

West Cheshire Together

Thematic Partnership Leads meeting

Report title	Rural Regeneration Strategy & Action Plan
Description	The development of this Strategy is being led by Cheshire West and Chester Council, and it aims to redefine how we work in our rural areas, how we support the existing employment opportunities and develop new, and how we ensure sustainable and vibrant communities that welcome tourism and are connected to modern ICT.
Document purpose	During the development of the strategy we will consult widely with the Rural Community and Partner organisations, as it is key that this document is adopted and owned by the wider community.
Circulation list	LSP
Decision/Action required	This is an information paper and intended to raise awareness of this important piece of work we are delivering.
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Publication date	The dates for consultation are still to be agreed but the information below gives a rough idea of when work will take place. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inception Workshop – 28th August 2010 • Consultation Events – Sept-Oct 2010 • Draft Strategy – Nov 2010 • Final Document – Jan 2011
Target audience	LSP
Cross reference	N/A

Report narrative

Context

Cheshire West and Chester Council (CW&C) is committed to driving forward the regeneration and transformation of key settlements and areas within the borough. To do this it has identified four key programme areas:

- Rural and Market Towns
- The Weaver Valley
- Ellesmere Port
- Chester

The creation of the new authority has amalgamated the legacy authorities into one and as such provides an opportunity to redefine the approach to regeneration across its priority areas.

Rural Regeneration

Rural Cheshire West and Chester represents approximately 65% of the total area of the Council, roughly 597 square km of the total and is classed by DEFRA as significantly rural. The rural area borders Shropshire, Merseyside, Cheshire East and Wales and has a diverse and varied character, heavily influenced by agricultural as well as industrial and maritime heritage.

The population of CW&C currently totals 330,000 of which the rural area totals some 26% or 85,800 but that is predicted to rise by 11% by 2031 with the number of residents over 75 expected to double to 50,000 by 2031.

CW&C recognises that the rural economy plays a key role in the character and economy of the county. The Rural Regeneration Strategy will need to understand the baseline statistics for the county, what successes we have and how it can shape development and investment. It will also represent the views of CW&C for developing Sustainable Rural Communities and include the adopted information in the Sustainable Community Strategy and Core Strategy.

The Rural Regeneration Strategy will be fundamental to ensuring alignment of emerging plans, policies, strategies and investment programmes in particular the Local Development Framework, Local Transport Plan and Regional Spatial Strategy to ensure key priorities, ambitions and opportunities are realised. It will also drive investment across CW&C's Rural Heartland, influencing public and private sector investment and attracting investment to the area.

We want to use this strategy as an opportunity to;

- Maximise Economic potential
- Create sustainable food supply and improve the competitiveness of farming
- Access to affordable living for rural communities
- Empower and connect rural communities
- Capitalise on our Environmental potential

The key strategic drivers for the strategy will focus on the following areas:

- Economy
- Community
- Environment
- Education
- Access to Services & Transport
- Next Generation Access (NGA)
- Sustainable Energy
- Partnerships & Governance

The intention is that, through the delivery of this Strategy, we will develop a partnership of public, private and community sectors, working together towards a common vision and delivering the strategic priorities identified.