



*St Edmundsbury*  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

# A309

## **Rural Area Working Party 12 November 2009**

### **Rural Action Plan - Update Report**

#### **1. Summary**

- 1.1 The Council's second Rural Action Plan, which covers the period from March 2008 to February 2011, was approved through Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 5 March 2008.
- 1.2 In addition to regular monitoring by officers throughout the year, it was agreed that the development of the Rural Action Plan would be monitored on an annual basis by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. As such, the first annual monitoring report for the current Rural Action Plan was taken to that Committee on 22 April 2009.
- 1.3 However, the responsibility for overseeing the development, and monitoring the implementation of the Rural Action Plan, now comes under the remit of the Rural Area Working Party. This report therefore forms the first report on the this Plan to the Rural Area Working Party.

#### **2. Purpose of the Report**

- 2.1 The purpose of the report is:-

To update the Working Party on the progress made from March 2008 to October 2009 towards completion of projects within the Rural Action Plan as indicated in Appendix A attached to this report.

#### **3. Background**

- 3.1 The 2008-2011 Rural Action Plan contains 35 projects under the following headings:-
  - (a) projects to create quieter and safer village roads;
  - (b) projects to improve community accessibility;
  - (c) projects to maintain and enhance the quality of the environment; and
  - (d) projects to promote stronger and sustainable rural communities.

3.2 All projects have been given approximate dates by which they should be completed, and the projects are to be delivered across the three years of the plan.

#### 4. **Monitoring and review**

4.1 For the review, projects have been subjected to a 'traffic light' approach, as approved as part of the Rural Action Plan on 5 March 2008. The key is as follows:-

- (a) **Green** – These are completed projects, and a final project summary will be given under the progress report column.
- (b) **Amber** – These are projects in progress and on track, and a summary of what has been done so far and how near the project is to completion will be given under the progress report column.
- (c) **Red** – These are actions that have not been able to start yet or have encountered a problem, a summary of why they have not been started and how this delay will be resolved will be given under the progress report column.

4.2 Projects that are not due to be started yet have not been given a traffic light status, since they are neither completed, in progress, or encountering problems.

#### 5. **Next steps**

5.1 The projects within the Rural Action Plan are subject to different timescales and each project will commence and be completed in sequence.

5.2 The next annual review of the plan is due in April 2010.

5.3 In Autumn 2010 a review will need to be undertaken to investigate the next steps when the current plan expires in 2011

#### 6. **Recommendations**

6.1 It is **RECOMMENDED** that the Working Party notes the progress made towards the completion of the Rural Action Plan projects.

#### **Contact Details**

Name  
Telephone  
E-mail




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
## Projects to create quieter and safer village roads

No.	What we originally said we would do	Who is doing the project	When to be completed by	Traffic light system	Progress report	Future issues
1	Assist with the development of National Cycle Route 51 - westwards of Bury St Edmunds towards Newmarket (connecting to Horringer, Chevington and Hargrave).	Engineering (SEBC); Suffolk County Council and Sustrans.	March 2010.	Amber 	Suffolk County Council are proposing to undertake a feasibility study into phase one of this route between Bury St Edmunds and Horringer.  Sustrans have indicated that the national cycle route network in the East of England is one of the highest priorities and this route forms part of it.	Suffolk County Council not yet found a route but in discussion with stake holders (e.g. National Trust).
2	Campaign for the creation of a cycle route from Sicklesmere to Bury St Edmunds.	Engineering (SEBC); Suffolk County Council and Sustrans.	March 2010.	Red 	This route was requested by Parish Councils and a bid for funding was subsequently submitted to Suffolk County Council in 2008-2009. Unfortunately this was unsuccessful, and other options for funding are looking unlikely due to higher priority schemes.	
3	Campaign to support Suffolk Roadsafe Partnership's ' <i>Community Speed Watch</i> '.	Engineering (SEBC) and Suffolk Roadsafe Partnership.	March 2011.	Amber 	Two co-operative Community Speed Watch groups formed in St Edmundsbury: Rural North villages based around Ixworth and the 'St Edmundsbury Rural South CSW initiative'. They have received some training and equipment with financial support from Suffolk Police and SCC locality budget.	



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No.	What we originally said we would do	Who is doing the project	When to be completed by	Traffic light system	Progress report	Future issues
4	Review and encourage flexible working for rural businesses in St Edmundsbury.	Economic Development Services (SEBC) and Environmental Management section	June 2010	Amber 	<p>A Smart Business conference is taking place on 11 March 2010. This is organised by SEBC in partnership with Business Link, Suffolk's Greenest County, Bury St Edmunds Chamber of Commerce, and the West Suffolk Green Business Forum. One of the items on the agenda is about 'Smart Talking' and how you can do business with less travel.</p> <p>Taking into account comments from people attending this event, a leaflet is going to be produced collating useful information that may be needed if you are an employer or an employee who wants to use flexible working</p>	

## Projects to improve community accessibility

No.	What we originally said we would do	Who is doing the project	When to be completed by	Traffic light system	Progress report	Future issues
1	Encourage existing supermarket-organised bus routes to be extended into other villages and at the same time encourage residents to use their local shop wherever possible (see action 2 below).	Economic Development Services (SEBC).	December 2008.	Green 	Officer contacted PB Bus Marketing to suggest that the Bury St Edmunds/Barrow route be extended to include Denham and Depden, and the Bury St Edmunds/Walsham Le Willows route be expanded to include Bardwell. At the time of requesting this, the network of Tesco free buses across the UK were under review. The Bury St Edmunds service is currently being reviewed and PB Bus Marketing are meeting with Burtons Coaches (who run the service on behalf of Tesco) in November 2009 to discuss the potential for extending the bus route.	


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No.	What we originally said we would do	Who is doing the project	When to be completed by	Traffic light system	Progress report	Future issues
2	Investigate supporting existing community transport services to transport people from smaller villages to larger villages with shop, post office and rural attractions.	Economic Development Services and Tourism Services (SEBC).	March 2009.	Amber 	Discussions have taken place with SCC and community transport providers to assess the most appropriate and cost effective way for SEBC to help ensure that rural residents, particularly those with poor bus services, have access to services in other villages (as well as BSE and Haverhill). This project is timely, since SCC's Integrated Passenger Transport Project is now looking at the BSE to Haverhill corridor. This project involves a Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) option which will feed into the conventional bus network. DRT offers an immediate service regardless of location which is an improvement upon the current Community Transport system. The service is likely to be from 7am to 7pm, 6 days a week. The service is due to start in Summer 2010. The first phase of consultation is now complete (stakeholders, parish cluster focus groups and special interest focus groups were involved). A great deal of data has been received via surveys. That data has been collated and is currently being analysed together with details of existing bus service patronage and performance.	
3	Organise for rural residents to be transported from identified villages to the Christmas Fayre.	Tourism Services (SEBC).	December annually.	Amber 	In 2008 a service ran on the Sunday of the Christmas Fayre from Cavendish, with pick ups at Clare, Poslingford, Stansfield, Denston, Stradishall, Chedburgh and Horringer. For 2009 the provisional route for the Sunday is planned to start at Honington and call at Ixworth Thorpe, Troston, Livermere, Ampton, Ingham and then Bury St Edmunds.	



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No.	What we originally said we would do	Who is doing the project	When to be completed by	Traffic light system	Progress report	Future issues
4	Produce maps (in leaflet format) to show key services/facilities, footpaths, cycle ways, and so on, in St Edmundsbury's villages.	Rights of Way Officer (SEBC); Suffolk County Council; Parish Councils. Ramblers Association; rural businesses and the rural community.	August 2010		This project was due to be carried out in partnership with Suffolk County Council. SCC had to delay the project due to resources, and have now decided that they will have to pull out of the project for the same reason. This project will be looked into again, with a view to getting villages to work on accessibility maps themselves, with support from officers.	




## Projects to maintain and enhance the quality of the environment

No.	What we originally said we would do	Who is doing the project	When to be completed by	Traffic light system	Progress report	Future issues
1	Distribute Black Poplar trees to suitable rural areas – volunteers to be trained to take cuttings of Black Poplar stock. Cuttings will then be distributed and planted.	Parks Section (SEBC); Dedham Vale and Stour Valley Countryside Project and Parish Tree Wardens.	End of March each year.	Green 	Completed for 2009-2010. The young tree stock has been moved by volunteers to a new part of the nursery at Nowton Park ready for distribution to any tree wardens who request plants as part of the village tree planting scheme.	

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No.	What we originally said we would do	Who is doing the project	When to be completed by	Traffic light system	Progress report	Future issues
2	Identify key sites in our semi-natural areas where the potential for biodiversity improvements can be achieved.	Parks Section (SEBC) and Biodiversity Partnership.	End of March each year.	Green 	Suffolk Wildlife Trust (SWT) were commissioned to carry out this project. For 2008-2009 SWT completed a desk top study and an evaluation of County Wildlife Sites (CWS) within the Borough. This report highlighted that there are currently 134 CWS's in the Borough. The largest category of types of habitat within these sites is ancient woodland, and other well represented habitat include historic parkland and species-rich grassland. During Summer of 2009-2010 sites where little was known about their current status were surveyed by SWT (this will support the Borough's National Indicator 197, to reach a target of 50% of local sites being in active management). The survey information will be used to update the records for CWS's in St Edmundsbury and inform progress on the targets set. Survey data should be available by the Spring.	
3	Organise training package for Parish Tree Wardens and encourage best practice – this will include the creation of a flow chart that states where particular trees can be planted and why.	Parks Section (SEBC); and Parish Tree Wardens.	March annually.	Green 	In March 2009 a seminar was held at Lackford Lakes where 12 wardens were present when two speakers gave a presentation on how the Council manages trees from a planning perspective and how to manage trees where bats are present. Another seminar is planned for the winter of 2010 and those wardens who make an application for trees to plant in their parish will receive advisory leaflets on appropriate planting techniques along	

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No.	What we originally said we would do	Who is doing the project	When to be completed by	Traffic light system	Progress report	Future issues
4	Produce dedicated web pages on the St Edmundsbury Borough Council website for the Countryside Forum.	Parks Section (SEBC) and St Edmundsbury Borough Council Countryside Forum.	March 2009.	Green 	A web page has been created - <a href="http://www.stedmundsbury.gov.uk/sebc/live/countrysideforum.cfm">http://www.stedmundsbury.gov.uk/sebc/live/countrysideforum.cfm</a> . This page includes meeting minutes, agendas and useful links.	
5	Promote private gardens as havens for biodiversity – through the council's publications, the Countryside Forum and Park Ranger events.	Parks Section (SEBC) and Suffolk Wildlife Trust.	From September 2008.	Amber 	Suffolk Wildlife Trust have been commissioned to research for, and write, an article (with photographs), on how residents can encourage biodiversity in their gardens. These articles go out with the Rural News and are also available from the Rural Communities web page on the SEBC website.	
6	Work with partners to preserve Scots Pine trees of local provenance – local pine cones to be collected by school children. Seeds will be germinated and grown into seedlings and eventually planted back out in the Brecks.	Parks Section (SEBC); The Brecks Countryside Project; schools and Services to Business.	From August 2008.	Amber 	For 2009-2010 the Park Ranger Service will facilitate the collection of seed from an appropriate Brecks area during November and December 2009. The seed gathered will be propagated by the Social Enterprise group at Nowton Park Nursery and be subsequently planted out in the Brecks by school groups in two to three years time.	

## Projects to promote stronger and sustainable rural communities



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

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No.	What we originally said we would do	Who is doing the project	When to be completed by	Traffic light system	Progress report	Future issues
1	Commission Suffolk County Council's Rural Development Managers - to provide project development and funding advice to projects in the rural areas to increase the amount of external funding levered into the district.	Economic Development Services (SEBC) and Suffolk County Council.	From April 2008.	Amber 	<p>The Rural Development Managers continue to assist with various projects in St Edmundsbury.</p> <p>In order to promote more widely the support that they can offer, Charles Taylor gave a presentation at the Parish Conference on 10 November.</p> <p>John Mullen is no longer working for SCC, so a replacement Rural Development Manager is currently being sought and will be in place in due course.</p>	
2	Create a database showing village halls available for private hire in the borough.	Economic Development Services (SEBC) and Suffolk ACRE.	May 2009.	Green 	<p>The plan originally was to have an Excel spreadsheet with current contact details for the St Edmundsbury Village halls. However, it was decided to enlarge this project by commissioning Suffolk ACRE to develop a village hall website.</p> <p>All St Edmundsbury Village Hall Committees were invited to an introductory event, where they were shown how their village can add information to the web pages. Everyone was given the opportunity to suggest improvements to the design of the website.</p> <p>This website is now live, and is getting well used.</p> <p>We are promoting it as much as possible, including through our website (there is a dedicated page about it and also a rolling link on the top of the home page), through Rural News and through Suffolk ACRE's newsletter and website.</p>	Need to ensure that 100% of village halls have their details added to the website in order for it to be comprehensive.



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3	Create a Farm Diversification Guidance booklet.	Planning Section and Economic Development Services (SEBC).	By 2011.		Following the delivery of the Local Development Framework, this project will be progressed.	
4	Create a new Accommodation Providers Information Pack – this will include information on the Quality Assurance Scheme, the visitor guide, environmental health and fire regulations, and so on.	Tourism Services (SEBC); Quality in Tourism and Suffolk Tourism Partnership.	March 2009.	Green 	An accommodation pack has been produced for people thinking of setting up a new B&B or self catering business; the pack aims to give people all the essential starter information they need. In light of the current economic crisis, the Tourist Information Centre ran a stall on Bury St Edmunds Market, where they promoted this pack whilst giving people on-the-spot information about what is happening on their door step.	
5	Create a section on the St Edmundsbury Borough Council website dedicated to rural residents - this is to be user-friendly and to include information as requested by the community.	Economic Development Services (SEBC); Communications Unit (SEBC); Parish Councils and the rural community.	March 2009.	Green 	A Rural Communities section has been created: <a href="http://www.stedmundsbury.gov.uk/sebc/live/ruralcommunities.cfm">http://www.stedmundsbury.gov.uk/sebc/live/ruralcommunities.cfm</a> . This includes web pages on community transport, the Countryside Forum, funding, parish plans, rural play, post offices, the Rural Areas Community Initiatives Fund, the Suffolk Rural Economy Scheme, the Rural Coffee Caravan Information Project, useful website links and wildlife information pages. This section is continually being added to as appropriate.	



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6	Develop the Rural Coffee Caravan Information Project ( <a href="http://www.onesuffolk.co.uk/RuralCoffeeCaravanIP/">www.onesuffolk.co.uk/RuralCoffeeCaravanIP/</a> ) in St Edmundsbury - potential pilot villages could include: Ampton, Coney Weston, Fakenham Magna, Great/Little Livermere, Ingham, Sapiston, Timworth and Troston.	Economic Development Services (SEBC); Rural Coffee Caravan Information Project Manager; Parish Councils; Community Councils; and the rural community.	From June 2008.	Green 	Completed for 2009-2010. In 2009 the caravan visited Ampton, Timworth and Fakenham Magna. There is always a good turnout at Fakenham Magna. Numbers are gradually increasing at Timworth and Ampton. As a result of the visits, notice boards have been installed in Ampton and Timworth, a mobile ice cream van has offered to extend its round to Timworth, and officers are in the process of carrying out consultation to assess whether or not residents in Ampton, Timworth and Little Livermere would like a regular Parish Meeting to be set-up.	
7	Encourage and support villages to take part in the annual Heritage Open Days.	Tourism Services (SEBC); local history groups; local attractions and various local organisations.	September annually.	Green 	Completed for 2009-2010. As part of the national Heritage Open Weekend, people were given the opportunity to purchase special tickets which included a guided walk, taking in local attractions, in either Clare or Ixworth and a meal provided at one of the local pubs. All local businesses were happy to be involved in the project. For 2009 a free bus was provided which took people from Bury St Edmunds to Ixworth. Also new for 2009 was a tour of Stanton.	



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8	Encourage online information technology training through promotional literature.	Economic Development Services (SEBC).	March 2010.	Amber 	Rather than just promote online I.T. training, this project will be linked to the Connected Villages project. Training sessions will be organised for each village that successfully applied, with a focus on the use of the internet and email. However, residents will be able to submit questions on any I.T. topic beforehand for discussion at the training. Research will be carried out to assess what online training is available.	
9	Encourage Parish Councils to undertake housing needs surveys and assist with the preparation of these.	Housing Team (SEBC); Parish Councils and Suffolk ACRE.	From March 2008.	Amber 	Affordable housing sites have been confirmed at both Chedburgh (planning permission has been granted, subject to certain conditions being met) and Stanningfield (22 new homes are being built from November 2009). Bardwell, Cavendish, Flempton/Hengrave and Hundon have got potential sites. Surveys have been completed, and the Parish Councils have formally agreed to proceed, at Great Barton, Great Whelnetham, Kedington and Wickhambrook. A survey has been completed at Whepstead. Brockley is due to complete a housing needs survey in January 2010	Ability to deliver rural exceptions sites may be affected in the future if the revised changes to the rural exception policy go ahead (these limit development to Key Service Centres and Service Centres).



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10	Investigate and support community café idea in existing community buildings.	Economic Development Services (SEBC).	March 2011.	Amber 	<p>This project has been linked to the rural issues sub group of the WSLSP.</p> <p>Officers visited existing community cafes in Kedington and Needham Market for ideas. A leaflet has been produced and is in the process of being distributed. Some promotion has already taken place (e.g. via Rural News, a Bury Free Press article and via BBC Radio Suffolk). All attendees at the Parish Conference have received a leaflet. Villages are being asked to get in touch for support, funding and guidance to set up a cafe.</p>	
11	Investigate the provision of remote work space (including phone, computer, and so on) in village halls – an alternative to working from home or the office that is within one's own community.	Economic Development Services (SEBC) and Suffolk ACRE.	March 2011.	Amber 	<p>This has been developed into a larger project. SEBC has commissioned Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC) to administer a project which will see up to ten villages receive a free laptop and wireless router, free phone line installation and a broadband and phone line rental grant for a year for use in their local village hall. As part of this grant, the applicant village will have to provide at least one training session for local residents, and the equipment must be made available, where possible, to members of the community.</p> <p>The villages taking part have been liaising with BT for phone lines to be installed in their village hall. The first village to receive its equipment was Clare (Bury Free Press took photographs and Radio Suffolk carried out interviews). Wickhambrook and Stansfield Village Halls have also received their equipment. We hope that all villages will have their equipment installed by March 2011.</p>	


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12	Organise a campaign to encourage and promote village welcome packs for new residents.	Economic Development and Tourism Services (SEBC)	March 2009.	Green 	<p>This has been linked to a WSLSP rural issues group project. Following research, templates were produced. These are available on CD and via email for use by local organisations. A useful information leaflet was also produced to complement the templates. The leaflet includes help on how to use the templates, where to obtain funding and why villages need welcome packs. The templates and leaflet are being promoted via the WSLSP (website and newsletter) and also via SEBC, Babergh DC and FHDC websites.</p> <p>To date, 32 people in West Suffolk have requested the packs, and responses to an evaluation form show that the templates have been helpful.</p>	
13	Organise an event to support National Mills day – including Bardwell, Pakenham, Stanton and Thelnetham mills. Transport will be provided between the mills.	Tourism Services (SEBC); local mills and National Mills Organisation.	May annually.	Green 	Completed for 2009-2010. A mini bus was organised to transport people (20 people took advantage of this) to the mills as part of National Mills weekend. At the Bardwell Windmill there was bread making, vintage vehicles and craft exhibitions; at Stanton Post Mill there was flour for sale and guided tours; and at Pakenham Watermill there were milling demonstrations and countryside walks. There was more advertising than last year and in particular, Pakenham Mill reported an increase in visitors number as a whole.	

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14	Organise rural business networking events – this will follow consultation to find out what businesses need.	Economic Development Services (SEBC) and Business Link East.	Annually.	Amber 	<p>An event took place in February 2008 at Culford School (focussed on I.T.) and in February 2009 at Kedington Community Centre (focussed on marketing and finance).</p> <p>Plans are now underway for an event for February 2010. The event is due to take place at Great Whelnetham Community Centre, and the focus will be on assisting rural businesses out of the recession. We have decided to hold this event from 6pm to 9.30pm in the hope that more rural businesses will be able to attend.</p>	
15	Produce planning guidance on the re-use of redundant buildings in rural areas.	Planning Section and Economic Development Services (SEBC).	March 2011.		Following the delivery of the Local Development Framework, this project will be progressed. The relevant planning policies are evolving to respond to some of the issues which have arisen in respect of the existing Policy RU4, and the planning guidance will therefore have to be amended accordingly.	
16	Promote existing events and initiatives for all young people and investigate ways of facilitating access to these events for young people in rural areas.	Community Development Unit (SEBC).	March 2011.	Amber 	<p>Community Development continues to promote all youth activities via the website, schools, and various youth organisations. There is good attendance at these events from across St Edmundsbury.</p> <p>We have begun a small transport initiative linked to our larger scale youth events. An example of this initiative is St Edmundsbury funded a coach to bring 30 Young People from Clare to the Bury Skate JAM event in July 2009. The transport was coordinated and supported by Youth Workers from Suffolk Youth and Connexions Service.</p>	

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17	Provide tours of the larger villages with qualified guides – transport will be provided from Bury St Edmunds and other villages en-route. The 'pilot' village may be Clare.	Tourism Services (SEBC); Clare Ancient House Museum; Clare Business Association; Clare Church; Parish Council and Bury St Edmunds Registered Tour Guides.	May to September annually.	Green 	<p>Completed for 2009-2010. Tours were provided monthly in Clare and attendance was good, with an average of ten people on each monthly tour. There was also a tour of Stanton, but this was part of the Heritage Open Day tours.</p> <p>For 2010 officers are going to increase the Clare tours, plus develop the tours further with an 'armchair' version which will enable the guide to visit clubs and societies in other areas.</p>	



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18	Support communities through the Post Office Network Change process – help identify potential outreach venues in villages for postal services depending upon the proposed closures and ensure Post Office Ltd's access criteria is met.	Economic Development Services (SEBC); Suffolk County Council; post masters/mistresses and the rural communities.	From March 2008.	Green 	During the Network Change process in 2008, officers ensured that the access criteria was met. Meetings took place with all the affected post masters and mistresses to gain an understanding of the individual situations. The Council supported Fornham All Saints Stores as it developed following the closure of the Post Office (although the shop has now sadly closed). Officers held discussions with Horringer Parish/Community Council in light of the loss of their post office and a decision was made not to pursue a community shop. Cavendish Post Office closed in June 2009 due to the retirement of the post master. An outreach post office situated within Cavendish Flowers opened on 22 October 2009. Stanningfield Post Office closed in February 2009. However, an outreach facility opened on 6 August within the new local grocery store, The Little Shop. Uptake of the Suffolk Rural Economy Scheme has been encouraged and support given by officers to applicants.	

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No.	What we originally said we would do	Who is doing the project	When to be completed by	Traffic light system	Progress report	Future issues
19	Work in partnership with other bodies such as Suffolk Youth Services, Suffolk Council for Voluntary Youth Services and Supporting Contemporary Adolescence, to part fund and deliver youth initiatives in the rural areas.	Community Development Unit (SEBC); Suffolk Youth Services; Suffolk Council for Voluntary Youth Services and Supporting Contemporary Adolescence.	March 2011.	Amber 	<p>Following the success of the 'Wos Up' Mobile Youth provision in 2008, Supporting Contemporary Adolescence were commissioned again to deliver the programme. The project worked in the following six villages Ixworth, Stanton, Barningham, Barrow, Kedington and Wickhambrook. The project has currently ended until Spring 2010. Wos Up in 2009 engaged with over 950 Young People aged 12 to 25.</p> <p>St Edmundsbury also funded bicycle maintenance workshops and sports training sessions which took place at Clare Youth Club in the Summer term, this was organised as a part of the Rural Youth Work programme and in response to young peoples' consultation.</p> <p>St Edmundsbury also worked with Suffolk Youth and Connexions Service. St Edmundsbury funded 3 sessions of the Go With the Flow Youth Bus which visited Stanton, Ixworth and Barningham in the summer holidays for 1 day per village. These sessions were very well received and complemented the ongoing work of 'Wos Up' in those villages.</p>	