



## **Rural Area Working Party 18 November 2010**

### **Review of the final year of the 2008-11 Rural Action Plan and proposals for future extension**

#### **SUMMARY**

1. The Rural Action Plan (RAP), covering the period from March 2008 to March 2011, was approved on 5 March 2008 (Report Y606 refers).
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 Overview and Scrutiny on 22 April 2009.
3. In November 2009 the responsibility for monitoring of the Rural Action Plan came under the remit of the newly formed Rural Area Working Party. The second monitoring report was thus taken to the Rural Area Working Party on 12 November 2009. This report forms the third and final monitoring report on the 2008 to 2011 Rural Action Plan.
4. This report also seeks approval for the future extension of the Rural Action Plan further to confirmation that the Rural Area Working Party Funding sub-group would like to see the Rural Action Plan continue beyond March 2011 (Report B235 to the Working Party on 30 September 2010).

#### **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

The purpose of the report is to:-

- (a) update Members on the progress made from November 2009 to October 2010 of the projects within the Rural Action Plan;
- (b) seek approval to develop a Rural Action Plan for an additional three years from April 2011 to March 2014; and
- (c) consult with Members of the Rural Area Working Party for potential projects for inclusion in the future Rural Action Plan.

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## 1. Background

- 1.1 The 2008-2011 Rural Action Plan originally contained 35 projects that were aimed at preserving and enhancing the social, economic and environmental well-being of rural St Edmundsbury.
- 1.2 Following consultation, the projects were devised to make a difference across three main areas; people, places and prosperity. The plan aims to deliver the Cabinet's commitment to rural areas.
- 1.3 The projects came under four 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.
- 1.4 All projects were given approximate dates by which they should be completed, and the projects were delivered across the three years of the plan.

## 2. Monitoring and review

- 2.1 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, and a summary of why they have not been started will be given under the progress report column.
- 2.2 Please find the progress report attached as Appendix A to this report.
- 2.3 Of the 33 projects (of the original 35 projects, two projects were merged because of their similarities and one project was removed because it was completed before the RAP began), 24 have been successfully completed and five are on-going. Four projects have not been finalised because of changing priorities.
- 2.4 As a summary to Appendix A, the following table summarises the projects that are proposed for continuation or otherwise. Reasons are provided in Appendix A.

<b>Project name</b>	<b>Project proposed for continuation?</b>
Assist with the development of National Cycle Route 51.	No.
Campaign for the creation of a cycle route from Sicklesmere to Bury St Edmunds.	No.
Campaign to support Suffolk Roadsafe Partnership's ' <i>Community Speed Watch</i> '.	<b>Yes.</b>
Review and encourage flexible working for rural businesses in St Edmundsbury.	<b>Yes.</b>
Encourage existing supermarket-organised bus routes to be extended into other villages.	No.
Investigate supporting existing community transport services to connect people from smaller villages with larger villages.	No.
Organise for rural residents to be transported from identified villages to the Christmas Fayre.	No.
Produce maps (in leaflet format) to show key services/facilities, footpaths, cycle ways, and so on, in St Edmundsbury's villages.	<b>Yes.</b>
Distribute Black Poplar trees to suitable rural areas.	No.
Identify key sites in our semi-natural areas where the potential for biodiversity improvements can be achieved.	No.
Organise training package for Parish Tree Wardens and encourage best practice.	<b>Yes.</b>
Produce dedicated web pages on the St Edmundsbury Borough Council website for the Countryside Forum.	No.
Promote private gardens as havens for biodiversity.	No.
Work with partners to preserve Scots Pine trees of local provenance.	No.
Commission Suffolk County Council's Rural Development Managers.	No.
Create a database showing village halls available for private hire in the borough.	No.
Create a Farm Diversification Guidance booklet.	<b>Yes.</b>
Create a new Accommodation Providers Information Pack.	No.
Create a section on the St Edmundsbury Borough Council website dedicated to rural residents.	No.
Develop the Rural Coffee Caravan Information Project in St Edmundsbury.	<b>Yes.</b>
Encourage and support villages to take part in the annual Heritage Open Days.	<b>Yes.</b>
Encourage online information technology training through promotional literature.	No.
Encourage Parish Councils to undertake housing needs surveys and assist with the preparation of these.	<b>Yes.</b>
Investigate and support community café idea in existing community buildings.	<b>Yes.</b>
Investigate the provision of remote work space in village halls.	<b>Yes.</b>
Organise a campaign to encourage and promote village welcome packs for new residents.	<b>Yes.</b>
Organise an event to support National Mills day.	<b>Yes.</b>

Organise rural business networking events.	No.
Produce planning guidance on the re-use of redundant buildings in rural areas.	<b>Yes.</b>
Promote existing events and initiatives for all young people and investigate ways of facilitating access to these events for young people in rural areas.	Unsure at this stage.
Provide tours of the larger villages with qualified guides.	<b>Yes.</b>
Support communities through the Post Office Network Change process.	No.
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.	Unsure at this stage.

2.5 Over the last year 8 village halls (Clare, Great Bradley, Great Whelnetham, Hawstead, Hundon, Ousden, Stansfield and Wickhambrook) have benefitted from new laptops with wireless internet connection for all the community to use. More than 18 visits have taken place to our most remote rural settlements by the Rural Coffee Caravan Information Project. 53 village halls have been included in the new website ([www.suffolkvillagehalls.co.uk](http://www.suffolkvillagehalls.co.uk)) aimed at promoting and increasing the use of village halls. The new *'Suffolk Links – Three Towns'* Demand responsive transport, which is available in some St Edmundsbury villages, has benefitted from financial support. Hundon Community Café was established and received the start-up grant and advice package. This will now be used as an exemplar for other community cafes in St Edmundsbury and beyond. Tours for visitors have been established in Clare, Ixworth and Stanton. The *'Wos Up'* rural outreach youth project was supported. Village welcome pack templates have been produced to support villages in promoting their local facilities, businesses, etc. These are just a few of the successes brought about by the Rural Action Plan over the past year.

### **3. Future extension of the Rural Action Plan**

- 3.1 The current Rural Action Plan finishes in March 2011 and it is proposed that a new three-year Rural Action Plan is produced.
- 3.2 As reported to the Rural Area Working Party on 30 September 2010 (Report B235, Review of Rural Area Funding), the Rural Area Working Party Funding Sub-group agreed that the Rural Action Plan is widely recognised to be an initiative that provides a useful funding scheme for revenue and capital projects and requested that the Action Plan be retained after 2011.

### **4. National context**

- 4.1 The Rural Action Plan seeks to help the Borough's rural communities to help themselves and develop their social capital, both of which are big themes on the Government's agenda (e.g. the Big Society and the Community Right to Build).

### **5. Funding options for a future Rural Action Plan**

- 5.1 The 2008-11 Rural Action Plan was established with a £100,000 budget allocated to carry out the projects over the three year life of the action plan. A further £17,500 was allocated from Economic Development budgets and Local Authority Business Growth Incentive (LABGI).

5.2 Since the current plan is due to come to an end it gives the Rural Area Working Party an opportunity to:-

- (a) consider the form of any continuation of the funding programme;
- (b) revisit priorities;
- (c) refresh the projects following consultation;
- (d) determine future funding support;
- (e) lever in external funding where possible to ensure the longevity of projects; and
- (f) recommend to Cabinet that all of the above are approved.

## **6. Current position**

6.1 Due to careful management of the available funding, a reassessment of some of the proposed projects, and success in attracting additional contributions from partners, there is in the region of £50,000 remaining (as of November 2010) from the original Rural Action Plan budget that can be carried forward.

6.2 The Review of Rural Area Funding (Report B235) by the Working Party was adopted by Cabinet on 20 October 2010 (Minute 71 refers). The review highlighted issues with the allocation of funding for rural initiatives going forward. It is clear that there are numerous projects that have been welcomed by rural communities; however it is also clear that these initiatives will have to compete with other commitments for future funding. Funding for these initiatives is reducing and, therefore, there are difficult decisions to be made about which projects should be supported.

6.3 Over the lifetime of the Rural Action Plan it has become apparent that some projects are more successful than others. For example, the Connected Villages Wi-Fi project has given eight communities access to the internet, opening up opportunities for online training/development and information gathering whilst engendering strong community involvement. In contrast, the projects to develop cycle routes, whilst worthy, have not been completed due to the reliance on partners and their changing priorities. This experience enables the projects to be prioritised in order of those that can be brought forward, to those that would not be pursued further. Projects with the greatest impact in rural communities and those supported most by rural communities would score highly in this test.

## **7. Options for continuing**

7.1 The Cabinet has already agreed with the Working Party's view (expressed in the Rural Area Funding Review) that the Rural Action Plan should ideally continue. Therefore the role of the Working Party is now to advise the Cabinet on what basis (see 5.2 above).

7.2 Furthermore, on 20 October 2010, through its adoption of both the Rural Area Funding Review recommendations and the proposals for LABGI in 2011/2012 (Minute 69 refers), the Cabinet, has in effect, already approved a means by which the Rural Action Plan can be extended for a further term. This funding approach entails creating a new Rural Action Plan budget allocation which consists of:-

- (a) the remaining Rural Action Plan budget of approximately £50,000, a new £79,000 LABGI contribution, and £21,000 from economic development budget (totalling £150,000), plus
  - (b) continued support from the Economic Development officers;
  - (c) maximising external funding opportunities; and
  - (d) harnessing and building on the capacity that exists within villages.
- 7.3 This model should enable the successful projects to be continued and provide sufficient funding to take advantage of unforeseen opportunities to lever in additional funds which always need match funding. The Working Party does, however, need to advise Cabinet on how long this funding strategy would enable the Plan to be extended.

## **8. Financial implications**

- 8.1 After analysing previous spend, looking at the projects most in need of continuation, it is suggested that a maximum budget of £150,000 would enable the Rural Action Plan to be extended by three years from April 2011 to March 2014.
- 8.2 The above figure of £150,000 includes funding for the Rural Areas Community Initiatives Fund. This is a small St Edmundsbury Borough Council grant scheme which gives up to 50% match funding, from £500 to £5,000. The £150,000 also includes the Suffolk Rural Economy Scheme, which is a small grant scheme which is administered by Suffolk County Council on behalf of all the districts. Each district and Suffolk County Council contribute a small amount annually and these monies are used to lever in more funding to enlarge the final grant pot for rural shops, post offices and pubs which gives up to 50% match funding, from £500 to £5,000. We feel that for marketing purposes these two projects should sit within the Rural Action Plan rather than be seen as separate projects.
- 8.3 This £150,000 does not require a growth bid since it can be funded from the remaining Rural Action Plan budget, which will be in the region of £50,000, £79,000 from LABGI and £21,000 from the Economic Development budget.

## **9. Next steps**

- 9.1 The next stages involved in the development of a new Rural Action Plan, including timescales, have been detailed in Appendix B of this report (Rural Action Plan 2011-2014 Work Programme).
- 9.2 The stages include consultation, drafting of the Rural Action Plan, presenting the draft Rural Action Plan to the Rural Area Working Party in January 2011, consulting on the draft Rural Action Plan with final approval by Cabinet in March.
- 9.3 The Action Plan will remain a dynamic document and, therefore, it will also take into account the outcome of the rural masterplanning process that Council will carry out in 2011. Subject to adoption of the Local Development Core Strategy in December 2010, work on the rural masterplanning process would start in Spring 2011. Members will recall that the Policy Development Committee has agreed that masterplans for Bury St Edmunds, Haverhill and the rural areas will be used to replace St Edmundsbury Vision 2025. This Working Party will have a chance to review the Rural Action Plan in the light of that work.

## 10. Recommendations

It is **RECOMMENDED** that the Working Party recommends to Cabinet that:-

- (1) the progress made towards the 2008 to 2011 Rural Action Plan be noted;
- (2) the Rural Action Plan be extended for a further three years to the end of March 2014, with funding from: the underspend from previous years; Local Authority Business Growth Incentive funding; and Economic Development section codes as set out in Paragraph 7.2 above;
- (3) the work programme for developing the new Rural Action Plan 2011 to 2014 be noted;
- (4) the continuation of some projects from the 2008 to 2011 plan (denoted by a 'yes' in paragraph 2.4 of this report) be noted, and these projects be approved for inclusion in the 2011 to 2014 Rural Action Plan; and
- (5) delegated authority be given to the Rural Area Working Party to carry out consultation on the draft Rural Action Plan once it has been collated, and to prepare and recommend a new plan to Cabinet.



## 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	Should the project be recommended for inclusion in the future Rural Action Plan
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.	Red	<p>This project has not been completed because of SCC's changing priorities. SCC had proposed to undertake a feasibility study into phase one of this route between Bury St Edmunds and Horringer.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>No.</p> <p>This project was dependent upon SCC for delivery and although it is still an aspirational project, no timescale or budget has been identified at this stage.</p>
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	<p>This route was requested by Parish Councils and a bid for funding was subsequently submitted to Suffolk County Council in 2008-9, and subsequently in 2010-11.</p> <p>Unfortunately this was unsuccessful, and other options for funding are looking unlikely due to higher priority schemes.</p>	<p>No.</p> <p>The aspiration of Sicklesmere to be connected to Bury St Edmunds on a cycle route has not gone away, but the prospect of delivery is very low and thus it does not make sense to have it as an action.</p>

3	Campaign to support Suffolk Roadsafe Partnership's 'Community Speed Watch'.	Suffolk Roadsafe Partnership and Parish Councils.	March 2011.	Green	A Partnership Community Speed Watch scheme started in 2008, which included a number of Parish Councils in the southern part of St Edmundsbury. This group became known as the Bury Rural South Community Speed Watch Initiative. Since this time lots of training has taken place and equipment is used on a shared basis between villages. At present 8 Parish Councils are involved and 3 more have expressed an interest. The group received £1000 via the Rural Action Plan for training and equipment. Their efforts were also promoted in Rural News in September 2010.	Yes.  There is at least one other community speed watch scheme in the borough that could benefit from funding. Failing that, the council could offer start-up support to any new schemes in the borough.
4	Review and encourage flexible working for rural businesses in St Edmundsbury.	Economic Development Services (SEBC) and Environmental Management section (SEBC)	June 2010	Green	A Smart Business conference took place on 11 March 2010. This was 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. The agenda included items such as 'Smart Talking' and how you can do business with less travel.	Yes, as part of a wider project.  It is important for SEBC to support businesses where possible in the development of flexible working practices, particularly those which deliver a reduction in carbon emissions (e.g. reduced mileage). Officers have recently secured funding of £60,000 from the West Suffolk LSP for a 'Carbon Cutters fund'. The fund will enable eligible small and medium businesses in the locality to apply for up to £1,000 from the fund to carry out work such as insulating their building, replacing heating controls and lighting or installing more energy efficient alternatives to existing equipment.

## 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	Should the project be recommended for inclusion in the future Rural Action Plan
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) and PB Bus Marketing.	March 2010.	Green	Following communication with PB Bus Marketing (the company responsible for liaising with Burtons Coaches on behalf of Tesco) over several months, success came in March 2010 when Bardwell was finally included in the Free Tesco bus route (Stanton to Bury St Edmunds Tesco, Route D). Officers informed local residents and an article was produced for the April 2010 Rural News. Depden now also has access to the Haverhill Tesco via bus no. 344/345.	No. This project has been completed and cannot be taken any further.

2	Investigate supporting existing community transport services to connect people from smaller villages with larger villages with shop, post office and rural attractions.	Economic Development Services and Suffolk County Council Passenger Transport section	In 2011.	Green	<p>This project was timely since passenger transport services in the BSE to Haverhill area were being reviewed by SCC. Information gathering took place using local focus groups, transport surveys and existing bus usage. Since 31 August 2010 there is a more direct and more consistently routed hourly timetabled bus service between Haverhill and BSE. This travels via Kedington, HMP Stradishall, Wickham Street, Clopton Green, Chedburgh, Chevington, and Horringer. Some journeys continue to serve Wickhambrook and most are also routed to additionally serve West Suffolk Hospital. The poorly-used 225 bus service has been withdrawn and the 341 is being altered. As a result, some villages are no longer served as before, but are instead able to access a new demand-responsive transport service: 'Suffolk Links – 3 Towns'. The service is wheelchair accessible; it picks people up from a venue at a time of their choosing and takes them either right to their destination or to a suitable point where they can then join a timetabled public transport service for onward travel at or near to their chosen time of arrival; it is bookable up to seven days in advance of when a customer wishes to travel; it operates from 7am-7pm Mon-Sat; it accepts concessionary fare passes and Explore cards and the fare is similar to a normal bus fare; it covers Hargrave, Ousden, Depden, Ashfield Green, Lidgate, Cowlinge, Wickhambrook, Denston, Stradishall, Barnardiston, Withersfield, Wrattings, Thurlows and Bradleys.</p>	<p>No.</p> <p>This project has been established and funded by SCC (with some funding from the Rural Action Plan) and has been a success; the Suffolk Links service will continue to serve the villages listed. Officers will also continue to do their best to promote the use of small rural shops, post offices and so on.</p>
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3	Organise for rural residents to be transported from identified villages to the Christmas Fayre.	Tourism Services (SEBC) and Coach companies.	December annually.	Green	In 2009 a free coach was provided for the Sunday and picked up residents in Honington, Ixworth Thorpe, Troston, Livermere, Ampton, Ingham, Hopton, Market Weston, Barningham and Sapiston. The free coach will not be available in 2010.	No.  Despite promoting this service heavily, the take-up was fairly low and did not prove cost effective. We have now trialled this for two years, but since the project can only benefit a small proportion of villages in the borough it is relatively costly in terms of the number of beneficiaries.
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4	Produce maps (in leaflet format) to show key services/facilities, footpaths, cycle ways, and so on, in St Edmundsbury's villages.	East of England Tourism; Economic Development Services (SEBC); Tourism Services (SEBC); rural businesses and the rural community.	March 2011.	Amber	<p>This project was originally due to be carried out in partnership with Suffolk County Council, however SCC had to pull out of the project due to a lack of staff resources. Fortunately shortly after this a Sustainable Tourism East project was developed (this is a three-year project supported under the Rural Development Programme for England by the East of England Development Agency, Defra and the EU, and delivered by East of England Tourism). This project gives rural businesses in the East of England access to practical support including training courses, green business advisory visits, distinctive area awareness seminars, and marketing opportunities, to help them develop a more sustainable approach. One of the marketing opportunities is a Local Information Guide. The guides highlight local distinctiveness with an emphasis on culture and heritage, traditions and outdoor activities, and give ideas for a car-free day out. The guides will showcase businesses which are participating in Sustainable Tourism East. In St Edmundsbury a guide for Clare and Cavendish is currently being developed which will be published in January 2011. Two other maps are planned - one to cover most of Bury St Edmunds town centre, but also including Nowton Park and Ickworth House. The other map will include the north part of Bury St Edmunds, including the Fornhams and West Stow. These are due to be published in May 2011.</p>	<p>Yes.</p> <p>The external funding for this whole project runs until March 2013, thus officers will endeavour to seek more maps to cover St Edmundsbury villages.</p>
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## 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	Should the project be recommended for inclusion in the future Rural Action Plan
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	Volunteers managed to take cuttings and produce 107 young trees. These have been planted in appropriate locations throughout the borough.	No.  This project has been completed. Furthermore, there is a limited opportunity to plant these river valley trees in the appropriate places so future delivery could be difficult.
2	Identify key sites in our semi natural areas where the potential for biodiversity improvements can be achieved.	Parks Section (SEBC); Suffolk Wildlife Trust and the Biodiversity Partnership.	End of March each year.	Green	Suffolk Wildlife Trust (SWT) were commissioned to carry out this project. In 2008-9 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 in the borough. During the Summer of 2009-10 sites, where little was known about their current status, were surveyed by SWT (to support the borough's National Indicator 197 to reach a target of 50% of local sites being in active management). At 31 March 2010 the National Indicator 197 figure for St Edmundsbury was 47%. Further information received from SWT since March 2010 shows that this percentage has risen to 49%.	No.  SEBC is only 1% off the target and so we are almost certainly going to achieve the 50% by March 2011, plus this survey does not need to be carried out on an annual basis. Furthermore, since we have commissioned SWT to carry out these surveys they will continue to monitor sites based on the priorities identified in the initial survey work.

3	Organise training package for Parish Tree Wardens and encourage best practice.	Parks Section (SEBC); Suffolk Wildlife Trust and Parish Tree Wardens.	March annually.	Green	<p>In Feb 2010 a second seminar was held at Lackford Lakes and 10 tree wardens were in attendance. There were two guest speakers and subjects discussed included hedgerows for wildlife and planting and management techniques.</p> <p>This project has been developed further with a hedge and tree planting small grant scheme being introduced to encourage the planting of native species in the countryside. The borough council will supply free plants and advice to tree wardens and community groups. Applications for funding must come from the parish tree warden in consultation with Suffolk Wildlife Trust.</p>	<p>Yes.</p> <p>Tree wardens have had a number of opportunities to gain experience through the training seminars so the identified training need has been met. However officers would like to continue to develop the grant scheme.</p>
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	<p>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.</p>	<p>No.</p> <p>This project has been completed and cannot be taken any further.</p>



5	Promote private gardens as havens for biodiversity.	Parks Section (SEBC) and Suffolk Wildlife Trust.	From September 2008.	Green	<p>During 2009 Suffolk Wildlife Trust were commissioned to research for, and write, an article (with photographs), on how residents can encourage biodiversity in their gardens. These articles went out with the Rural News and continue to be available via the Rural Communities section on the SEBC website.</p> <p>In 2010 a new approach was taken to promote wildlife gardening and SWT were commissioned to put on a Wildlife Gardening Question Time at Nowton Park Country Fair in June. The event as a whole attracted approximately 10,000 visitors and everyone had the opportunity to visit the SWT show and ask questions and pick up information. SWT recorded 130 one to one consultations throughout the day.</p>	<p>No.</p> <p>This project has been completed.</p>
6	Work with partners to preserve Scots Pine trees of local provenance.	Parks Section (SEBC); The Brecks Countryside Project; schools and Services to Business.	From August 2008.	Green	<p>The sourcing of appropriate seed proved to be very difficult; various methods were tried but no viable material could be acquired. It became apparent that this project was not achievable for the Brecks. The concept of school children collecting seed and growing plants on was, however, achieved with children from Horringer Middle School successfully germinating 'honesty' seeds and planting them out in the woodland garden at Nowton Park.</p>	<p>No.</p> <p>The principle of collecting wild seed and growing wild plants with school children has been achieved but since the sourcing of seed has proved difficult this project cannot be taken any further.</p>

## Projects to promote stronger and sustainable rural communities

No.	What we originally said we would do	Who is doing the project	When to be completed by	Traffic light system	Progress report	Should the project be recommended for inclusion in the future Rural Action Plan
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.	Green	The Rural Development Managers at Suffolk County Council have answered queries from community groups across the borough, particularly with regard to funding for projects. SEBC commissioned the Rural Development Managers to carry out three funding surgeries during 2010. These were held at Great Whelnetham Community Centre, Hundon Village Hall and Culford Village Hall and were very attended and very well received by groups.	No.  On balance this project has not been as successful as some of the other projects in terms of value for money.

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>The website - <a href="http://www.suffolkvillagehalls.co.uk">www.suffolkvillagehalls.co.uk</a> - has now been live for over a year, and is well populated. When officers are made aware of changes in Village Hall Management Committees they advise new committee members of the login process and put them in touch with Suffolk ACRE for login details.</p>	<p>No.</p> <p>This project has been completed and cannot be taken any further. However support regarding the website will continue to be given to village hall members as and when the need arises.</p>
3	Create a Farm Diversification Guidance booklet.	Planning Section and Economic Development Services (SEBC).	By 2011.	Red	This project has been delayed due to higher priority work on the Local Development Framework.	<p>Yes.</p> <p>Although this project will be deferred pending the preparation of the Development Management Policies document as part of the LDF, it is still a worthwhile project to be included in a future plan.</p>

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.	No.  This project has been completed and cannot be taken any further.
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.	No.  This project has been completed, however updates will continue to be made throughout the year.

6	Develop the Rural Coffee Caravan Information Project in St Edmundsbury	Economic Development Services (SEBC); Rural Coffee Caravan Information Project Manager; Parish Councils; Community Councils; and the rural community.	From June 2008.	Green	<p>Completed for 2010-11. The caravan spends two hours at a location which enables staff to advise and signpost individuals, including older people, those from low income households, and single parents. It also enables residents to socially interact with each other and with the organisations' volunteers and partner agencies. Working with agencies allows the project to really disseminate information at grass roots level and link people into vital services. The project has developed further with a campervan being purchased, funded from the Care Health and Independence Delivery Board (part of the Suffolk Strategic Partnership). Its mission is to make available information that enables people to achieve better health and wellbeing, feel safer and more engaged in their own environment and maintain their independence, enabling users to stay longer in their own homes. It operates in much the same way as the caravan, but it is available five days a week and throughout the Winter. The campervan aims to link into existing village events such as coffee mornings to bring the information service to places where there is some social focus but the same difficulty in getting access to information. Partner organisations travel with the project to these visits to increase awareness of the services they offer and to link people into the services they need.</p>	<p>Yes.</p> <p>This is an extremely valuable resource for our rural areas. The project has expanded and is reaching more villages in St Edmundsbury and will continue to do so with our support. For example in 2010 the project visited Ampton, Barningham, Cowlinge, Euston, Fakenham Magna, Great Bradley, Great Livermere, Hopton, Lidgate, Ousden, Rougham, Stradishall and Timworth. The project has also recently been awarded some WSLSP money which will enable the project to purchase a people carrier to pick up people (with mobility issues) within the village that is being visited, or from nearby villages. The money will also enable the project to reach even more West Suffolk villages.</p>
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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	<p>Completed for 2010-11.</p> <p>Officers continued with the Ixworth and Stanton tours and added a Clare tour. A coach was provided from Bury St Edmunds to Clare - it was full and feedback was very positive.</p>	<p>Yes.</p> <p>For 2011 officers would like to continue with the Clare coach because Clare offers so many attractions and customers expressed the fact that they would like to come back again. Officers would also like to add another bus to the north west of the borough (e.g. West Stow, Culford and Lackford).</p>
8	Encourage online information technology training through promotional literature.	Economic Development Services (SEBC).	March 2010.	Amber	<p>Through the 'Connected Villages' project we have stipulated that villages must provide online training for their residents, and this is working successfully in the majority of villages that have taken part in the project. Some villages (e.g. Great Bradley) are linked into West Suffolk College's outreach courses.</p> <p>In 2011 officers will also be promoting existing online tools to help improve information technology skills of rural residents - for example <a href="http://www.myguide.gov.uk">www.myguide.gov.uk</a> - through literature such as the Rural News magazine.</p>	<p>No.</p> <p>This project has been completed. Officers will continue to promote information technology learning opportunities (e.g. through existing promotional material, via email, and so on).</p>

9	Encourage Parish Councils to undertake housing needs surveys and assist with the preparation of these.	Housing Team (SEBC); Parish Councils; Housing Associations and Suffolk ACRE.	From March 2008.	Amber	<p>Just over 18 months ago the first residents moved in to Havebury's new affordable homes in Honington. Since that time St Edmundsbury Borough Council's Housing Team has continued to work with Parish Council's, Suffolk ACRE and housing associations to improve the affordable housing provision in our rural villages.</p> <p>Schemes in Bardwell and Cavendish have been awarded grants totalling £556,000 from the Homes and Communities Agencies and, subject to planning permission, eight homes in each village will be completed in early 2012.</p> <p>Potential sites are currently being investigated in Great Barton, Great Whelnetham, Hundon and Wickhambrook. This is a critical stage in the development of a scheme and can be the most unpredictable in terms of time scales. In Kedington, for example, after several years a suitable site has still not been found.</p> <p>The St Edmundsbury Local Investment Plan identifies the lack of affordable housing as 'one of the strategic challenges for the borough'. In response to this challenge, 51 new affordable homes in rural areas are proposed over the next three years.</p>	<p>Yes.</p> <p>This is an important issue and something that SEBC wants to continue in a more systematic way.</p> <p>The Rural Exceptions policy in the Core Strategy has been amended and now includes infill villages, so future planning policy in terms of settlement hierarchy should not affect deliverability.</p> <p>The main project is to continue to deliver affordable housing prioritising the sites identified in the Local Investment Plan.</p>
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10	Investigate and support community café idea in existing community buildings.	Economic Development Services (SEBC); Environmental Health (SEBC); Parish Councils; and rural residents.	March 2011.	Amber	<p>This project was linked to the rural issues sub group of the WSLSP.</p> <p>Officers visited existing community cafes in Kedington and Needham Market to create case studies. Following this a leaflet was produced and distributed. Further promotion took place through the Rural News, a Bury Free Press article and BBC Radio Suffolk. Several villages have contacted officers asking for ideas and advice.</p> <p>The project has been developed further and a small grant scheme is now available which villages can use towards set-up costs (for example catering equipment, tables and chairs). Hundon is the first village to benefit from the advice and funding support available through this project and the Hundon Community Cafe subsequently started in May 2010.</p>	<p>Yes.</p> <p>The useful information leaflet can continue to be updated as necessary and given to interested parties (promotion of its availability is on-going). The grant scheme can be very useful for those wishing to start up.</p>
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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 Association of Local Councils.	March 2011.	Amber	<p>This was developed into a larger project. SEBC commissioned Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC) to administer a project to enable ten villages to 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 has 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>Clare was the first village to receive its equipment and was therefore the location for the official launch (Bury Free Press took photographs and Radio Suffolk carried out interviews). Since that date, Great Bradley, Great Whelnetham, Hawstead, Hundon, Ousden, Stansfield and Wickhambrook have also been beneficiaries of the project. Stanton Community Village Hall is due to benefit shortly (following its recent refurbishment).</p>	<p>Yes.</p> <p>Whilst this project is almost complete, there is still money allocated for at least one more village to take part. Furthermore, there is some money left over which has been allocated towards a small match-funded grant scheme that will allow the Connected Villages recipients to apply for money towards a projector and/or screen to enable the village hall to become fully equipped.</p>
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12	Organise a campaign to encourage and promote village welcome packs for new residents.	Economic Development (SEBC) and the WSLSP.	March 2009.	Green	<p>This project, which was linked to a WSLSP project, has been completed. Following research, templates were produced. A limited number were available on CD and continue to be sent via email when requested 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 were 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. There have also been over 20 requests for the templates from rural community groups outside of West Suffolk (including Ireland and New Zealand!).</p>	<p>Yes.</p> <p>Officers can continue to keep the documents updated and give advice to villages as and when requested.</p>
13	Organise an event to support National Mills day – including Bardwell, Pakenham, Stanton and Thelnetham mills.	Tourism Services (SEBC); local mills and National Mills Organisation.	May annually.	Green	<p>Completed for 2010-11. A mini bus was organised to transport people (30 people took advantage of this, an increase on last year, and there was indeed a waiting list but a bigger coach could not be used due to the narrow roads on the route) 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.</p>	<p>Yes.</p> <p>For 2011, we would like to further develop this project to incorporate Fuller's Mill in West Stow. We hope to also investigate the possibility of having two smaller coaches.</p>

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.	Green	An event took place in February 2010 at Great Whelnetham Community Centre. The focus of the event was on assisting rural businesses out of the recession, and there were speakers covering the areas of marketing, finance and rural retail.	No.  Whilst we are keen to provide business events that are specifically aimed at rural businesses and held in rural locations, the attendance at these events is not as high as hoped. This means that the project does not provide value for money.
15	Produce planning guidance on the re-use of redundant buildings in rural areas.	Planning Section and Economic Development Services (SEBC).	March 2011.	Red	This project has been delayed due to higher priority work on the Local Development Framework.	Yes.  Although this project will be deferred pending the preparation of the Development Management Policies document as part of the LDF, it is still a worthwhile project to be included in a future plan.
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.	Green	In 2009 we provided funding for established groups of young people to access events happening in the borough for young people. This initiative was offered again in 2010 to established groups across the borough but as yet we have had no expressions of interest from established youth groups and clubs.	Unsure at this stage.  Officers are looking at future options, including working with Forest Heath District Council.

17	Provide tours of the larger villages with qualified guides – transport will be provided from Bury St Edmunds and other villages en-route.	Tourism Services (SEBC); Clare Ancient House Museum; Clare Business Association; Clare Church; Clare and Stanton Parish Councils, and Bury St Edmunds Registered Tour Guides.	May to September annually.	Green	Completed for 2010-11. Tours were provided monthly in Clare and there was a reasonable attendance. There was also a tour of Stanton, but this was part of the Heritage Open Day tours. Officers have been working with the Curator at the Clare Ancient house Museum and other parties in Clare to develop the armchair tour (which will enable the guide to visit clubs and societies in other areas). The script and images are now available and the finishing touches just need to be made.	Yes.  For 2011 in addition to the other tours, officers hope to launch the 'Armchair' tour.
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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	<p>This project has been completed. 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.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>No.</p> <p>This project has been completed and the 2008 network change programme has come to an end. However officers will continue to support rural post offices through existing programmes (e.g. Suffolk Rural Economy Scheme).</p>
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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.	Green	As part of the St Edmundsbury Rural Youth Work Programme in 2010-11 we have continued to fund Supporting Contemporary Adolescence to deliver the 'Wos Up' project. The Wos Up project consists of Youth Workers, a truck full of kit, information and advice for young people visiting villages in St Edmundsbury. This year the programme was extended to cover nine villages, an increase of three villages compared to 2009. Wos Up in St Edmundsbury is in its third year and future options for the scheme are being considered to ensure value for money.	Unsure at this stage.  Officers are looking at future options, including working with Forest Heath District Council.
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**Appendix B:  
Rural Action Plan 2011-14 Work Programme**

Item	Nov-10	Dec-10	Jan-11	Feb-11	Mar-11	Apr-11
Report to Rural Area Working Party to: a) Note progress of final year of 2008-11 Rural Action Plan b) Recommend approval to Cabinet for three year funding for a future Rural Action Plan c) Recommend approval to Cabinet to continue certain projects from the 2008-11 Rural Action Plan and include in the 2011-14 Rural Action Plan d) Delegated authority be given to the Rural Area Working Party to start consultation on the draft Rural Action Plan once it has been collated.	<b>RAWP 18th</b>	<b>Cabinet 1st</b>				
Carry out internal consultation						
Carry out external consultation with partners						
Carry out public consultation						
Draft the 2011-14 Rural Action Plan						
Seek approval to put the draft Rural Action Plan forward for consultation			<b>RAWP 13th</b>			
Carry out further consultation with all parties						
Prepare final draft 2011-14 Rural Action Plan						
Seek approval for final draft Rural Action Plan					<b>RAWP 10th Cabinet 16th</b>	
Seek delegated budget approval (for individual projects)					<b>RAWP 10th Cabinet 16th</b>	
Promote new Rural Action Plan (e.g. at the Parish Conference)						