HGV generators in the Vale area, through the Road Haulage Association and the Freight Transport Association.

Gloucestershire County Council's commitment to trial 'Lorry Management Zones' to help manage the use of HGVs with the Cotswold AONB has prevented progress with providing HGV route signing within the Vale area. Furthermore the Panel is very concerned that this action by Gloucestershire County Council could result in an increase in HGVs on inappropriate roads within Wychavon.

It is stated that Worcestershire County Council is committed to solving the need for good, large, secure overnight lorry parking facilities within the County. Three additional lorry parking locations have been identified: Kidderminster, off the A449; Worcester, near to Junction 6 of the M5; and Evesham, near to the A46 (Vale Park is identified as an ideal location).

The FQP continues to meet every 3 months to discuss local issues and to disseminate information, but is constrained by limited financial resources, and redirection of priorities following flood events.

Simon Higgins, Area Manager of the Road Haulage Association, gave the Panel a resumé of the results of a survey undertaken amongst businesses in the Vale of Evesham, to discover the problems they experienced with the movement of HGVs to and from their premises.

Many of the companies involved import goods throughout the year, with more goods being imported during late winter and early spring. Most of the companies accept deliveries from 6.00am to 8.00pm, with a few remaining open 24 hours a day. The survey emphasised the need for a lorry park in the area, the problems of foreign drivers getting lost, the need for more Government funding for road infrastructure maintenance, and the lack of adequate signage.

Members of the Panel discussed the problems caused by slavish reliance upon satellite navigation systems which result in many HGVs becoming stuck and/or causing damage to property, bridges and roadside verges, and extreme inconvenience and annoyance for local residents. It is understood that action is taking place in Somerset to try to reduce the likelihood of this happening.

Recommendations

12. In making development control decisions, the District Council and the relevant highway authority should have due regard to the unique characteristics of the road network and the pattern of lorry movements in the Vale and moreover, the implications for traffic growth away from the limited principal road network.
13. All those involved in the industry that approach us regarding future plans and proposals should be made fully aware of the amenity problems caused by 24 hour traffic movements off the principal road network and where rural communities are affected, and they should be encouraged, in conjunction with their principal clients (the supermarkets) seek to regulate such movements.
14. That a review of highway signage in the Vale of Evesham and the affected strategic road network in the area (including the M5 and A46 linkages) should be undertaken by both the affected highway authorities possibly via the Freight Quality Partnership and in conjunction with and supported by the industry itself with the aim of rationalising and clarifying road signage on a strategic basis.
15. The Council's general approach to not allowing residential development on vacated sites be continued as it represents a sound basis for good development control and also reflects the district's housing supply situation in strategic planning policy terms. Any exceptions to this approach would need to be very extenuating and have substantial benefits for local communities. The Panel recommends that an appropriate policy be developed through a Development Plan Document or a Supplementary Planning Document in the Local Development Framework.
16. The County Councils commitment to solving the need for good, large, secure, overnight lorry parking in the vicinity of Evesham is welcomed. Any proposals for lorry parks in the Vale should be based on a sound strategic case supported by the Freight Transport Association and other representative bodies. Such proposals will be considered favourably if sufficient demand is proven locally and the site conditions in development control terms are favourable.
17. That the work of the Cross boundary Issues Group continue to be supported by the Council and the 6 participating Councils be encouraged to work together to limit the impact of HGV movements throughout the Vale of Evesham by securing an agreed common approach.
18. That the Local Highway Authorities be encouraged to take note of the concerns of the industry about the lack of co-ordination in the execution of road maintenance projects, and the consequent effects upon businesses.
19. That Local Highway Authorities be encouraged to lobby producers of satellite navigation systems for HGVs to remove routes unsuitable for HGVs from their systems.
20. The Panel recognises the importance of a number of 'primary' suppliers to the supermarkets and the Council should be particularly aware in decision making about the planning and community issues when such businesses have to expand. Where suppliers/ producers are not located on the principal road network, the Council should give support (especially primary suppliers) to find more suitable sites for expansion.

21. That any new packhouses should be constructed adjacent the main road network to ensure satisfactory access by HGVs unless it can be demonstrated that there are overriding reasons that they need to be located on a farm holding. The need to consider such developments outside of established settlement boundaries will need to be considered.
22. That extensions to existing packhouses and food processing premises shall only be allowed where it can be demonstrated that the development will not result in an increase in HGV movements, or they are required to serve the adjacent land holding. Section 106 agreements should be required to ensure the packhouse remains linked to a farmholding.
23. That applications for new or improved facilities at the premises of established growers are considered on their merits, taking into account the needs of the industry, the impact of the development on local residents, and the ability of the local road network to accommodate any additional traffic likely to be generated by the development.

3.2.2 Relocation Options

Vic Allison, Deputy Managing Director and Head of Resources, updated the Panel on the situation relating to the provision of land at Vale Park in Evesham for the relocation of HGV-generating business in the Vale of Evesham. Outline planning permission was granted on 5 October 2006 for Phase 2 of Vale Park, and within that is the provision for 10 acres of serviced land to be conveyed to the Council for this purpose. Following the limited success in encouraging such businesses to Council-owned land within Phase 1 of the development, the Council is considering offering land within Phase 2 to appropriate companies for no cost. This would be on the understanding that the Council would then be able to acquire the existing land and premises of such companies at nil cost, in order to be able to control the future use of the sites. Vic was able to inform the Panel of potentially interested companies in such an agreement.

Recommendation

24. Haulage and other HGV-generating businesses in the Vale of Evesham should continue to be encouraged to relocate to Vale Park, and incentives for them to do so should continue to be investigated. The Council should ensure that such vacated sites are only occupied in the future by appropriate businesses and activities that generate minimal HGV movements. The

potential option of negotiating the freehold interest of such sites is seen by the Panel as a good way of ensuring the Council retains control over future uses of such sites, and recommends this as a way forward.

3.3 To further analyse the implications high volume food packing and distribution uses on the character of rural areas and provide an evidence base of the development of the policy framework for these uses through the South Worcestershire Joint Core Strategy.

3.3.1 The Planning Policy Framework

The 2004 report of the Vale of Evesham Agriculture and Food Distribution Policy Development Panel outlined the planning policy situation relating to agricultural, farming and food distribution matters pertaining at that time. The updated policy framework is outlined below.

3.3.2 National Planning Policy

Subsequent to the publication of the previous Panel report in February 2004, the Government produced Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (August 2004). The Government's key objectives for rural areas are stated to be:

- I) To raise the quality of life and the environment in rural areas;
- II) To promote more sustainable patterns of development;
- III) Promoting the English regions by improving their economic performance so that all are able to reach their full potential; and
- IV) To promote sustainable, diverse and adaptable agricultural sectors.

The main message in this Policy Statement relevant to this report is that Local Planning Authorities should "...support development proposals that will enable farming and farming communities to:

- I) become more competitive, sustainable and environmentally friendly;
- II) adapt to new and changing markets;
- III) comply with changing legislation and associated guidance;
- IV) diversify into new agricultural opportunities (eg. renewable energy crops); or
- v) broaden their operations to 'add value' to their primary produce."

3.3.3 Regional Planning Policy

Regional Planning Guidance for the West Midlands (RPG 11) was adopted in June 2004. Already this is being revised, with the Draft Phase 2 Revision currently at Preferred Option Consultation stage (Phase 1 related solely to the Black Country). The step change in urban and rural renaissance is still at the heart of the emerging revised Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), with the overriding rural renaissance policy (RR1) in the Preferred Options report (Dec 2007) stating:

“Rural areas of the West Midlands will be regenerated through improvement of choice in housing; the diversification of the rural economy; better transport links both within rural areas and between urban and rural areas; improving health, education, skills training, social, shopping, community facilities and other services, the sustainable use of environmental assets, and the prudent use of natural resources”

The strategy recognises the importance of market towns, such as Evesham, to their hinterland, and their important role in the regeneration of rural areas. Access to services is recognised as critical to the quality of life in rural areas, and the improvement of public transport facilities between the town and its hinterland is one aspect of this.

Policy PA14 of the Preferred Options identifies the need to:

“... support the sustainable diversification and development of the rural economy through the growth of existing businesses and the creation of new enterprise. This should be undertaken in ways that meet local employment needs, maintain viable and sustainable local communities, conserve and enhance environmental assets and respect local character and distinctiveness.”

Agriculture is seen as one of the most important activities in the region's rural areas, with strong inter-dependency with many other sectors. Policy PA15 states:

“...Development Plans should include positive policies to promote agriculture and farm diversification through the development of innovative business schemes including sustainable tourism, environmentally sustainable farming, forestry and land management, new and innovative crops, on-farm processing adding value to existing

production and the promotion of local marketing and supply chains. Any development should be appropriate in scale and nature to the environment and character of the locality.”

Furthermore, “Environmental improvement is a key component of the Spatial Strategy in order to underpin the overall quality of life of all areas and support wider economic and social objectives (Policy QE1)”

The Regional Strategy echoes the Government's objectives for a more sustainable transport system, obtainable by the direction of economic growth to locations served by a number of modes of transport to reduce reliance upon the car. However, it is recognised that some businesses in rural areas are frequently serviced by large vehicles that cause damage to roads and raise perceptions of safety concerns.

The Preferred Options of the RSS Phase 2 Review are to be subject to an Examination in Public commencing in April 2009. Phase 3 of the RSS Review is to look further into rural services and the environment

3.3.4 Worcestershire County Structure Plan

This Plan, which was adopted in June 2001, provides a statement of the overall strategy for development and the use of land in Worcestershire for the period 1996-2011. This strategy is promoted through policies which seek to retain and enhance the County's environmental assets and the distinctiveness of the local environment and to direct development to locations where the need to travel is minimised. The Structure Plan also endeavours to provide for a policy background which will work towards a better balance between housing, employment, social and community facilities within settlements and encourage urban and rural regeneration.

There are few specific policies within the Structure Plan relating to agriculture. Policy D29, which gives priority to employment purposes when proposals for the change of use of building in rural areas are considered, contains the restriction that development would generate HGVs on unsuitable roads should not be granted planning permission. Policy D30 supports proposals for the diversification of agriculture units as long as they protect the rural environment and promote sustainable development; and, where possible, are contained within the farm complex.

It is, perhaps, indicative of the fact that the Structure Plan was adopted prior to the PPS and the Regional Planning Guidance (RSS) that it does not contain more policies relating specifically to rural areas or to the need to promote economic activity in the countryside.

3.3.5 Wychavon District Local Plan

The current Local Plan was adopted in June 2006 and provides the planning policy framework for the District to 2011.

The relevant policies promote limited economic expansion within the rural parts of Wychavon but put great emphasis on protection of the rural character of the area and the restriction of HGV traffic upon the rural road network. Policy ECON2 allows limited extensions to existing employment sites outside the main built up areas of settlements where the site is currently operating without adverse impact and the proposal is required to meet the needs of an established business.

Policies ECON3, ECON4 and ECON5 relate to existing food storage and distribution businesses operating in the Vale of Evesham Control Zone as defined in the SPG 'Lorries in the Vale of Evesham (2001). These policies provide for:-

- the relocation of these businesses to sites better situated on the main road network, provided that the relocation will result in transportation/environmental improvement and the proposed site is a brownfield site or adjacent to an established business activity;
- the allocation of 4 hectares of land adjacent to the Vale Business Park at Evesham to accommodate these businesses; and
- new B1, B2 and B8 uses, or expansions to existing, where it can be demonstrated that the use and scale of activity proposed will not generate an increase in HGV movements through any of the settlements in the zone, or only limited increases in certain specified circumstances.

The Plan recognises the importance of finding specific ways in which to assist rural regeneration and to provide for more sustainable rural communities. To minimise landscape impact and to encourage new employment development in the rural area, Policy ECON6 provides for small-scale employment development (B1 and B2) in locations immediately abutting settlements, having regard to the nature and character of those settlements.

Policy ECON7 permits development where it is reasonably necessary for agricultural or forestry

purposes, subject to it being seen in the context of existing buildings on the holding, unless there are special circumstances. Farm diversification is allowed by Policy ECON8 subject to certain criteria relating to the scale and appropriateness of the use. Any such development is, however, subject to the general development control criteria of Policy GD2 which requires that any development does not have unacceptable effects in terms of the appearance or character of the area, public amenity, health and safety, the ability of the transportation network, highway safety or a number of other detailed criteria.

Where planning permission is required for temporary agricultural dwellings, Policy COM9 requires a functional need for such accommodation to be demonstrated, evidence that these needs could not be met by an existing dwelling, or a converted building, and that it is sited to minimise its impact on the landscape. Proposals relating to permanent residential caravans are evaluated on the same criteria as for housing development. Proposals for permanent agricultural dwellings are subject to a number of criteria, detailed in Policy COM8, including a demonstrated functional need for a full-time worker to live on the site and a stringent financial test to give evidence of the future viability of the enterprise.

3.3.6 South Worcestershire Joint Core Strategy

The County Structure Plan and the Wychavon District Local Plan will be replaced in 2011 by the South Worcestershire Joint Core Strategy (SWJCS). This will set out the spatial planning framework for the long term development of South Worcestershire, ie. for the administrative boundaries of Worcester City, Malvern Hills and Wychavon District Council areas, to the year 2026. The overarching aim of the SWJCS will be to ensure that new development is sustainable.

The spatial vision in the Preferred Option document states that in 2026, in South Worcestershire:

“...there will remain at the heart of the area's character the traditional rural economy of farming and horticulture which will have been safeguarded and promoted as part of the specific rural developments that will have added to the vitality of the main villages.....there will be a higher quality environment in South Worcestershire to make it an even better place to live, work and enjoy life.”

Policy CS10 details the proposed spatial strategy for the villages in South Worcestershire, and recognises the needs to enhance the rural economy and to direct some growth to rural areas. Farm diversification, access to key services and the safeguarding of village facilities and services are all identified as critical to achieving the overall vision. There are no specific strategic policies relating to the agriculture or food production in the SWJCS Preferred Options document, but future Development Plan Documents and/or Supplementary Planning Documents can be produced when a need is identified to further detail elements of the overall strategy.

It is anticipated that the SWJCS will be subject to an Examination in Public in 2010 and adopted in early 2011.

The original intention of the Panel was to further analyse the implications of high volume food packing and distribution on the character of rural areas in order to provide an evidence for the development of the policy framework for these uses through the SWJCS. However, the timetable for the production of the SWJCS will not allow this to happen. Furthermore, being an overarching strategy for the South Worcestershire sub-region, the SWJCS is not an appropriate vehicle for the promotion and adoption of detailed development control policies relating to specific issues.

3.3.7 Development Control

In relation to the current local overall policy framework and detailed development control matters, there has been little change since 2004 as the current adopted Local Plan was in draft form at the time of the previous report. Then it was concluded that the production and distribution of food from the Vale of Evesham had outgrown its traditional roots and, in many cases, become a quasi-industrial operation. Investigation of planning applications submitted for agricultural workers' caravans, glasshouses and packhouses since 2001 demonstrated that there has been little change in the volume of produce or operational methods used to produce it. The Panel did, however, consider that more attention could be paid to landscaping to ensure that agricultural/horticultural development did not become a blot on the landscape.

The Panel considered that some of the previous recommendations were still very valid today, in the current planning policy framework, and these are repeated below. It was also noted that the guidance for farmers and other stakeholders relating to the siting of mobile homes, is still outstanding (previous

recommendation no. 2). This, too, has been carried forward, but reworded to take account rural character, amenity matters and wider transportation issues emanating from the food packing and distribution industry.

Recommendations

25. The Panel recommends that the Council should produce a guidance leaflet strongly advising that farmers and other stakeholders in the food production business always seek advice from the Council on the siting of mobile homes and any other potential developments or changes on their sites, whether planning permission is required or not, in the interest of the character of the rural area. Issues regarding siting and landscaping are very important, as is the need for the development of transport plans utilising appropriate local and strategic routes suitable for accommodating HGV traffic away from centres of population within the Vale of Evesham. The guidance should make quite clear the need to obtain planning permission for all accommodation other than that removed at the end of each growing season.
26. That all applicants for development affecting new or existing processing or distribution facilities, including packhouses, are advised to submit transport assessments and, where appropriate, workplace travel plans and lorry control plans with any planning applications to enable the Council to properly consider the proposals. The absence of such comprehensive information could result in a refusal of permission if the Council is not satisfied with the impact on traffic movements.
27. That when granting planning permission for large development schemes in the countryside, conditions be attached requiring the implementation of structural landscaping schemes in advance of commencement of the development
28. That the implementation of landscaping conditions imposed upon major developments be vigorously monitored.

We visited Herefordshire Council on 23 June 2008 where we were informed of the production of a draft Polytunnels Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). This is in response to the increasing use of polytunnels for agricultural soft fruit production, and is to replace a previous code of practice for growers which was not very successful in reducing the conflict between the needs of the growers and the

expectations of residents in terms of visual enjoyment of the countryside. The SDP, when adopted, is to help potential applicants to prepare their planning applications and will detail what issues the Council will expect to be addressed in planning applications. Bearing in mind that Herefordshire is the 3rd largest fruit growing area behind Kent and Scotland, the scale of the problem can be appreciated.

This information is very useful to us, but the Panel formed the opinion that the demand for polytunnels in Wychavon is not yet at a scale requiring specific detailed planning guidance. It is acknowledged that the situation could change in the future, when the matter could be re-assessed

What was of greater practical interest to the Panel was Herefordshire's adoption of a "Whole Farm approach" to planning applications. This is where the grower/farmer agrees to discuss a wide range of issues across the whole farm with the Planning Authority prior to the submission of a planning application, with a view to developing a partnership approach to the siting of polytunnels and/or other developments. The issues and constraints to be resolved include:

- Economic benefits
- Landscape impact
- On-site accommodation and associated facilities for temporary migrant workers
- Flood risk
- Surface water run-off
- Water resources
- Residential amenity for any nearby residents
- Public rights of way
- Ecology
- Setting of Listed Buildings
- Adequacy of local highway network

The holding is split into landscape character zones by which the parts of the farm which are suitable, and those which are not suitable, for polytunnels, or other proposed developments, are identified. We visited a farm which had adopted this approach in relation to polytunnels, Withers Farm, near Ledbury. This is regarded by Herefordshire Council as a good example of Best Practice. The end result of the "Whole Farm" approach in this instance was that approximately a third of the holding could be used for the production of fruit within polytunnels at any one time. The least visually intrusive areas of the farm had been identified and a percentage of these areas can be used on a rolling programme basis. An important part of the process involves the implementation of landscape mitigation, i.e.

reinstatement of hedgerows, planting of tree belts etc.

Whilst the Panel was very impressed with the methodology behind this "Whole Farm" approach, it was with concern that we noted that only one grower in Herefordshire had so far been willing to take part in this approach. Furthermore, a Planning Officer had spent around 5 years on this one project!. Nonetheless, the Panel was very impressed with the resulting quality of landscaping and the way that the polytunnels respected the character of the rolling countryside and remained largely screened in the landscape. Withers Farm was overall considered to be a very well run holding, but it was noted that packing and distribution took place from a separate location in Town, a short distance away.

Recommendation

29. That a pilot scheme for the "Whole Farm" approach be identified and progressed to allow the Council to assess its benefit in relation to the assessment of large scale farm developments, including accommodation for workers, glasshouses and polytunnels, taking into account the potential staff resource implications

Furthermore, the Panel spent some considerable time discussing accommodation for temporary Migrant Workers on farms. It was evident from the visit the Panel made to Withers Farm in Ledbury and from photographs produced by Graeme Duerden of other temporary accommodation on farms within Wychavon, that there is a wide discrepancy in the quality of accommodation provided, and the care in which it is positioned in the landscape. There was a debate on the merits of caravans/mobile homes as opposed to permanent accommodation, which tends to be more controlled by the planning system. From observation and information received by the Panel, it is certainly perceived that permanent accommodation is able to offer a better quality of living space with a good level of facilities closeby, eg., cooking and washing facilities. On the other hand, caravans and mobile homes are, in theory, temporary, and not permanent fixtures in the landscape. Members of the Panel expressed great concern of the large numbers of mobile homes on farms they are personally aware of that have been permanently sited for a number of years with no regard to the seasonal nature of their need. Regrettably, as planning permission is not required for temporary mobile homes used by seasonal workers, there is no easy consistent way to monitor these developments. Enforcement is very much reliant upon local information sources with respect to such temporary accommodation. However

Members of the Panel did request that we contact farmers and producers when the expiry of temporary planning permissions for on-site accommodation is approaching to request confirmation of their continuing need and their occupation by agricultural or horticultural workers.

Recommendations

30. That the Council should support the principle of small scale, on site permanent accommodation for resident casual workers where a robust case has been made. On site accommodation proposals, or those nearby to premises in the rural areas, should be assessed against the countryside protection and residential amenity planning policy framework. This should be subject to new build facilities being controlled by way of a planning obligation to prevent unrestricted residential usage. If there is a continuing demand for such accommodation the Council should consider the adoption of a Supplementary Planning Document to facilitate development control decisions.
31. That the industry is advised to have due regard to the requirements of the Council's Housing Services Unit, planning and any other legislative implications of any change of use of properties to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), especially in the urban areas, and that advice is always taken from the appropriate bodies prior to the commencement of any use.
32. That an electronic database of temporary planning permissions for on-site accommodation for temporary farm workers is established to enable the farmers or producers to be contacted towards the end of the temporary period. The farmers or producers will be reminded of the need to remove the accommodation, or of the need to apply for further planning permission if they wish to retain them. A further aspect of this monitoring will be a request for written confirmation of the agricultural status of the occupants.

3.4 To continue to ascertain the effect, in terms across the board, of the continually changing practices of growers and employers in the District.

There has been a general perception that the practices of growers and related employers across the District have been continually changing, with larger production units, more intensive production methods and greater reliance upon imported

produce with a related increase in transportation. The Panel was to assess the effect of these changes.

In practice, this appears to remain a perception, not borne out by evidence presented to the Panel. A study was undertaken of planning applications submitted for agricultural workers' caravans, glasshouses and packhouses since 2001. This showed that the numbers of planning applications within each of these categories has remained very modest over the last seven years, with no discernable increase. Details of these are contained in Appendix VII.

Furthermore, Chris Brooks presented statistics from the DEFRA census to the same meeting. These compared farm types, the numbers of units within specified size ranges, the horticultural crops grown and the numbers of employees involved between 2001 and 2007. The details are contained within Appendix VII, and show little variation overall. The total number of registered holdings has grown by 246 overall, from 1384 to 1630, with the greatest increase being in the small, 5 - 20 Ha range, indicating, perhaps, an increase in 'hobby farming'. There has been a slight increase in farms growing cereals, which has been compensated for by a decrease in farms specialising in pigs and poultry. In terms of holdings growing vegetables, there has been a slight increase in the area under production but a decrease in the number of holdings, but the differences are not significant. Regrettably, statistics for pea and bean production in 2007 are not available, presumably due to the summer floods. The statistics for 2007 indicate that vegetables are grown under glass or plastic over 51 Ha across 98 holdings, but comparative figures for 2001 are not available.

There has been little change in horticultural production, again a small increase in area and a slight decrease in the number of holdings.

Interestingly, there has been a slight decrease in the total labour force, from 1182 to 1058, with the largest decrease being in casual workers.

In the light of the evidence presented, the Panel did not consider it necessary to make recommendations under this term of reference. However, the panel did note the potential economic damage that could be caused in the District by any drop in the number of migrants. This has already been seen to some extent this year, and hence the panel recommendations in Section 1 to Government to re-consider its decisions to cease the Seasonal

Agricultural Workers Scheme. The Panel also considers that the recommendations of the mini-horizons report, below should be read alongside this report.

4. Wychavon Migrant workers mini scenario report - Executive Summary - Prepared by Sheila Moorcroft and Andrew Myers, October 2008

During 2008, Wychavon District Council participated in the Improvement and Development Agency's 'Migration Excellence' programme. This resulted in the production of a 'Mini Scenarios' Report, highlighting four possible future outcomes for the District based on migration patterns. The panel were very keen to incorporate this work, by Sheila Moorcroft and Andrew Myers, within this report. The following is a re-production of the Executive Summary complete with conclusions and recommendations. The full report and data appendix are at Appendix I.

Background and aims

In February 2004, Wychavon District Council published a report from the Vale of Evesham Agriculture and Food Distribution Policy Development Panel. This panel examined a range of issues linked to horticulture including transport and the impact of the industry on communities in the Vale of Evesham. It also looked in detail at the role of migrant workers and gangmasters.

Recommendation 37 of this report supported the call for Government to carry out detailed research into accurate measurement of the numbers of casual workers in the Food and Farming sector. It went on to state that the Vale of Evesham would make an appropriate pilot study.

With financial support from the Countryside Agency, Worcestershire Primary Care Trust and the Worcestershire Diocese, the research document 'The Extent, Size and Characteristics of the Migrant Workforce in the Vale of Evesham' was published in 2006. It found that migrant workers in horticulture are often skilled people with aspirations to move into other employment. They also make a positive contribution to the economy as tax payers and as customers for local businesses.

Local employers in the horticulture sector rely on them. With low unemployment and the work being very hard, local people seem not to want the jobs. Two years on from the publication of the research, it is clear that the picture is changing. As the British

economy slows down and the pound weakens, working in the UK is no longer as attractive as it was. The economies in Eastern Europe are improving and there are fewer people coming to the UK. Furthermore, restrictions on the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme have resulted in growers unable to pick crops. Local employers who, with the arrival of the Gangmasters Licensing Authority made conscious decisions to employ directly and not use labour providers, now have to turn back to these agencies to fill their labour needs.

Since late 2007, Wychavon District Council and partners from the private and public sector have been involved in the Improvement and Development Agency's 'Migration Excellence' programme. One of the objectives of this programme, agreed at a meeting with partners in late October 2007, is to carry out a 'horizon scanning' study.

Together with partners including the Worcestershire Partnership and as part of its long term planning, Wychavon District Council wishes to assess the significance of migrant workers in their local area, with particular reference to the impact on local population, housing and employment. They wished to use a 'mini scenario' approach to provide them with:

- A baseline measure of current migrant populations
- An assessment of exposure and risk
- A joined up working assessment
- Scenarios of different projections over the next 5-10 years
- A framework for updating the project

The main report summarises the key findings from our research.

Approach

Sheila Moorcroft and Andrew Myers used a combination of:

- Data collection from secondary sources such as the Institute for Public Policy Research report on migration
- Selection and analysis of original data sources such as the WRS database (Worker Registration Scheme)
- Interviews with local stakeholders – which took place during the first half of August

We have presented the detailed data tables and figures in a separate set of appendices, so that Wychavon has the full baseline data. The full report includes:

- The key baseline data in summary
- The trends and issues emerging from the analysis and the interviews which are likely to affect migrant workers in Wychavon, their role and impact in the local economy
- The key 'uncertainties' shaping four possible scenarios of the number of migrant workers in Wychavon in coming years
- Four scenarios outlining the impact, implications and risks to Wychavon, its population and economy of both increased and decreased numbers of migrant workers in the area
- Conclusions and recommendations

Why mini-scenarios?

This project has taken a futures approach and used mini scenarios as the mechanism for presenting the findings for several reasons.

Scenarios enable us to:

- Incorporate data, issues and inputs from a wide range of stakeholders and sources into an integrated view of the future context of the policy issues under consideration
- Explore different views of the future and their implications for Wychavon
- Recognise that the future is not only uncertain, but could develop in very different directions from the one we 'expect'
- Provide a framework for discussing wider issues and implications of future decisions
- Learn the lessons of futures we might neither want, nor expect.

The mini scenarios outlined in this report do not attempt to predict precisely what will happen; based on the stakeholder interviews, published reports and statistics they present informed views of possible outcomes.

In addition, in collaboration with Wychavon, IDeA also wanted to use this project as a means of demonstrating how futures could be used to explore and inform a more integrated look at local policy with regard to migration – or indeed any other area of policy.

The mini scenarios

Issues in developing the scenarios

From analysing the data, conducting the interviews and previous discussions with the project team, the critical 'uncertainties' – i.e. those issues /

developments which would create different outcomes and patterns of migration in the future – were the relative differences between the UK and the A8 economies, especially the 'feel good' factor of whether UK salaries, even for low paid jobs or jobs for which A8 migrants were over qualified, continued to provide a better offer than the local job market back home.

Emerging from that are a number of uncertainties

- Whether people continue to come and go in similar patterns as before – i.e. a revolving door – and what levels of growth / shortfall may emerge
- Whether those who come are of a similar skill level, work ethic etc
- The proportion of those who decide to remain on a long term/ permanent basis; short term 1-3 years; purely seasonal
- The proportion of those with dependents
- What movement there is in terms of job type – i.e. migrants 'moving up' (or down) in terms of more / less skilled work
- The levels of government imposed quotas for different skill levels affecting overall supply of migrants into the UK

Other trends and developments which are unlikely to change over the next 5-10 years and which need to be taken into consideration include:

- The continued attractiveness of Wychavon as a location to move to from the southeast and other areas
- The general trend of outward migration of younger people from Wychavon
- The overall ageing of the resident population in Wychavon.

Using these variables, we developed four different scenarios examining the impacts and implications of both shortfalls and increases in the numbers of migrants locally. The dominant characteristic in each case is:

- Significant reduction in numbers coming – of 20% - 30%
- A lesser reduction of 10 - 15%
- A continued supply of migrants but with a different composition in terms of origin and skill level
- A continued increase of 5% per annum – regardless of work availability.

While we have not used formal scenario frameworks, in each case, we have endeavoured to give a plausible set of circumstances which might lead to the rise / fall in migrants as postulated, and set those within the wider context of population and economic changes. These

scenarios are not forecasts or extrapolations from existing data. They are pictures of plausible futures 5 or so years out based on trends and issues identified and discussed during the research. The aim is to illustrate the potential implications of a variety of circumstances for the local economy, employment and housing of significant changes in future in the migrant population in Wychavon.

We have given each of the scenarios a name which reflects the core element differentiating that particular scenario.

Using the mini scenarios

The mini scenarios are not designed to provide clear cut detailed forecasts of the local employment or housing stock in each and every area of Wychavon. What they are designed to do is to raise awareness that the future could go in very different directions; alert people to the potential impacts and wider implications and interactions of a wider variety of trends and developments across the board.

The scenarios allow users to ask questions, see connections and raise issues that might otherwise not get raised. They provide contexts based on 'if the following set of circumstances were to arise, what might the impacts and implications be?' ; they are to explore not predict the future outcomes of trends combining; they aim to challenge current thinking and provoke further questions.

They can then be used to identify alternative strategic and policy options for addressing some of the issues raised and to explore the wider context of change that might indicate that one or other set of outcomes is emerging.

They should all be regarded as equally likely, so that:

- The potential implications arising from widely different futures can all be learnt
- The policy implications and trade-offs between different choices thought through and assessed
- Contingencies can be explored and developed
- Indicators of the emergence of one or other futures identified and monitored to buy time for alternative strategies to be implemented
- Options for avoiding the most damaging and encouraging the potentially most positive impacts and implications can be considered

When reading the scenarios, it is important to remember that they are written as though we are in the future; think of them as 'stories' that might appear in the economic / business section of a

newspaper review of the year for the local area highlighting what is 'currently' happening in 5 years or so; but also indicating what events happened to cause us to arrive in these circumstances. All of them are set 4-5years out in the future.

An overview of the scenarios

Serious Shortfall

- Sharp reduction of well over 20% in migrant workers
- A8 economic growth stronger relative to UK
- Other EU countries opening up creating competition for migrants
- UK quotas and controls tighter
- Wychavon population growing overall
- Continued exodus of young work age population
- Fall in migrant workers having serious impact in local economy
- Housing market static and tight

Slowly but surely declining

- Year on year steady reduction in numbers, up to 15%
- A8 growing faster than much of EU
- More controls on immigration in UK
- Local population in Wychavon ageing overall and growing slowly
- Migrants with dependents a more significant proportion and very much part of local economy
- Increased use of gang masters
- Some reduction in commuting creating new pool of local labour
- Pressure throughout the housing market

A different revolving door

- Overall numbers of migrants relatively stable
- UK economy doing better than other EU mature economies
- Gang master regulation strengthened
- Population moving more strongly to urban areas
- Local economy benefitting from concern and focus on food security
- Migrants tend to be lower skilled and more from Bulgaria and Romania
- More rented accommodation, but less affordable

A steady rise

- Wychavon has managed to attract a steady rising flow of migrants
- UK remains a more popular choice overall among migrant workers
- Net inflow from within the UK continues to Wychavon; more focus on urban centres
- Local economy generally buoyant
- Wychavon collaborative ventures to attract and keep migrants coming

- Local innovation is creating new forms of housing and encouraging renovation of poor quality stock

Conclusions

Wychavon is potentially between a rock and a hard place: the economy is highly dependent on short and longer term migrant workers. Inadequate housing supply and wider population movements are making an already tight housing market, even tighter.

However, while the local economy is vulnerable on a number of levels, it also faces a number of opportunities for change.

1. There is likely to be gradual growth in the overall population in Wychavon - requiring more housing often in the sectors and areas already under supplied. Without initiatives to address shortfalls more proactively, housing could become a significant constraint on the local economy.
2. Population growth will be uneven across the age ranges: net inflow in the over 65s and those with young families; net outflow in the younger workforce age groups. This pattern will place further pressures on the need for migrant labour to fill jobs; it will also have knock on effects for local health and social care services longer term.
3. UK nationals moving within the UK to Wychavon is likely to continue to be an equally significant, if not more significant, contributor to local population growth as migrant workers.
4. Local urban centres are likely to feel the most pressure from population growth, because of rising fuel costs and desire for easy access to local services.
5. Smaller centres and villages will remain popular in the short term, but without changes in transport and service provision may face significant ageing population related pressures.
6. Very rural areas may face a down turn in house prices, even within a general upturn in the housing market, as a result of rising fuel costs, transport and service access.
7. The Wychavon local economy is extremely dependent on migrant workers, for both short and long term employment needs.
8. A significant drop in local availability of migrant workers – seasonal or longer term - would have serious consequences for local employers and the local economy as a whole.
9. Current quotas emphasising higher skilled workers are beginning to place constraints on the local economy, which needs low skilled workers who are not available – or willing - locally.
10. Concerns about food security and climate change targets present Wychavon and other rural areas with a potential opportunity and leverage to change national quota policy.
11. While growth in the numbers of migrants will bring its own problems in terms of housing, the bigger threat is a significant downturn in supply and availability of both longer term and seasonal workers.
12. Lack of appropriate and adequate quality housing is a significant constraint on the potential for growth within the local economy.
13. Demand for housing in the main local urban areas will continue to grow strongly.
14. A number of opportunities exist for collaborative ventures to enhance and promote Wychavon as a destination for migrant workers and to recruit workers more pro actively. These centre round the use of the colleges to provide ESOL and other skills development; a collaborative proactive campaign on recruitment and marketing of Wychavon; local shared ownership and 'commitment deals' housing initiatives.
15. Rising fuel costs present an opportunity to promote and encourage people to work locally rather than pay for long commutes.
16. The arrival of the 'young old' presents an opportunity for more flexible job opportunities and employment locally; it also presents a long term growth in demand for social care and long term support.
17. Lack of consistency the remit of the GLA - i.e. not all sectors are covered - and lack of clarity about boundaries of responsibility – i.e. papers / legality etc of workers - create burdens for local employers.
18. Gang-masters are not regarded as a welcome source of employees – reliability, quality and consistency as well as administrative issues all play a role.

Recommendations

The following recommendations apply variously to Wychavon District Council and other local stakeholders. Any number of stakeholders could take the lead on the recommendations below, in order to take action to avoid the negative impacts and encourage the more positive outcomes implicit in the scenarios.

- a) Market / promote Wychavon strongly Develop specific initiatives to market Wychavon and target groups of workers to ensure that even within a constrained total of low skilled workers, Wychavon remains well placed to get the workers local employers need.
- b) Invest to attract - Recognise the importance of migrant workers to the local economy and invest accordingly.
- c) Provide ESOL and other training/ work experience packages - The local colleges, especially Pershore with its expertise in agriculture, should work with local employers and other stakeholders to develop a range of offers to attract and encourage overseas students / workers for short and long term stays.
- d) Identify and examine the 'hot spots' Examine further the local data on concentrations of migrant workers and children with ESOL in local schools in order to plan ahead more effectively.
- e) Work with local migrant communities – Strengthen word of mouth recommendations and build on the positive experiences and attitudes among the migrant worker community.
- f) Use the scenarios to examine other impacts and implications - Enable local councillors, employers and stakeholders to discuss the wider implications of the scenarios for service provision, impacts and options.
- g) Use the project as a model for elsewhere - Share the experience and enable other local districts/ councils to learn from and develop their own local mini scenarios to create a more holistic view of local circumstances.
- h) Explore a range of housing options – Recognise the pressures for housing, the inadequacy of much of the local supply and the potential of innovative schemes to meet local needs: use good quality hostel accommodation to encourage workers to Wychavon rather than elsewhere; use shared ownership and / or

'commitment deals' to make more housing affordable and encourage people to stay locally for longer; invest in and upgrade what is already there.

- i) Capitalise on concerns about food security, food miles and local supply - Work collaboratively, locally and with other agricultural areas, to encourage a change of national policy on quotas and skill levels to ensure a steady supply of labour. Draw on the power of the supermarkets in this process.
- j) Ensure clarity and consistency of gang master regulation - Campaign for more effective implementation of Gang master and other migrant worker related regulation.

List of appendices

**Appendices can be viewed online at
www.wychavon.gov.uk**

- I. Mini scenarios full report and data appendix
- II. Minutes of meeting of the 14th April 2008
- III. Minutes of the meeting of 12th May 2008 including updates on the recommendations of the previous panel report and statistical information from Worcestershire County Council's research and intelligence unit
- IV. Minutes of the meeting of 23rd June 2008, including a presentations from Herefordshire Council on support for migrant workers and polytunnel policies
- V. Minutes of the meeting of 14th July 2008 including information on the Strategic Investment Grant and presentations from the freight quality partnership
- VI. Minutes of the meeting of 28th July 2008 including presentations on the focus groups held with Polish residents in Evesham, from Paul Southall of DS Southall and Sons on the numbers of migrant workers on his farm and support available. Presentation also from The Revd John Paxton on migrant workers in Worcestershire
- VII. Minutes of the meeting of 15th September 2008 including information from Evesham Vale Growers, a presentation from Research for Tomorrow Today and statistical information from the DEFRA agricultural census
- VIII. Minutes of the meeting of 6th October 2008
- IX. Minutes of the meeting of 27th October 2008
- X. Alphabetical list of people who contributed to the report

