



Research for Tomorrow, Today



Wychavon Migrant Workers Mini Scenarios Report  
Executive Summary  
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## 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 dependants
- 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 tradeoffs 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 dependants 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.