Introduction

1. The Country Land and Business Association’s (CLA) 36,000 members are involved in all aspects of rural land management and business. They own or manage approximately 5 million hectares of rural England and Wales. CLA members provide land and capital for investment in farming or other rural businesses, and they account for 38% of private rented housing in rural areas. They generate jobs and incomes in the rural economy and are involved in rural tourism, from managing the landscape through to ownership and management of tourist attractions and accommodation.

2. It is worth noting that whilst the questionnaire has divided community, economy and environment into separate areas for consideration, the three are intrinsically linked as the three pillars of sustainability. For example, without local services there are not the people to buy products or work the land.

SECTION 1: COMMUNITIES

What do you regard as the strength of upland communities?

3. Upland communities are invariably resilient. They have proved to be capable of surviving economic and physical hardships. Perhaps because of this adversity, the sense of community within upland areas is possibly stronger than in almost any other location. This can be found not only in upland settlements, but within sparsely populated defined geographic areas, such as river valleys. This strength can manifest itself in self help initiatives, which are of relevance to the economy as well as the community.

4. The role of private, and some public, estates in upland areas cannot be overlooked. Estates can be significant providers of housing in remote areas, and will often be responsible for the provision of services that many would think of as being in the public domain. Examples include water supplies, roads, access opportunities and infrastructure, community facilities, crime watch and snow clearance. This provision extends to the economy of remote areas, through the provision of work space, joint marketing and communal infrastructure.

What do you consider to be the weaknesses of upland communities?

5. The changing demographics of the upland population are a significant concern. As an economic opportunity, basic services and the provision of affordable housing have all declined, so the younger generation have been lured or forced away from upland areas. As this shift begins, so does a spiral of decline which
becomes increasingly hard to arrest. As some young families move, so the school has insufficient pupils to remain open, so dissuading the remainder from staying or new families to arrive. As the school closes, so the village traffic diminishes as does the trade in the village shop and pub, which disappear as well.

6. In addition, one of the main weaknesses remains that of low incomes. In Cumbria farmers’ wives, for example, will often drive for an hour or so to work in a hotel in order to keep the family unit going economically. However, with the rise in fuel costs last year and at the present time, as well as the lack of public transport, the second job is actually becoming less viable. This has the effect of putting extra pressure on the family unit and could lead to families moving from the area.

7. Given the often sparse nature of the communities, effective representation at a local, county and regional level is often hard to achieve, let alone at national level.

8. Where an estate is the provider of community goods and services, the supply is reliant on the future of the estate. While estates do come and go, the most widespread threat would come with changes to the capital tax system. Punitive taxation could have disastrous consequences, while less punitive changes could result in a withdrawal of investment due to the need to address the tax issue.

What do you consider to be the most promising opportunities for the future of people living and/or working in upland communities?

9. Sustainable policies are needed to achieve a viable standard of living, and may include the emergence of a number of new markets, including water management, waste management and carbon balancing. Systems should be found to adequately fund upland farmers for the environmental goods provided. There is increasing interest, and developing technologies, in renewable energy production. Wool prices are so low that it costs farmers more to shear and transport the wool to the depot than they receive through payments. Wool is a natural material that can be hugely beneficial in, inter alia, housing insulation, the formation of cloth and carpets. How and by whom could new markets for wool be generated?

10. Recent surveys by the CLA confirm that upland communities can be among those disadvantaged by not having effective and affordable broadband provision. This alone is an important opportunity for upland communities, allowing them to access many of the same goods and services that their urban counterparts enjoy.

11. Additionally, it creates economic opportunities by allowing competitive, but also added value and low environmental impact businesses to operate, often from home. This creates employment opportunities for those geographically remote, who have no access to enabling services such as child care, or who work part time in existing businesses, including farms. The provision of up to date, high speed broadband provides a very significant opportunity for upland communities. This will potentially allow upland communities to access many of the same goods and services that their urban counterparts enjoy. Furthermore, it brings great economic opportunity with increased chances of home working.
12. It also provides the facilities expected by the keyboard generation. They increasingly use the internet not only for their recreation but also for social interaction. The internet has the power to remove the social isolation often associated with upland areas.

13. Free market environmentalism may also offer future opportunities for upland communities. However, this may be limited to sectors such as carbon sequestration through peat management and micro generation projects.

**What factors most threaten the continued existence of upland communities?**

14. If land managers are unable to positively manage their land to generate acceptable incomes the implications affect not just their own businesses and families but also the wider community. For example, the removal of hefted flocks from upland areas puts additional pressure on already fragile businesses. The remaining flocks on the moorland will spread out to utilise the area abandoned by others meaning that stock checks and rounding up for routine animal health operations take significantly longer, putting further strain on available labour. Although the actual income for these units remains the same, the costs still rise. Further, upland farms support a high proportion of the local businesses and often much of the local employment is dependent on a farming industry being able to spend money. Therefore, services and communities are directly affected. A non-managed landscape may also be far less attractive to visitors, again affecting incoming money to local businesses.

15. The lack of affordable housing for local working families is a significant threat to upland communities. It can prevent succession on local farms, as sons and daughters cannot live close enough. This is particularly significant when they are not needed full time on the farm, but could help their parents during evenings and weekends. The fragmentation of families means that problems caused by lack of services in remote rural areas, such as child care or supporting the elderly cannot be done by family members.

16. The providers of public services no longer seem to accept that providing such services in remote rural areas will cost more than providing them in urban areas. Thus service provision is seen as disproportionately expensive and therefore under threat. Remote rural dwellers do not benefit from the same level of services that their urban counterparts enjoy although they are required to pay the same amount of tax. This is seldom understood by local and national government.

17. For example, the closure of local schools is very harmful to remote communities, as students need to travel considerable distances, so starting their days very early and finishing very late. Similarly, the curtailment of NHS GP services has been very harmful. NHS Direct is not best suited to remote areas. In the case of a poorly child, the telephone advice is invariably to take it to the nearest hospital, which may not be easy for some people.
18. The failure of social welfare economists, when advising decision makers, to take into account positive benefits to the wider community provided by upland and other isolated communities is a continuing danger. If reliance is placed only on private wealth for the provision of increasingly scarce public services, these remote areas will continue to decline.

What actions do you consider necessary to secure the future prosperity of upland communities?

19. Local planning policies need to appreciate the requirement for truly sustainable development in upland areas. Currently, ‘sustainability’ in planning terms has been taken to mean access to public transport, and therefore new businesses partly or entirely dependent on private transport have been deemed to be non-sustainable. This has been extremely detrimental to upland communities as they have been starved of necessary development and investment. The situation is compounded by many upland areas being designated as National Parks and AONBs, where there can appear to be a presumption against virtually all development however beneficial it may be to the local community and economy.

20. The failure of effective planning policy is of course central to the issue of affordable housing for retiring farmers. The average age of farmers in the uplands is in the late 50s. Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 7 specifically forbids retiring farmers from being able to build an affordable home on their farm. Retiring farmers feel forced to keep farming as they are unable to buy a home in a nearby settlement. However, if retirement properties could be built on existing or adjacent land, it would free up the farmhouse for the successor. This would, in turn, aid the process of injecting new blood into the uplands and reinforce upland communities.

21. There needs to be a de facto positive assumption in favour of the provision of modern infrastructure and the maintenance of traditional infrastructure. It remains the case that high quality, or superfast broadband has to be made available in all upland areas through extending the fibre optic network. While environmental considerations are important, the maintenance of roads and bridges should be given priority as there will often be a single access route serving a community. For example, recent flood events in the North East left some upland communities effectively cut off. Much of the damage could have been avoided if basic maintenance had been allowed to proceed and services could have been restored somewhat quicker if the needs of the community had been given priority.

22. The service needs of remote communities must be properly recognised. Public service “improvements” so often claimed by central Government appear to be based on urban centres where demand is high and provision is cheap. Such an approach bears little relevance to remote communities.
SECTION 2: ECONOMIES

What do you regard as the strengths of upland economies?

23. Although often regarded as of declining importance, land based industries are invariably the key stone of upland economies. This is not only due to the economic impact of farming, and to a lesser degree, forestry, but of the wider impact such as environmental and landscape management. These factors will underpin the other elements of the upland economy, such as tourism and sporting activities.

24. The uplands may not be the most productive agricultural area in the UK, but their place in the agricultural hierarchy should not be overlooked. Much of the lowland sheep industry will rely on the uplands for breeding stock. Furthermore, the uplands rely on low input farming, producing a very “natural” product, so finding favour with many consumers.

25. Large parts of the uplands are owned and managed by private estates. This provides a mechanism for external private funding to be channelled into the upland areas, and provides the scale to fund additional investment and employment. The obvious examples are grouse moors, but there are also other sporting estates and those managed for other objectives.

26. Mineral extraction is often not immediately thought of as an upland activity, but it is of course one of the most traditional of upland activities. Mineral extraction should continue to be viewed as an appropriate activity in upland areas.

What do you consider to be the weaknesses of upland economies?

27. Recent studies from the Centre for the Rural Economy at Newcastle University and Exeter University have shown that upland farming is heavily dependent on public subsidy through the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Typically, the total income obtained from the CAP will amount to around 50% of upland farm business income. However, even with support, businesses return little profit and thus are very vulnerable to any decline in agricultural income or EU support. A recent study of economic viability of the uplands in the South West from Exeter University revealed average farm business income in 2006/07 to be £9,207. However, this fell to an average loss of some £10,583 once family labour was factored in. These figures highlight that the continuation of a critical mass of the basic delivery units of upland public benefits (that is, livestock farm businesses) is severely threatened.

28. If upland farming was to continue to decline, with the associated removal of livestock from the hills, then landscape change would occur which may very well be detrimental to recreation and visitor enjoyment in the uplands. Furthermore, the resultant build up of vegetation would present an increased fire risk which may well have significant climate change implications given that this fuel source will often be located on top of deep peat.
29. Tourism is often seen as the great saviour for upland economies. In some areas this may well be true but it should not be regarded as the remedy in all areas. Tourism in upland areas tends to be seasonal, producing only short-term employment, often for migrant labour, at a low wage with little scope for advancement.

30. In more remote upland areas, tourism can be best viewed as a provision of public good rather than genuine economic activity. Although many areas will attract day visitors there remain few opportunities for visitor spend. For example, the Ingram Valley is one of the most popular day trip destinations in the Northumberland National Park attracting many tens of thousands of visitors over the course of a year. However, the only opportunity for visitor spend is the ice cream van where the economic value leaves the area at the end of each day.

31. Conversely, shooting enterprises may well only provide recreational activity for a relatively small number of people, but they do leave a significant economic footprint as well as year round employment. Much of the expenditure occurs in the winter months when other visitors are scarce. Upland game keeping is a young man’s activity and so attracts young families. In north Northumberland, Branton school is in a small remote community, but is well attended, not least because of the five young gamekeepers (and their families) on a nearby upland sporting estate.

32. It remains the case that there are a lack of alternatives, both for land based and other businesses. Upland beef and sheep farmers do not have the same options to change their systems or to diversify as their lowland counterparts. Businesses may also be very weather dependant. Where change has occurred, it has been negative. For example, in the Shropshire Hills and Black Mountains, there has been a move away from a wide range of farming activities, such as dairying, suckler cows, sheep and arable, to a mono culture of sheep production as a result of public policy initiatives, in this instance, health and safety and environmental schemes. The result has been a change in grazing regime, causing issues such as bracken encroachment and changes in the tree line.

33. Other significant barriers include planning, particularly in designated areas, and the failure to provide affordable and effective broadband capacity. National Park planning restrictions can be detrimental to sensible and reasonable economic activity by upland dwellers. Perhaps as a consequence of the environmental value of the uplands, there is often a proliferation of Government agencies and regulators exercising influence. The result is to stifle innovation, development and progress in areas where they are most needed.

What opportunities are there for new enterprise, business growth and employment in upland communities?

34. It is the CLA’s view that broadband possibly offers one of the best opportunities for increased activity in upland areas if the most appropriate infrastructure can be put in place. By this we mean a joined up network, in the first instance, that takes into account the variety of available options, including satellite, wireless and mobile phone capacity.
35. It is hoped that increased agricultural product prices may well strengthen upland farming businesses. The increased value of finished stock and opportunities offered by local direct marketing may benefit some businesses but it is hoped that increased values will filter back to everyone via increased prices for store and breeding stock. However, this could be offset by the actual decline in CAP payments over the next decade. A way of adding value to products needs to be found so that the cost of their production is fully compensated, for example, through the better utilisation of wool.

36. Free market environmentalism (i.e. the provision of environmental goods being paid for by means other than public funds) could bring benefits to upland economies. If so, there does need to be a shift away from paying upland land managers on the basis of income forgone and providing payment on the actual value of the good and services provided.

37. An example is flood mitigation. It is possible that upland flood mitigation schemes could provide significant downstream savings to those agencies involved in the provision of hard flood defences and also to households and businesses potentially affected by flooding, and their insurers. However, the compensation payable for the temporary storage of flood water is currently based on the temporary loss of minimal agricultural income so would be minimal. Carbon management may present better opportunities but the processes still need to be better understood.

38. In order for exploit the available economic opportunities in upland areas there needs to be a suitable policy and regulatory framework, which includes substantial changes to the current planning system.

What threatens existing and future economic activities in the uplands?

39. Upland economies are facing the same issues as the general economy as the lack of credit and economic activity continues to take effect. This is despite the clear ability of upland economies to survive previous rural economic crises such as foot and mouth in 2001.

40. Nevertheless, one of the major constraints of the current economic downturn is that there are few employment opportunities. For example in the South West, travelling off Exmoor to find work is not an economic option. Quite recently, the local tearoom (in the middle of Exmoor) advertised for a part time assistant. This led to over 100 applicants with many asking for travel assistance as well as the basic wage. Clearly, upland communities are more sensitive to economic problems with little room for manoeuvre and where business premises are vacated they tend to be very difficult to re-let together with the additional costs of vacant premises in the meantime.

41. Livestock farming is relatively confident with improved stock prices, decreasing input costs and more timely EU payments. Tourism may well be a beneficiary of the current economic situation as the weak pound makes the UK attractive to overseas visitors and makes trips abroad less attractive to UK residents. Bookings for 2009 are currently strong. However, as stated above, visitor spend tends to be low. The small scale nature, and associated lack of borrowing, of
many businesses in upland areas make them more resilient to economic shocks although this is not to say they are not affected. Building and financial services industries will be affected in upland areas, as in other areas, although this tends to be less visible.

42. Regulation in the agriculture sector, and other sectors, is a major threat to economic activity. In agriculture, the proposed introduction of electronic identification for individual sheep (EID) will have a significant impact on extensive hill farming systems that are found in upland areas. It is likely to prove impracticable to implement this regulation, which in turn could threaten other EU payments.

43. As stated above, planning is a continual problem, both for the provision of suitable housing and workspace. There have been many recent examples where planning consent is only forthcoming for the sympathetic conversion of existing redundant buildings to holiday accommodation but not to provide housing for local people.

44. The fees, levies and taxes now associated, or proposed, with the planning system are likely to be very detrimental to economic activity in upland areas. Development work in these areas is often economically questionable and additional costs will tilt the balance further towards inactivity. Furthermore, pre-application planning fees can be a real deterrent, as can the cost of providing the additional work required to accompany a planning application. This is an upfront cost with no guarantee of value so it is not an incentive. The CLA believes that reports deemed necessary could be provided post-decision.

45. Some Local Authorities have chosen to apply their own levies on successful planning applications, in addition to possible Section 106 agreements. For example, Tynedale District Council has imposed a levy per bedroom which is a direct disincentive to the provision of affordable housing. The proposed Community Infrastructure Levy would clearly burden the process and stifle activity. Moreover, it would be likely to be considered a highly unjust levy in the uplands as these areas are unlikely to benefit from the infrastructure investments made.

46. Furthermore, the removal of empty business property rate relief is a further disincentive to providing work space and even to maintaining existing work space. This is of particular relevance to upland areas, where demand is often weakest and the viability of projects is finely balanced.

What actions do you consider necessary to secure future prosperity of upland economies?

47. Planning policies should be refocused to encourage the development of true sustainable communities, focusing on the provision of suitable housing and business development, paying due regard to landscape and environmental protection.
48. Support mechanisms, such as the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE), should be properly focused on where we are in the economic cycle and should not be delayed. For example the RDPE in the West Midlands, administered by Advantage West Midlands, has failed to deliver funding to date. Moreover, even when this is in place, it is felt that the schemes available will be far too targeted and narrow to deliver any benefit to the uplands.

49. Agri-environment payments need to provide continuity to farming businesses for the delivery of environmental goods and services. Where historic schemes are expiring, there should be a mechanism to ensure that the environmental benefits delivered to date are captured and rewarded through the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme. To try and recreate these benefits elsewhere would be nonsensical both in terms of the time it would take new ecosystem services to bed down and because of the public investment in these goods to date. Where farmers have received the Hill Farming Allowance (HFA), there should be an assumption in favour of them entering the Upland Entry Level Stewardship (UELS) scheme. The budget for the latter should be increased to ensure that income levels are maintained.

50. The thinking behind free market environmentalism needs to be developed in order to ensure that upland land managers can actually gain true value from providing environmental goods and services to the wider society.

SECTION 3: PUBLIC GOODS AND BENEFITS

Which existing public benefits do you value most and why?

51. Undoubtedly the uplands landscape is valued by everyone, but not everyone appreciates that it has been manmade. Originally, it was a by-product of farming and forestry activities, but latterly there has been a greater emphasis on environmental management for its own sake. As “public goods”, they are often “publicly consumed” for free, hence the Single Payment Scheme (SPS) to farmers for their provision.

Are some public benefits either overlooked or lacking adequate investment?

52. There is a danger that upland farming could become a victim of under funding. The targeting of agri-environment funding towards designated sites runs the risk of creating a two tier upland farming system. In the future, there is a danger that this scenario could spread to all upland farming as it is unclear what level of funding will be available post 2013. As has already been stated, farming largely underpins upland communities.

53. The method of funding the delivery of public goods on an income forgone basis is often unsatisfactory. Agri-environment funding is based on ‘income foregone’ calculations (i.e. the cost of completing a particular action) rationalised on a national scale. The costs of operations in upland areas is often more costly than some lowland areas due to the remoteness of the land. Similarly, since incomes in these areas are often low to start with, ‘income foregone’ calculations can not adequately reward farmers for the environmental goods and services delivered.
For example, 70% of drinking water is filtered through upland areas but no reflection of this is made in payments to farmers. A new mechanism whereby a true economic value of the goods/services delivered needs to be developed and EU legislation needs to be challenged so that payments do not need to be limited by income foregone calculations.

54. Road infrastructure is invariably poor, but arguably enjoys a better level of investment than the public rights of way network, which is often seen as an easy target for budget cuts.

**Do changes to land use and ownership in the uplands offer new opportunities for investment in existing or new public goods/benefits?**

55. Farming must remain the major industry in the uplands. In addition to food production, we have already listed some of the additional possible income streams that would help keep the uplands in the active management that would protect its public goods. Much land use management is regulated in the uplands.

56. Upland land ownership includes owner/occupiers, private landlords, forestry concerns, utility companies, military ranges and organisations such as the National Trust. Some of these organisations are not typical landowners, leading to their having different land management objectives. They can also have the benefit of significant other income. Sometimes this may lead to tensions, at other times it can bring real benefits to upland areas, businesses and communities. For example, the Sustainable Catchment Management Programme (SCaMP), developed by United Utilities in Bowland and the Peak District helps deliver government targets for SSSIs, enhances biodiversity, ensures a sustainable future for the company's agricultural tenants and protects and improves water quality.

**Are some public benefits now vulnerable due to recent (or possible future) social, economic, (e.g. public subsidy or private investment) and environmental changes in the uplands?**

57. Public benefits are as vulnerable as the individuals, businesses and communities that deliver them. If upland farming becomes unviable there would be a significant decline in the public benefits being provided. Little can be delivered without land managers being in place. The provision of these benefits is dependent on people with particular skills and experience and their hefted flocks. Once lost, such benefits can only be reproduced at great public expense. Already the loss of livestock (particularly cattle grazing) from the high land in upland areas has resulted in loss of habitat and access opportunities in some areas such as the Yorkshire Dales National Park.

58. It is widely believed that climate change will result in an increased probability of wild fire, as springs become drier and warmer and summers become drier and hotter. The Fire Severity Index is in existence but only in use as an access management tool and is not used for fire prevention. Natural England seems incapable of incorporating its roles of access, conservation and climate change, even though severe wild fire could destroy upland deep peat, so resulting in a significant carbon release.
What actions do you consider necessary to secure the public goods and benefits we derive from the uplands?

59. The CLA argues that there needs to be a robust structure for upland land management that is adequately rewarded for the provision of public goods. In addition, an increase in trust, leading to a decrease in regulation, would have a positive impact. Finally, land managers and farmers need to have economic activity to keep them on the land and to allow other local businesses and communities to benefit from their spending. Through this, the benefit derived from the provision of public goods would be achieved.

SECTION 4: POLICIES AND PRACTICE

There are many agencies with policies that broadly aim to secure a sustainable future for the uplands. From your experience, which ones provide tangible benefits for upland communities and how they are doing so?

60. There are various land-focussed agencies, including Natural England, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, English Heritage and the RDAs, and although they all can provide tangible benefits, their activities can lead to mixed messages and confusion for our land managers. “Joining up” the activities of these public agencies would simplify the delivery of the desired public goods.

61. However, there are few agencies, and their policies, which could be said to work well in their entirety. Mostly it is a case for some elements being beneficial but others being detrimental. As an example, the National Park Authority may provide some useful assistance through its Sustainability Fund but its planning policy may prevent sustainable development. Natural England may bring benefit to areas with Sites of Special Scientific Interest through the provision of HLS agreements, but there remains a risk of environmental degradation by not being able to bring historic agri-environment schemes into new HLS agreements through a lack of resource, particularly in Cumbria. The Environment Agency may be helpful in funding projects, such as Cheviot Futures, but unhelpful in requiring excessive bureaucracy for micro hydro developments. The Local Authority may seek to keep the local school open but refuse consent for new housing which may secure its long term existence.

Are existing public policies and programmes effectively addressing the needs of upland communities?

62. Often upland communities feel that policies are delivered from afar with little appreciation of their effects on their respective communities. There is a perception that the environment is more important than people or the economy, and that visitors are more important than residents. What is required is a better balance between economic prosperity for farmers and environmental gain.
63. The dramatic reductions in sheep flocks under many ESA’s has not achieved the desired effect, particularly in areas of “white Fell” which is mainly grass based vegetation with very little heather presence. These areas have now become rank and unproductive; however these are the areas which can naturally carry higher sheep numbers. There has to be an acceptance on the part of decision makers that where the policy is not working change must occur so in this instance, that farmers should begin to stock these areas at appropriate levels again. This would create a demand for Upland labour, allowing the son who has to work part time to return to the farm. The CLA’s concern is that if these areas are reduced any further the natural hefting systems will break down, the sheep will come off the fells and the system that created our landscape will be in danger of being lost.

What improvements could be made to the implementation of policies and programmes within and across upland communities?

64. Throughout this response, the economic activity that takes place in upland areas has been stressed. However, farming and food production is virtually ignored from a policy perspective at regional level and is largely taken for granted. Following the delivery of the Modernising Rural Delivery Agenda, there is no longer any regional agency with the remit to represent or look after the interests of the agricultural community. Instead, it appears that the integration needed to make the three pillars of sustainability operate effectively has been severely neglected with each pillar now the responsibility of separate agencies making the effective delivery of sustainable development little more than an illusion.

65. This imbalance is further accentuated with two agencies delivering environmental objectives: the Environment Agency and Natural England. Increasingly, the workload, both regulation and facilitation, of these agencies appears to overlap and delivery is frustrated by the twin responsibilities of the two bodies. For example, the Cheviot Futures project involves climate change issues in the uplands, but is funded by the Environment Agency rather than Natural England. Catchment Sensitive Farming is delivered by both agencies. Dual consents are required for work on many water courses. The Water Framework Directive is the responsibility of the Environment Agency but the main delivery mechanism in upland areas will be the agri-environment schemes, which are administered by Natural England.

66. If the uplands are to have a sustainable future, delivery would be improved with a single environmental agency, in addition to farming and food production being effectively represented at a regional level.

Are there any examples of public policy, at a national, regional or local level, that threaten the future sustainability of upland communities or economies?

67. The most immediate example is the introduction of EID of sheep. This will impose a considerable cost on upland farmers for absolutely no benefit what so ever.
68. A further threat is the Water Framework Directive, which could tip the balance of land management objectives further to environmental considerations, with even less regard for communities and economies. In particular, Water Protection Zones would deliver the objectives of the Water Framework Directive with absolutely no regard to upland communities and economies.

69. Planning policies remain a threat. There is an urgent need to move away from the ideology of assessing rural communities as “sustainable” or “unsustainable” in terms of planning, with the latter being automatically precluded from development and thus confined to the economic wilderness.

70. The Government’s response to the Matthew Taylor Report could pave the way for more rural centric planning policies, which will encourage true sustainable development in upland areas. However, there remains considerable concern about how such a policy change can be delivered at a local level with a disconnect between national planning policy statements and local planning policies remaining in place.

71. The results of the last decade of urban centric planning policies are now clear to see, with a change in the demographics of the rural population, withdrawal of services, lack of affordable housing and lack of appreciation of home working. It is understood that in Scotland there is now policy which prohibits the closure of rural schools and seeks to avoid the possibility by building more family houses within the catchment. This does at least demonstrate a long term commitment to remote communities.

What actions do you consider necessary to improve public policy and programs and their implementation in upland areas?

72. The CLA believes that there should be:
   • clear support for upland farming, including the removal of the threat of EID;
   • competent and effective delivery of UELS
   • an assumption in favour of rolling over historic agri-environment schemes into HLS agreements;
   • providing a framework to allow environmental markets to operate;
   • proper Government agency regional representation for farming and food production, and firm commitment for adequate funding post 2012;
   • provision of high speed broadband facilities in all upland communities;
   • a complete reorganisation of regional policy delivery, the creation of a single environmental agency and the provision of a suitable policy infrastructure to delivery food and environmental security and sustainable development.

73. In terms of planning:
   • national planning guidelines should be adhered to ensure that local planning policies reflect the needs of upland communities and are conducive to the creation of true sustainable development. This will include the provision of affordable housing and the maintenance of rural services.
74. Regarding public goods, services and support mechanisms the CLA believes:
   - a system should be developed to reward the provision of public goods according to the value of those goods rather than on the basis of agricultural income forgone;
   - the delivery of support mechanisms, such as RDPE, including LEADER projects must be effective and efficient.

**Conclusion**

75. It is clear that upland communities face a myriad of difficulties. Some of these are a result of the intrinsic nature of upland farming whilst many others are a result of Government policy.

76. The value of the uplands is fundamental for a robust and sustainable rural economy. This submission has highlighted that there has to be a clear and definable link with economic activity for it is this that will, in both the short and medium term, determine the viability of many upland areas.

77. But here lies the conundrum. In order for upland areas to remain economically active, there requires a commitment and understanding from Government and the public sector as to their importance to the communities they serve. For example, one of the economic drivers that has been cited throughout this submission is the need for effective and affordable broadband in order to both stimulate economic activity in addition to acting as a tool for greater social cohesion. Without such a provision, it is very possible that upland communities could become separated from the rest of society.

Country Land & Business Association

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