

# People Helping People

An Assessment of the  
Market Towns and Related Initiatives,  
and the  
Extent to Which They Addressed  
Rural Poverty  
(Volume 1 of 2)

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**Signed:** .....

## Abstract

This study evaluates, by means of face to face interviews and a postal survey, aspects of the Market Towns Initiative (MTI), the Beacon Towns Programme (BTP), and related programmes of community-led work, the majority of which arose from the British Government's Rural White Paper of 2000. Particular emphasis is placed on: participants' experiences, achievements and opinions about the programmes; their understanding of rural poverty; the extent to which they thought that the programmes should have had poverty alleviation as an aim, and to which they believed that the programmes had helped to identify and address rural poverty.

A review of the literature relating to rural policy reveals that political interest (and, therefore, policymakers' interest) in the functions of England's country - "market" - towns, and their place in the settlement hierarchy, has waxed and waned since the Second World War. During this period the nature of government, in particular the balance between the various tiers, has tilted in favour of central government. Consequently, the powers available to County and District/Borough Councils, if not Town/Parish Councils, have reduced. Central government has increasingly looked to partnerships formed from public, voluntary, and private sector organizations to implement policy. It is **governance**, therefore, rather than **government**, that has grown in importance in recent years. The MTI/BT programmes were both designed for implementation by broad-based partnerships of professionals and volunteers.

The literature also reveals that the post-war period has seen research into poverty become increasingly nuanced and sophisticated, with definitions moving away from the relatively simple to understand (eg lack of money) to more complicated notions of disadvantage, deprivation, and social exclusion. The factors that affect rural poverty have, since the 1970s, been remarkably constant (eg access to services, affordable housing, low income self-employment). The problems of rural poverty have not been solved.

It is argued, based on the results of the data acquired from this research, that community-led development programmes such as the MTI/BTP, have the potential to inform the development of policy and practice relating to community-led development and poverty alleviation, to add to the body of knowledge about rural poverty, and to improve the overall understanding of the functions of England's small towns. Despite the potential of partnerships to effect change, the important role of local authorities as democratically accountable organizations, and contributors to partnerships' success and effectiveness, is noted.

## **Acknowledgements And Dedication**

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## **CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION**

*There is nothing good to be had in the country, or, if there is, they will not let you have it.* William Hazlitt (1778-1830)

### **1.1) Small Country Towns and Rural Poverty**

This study considers two aspects of English rurality, country towns and poverty. The former have been of occasional interest to policy makers, but of considerable interest to those who live and work in them, or who depend upon them in one way or another. The latter, a constant if poorly understood concern, has attracted a lot of attention from researchers and rural development practitioners, but little in the way of meaningful, or obviously successful, policy responses.

In an attempt to add to both bodies of knowledge, this research explores the relationship between two relatively recent (2000 to 2005 approximately) community development programmes, the Market Towns Initiative (MTI) and the related Beacon Towns Programme (BTP), both of which were largely led by local people, and the extent to which the resulting work addressed poverty. The programmes, designed and sponsored by British Government organizations, supported community-based partnerships working in, and for, England's country towns and their surrounding areas.

Consideration is also given to the relationship between the MTI and BT programmes and the Market and Coastal Towns Initiative (MCTi), a programme similar in intent, but operationally distinct from the MTI/BTP, which operated almost simultaneously in the south west of England.

This research explores whether:

- 1) community-led initiatives like the MTI/MCTi/BTP have the potential to identify and address rural poverty at the local level;
- 2) the definitions and statistics used to explain and describe rural poverty are inadequate, if not inaccurate, for two reasons:
  - a. They have failed to produce a simple, coherent, widely and clearly understood idea of what it is that constitutes rural poverty. As a consequence rural poverty is difficult to understand conceptually and practically.

b. The generally accepted notion that poverty is relative is unhelpful. Research during the last 25 years suggests that approximately 20-25% of rural households live in poverty, with rural areas containing, "... around 16% of all of England's households living in poverty." (CRC 2006 p20). Although the arithmetic and theory are sound and accepted, the fact that the population of rural England is growing, that its economy is collectively (ie selectively) vibrant (CRC 2008 p109), and that the people who live there are generally prosperous, healthy and happy (CRC 2007 pp41, 45, 67, Poverty Site 2009) allows the figures to be challenged or dismissed (Miles 2007 p15).

In political and policy terms, the two poverty-related reasons (2a and 2b above) work to the disadvantage of people in rural England who are poor, and who tend to be hidden by the high average incomes of the majority (Taylor 2008 p32) and yet live in clusters, as exemplified by the fact that, "*Almost half of all people in social housing in rural districts are on low income*" (Poverty Site 2009a). The fact that poor people are the dispersed minority in rural areas (Poverty Site 2009b) means that they are largely hidden from view, if not from statistical analyses. There are visible exceptions living in ex-mining and seaside towns, but these settlements have an essentially urban "feel", and sit uneasily amongst the otherwise wealthy and pretty towns that nestle amidst England's stereotypically verdant valleys, lush meadows, and soft rolling hills.

Yet, within at least 227<sup>1</sup> of England's small country towns, work has been done by community groups as part of the MTI/MCTi/BTP that has, with or without their knowledge, and irrespective of their specific aims, helped to overcome problems of what might be broadly termed as rural poverty. This research takes and analyses the views and experiences of a sample of the people involved in these programmes, which operated throughout rural England, and uses these to inform discussions about the programmes and their impact on rural poverty.

The programmes were – broadly - restricted to the towns and their hinterlands. These geographical boundaries, together with eligibility criteria governing the population range, and rules standardizing the support available and the procedures to be followed, were useful in that they provided a relatively well defined,

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<sup>1</sup> The writer believes, based on his involvement with the programme, that 240 towns participated in the MTI. According to the Government's figures quoted in Hansard, <http://tinyurl.com/cjth9p> (Powe, Hart and Shaw 2007 p5) 227 partnerships participated. For the sake of consistency this latter figure has been used throughout this thesis.

numerically manageable, and appropriately dispersed research base suitable for controlled study.

Although concern about rural poverty is integral to this research, the achievements and potential of the approaches developed via the MTI/MCTi/BTP are of great interest, both in overall terms as effective enablers of community-led development, and also in their role as test beds for this research. The topics are also of personal, professional and long-standing interest to the writer, who, as an employee of both the Rural Development Commission (RDC) and the Countryside Agency (CA) was closely involved in the development and implementation of the MTI and BT programme. His roles and responsibilities are discussed in Section 1.2.

Following this, Sections 1.3 and 1.4 offer a more detailed exploration of the nature of rural poverty and the appropriateness of the MTI/MCTi/BTP as vehicles for the research. In Section 1.5, the chosen methodology is outlined. Finally, Section 1.6 introduces the literature review, and details the research objectives.

## **1.2) The Writer's Background, Experience and Involvement in the Programmes, and the Implications of These for the Research**

The writer's interest in the potential of local people to work together to help their town develop in ways that meet local needs stems from his work as a Parish Councillor, a School Governor of rural primary and secondary schools, a member of a Youth Management Committee, and a lecturer at a Further Education college in a country town. It was this interest that led him to a job with the then RDC in 1993 as Business Adviser for Dorset. This, in turn, led to his involvement with community-led, but public and voluntary-sector encouraged, work in country towns. Initially, his involvement was mainly local (ie county-based), with, for example, work in Bridport, the town on which the case study element of this research is based.

Later, as a consequence of growing, but uncoordinated concerns that the needs (and roles and potential) of England's country towns had been neglected in policy terms, colleagues in the RDC and other public, and private and voluntary sector organizations, came together, and began to encourage local people to become involved in community development. The approaches to this were designed to capitalize on the strengths, not only of the towns as service centres, and as places in which to live and work, but also on the ability – capacity – of local people to take the lead in analyzing and improving their town's circumstances. In the writer's

opinion this process occurred naturally, suggesting a common concern about settlement type (and, perhaps, sphere of influence), rather than, for example, a more general, wider geographical area. This development, with its local origins, undoubtedly helped to influence the policy and practice priorities of the RDC and also, subsequently, the CA.

Shortly after the closure of the RDC in 1999, and the simultaneous formation of the CA, work started on the Rural White Paper (DETR/MAFF 2000). The writer had by then been given regional responsibility in the south west of England for the development of the CA's emerging community development programmes. He worked with the CA headquarters team that contributed to the White Paper, and helped, by drawing on his experience with the county-wide town partnership he formed in 1994, together with some early regional work with Professor Andrew Errington of Plymouth University, to develop the thinking that informed the MTI and BT programme.

When the MTI became operational (at about the same time that the south west region's variant, the MCTi also began to operate), the writer was based in the south east. He helped, with his team, and colleagues from local authorities, the Regional Development Agency, and the region's Rural Community Councils, to introduce the MTI to the town-based partnerships that wanted to take part. It was during these early days that some of the unforeseen difficulties associated with, for example, the employment of project workers, and the extent to which partnerships had to adhere to the procedures governing the process (ie, the Healthcheck). In order to improve the management of the programme within the region, the writer, with support from colleagues in other organizations, formed the South East Rural Towns Partnership with the aim of improving coordination, liaison, and clarity and openness about the processes controlling the programme, and governing partnerships' eligibility for financial support.

With the MTI underway and proving, to many at least, to be popular, if not as straightforward as some would have liked, and with RDA staff developing their roles and responsibilities (DETR/MAFF 2000 p75), the CA's MTI team turned its attention to the BTP (the MTI and related programmes are discussed in detail in Chapter 5). The writer led the development of the BTP, which, in accordance with the Government's instructions, was designed to identify, "... *a national beacon towns network ... of 10-20 towns to demonstrate the range of different problems and challenges which market towns experience and from which other towns can learn.*" (DETR/MAFF 2000 p75). The programme and the selection processes were

developed during 2002, and the BTs were announced in three stages during 2003 and 2004 (Chapter 5 refers). It was during this period that the writer noticed how many of the topics identified for concern/action by MTI partnerships, and BTs, were those long recognized as factors related to rural poverty (eg access to services, affordable housing, low income employment). It was from this that his interest in the potential of the MTI and BTP to help identify and address rural poverty grew, and which led to the research that forms part of this thesis.

The connection between the evaluation of the MTI and BTP, and their impact, if any, on rural poverty, is not, therefore, due to the aims of the programmes. The connection is made by the writer. It is based on his interest in a topic (rural poverty) that appears persistent and resistant to the best attempts of policy makers, academics, and practitioners to solve, and also professionally, in his work as a rural researcher and university lecturer in community development.

As a consequence of the writer's professional involvement in the MTI and BTP work, the thesis contains both the views of the participants in the research (ie the surveyed and the interviewed) and information based on the writer's personal, and inevitably partial, experience, as well as his professional knowledge. Broadly, the descriptions of the development and achievements of the programmes in Chapter 5 draw on the writer's experience, as well as on information gathered from the sources given as references. Chapters 7 and 8 contain data obtained from the research participants (ie survey questionnaires and interviews). The conclusions and recommendations discussed in Chapter 9 are based on inferences drawn from the data gathered. The writer's experience and opinions are used to inform these inferences, but his personal views are mainly confined to the concluding remarks contained in Section 9.4. The next two sections offer a more detailed explanation of rural poverty and the appropriateness of the MTI/BTP as vehicles for the research.

### **1.3) Rural Poverty**

Although poverty has been a topic of political and social concern since medieval times (Glennerster, Hills, Piachaud and Webb 2004 p64) its existence was recognized much earlier (eg the well-known reference in the Gospels to the poor being a constant presence). Whereas eighteenth and early nineteenth century debates were about the, "... proper scope of the Poor Law", with, "... definitions of 'the poor' ... just as likely to be based on observations about the sources of a family's income and their place in the social hierarchy . . ." (Harris 2000 pp61-62), the late nineteenth, early twentieth century studies by Seebohm Rowntree were

about minimum levels of income – ie about the amount of money needed for subsistence (Glennerster *et al.* *ibid* p63).

Today, the word, poverty, is less commonly used, and debates and policies are as much about people's ability to participate in society as they are about income. Since the end of the Second World War, the idea of absolute poverty has largely given way to the – broadly accepted - concept of relative poverty, a change influenced to a great extent by the lifetime work of Peter Townsend, who believed that, "... we cannot determine a level of adequacy simply by virtue of some expert calculation of dietary or health needs.", but that, "Social custom requires that we share cups of tea with neighbours or buy presents for our children at Christmas ..." (Glennerster *et al.*, *ibid.* p87).

Broad acceptance does not mean universal acceptance, however. The extent, causes, and nature of poverty are contested between those who believe that poverty in its various forms is persistent, and those who take a contrary view, for example, that, "*Relative poverty breaks away altogether from the idea, not just of a satisfactory minimum standard of living that the community ... must afford each of its members, but from any idea of a 'satisfactory' minimum standard of living at all.*" (Dennis 1997 p146). Indeed, the picture was also complicated in Victorian times, for, as Mingay (1998 p194) reported, "*There is no doubt that rural poverty was widespread, but Rowntree [in his 1913 investigation into farmworkers' wages and living standards] certainly exaggerated the problem by ignoring in his calculations such considerations as additional earnings which could be gained by piecework, the subsidiary earnings of the wife and children, and the produce of the labourer's garden or allotment.*"

The years following the creation of the Welfare State in the late 1940s have seen the debate move from poverty to disadvantage, deprivation, and social exclusion. Recently, the word poverty has begun to regain some prominence ( Brewer, Muriel, Phillips, and Sibieta 2009, CRC 2008a, Dorling, Rigby, Wheeler, Ballas, Thomas, Fahmy, Gordon, and Lupton 2007), as has the term, disadvantage, which is central to the interests of the Commission for Rural Communities and the Rural Advocate (CRC 2006a). Also, relatively recently, there has been a growing interest in the causes and effects of inequality (Hills, Sefton, and Stewart 2009, Wilkinson and Pickett 2009), and in the related, but somewhat more nebulous concepts of social cohesion (Putnam 2000) and overall societal wellbeing (Layard 2006, James 2000). In terms of the rural dimensions of poverty, the relatively recent, ie post-1970s, literature is extensive and eclectic (Cloke, Goodwin, Milbourne and Thomas 1995,

Midgeley, Hodge and Monk 2004, Taylor 2008). It owes much to Brian McLaughlin's work for the then Department of the Environment in the 1980s. This measured income relative to Supplementary Benefit entitlement (McLaughlin 1985). Although in many ways a seminal work, aspects of the associated research findings have been questioned (Woodward 1996). Similarly, Amartya Sen's 'Capabilities Approach'<sup>2</sup>, on which the British Government's Department for International Development's (DfID) Sustainable Livelihoods approach is based (Korf and Oughton 2006 p281), has also been contested (Olsarreti 2005 p89). In short, the picture remains complicated, and one aim of this research is to provide information about how people involved in community-led development work in early 21st-century England view and understand rural poverty.

#### **1.4) Introducing the Market Towns Initiative (MTI), Market and Coastal Towns Initiative (MCTi), and Beacon Towns Programme (BTP)**

England's small country towns, be they traditional historic market towns, industrial – eg coal mining – towns, or seaside towns, are relatively numerous, geographically evenly distributed settlements, but they are not alike. Their histories and reasons for existence are different. Indeed, some, eg ex-mining towns, no longer have a primary purpose and, unlike traditional market towns, their service function was always secondary. The term, market town, does not help in that it implies settlement similarity rather than the diversity that is the reality, for, "... no two rural towns are likely to be exactly the same."<sup>3</sup> (LUC 2004).

It is important to recognize, therefore, that assertions from the Government that, "*market towns contribute significantly to prosperity in the rural areas around them.*" (Defra 2004 p17), may be true for some settlements, but not all. There are traditional market towns that still serve, and are served by, their surrounding communities (Knight 2006), but, given people's relative freedom as to where they live, work and shop<sup>4</sup>, the changing nature of the "retail experience", and the location of towns relative to other centres, they are atypical (LUC 2004). As a report for the Countryside Agency (CA) noted, although, "... *globalization has increased the number of different roles that [country towns] could perform – they*

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<sup>2</sup> Essentially, and simplistically, this approach is about people's freedoms and entitlements; for example, to live for a normal length of time (ie not to die prematurely). In essence, "... *the power to do something.*" (Leighton 2009 p10).

<sup>3</sup> Indeed, one can go further: no two towns can be **exactly** the same.

<sup>4</sup> This tendency to travel despite exhortations or policy drives designed to encourage people to, "shop, live, work local" etc., was appropriately – and neatly – termed, strategic disobedience, in a paper to the England National Market Towns Advisory Forum (page 94 refers) by James Shorten of Land Use Consultants.

*are no longer robust central place entities.*" (Medcalf 2000 p20). Nevertheless, as places on which people continue to depend to a lesser or greater extent, they are important, to rich and poor alike.

In simple terms, country towns, which are generically known for historical reasons as market towns, fill the social and economic "gap" between hamlets and villages, and larger regional and metropolitan centres. As this research is based on information gathered from a variety of towns (ie not only those with markets or historic market functions), the terms, small town, and country town, rather than market town, are used interchangeably, and wherever possible, both for preference, and accuracy (the term, market town, is retained when referring to the MTI/MCTi/BTP and original references by other writers and researchers). Paradoxically, therefore, country towns are, given the considerable variation between the smaller and bigger settlements, and the many historical differences, both difficult to define and yet easy to recognize. As has been noted (Martin 1958),

*"Every country town is a piece in a gigantic jigsaw puzzle, spread-eagled in a most attractive way over the whole length of Britain. These urban dots on the map are key-pieces, different in size, shape and quality, so that their purposes and acquired ancient personalities – far from being identical – have all the contradictions and diversities of life itself, each being symbolic of an area, part of a great whole (that is itself without wholeness) in a network of towns that both feed the land and are fed by it."* (p29).

This description illustrates the mixture of attempted accuracy and inherent romance that has come to characterize a particular view of rural England; a view based on an idealized vision of country life encapsulated in the phrase, the rural idyll. The undoubted beauty and aesthetic virtues of some of England's towns have been lovingly described (Chamberlin 1984, Oswald 1952). Their history and influence has been written about for both the general reader (Chalkin 1989), and for a more academic audience interested in their roles by the likes of, for example, Howard Bracey between the 1940s and 1960s (Bracey 1953, Bracey 1962), the late Andrew Errington and his colleagues at the Universities of Reading and Plymouth in the 1990s (Errington 1998), Neil Powe at the University of Newcastle (Powe and Shaw 2004), and John Shepherd at Birkbeck College (Shepherd 2007).

The Rural White Paper of 2000 (DETR 2000), and its predecessor (DoE/MAFF 1995), indicated a renewed national political interest in rural England as a, "... *living and working countryside.*" (DoE/MAFF 1995 p6). The 1995 White Paper recognized the value of country – market – towns (p57) to wider rural areas and communities. The establishment of a Market Towns Forum was encouraged (Teasdale 1996). This led

to the creation, by the then Rural Development Commission<sup>5</sup> (RDC), of Action for Market Towns (AMT), a support and membership organization, in 1997<sup>6</sup>, and pointed the way towards the development and implementation of the MTI and BT programmes. Both programmes were announced in the Rural White Paper of 2000 (DETR 2000) and were operated jointly by the Countryside Agency (CA) and Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) until 2004-2005 when, following the review of the Government's rural strategy (Defra 2004), the work was regionalized, and became the responsibility of RDAs (p17). From this point on the work gradually lost its discrete whole of rural England identity. Although RDAs continued to share experiences via their websites and conferences (Appendix 1), this reduced as the programmes ran their course and priorities changed.

The writer was closely involved in the development and implementation of the MTI, and led the Countryside Agency<sup>7</sup> team that developed, implemented, and reported on the BTP. The scope of the MTI/BTP was both geographically wide, and restricted. Both programmes were available throughout rural England, but each participating partnership's work was restricted to the town and the town's neighbouring, often historically, if not currently, dependent settlements (ie the town and its hinterland/sphere[s] of influence). In addition, each partnership had to assess its area's strengths and weaknesses, and the potential for a variety of locally-specified and agreed social, economic and environmental developments, before writing an action/project plan developed from the assessment. The combination of the writer's knowledge with – potentially - the collective experience of 227 partnerships from all parts of rural England, each with locally acquired and recorded knowledge, and defined priorities and plans, was considered a realistic starting point from which to attempt the poverty-related research element of this study.

The Market and Coastal Towns Initiative (MCTi), a local programme similar to the MTI, but created and operated by the South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA), and restricted therefore to the south west of England, is also discussed. This is because some of the towns that participated in this research, including Bridport, the Dorset town selected for more detailed analysis, are in the south west.

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<sup>5</sup> The writer worked for the RDC between 1993 and 1999, and was involved in its market towns work in Dorset, the south west region, and nationally.

<sup>6</sup> The writer was, when writing this thesis, a Trustee of AMT. See [www.towns.or.uk](http://www.towns.or.uk)

<sup>7</sup> The Countryside Agency was formed from a merger of the Countryside and Rural Development Commissions in 1999. It effectively ceased to exist in 2005 when the majority of its staff were redeployed to the Commission for Rural Communities ([www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk](http://www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk)), Natural England ([www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk)), the Government Office network ([www.gos.gov.uk](http://www.gos.gov.uk)), or Regional Development Agencies ([www.englandsrdas.com](http://www.englandsrdas.com)).

To fulfil the research ambitions it was necessary to develop a method of inquiry that would allow the overall experiences of MTI/MCTi/BT partnerships to be assessed, and the views of participants about the poverty-related aspects of the research to be gathered and analysed. The development of the methodology is explained in the next section.

### **1.5) Methodology**

A combination of semi-structured face-to-face interviews and postal questionnaires was used to gather information from members of MTI/MCTi/BT partnerships and others involved in the programmes nationally, regionally, and locally. The majority of the interviews were held with people involved with the work of the local partnership in Bridport. Bridport was selected, as part of the BTP, to be a Beacon Town for work associated with local food production (Nichols 2005). Before being awarded BT status, Bridport's partnership took part in the MTI and MCTi (SWRDA 2008). In addition to interviewees from the town partnership (ie generally speaking people who live in Bridport) those involved at a county, district, and regional level were also interviewed (eg Local Authority and RDA officers).

Prior to conducting the interviews proper and distributing the postal questionnaire, both methods were tested, formally and informally, on representatives from national and regional organizations, including members of two Oxfordshire town partnerships (Faringdon and Carterton), officials from the Countryside Agency (a national organization), the South East of England's Regional Development Agency (SEEDA) and Regional Assembly, and an officer and senior Councillor from Hampshire County Council<sup>8</sup>.

Determining how to research and assess the effectiveness of the MTI/MCTi/BTP approaches and achievements (and frustrations, drawbacks, and potential for improvement) was relatively straightforward. Similarly, it was relatively easy to develop questions designed to gauge people's views about the nature of poverty, and any contribution to its identification and alleviation as a result of the work done by partnerships. There were, however, two difficulties that had to be considered and understood before the research could be conducted, namely how to:

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<sup>8</sup> Other more general discussions about the research were held with, for example, a rural cleric based at the Royal Agricultural Society, Stoneleigh, the Chief Executive of a national rural charity, and the writer's colleagues.

- 1) gain a useful and reliable understanding of the constraints that prevent well-intentioned programmes like the MTI/MCTi/BTP from achieving their potential;
- 2) develop an accurate understanding of what constitutes rural poverty, in order to be able to attempt to determine whether the partnerships were able, as a result of their participation in the programmes, to identify and help those affected locally.

Given the *ad hoc* nature of the research and practice associated with the roles and functions of country towns and related community development work, there is relatively little coherent information to draw on about any of these matters. There is, in particular, a lack of longitudinal data about the effectiveness of partnerships as long-term designers, owners, and implementers of projects or other works identified as being of local importance.

Similarly, although a lot of work has been done to refine the definitions associated with rural poverty, and to develop a better understanding of its nature, the research projects have been occasional and discrete, not regular and part of a planned, developmental process. To judge from the findings, accumulated over many years, and which are detailed and clear, the problems identified remain.

Taken together, policies and priorities relating to country towns and rural poverty present a complicated and uncertain picture. It was with a mixture of apprehension and enthusiasm, therefore, that the literature was reviewed; the intention being to ensure that the research questions, although few in number, and direct in approach, would be based on a sound understanding of the two topics, and, therefore, capable of producing clear answers and useful information. This process is discussed in the next section.

## **1.6) Literature About Small Country Towns and Rural Poverty: Tantalizing and Insufficient**

Whereas the literature about poverty is extensive, the literature about community-led development in small towns is less so. Indeed, "... *there is an evident dearth of research into the effectiveness of town-based partnerships – as distinct from rural partnerships generally*" (Courtney 2007). Interest appears to have been occasional and largely uncoordinated, with the exception of, for example, some post-war reconstruction planning (Larkham and Pendlebury 2008), and regional work by the likes of Kendall and Bracey (Cloke 1996).

Although it seems to have been left to individual people or organizations to take the initiative as political interest waxed and waned, attempts have been made to categorize and understand the role of towns and their place in the settlement hierarchy. These have been considered at the national level (Hall, Marshall and Lowe 2000, HMSO 1942, Lipman 1952, Smailes 1944), and more locally. For example, at county level in Wiltshire (Bracey 1952) and Somerset (Bracey 1953, Mills 1988), in small areas (DTZ Pieda 2000, Moseley and Pahl 2007, RRG 1994), and in relation to specific towns and their hinterlands (Errington and Dawson 1998, Morris 2003, Powe and Shaw 2004). Andrew Errington and his colleagues conducted surveys in several towns, mostly in the south west of England, in an attempt to understand how small country towns functioned in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Liz Mills and the writer independently re-examined aspects of Howard Bracey's studies and methods. Bracey's work, in turn, was closely allied, professionally and methodologically, to that done by Professor Arthur Smailes, who explored the, "... urban mesh of England and Wales" (Smailes 1946), and others who studied related aspects of town functions, such as transport (Green 1952).

The sources above essentially relate to matters of "form and function". They are not the work of local people, but of interested and informed professional outsiders. This is not to denigrate the value or motivations of the work, but it illustrates how little exists in the way of nationally coordinated, monitored and evaluated locally-led research and evidence relating to how particular settlements work. The approach adopted by the MTI/MCTi/BTP represented a clear change in this direction, albeit a development of what had gone before via, for example, Village/Town Design Statements.

The programmes were short-lived, but a lot of work was done by local people at a time when the idea of "localism" (ie the devolution of powers from central to local government) was beginning to take hold as a topic of political debate, if not action, by the three main British political parties (Cameron 2007, Blears 2007, Hughes 2007). The programmes were supported for longer than the period specified in the Rural White Paper of 2000 (DETR/MAFF 2000), but lost coherence, partly as a consequence of their time-limited nature, but also because of changes to the 'machinery of government' as a consequence of the, "... implementation of the radical streamlining of rural funding ..." (Defra 2005) brought about by the review of rural policies in 2003 (Haskins 2003).

There is little in the way of literature about the achievements of the MTI/MCTi/BTP. Quite why is not known, but it is reasonable to assume that this is due to the short-

term nature of the programmes, and the coincidence of changes taking place in the organizations most closely involved with their management. Therefore there is also a dearth of literature – if any – about the programmes' effectiveness in identifying and tackling poverty.

There is, however, a lot of literature about poverty, and this is explored and reviewed. Again, apart from a brief historical review, the emphasis is on the period from 1945 onwards. It is noted how terminology has changed, policies have come and gone, and the overall standard of living for the majority of the population has increased. Within this changed world, the main problems for the rural poor appear to have changed little, with low incomes, limited opportunities, and access to transport, affordable housing and services among the factors consistently identified by researchers.

The main aim of this research is to contribute to the debate about community-led development, the current and potential roles of England's small country towns, the nature of rural poverty, and the extent to which the MTI/MCTi/BT community-led development programmes helped to identify and address aspects of poverty. In order to do this, it must take into account the work of others active in, and knowledgeable about, these essentially discrete topics, and attempt to place this work into a contemporary context. It must also use the findings from the surveys and interviews to add to this body of knowledge, specifically about the potential of locally-led, essentially empirical, community development work to alleviate poverty. If it succeeds in this, it might help to encourage the further development of MTI/MCTi/BT-type programmes, and to make the case for their widespread availability and use, and subsequent formal monitoring, evaluation, and evolution.

## **1.7 Research Objectives and Structure of the Thesis**

This research sets out to achieve the following objectives:

- 1) To assess the effectiveness of the MTI and the BTP in terms of the programmes' strengths, weaknesses and achievements.
- 2) To add to the body of knowledge relating to rural poverty.
- 3) To draw from the above conclusions about the extent to which:
  - rural poverty is recognized and understood;
  - the MTI/MCTi/BTP have been effective, both in overall terms, and as approaches capable of identifying and reducing poverty in rural areas.

The thesis first takes the reader through a review of the literature (Chapter 2), in particular that relating to poverty and the linguistic changes that have helped to inform and refine the debate during the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

Following this, Chapter 3 contains a discussion about governance, and its importance for town partnerships.

A detailed description of the research method is given in Chapter 4.

Chapter 5 contains a review of the literature about country towns. Particular emphasis is placed on the "story" of the MTI/MCTi/BT programmes. As this is essentially the story of the programmes told from the personal point of view of the writer, the risks to objectivity were recognized, and attempts made to ensure that the views of others were fairly reflected in the analysis. To this end drafts of the chapter were read and commented on by others involved in this and related work, including an officer with experience as an employee of both an RDA and the Department for Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

In Chapter 6, the reasons why Bridport was selected for in-depth study are explained. A pen-portrait of the town and its surroundings is provided.

Chapter 7 contains an analysis of the results relating to the MTI/MCTi/BTP in terms of partnerships' perceptions of their work, and the effectiveness of the programmes.

Chapter 8 provides an insight into the research participants' views about rural poverty.

Finally, in Chapter 9, conclusions are drawn, recommendations made, and some personal thoughts offered.

## Chapter 2 From Poverty to Social Exclusion – an Evolution of Terminology

*Poverty is an anomaly to rich people. It is very difficult to make out why people who want dinner do not ring the bell.*

Walter Bagehot (1826-1877)

*Poverty in an age of affluence is being unable to write and having others write about you.*

From a postcard (Corden 1996)

### 2.1) Introduction

This chapter explores literature that relates to the study of poverty and its causes, and notes the way in which the emphasis of the debate has changed from the **relatively** simple concepts of poverty, to the more complicated evolved notions of deprivation, disadvantage, and social exclusion.

### 2.2) Changes in Poverty-Related Policy Since 1945

The debate about how to solve the problems of poverty (whether of income, aspiration, or opportunity) effectively, and cost-effectively, within a limited budget, has its post-war roots in, "... *The framework for a welfare state ... with the National Health Service Act passed in 1946, along with the National Insurance Act that enacted the Beveridge proposals [of 1942], and new drives for publicly subsidized housing and advance [sic] in elementary and secondary education.*" (Morgan 1992 p29).

The post-war consensus, with its 'cradle to grave' philosophy born out of the determination by generations scarred by their common experiences in two world wars, weakened during the thirty-five year period that followed, as concerns grew about the desirability and affordability of providing support on such a scale. The political flow from left to right culminated in the attempts by the Conservative governments between 1979 and 1997, "...*to dismantle the inheritance of the Second World War.*" (Morgan p7).

Although, today, welfare provision exists in a form that the founders of the 1940s welfare state would recognize, the various changes wrought on the original by subsequent governments produced, by the mid-1990s, a hybrid system in which reduced state benefits and market tested suppliers of services provide the core of a mixed private-public sector system of provision.

In a report about public and parliamentary attitudes to welfare, Bochel and Defty (2005) point out that there is, "*... a strong and consistent public commitment to a high level of state provision [of benefits] ...*", a view somewhat at odds with that of their elected Parliamentary representatives, whose views tend towards provision based on, "*... a more limited safety-net coupled to a more active approach to getting people off benefits and into work.*" (p22) .

Interestingly, Bochel and Defty also report (p17) that while the public are in favour of, "*... increasing taxes for spending on health, education and social benefits.*", there exists a clear priority order, with the elderly, the disabled, and children receiving much greater levels of support than single parents or the unemployed (p15). In part this appears to be a reflection of the, "*... shift towards greater selectivity in [welfare] provision, increased emphasis on individual responsibility and reform of the public services.*" that has taken place since the beginning of the Thatcher Governments in 1979 (p2).

Recent British Labour Governments have generally attempted to help the poorest to find work via a mix of benefits and incentives (CRC 2005 p79), although in ways that remind some of pre-war means testing, with its lingering stigmas, especially for the elderly (Anon. 2002), and consequent tendency by some people to under-claim entitlements (Carnegie 2007 p3). This approach is politically contentious (Bochel and Defty 2005 p21), considered by some to be overly complicated in terms of design and implementation (Lishman 2005), and has caused some concern that benefit cuts could be, "*... harshly or inconsistently applied under the new regime, causing poverty and hardship for vulnerable families.*" (CAB 2008).

The various approaches to welfare that have been used during this period have been influenced by, and, no doubt have influenced, developments in policy. The move from universal to selective, and, more recently, the return to a form of means-tested benefits is proof enough that, given life's uncertainties, the search for answers will continue. No matter how elusive and difficult the solutions to these problems might be – and they are undoubtedly difficult – efforts will continue to be made to find them. At the heart of this effort lies a related search for clear definitions of, for example, absolute poverty, on which to base decisions about who should receive benefits, in what form, for how long, and to what ends. The nature of this debate is, therefore, sociological, economic, and, above all else, political. For, as Cloke, Milbourne and Thomas (RDC 1994 p165), wrote, "*Despite the careful selection of a poverty indicator which has become 'standard' in academic and some*

*government debates, we are aware that any specific threshold on a normative indicator of the poverty line is likely to be arguable politically."*

Questions about poverty, its extent and true nature are, therefore, difficult enough. When questions about deprivation, disadvantage, and social exclusion are added to the mix, the room for debate, disagreement, and further questioning is considerably extended. Before such difficult, contentious questions can be addressed and considered in the context of contemporary rural England, however, it is first necessary to understand the:

- background to the emergence of poverty as a topic of social, moral, and political concern;
- changes in, and relationships between, terminology and approach that have taken place since 1945.

### **2.3 The Changing Debate. The Linguistic Progression From Poverty to Social Exclusion via Disadvantage and Deprivation ... and Back Again?**

#### **2.3.1 Introduction**

William Cobbett, "... believed that the poor were ... those who did as much as anyone to create the wealth of a country ... [and] ... What he wanted for the poor was the fundamentals of a decent life: a good home, clothing and nourishing food." (Burton 1997 p254). The fundamental needs identified by Cobbett in the 19th-century beliefs are timelessly relevant (Young Foundation 2009 p18). To these can be added modern day phenomena such as obesity (p18), and a growing awareness of the importance of inequality as a significant cause of societal dissatisfaction and unfairness (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009). All are forms of poverty, absolute, or relative, and none of them are new (the cause of today's obesity problems are surely similar to those associated with malnutrition, in that both can be caused by poor diet). Neither are society's responses new: public support is available, but there are constant debates about how much and what type of support should be provided.

In 1833, during Cobbett's lifetime, Alexis de Tocqueville, the French historian, reported that nearly 17% of England's population were believed to be dependent to some extent on public support (Himmelfarb 1985 p147). That this figure is, according to Himmelfarb, now considered to have been, "... much exaggerated."

(p152), serves to hint at the difficulties associated with the measurement of poverty (let alone its alleviation).

Irrespective of how contested 19th-century percentage figures may be, one has only to read descriptions of the findings of early observers of poverty such as Mayhew, Engels and Booth to realize that many people in industrializing England were in an obvious state of absolute poverty (Kent 1981 pp37-73). In more recent times, the percentages relating to poverty have increased. For example, Brian McLaughlin, well-known for the work he did for the Department of the Environment in the mid-1980s (McLaughlin 1985) found approximately 25% of the households surveyed, " ... *living in or on the margins of poverty according to ... state standards.*" (McLaughlin 1990). Interestingly, in Seebohm Rowntree's third social survey of York in 1950 (Rowntree and Lavers 1951), 24% of the families surveyed were considered to be in or on the margins of poverty (pp26-36), a figure similar to the 27.8% found in his 1899 survey (Glennerster, Hills, Piachaud, and Webb 2004 p45), and the recent suggestion (CRC 2005 p83) that, " ... *as many as 30 per cent of households [in rural England] are likely to experience income poverty*<sup>9</sup> ...".

These figures are 'snapshots'. Nevertheless, the bases for Rowntree's surveys, eg, rates of pay, unemployment, lone-parent families, are similar to those used in the more recent surveys (Glennerster *et al.* p43). Although McLaughlin's investigation and Rowntree's third survey differ in time and location, they were conducted during a period when state welfare benefits provided relatively common benchmarks to work with.

As will be shown, the results of these various surveys can be compared. However, although the individual surveys are relatively easy to understand and explore, distances in time, and methodological and – in terms of the urban rural divide – spatial differences can make for difficult analysis. The more recent concepts of deprivation, disadvantage, and social exclusion are, although somewhat easier to compare, because they are closer in time, difficult to define and measure.

According to Shucksmith, Roberts, Scott, Chapman and Conway (1996 p5), deprivation is , "...*a less precise concept ...*" than poverty. They explain that it is, "... *sometimes taken to convey an emphasis on personal failings, in contrast to the notion of disadvantaged groups bearing the brunt of social, economic and social forces outside their control.*" (p5), whereas absolute and relative poverty are

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<sup>9</sup> Defined (CA 2005 p80) as a household income of less than 60% of the median annual household income, equal to approximately £14,500 for a couple with 2 children under 14 in 2007/08 (Palmer 2009).

defined in terms of personal or household income (p4). Garner (1989 p10) considers deprivation both to be, "*... essentially a normative concept, incorporating value-judgements about what is morally acceptable and what is not*", and also, "*... something more than just the lack of material resources.*"

Two other terms are discussed by Shucksmith *et al.* These are, disadvantage, defined in terms of, "*... an inability of individuals or households to share in styles of life open to the majority.*", and social exclusion, described as a concept embracing, "*... multi-dimensional, dynamic processes of social exclusion, within the concept of local communities.*" (p5).

Of the four terms used, poverty has the advantage of being well known, and instinctively understood. Its definition is relatively short, and, at first sight, its meaning clear and unambiguous. The Oxford English Dictionary defines poverty in straightforward terms as, "*... the state of being poor; want of the necessities of life.*" (OERD 1996). However, of the four terms, deprivation, disadvantage and, relatively recently, social exclusion, have come to dominate discussions about the state of rural England (CRC 2005).

Fundamentally, poverty implies insufficient money. This problem has not been solved, or at least, there is no wholly agreed definition as to what constitutes a sufficient minimum income. Equally, there is no wholly agreed mechanism for ensuring that everyone has a sufficient income. The resulting contested, and consequently, developmental nature of the debate has resulted in the progression from the relatively straightforward poverty definition to the more nuanced notions of disadvantage, deprivation, and social exclusion.

With the broadening of the debate, the finessing of arguments, the perception amongst some that rural poverty is exaggerated, conceptually and in reality, there comes a lack of clarity, and the possibility that local responses may be unable to deal with underlying structural problems (Milbourne 2006 p11), in that (p12),

*"The profile of rural poverty would appear to cut against popular and policy discourses of poverty in contemporary Britain. The vast majority of the rural poor are elderly; most are property owners and own cars, although many may have been pushed into private ownership through a lack of public housing and transport in rural areas. Those in work significantly outnumber the unemployed among the non-elderly poor population. In addition, the rural poor tend to express general satisfaction with their local areas and to feel included within the social fabric of their local communities."*

It is with some trepidation, therefore, with the aim of contextualising the research, that the next sections explore the seemingly perennially intractable problems of language, policy, and practice, as they relate to rural poverty in all its guises.

### **2.3.2 Poverty – an Overview**

If poverty is accepted as a relative concept, it will be a permanent feature of life. It will, however, be relatively easy to define and measure, provided there is sufficient consensus regarding the measurement criteria. Achieving consensus, however, is not easy. Although there is, in theory at least, a safety net through which no one should drop, the relative material comfort of the majority means that few people have any direct experience of poverty, or of people in poverty. In view of this, the difficulties associated with finding acceptable definitions of poverty are a constant challenge for researchers, social workers, and politicians. Attempts continue, however, because poverty is considered to be morally and socially unacceptable. That this is so, is due, in large part, to the work done in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and the first half of the twentieth century by, for example, Booth and Rowntree, and, in more recent times by organizations such as the Child Poverty Action Group (Walker 1977).

Public policy concerns about poverty, however, stretch back at least to the late eighteenth century (and, no doubt, before). For example, Jordan (1973), in a book about the Claimants' Unions that sprang up in the early 1970s (p26) in response to rapidly increasing national unemployment, remarks on the similarity, in his view (pp1-23), between the newly-introduced Family Income Supplement (a means-tested State benefit paid to low-wage families) and the Speenhamland System, "*... the notorious scheme for subsidising starvation wages out of the Poor Law funds which was adopted in 1795, and persisted until its abolition in 1834.*"<sup>10</sup> (pp7-8). It should be noted that the scheme was well-intentioned in that it recognized that some people were simply not paid enough to live on, and was designed to improve their lot. The Justices of the Peace who were called to Speenhamland were supposed to fix a minimum wage, but were persuaded to introduce a wage supplement (Trevelyan 1946 p469). That, in the event, it contributed to what Gertrude Himmelfarb (1985 p154) called, "... a vicious cycle of evils ...", whereby an increase in poor rates caused a decrease in wages, and other related negative – and

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<sup>10</sup> Named after the village of Speenhamland in Berkshire, the system was established in about half of rural England (mainly the south). In the northern counties the competition for labour provided by nearby mines and factories tended to keep wage levels up (Trevelyan 1946 p469).

unintended – consequences, helped to reinforce the belief , "... *that the poor laws were 'pauperising the poor'.*" (p155).

Seebohm Rowntree, in his 1899 survey work in York, defined two levels of poverty, primary and secondary. The Primary Poverty level was related to an individual's or family's ability to satisfy their minimum needs, and was based on the cheapest Local Government Board recommendations for workhouse rations for men, which were then adjusted for various family and household sizes (Glennerster *et al.* p23). The secondary level applied to those families who had sufficient money to meet those needs, but who, for good or bad reasons, spent some of their money on other things. In essence, Rowntree's work was based on household needs and diet. It was a level of subsistence, which, according to a contemporary of Rowntree's, did not make for a living wage (Shann 1913 p89).

Today, Rowntree is perhaps the best known poverty researcher of his time. The other notable researcher of the latter part of the 19th-century is Charles Booth, and it is often assumed that their work produced similar results. Things are not, however, that clear-cut. In a paper by Gazeley and Newell (2007), the authors point out that although it is generally assumed that Booth's and Rowntree's results were similar (Booth recorded poverty levels of 30% in London, Rowntree 27% in York), work at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century suggested that any similarity was superficial due to the use of different poverty line formulations (p2). When Rowntree's and Booth's data were transposed it was discovered that there was 3% poverty in York, using Booth's standard, and 50% poverty in London, using Rowntree's. Another researcher, A L Bowley, found, in a 1912-13 study of northern England towns, that poverty levels varied between 4.5% and 19% (Gazeley and Newell 2007 p2). Gazeley's and Newell's reworking and analysis of Booth's, Rowntree's, Bowley's, and Board of Trade data, suggest an urban poverty figure of about 15% using Bowley's poverty line, but also note poverty rates of over 60% for households with unskilled heads and more than three children (2007 p25). It can be seen from the above that although people may have an innate understanding of poverty, and believe that they recognize it when they see it, defining it objectively has long been difficult.

In the end, however, and irrespective of the outcome of debates such as those described above, it was a subsistence level (if not the same one as Rowntree's), not income, that was adopted by William Beveridge in 1942 (HMSO 1942a p14), and which, "... *provided the basis for the post-war National Assistance Scheme (later supplementary benefit and ... income support).*" (Oppenheim 1988). Rowntree

measured poverty against a defined yardstick (ie the minimum income needed to live). Beveridge, referring, in his report (p7) to the measures required to alleviate poverty, stated, unequivocally, "... *the main conclusion to be drawn from [Rowntree's] surveys: abolition of want requires a double re-distribution of income, through social insurance and family needs.*"

Beveridge, like Rowntree, considered poverty levels in absolute terms, but, as Oppenheim argues, poverty is also a relative term, and a relative reality. Its meaning changes with time, and in comparison with the wealth of others in, for example, a group, community, or nation.

In a sense, therefore, and crucially, there is no universally agreed definition of poverty. Instead, once beyond statistical measures (eg, percentages of average/median incomes), the notion of what constitutes poverty is more a subjective, personal and moral judgement. Works by Peter Townsend (1950s onwards), Michael Young (1970s) and Ann Power (1990s and 2000s) were based on the premise that, "... *human need is not always visible.*" (Young Foundation 2009 p130). Other work has attempted to define poverty in terms of minimum standards of living.

For example, a London TV MORI poll from 1978 (Mack and Lansley 1985 p55), also mentioned by Oppenheim (1988 p2), showed that two out of three people surveyed thought that the following were necessities (the clear implication being that those without them were poor relative to those who had them):

- Self-contained damp-free accommodation with an indoor toilet or bath.
- A weekly roast joint for the family and three daily meals for each child.
- Two pairs of all-weather shoes and a warm, waterproof coat.
- Sufficient money for public transport.
- Adequate bedrooms and beds.
- Heating and carpeting.
- A refrigerator and washing machine.
- Enough money for special occasions like Christmas.
- Toys for the children.

When the list is compared with both Rowntree's measures, based on basic dietary requirements and household budgets, and Beveridge's recommendations for a, "...

*national minimum [state benefit<sup>11</sup>] ...”, that left, "... room and encouragement for voluntary action by each individual to provide more than that minimum for himself and his family.” (Beveridge 1942), the emerging relative nature of the debate about poverty and its definitions can be seen.*

From today's western society viewpoint, the MORI list above appears reasonable and unsurprising, for, as Oppenheim states (1988 p3), "*People should have a right to an income which allows them to participate in society rather than merely exist. Such participation should involve having the means to fulfil responsibilities to others – as parents, sons and daughters, neighbours, friends, workers and citizens.*"

Putting to one side the philosophical and moral question as to whether any of us are entitled to anything, especially when so many others in the world have so very little, and the presumption that all those who have the means to fulfil responsibilities, actually do so, few would disagree with this (especially given the helpfully 'all-of-one-company' reinforcement of the second sentence).

The ability of an individual or a family to achieve the standard of living implied by the Thames TV list is directly and obviously related to income. Similarly, the causes of poverty listed by Oppenheim (1988 pp10-11), namely unemployment, low pay, taxation, family responsibilities, disability and sickness, and old age, are also related to earnings, the ability to earn, or income (eg pensions); the assumption being that if one has the money, one can buy both access to goods and services, and the goods and services themselves. Oppenheim's paper deals explicitly with poverty, the definition of which, as he explains, was still being argued about in the 1970s (indeed is still being argued about), with the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) describing anyone living on or below the level of the then minimum State benefit as living in poverty, and the Government countering that the use of a poverty "line" based on a benefit meant that the numbers deemed to be "in poverty" increased with each increase in benefit. According to Oppenheim (p2), and CPAG's definition of poverty, 9.4 million people, nearly one sixth (approximately 16½%) of the British population were living in poverty in 1985.

At about the same time, in the five rural areas surveyed by Brian McLaughlin for his household survey for the Department of the Environment (McLaughlin 1985), approximately 25% of households, and 20% of the people, "... were found to be in or on the margins of poverty ..." (McLaughlin 1990 p15) based on the definition used by CPAG (ie incomes below the poverty line, which, at the time, was set at 140% of

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<sup>11</sup> The belief was that the national minimum income – and, therefore, the maximum benefit - should be that needed for subsistence.

the State Supplementary Benefit Entitlement<sup>12</sup>). These percentages have remained broadly stable, in that, "... research on rural poverty in Britain over the last 25 years has consistently identified an average of around 20-25% of households living in poverty ..." (CRC 2006 p20).

In many ways, the work of Brian McLaughlin and his colleagues are the foundation stones on which subsequent investigations into various aspects of rurality and poverty by the likes of Tony Bradley, Mark Shucksmith, Ray Fabes, Philip Lowe, and others, have been built. The next section considers poverty in the context of rurality.

### **2.3.3 Rural Poverty – a Variation on a Theme**

In rural areas the poor are affected by familiar and much discussed factors relating to population sparsity and remoteness, the high cost of providing services, difficulties associated with obtaining access to services, and low-income invisibility caused by the masking effect of the high average incomes of the majority (CRC 2005 p56-57, CRC 2008 p73, Hale 1996, Lievesley and Maynard 1992 pv, Moseley and Parker 1998 p1, Oppenheim 1993 p152, Scott, Shenton and Healey 1991 p10, Woods 2005 pp103-104).

Although these rural factors have made it more difficult for researchers, practitioners and policymakers to understand and solve the problems of rural poverty, it is possible to identify the poor. Work based on spatial analyses of benefit claimants used mapping techniques to produce detailed information about the scale of rural poverty within local authority districts. This developed to the point where those on low incomes in rural areas can be identified (CCD 2009, Noble and Wright 2000 p298), and led to the researchers' view that, "*Direct measures of low income are inherently more satisfactory measures than the proxies found in many indices.*" (Noble and Wright 2000 p298).

According to Noble and Wright it is possible to identify the rural poor, the majority of whom are known to Government agencies from Benefit records. These have been matters of confidential record since Benefits were introduced. It must be assumed, therefore, that Governments have either not wanted to address poverty at the individual fundamental level (eg by giving people more money by increasing

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<sup>12</sup> The poverty line is now drawn at 60% of the English median income (CRC 2006 p20).

benefit rates), or have accepted that to do so would be too difficult, or too expensive.

In either case, given that concerns about rural life and its associated difficulties have proved to be remarkably consistent over the years, irrespective of whether the concern is expressed by academics or the Government (Scott 1942, Countryside Review Committee 1977, CRC 2005), it can be stated that the problems associated with rural poverty have not been solved, despite the various policies and approaches adopted by the various organizations responsible, over the years, for the economic, environmental and social wellbeing of rural England.

In conclusion, therefore, the work of Rowntree, Booth, and others, for example, the Hygiene Committee of the Women's Group on Public Affairs between 1939 and 1942 (Bondfield 1943) grew from the belief that, as Clement Attlee noted – mistakenly – in 1920, "*Booth had dispelled forever the complacent assumption that the bulk of the people were able to keep themselves in tolerable comfort.*" (Himmelfarb p531). Actually, Booth had confirmed exactly the opposite for, as he had discovered, "... if less than one-third of the people were below the line of poverty, more than two-thirds (including a large majority of the working class) were above it." (p531). In Attlee's misreading of Booth's work lies another clue as to why it is that research has moved beyond poverty and into topics such as deprivation and disadvantage. Attlee was one of the Welfare State's founding fathers, and, as Himmelfarb notes (p531),

*"The principle of the welfare state was to provide not relief but services; and not only to the poor or even the working classes but to everyone 'across the board'; and not in accord with a 'line of poverty' (not even the much elevated line of poverty devised by Seebohm Rowntree in ... 1941), but of a standard of welfare; and not the minimum standard earlier proposed by the Webbs, but what the Labour Party manifesto of 1945 called an 'optimum' standard."*

In spite of the Labour Party's intentions, welfare support has clearly not removed poverty. For, as discussed by Himmelfarb (p531), "... 'pockets of poverty' and a 'culture of poverty' exist; the former amongst people whose needs are not met by available welfare provision; the latter where poverty has become the norm, and where people are resistant to attempts by the welfare state to solve their problems." Himmelfarb goes on to note the arrival of a redefinition of poverty as 'relative poverty', by which definition, as she says, "...one-third, two-thirds, or any proportion of the people could fall into the category of the poor and be regarded as a 'social problem'." (p531).

Himmelfarb also notes (p531) that, "*The concept of welfare might have displaced the idea of poverty ...*" (writer's emphasis). Clearly, the arrival of the concept of welfare has not resulted in the removal of poverty; neither has development of poverty studies, exemplified by the linguistic and philosophical progression from poverty to disadvantage, deprivation, and social exclusion.

When, in 2006, recorded unemployment was, at 5%, relatively low (ONS 2006), it was noted that, in 1951, "... 4% of the population relied upon the principal means-tested benefit, national assistance ...", but, "... today nearly 17% rely on its successor, income support, and one in four is in receipt of one state payment or another ..." (Anon. 2006 p13). The dependency figure of 17% is the same as that quoted – but since questioned - for benefit dependency in 1833, and the one in four figure is the same as, or similar, to the figures quoted by Rowntree and McLaughlin. In 2007/08 around 22% of the population of the United Kingdom were living in households in which the income was below the 60% median income threshold (Poverty Site 2009c).

As the times and circumstances in which these figures were so obviously different, comparisons between them can only be illustrative (or useful as 'boosters' for the cause), but the similarities, both of the figures and the arguments about their validity, are striking. The persistence and essentially unchanging nature of the debate and concerns provokes questions about the appropriateness of current approaches, with research producing more in the way of disquisition than explanation, especially given the political preferences, and apparent public acceptance of these, since 1945. This is not to promote a council of despair, but to suggest that it might be time to investigate alternatives to the approaches, based on periodic interest, good, but repetitious research, and relatively incoherent attempts to solve identified problems, that have prevailed in the years since the end of the Second World War.

The persistence of poverty may help to explain the sequential emergence of the terms, disadvantage, deprivation, social exclusion and, recently, in view of the Commission for Rural Communities' emphasis on, "... *tackling disadvantage ...*" (CRC 2009), a return to disadvantage, as important topics for study and for policy makers. The next sections consider each of these in turn.

### 2.3.4 Disadvantage

In a report for the Rural Development Commission, Shucksmith *et al.* (1996 p67), drawing on research from Scotland, pointed out, "... *the extent to which ... knowledge of disadvantage in rural areas is based on static snapshots, derived from surveys at a point in time.*" They explained that, consequently, little is known about the numbers of poor people and the time that they spend in poverty. They quote, as an example, that, "... we *have no knowledge of whether those individuals identified by McLaughlin as experiencing rural poverty in rural England in 1980 were still experiencing poverty when Cloke undertook his survey in 1990.*" (p67). In essence they note the lack of consistent monitoring and reporting, and suggest (p72) that a combination of, "... *discrete short-term studies ...*" and, "... *some longer-term, more fundamental research.*" designed to, "... *complement the current understanding of how disadvantage is experienced in rural areas of England.*" (p.iv) would increase understanding about the nature of rural disadvantage, and the ways in which people become poor, and escape from poverty<sup>13</sup>.

Implicit in the authors' recommendation for more research is an admission that not enough is known about disadvantage to enable it to be tackled with confidence, a message the authors reinforce on several occasions (eg pp13, 15, 17 and 18). This is despite the fact that a lot of research effort had, by 1996, been put into this area of study<sup>14</sup>. Nevertheless, in their analysis of disadvantage (pp23-57), Shucksmith *et al.* cover the familiar topics of income, employment, housing, health, transport and service provision (including recreation, leisure, and education).

A subsequent report for the Rural Development Commission (RDC 1998 p1), by the Policy Studies Institute (PSI) about rural disadvantage refers to the, "... *long-running, and often theoretical, debate about what constitutes rural disadvantage ...*", and lists three influences: poor quality and availability of services; income, economic status, and social class; levels and patterns of consumption. The authors explain that research, "... *has shown that it tends to be the same individuals and households who benefit least* (writer's emphasis) *from a wide range of social and economic policies – related to labour markets, housing, fiscal policies and the delivery of a wide range of services such as financial services, transport, utilities,*

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<sup>13</sup> The two short-term studies suggested are: 1) research into the ways in which people cope with poverty; 2) a participative study in which researchers and local people work together to identify the causes of disadvantage in an area, and to develop solutions (Shucksmith *et al.* p72). The longer term project (p73) proposed an analysis of rural households, designed to track over time information about respondents' circumstances.

<sup>14</sup> This report alone contains more than 120 references, the titles of twelve of which contain the word, disadvantage, 8 mention poverty, 8 deprivation, and 2 social exclusion.

*health and social services, and education ...".* This implies that the affected individuals and households are identifiable, but that, as discussed in the previous section, The Government is unwilling or unable to solve these people's problems.

The ability to access services is limited by economic factors, and it is these, for example, and as is generally assumed to be the case where poverty is concerned, not enough money (CRC 2006 pp202-203, Shucksmith 2003 p1), that determine the extent to which people are disadvantaged. It is logical to infer that the poorest individuals and households are also the most disadvantaged. It follows that if they were richer, they would be less disadvantaged. Not surprisingly, the PSI's researchers found (p58) that the disadvantaged included: the unemployed, those on low incomes, the sick, elderly and disabled, and young people aged between 12 and 17. As Shucksmith *et al.* noted in their earlier report (1996 p58), "*... many incidences of disadvantage were accepted as simply being part and parcel of rural life.*", and (p59),

*"The literature points strongly to the idea that the disadvantage experienced in rural areas is multi-dimensional and that those groups suffering most ... are those that suffer from powerlessness and inequality of opportunity .. young people, elderly people, women, disabled people, unemployed people ...".*

Also noted in the report (p58) is, "*... that rural people's subjective assessment of their poverty or disadvantage was often at odds with objective definitions.*" If this means that people disagree with measurements or criteria that suggest that they are poor, who is to say that they are wrong, and, more to the point, from a political point of view, what is to be gained by attempting to convince them otherwise? If they believe that they are not poor, or disadvantaged, why should other people try to tell them that they are? Is it not simply patronising, and potentially expensive in public policy terms, to suggest that the way of life of one group should be judged to be "not good enough" by another group, no matter how honourable and well-intentioned? It can be argued that there are other calls on the public purse, for example evident urban poverty, which makes it relatively cost-**ineffective** to pursue today's easy to categorize, but hard to find (and, if found, sometimes hard to convince) rural poor.

In any event, the mismatch between some people's perceptions of their own circumstances and the objective judgements of others, lie at the heart of a contradictory discourse that seems no closer to resolution now than it was in the 1980s, at the time of McLaughlin's work. In essence, some people, both those considered disadvantaged, and those, the well-off, who have little understanding of

the problems of the former group, believe that some disadvantages are inherently part and parcel of rural life, and that, therefore, "... *some see disadvantage as an aspect of rural life rather than a particular problem.*" (CRC 2006 p198). There is an unavoidable truth to this view inasmuch, for example, that it will always be more cost-effective to provide public transport in densely populated towns and cities, than in sparsely populated rural areas. Such forcefully logical realities will always be used to advance arguments by those whose interests are more urban than rural. This makes for obvious difficulties for those whose job it is to argue on behalf of England's rural population, and, again, provokes questions about the validity of current approaches to the identification of poverty and related concepts such as disadvantage, and deprivation.

Prior to the relatively recent re-emergence of interest in disadvantage, which has experienced a renaissance since the creation of the CRC, deprivation was, as discussed below, the concept of choice and the target for research and debate, because, unlike disadvantage, which considers, ... *all aspects of a person's life and not only income or expenditure ...*", deprivation concentrates, "... *on the lack of certain essentials such as food, housing, mobility or services.*" (Shucksmith 2003 p1).

### **2.3.5 Deprivation**

In his Introduction to the Child Poverty Action Group's papers presented to a 1977 conference on the problems of rural areas, Alan Walker noted that the purpose of the conference papers was, "... *to begin to counter the predominantly urban image of poverty and deprivation ... in short, the authors are seeking to remind planners and policy makers that deprivation is not solely an urban phenomenon.*" (Walker 1977 p1). From a rural perspective it is understandable and important to distinguish between urban and rural conditions, and, as the literature, and discussion above, reveals, this has largely been done.

In 1979, a study by the Association of County Councils reported that, "*Rural deprivation is evidently a complex phenomenon and there can be no simple method of defining it.*" (ACC 1979 p3). The component factors of rural deprivation were, however, defined under three headings (pp1-2):

- **Household**, primarily related to household income, and its importance in terms of an individual's/household's ability to afford, eg, to buy a house.

- **Opportunity**, relating to the ease with which a variety of services and employment opportunities can be accessed.
- **Mobility**, considered to be, "... *of paramount importance ...*", and relating, in terms of importance, primarily to access to transport for the young, mothers at home, the elderly, the poor, and the infirm.

In the detailed analysis and discussion about the above factors contained in the study report, references were made to house price affordability, planning policy, employment and public transport provision, and access to a range of services, including recreation, health, social services, and education (pp7-38). These headings are broadly those which have exercised the minds of those interested in, and responsible for rural policy from Scott (HMSO 1942 pp45-80) to the CRC's 2008 State of the Countryside Report (CRC 2008 p157) and 2009 Rural Insights Survey (CRC 2010 pp31-32). These elements, which, when taken together, encompass elements of poverty, disadvantage, and deprivation, have been known for many years. It is hard to imagine that there is much more to be said, or to be learnt, about them. There must, however, to judge from the lack of progress made in tackling these often identified problems, be much to learn about how to develop effective remedial actions.

The authors of the County Councils' Association's 1979 study concluded,

*"... that many of the problems found in the cities, such as low wages and poor housing, are also common in the countryside, but in rural areas there is an additional factor of inaccessibility which exacerbates these difficulties. Opportunities and choice are rationed by distance and mobility and this applies not only to facilities such as shops and doctors, but also to jobs and housing. The constant references throughout this report to accessibility and transport illustrate how critical these issues are."* (ACC 1979 p49).

The evident difficulties associated with the concept and realities of poverty discussed in Section 2.3.2 appear relatively straightforward compared with those associated with deprivation, for, as Himmelfarb (p532) noted,

*"Today the concept of relative deprivation has so thoroughly relativized [sic] the idea of poverty as to remove all limits, to make poverty so protean as to deprive it of form and shape. It is no longer a matter of raising the standard of 'subsistence' or of extending the concept of 'needs' to 'felt needs' – 'wants' as distinct from 'needs'. 'Relative deprivation' has become whatever the social inquirer ... may regard as such."*

The relative nature of poverty, disadvantage and deprivation may, as Himmelfarb suggests, mean that they can be whatever people want them to be. The freedom this implies, however, does not seem to have helped solve the problems of impoverishment, rural or otherwise. Quite the opposite, in fact. In reality, it is a false freedom. Financial and political constraints, public opinion, and the vagaries of an increasingly global economy, all conspire to ensure that although social inquirers can fix the poverty line at whatever point they care to choose, and can add as many factors as they like to their definitions of disadvantage and deprivation, the truth is that the extent of their freedom to influence, and the Governments' freedom - and ability - to solve the problems of poverty, is limited. To give an example of the inherent difficulties associated with maintaining a consistent, long-term determined attempt to solve poverty, MacInnes, Kenway and Parekh (2009) noted in the 12<sup>th</sup> United Kingdom annual poverty and social exclusion survey,

*"... the extent of the achievement of the early years of the Labour government's anti-poverty strategy can be seen in the fact that the five years to 2003/04 is the only time in 30 years when both in-work and out-of-work child poverty fell. Second, what has wrecked it since then is the rise in in-work poverty – although it should be noted that out-of-work poverty has been flat now for three years."*

To relieve poverty is, therefore, in pragmatic political terms, difficult. As a consequence, perhaps, the language of poverty is mixed and complicated, and, as it develops, can appear arcane and increasingly theoretical, as practical attempts at its alleviation falter, and further attempts are made to improve understanding, and refine definitions. Essentially, poverty, disadvantage and deprivation are dialects of the same language. They are similar, but sufficiently different to suggest a distinctiveness worthy of more study, in the hope that one more concerted effort will produce a common understanding of the phenomena suitable, and accepted, as a basis for the development and implementation of coordinated policies designed to alleviate rural poverty.

It is even arguable that on occasions the case made by those concerned about the plight of the poor has been unhelpful. In the writer's opinion an example of this is to be found in a report by Bruce, Gordon and Kessell (1995) in which **80%** of the whole population, "... *can be said to be at risk ...*" (writer's emphasis) of falling into poverty. This must have been true at the time, just as it is true that 100% of the population are always at some risk of falling into poverty. Such truths do not necessarily strengthen the case for support. The counter-intuitive effect of such findings can lead to accusations, or unspoken assumptions, of special pleading,

especially in the case of the rural, where perceptions and statistics relating to health, wealth and happiness suggest a high level of satisfaction.

In 2005, seven years after the work by the PSI for the RDC (RDC 1998), the CRC announced that its first thematic study would look, "... *more broadly at rural disadvantage* ..." (CRC 2005a). In addition to identifying (p7) aspects of disadvantage that include those discussed above, the CRC's paper also refers to other aspects, such as advice and information, discrimination/racism, and cultural factors. The report not only defines disadvantage, but also poverty as it is conventionally understood in terms of income, and yet another variation on the theme, another dialect, that of social exclusion (p4). This member of the poverty "family" is discussed in the next section.

### **2.3.6 Social Exclusion**

According to a report for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (Shucksmith 2000), the term social exclusion lacked a,... *single agreed definition.*" It is said to refer to a failure of those parts of society that are supposed to ensure that everyone is a part of society. Mark Shucksmith explained (2003 p1) that whereas poverty is essentially caused by a lack of, "... *resources (often taken to be disposable income)*", social exclusion is,

*"... a multi-dimensional, dynamic process which refers to the breakdown or malfunctioning of the major systems in society that should guarantee the social integration of the individual or household ... It implies a focus less on 'victims' but more upon the processes which cause exclusion... while the notion of poverty is primarily distributional, the concept of social exclusion focuses primarily on relational issues (detachment from labour markets, low participation, social isolation, and especially the exercise of power)." (emphasis as in the original).*

Similarly, the British Government's Social Exclusion Unit (SEU 2005 p12) described social exclusion as,

*"... a shorthand label for what can happen when individuals or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown. It can also have a wider meaning which encompasses the exclusion of people from the normal exchanges, practices and rights of society."*

Such a combination of circumstances is, by definition, also indicative of poverty, both at the individual and community level.

Clearly, social exclusion is a complicated concept. It is associated with poverty, but also attempts to contextualize the causes of poverty in terms of the various barriers and limiting factors that make escape from poverty more difficult. Nevertheless, although the concept is complicated, it is reasonable to assume that the financially poor are more likely to be socially excluded, because of, for example, exclusion from the labour market due to poor health. It is reasonable to assume that people who are excluded in this fundamental way are also more likely be socially isolated, and less able to exercise power. In rural areas job opportunities are limited (CRC 2009a p3) and although self-employment levels are consistently high (CRC 2006b p82, CRC 2008 p103), incomes can be low (CRC 2008 p79, Winter and Rushbrook 2003 p14), resulting in 'financial exclusion' (SQW 2007 p4). In any event, obtaining finance to start a rural business can be difficult (Bayly 2009).

It is difficult to see how better housing, for example, no matter how obviously desirable, can of itself solve the problems of social exclusion, whereas, if an individual's income is increased, their route out of poverty – and into better housing - becomes much clearer. Similarly, people living in high-crime areas are clearly disadvantaged, and any reduction in crime levels must help improve an area's overall prospects, and the quality of life of those who live there. Nevertheless, it cannot be guaranteed that any employer attracted to an area as a result of crime reduction will pay enough to lift people out of poverty.

The various elements that make up social exclusion do not have equal weight. No matter how important the other factors, it is insufficient money that is both the underlying constant in discussions about poverty in all its guises, and the most significant in terms of helping people to overcome social exclusion. Income is dependent on, for example, skills and qualifications, age, local economic conditions, and health, all of which are reflected in the make-up of the rural socially-excluded. According to Shucksmith (2003 p7), the groups most likely to experience poverty in rural Britain are:

- 1) older people living alone;
- 2) children especially of lone parents;
- 3) low-paid manual workers' households;
- 4) the unemployed, sick or disabled ("*...with half of all men in this category being men aged 55 to 64...*");

- 5) the self-employed (given as a, "*major source of rural poverty amongst those of working age.*").

Although simplistic, the circumstances of the first four categories listed above could be improved by increasing State pensions, benefits and wages. Similarly, the tax advantages for the self-employed could be adjusted to improve their incomes, and steps taken to enable easier access to finance for start-ups (Bayly 2009). As the discussion above has, it is hoped, gone some way to demonstrate, improving our understanding of poverty (if not our success in alleviating it) and its associated and contributory factors is a continuous, iterative process, in which the same symptoms and conditions are revisited, reanalysed and re-categorized by each generation of policymakers, academics, and practitioners.

As benefits are unlikely to be significantly increased, however, solutions to the problems of rural social exclusion would appear to lie more in direct action to provide help to those seeking to help themselves, via, for example, acceptably remunerated self-employment, or by longer-term action, such as improving the availability of, and access to, local services. It is suggested that community-led development work like the MTI/MCTi/BTP, coupled with policies designed to encourage the provision of local employment and the other opportunities mentioned, could help achieve these aims; could, in fact, help to reinvent England's small towns as employment and service centres. At the very least attempting this should not be difficult, given the increasing popularity of rural living and the growth in the numbers of active, sometimes early-retired, well-educated people with the time and inclination to work for the improvement of the places in which they live (Moseley 2009).

The years since 1945 have seen a resurgence in the popularity of country living (Woods 2005 p73) during a time of falling agricultural and other primary industry employment, and growth in industries such as manufacturing and tourism (p62). During this time, policy and practice have been influenced by the increasing importance of European policies and programmes, and, on the home front, by two Rural White Papers (DETR/MAFF 2000, DoE/MAFF 1995), and a wealth of policy-related papers from, amongst others, the Countryside and Rural Development Commissions, various Local Government associations, charities, faith groups, the CA, the National Farmers' Union, the Country Land and Business Association, the Campaign to Protect Rural England, the Women's Institute, and academic institutions.

According to the Commission for Rural Communities (CRC 2008 p73), "Rural areas continue to fare better on most measures of quality of life than urban areas in England ... [but] ... rural areas are not **universally** [writer's emphasis] better off than urban areas, and that we should not assume that because rural areas are better off, on average, that there is no need to take action to address problems there." Although the long-term decline in rural services continues (CRC 2008 p158), the rate and nature of the decline essentially appears to reflect changes in the way that we live (Morris 2000). Overall, people who live in rural England are doing well in terms of income, relative to their urban counterparts, although it should be noted that more than 13% of State benefit claimants live in rural areas<sup>15</sup> (CRC 2008 p69). Rural England appears, therefore, to continue to be a place of extremes in which the relatively poor, however defined, live in the midst of the relatively rich, and, as has been the conventional argument for many years, where the high incomes and standard of living of the latter gives a misleading impression of uniform wealth which serves to mask the existence of the former.

## **2.4 Rural Poverty and the Market Towns Initiative and Beacon Towns Programme – Concluding Thoughts**

It is clear from the above that rural poverty is conceptually complicated. Wrapped in definitions and debates couched in the language of the time, it is perhaps better explained, if no better understood in terms of how best to tackle it, than it has ever been. The almost circular progression from poverty to social exclusion and back again is the result of a great deal of work, thinking and action by academics and other professionals. The continued existence of organizations like the Child Poverty Action Group and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, however, make it clear, as they have done for many years, that poverty remains problematic. So too do the repeated references in the literature, both academic and grey, to the factors that affect both rural poverty and the people most likely to experience it.

Of course, there are naysayers. Today's broad acceptance that poverty is relative allows for, indeed would seem to make inevitable, such debates. The great debate about where and how to draw the poverty line is likely to continue, So too are debates about the particular nature of rural poverty and related income needs, with a recent report concluding, almost in time-honoured (and generally ignored) fashion, that, "... the minimum cost of living in rural areas is greater than living in urban areas. This is not because costs are generally higher across a rural household

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<sup>15</sup> Up from the 11% recorded in the CRC's 2005 State of the Countryside Report (CRC 2005 p82).

*budget, but because of specific extra expenses, mainly transport ...”* (Smith, Davis and Hirsch 2010 p49).

The debate appears to be never-ending; practicable solutions as elusive as ever. It is accepted that poverty can be framed in both relative and absolute terms. The writer believes that current definitions could be improved if more effort was put into finding practical ways both to understand rural poverty, and to improve the circumstances of those experiencing it. This could be done by building on the experiences and local knowledge of those involved in programmes such as the MTI and BTP, in order to find out if the approaches championed by them can improve the lot of the poor. The findings of this work could then be used to refine poverty definitions.

In order to make the most of these opportunities, however, the work must be formally and regularly evaluated. This will help to ensure effective learning. It will also enable community-led programmes to be developed in terms of, for example, governance. This is an important consideration, because the poor, however defined, are less likely to be involved in community development work than the better off. Therefore, it will be necessary to establish governance mechanisms that will encourage, if not widespread participation by the poor, ways of ensuring that their existence is recognized, and their needs taken into account. Aspects of governance, both in general terms, and in relation to community-led development work as exemplified by the MTI/MCTi/BTP, are explored in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 3 Governance – the Changing Debate**

*The danger is not that a particular class is unfit to govern. Every class is unfit to govern.* Lord Acton (1834-1902)

### **3.1 Introduction**

A dictionary definition of government (Collins 1979 p631) is, "... *the system or form by which a community etc., is ruled ...*", whereas governance is, "... *the action, manner, or system of governing.*" Where the former is about structure, the latter is about action – ie how things get done. **Government** suggests Westminster politicians and civil and public servants, Non-Departmental Public Bodies, and the two or three tiers of local, democratically elected politicians and their officers.

**Governance** is often attached to words such as corporate, clinical, and global, as well as national and local, and means a sharing of power and influence by various organizations, whose representatives might be elected, or appointed.

Governance mechanisms are designed to improve policy development and implementation. The literature on governance is, according to Flinders (2000), "... *eclectic ... [and] ... Governance theory can be said to be in an embryonic phase of its development.*" (pp51-52). The influence of governance is apparent at all government levels, although, "*Governance as an approach to governing ... contains mutually contradictory elements.*" between the need for consensus and joint working, and prescription and control by the centre (p70). In view of these contradictions, there is a continuing debate about the effectiveness of governance in encouraging people to become involved in local democracy (DCLG 2008), and its appropriateness as a mechanism for implementing policies (Carnegie UK 2007 pp35-36).

The rate at which government organizations and structures are reviewed and changed (DCLG 2006, Defra 2005, Gershon 2004, Lyons 2004), adds further complications to what has long been recognized as a complicated way of doing business (Jackson and Stainsby 2000) that can be informed by political self-interest as well as by a desire to improve policy development and implementation (Nuffield 2006 p). In addition, although, "*Community-based partnerships that engage local people ... remain strongly in vogue ... the perception remains that a 'democratic deficit' persists at local level*", a consequence perhaps of the, "... *150 Acts of Parliament diminishing the powers of local authorities.*" enacted between 1979 and the mid 1990s (Tomorrow Project 2006).

There is, therefore, a difference between intention and rhetoric, and the reality faced by local people when they choose to work together for the common good, using processes and money controlled by others. It is this reality – complicated and time consuming - that faces those involved in community-led partnerships like the MTI/MCTi/BTP.

### **3.2 Governance: Getting Things Done? Rhetoric and Reality**

#### **3.2.1 The More the Merrier? Encouraging Participation is a Complicated Business**

Governance operates at various “levels”, both up and down (ie “vertically” between, for example, European, national, and local government bodies) and across (ie “horizontally” between, for example, a County Council and private and county-based voluntary sector organizations).

At the European level, Eising (2004 p212) explains governance in terms of a dispersed and shared political authority across and between European and national institutions. He suggests, as a hypothesis (p216), that, "*Multilevel governance implies many interactions among public and private actors both at the national and the EU level and an increase in the importance of institutions at both levels for the representation of interests.*" This mixture of government levels – national and international - and types of organization, is not restricted to Europe. It can also be applied sub-nationally to a similar mix of local government and other organizations and interest groups.

Graham Pearce and John Mawson (2003) describe governance as a way of working that increases accountability, and encourages participation in democratic processes between local government and other organizations interested in, and/or responsible for, service provision. They do this in the context of the first New Labour government’s concern about citizens’ lack of confidence in formal politics, "...reflected in renewed attention being given to the relationship between citizens and government, leading to a quest for new or improved approaches which **balance the advantages of central control with decentralised decision making.**" (p52) (writer’s emphasis). Consequently, there are debates and arguments about where the boundaries lie between the ‘advantages of central control’ and ‘decentralised decision making’.

Similarly, the extent to which governance mechanisms increase, or reduce participation in the democratic process, and the effectiveness of current governance processes, is also debated, not only in the context of the UK and Europe, but also more widely. In the developed world, "*Governments are generally emphasising decentralisation and bottom up strategies as mechanisms for rural development.*" (Keating 2001 p1). There are concerns, however. For example, Mary Hobley, writing about pro-poor policy in the developing world, notes, "*The presumption that good governance (achieved through democratic transformation) leads to pro-poor outcomes has been a strong driver of reform in the forest sector over recent years. However ... this is not necessarily the case.*" (Hobley 2005 p21).

Governance mechanisms not only relate to external relationships, but to the ways in which organizations work. For example, a Dorset Primary Care Trust's governance system (Merricks 2006 p8) is viewed as, "... *a comprehensive management tool ...[that] ... recognises that every job, clinical and non-clinical, should aim for ever-higher standards of reliable care for patients.*" In order to achieve the desired standards, the Trust has established a range of governance mechanisms. These include an organizational "health check" (with, "... *24 core standards, with some 80 elements representing the level of service that patients should expect.*"), best practice conferences, risk and safety management, and National Service and Quality Outcomes Frameworks (this last measured across 146 indicators). The terminology and approach give an indication of the complicated nature of governance within an organization which, in addition to its own work, is part of local governance via, for example, the County's Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)<sup>16</sup>.

Developments in forms of governance are affected by more than a desire to devolve and share power. Recent changes have, in part at least, according to Suzy Harris (2002 p321) been driven by the fact that, "... *national governments do not have the financial resources required to manage the public expenditure as they have done in previous decades. Instead of a strong interventionist state there has been a shift to a state which 'enables' or 'steers' through the use of powerful actors in society, such as the markets, institutions and networks.*"

One inevitable – and intended – consequence of the development of governance at the local level, is the bringing together of representatives from the many independent organizations that now exist, in order both to implement policy and raise the money needed to operate the various schemes and projects created in

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<sup>16</sup> For information about Dorset's community strategy/LSP, see: <http://tinyurl.com/ykb5x9s>

response to policy demands. The idea behind this is that, "... governance leads to a greater focus on outcomes, and is more able to address cross-cutting issues. In this 'new' world, public/private boundaries are blurred; informal as well as formal relationships, partnerships and networks are seen as being centrally important." (Wilson 2004 p10). The involvement of a larger number of organizations, each with its own purpose, aims and objectives, increases both the potential benefits that a greater number of interested and knowledgeable people can bring to bear on a project, and the potential for conflict, inter-agency and intra-network competition, fragmentation, and bureaucratic confusion (Bevir and Rhodes 2001 p115, Flinders 2002 p53, Hart and Doak 1994 p202).

The trend to stand-alone agencies pre-dates New Labour (Skelcher 2004 pp29-32). The Thatcher and Major Conservative governments created new semi-public administrative bodies, commonly known as quangos<sup>17</sup> (eg Urban Development Corporations, Training and Enterprise Councils, Grant Maintained Schools), as did their predecessors who, for example, created the Development Commission in 1909, and National Park Authorities in the 1950s. That said, the period of Labour government since 1997 has seen both a growth in the number of quangos (Wilson 2004 p11) and "... a normative approach to public policy through partnership." (Skelcher 2004 p32).

The number of these specific-for-purpose organizations, together with the need to work collaboratively within a complicated funding regime has produced a, "... complex interaction of national programmes, initiatives and targets, and complicated partnership arrangements ... [that] ... confuse lines of responsibility and accountability and hamper successful delivery at local level." (Audit Commission 2004 p53), a point reinforced by other writers (Brooks 2000 p605, Hart and Doak 1994 p201, Winter 2006 p14). The Government has tried to overcome this complexity by introducing LSPs. These are intended to bring, "... together the key sectors and agencies to deliver better towns, cities and rural areas." (JRF 2001 p1). More recently, the ChangeUp programme, which, "... is about strengthening the support and assistance available to voluntary and community organisations ... [and was] ... developed in partnership with the sector and focuses on improving capacity building and infrastructure within the voluntary and community sector.", has also attempted to develop ways in which organizations can be more efficient and effective, both in terms of their own work, and also in terms of their ability to work with others for the public good (ChangeUp 2005).

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<sup>17</sup> Quasi-autonomous non-government(al) organizations.

The experiences of those involved in this type of work are, however, mixed. LSPs appear, paradoxically, both to dilute the influence of local authorities by virtue of their multi-agency structure (Sullivan 2004 p109) and reinforce their importance as accountable bodies to groups that need, "... *their political, managerial and financial resources* ..." (Skelcher 2004 p39). ChangeUp, although at a relatively early stage in 2005 (the programme is formally scheduled to end in 2014), was well-intentioned, but confused in terms of process and finances (Morris and Nichols 2006<sup>18</sup>). In both of these examples, however, the role of local government is crucial to the effective working of the partnerships.

The fact that some of these new organizations, "... *have removed responsibilities from one or other parts of local government*.", and that their Board Members are appointed rather than elected has produced concerns about loss of representation for the public (Hart and Doak 1994 p202, Whitehead 1997 p1). There are also practical concerns about whether something as complicated as community governance can actually be made to work (Whitehead 1997 pp5-7, Winter 2006 p15). Changes within local government itself, for example competitive tendering for services (Hart and Doak 1994 p201), and the spread of cabinet government, with its potential to, "... *create a formidable battery of powers* ..." for political leaders (John 2004 p54), together with the debate about the pros and cons of directly elected mayors (p59) have only added to the confusion experienced both by professionals, and interested individuals, as they try to get things done.

The same concerns exist at more local levels, where power and influence are increasingly – if not equally – shared between regional organizations (eg Government Offices, RDAs) and local authorities, and between both regional and local authority organizations and a variety of public, private and voluntary sector bodies (eg Primary Care Trusts, Business Associations, Rural Community Councils). As the potential for partnership working grows, so does the potential for confusion, inefficiency, and paralysis, together with the possibility that, despite the rhetoric, the concept of governance may be increasing, not decreasing, political centralization (Davies 2002). If this last should prove to be true then it is to be hoped that it is an unintended consequence of a well-intentioned policy move, rather than a deliberate muddying of the democratic waters.

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<sup>18</sup> As an example of how short term some programmes/initiatives/projects are, when this reference was checked online in December 2009 prior to submitting the thesis it was found that the document had been removed from the World Wide Web, and the link address redirected to the Capacity Builders' website (<http://tinyurl.com/yku59av>), in which the only references to the ChangeUp Programme were to its continuing evaluation (see this related link, <http://tinyurl.com/yjnvhd2>), and to its origins, <http://tinyurl.com/ygp4ubj>.

### **3.2.2 Letting go is Hard to do**

There are, therefore, tensions, “*... within the Labour government’s agenda for central-local government relations – between a drive for national standards and the encouragement of local learning and innovation; and between strengthening executive leadership and enhancing public participation.*” (Wilson 2004 p9). The strategies adopted by the Government are both “top-down” (eg inspecting bodies such as OFSTED<sup>19</sup>, competitions such as the Beacon Council scheme operated by the Improvement and Development Agency<sup>20</sup>, and Whitehall-imposed targets via the Public Service Agreements that exist between government spending departments and the Treasury), and, although prescribed from the centre, “bottom-up” implementation (eg Health and Education Action Zones, and the MTI) (Bevir and Rhodes 2001 p126, Wilson 2004 p9). The debate about governance and, by association, government, centres on these inherent tensions, although, according to Bevir and Rhodes (2001 p125), “*New Labour favors (sic) a society of stakeholders enabled by a state that forms with them partnerships and networks based on trust ...*”. Given that all organizations and the individuals within them have their own motivations, the sharing of aims and mutual trust cannot be taken for granted (Pennington and Rydin 2000 p246), or easily achieved (Jackson and Stainsby 2000 pp13-15). Although local authority power may have been diluted by the growth of partnership working (ie community-level governance), much of the responsibility for strategic leadership, implementation and financial probity remains with local government as enabler and banker (Pearce and Mawson 2003 p52); albeit, in the view of some sectors that lack local authority resources and powers, that this role might be inevitable, rather than desirable (Foley and Martin 2000 p481).

Local Authorities are, therefore, still central to policy implementation and governance mechanisms at the local level. Although the Labour governments’ intentions, according to Helen Sullivan (2004 pp190-191), can be summarised as encouraging, 1) community leadership, 2) participation in the democratic process, and, 3) the modernization of local public services, central government remains ambivalent as to the amount of trust (and, by extension, power and influence) that they are prepared to cede (Pearce and Mawson 2003 p57).

In her discussion about governance, Sullivan noted (2004 p182) that, “*... friends of local government may feel that they have little to be comfortable and confident*

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<sup>19</sup> Office for Standards in Education

<sup>20</sup> The scheme was introduced in 1999 to identify excellence in local government from which others can learn (see <http://tinyurl.com/yk5edyf>).

*about as they survey the institutional terrain. Among national politicians ... local government continues to be viewed at best with scepticism ...".* Developments such as the Public-Private Partnerships programme (ie agreements between public sector and private sector providers<sup>21</sup>) and LSPs, coupled with the growth in influence of the regions, and grant programmes like the MTI developed specifically for local implementation by locally created partnerships between statutory, private and voluntary sector organizations and interested individuals, have undoubtedly reduced the power, if not the influence, and ultimately the importance, of the County and District levels of local government.

The nervousness that - some parts at least - of central government have about the effectiveness of local government at the County and District levels is coupled with a stated desire - by some parts at least - of central government to devolve some aspects of government to the local level, and a variable willingness by, and ability of, local government to participate, exemplifies the fact that government has still not been "joined-up" (Gains 2004, Hetherington 2006, Wilson 2004 p12). Moreover, local government is still being subjected to change, most recently, for example, via the proposals announced in the Local Government White Paper (DCLG 2006), and continuing pressures on some Councils to merge (either into single - unitary - authorities, or via local agreements to share functions, for example, planning or finance).

### **3.2.3 All Tiers of Government Need to Work Together – Don’t Forget or Neglect Town and Parish Councils**

The view that central government has of the Parish Council tier of government is also unclear. Despite talk of 'double devolution', "... *of power from the central government to local government, and from local government to citizens and communities...*" (Miliband 2006), and calls for the government to, "... *provide a joined up and coherent narrative, strategy and development support for the parish sector.*" (Moor and Griggs 2005 p12), the only reference to parish councils in the Local Government White Paper summary is a statement that, "*The process for creating parishes will be devolved to councils...*" (DCLG 2006 p2). The only references in the full White Paper, beyond a general sense of approval of activities such as parish planning, are statements of support and intent. For example, there is support for local charters (DCLG 2006a p41 Vol. 1), and there are intentions, "... *to extend the power of well-being to all parish and town councils which satisfy*

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<sup>21</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/ykchr4m>

*criteria based on the Quality Parish scheme.”* (p45), and to encourage, “... parish and town councils to use their powers in relation to promoting energy saving measures ...” (DCLG 2006a p51, Vol. 2). Any commitment to granting additional powers to parish/town councils, perhaps the most significant tier of government for town partnerships, appears to be minimal to judge from the frustrations about the lack of power expressed by some contributors to Dame Jane Roberts’ Councillors Commission inquiry (CC 2007 p27), and the CRC’s contemporaneous inquiry into the role of rural councillors (CRC 2008b).

This governmental angst, further complicated by developments in regional governance (Tomaney 2004) has resulted in the complicated system of governance that urban and rural areas have to deal with, and perhaps explains Helen Sullivan’s warning (2004 p 197) that, “... *there is a danger that community governance will be interpreted narrowly and understood as one of a number of functions of local government rather than as a philosophy for governing localities.*” There is a risk, she suggests (p197), that Community Strategies could become peripheral, rather than central to local development work if the three principles of community governance, centred on the role of local government, collaboration, and participation, are neglected (pp189-190).

If such marginalization was to occur to Community Strategies (CS), then it is possible that other types of community development work – for example, small town partnerships - will suffer the same fate. Indeed, given that a Community Strategy is central to the work done within, for example, a shire county, the essentially local work of a small town partnership might be relatively unaffected by changes at the wider community level. The very localness of MTI, and other community-led development work, might enable it to continue, simply because the work at the town or village level, although relevant, is peripheral to District, County, and regional activities, and relatively inexpensive to support. The counter to this is that the “top-down” importance attached to the LSP/CS work might mean that organizations higher up the vertical governance chain are unable, for reasons of priority or resource limitations, to support the essentially local partnership work.

In any event, the ways in which small town partnerships are supported have changed. The national element of support for MTI/BT partnerships ceased when the Countryside Agency reorganized in 2005, leaving the primary responsibility for support to RDAs. It was replaced by regional (ie more local) support provided by the RDAs. This could be viewed as a less “top-down”, if not exactly “bottom-up”, approach. Whether the effective replacement of national support by regional

support has been beneficial is a matter for debate (and, it is suggested, eventual evaluation). It is logical to suggest, however, that partnerships are more likely to be successful if they have widespread support from all tiers of government, and are able to operate within an effective governance structure.

### **3.3 The MTI/MCTi/BTP – Pointing the way to Localism?**

At the end of the nineteenth century, "*The most active and effective part of local government was, without a doubt, the town councils.*" (Keith-Lucas and Richards 1978 p13)<sup>22</sup>.

The impact of governance mechanisms on the MTI/MCTi/BTP is, however, difficult to assess. This is partly because these specific programmes were relatively short-lived in terms of a long-term developmental process (especially in the case of BTs [Nichols 2005]), and partly because the partnerships were affected by organizational and policy priority changes (Defra 2005, Haskins 2003). Indeed, the work that continues as a result of these programmes is still relatively new, given the inherent difficulties associated with regeneration, and the need to gain an improved understanding of community-led work via, for example, systematic monitoring and evaluation.

Coupled with this is the fact that there have been numerous regeneration policies since the 1960s - an Audit Commission report lists 39 major Acts, policies and initiatives (Audit Commission 2004 pp59-62). Although increasingly said to be designed to develop the capacity of the people who are affected by, and involved in the regeneration of an area, policies have been poorly integrated into the so-called "mainstream" (ie the accepted way of working) in that they have been fragmented, badly coordinated, and complicated in terms of process and administration (Scott, Shorten, Owen, and Owen 2009, Wilks-Heeg 2000 pp17-20). Similarly, although there have been calls since at least 1987 for integrated rural strategies to join-up, "... *economic, social, environmental, and recreational objectives and policies ...*" (RTPI 2000 p31), the vertical governance mechanisms within the hierarchical departmental structure of government makes it difficult to achieve effective integration of programmes such as the MTI into "mainstream" policy. This, in turn, effectively limits partnerships' influence and control over both programme and associated processes (Caffyn 2004).

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<sup>22</sup> At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Wiltshire County Council employed 26 staff, and an annual budget of £133,000. According to the National Archives this is equivalent to £7,588,980.00 in 2009 monetary values (<http://tinyurl.com/yzszpd3>). In 2008-2009 Wiltshire Council's gross budget was £622,493,000 (<http://tinyurl.com/yld2vj>), indicating the growth in local authorities' responsibilities, if not powers, and the generally more complicated world in which local authorities operate.

The MTI, with its emphasis on, "... *Market Towns as a focus for growth, ... and ... as service centres and hubs for surrounding hinterland ...*" (DETR-MAFF 2000 p73), and, "*Business, local authority, voluntary group, residents and other partners coming together as a steering group ...*" (p78), illustrates the importance of community leadership as, "*the area of greatest relevance ...*" to the development of community governance (Sullivan 2004 p191). If leadership is to come from within a community, it is reasonable to suggest that the community should have a measure of control over the direction in which it is being led. Ultimately, the debate about local governance and community-led work is likely to centre on influence, power, and control.

On the one hand, communities will need power and resources if they are to take and implement decisions (and, implicit in this, to risk getting it wrong). A community's leadership will need control of money and the freedom to take decisions if it is to be truly empowered to act, and able to take responsibility for its actions. On the other hand, organizations responsible for developing public sector programmes, and for ensuring that money is spent in accordance with Treasury Rules, will be limited in their freedom to take risks and devolve power by the controls imposed on them by their sponsors within the vertical governance chain. Limits will also be imposed on all the parties involved in a partnership by the constraints governing each partner's freedom to act.

Within this tangled – and changing - web of regeneration reality, lie the dilemmas of both government and governance. Putting to one side the practical difficulties associated with horizontal governance (eg numbers of organizations, potentially conflicting, or poorly matching individual or organizational priorities and objectives, and concerns about the democratic deficit), if control is to be given to a market town partnership, the external paymasters and those with statutory responsibilities for wider geographical and policy areas must hand over their power and their responsibilities. They cannot do this unless they are authorized to do so by the appropriate "vertical" government authority. If control is not given, then the community cannot be said to be leading (or taking ultimate responsibility for its actions).

In the context of the MTI, government, as a responsible and controlling mechanism, appeared, therefore, to be destined to be in opposition to governance, an essentially enabling mechanism only able to work effectively via a partnership of committed members, and with the powers needed to enable it to implement its plans. Without these, partnerships can become demoralised and ineffective, as the realization

dawns that their influence is limited, their freedom to act restricted, and that progress is, despite the rhetoric, ultimately in the hands of others.

As Alison Caffyn (2004 p23) noted, "*The MTI appears to be another 'third way' strategy which has an over-reliance on local partnerships and communities to deliver 'joined-up' governance without effective central government support.*" As seen from her local – West Midlands - perspective, the effect of local governance might well have increased local participation, only to end up by confusing and frustrating people. From the point of view of effective community development, this is a dangerous and damaging combination.

This research was prompted partly by concerns similar to those expressed by Caffyn, and the writer's frustration that the nationally coordinated MTI/BT work effectively ceased following the implementation of Lord Haskins' recommendations in 2005 (Haskins 2003). The work, however, of the partnerships, and many of the organizations and individuals involved with, and committed to community-led development continues (SERTP 2010), as does wider political interest, as exemplified by the debates that contributed to the Local Government White Paper (DCLG 2006).

Although this study cannot compensate for the lack of a large scale longitudinal research project designed to assess the wider impact of the MTI/BTP (and MCTi) on English country towns, it can provide a snapshot of people's views and experiences about the programmes, and give some pointers to the strengths and weaknesses of community governance, and community-led development. It will perhaps help to test the validity of Alan Whitehead's slightly paraphrased suggestion (1997 p13), that the forms of governance associated with the MTI/MCTi/BTP run, "... *the danger of producing representation which is perhaps good at achieving the particular views of a locality, but is less adept at running a [town].*" (NB Whitehead was writing about a city).

The possibility that the approaches may prove less adept at running a town than achieving views should not be allowed to obscure the importance of ascertaining views, provided that the views ascertained are representative of the population as a whole. Ensuring such representation is difficult, and concerns have been raised about the legitimacy of some town and parish councils in terms of their representativeness (Steel, Jochum, Grieve and Cooke 2006 p42). It is also acknowledged that there are, "... *gaps in our understanding about how to promote community representation in ways that take account of diversity and population change.*" (Blake, Diamond, Foot, Gidley, Mayo, Shukra and Yarnit 2008 p1). That

these concerns exist – and not only in the UK, for example, Australia, is similar (Murphy and Cauchi 2006) - suggests that community-led development needs to be encouraged, and monitored and evaluated, in order to increase knowledge about the processes, and gain practical experience about implementation. Monitoring and evaluation could, it is suggested, be based on the method used in this research (a relatively simple standard mix of interview and postal survey work), the development of which, and justification for, is explained in Chapter 4.

## **Chapter 4 The Development of the Method**

*Survey should be a continuing process in the life of a community, a stocktaking of resources and conditions that allows the citizen to have a comprehensive understanding of the life and activity in which he participates. After this stocktaking should come revaluation of current practices and conditions in the light of new techniques, material, and cultural standards.*

(Glaisyer, Brennan, Ritchie, and Sargent-Florence 1946 p286)

### **4.1 Introduction**

To an extent the nature of the research suggested the methodology that was eventually decided upon, namely a postal survey of a selection of MTI/BTP town partnerships, and a series of semi-structured interviews with people involved, directly and indirectly, with the work of a single town's partnership. Firstly in this chapter, the reasoning behind the choice of methods is explained (Section 4.2). Following this, the reader is introduced to the sources from which data were gathered (Section 4.3). In Section 4.4, the difficulties associated with gathering the data are explored. The final four sections explain how the data were reduced, manipulated, and prepared for analysis.

### **4.2 Choosing the Method**

The writer was aware, from his professional involvement with the MTI/BTP, related programmes, and members of partnerships, that the nature of the approach and the work was such that success was essentially dependent upon the good will and enthusiasm of the participants. Although the approach to the work adopted by each partnership was similar, in that it was influenced and guided by the Healthcheck process, written procedures (eg the Healthcheck handbook), officials from, for example, the Countryside Agency, RDAs and local authorities, and professionals appointed as coordinators and project managers, ultimately success was in the hands of local people, each of whom had their own story to tell. Similarly, although the projects chosen by partnerships were also often similar in terms of topic, they were also unique to a place and its circumstances, a time, and a group of people.

It was considered, therefore, that the nature of partnerships' work was such that information gathered during the research was likely to be in descriptive, rather than numerical form, based, as it was, on people's experiences and opinions. Although people's motivations and roles could be, and to a certain extent were, reduced to a form suitable for simple numerical analysis (eg the number of people who

volunteered because of a particular interest, or the number of Town Clerks who responded), the data collected were essentially best suited to qualitative analysis. It was the participants' achievements, challenges and opinions, expressed in their own words, that were of primary interest, and that were used to inform both the research aims, and the narrative of this thesis. The collection methods employed, semi-structured interviews and self-administered questionnaires, are well recognized, and are the two most common methods identified by Alan Bryman in his examination of how quantitative and qualitative methods are integrated (Bryman 2006). The limiting factors were primarily those of time, money and capacity (the research was conducted by the writer alone).

As the method chosen enabled a lot of essentially summary data and more detailed, supporting information to be gathered cost-effectively, quickly, and relatively efficiently, the decision to gather information from a combination of a postal survey and interviews was relatively easy to take.

It was recognized that postal questionnaires could, in the majority of cases, only capture the summary views of one individual. The decision was taken, therefore, to conduct semi-structured interviews with a variety of people, some of whom were closely involved in rural policy, and some who were involved with the work of a single town partnership. Bridport, the town selected for closer study, was, as is discussed in Chapter 6, chosen not only for the pragmatic reason that it is close to the writer's home, but also because the partnership was involved in the MCTi and the MTI, and the town held BT status.

The use of an essentially qualitative research method in this type of study is not unusual. In an assessment of Dorset's Rural Development Programme for the period 1994-1998, 44 projects were assessed using a combination of visits, interviews and project analysis (Moseley and Clark 1998 pp6-7). Malcolm Moseley also used a combination of telephone interviews and visits to inform his team's analysis of linkages between various community-based planning initiatives, including the MTI (Moseley, Owen, Courtney, Chater and Cherrett 2004 pp6-9).

Similarly, Andrew Errington and his colleagues, in their review of the Peak District Integrated Rural Development Project, a programme of community-led work (Peak National Park 1990) employed a qualitative approach structured around interviews with participants, and noted, in support of their decision, that their research brief had stated that it would be difficult to obtain statistically rigorous data from the small number of projects being investigated (Blackburn, Errington, Lobley, Winter

and Selman 2000 p31). By way of further justification for the selection and appropriateness of the interview-based approach, Errington and his colleagues referred to an earlier investigation into training for rural businesses, in which, "... a rounded picture of each initiative [was obtained] by gathering information and views from a number of different people, each bringing their own distinctive perspective." (Errington, Nolan and Farrant 1998 p3).

Furthermore, the method is well-known and accepted, not only in the UK, but overseas. For example, a research project supported by the United Kingdom's Natural Resources Institute and Department for International Development, used a mix of questionnaires and structured and semi-structured interviews to gain an improved understanding of India's rural non-farm economy and related policies associated with poverty reduction (Wandschneider 2003, Wandschneider and Mishra 2003). In a UK investigation into the use of information technology made by rural businesses in Scotland, Deakins, Mochrie and Galloway (2004 p143) described their use of questionnaires administered by telephone and face-to-face interviews, supported by 'triangulation' of the data using reports and research documents related to their study.

Consequently, it was concluded that the mixed method of interviews and postal survey enquiry would provide an appropriate balance between the need to gather information from as many partnerships as possible (ie relatively small amounts of data acquired from the postal survey), and the supporting requirement to gain both a broad and deep understanding, both of the programmes, and of participants' views about poverty and policy (ie by means of face to face interviews). In the event, although the data collected was, as anticipated, primarily suited to qualitative analysis, some limited quantitative analysis was also possible.

### **4.3 The Data – Collection and Analysis Discussed**

#### **4.3.1 The Data – Sources and Method of Collection**

The research data were obtained from four sources between May 2006 and October 2008 (although most of the final interviewing and the postal survey work was done during 2008):

- 1) Initial, exploratory face-to face interviews designed to gather information about rural poverty, gain interviewing experience, and to help develop the survey questionnaire. Five people were interviewed, the Deputy Chief Executive of the

Countryside Agency, the Chief Executive of RuralNet UK<sup>23</sup>, an officer from the South East Regional Assembly, a senior Hampshire County Councillor, and an officer from Hampshire County Council. All of these interviewees were closely associated with rural policy, if not the MTI/MCTi/BT programmes, at the time of the interviews.

- 2) Exploratory face-to-face interviews with four people closely involved with MTI/BT work in two Oxfordshire towns, Faringdon and Carterton. These short interviews were also primarily about poverty, but differed from those in 'A' above in that they explored the interviewees' views about the appropriateness of poverty reduction as a programme aim, and, irrespective of this, the extent to which the partnerships' work had addressed poverty. They also informed the development of the questionnaires used in the postal survey and the final series of face-to-face interviews in Dorset.
- 3) Face-to-face interviews with ten people associated with MTI/MCTi/BTP work in Bridport, Dorset.
- 4) Information from telephone discussions with, and/or postal questionnaires received from, 30 representatives of 27 town partnerships. Two town partnerships returned two forms (ie two respondents replied from each of the two towns), and one town used one form to give the views of two people, hence the total of 30 respondents (NB as not every question was answered by each of the 30 respondents, the number of answers available to inform the analysis was sometimes less than 30).

Questionnaires were sent to 48 towns, approximately 20% of the 227 towns that officially participated in the MTI/BTP. To ensure a reasonable geographical spread the following method was used to select the towns to which postal questionnaires were sent. First, every sixth town on the list of participating towns was selected. Following this, additional towns were selected to ensure that: at least one town from each English region was surveyed; all eighteen Beacon Towns were surveyed.

As explained above, information was eventually received from 27 towns (a response rate of approximately 56%). In total, therefore, including Carterton, Faringdon, and Bridport, data was obtained from a variety of sources in 30 towns; ie approximately 13% of the total number of town partnerships that participated in the MTI/BTP. The names of the towns to which questionnaires were sent are listed in Appendix 2. Information is also given in this Appendix about each town's regional location,

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<sup>23</sup> RuralNet UK, a charity, was formed in 1986 (as part of the Royal Agricultural Society of England). Its purpose was to help rural communities improve and strengthen their local economies (<http://tinyurl.com/yh9py9j>). It ceased operations in 2009.

population, its place in the Index of Multiple Population (DETR 2000), its category in the settlement typology developed for Defra by the Rural Evidence Research Centre (RERC 2009), its status, if any, as a Beacon Town, Gateway Station or One-Stop Shop, and as a participant or non-participant in this research study. Attempts were made to find out if a town's participant/non-participant status correlated with the locational, population, IMD and typology data. For example, participation/non-participation was assessed against population to see if larger towns were more likely than smaller ones to participate. There were no discernable patterns with this or any other comparison (eg participation/non-participation compared with RERC settlement type).

In all, 49 people contributed to the research, namely the nine people interviewed during the development of the questionnaire and survey form (A and B above), the ten Bridport interviewees, and the 30 individuals who participated in the postal survey. **It is important to note that this does not mean that each question was answered by all 49 people. This is because the initial interviewees were not asked about partnerships' achievements, and some participants did not answer every question.**

All those approached for interview agreed to be interviewed, and agreed, having approved the transcripts of their interview, that their contributions could be used to help the research. In one case, however, permission was subsequently withdrawn because, on reflection, the interviewee considered that the structure of the interview, which deliberately made little mention of the writer's interest in rural poverty, was misleading. With this one exception, the response to the two methods used to gather information, ie questionnaires and interviews, was broadly satisfactory.

In an attempt to corroborate the information obtained from the primary sources of data (ie the questionnaires and interview transcripts), some town Healthchecks and Action Plans were used to provide a measure of 'triangulation'. These, which included Marlow<sup>24</sup> from south-east England, Alcester<sup>25</sup> from the West Midlands, and Keswick<sup>26</sup> from the north-west, were used primarily as comparative sources of information about the type of work being done by partnerships. According to the British Government's Social Research Unit (HM Treasury 2004 p8:30 ), "... *good research design will often include elements of triangulation ... bringing together...*

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<sup>24</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/yzqajcy>

<sup>25</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/yf5nfoz>

<sup>26</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/yqjymfr>

*different ways of looking at data, to answer the research questions."* This positive view of triangulation as a useful methodological tool is not shared by all (Massey and Walford 1999), but its use was found to be helpful by James Derounian who, in his analysis of Oxfordshire's Parish Plans, considered that, "*Overall the process of 'triangulation' seems to have worked well in engaging local people in the parish plan process ...*" (Derounian 2005 p8).

Given that the disadvantages and difficulties associated with both primary methods are well known, in that interviews are time consuming for both parties, and relatively expensive to conduct (Oppenheim 2000 pp83-84), and postal questionnaires are prone to low response rates (p102), the positive reaction to requests for interviews, and a better than 50% response rate from the towns surveyed, was considered adequate, even encouraging.

#### **4.3.2 The Data – Summarizing and Analyzing**

The interview transcripts and completed questionnaires total more than 37,000 words of fact and opinion. They were anonymized before being gathered together by question. These data represent a substantial amount of information elicited from a variety of respondents, each of whom offered a view about the MTI/MCTi/BTP work based on the extent and nature of their involvement, and their local and professional knowledge of places, priorities, and policies. Nevertheless, although the response rate to the postal survey was relatively encouraging, and the data gathered contains a wealth of relevant, rich, dense information, in absolute terms the information provided by respondents represented only a small proportion of the total potentially available from all of the participants in the MTI/MCTi/BTP.

In view of this, and because of uncertainties associated with determining an appropriate level of statistical confidence in a survey of this sort, it was decided to describe the data, rather than to attempt to find within it causal linkages about, for example, the extent to which a partnership's success is dependent upon previous beneficial involvement in public sector grant aided support programmes, such as European Union's LEADER programmes<sup>27</sup> or the UK government's Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) programmes<sup>28</sup>. The implications of this self-imposed

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<sup>27</sup> LEADER 1, 2 & 'Plus' were designed to help rural development. The programmes, which ran from 1991 until 2006, emphasized the involvement of local people.

<sup>28</sup> The SRB began in 1994, and brought together a number of programmes that had previously been administered by different UK Government Departments, with the aim of simplifying and streamlining the assistance available to local regeneration partnerships.

limitation, together with an explanation of how the data were summarized and reduced, are explored in the next section.

#### **4.4 Difficulties Associated With Gathering and Managing the Data**

In order to meet the research objectives (Table 1) and identify the main points made by the interviewees and postal survey respondents, it was necessary to analyse and reorganize the data.

**Table 1**  
**The Research Objectives**  
**(Chapter 1, page 29)**

1. To assess the effectiveness of the MTI and the BTP in terms of the programmes' strengths, weaknesses and achievements.
2. To add to the body of knowledge relating to rural poverty.
3. To draw from the above conclusions about the extent to which:
  - o rural poverty is recognized and understood;
  - o the MTI/MCTi/BTP have been effective, both in overall terms, and as approaches capable of identifying and reducing poverty in rural areas.

There are obvious problems associated with summarizing and then further reorganizing data gathered from interviews and questionnaires. First, any inherent biases introduced by the interview and questionnaire designer could be reinforced by the summarizing process. This problem is made worse when, as in this case, the designer and summarizer are the same person. Sue Dopson (2003 p219) stresses both the need for rigour when designing the research, and the importance of a full discussion and explanation of the method and its implementation, in order to ensure that results are not, "*presented as self-evident.*"

To reduce this risk the writer sought, and acted upon, the views of his supervisors at each stage of the two stage questionnaire design process. These were the initial interviews with policy professionals, a practitioner, and a County Councillor with rural responsibilities and interests, and the later interviews in Faringdon and Carterton. By ensuring that the testing and design work was formally monitored and critiqued, the risk of interviewer and designer bias was both recognized and addressed, if not completely removed.

On completion of the testing of the interview method and the design of the questionnaire used to guide the interviews, the postal questionnaire was developed. It closely follows the design of the interview questionnaire. There are eleven questions about the programmes, and three about poverty and policy (Appendix 2).

Inevitably, the summarizing process offers another opportunity for bias. The best that can be said, perhaps, is that the writer was aware of this and, again, ensured that his supervisors were consulted about both method and the data reduction work.

The risk of bias, and consequent distortion of the results obtained from the postal questionnaires, is further increased by the missing views of the non-responders (and non-participants – ie those partnerships to which survey questionnaires were not sent). Oppenheim (2002 pp106-107) suggests several ways in which the problems of non-response can be addressed, including the sending of follow-up requests (this was done), and various methods of statistical analysis. He cautions, however, that the latter can be problematic, and that, "... *it might be safer to do no more than indicate the direction of the bias due to non-response ...*" (p107). Although not ideal, it is this advice that has been followed, as it is considered that there exists sufficient information about the work of MTI/MCTi/BT partnerships, and other partnership-based programmes, gathered both from this research and other evaluations, to enable reasonable, although basic, assessments to be made about likely reasons for non-response. In any event, in some cases, reasons for non-participation were given. For example, in two cases, Partnership Chairs, both businessmen, declined, when contacted by telephone as part of the follow-up phase, to participate in the research because they were too busy to spare the time. Other non-participants explained their reasons in a note on a returned, but otherwise uncompleted, form.

Other possibilities for non-response include poor outcomes or bad experiences resulting in a reluctance to take part in a survey, and changes in personnel and/or local priorities that make it difficult to respond because of a lack of knowledge, or time (see above). A report about community participation for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (Skidmore, Bound and Lownsborough 2006 pp12-15) lists gender, socio-economic status, marginalized groups, age, geography, strength of identity with a community, and existing patterns of social capital as factors affecting participation.

As mentioned in Section 4.3.2, an untested possibility for non-response/participation is a town's location in, and its population's involvement with, previous community development work. If a town is, or has been, in an area

eligible for government support via, for example, SRB or LEADER programmes, it is more likely – assuming that the experiences have been positive – that the town will have the necessary structures in place, and already be supported by appropriately experienced people (volunteers and officials) than might be the case for a place where no such experience exists. An evaluative investigation into the whole of the MTI/MCTi/BTP would be useful because the partnerships' experiences, drawn from a wide variety of places throughout rural England, would provide an excellent basis for research. The results would be well-placed to contribute to wider research findings into community participation, such as that of Skidmore *et al.* (2006 pxi), who found, in their study of two urban areas, that, "*Community participation tends to be dominated by a small group of insiders who are disproportionately involved in a larger number of governance activities.*" Whether these findings apply in rural areas is not clear from this research (although the writer's experience gained from attending many meetings of partnership groups since 1993, suggests that they might very well apply).

Oppenheim (2002 p7) also notes, "*Survey literature abounds with portentous conclusions based on faulty inferences from insufficient evidence misguidedly collected and wrongly assembled.*", and draws attention to the lack of a strong theoretical base on which to build, "*so that the problem of attitudinal validity remains one of the most difficult in social research and one to which an adequate solution is not yet in sight.*" (p149). He also states, however, that, "*In social research we have few absolute measures, but relative differences are well worth having if they are consistent.*" (p289).

Although Oppenheim makes this point in a discussion that is largely about numerical analysis, it is suggested that the statement is broadly applicable to this research, in that it should be possible, tentatively, to infer from the interviewees' and respondents' detailed contributions any relative differences between MTI/MCTi/BT partnerships' concerns, achievements etc., without, as discussed above, attempting to identify definitive causal relationships. For example, one respondent's definition of what constitutes their partnership's "good" progress is likely to differ from another's. The relative difference between these two assessments, and the assessments made by other respondents, can, to an extent, be deduced from their written responses in terms of the partnerships' recorded achievements. In any event, categorization of achievements in this research was essentially subjective in that each participant had, depending on their experience and local circumstances, their own definition of what constituted a "good" project, or made for "good" overall progress (ie progress is relative to that already achieved in a town by that town's

partnership). Also, and as was evident from the Bridport interviews (Chapter 7), people's views about a particular project in which they were all involved, can differ markedly.

Having understood and overcome the difficulties associated with the development of the approach, and arrived at a usable method, it was necessary to consider how best to present the data for analysis. Aspects of this are discussed briefly in the next section.

#### **4.5 The Results – Some Presentational Considerations**

This research is but one part of an informal, uncoordinated and rather stuttering longitudinal evaluation of MTI/MCTi/BTP work. As discussed in Chapter 5 (the "MTI story") the concerns and work of partnerships were monitored (Nichols 2004, Nichols 2005) and investigated (Entec 2004, Moseley *et al.* 2005) during the period when the programmes were operational. In addition, earlier work assessed town characteristics and vulnerability (ERM 2001).

The findings from this research can, therefore, be considered as a continuation of, and contribution to, an overall, and, it is to be hoped, continuing analysis of the programmes and related approaches. Consequently, it was decided to include in this thesis all of the data collected in order to ensure that interested readers can interrogate it, either for their own purposes, or as the basis of a critique of the findings and analysis explored in the next section, and in Chapters 7 and 8. The full, but anonymized, interview transcripts and questionnaire returns relating to the participants' views about policy, the programmes, and poverty, are contained in Appendices 3 to 7, inclusive.

As discussed above, the majority of the data, being drawn from open questions and guided interviews, are not easily suited to statistical, quantitative analysis. Although, where possible, data are presented in graphical – ie essentially numerical – form, the majority are tabulated, or simply used to inform a series of discussions which are, in turn, supported by quotations taken from the full transcripts.

Dopson's view (2003 p222) is that case study, "... *analysis is very complex.*" This is supported by Oppenheim's caveats (discussed in the previous section) and his suggestion that the process of reduction and evaluation of information gathered must, inevitably, be somewhat subjective. Given also Dopson's belief that, "... *it is impossible to find an example of thinking which is absolutely 'objective', and it is*

*extremely difficult to find examples of thinking which is wholly 'subjective' in character.*" (p220), and that these problems are nothing new (Lynd and Lynd 1929 p3), it is concluded that the carefully structured, but pragmatic, approach adopted is both appropriate and adequate, and yet, inevitably and frustratingly, limited. The inclusion in the appendices of the raw data will allow others to judge if this conclusion is correct.

The next section explains how the data were summarized and reorganized, and the rationale for the approach.

#### **4.6 Preparing and Reorganizing the Data**

The two primary sources, the interview transcripts and questionnaires, were transcribed before being combined, question by question, for analysis.

On completion of the transcription work the main points from each contributor's answers were identified (Appendices 3 to 7). Following this the main points were gathered together and re-tabulated (Appendices 8 and 9). In order to improve presentation further and aid understanding, key words and phrases from both the interview and postal questionnaire data sets in Appendices 8 and 9 were identified. These were tabulated, and are contained in Appendix 10.

The data fall naturally into three sets, namely those which relate to the:

- 1) MTI/BT and MCTi programmes (eg opinions about the work done by partnerships);
- 2) specific poverty and policy questions; and
- 3) definitions of poverty offered by the participants.

For analysis purposes, however, there are six groups of data, two of which refer to the programmes, two to relationships between policy and poverty, and two which contain the participants' definitions of poverty, ie:

- 1) answers to the **programme-related** (ie non-poverty) questions obtained from the interviewees (Appendix 3);
- 2) answers to the **programme-related** (ie non-poverty) questions obtained from the postal survey questionnaires (Appendix 4);

- 3) answers to the **poverty and policy-related** questions obtained from the interviews (Appendix 5);
- 4) answers to the **poverty and policy-related** questions obtained from the postal survey questionnaires (Appendix 6);
  
- 5) **poverty definitions** given by the interviewees (Appendix 7);
- 6) **poverty definitions** given by the postal survey respondents (Appendix 7).

The data gathered in Groups 1 and 2 are discussed in Chapter 7.

The poverty and policy-related questions (Groups 3 and 4), together with the poverty definitions (Groups 5 and 6) given by participants are discussed in Chapter 8.

Before interviewees were asked the questions relating to poverty, they were given the following extract from the Rural White Paper (DETR/MAFF 2000 p74) to read and consider:

*"... businesses and communities in these towns need to respond to [and] maintain their physical fabric, economic vitality and a **good quality of life** for people in the town itself and surrounding rural areas." [writer's emphasis].*

This extract was given to the interviewees as a prompt to help them turn their attention to the poverty-related questions, and to ensure that they understood that 'quality of life' was an aim of the MTI. The three poverty-related questions were asked at the end of the interviews, and were deliberately placed towards the end of the postal questionnaire. There were two reasons for this:

- 1) the participants were able to answer the questions with their minds firmly fixed on the MTI/MCTi/BTP;
- 2) where the interviewees were concerned, the questions – especially the question asking the participant to define poverty - were unexpected<sup>29</sup>, and so it was hoped that, consequently, the answers given would tend to be instinctive, but informed, rather than carefully thought-out, compared with those given by respondents to the questionnaire, who would have time, if they wished, to provide more considered answers.

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<sup>29</sup> This approach had one unintended consequence. The interviewee who withdrew permission to be quoted (Section 4.2) felt that it was misleading not to explain the importance of rural poverty to the research. This person's irritation could be due to the writer's failure to explain adequately that the questions about the partnership's achievements were of equal importance.

Although none of the questions force the respondents to give single word answers, the poverty and policy-related questions (Groups 3 and 4 above) lend themselves to answers that can be reduced to a form suitable for simple numerical, as well as textual, analysis (eg, yes, no, don't know). These data were, therefore, subjected to numerical treatment, while the remainder (Groups 1,2, 5 and 6) were analysed and compared textually, and presented in tabular form.

#### **4.7 Deriving Participants' Views About the Programmes**

As explained in Section 4.6, the summary answers obtained from the interviews and postal survey respondents were gathered together, in tabular form, question by question (Appendix 10). Although related information from the two information sources is contained in the same tables, the interview and questionnaire answers are presented separately. This ensures that the two primary sources of data are clearly identifiable. It also reflects the fact that the longer, more discursive answers obtained from the interviews resulted in longer, more complicated summaries than those developed from the generally much shorter answers given by survey respondents. Where possible the summary answers within each of the final tables have been rearranged to show, for example, commonality or rank order of answers.

It is these data (Appendix 10), together with quotations taken from the original transcripts and survey forms in Appendices 3 and 4, that are used to frame the discussion and analysis of the research findings relating to the programmes, discussed in Chapter 7.

#### **4.8 Deriving Participants' Views About Policy and Poverty**

Using the same process described above, the data relating to policy and poverty, and the definitions of poverty offered by participants, were gathered together. These data, presented in Appendices 11 to 14 inclusive, are discussed in Chapter 8, which deals specifically with the poverty-related aspects of this research.

Before discussing the research findings, however, the opportunity is taken to consider the MTI/MCTi/BTP in detail (Chapter 5), and to discuss the reason for selecting Bridport for more detailed investigation (Chapter 6). There are two reasons for this.

Firstly, to explain the background to the programmes in the form of a potted history told, primarily, from the writer's point of view as someone closely involved with the

development and implementation of not only the MTI/BTP, but also the One Stop Shop and Gateway Stations programmes (Sections 5.7 and 5.6 refer), the establishment of the South East Rural Towns Partnership, and earlier work in the 1990s when he worked with the late Professor Andrew Errington and colleagues in the RDC, Rural Community Councils, and local authorities in setting up a south west regional network based on that established in Dorset in the mid-1990s.

Secondly, Chapters 5 and 6 help to provide some context for the research, the results of which are discussed in Chapters 7 and 8.

## **Chapter 5 The Market Towns Initiative and Related Programmes and Policy**

*The city dweller who passes thorough a country town, and imagines it sleepy and apathetic is very far from the truth: it is watchful as the jungle.* John Broderick (1927 - )

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter explores the development of rural policy in relation to England's country towns and the community-led development programmes introduced and implemented since 2000, a period during which 'machinery of government' changes affected the government bodies managing the programmes, and also, as a consequence, the programmes.

The chapter contains thirteen sections, each of which relates to an aspect of three broader elements.

Firstly, in sections 5.2 and 5.3, a discussion about rural policy and research associated with country towns sets the scene and establishes the context for the second element (sections 5.4 to 5.11), an explanation of the Market Towns Initiative (MTI) and associated work, including the Beacon Towns Programme (BTP). The third element, in sections 5.12 and 5.13, contains a discussion about regional market town programmes, in which especial emphasis is placed on the south-west region's Market and Costal Towns Initiative (MCTi).

The next section, therefore, discusses post-war research into small country towns.

### **5.2 Small Country Towns - Post-War Research**

If, as Michael Woods suggests (2005 p131), rural policy in general is enigmatic and elusive, that which relates to small towns is altogether more slippery. Historically, rural policy has been fragmented (Defra 2004a p3, Winter 1996, Woods 2005 p131). Although, relatively recently, rural and urban definitions have been adopted (Defra 2004, ODPM 2002), the much debated definitional "borders" between town and country, let alone difficult to define borders between inland and coastal, big and small, growing and declining, industry-specific and traditional/historic towns, means that, despite work, by, for example, Birkbeck College's Rural Evidence Research Centre (RERC 2009), it remains difficult to categorize "towns" for research purposes.

There has been periodic interest in, and debates about the roles of towns, but little in the way of coordinated, systematic, long-term research. In the 1940s, Lord Justice Scott's seminal report referred, somewhat romantically, to, "... *market towns with their streets – busy at least on market days – their shops, their cinemas and their small industries – with perhaps an abbey or cathedral in its close, or else a barracks bringing with it the status of a garrison town.* ... these towns all serve the same purpose, forming the main commercial and social centres for the surrounding countryside." (HMSO 1942 p3), and noted that, as a service centre, "The market town still plays an important part in the countryside." (p13). In the years since Scott made these comments, including the qualifying and revealing statement that towns are busy, "... at least on market days...", the roles of towns have been investigated, for example:

- systematically, but largely independently, by the likes of Arthur Smailes (1946), Howard Bracey (1952, 1953, 1954, 1959, 1962, 1963), R.E. Dickinson (1942), F.H.W. Green (1949, 1952), and various organizations (AMT 1998, RDC 1996, RRG 1994, URBED/AMT 1999, URBED/AMT 2006);
- as part of academic studies (Dawson and Errington 1998, Heamon 1950, Mills 1988, Morris 2003, Powe, Hart and Shaw 2007);
- by interested professionals (Caffyn 2004, Chalkin 1989, Clark and Murfin 1995, Green 1966, Green 2000, Medcalf 2000);
- by Local Authorities (GCC 2000, KCC 2001);
- by consultants engaged by government departments (DTZ Pieda 2000, ERM 2000);
- by the 227 towns partnerships involved in the MTI and BTP (CA 2004a, CA 2005, Nichols 2004, Nichols 2005).

As discussed above, this suggests a lack of coordinated study. This is only partly true, in that Bracey's later work, for example, made a valuable and incremental contribution to both his earlier work, and to that of his predecessors, such as Professor Smailes. It also provided useful stepping stones and reference points to those, like Liz Mills, who followed him. Although the chronology and relationships between the people and organizations involved in post-war work are clear, their contributions, at least since Lord Scott's committee's work, and until the 1990s, stem more from personal and sectoral interests (eg local government, academia) than from central government policy imperatives. In terms of this research, however, their contributions are essential, both to an understanding of the evolving, and yet remarkably unchanging roles of many small towns, and the writer's interest in the subject. Essentially, the post-war work falls into two main periods: the late

1940s to the late 1960s, which were largely led by academics interested in the roles of, and relationships between, settlement types; and the relatively recent period from the early 1990s, until the present day, which has seen the move towards the trialling of community-led development work. These two periods, which are considered in the next two sections, draw on the writer's research into the roles of Sherborne, Dorset conducted as part of his MSc studies (Morris 2003), and his related investigation into changes in service provision in three West Dorset villages between 1953 and 1999 (Morris 2000).

### **5.2.1 The 1940s to the 1960s – Understanding Settlement Types and Functions – Individuals Take the Lead**

The immediate post-war years were dominated by the need to build the Welfare State, and rebuild and modernise the United Kingdom's infrastructure during a time of rationing and industrial restructuring, and, later, a time of growing prosperity and personal mobility, as the economy improved, and people's wealth grew. It is not surprising, therefore, that this period saw an increasing interest in settlement planning (and, in many cases, settlement rebuilding).

England's geography and settlement pattern did not, as recognized by Professor Smailes, fit the well-known theories of Van Thunen (1826) and Christaller (1933), which were based on settlement patterns in mainland Europe. Smailes noted that, "*The complementary relations of town and country and the complex interactions between towns and their surrounding regions [in England] require much more recognition and analytical study than have been accorded them either by geographers or sociologists.*" (Smailes 1946 p88). Similarly, Howard Bracey (1954 p95) noted how little was known about, "... *the modern pattern of service centres which has been, and is being, imposed on an earlier framework of market towns and service territory.*" It was Dr Bracey, together with the likes of Robert Dickinson (1942) and F.H.W. Green (1949, 1952), and their physical planning and transport work respectively, who built on Smailes' investigations into spheres of influence.

The work of this group was essentially practical. For example, Bracey used questionnaires distributed to selected people **in villages**, namely, "... *head-teachers of schools, chairmen of parish councils, village clergymen and other responsible persons ...*" in order to, "... *find out which towns were used for what services*" by the people surveyed (Bracey 1954 p96) (writer's emphasis). He called this the "Indirect Count" method.

Bracey also used the "Direct Count" method, in which the number and type of shops, services and professions **in a town** were counted. This method proved to be useful in settlements with populations of less than 2000, but unwieldy and unreliable in larger towns. It was, therefore, the indirect method that was mainly used to calculate the Index of Centrality, a simple ranking system based on the total number of points allocated to a particular town<sup>30</sup>. Bracey admitted that his system was not perfect, but it served to give an indication of the relative importance of towns as service centres. Although not perfect, the method revealed a lot about the relative importance of towns as service centres, and the extent of their influence.

Bracey's hope was for national estimates of centrality to be made. Regrettably, his hopes came to nothing, but others, over the years, worked with him, or picked up his mantle in a variety of ways. For example, Green, a contemporary of Bracey, explored aspects of accessibility via the mapping of 'transport hinterlands' (1949, 1952). Green's work demonstrated that the frequency of bus services, journey origins and destinations, and the locations of bus stations/bases were indicators of town types and their spheres of influence (Morris 2003 p120). His work was part of the quest for, "... *some sort of short cut which would enable one to define the average spheres of influence of centres performing urban functions.*" (Green 1952 p345). He used information gathered from Bracey's early surveys<sup>31</sup> together with parish population data to calculate the, "... *number of shops in [a service] centre and the total number of persons within [a] hinterland ... an average of 110 persons/shop.*" (Green 1949 p63). He also calculated, albeit with qualifications, that the average service centre hinterland population in the south west of England was about 20,000-25,000 people, and that the approximate area of the hinterlands was 100-125 square miles. In his 1949 paper (p68) Green notes that his aim was to draw attention to the potential of investigations like his to provide a spatial framework (the hinterlands of the south west) within which local problems could be identified locally, and addressed locally, namely, "... *to point to a regional framework into which local problems could be integrated.*"

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<sup>30</sup> Essentially each service was given one point. If one village used one town for a particular service, then one point was awarded to that town. If two towns were used by one village for the same service, each town was given half a point. The number of points awarded to each town were added together to give a total score. The scores allocated by a particular village to different towns gave an indication of the extent to which particular towns were used for particular purposes by selected villagers from particular villages (Bracey 1954 p97). The results, when mapped, indicated the extent of each town's influence for each of the services surveyed. Initially 15 services were surveyed. This was later reduced to four (medical supplies and services, business professions, shopping, and entertainment) when Bracey discovered that the results obtained were similar. The counties surveyed were Somerset, Wiltshire, Hampshire, Berkshire, Oxfordshire, and Dorset. (Morris 2003 pp28-42).

<sup>31</sup> Bracey was a member of Bristol University's Reconstruction Research Group.

In his later paper, Green (1952 p346) stated that the method used in his survey of the south west of England (Green 1949), was, "... subsequently applied to the whole of the United Kingdom ..." (frustratingly, no reference to this work is provided, demonstrating how ephemeral research can be), before describing the changes in bus services in Somerset between 1947 and 1949-50. He concludes (p356) that six towns in Somerset and nine in other southern counties rose in status during the period, and suggests that continued monitoring of service changes would, "... at least give some basis for forecasting future developments." While, in 2011, it does not follow that bus services would be the most appropriate survey vehicle (although they would not be without interest), his general point, that regular monitoring is of value, is well made and pertinent.

Whereas Bracey's and Green's work described above was empirical, Robert Dickinson discussed the implications of a variety of social factors<sup>32</sup> for post-war town planning, noting, "We want no more Dagenham estates ..." (Dickinson 1942 p174). He also noted, "... that in order to support all the normal urban amenities, a town should have a minimum population of 10,000 to 15,000." (p167), a figure typical then, as it is today, for many of England's country towns (similarly, he gives population figures of between 2,500 and 10,000 for, "... the numerous country-market towns." [p165]). In concluding that the analysis of the structure of society in terms of services and community was a matter for, "... all the social sciences ... and is likely to be one of the most fruitful fields of research in the social sciences in the ensuing years." (p180), Dickinson noted the lack of analysis relating to rural geographies (p181), the failure to "join-up" research efforts, the lack of published data relating to trades, rail and road traffic (p181), and the need for, "... a thorough analysis, district by district, of the existing structure of society in its geographical aspects." (p182).

It seems, therefore, that, in the 1940s and '50s, researchers were as conscious as we are today of the need for sustained and coordinated research designed, not only to learn about current circumstances, but also to track changes over long periods. Dickinson's frustration at the failure to do this are evident from his observation (1942 p181) that, "The present war has turned the attention of scientists, as in the last war, to the problems of internal reconstruction, and they are, in large measure, **now facing the same unsolved problems.**" (writer's emphasis).

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<sup>32</sup> Wage levels, numbers of children and domestic servants, age and sex composition, locations of churches, pubs, clubs and schools.

Although the coordination called for by Dickinson did not happen, Bracey continued his work into the 1960s. He recognized the change from concern about rural depopulation in the 1950s, to the beginning of today's concern about repopulation, noting that, "... *the countryside is changing rapidly with more industry, greater mobility and an influx of newcomers. In past generations, change, whether brought about by industry, or from other causes, came to the countryside but slowly. The frightening thing about the present day is the rate of that change.*" (Bracey 1963 p224). At least two things had not changed, however: one, the sense that small towns were in a state of steady decline, but had potential to grow anew (Dickinson 1942 p167); and two, that research remained uncoordinated, and essentially, as will be discussed in the next section, a matter of individual or departmental interest until, approximately, 2000.

### **5.2.2 The 1960s to the 2000s – Understanding Settlement Types and Functions - Central Government Takes an Interest**

In a paper in which the bus service centres suggested by Green<sup>33</sup> are compared with Smailes' urban hierarchy, Carruthers (1957 p384) noted that, "*the background against which centres in different parts of the country have had to adapt themselves is so richly various that it could hardly be expected that any index [eg of traffic patterns, service provision, or population] used alone would be entirely satisfactory in providing a national yardstick.*" (p384). This truism, and the difficulties and expense associated with gathering and analyzing data, offer a possible explanation as to why the research into England's widely dispersed small towns has not been subjected to serious systematic longitudinal research. Carruthers illustrates the lack of easily comparable chronological data, and the consequent problems for researchers, in his discussion about the limitations associated with his attempts, in the mid-1950s, to compare pre-war (urban hierarchy) data with F.H.W. Green's bus service data from the late 1940s (Carruthers 1957 p382). These periodic bursts of interest in small towns and associate research interest were to continue until the late 1990s.

Irrespective of the quantity and quality of research into small towns and related matters, it is a paradoxical fact that although rural England has seen many changes since the end of the Second World War (for example, the decline in the significance of agricultural employment, and the repopulation of many rural areas), there is much, in terms of the day-to-day roles of country towns, that is unchanged. Ray

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<sup>33</sup> Green compared towns' importance as bus service destinations, and the extent and nature of the various services available in the towns.

Green (1966 p2) noted that although the conditions of the 1920s would not be tolerated in the 1960s (let alone in the 2000s), country people, "... *looked to the village for most of their needs, and what could not be obtained in the village was usually obtainable in the nearest market town.*" , a view supported by C.B Hillier-Parker's examination of the impact of food store development on country towns and district centres, which, "... *confirmed the importance of food shopping in smaller towns.*" (DETR 1998 p17). Indeed, everyday patterns of life continue in much the same way as before, in that, "*Most people's lives are very local ... most everyday journeys take place within a radius of eight or nine miles.*" (Donovan, Pilch and Rubenstein 2002 p11), a view supported by Green (2001), who in a personal letter to the writer, commented that, "*The journey to work pattern in rural England and Wales is still surprisingly similar to the Bus Hinterlands identified in 1951.*"

These views about the similarities in behaviour were supported by the findings of investigations into small area studies in Berkshire and the south west of England led by Professor Andrew Errington. In studies of the Lambourne Valley (West Berkshire) and the Liskeard and Bude areas (Cornwall), for example, the researchers found that two of the three main purposes of "out of village" journeys in both areas were for work and shopping, with, in all cases, work being the most important, followed by "social" and shopping (Dawson and Errington 1998 p16, Dawson and Errington 1998a p16, Errington 1994 p15).

The above examples of specific research findings illustrate the type of research that has been done since the 1960s. Although Liz Mills (1988) revisited Howard Bracey's work, and Morris (2003) applied Bracey's approach to a small scale study of Sherborne, Dorset, and AMT produced a variety of case studies, and sponsored – indeed still sponsor - the Market Town of the Year Awards, national-scale research projects have been absent. This absence is revealed in a wide-ranging review for the CA of the literature relating specifically to country towns (ERM 2000), in which the authors note the lack of research into, "... *the types and characteristics of market towns and how relationships between market towns work, particularly where there is in effect a hierarchy in the level of service provision between towns.*" (p21). They also identify the lack of research into housing development, the processing and marketing of locally grown foods, and the potential roles for towns in relation to public transport, culture, the arts, tourism, and education and training (pp21-22). Also listed (ERM 2000 Annexe E) are 25 references to research related to market towns in general (the review lists more than 110 references to a broadly drawn range of relevant, but *ad hoc*, literature). These range in scope from a conference

report from ACRE<sup>34</sup> to information about the Civic Trust's specific regeneration programmes<sup>35</sup>, together with references to examples from Scotland and the United States. What is notable is the absence of any nationally organized (ie by government) programmes, although it should be noted that ERM's literature review was commissioned by the CA, a government body, to inform the development of what was to become the – England wide - MTI.

It is reasonable, therefore, to assert that ERM's 2000 review, which was published shortly after the Rural White Paper (DETR/MAFF 2000), represented the first formal recognition by **national** governments and their agencies of the interest in, concerns about, and potential of, country towns for many years; certainly since the end of the Second World War. Although the MTI and related work were to be relatively short-lived, they nevertheless began a process that, as this research will show, continues informally, albeit, nationally at least, uncoordinated, un-monitored, and substantially un-evaluated.

Therefore, research and practice relating to country towns is still *ad hoc*. It is difficult to find out exactly what work was done, by whom, and when; and still, today, there does not appear to be a coherent body of work within the rural research community. Why is this? In part it can be explained by: the changes in the 'machinery of government' resulting from Lord Haskins' review (discussed in Chapter 3) that led to the work being devolved to RDAs; the formal end of the MTI programme; changed policy priorities in Defra (the government department with ultimate responsibility for the MTI/BTP) away from community development – which became the responsibility of the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) – and towards climate change and farming (Defra 2009 p27); short-term (and frequently changing) political priorities caused, partly, by short electoral cycles, with the related need for 'innovative approaches' (often a euphemistic phrase for simply a different approach to the previous one).

Nevertheless, interest in the roles, needs and service potential of towns did grow during the late 1990s and early 2000s, as did an awareness of the policy challenges relating to the way in which some English towns straddle the somewhat arbitrary dividing line between rural and urban communities (Joshi, Hughes and Dodgeon 2006 p3), and, consequently, between rural and urban policies, and related assistance programmes.

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<sup>34</sup> Action With Communities in Rural England (<http://tinyurl.com/2ea2p8y>).

<sup>35</sup> The Civic Trust, a, English charity that represented local civic societies closed in 2009 (<http://tinyurl.com/ca8gps>).

However, the MTI was an important development. It, together with the CA's Vital Villages Programme, and various related RDA-sponsored work, helped to encourage participation in community-led development. National and regional programmes of support were developed, and have been, and in places continue to be, implemented. As a result, a lot of experience has been gained, and remains to be exploited. The following section describes these programmes and discusses their achievements, and changing significance, in the light of the changes resulting from the enactment of the post-Haskins Natural Environment and Rural Communities Bill in 2006 (Defra 2007).

### **5.3 Support for Country Towns: the Market Towns Initiative, a New Approach**

#### **5.3.1 Introduction**

"*A new commitment to [England's] market towns ...*" was made in the Rural White Paper of 2000 (DETR/MAFF 2000 p75). This led, eventually, to the MTI, the budget for which was divided between the CA and the RDAs, with £5,000,000 allocated to the former, and £32,000,000 distributed between the latter (Caffyn 2004 p14) for expenditure over a three year period (although MTI-initiated work continued until at least 2006). The commitment, with its associated aim of finding another £63,000,000 from other sources<sup>36</sup>, was to be spent on, "*... a regional regeneration programme **led by the RDAs**, [writer's emphasis] with the [Countryside Agency] and other regional partners, of around 100 towns across all RDAs, which will help create new job opportunities, new workspace, restored high streets, improved amenities and transport facilities and help with community needs.*" (DETR/MAFF 2000 p75).

As the writer's emphasis in the above paragraph makes clear, the RDAs were given responsibility for the regional regeneration work, while the CA was instructed to, "*... identify a national beacon towns network drawing on [the experience gained by the 100 town partnerships] and featuring 10-20 towns to demonstrate the range of different problems and challenges which market towns experience and from which other towns can learn.*" (DETR/MAFF 2000 p75). The CA was also instructed to lead the development of, "*... a National Best Practice Programme...*" (p75), and to "*... encourage the application of best practice health check methods across all of England.*" (p78). Although the quotations in this and the previous paragraph

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<sup>36</sup> It is not clear from the Rural White Paper monitoring information provided by Defra (<http://tinyurl.com/32oxapf>) whether this aim was achieved.

clarified individual organizational responsibilities, the relationships between, and responsibilities of, the RDAs and the CA in terms of programming and managing the work, were not specified. In the writer's view, this was unfortunate, because, although the work developed and progressed, time was lost in discussions about relationships and responsibilities. As a consequence, in some places, confusion was caused to participants by, for example, delays in agreeing how and when the CA-developed Healthcheck should be used, and its relevance/authority in terms of informing RDA-led regeneration.

Nevertheless, as part its work, the CA developed the Market Towns "Toolkit" (CA 2001), which was reissued in 2005 as the Market Towns "Healthcheck" Handbook (AMT 2005). These documents offer advice and guidance to MTI participants. The document is freely available<sup>37</sup> (AMT 2005), and can be used, and adapted – indeed is being adapted and developed<sup>38</sup> - by any community development group or other interested parties, including those overseas (SJ 2005).

The Healthcheck handbook contains information about how to set up a partnership, conduct research, consult within the town, with hinterland communities, and with public, voluntary and private sector organizations, and local authorities. The advice is practical (eg detailing the skills needed by the people involved in managing the process, and explaining the roles of working groups). The handbook was designed to be used in conjunction with a Web-based 'toolkit' consisting of eighteen worksheets<sup>39</sup>, each of which covered a particular topic (Table 2). The information obtained from the investigative and analytical work was used to develop action plans containing information about the projects that the partnerships intended to implement. The intention was to use the experiences of those who used the Healthcheck to inform its development. As Julian Owen, the then Chairman of Action for Market Towns noted, the Healthcheck did not cover the important topic of a community's capacity to do the work in any great detail, and it also took a somewhat simplistic view of the ways in which towns function (Owen 2007). In retrospect this was perhaps inevitable, given that the Healthcheck was not, in the end, in controlled use for long enough for its development to be informed by users and formal evaluation (as intended by the CA's Market Towns Team).

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<sup>37</sup> <http://mt.net.countryside.gov.uk/cgi-bin/item.cgi?id=2854>

<sup>38</sup> At the time of writing (February 2010) the Healthcheck is in the process of being updated by AMT for reissue in its new guise as the Town Action Planning Set (TAPS) that will form part of AMT's community-led development work (draft copy held by the writer). Unlike the Healthcheck, TAPS will not be free to use (<http://tinyurl.com/47b5edg>). At the same time, the Association of Town Centre Management has developed its own "Healthcheck" (<http://tinyurl.com/y17yhd9>). While such uncoordinated developments are perhaps inevitable, they are not always useful, and can confuse users.

<sup>39</sup> [http://mt.net.countryside.gov.uk/cgi-bin/library.cgi?action=detail&id=4349&dir\\_publisher\\_varid=51](http://mt.net.countryside.gov.uk/cgi-bin/library.cgi?action=detail&id=4349&dir_publisher_varid=51)

**Table 2**

**Worksheets Used to Establish  
a Town Partnership's Aspirations, Concerns and Priorities  
(AMT 2005 p18)**

Social & Community	Transport & Accessibility	Economy	Environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population</li> <li>• Housing</li> <li>• Health and Public Safety</li> <li>• Local Government</li> <li>• Sport, Leisure and Open Space</li> <li>• Culture and Heritage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ease of Travel Outside Local Area</li> <li>• Access to Services</li> <li>• Ease of Movement Around Town</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment</li> <li>• Retail and Town Centre Services</li> <li>• Training and Education</li> <li>• Commercial and industrial Property Needs</li> <li>• Tourism and Visitor Services</li> <li>• Business Support Services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Character of the Town</li> <li>• The Countryside</li> <li>• Links Between Town and Country</li> </ul>

Essentially, the Healthcheck was a series of prompts, supported by suggestions as to whom to involve, which organizations might be able to help, and how best to find and record a town's assets, and plan for a locally-determined future.

The majority of participating towns were, during the life of the MTI, given money to cover some of the cost of employing a coordinator in each town (to help take the partnership through the Healthcheck work) and, subsequently, to pay project managers, or development workers, to help implement the action plans (for a description of the experiences and views of a project officer see Caffyn 2004). Different approaches were tried. In many places, for example, Faringdon and Carterton in Oxfordshire, partnerships employed a dedicated coordinator; elsewhere coordinators covered a geographical area (eg the Isle of Sheppey in Kent). Also in Kent (New Romney), the Healthcheck was used in conjunction with the Department for International Development's (DfID) Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (NSSD 2010), and the opportunity taken to conduct a comparative study of the two methods (Butcher, McDonald and Westhorp 2003). In the south west, as will be seen (Section 5.13), work in small country towns was led by the Market and Coastal Towns Initiative (MCTi) developed by the South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA).

As the MTI progressed, and each town began to develop its preferred way of working, so the ways in which coordinators and project managers were employed began to evolve to suit a town's particular circumstances. As experience in using

the worksheets and conducting Healthchecks was gained by partnerships, so information and suggestions about how to improve the process were fed back to the CA, either directly via the Agency's regional officers, or indirectly, for example via regional market towns partnerships, or staff from local authorities or RDAs. The effectiveness of this approach is illustrated by the following comment by a market town worker, who wrote, "*It's good to see the new worksheets and to see that some of the feedback that healthcheck coordinators gave has been attended to. They do look and feel much more user-friendly.*" (Walker 2005). Earlier, Alison Caffyn, who worked with MTI towns in the West Midlands, had drawn attention to the difficulties associated with the completion of a Healthcheck, mentioning its length and badly drafted worksheets, and commenting that, "*It appeared like a massive piece of homework that participants were being set ...*". Caffyn also acknowledged, however, "*That there is no denying the numerous benefits of undertaking the Healthcheck ...*" (Caffyn 2004 p16), and believed that some of these early problems were eventually overcome (Caffyn 2007).

The emphasis throughout the life of the MTI was on people working together. Members of town partnerships were drawn from the town, from hinterland parishes, and from local authorities, RDAs, and other potential supporters with knowledge, money, or both (eg English Heritage<sup>40</sup>, local community development associations). The method of working, therefore, with its structured approach (the Healthcheck) and built-in feedback mechanism (ie using the experiences of the partnerships to inform the development of the Healthcheck and worksheets) was essentially sound, in that, "... whilst not universally popular because of the time and resources demanded for its preparation, [the process/approach] provides a useful snapshot of activity, the opportunity to identify new issues and refine old ones, and provides the foundation for funding bids." (Entec 2004 p59).

Inevitably, given the different pressures, remits, and priorities of different organizations, and the varied capabilities of town partnerships, the extent to which the programme operated coherently and with common purpose in each region differed. These tensions reflected Caffyn's view that , "*Regional Agencies' roles should be to establish a supportive structure ... which is relatively simple for local partnerships to navigate.*" (Caffyn 2004 p22). Without this, and given the organizational complexities referred to above, Caffyn concluded that, based on her experiences in the West Midlands, "*The MTI appears to be another example of a 'third way' strategy which has an over-reliance on local partnerships and*

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<sup>40</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/yf96q2a>

*communities to deliver 'joined-up' governance without effective central government support.*" (p23).

Regional differences could have been exploited and shared for the common good (in fact, the sharing of practice and experience was the prime purpose of the BT programme). Attempts were made to share regional experience nationally, via, for example, meetings of the CA-organized and Chaired England National Market Towns Advisory Forum (ENMTAF), and an international BT conference (AMT 2004, AMT 2004a), but this nationally-led coordinated work effectively ended with the implementation of the Rural Strategy (Defra 2004), although, "... *good practice between RDAs ... [and] ... within and between regions ... [was] being achieved through: RDAs' extranet, websites within ... regions ... [and] ... Events ...*", such as regional conferences designed for a national audience (see letter from Diane Roberts of Defra in Appendix 1).

Further opportunities to share experience, develop policy and practice, and to learn more about the roles and functioning of small country towns arose from related work. There were indirect links with, for example, the Local Heritage Initiative<sup>41</sup>, Millennium Greens<sup>42</sup>, Cittàslow (RAE 2005), and Rural Transport Partnerships (Nichols 2005 p11). There were also direct links with the Vital Villages (VV), BT, One-Stop Shop, and Gateway Stations programmes. These programmes are discussed in Sections 5.4 to 5.7, but first, some background information is given about the development and implementation of the MTI, specifically in terms of its rationale, objectives, methods (ie the approaches used by participants), instruments (ie the ways in which the aims of the programme were pursued by participants), the politics that affected the programme, and, finally, the achievements that arose from the programme. Inevitably, given the writer's central role in some aspects of the work, some of the views expressed in this and other sections are drawn from personal experience. Where this is the case it is made clear.

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<sup>41</sup> [www.lhi.org.uk](http://www.lhi.org.uk)

<sup>42</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/yfq35r4>

### **5.3.2 The Rationale for the Market Towns Initiative**

As explained in Section 5.2, interest in England's country towns grew in the late twentieth century, culminating in the Government's explicit interest and decision to develop the MTI, as described in the Rural White Paper (DETR/MAFF 2000 Ch7). The White Paper called for an enhanced role for country (market) towns (p74), as focal points for, "... growth in areas which need regeneration, and more generally as service centres and hubs for surrounding hinterland, exploiting their potential as attractive places live, work and spend leisure time." (p73). In part this interest in the roles of towns grew from wider concerns about the loss of services (eg closure of rural post offices and schools) and a desire to improve the quality of life for rural dwellers (pp4-5). A report by the Wales Rural Observatory provides an effective summary of the MTI's rationale,

*"First, there is the purpose of addressing the particular needs of the small town communities themselves. These include problems that are arguably symptomatic of the small town condition, including responding to the closure of major employers or the challenges faced by local retailers against competition from larger retailers or supermarkets, which may be most appropriately addressed through targeted initiatives. They may also include tackling problems of social exclusion and deprivation that are evident in many small towns . . . Secondly, there is the purpose of addressing wider rural areas by taking action in small towns, following the principle that the benefits will 'trickle out' to surrounding rural communities . . ." (WRA 2007 p5).*

In addition to the above reasons there was one other: in the early 1990s people living in small towns (especially business people, local Councillors, and those active in voluntary organizations) began to comment that their towns, which still, in their view, fulfilled important and traditional service functions for the inhabitants of surrounding settlements, had been neglected by policy makers. To many of them this was about a perceived lack of fairness, and a belief in their town's potential to contribute – sustainably - to what, in 2011, would be called 'localism', or community-led development. Their views were not, in the main, based on rational inferences drawn from research, but from observation, experience, and specific and general knowledge about policy developments relating to other settlement types.

These views and concerns were noted by the writer and by some of his colleagues. They are, therefore, essentially personal and anecdotal. Nevertheless, it was clear to the writer, from his work in Dorset, Wiltshire and Somerset, and elsewhere in the south west of England, that, between 1994 and 1999, there was an groundswell of locally-led interest, action and lobbying (eg of politicians and officials). This led,

eventually, to interest from politicians, policymakers and practitioners in how the demands of these townspeople might be met. In addition, thought was given to how to tap their local knowledge and enthusiasm. Renewed interest in the actual and potential roles and functions of these neither wholly rural, nor wholly urban, settlements also followed.

To summarize, therefore, the rationale for the MTI was to a certain extent based on largely uncoordinated awareness raising by local people, and a related, if not wholly consequential, renewed and growing interest in small town by academics, practitioners, and, eventually, national policy makers.

### **5.3.3 The Objectives of the Market Towns Initiative**

In the writer's view, the main objective of the MTI was to "help people to help themselves", and by so doing to recognize and attempt to address the different needs of, and varied capabilities within, participating towns. Interestingly the Rural White Paper (Defra/MAFF 2000) does not refer to the Market Towns **Initiative**, but makes specific and discrete references to market towns in relation to the Healthcheck, and to topics such as broadband, transport and housing, and the distinct, but complementary, roles and responsibilities of the CA and the RDAs. The objectives spelt out in the Rural White Paper, therefore, refer, as already discussed (Section 3.3), to the Government's wish to see, "*Market Towns as a focus for growth ... and ... as service centres and hubs for surrounding hinterland ...*" (p73), that is, broadly, to, "[e]nhance the role of market towns." (p74).

The White Paper does not prescribe the relationship between rural organizations, but states that the Government will, "... **provide new resources of £37m[illion]** **within the Regional Development Agencies' ... rural programme and the Countryside Agency rural programme over the next three years to support market town regeneration.** ... with matching support from partners and [European Union] funds we expect to create a £100m[illion] programme over three years." (p75). Also stated are requirements to implement a, "... **regeneration programme led by the RDAs, with the CA and other regional partners, of around 100 towns across all RDAs ...**", and for the CA to, "... **identify a national beacon towns network ... featuring 10-20 towns to demonstrate the range of different problems and challenges** which market towns experience .... All market towns would be able to draw on a National **Best Practice Programme** ... led by the Countryside Agency, in partnership with the RDAs and Action for Market Towns. **Health checks** for individual towns ... will be a part of this

*approach.*" (p75) (all emphases as in the original). While this wording implies that organizations should work together, it does not specify that all town partnerships should conduct a Healthcheck, and, in the process, draw up an action plan, before applying for, or being granted, RDA support. Consequently there was the potential for RDAs and the CA to work with various degrees of independence as determined by, for example, management diktat, organizational priorities, or budgetary necessity.

Essentially, therefore, there was no single, coordinated national programme. There were seven RDA programmes, and two CA programmes (the Healthcheck and the related CA-led Beacon Town/Best Practice Programme). The bringing together of these various elements into a recognizable, largely national programme (ie the Market Towns **Initiative**) was the result of generally – but by no means always – close cooperation between RDA officials (coordinated by whichever RDA was responsible for national liaison on rural matters at the time) and CA national and regional staff, many of whom had worked together as colleagues in the Rural Development and Countryside Commissions. Staff from local authorities and the voluntary sector (eg Rural Community Councils) were also closely involved. The England National Market Towns Advisory Forum, serviced by the CA and AMT, and informed by a range of academics, officials (eg from RDAs), and practitioners, was formed by the CA for the purposes of coordination, and information gathering and sharing. It had no statutory authority, but was an attempt to overcome the inevitable communication – and priority – problems arising from work that was logically, and implicitly, national, but largely controlled by regionally-centred, regionally-loyal, organizations.

The objectives of what became the MTI were easy to infer from the Rural White Paper 2000, namely to revitalize towns, and to reinvigorate, encourage and support their inhabitants to take the lead in the revitalization work. A central weakness in the process, however, from a national perspective, and in the writer's view, was the failure to specify that Healthchecks should have formed the first phase of a two-stage programme, in which RDA support would have been informed by the action plans. This would have required the RDAs' dedicated market towns programme money to have been made available **after** the Healthcheck and action planning stages, and, in theory, wherever possible in accordance with partnerships' wishes, as expressed in their action plans. One consequence of this would have been a extension of the programme considerably beyond the initial three years<sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> In fact the programme was implemented until 2005, and in many places work continues, as revealed by this research.

Although this is an idealized view given the constraints imposed by pre-existing policies, rules and regulations, a programme designed for, and coordinated over, a much longer period might well have offered better value for money.

### **5.3.4 The Methods and Instruments Used to Implement the Market Towns Initiative**

At the heart of the MTI lay: the Market Towns Healthcheck, money, and support from the many volunteers involved in the work, and the officials and professionals drawn mainly, but not exclusively from the CA, RDAs, Local Authorities, the voluntary sector, and various consultants and consultancies.

In addition to the Healthcheck and Web-based “toolkit” described in Section 5.3.1, CA staff developed the One Stop Shop and Gateway Stations Programmes (Sections 5.6 and 5.7 refer) as well as the Beacon Towns Programme (Section 5.5). Within the CA efforts were made to integrate, or at least interrelate these and the MTI and Vital Villages programmes where practicable, and to work with Local Authority and other partners to ‘join-up’ activities in order to ensure value for money, and clarity for the participants in, and beneficiaries of, the programmes. The same approach was taken with other CA activities such as the Local Heritage Initiative and Rural Transport Partnerships. These efforts to maximise efficiency and effectiveness across programmes, and between organizations, were explored in relation to Parish and Town Plans, and Local Strategic Partnerships and Community Strategies, by Moseley *et al.* (2004). They concluded that, *“If bridging [ie linking programmes and effort] ... is to flourish, it will need appropriate encouragement not just at the very local and local levels – but at the regional and national levels too.”* (Moseley *et al.* 2004 p55). Following the closure of the CA both the attempts at integration ceased, and, eventually, the programmes ended.

However, the fact that the programmes continued for more than the three year period specified in the Rural White Paper of 2000 is a testament to those who worked hard to shape and implement them. It is also indicative of the growing popularity of the approaches to community-led development that were beginning to evolve. It is possible that they would have continued to evolve in a coordinated and supported way but for the changes recommended by Lord Haskins, following the Foot and Mouth outbreaks and the creation of Defra (Haskins 2003). The MTI was not politically contentious in national party political terms, but the changes to that followed the creation of Defra and the post-Haskins Rural Strategy (Defra 2004)

were political. The next section discusses the background to this, and also explores the political influences at local and regional levels that affected the MTI.

### **5.3.5 Politics and the Market Towns Initiative**

In the writer's view, the attempts to integrate programmes and organizational aims during this period demonstrated that officials within participating organizations were beginning to create a joined-up approach to locally influenced and led development. The demise of the CA and consequent reorganization following Haskins' review stopped this process. The loss of public and voluntary sector staff momentum, experience and knowledge, and related opportunities to learn from and develop these approaches, is regrettable, not least given the current British Government's (and their predecessors') emphasis on devolution and localism. As Haskins acknowledged, the MTI was, "*... on the whole valued by those that engaged with the scheme. Its key strength was often seen as consultation with the community. ... [although] ... there were drawbacks ... particularly the problems of insufficient funding... and the raising of expectations that could not subsequently be met.*" (Haskins 2003 p139).

Also identified by Haskins was the need for better coordination (p142). Ironically, this was beginning to happen, and there were acknowledged successes associated with the MTI (ENTEC 2004 pp42-45), due in part to the fact that town partnerships were able to learn from one another as the programme evolved (p57). It is disappointing, therefore, that Haskins, who stressed the need for devolution of delivery to more local levels (Haskins 2003 p10), failed to recognize, in his desire to separate policy and delivery (p11), that the MTI was, at heart, and increasingly, a devolved approach. He also failed to see that one of its major strengths was the in-built potential for those who "delivered" the work (mainly local people) to inform policy developers (officials), and thereby to help improve community-led development. In other words, the MTI benefitted from the fact that it was possible, even essential, to ensure that policy development and delivery were connected – via effective communications between the town partnerships and the enabling organizations - in order to assist the evolution of the approach, for the benefit of all.

The risk that separation of these two elements posed was captured by James Derouinian, who, in his submission about the review of the Government's Rural Strategy to the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee of the House of Commons, wrote, "*... if policy generation is "managed separately" from implementation then there must be a distinct possibility that the two will not dovetail or "join up" to ensure ... that "delivery of policy is effective". At worst, it*

*flies in the face of common sense, by increasing the distance between policy development, delivery, monitoring, and beneficial policy change in the light of experience.*" Moreover, as Derounian also noted, the, "Environment Minister Margaret Beckett had, in an initial response to the review, recognised 'that policy advice can be particularly valuable when it comes from those involved in delivery'."

(Derounian 2004).

Irrespective of the effectiveness and appropriateness of Haskins' wider reforms, it is the writer's firm belief that community-led development policy and practice was set back considerably as a result of his review.

It is inevitable that politics, both organizational and party political, will affect a programme such as the MTI. It was a political creation. As explained in Section 5.3.1, its genesis was largely a result of a growing post-war interest in country towns, and so the idea that local people should be encouraged to build on this interest was not party political. However, as the programme was sponsored by central government, and developed within and implemented by national and regional non-departmental government organizations (ie unelected bodies), there were some political sensitivities. These, during the MTI's implementation, were, from the writer's perspective, and with the exception of Lord Haskins' intervention, local and regional, rather than national.

Questions about the MTI were asked in Parliament, but these tended to be straightforward queries about the progress, or availability, of the programme in particular constituencies. There was little, if any, criticism by parliamentarians of the intentions of the programme, or of the methods used, and there was a majority view amongst those surveyed by Entec that the MTI complemented other regeneration programmes, was guided by existing policies, linked effectively to the objectives and programmes of other organizations, and provided, "... *an excellent opportunity for local communities to influence decisions taken about their town.*"

(Entec 2004 pp27-30) .

Some criticisms were, however, made by local people, including Councillors who were concerned about the democratic legitimacy of the work, and volunteers who, for example, found aspects of management remote, communication poor, support from some organizations lacking or unhelpful, and process(es) and administration confusing, bureaucratic and jargon-laden. There were also tensions between the CA, RDAs and others, about the approaches, respective roles and responsibilities, and organizational priorities.

These and similar concerns were expressed to the writer and his colleagues. Although anecdotal, they are supported both by comments gathered during this research, and in other sources. For example, Entec researchers noted that, "*The most commonly identified tension [was] between town councils and partnerships ... interviews highlighted instances where town councils ... felt the partnership claimed success for initiatives that they [had] been previously promoting.*" (Entec 2004 p21). Heywood (2002 p6), commenting on inter-programme tensions specific to the MCTI, but including the MTI's Healthcheck, noted that the administrators of one European Union scheme, "... who have a reputation for not supporting bids from community groups.", rejected applications for support from a community groups that was being supported via SWRDA's MCTI.

Heywood also noted that the CA's Healthcheck was seen by some groups as an imposition, irrespective of its usefulness (p6). A later report (Walker and Young 2004), however, stated that, although the Healthcheck had weaknesses, for example, the initial "snapshot" was found to be time consuming and of little value, and, "... *the language of the Health Checks [sic] was uninviting and required interpretation for community groups ...*", the eventual value of completed Healthchecks was recognized (p2). A diversity of views about the Healthcheck was reflected in Entec's survey which revealed that 53% of officers surveyed, "... were happy with the approach ... whilst the remainder were not (47%)." (Entec 2004 p6).

Walker and Young noted (2004 p5): the need for Healthchecks to be done early in the process (p3); the potential for Healthcheck users to improve it by reporting their experiences of it in practice (pp2-3); and the potential of community-led planning, given the right support, as a way of achieving long-term development (eg, finance, training, effective joint working to agreed objectives by staff working for different organizations).

Heywood's, and Walker and Young's reports acknowledge the strengths of the MCTI, and, by analogy, the MTI, as well as the weaknesses and challenges (Heywood 2002 pp17-18, Walker and Young 2004 p5). Their reports, separated by two years, also illustrate how initial concerns and weaknesses relating to structures and processes can be overcome, as people become more involved, increasingly familiar with the way of working, more knowledgeable, competent and confident, and better able to use their knowledge to improve the process for the benefit of all. Similarly, local sensitivities about democratic accountability can be overcome as councillors become increasingly involved with the work of locally-led groups (Heywood 2002 p12). The findings of these two reports are broadly similar to those reported by Entec (2004).

The above problems and eventual/potential solutions were noted by the writer and his colleagues. The degree to which partnerships experienced them varied. The nature of the work – and human beings - is such that some degree of disagreement between people, be they locals or remote officials, is inevitable, and will be, to an extent, political. The potential of the MTI to work, however, was not in doubt, provided that sufficient time was made available, both to develop plans and to do the work, and also to allow those involved, in whatever capacity, and from whatever organizational “level”, to learn how to do, or support, the work, and, by so doing, eventually, to overcome political and other problems.

There was insufficient time for the MTI and related programmes to develop, to evolve, but that should not obscure the fact that a lot was achieved. Local people came together to work for the common good. Officials and professionals did their best within – and without – the rules to ensure that progress was made, both within individual partnerships, and in terms of processes and practice, as information gained by participants was used to improve, for example, the Healthcheck. The writer’s strongly held view is that the MTI was becoming an effective and potentially powerful and flexible community development “tool”. The loss of the MTI and related programmes is also a lost opportunity for politicians, policymakers, practitioners, and, most importantly, for the mainly volunteer-led partnerships. In the era of the 2010 Coalition Government’s “Big Society” ambitions, there is every chance that it will have to be resurrected or reinvented.

Examples of the achievements of the MTI are given in Section 5.9. It is equally important to recognize that the programme had limitations. These are discussed in Section 5.8. First, however, the relationships between the MTI and other community development programmes are discussed.

#### **5.4 Links Between the Market Towns Initiative and Vital Villages Programmes**

As the MTI and VV programmes developed, so too did links between the people involved in them, both within the CA and – given the explicit requirement in the MTI to work with hinterland parishes – within participating communities. The Parish Planning (CA 2003) and Healthcheck approaches had much in common. This was recognized by CA staff, who decided that, "... *valuable links could, and should, be made between ...*" Parish Plans, Market Town Action Plans, and the Community Strategies being developed within local authorities as part of their Local Strategic

Partnership (LSP) work (Moseley *et al.* 2004 p1). Moseley *et al.* concluded, on the basis of, "... *admittedly ... a very limited number of case studies ...*" that, "... *Market Towns Action Plans differed very little from Parish Plans in their capacity for bridging [ie linking 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' community planning] to LSPs and Community Strategies.*" (p3).

The researchers also noted that where RDAs had committed substantial sums of money to help implement some market town action plans, "... *there seemed to be little or no incentive for the [market town partnership] to create a bridge through to the Community Strategy.*", and, "*Conversely it seemed that some LSP/local authorities might see individual Market Towns Action Plans more as tools for implementing the Community Strategy than vice versa.*" (Moseley *et al.* 2004 p3). The existence of these various, but similar, community development and planning "tools" reinforces the need for a strategic, coordinated approach by the local, regional, and national organizations involved in the work. This was recognized by Moseley *et al.* (2004 p4), who recommended, amongst other things, "... *a unified programme of generic local community-based planning, drawing on the experience of Parish Plans and Market Town Action Plans ...*", and that, "*an integrated response to the challenge of bridging at the national level, to incorporate both Defra and [the then Office of the Deputy Prime Minister] ...*" be fostered. Researchers in the south west of England (BDOR 2006 p14), noted that, "*There are already close ties between the current arrangements for Local Strategic Partnerships and for their key 'plans' - Community Strategies.*", and suggested that integration might have been beginning to happen.

It is worth noting that efforts were made to bring together the experiences of the participants in the Vital Villages Parish Planning work and the MTI. An assessment of these investigations (Moseley, Owen, Clark and Kambites 2005 p4):

- concluded, amongst other things,
  - "*Every parish and small town has its own distinctive profile of concerns and the case for place-specific, locally generated programmes of action remains a sound one.*";
  - "... *for all their uniqueness (and deficiencies) these locally generated audits of local issues [ie the MTI Healthchecks and PPs] can be used as a crude barometer of concerns felt across rural England ...*";

and ...

- recommended that, "... further 'culls' of their messages should be periodically undertaken."

The main topics of concern raised about both programmes by participants are similar. These are given in Table 3.

<b>Table 3</b> <b>Topics of Interest/Concern Arising From Parish Plans and Market Town Healthchecks</b> <b>(Moseley, Owen, Clark and Kambites 2005 pp3-4)</b>	
<b>Parish Plans (in descending order of importance)</b>	<b>Market Town Healthchecks (in no particular order of importance)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Road traffic</b></li> <li>• <b>Housing (in various guises)</b></li> <li>• <b>Inadequacy of facilities for young people</b></li> <li>• <b>Law and order / policing</b></li> <li>• <b>Inadequacy of public transport</b></li> <li>• <b>Minor environmental concerns</b></li> <li>• <b>Inadequacy of specific village services</b></li> <li>• <b>Car parking issues</b></li> <li>• <b>Environmental protection</b></li> <li>• <b>Village hall matters</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Road traffic</b></li> <li>• <b>Deficiencies of the town environment</b></li> <li>• <b>Inadequacies of public transport</b></li> <li>• <b>Inadequacies of facilities for young people</b></li> <li>• <b>Poor range and quality of local shops</b></li> <li>• <b>Neglect of towns' potential for tourism</b></li> <li>• <b>Insufficient facilities and support for local business</b></li> <li>• <b>Poor quality of employment</b></li> <li>• <b>Affordable housing</b></li> <li>• <b>Health and health care issues</b></li> </ul>

The research into the links between the two related programmes suggests that they have much in common, both in terms of approach and participants' concerns and priorities. The straightforward nature of the approaches also suggests that they could prove helpful to all involved in community development work, whether locally, regionally, nationally, or, based on experience gained from the international BT conference (AMT 2004), and work by the Commission for Rural Communities (CRC 2007a), internationally. It is suggested, therefore, that there is much to be gained in terms of mutually beneficial experience from regular collaboration - sharing experience and practice - between practitioners and policymakers within and beyond the UK.

The BT programme was designed primarily to enable the sharing of experience between partnerships. Its intention was to provide support and information to MTI partnerships based on the experiences of the selected BTs. This programme is discussed in the next section.

## **5.5 The Beacon Towns Programme**

The 18 Beacon Towns were not chosen because they were considered to be "the best". They were chosen because, "... *the work that is being, or will be done, will help inform the work of other town partnerships, and the development of policy.*" (CA 2005a p5). Selections were made via a two-stage process. In the main, regional partnerships proposed, by a process of local negotiation and/or competition, towns and associated topics for consideration by the national steering group. These recommendations were brought to a meeting of the CA's BT national steering group by the CA regional officers responsible for implementation of the MTI in their region. Agreement as to which towns – and their topics of interest - was reached by negotiation, regionally and nationally.

The BT partnership selection method helped to ensure both a reasonable distribution in and between regions, and a reasonable range of topics of interest to other towns and policy makers (Table 4). The final selections were a mixture of:

- the competitive, eg if two towns were working on the same topic, only one was likely to be chosen, unless, as in the case of Barnard Castle and Middleton, and Evesham and Spalding, other factors – geography in the case of the former, topic in the case of the latter – offered opportunities for learning that were too great to be ignored;
- the pragmatic, ie the need to have at least one BT in every one of the eight English regions with significant rural areas (ie excluding London) in order to encourage participation by organizations in all regions, and to ensure that the BT programme could be viewed as being truly national.

**Table 4**
**Beacon Towns and Their Topics of Interest  
(CA 2005a p3)**

Phase 1 (July 2003)		Phase 2 (January 2004)		Phase 3 (August 2004)			
Town	Topic	Town	Topic	Town	Topic		
Barnard Castle with Middleton-in-Teesdale, County Durham	Entrepreneurship	Brigg, North Lincolnshire	Leisure	Evesham, Worcestershire	Community Integration of Short Term Contract Workers (migrant workers)		
Belper, Derbyshire	Vacant Floor Space (ie new uses for same)	Carterton, Oxfordshire	Community Planning and Town Centre Revitalisation	Spalding, Lincolnshire	Community Integration of Short Term Contract Workers (migrant workers)		
Bridport, Dorset	Local Food	Keswick, Cumbria	Rural Business Improvement District	Uttoxeter, Staffordshire	Integrated Transport		
Faringdon, Oxfordshire	Enterprise Support Mechanisms	Longtown, Cumbria	Renewable Energy				
Haltwhistle and Hexham, Northumberland	Integrated Service Provision	Newmarket, Suffolk	Affordable Housing				
Richmond, North Yorkshire	Heritage-led regeneration	Thirsk, North Yorkshire	Community Safety				
Whitby, North Yorkshire	Sustainable tourism						
Wolverton, Milton Keynes	Community-led regeneration						

In addition to the BTP, with its specific topic-based work, two other MTI/BT-related and integrated programmes were developed. These, the One Stop Shop and Gateway Stations Programmes, were designed to help local people experiment and share experiences about how to improve aspects of service provision and public transport respectively. They are described in the following two sections.

## 5.6 The One-Stop Shop Programme

This programme grew from an awareness that, "*One of the methods that a number of progressive [MTI Partnership] towns have adopted to combat the decline in services has been the establishment of a One Stop Shop ... [a] ... staffed, accessible premise ...[providing] ... a range of public, statutory, private and voluntary sector services to the local community.*" (CA 2003a p3). Although the ideas for a "shop" grew from the work done by various MTI partnerships, the approach is not new, having been reported on by the Rural Development Commission (Moseley and Parker 1998), hinted at by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC 1979), called for at the village level by partners in Hampshire (CAH 2001 pp7-8), and evident in practice since the first post office opened in a village shop. The advantage of this particular programme was its integration with the MTI and BTP. For example, case studies featured in the One Stop Shop report (Table 5) include Ibstock (MTI), Haltwhistle (MTI and BT), and Brandon (MTI and Gateway Station).

<b>Table 5</b>	
<b>Towns Featured in the One Stop Shop Programme Report (CA 2003a p4)</b>	
<b>Town</b>	<b>One Stop Shop providing</b>
Brandon, Suffolk (also MTI and Gateway Station)	Healthy Living Centre
East Grinstead, West Sussex	Help Point/Information Centre jointly with library
Fakenham, Norfolk	Information centre jointly with community and local authority services
Haltwhistle, Northumberland (also MTI and BT)	Joint information about services plus training, meeting, and computing facilities
Ibstock, Leicestershire (also MTI)	Community shop
Longtown, Cumbria	Provision of coordinated services
Moreton-in-the-Marsh, Gloucestershire	Area information centre with meeting rooms and provision of "drop-in" advice sessions.
Walton-on-the-Naze, Essex	Business Link and Councillor surgeries, banking, careers advice, and base for voluntary services and town centre manager.

The experiences of, and approaches adopted by the participating partnerships were, because of their involvement in the MTI, relatively easy to gather and disseminate.

Also, because of their “membership” of the MTI, they were well-placed to contribute to the development of policy and practice via the feedback mechanisms described above. The benefits of this integrated approach were also evident from the work done via the other linked programme, Gateway Stations. This scheme is described next.

## **5.7 The Gateway Stations Programme**

The programme ran for two years (2003-2005). It was aimed at those MTI partnerships that wanted to improve their railway station. Designed, "... *to help towns develop integrated transport networks ...*" (Nichols 2004 p5), it brought together, amongst others, Community Rail Partnerships, local authorities, the Youth Hostels Association, British Waterways, Transport 2000, the Development Trusts Association, rail companies (Nichols 2005 p8), voluntary groups, and Rural Transport Partnerships (p11).

The programme was led by the CA, and managed, day to day, by a dedicated project officer employed by the Association of Community Rail Partnerships<sup>44</sup>. A national steering group, which included representatives from the Strategic Rail Authority and Network Rail, provided support and guidance to the project officer, and also sought information and advice from other organizations (eg Defra, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport).

Two reports were written about the programme (Nichols 2004, 2005a). These contain case studies about each of the 14 participating stations (Table 6).

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Table 6</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>The Gateway Stations Programme:</b> <b>Participating Railway Station Partnerships</b> <b>(Nichols 2004 p4, Nichols 2005a p4)</b></p>
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<sup>44</sup> <http://www.acorp.uk.com>

<b>Year 1 (2004)</b>	<b>Year 2 (2005)</b>
<p><b>Berwick-upon-Tweed</b>  <b>Brandon</b>  <b>Craven Arms</b>  <b>Crediton</b>  <b>Frodsham</b>  <b>Hexham</b>  <b>Market Harborough</b>  <b>Sandown (Isle of Wight)</b>  <b>Sheerness</b>    <b>Uttoxeter</b>  <b>Wem (Year 1 only)</b>  <b>Whitby</b></p>	<p><b>Alnmouth for Alnwick (Year 2 only)</b>  <b>Berwick-upon-Tweed</b>  <b>Brandon</b>  <b>Craven Arms</b>  <b>Crediton</b>  <b>Frodsham</b>  <b>Hexham</b>  <b>Market Harborough</b>  <b>Sandown (Isle of Wight)</b>  <b>Sheerness</b>  <b>Tring (Year 2 only)</b>  <b>Uttoxeter</b>    <b>Whitby</b></p>

The programme concluded with a seminar, "... to celebrate the two-year ... programme and to reflect on successes to date." (Nichols 2005 p9). Although there were successes, for example, the refurbishment of a bridge in Frodsham, the reactivation of Frodsham station's closed-circuit television, the introduction of a station to town centre bus link in Alnwick (Nichols 2005 p35), and the formation of a Community Rail Partnership on the Isle of Wight (p41), the main messages from this short-term programme were about the disruptive impact of frequent organizational change (eg the demise of Railtrack, the Strategic Rail Authority, and the CA), and the contrast between the short-term programme, and the long timescales associated with rail industry projects. As the final report on the programme recognized, "... a station project of any significance is a long-term undertaking. ... up to five years to gain permission for land that is owned by the railway industry to be put to alternative uses" (Nichols 2005a p14). The implications of this for people trying to integrate and improve rural transport in small country towns, while working within the constraints imposed by short-term funding regimes, and coping with frequent organizational change, are obvious, but have yet to be addressed.

The report concludes,

*"Given that any significant station improvements will take a long time to deliver, and involve a number of parties so ... 'higher risk', large-scale infrastructure station projects are less likely to be included as part of the [Local Transport Plan] planning process in favour of softer deliverable options. The effect of this is to jeopardise the building of market town transport hubs which, in turn, contributes to a failure to substantially improve rural transport." (Nichols 2005a p14).*

The Gateway Stations programme did, however, extend the range of activities and ambitions of some MT partnerships, and enabled useful information to be gathered from around the country in a short time. It would be interesting to revisit the station partnerships (and, indeed, all the MTI partnerships, rather than the few surveyed during this research) in order to find out how much progress has been made.

The discussion above may suggest to some that the MTI and related programmes and approaches were carefully coordinated and coherent. They were not. Indeed, given that the programmes were relatively short-lived it would be surprising if they had been anything other than imperfect (they should perhaps more fairly be regarded as trial programmes). There were limitations, some of which, together with achievements relating to the MTI, but with messages for all of the programmes, are described in the next two sections.

## **5.8 The MTI – Limitations**

Although unpredictable events such as the foot and mouth crisis in 2001 played an understandable part in changing national and local priorities and plans, the MTI's success was limited, in the writer's opinion, by the failure:

- 1) to allocate specific responsibilities and commensurate authority to the programme budget holders, the CA and RDAs;
- 2) to recognize that the programme had, and should have been designed to reflect, three distinct phases (Healthchecks, Action Planning, Project Implementation), and that these phases should have been implemented sequentially, not simultaneously;
- 3) to appreciate that three years was simply not long enough to develop the necessary means and community capacity (this was implicitly recognized by the – welcome – continuation of MTI-related work until 2006). To quote a community leader from the Kent coalfield town of Aylesham, "*Regeneration takes a generation.*" (Garrity 2001).

The three points above are discussed in detail below.

The Rural White Paper of 2000 (DETR/MAFF 2000) was not explicit about how the MTI was to be developed and managed. Although England's National Market Towns Advisory Forum (ENMTAF) was established by the CA to enable information and experiences to be shared, no single organization was given the authority and responsibility for managing the overall programme. The valid counter-argument to this is that the rather informal approach that resulted from the RWP's lack of explicitness allowed distinct regional, ie relatively local, approaches to be developed. The extent to which this succeeded is a matter for further research and debate, but, at the time of writing in 2011, work initiated by the MTI continues. In terms of the participating partnerships and their supporters this is a satisfactory outcome. It is the writer's belief, however, based on the findings of this research (chapters 7 and 8) that more could have been achieved, by and for partnerships, had some form of nationally coordinated continuation support, perhaps provided by ENMTAF, or AMT, the organization that provided ENMTAF's secretarial support, remained in place.

Consequently, experiences in the regions varied. These differences go some way to explain why the MTI assessment report (Entec 2004) noted, in relation to attitudes to continuing the MTI work, "... *the feeling in some quarters that everything has been done...*" (p54), whereas in other cases (p55), although, "... *Some towns have yet to actively consider succession and the development of a succession strategy ... [c]ertain regions are looking to support towns and are considering the issue of succession within their evaluations of the MTI.*" The researchers noted that, "... *there are real concerns about the degree of commitment from key funders, especially in the absence of the direct involvement of the Countryside Agency.*" (p51). The rather informal approach meant that success depended greatly on the personal relationships that developed between, primarily, CA and RDA officials, the approaches to inter, and intra, organizational working adopted in the regions, and the work and national policy priorities of the organizations involved.

Logically, the Healthcheck and action planning work should have been the first two of three phases of work, paid for primarily by the CA from its £5m budget, but also, in the form of matched, or additional, funding, by other organizations. The RDAs' £32m could then have been used to help pay for the locally developed and prioritized projects detailed in action plans (albeit restricted, for reasons of legislative necessity, to those projects capable of satisfying RDA eligibility criteria, with their economic, rather than social and environmental, emphasis). In practice,

however, the need, perceived at the time, for the RDAs and CA to spend their money during the same three year period, meant that it was not possible in the time available to take this logical approach. Therefore, work that would have better managed sequentially, was attempted simultaneously.

In addition, the way in which the programme was managed, with joint responsibility between the eight RDAs and the CA's eight coterminous regional teams and small Head Office team, but with no single controlling authority, meant that it was difficult to agree overall priorities and approaches, with the result that, as Caffyn (2004 p14) noted, there were, "... *anecdotal reports of tensions between the two organizations in some regions.*"<sup>45</sup> Similarly, a review of the effectiveness of the MTI and the Yorkshire and Humber RDA's Renaissance Market Towns Programme noted that, "*The Countryside Agency was not consulted in [sic] the decision to end the Market Towns Initiative or asked to advise on the development and implementation of the Renaissance Market Towns Programme*", and that, "... *local authorities at all levels are uncertain about their role in relation to both the Market Towns Initiative ... and the Renaissance Market Towns programme.*" (Yorkshire and Humber Assembly 2004 p18). Although there was no obligation for any organization to consult another, this example illustrates the confusion that can flow from the lack of a formal programme management structure.

## **5.9 The MTI's Achievements and Partnerships' Priorities**

Despite any problems associated with the management and implementation of the programme, the MTI can be considered a success in that it exceeded the – mainly numerical – minimum requirements of the RWP (ie 100 towns, 10-20 Beacon Towns, development and use of Healthcheck). The CA's assessment records that, "... *direct support to 235<sup>46</sup> towns in partnership with others (especially the RDAs)...*" was provided (CA 2004a p3). Also, "*An overwhelming majority of project officers and partners recognise the MTI as a successful venture, promoting community involvement, acting as a catalyst for regeneration and helping to raise the profile of individual towns amongst a variety of funding agencies and other partners.*" (Entec 2004 p60). Moreover, 18 Beacon Towns were identified, supported (CA 2005a), and continue, theoretically, to exist (although the nature and extent of continuing

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<sup>45</sup> To the writer's certain knowledge there were tensions. They were few in number and stemmed from differences in organizational priorities, administrative procedures, and local differences in the programmes and their management.

<sup>46</sup> The difference between this number, the "240 plus" recorded informally by the CA, and the 227 taken from Hansard (<http://tinyurl.com/cjith9p>) and used by Powe, Hart and Shaw (2007 p5) – and otherwise used throughout this thesis – usefully illustrates the lack of effective monitoring, and the way in which the programme petered out.

support for them is unclear, and some respondents to the postal survey from BTs were unaware of their town's status).

Although when viewed short-term and quantitatively the MTI succeeded in that it exceeded its targets, the picture is less clear when considered in terms of its largely unrealized potential to contribute to the development of community-led planning in practice. Its relatively short life, coupled with the lack of rigorous, sustained monitoring of its performance and evaluation of its achievements, means that questions must remain about the Programme's value for money, not only in terms of achievement, but also in terms of the opportunity costs associated with its fragmentation, if not, given the continuing work of partnerships, its cessation.

This is a familiar story, indicative of the short-term nature of public sector contracts and programmes (Blackburn, Skerratt, Warren, and Errington 2003 p45, CRC 2005a p13, DCLG 2006 p55, Gershon 2004 p48), and the consequent lack of time in which to plan, agree, and implement a national work programme with regional elements. Little has changed, it seems, to challenge the Scott Committee's view that, "... *our great failures, both in war and peace, have been due to a failure to think ahead and make plans in advance.*" (HMSO 1942 p89). Nevertheless, it is perhaps surprising that the MTI was not operational for longer, given that the review by Blackburn *et al.* (2003) of an integrated rural development project, "... *reinforces the importance of social capital and of voluntary and community activity* [writer's emphasis] *to the well-being of rural areas.*" (Defra 2003 p3).

One consequence of the weaknesses discussed above is the lack of a single, detailed summary of the programme's achievements in terms of the work done by partnerships. Although the CA produced an evaluation report summarising, "... *the key issues contained in 80 Parish Plans and 40 Market Towns Healthchecks ...*" (CA 2005b p3), there has been no attempt since 2005 (Moseley *et al.* 2005) methodically to acquire nationally, analyse and disseminate the experiences of the MTI and BT partnerships. The "key issues" extracted from the research conducted by Moseley *et al.*, and the topics that dominated partnership discussions as reported to Entec (2004) during the course of their research are listed in Table 7. By means of this crude attempt at categorization it can be seen that many of the topics have economic implications. While this may have reflected local priorities, it may also reflect, "... *the attention to economic issues which is prevalent within the RDAs*" (Entec 2004 p18).

**Table 7**  
**Concerns Identified and Subjects Discussed  
by  
Market Towns Initiative Partnerships**

<b>Main Concerns Identified in Market Towns Initiative Partnerships' Healthcheck (Moseley, Owen, Clark and Kambites 2005 p38)</b>	<b>Main Subjects Discussed by Market Towns Initiative Partnerships</b> (based on 317 interviews with officers and members – their views listed in order of importance) (Entec 2004 p16 [after Chart 2.2])	
	<b>Officers</b>	<b>Members</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Road traffic</li> <li>• Deficiencies of the town environment</li> <li>• Inadequacies of public transport</li> <li>• Inadequacies of facilities for young people</li> <li>• Inadequacies of leisure and recreation facilities</li> <li>• Poor range and quality of local shops</li> <li>• Neglect of towns' tourism potential</li> <li>• Insufficient facilities and support for local business</li> <li>• Poor quality of employment</li> <li>• Affordable housing</li> <li>• Health and health-care issues</li> </ul> <p><b>NB</b></p> <p><b>1)</b> The principal concern in larger towns was road traffic, whereas in smaller towns local services caused most concern. When the results of this research into 40 Healthchecks were compared with earlier research into 24 Healthchecks (Shorten and Bell 2002) a, "... remarkable degree of common ground was apparent." (Moseley <i>et al.</i> 2005 p38).</p> <p><b>2)</b> See Table 3 for list of Parish Plan-related concerns.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project delivery, progress &amp; Action Plan</li> <li>• Funding</li> <li>• Partnership's constitution and future role</li> <li>• Transport</li> <li>• Economic</li> <li>• Social</li> <li>• Bureaucracy</li> <li>• Local Authority role</li> <li>• Environmental</li> <li>• Regeneration</li> <li>• Speed of delivery</li> <li>• County Council's &amp; RDA's role</li> <li>• Internal process issues</li> <li>• <b><u>Other see below</u></b></li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project delivery, progress &amp; Action Plan</li> <li>• Funding</li> <li>• Environmental</li> <li>• Economic</li> <li>• Internal process issues</li> <li>• Social</li> <li>• Regeneration</li> <li>• Transport</li> <li>• Partnership's constitution and future role</li> <li>• Speed of delivery</li> <li>• Local Authority role</li> <li>• Bureaucracy</li> <li>• County Council's/RDA's role</li> <li>• <b><u>Other see below</u></b></li> </ul> 
<b>Topics Discussed Under "Other" Headings Above</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Affordable housing</b></li> <li>• <b>Long-term strategies and planning/master planning</b></li> <li>• <b>Market Town programme</b></li> <li>• <b>The role/involvement of particular members/agencies</b></li> <li>• <b>Specific sites</b></li> <li>• <b>Youth issues</b></li> <li>• <b>Crime and policing</b></li> <li>• <b>Public reaction</b></li> <li>• <b>Good practice</b></li> </ul>		

The evaluation by Moseley *et al.* (2005 p41) provided, "No convincing evidence ... of significant region-to-region differences in the concerns expressed locally ...",

recognizing that this might be a reflection of the, "... *smallness of sample size at regional level ...*". The researchers suggested that, "... *it may more substantively reflect the large size and heterogeneity of England's eight regions.*.", before concluding that, "*Local circumstances rather than regional location appears more meaningful in explaining place-to-place differences in the key experienced concerns.*" (Moseley *et al.* 2005 p41).

This supports the view that local people are often best placed to understand and reflect **local** circumstances. The MTI provided, "... *the stimulus and focal point for a wide range of activity covering economic social and community development.*" (Entec 2004 p59), and demonstrated, "... *that there exists within market towns the skills, experience and commitment of local people to take a lead in the regeneration of [towns].*" (p60). The examples of MTI projects and sources of funds illustrated in Table 8 indicate that in addition to economic needs, social and environmental needs were also addressed, despite, "... *pressure from particular funding sources to demonstrate economic benefits.*" (Entec 2004 p17).

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Table 8</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Examples of Market Towns Initiative Projects, Sources of Financial Support, Benefits of Participation, and Successes</b></p>	
<p><b>Examples of Projects for Which Money was Obtained Following Completion of a Healthcheck (Entec 2004 p35)</b></p>	<p><b>Examples of Funding Sources Used to pay for MTI-related Projects (Entec 2004 p31)</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cybercafé</li> <li>• Tourist literature</li> <li>• Town centre enhancements and redevelopment</li> <li>• Child care centre</li> <li>• Community grant schemes</li> <li>• Footbridge</li> <li>• Shop front improvements</li> <li>• Signage and interpretation boards</li> <li>• Special events/festivals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Authorities</li> <li>• The Countryside Agency</li> <li>• Regional Development Agencies</li> <li>• Voluntary/charity sources</li> <li>• The National Lottery</li> <li>• European funding</li> <li>• English Heritage</li> <li>• Private sector (inc. Northern Electric &amp; Lloyds TSB)</li> <li>• Landfill tax credit scheme</li> </ul>
<p><b>Examples of Benefits Perceived by Project Officers and Partnership Members in Rank Order (Entec 2004 p43)</b></p>	<p><b>Examples of Successes Perceived by Project Officers and Partnership Members in Rank Order (Entec 2004 p43)</b></p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Promoted community involvement</li> <li>2. Other (unspecified)</li> <li>3. Raised town profile</li> <li>4. Catalyst to regeneration</li> <li>5. Provided a strategy for the future</li> <li>6. Attracted funding</li> <li>7. Provided a focus to represent the town</li> <li>8. Improved relationship with RDA</li> <li>9. Environmental improvement</li> <li>10. Improved knowledge base</li> <li>11. Delivered jobs</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Development/implementation of specific regeneration projects</li> <li>2. Engaged the community</li> <li>3. Team working</li> <li>4. Delivered funding</li> <li>5. Catalyst to regeneration</li> <li>6. Clarified priorities/strategies for the future</li> <li>7. Focus for the town</li> <li>8. Improved knowledge base</li> <li>9. Contact with agencies</li> <li>10. Increased employment</li> <li>11. Gained agreement</li> <li>12. Raised the town profile</li> </ol>

The information in Tables 7 and 8 hint at the strengths of the approach and illustrate the achievements of the partnerships. According to Entec's assessment of the MTI, "An overwhelming majority of project officers [89% of 108 surveyed] and

*partners [88% of 209 surveyed] recognise the MTI as a successful venture, promoting community involvement, acting as a catalyst for regeneration and helping to raise the profile of individual towns amongst a variety of funding agencies and other partners.*" (Entec 2004 p42). A further 34 interviewees, drawn mainly from participating regional organizations, were in broad agreement with the partnership officers and members (p42). These essentially positive views help to explain the fact that, "*Many of the towns contacted ... stated that prior to the MTI there had been little regeneration taking place, that community groups were often disparate and that the town may have lacked a strong local identity.*" (Entec 2004 p45). These positive views, coupled with the benefits and successes listed in Table 8, and the findings from this research (Chapter 7 refers) provide a good indication of the potential of the MTI, and hint at lost opportunities to build on the experiences of the participants, and to develop, nationally, community development techniques. It is important to remember that all of the programmes discussed in this chapter were developmental – none were the finished article; all were experimental and empirical. As with all work of this type, in addition to strengths and achievements, there were lessons to learn, and weaknesses to explore. Some of these are discussed in the next section.

## **5.10 Some Messages for the Future**

Ultimately any weaknesses lie, not in the aims of the MTI and the related programmes discussed in this paper, or in the inevitable tensions that must occur between organizations with different roles and responsibilities, or in the other policy/institutional divides (eg economic versus social planning, rural versus urban), but in the short-term or "pilot" (ie trial) nature of the work. This, together with the pressure on the CA and RDAs (mainly) to spend their budgets during the same three-year period, and the inevitable tensions between organizations with different roles and responsibilities, meant that the programme was not as effective as it might have been, had it been allowed to develop more slowly, and operate for longer. Implicit in this is a failure to realize that the MTI was essentially about the long-term exploitation of local knowledge, and the development of local people's abilities to help themselves for the benefit of their communities. This is a consequence of the short-term approach that can characterize government programmes (Baine, Camp and Eversley 2005 p13, Beecham 2005, CRC 2005a p13, Shucksmith 2000 p52, Tomaney 2003).

Taken together, the failure to evaluate fully the MTI, to monitor the BTs for, say, 10 years (ie to subject them to a longitudinal study), the end of the Gateway Stations programme, a short-term initiative attempting to identify and implement long-term

projects, and the dispersal to new jobs of the officials involved, represent a lost opportunity to learn about the functions and roles of England's country towns, and to, "... *improve the evidence base for rural policy ...*" (Defra 2004a p2). Although, according to Defra's 2004 Rural Strategy document, "... *market towns contribute significantly to prosperity in the rural areas around them.*" (Defra 2004b p17), this is the sole reference to market towns in the document. Similarly, Defra's policy paper about community capacity building (Defra 2003) refers to Vital Villages (p3), but not to the MTI.

The effective end of the MTI as a consequence of the organizational changes instigated by the "rural delivery" review (Haskins 2003) was confirmed by Defra Minister, Jim Knight, who said, "*Following the end of the Market Town [sic] Initiative, and as stated in Defra's Rural Strategy in 2004, the responsibility for market towns has been devolved to the regional and local level, meaning that Defra looks primarily to the Regional Development Agencies to provide support for market towns through their mainstream activities.*" (Knight 2006).

The effective loss of the programme's national identity did not, as has been discussed above, result in an end to the work of the MTI partnerships. However, its effective closure was disappointing given its prominence as a national programme only a few years earlier, and in view of concerns that, to a certain extent, the Rural, "... *White Paper's approach had to depend on anecdotal information.*" (Defra 2004a p4), and the related belief that, "*The [Rural] White Paper failed to make as much as it could of the wider benefits of driving the prosperity of market towns.*" (p53). It is also disappointing in terms of the time and money invested, both in the development and implementation of the MTI, and in the partnerships, whose members were, ultimately, the only people who could inform and improve the effectiveness of the approach. While fully acknowledging the undoubted successes, and the fact that work continues, the programme's impact must have been lessened by the failure to build on its strengths, and helps to explain the continuing, "... *lack of research into the role of market towns in alleviating problems in the provision of rural services ...*" (Powe and Shaw 2004 p405).

Nevertheless, although the programme was coordinated nationally, and information shared via, for example, the ENMTAF and the BTP, action planning and project implementation was essentially regional, with RDAs especially, together with local authorities and Rural Community Councils, playing a crucial role. The next sections contain brief discussions about regional support for the MTI in general, and the south west's stand-alone MCTi in particular.

## **5.11 Support for Small Towns in the Regions**

The different priorities and relative autonomies of the CA and the RDAs, coupled with their different reporting lines to Whitehall<sup>47</sup>, made, as discussed above, for some communication and coordination difficulties. The lack of strong central direction meant that it was inevitable – and proper - that regional approaches would be developed and implemented. The lack of direction also made it difficult to ensure that experience and learning was shared, although the CA, RDAs, AMT and others did come together under the auspices of the ENMTAF.

The ENMTAF was disbanded in 2005 prior to the Haskins-inspired Modernising Rural Delivery reorganization, to be replaced, in some places, by regional groups. One such group, set up by the East England Rural Forum (EERF 2007), is Market Towns East (MTE), an aim of which is, "... *to feed into the proposed national policy and research group, the likely successor to the English Market Towns Advisory Forum*" (MTE 2007). To date (December 2009) there is no obvious evidence to say that this group exists (a brief search of Defra's Website failed to find any reference to a market towns "national policy and research group"), although, according to the RDAs' Co-ordination Unit, information is shared between RDAs via regional Websites, the RDAs' extranet, and various regional events about small towns to which representatives from other regions are invited (see letter from Diane Roberts of Defra in Appendix 1).

MTE was established to build on the work done in the region during the MTI implementation period, and to ensure a degree of post-MTI continuity. Similar approaches have been taken in other regions. In the south east, for example, a similar region-wide function is served by the South East Rural Towns Partnership, which employs staff to work with town partnerships, and is the organization through which the south east RDA channelled its small rural towns programme. The regional groups have connections, of varying degrees of closeness, with AMT, which, as the national representative membership (by subscription) body for towns, has the potential to act in a coordinating, intelligence gathering and disseminating role<sup>48</sup>, and which was, in 2005, awarded a Defra grant to further its work with RDAs and partnerships (Wade 2007). Further grants were not made as such central support

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<sup>47</sup> For the CA: initially to the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, later to Defra. For the RDAs: to the DETR, then the Department of Trade and Industry, then the Department of Business and Regulatory Reform, then (2009) the Department for Business, Innovation, and Skills, as well as other departments, such as that for Communities and Local Government.

<sup>48</sup> Declaration of interest: the writer is a Trustee of AMT.

would have been counter to Defra's, "... *underlying principle of shifting delivery functions out of Defra.*" (see letter from Beth Crook of Defra in Appendix 1).

The writer wrote a number of letters of enquiry about the MTI to Ministers and officials between June 2005 and March 2010. Letters were also sent to the Chief Executives of the RDAs and the CRC (Appendix 15). It is clear from the information received from seven of the eight RDAs (no reply was received from the Yorkshire and Humber RDA) and the CRC, that, by 2009, regional work had become increasingly diverse. The letter from Isaac Fabelurin of Defra (Appendix 1), states, "... *that responsibility for delivery and evaluation sits primarily with the RDAs.*" Fabelurin's letter also makes clear that, in Defra's view, market town programmes, ... *were run primarily through and by Regional Development Agencies ... with Countryside Agency funding integrated into these regional level programmes.*" These comments are in line with the Haskins' reforms (Haskins 2003). As Fabelurin's letter makes no reference to the CA's national coordination and Healthcheck-related work, it can be assumed that these aspects of the overall approach have either been forgotten as organizational change followed organizational change, or were considered to be of secondary importance to the RDAs' work, and the eventual move to regionally-led work and programme management.

The letters from RDA staff (Appendix 15) make it clear that the work has become regionally distinct, with each RDA adopting its own approach. For example, in the West Midlands, MTI Healthchecks were no longer promoted as examples of good practice. Instead, decisions to intervene in towns were based on evidence garnered from economic statistics such as wage and skills levels. The emphasis on the economy reflects both the placing of 'market towns' in the Rural White Paper's chapter about the economy (DETR/MAFF 2000 pp74-88), and the RDAs' main remit, economic development. This served to obscure the importance of towns as drivers, "...*of social and environmental benefits ...*" (Defra 2004a p53).

The move to regionally-led, and, in effect, regionally-bound policy development (and, for the MTI, implementation) work accelerated in the mid-2000s, "... *to ensure that solutions reflect local need ...*" (DETR/MAFF 2004a p24). A consequence of this was that the MTI/MCTi/BT programmes were no longer national. The outcome of regionalization in terms of the availability of completed Healthchecks is illustrated by the following examples.

- In the East Midlands, information about all of the region's work with towns was held on a website hosted by AMT (<http://tinyurl.com/yqdycy5>), but by early 2010 the site no longer existed.
- In the north east, historic Healthchecks were held in electronic form by Northumberland County Council and were available, subject to copyright and certain approvals being granted by the town partnerships, as were those from the East of England.
- The work of SERPT continued in the south east, and although the RDA did not hold copies of the Healthcheck, SERPT did, and these were readily available online (<http://tinyurl.com/y19l4f3>).

The approach taken in the south west of England was similar to that in the south east, in that their version of MTI Healthchecks, named Community Strategic Plans, were available on request. There was a regional organization, the Market and Coastal Towns Association (MCTA) with employees who worked with town partnerships, and liaised with a range of interested organizations, such as the RDA, and the Government Office. In the south west, however, the MTI was not the primary programme of support for town partnerships. The region's already established MCTi had similar aims, and so the two programmes were related closely by purpose, and often, although not always, closely in practice. Although both the MTI and the MCTi (and the MCTA) ceased to operate in 2008, the south west's approach is, for reasons of completeness concerning the "story" of these programmes, discussed below.

### **5.12 Support for Small Towns in the South West of England – the Market and Coastal Towns Initiative**

The requirement for RDAs to develop regional approaches is apparent from the MCTi's business plan, which stated that, *The Market and Coastal Towns Initiative (MCTi) was launched in 2001 by a regional partnership of organisations in response to a variety of UK Government and SW regional policy initiatives. Its fundamental purpose was to promote the regeneration of market and coastal towns.*" (RTP 2003 p2). With 205 towns in the region falling within the then accepted 2,000 to 20,000 population range (p2), the south west's approach via the MCTi, and SWRDA's significance as a developer of rural programmes, is relevant and important, nationally as well as regionally. The MCTi had two types of objectives (RTP 2002 p2):

- "1) 'content' objectives – 'Creating vibrant, healthy towns' ... 'the result will be towns that are thriving and prosperous in both the short and the long term'.
- 2) 'process' objectives – 'investing in communities'; 'helping them to plan their future'; 'providing a gateway to funding programmes'."

The business plan was produced following the evaluation of a 'pilot' exercise (RTP 2002) and discussions with partners (the CA, Government Office, Regional Assembly<sup>49</sup>, English Heritage, the National Lottery<sup>50</sup>, the Housing Corporation<sup>51</sup>, and SWAN, the south west's Rural Community Councils' umbrella body<sup>52</sup>). The evaluation concluded that the MCTi was, "*achieving a positive response from the Pilot towns, and ... can reasonably be expected to deliver against its stated objectives.*" It also concluded that the following concerns needed to be addressed:

- "1) 'external' factors – particularly the role of local authorities and the development of Local Strategic Partnerships – where the partners need to take a clear view on how they wish to see the Initiative develop in relationship to developments outside the Initiative.
- 2) 'policy' issues affecting partners individually and jointly – particularly the ability of each of them to commit resources to MCTi and to the regeneration proposals which will flow from MCTi towns.
- 3) 'partnership' issues – there is a need to develop closer or more effective MCTi partnership relationships (or to determine that such relationships cannot be developed and the Initiative closes down.)
- 4) 'operational' issues – including the need for continued resources to support Towns, clarification of guidance, presentation and branding of the Initiative." (RTP 2002 p40).

The four concerns were discussed by partners, and the outcome of the discussions informed the MCTi Business Plan (RTP 2002 p40), which, having drawn on the discussions, identified the following as essential elements of the MCTi process (RTP 2003 p4):

- "Community Strategic Plans – each community-based partnership to prepare or review a Community Strategic Plan that must be holistic and include the rural hinterland;*
- Capacity Building – supporting processes to building capacity within local organisations/individuals and within agencies, to manage, develop and deliver Community Strategic Plans;*
- Early Wins – the ability to support small scale projects that are deliverable within the timescale of preparation of the Community Strategic Plan, to engender local involvement and commitment to the process;*

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<sup>49</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/6fjqqh3>

<sup>50</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/68rvwoq>

<sup>51</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/6hehwag>

<sup>52</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/62zepsi>

Local Brokering Tables<sup>53</sup> - use of local brokering tables to bring together local partnerships with potential funding agencies and other influential organisations, to work together to achieve the aims and objectives of their Community Strategic Plans;

Regional Partnership and Brokering – establishment of a regional partnership and regional brokering table to manage and provide the strategic steer to the Initiative and to address key policy issues that emerge from the local level;

Learning Network - development of a Learning Network to provide information, examples of practice and facilitate networking and exchange of experience between participants in MCTi, communities in other market and coastal towns and agencies/organisations supporting local partnerships.”

It was also concluded, in both the evaluation report (RTP 2002 p40) and the Business Plan, that, in order to, "... address the concerns identified in evaluation studies ... an 'arms-length' organisation specifically designed to deliver the MCTi on behalf of the Regional Partners ..." should be established, and that this organization, "... would work closely with the towns, local authorities, LSPs and other stakeholders ..." (RTP 2003 p9). The outcome of the pilot work, the evaluations, and the business planning, was the creation, in 2004, of the MCTA. Its job was to give,

"...capacity building support to assist communities and their partners to,

- Prepare plans for their future covering all aspects of community life in their towns and surrounding rural areas
- Develop their skills and organisational capacity to be effective partners
- Share good practice and learn from local, regional, national and international experience
- Secure funding and professional assistance." (MCTA 2007).

According to a community facilitator working for the MCTA, social and environmental projects outnumbered those dealing with business, employment, and skills development. Partnerships found, "... it increasingly difficult to implement ... sustainable projects due to a lack of project delivery skills and dedicated support from [Local Authority] officers and other agencies." (Coffin 2007). From this it appears that there was a perceived lack of support and training for people involved in partnerships, and that this made for obvious related difficulties when the time came to develop and implement projects.

The MCTA's community facilitators were employed partly to overcome these shortcomings. They, together with, "... Market Town Forums ... in Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Somerset, Devon and Cornwall." helped town partnerships involved in the

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<sup>53</sup> By 2007 the brokering approach (ie partnership members meeting with representatives of potential funding organizations to discuss their plans and seek support "around the brokering tables") had been superseded by a more structured, "... prioritisation and implementation ..." process (Coffin 2007).

MCTi develop community strategies, and assisted the people involved in the work to develop the skills needed to plan projects, and obtain the money needed for their implementation (Coffin 2007).

There was, therefore, much in common between the MTI and the MCTi. The approaches were similar. The MTI had the Healthcheck, and the MCTi had a Resource Handbook, the purpose of which is evident from its title, 'Planning for Your Community' (MCTA 2007a).

The aims of the two initiatives were also similar. They were developed independently, but were introduced – to an unsuspecting public - at about the same time. This, another consequence of the lack of central direction and the different remits of the CA and SWRDA, the organizations responsible for the two initiatives, was at times confusing to some town partnerships, and an unnecessary, and sometimes competitive, duplication of effort at a time when the policy waters were already being muddied by the introduction of Local Strategic Partnerships and Community Strategies. For example, a Devon County Council Committee Report (DCC 2005) commented that, "*A national evaluation of the MCTi programme was undertaken for the Countryside Agency by consultants Entec in 2004.*" The Entec report was actually commissioned to evaluate the MTI, not the MCTi, to "... *inform the development of the Market Towns Initiative, including a revision of the Healthcheck and toolkit ...*" (Entec 2004 p1). In one sense this is unimportant – work was done, and the Council's view was broadly supportive, although it noted that, "*Projects have not, on the whole, met the objectives of the RDA and other large funders and have therefore not attracted the amounts of funding originally anticipated.*" This example is included, not to promote one approach against the other (for, as has already been noted, they were similar), but to argue for one approach, rather than two, if only to avoid confusion, no matter how slight or inconsequential.

There were, therefore, human and organizational difficulties, as efforts were made – long before the creation of the MCTA - to develop a coherent approach. This took time and energy, and accounted for the fact that, possibly because the MCTi was introduced to the region before the start of the MTI, "... *the south west started the Healthcheck process later than other regions.*" (Entec 2004 p5). The inevitable consequence of this confusion, lack of coordination, and SWRDA's commitment to the MCTi approach, was that the Healthcheck did not gain the prominence that it achieved elsewhere. This was not, in general, a major problem for town partnerships, because the programmes, although distinct, were not incompatible, and each brought money to help pay for the development work. Where the two

programmes were “forced” together, however, for example in Bridport, both a Beacon Town, and therefore required to complete a Healthcheck, and an MCTi town, there was, as the evidence for this research suggests (chapter 7), some confusion.

As time passed, however, confusion decreased, with many MCTi towns using the Healthcheck to help guide partnerships with their initial data collation (Coffin 2007), suggesting that both approaches could have, and indeed may have, usefully informed one another, possibly for wider national benefit. As regional work continues throughout England, the potential for mutual learning must still exist.

It is hoped that the research described in this thesis, which used data drawn from towns in each of England’s eight largely rural regions (ie excluding Greater London), might inform the development of whatever community-led development programmes eventually follow the MTI/MCTi. Before exploring the data, however, the opportunity is taken, in Chapter 6, to explain why Bridport, the town in which the majority of the detailed interviews that formed part of the research were conducted, was selected for study.

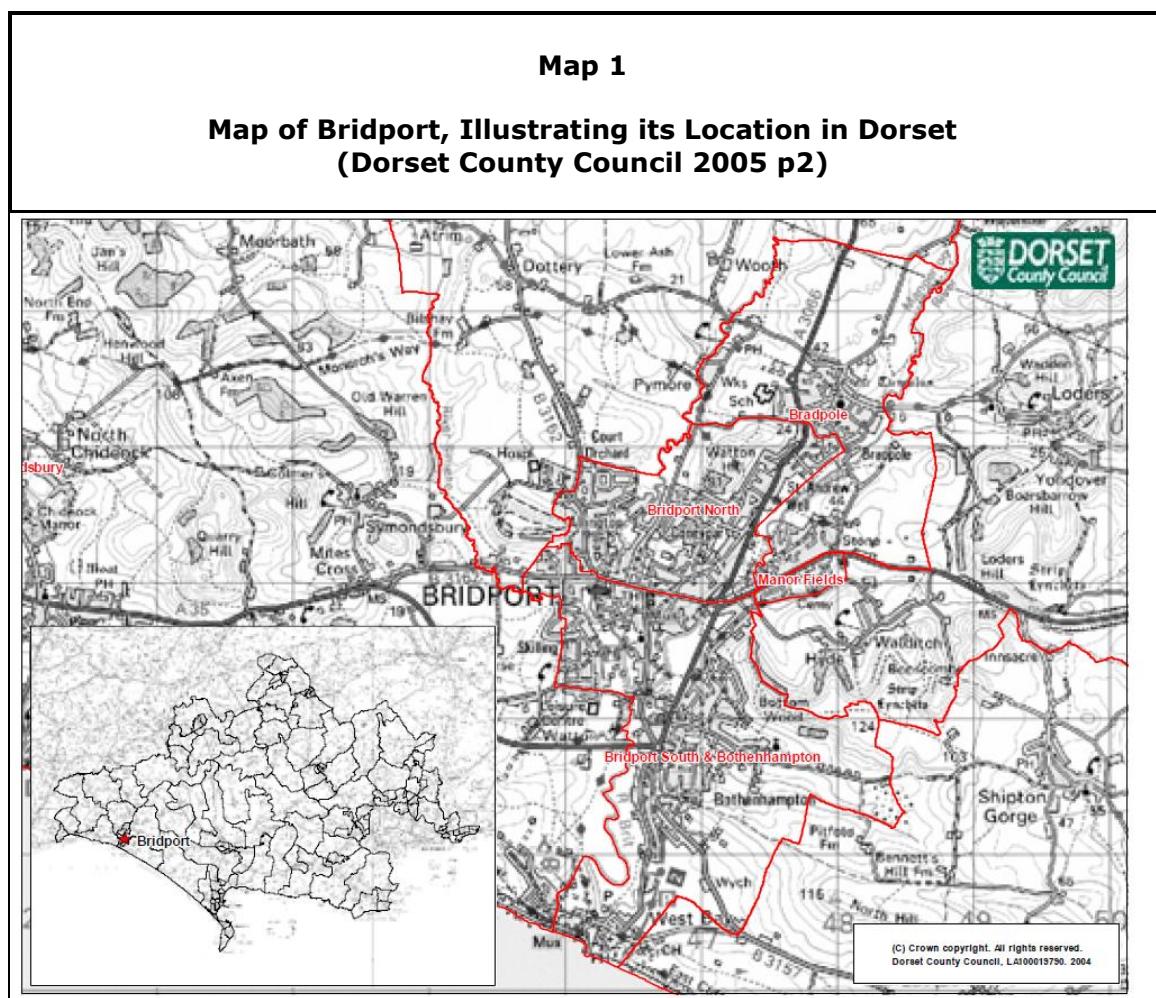
## Chapter 6 – Reasons for Selecting Bridport as the Main Case Study Town

*"... we are all Bridportians and mostly we are all friends, and in Bridport people still appreciate you for who you are, and NOT WHAT you are. That is what Bridport is about. It is open-minded and easy-going, and we are fully aware of how lucky we are to live here."*

One of a series of comments (not all of which were complimentary) by an anonymous contributor to an online debate on Bridport Radio, 26<sup>th</sup> March 2007 (<http://tinyurl.com/yh9bhpn>).

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter explains why Bridport, a southern England country town in the south west of Dorset (Map 1 and Plate 1), was selected for detailed study.



**Plate 1**  
**Two 21<sup>st</sup> Century Views of Bridport**

**Market Day<sup>54</sup>**



**A Typical Street Scene<sup>55</sup>**



<sup>54</sup> Image Copyright Maurice D Budden. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic Licence. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://tinyurl.com/4kprz> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 171 Second Street, Suite 300, San Francisco, California, 94105, USA.

<sup>55</sup> Image Copyright Steve Chapple. This work is licensed as specified under footnote 46.

Research data were gathered via a postal survey and face to face interviews. As will have been seen from the explanation of the research methodology in Chapter 4 both methods have their advantages and disadvantages. In addition to the more technical aspects of these, there are practical reasons for their adoption. For example it made sense, logically and financially, to use a postal survey to gather information from town partnerships located a long way from the writer's home in Dorset. For the same reasons it made sense to conduct the interviews as close as possible to the writer's home near Sherborne in North Dorset (approximately 20 miles from Bridport), provided that the choice of town did not compromise the aims of the research. Fortunately, Bridport satisfied both of these conditions, as is explained in the next section.

## **6.2 Bridport's Suitability for Inclusion in the Research**

The first reason for selecting Bridport was pragmatic. The writer has lived in Dorset since 1975, and is familiar with the town, both personally, as a Dorset resident, and professionally, having worked in various jobs associated with rural development since 1993. For much of this time he has had some involvement with local authority, voluntary sector, and partnership work in Bridport, both directly while working as the RDC's Business Adviser and Economic Development Officer for Dorset, and indirectly as an employee of the Countryside Agency.

The second reason for Bridport's selection was based on the townspeople's long involvement in partnership working, and the fact that with a – mainly white – population that grew, at an increasing rate (Dorset County Council 2005 p2), from about 7,300 in 1991<sup>56</sup> to approximately 13,350<sup>57</sup> in 2007, it is, in terms of its location, traditions, history, and nature and rate of development, a typical country town, in that it retains a measure of local employment and a role as a service centre for its rural hinterland. For example, in 2005 the town boasted 128 shops (only four of which were vacant<sup>58</sup>), the fourth highest after Weymouth, Christchurch, and Dorchester out of the county's 18 recognized service centres (Dorset County Council 2009 p34). The town's retail catchment area is said to extend some 4.5 miles outside the town (p59), an historically typical distance (Howkins 1991 p21). While, in 2007, unemployment, at 0.8% (50 people) was low (Dorset County Council 2009 p59), Bridport town was ranked as the 42nd (out of 247) most deprived area in terms of income in Dorset (p58). In 2007, parts of Bridport were within the 20%

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<sup>56</sup> Figure from Dorset County Council website <http://tinyurl.com/yqduhx>.

<sup>57</sup> Mid-year home population estimate from Dorset County Council website <http://tinyurl.com/ygnxvlu>.

<sup>58</sup> This had reduced to zero by 2006 (paragraph 2.5 of Appendix 16 refers).

most deprived areas of England, with 30% of households classed as being, "hard pressed", a figure higher than the national average of 22%, whereas other parts, such as Bothenhampton, were far less deprived (Dorset County Council 2008 p3).

Of additional interest are contemporary challenges associated with, for example, the high number of older people and low number of younger people (Dorset County Council 2005 p5), relatively high house prices and levels of second home ownership<sup>59</sup> (this last partly explaining the town's nickname, Notting Hill-on-Sea [Edwards 2007]), and a relatively high proportion of social housing, reflecting the broad range of skills, educational qualifications and incomes to be found in and around the town<sup>60</sup>.

To the writer's knowledge Bridport has had an active town partnership since at least 1994. The town's partnership also participated in the MCTi, and the town was selected as one of the first BTs in 2003, for work associated with local food and its potential to contribute to improvements in health, sustainability, and the economy (Nichols 2004a). Local people have established the Bridport Local Area Partnership (BLAP), and, as will be seen from the information gathered from the interviews (Chapters 7 and 8), have built on MCTi and related work with, for example, and with varying degrees of success, both young and elderly people.

Bridport also proved to be appropriate for study socio-economically, especially given the research interest in rural poverty, as the town and its surrounding parishes embrace a wide range of overall deprivation scores that broadly reflect the overall range within Dorset (Map 2).

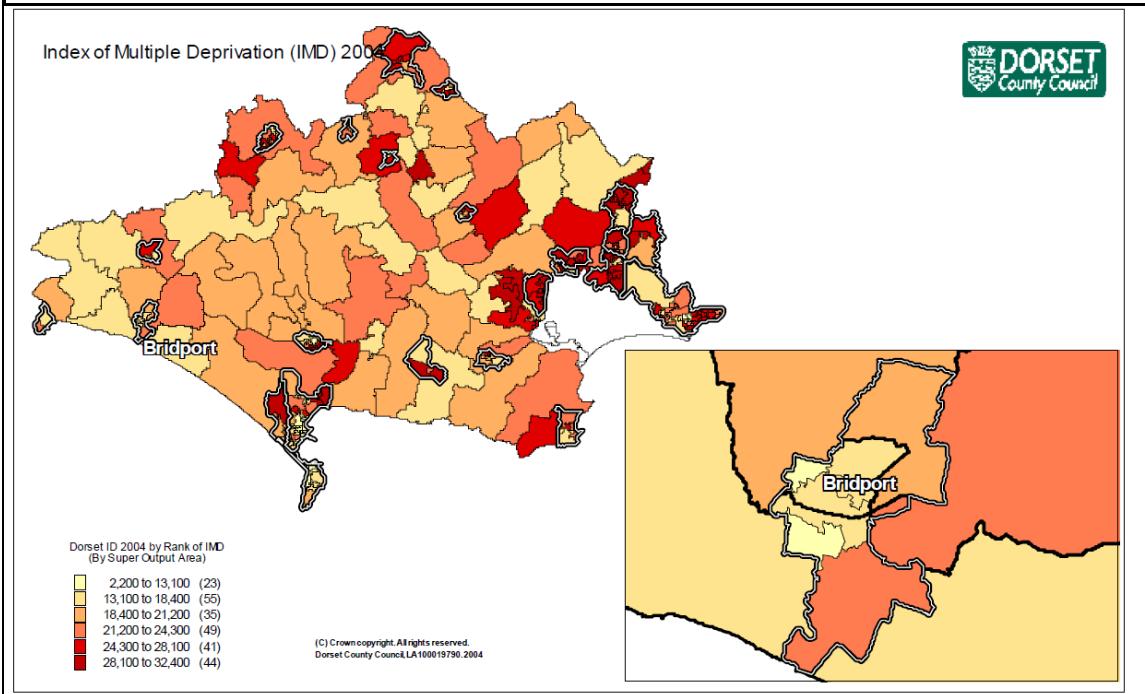
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<sup>59</sup> 4.9% according to the 2001 census figures <http://preview.tinyurl.com/ylx7d97> - this is high compared with Dorset's other towns, eg Shaftesbury and Sherborne, both with 0.80%, and Wareham with 1.2%).

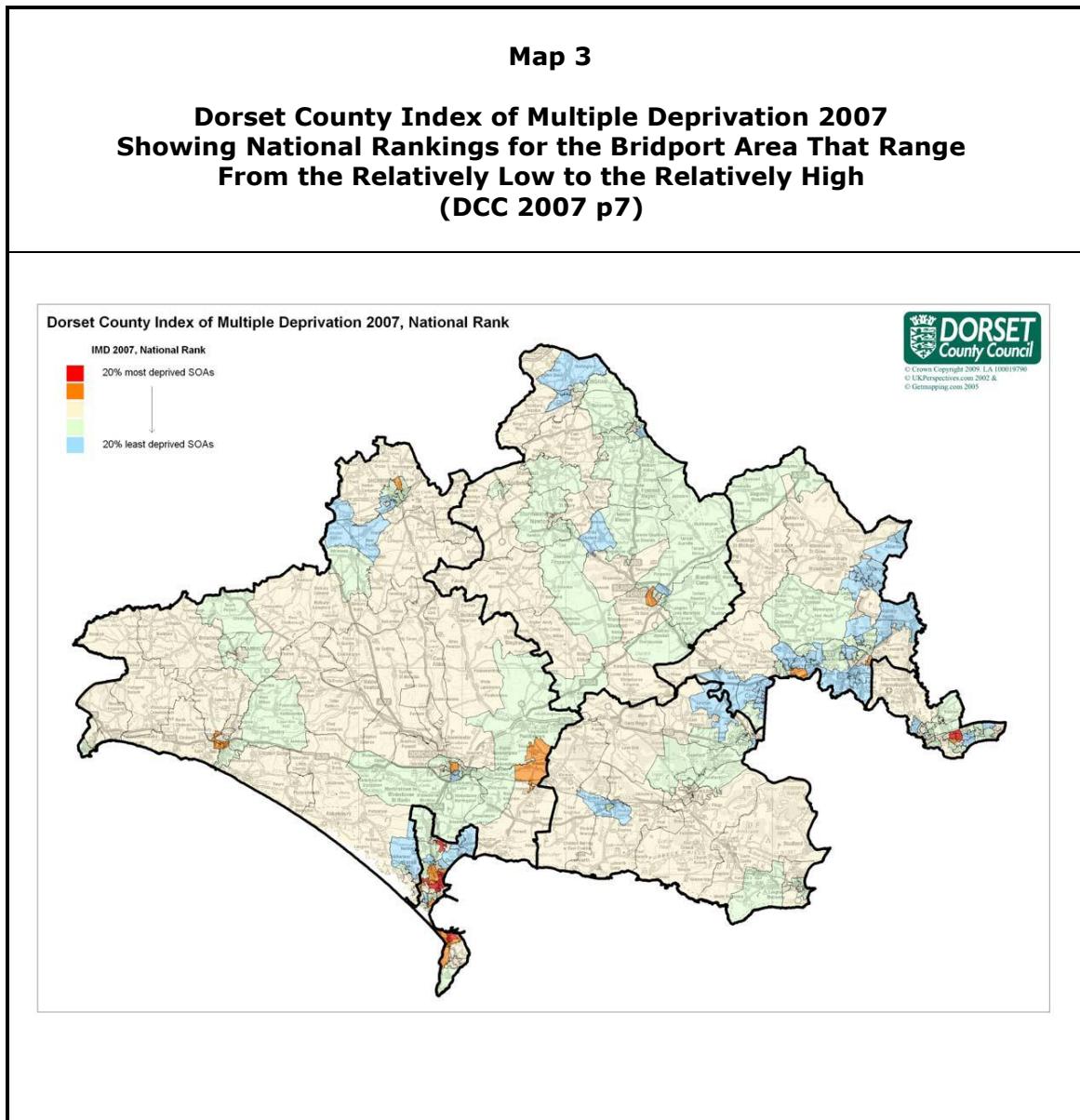
<sup>60</sup> Data relating to these can be found on the Dorset County Council website: <http://tinyurl.com/ygduhxd>

**Map 2**

**Indices of Multiple Deprivation in Dorset in Six Bands,  
With Particular Reference to the Bridport Area  
(Dorset County Council 2005 p17)**



Within Bridport's sphere of influence there is a mix of relatively wealthy and relatively poor people, both in terms of Dorset's socio-economic structure (Map 2), and nationally (Map 3). It was considered, therefore, that, in the context of a southern town in a relatively wealthy county, interviewees were likely to have a relatively well-rounded understanding of poverty, deprivation, disadvantage, and rurality. In addition, and happily, the interviewees proved to be open, very direct, professional, and without exception, holders of firm, clear, but by no means unanimous, views.

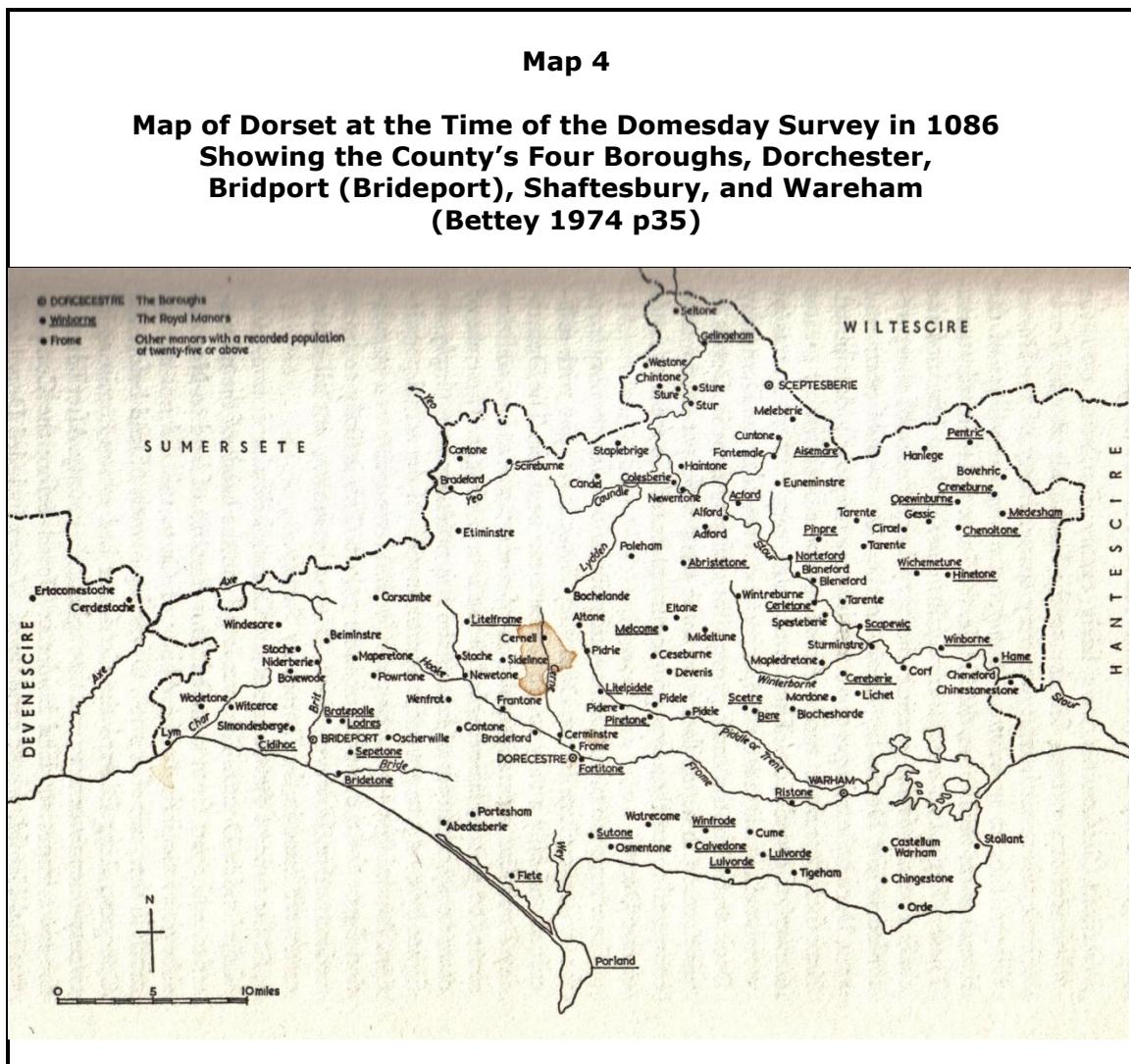


Last, but by no means least, Bridport is a relatively remote, very old and very well established small country town. The following pen portrait provides an introduction to the town and its history.

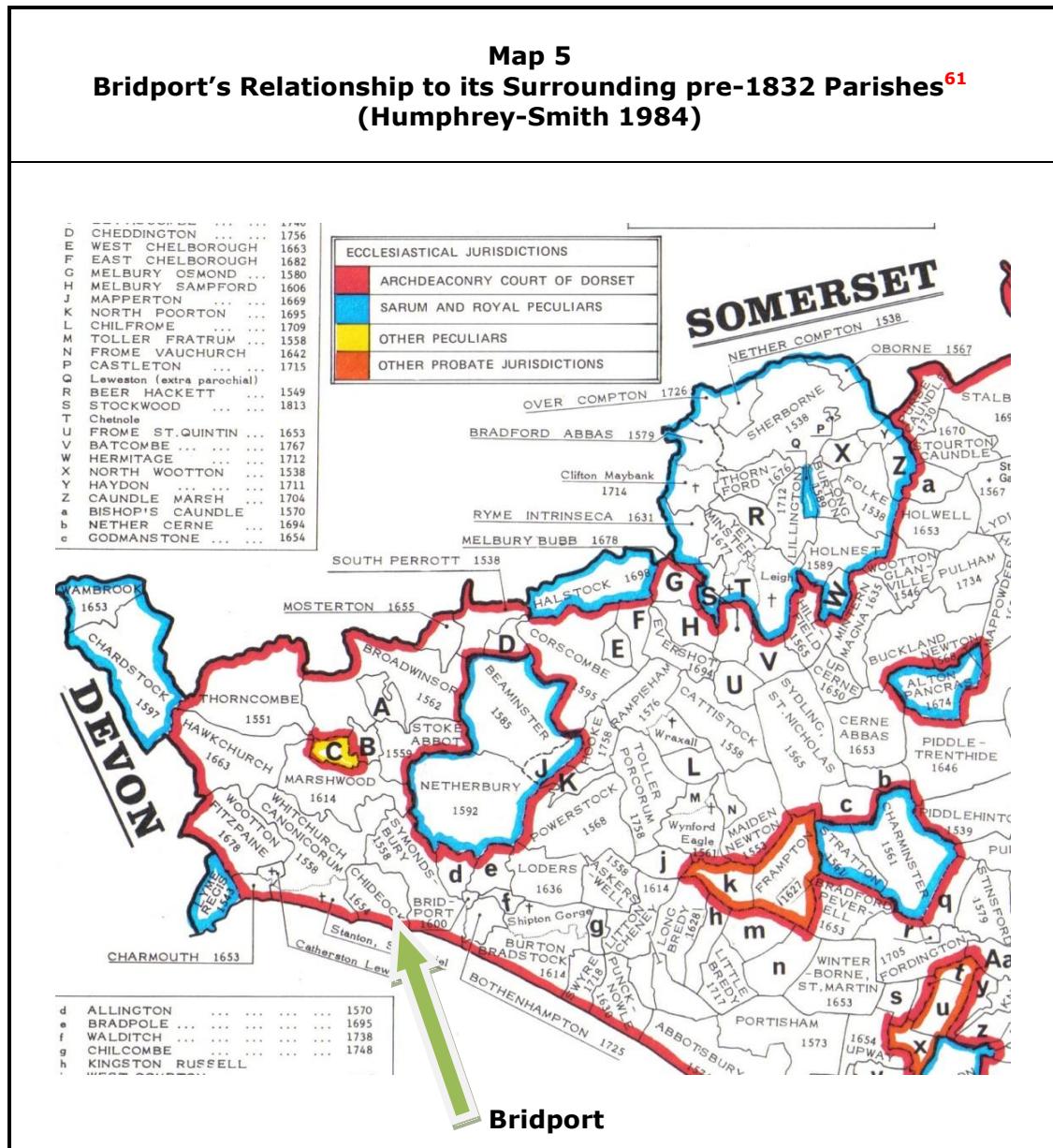
### 6.3 A Pen Portrait of Bridport

*"Brideport 1086 (Domesday Book), Bridiport 1157, Brudiport 1207, Bredeport 1266. Harbour or market town belonging to Bredy', from old English 'port' which could have the sense 'port' or 'market'. ... The present name of the river which flows through the town, the Brit, is taken from the name Bridport ..." (Mills 1991 p43)*

Following Danish invasions in the ninth century, Bridport was one of three Dorset towns, the others being Shaftesbury and Wareham, to be fortified as part of the build up of Wessex's defences by King Alfred (Bettey 1974 p29). Although as a consequence of the destruction wrought during the Norman Conquest the number of houses in Bridport fell from 120 in 1066, to 100 in 1086 (p29), by the time of the Domesday survey of the 1080s, the town, with its own mint, was established as one of Dorset's four Boroughs within a very rural county comprising many small settlements (Map 4).



Over the years, Bridport's fortune varied as it was affected by the plague, which arrived in Dorset in 1348 and scythed through the county's seaports' populations (p46), the Monmouth Rebellion in 1685, which saw skirmishes in the town followed by Judge Jeffries' subsequent retribution, during which 70 men from Dorset, including nine from Bridport, were executed (Weinstock 1967 pp59-60), the development of education (p148), the award of royal charters in 1253 and the late 16<sup>th</sup> century (Lambert 2009), and the growth and decline of its various local industries, the most famous of which is net and rope manufacture (Weinstock 1967 pp164-168), including, from the latter category, hangmen's ropes, known as 'Bridport Daggers'. Today, the town continues to service its surrounding parishes, which have remained substantially unchanged since at least the 1830s (Map 5).



<sup>61</sup> This map, from a series of parish maps of the counties of England, Scotland and Wales, appears by kind permission of Cecil Humphrey-Smith and the Trustees of the Institute of Heraldic and Genealogical Studies.

According to the Town Council's Official Guide<sup>62</sup>, Bridport today has a mix of service and manufacturing businesses, including net manufacturers based on, in, and around the traditional rope works, and a range of local and national retail businesses (Plate 2). It retains a variety of Town, District and County Council service functions. There is a bus station, a Royal Mail delivery centre, a hospital, primary and secondary schools, a youth centre, and a police station.

Bridport is known for its rich variety of local food produce. The town is popular as a retirement area, and has an arts centre, a theatre group, film society, a well-known street market, and many historic buildings.

Bridport retains its most famous industry, in that its, "*... historic links to [its] rope and net heritage continue today through netting businesses, large and small, within the town.*" (Bridport Town Council 2010). In many ways, therefore, Bridport, despite its ups and downs through the centuries, is the epitome of a classically resilient, largely self-reliant small town; its people proud of its history, knowledgeable about its strengths and weaknesses, and still providing services for both town and hinterland.

Finally, and although this is not recorded in any book or on any website, Bridport people interested in community-led development and local government are unlikely to have forgotten the loss of power and influence that occurred following the reorganization of local government in 1974, when many powers previously centred on Bridport Rural District Council were transferred to the newly-formed West District Council<sup>63</sup>. Perhaps, in some ways, it falls to research such as this to build on the work of the MTI and other programmes in an attempt to assess whether the balance of influence and power between the Town and Parish Council tier (third to some, first to others) could be usefully altered to assist the trend, rhetorically, if not yet actually, towards devolution of powers.

If nothing else, and as will be shown, the results of this research (Chapters 7 and 8), drawn from many towns, each unique, but many with histories and characteristics similar to Bridport's, suggest that local people have the desire and ability, if not the powers and capacity, to take greater responsibility for their locality.

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<sup>62</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/ygabkr5>

<sup>63</sup> As a personal observation, the writer has been struck both during this research and his wider work with town partnerships by the number of comments, some wistful, some adverse, but few positive, made by Town and Parish Councillors and officers to the loss of these powers and their perceived impact on local democracy, power, and influence.

## Plate 2

### Images of Bridport Illustrating the Diverse Nature of a Typical English Country Town's Forms and Functions (Taken by the Writer 17<sup>th</sup> March 2010)



## **Chapter 7 The People, the Programmes, and Progress**

*In human society the warmth is mainly at the bottom.*  
Noel Counihan, Australian artist, 1986.

### **7.1 Introduction**

This chapter explores the views and experiences of the people involved in the MTI/BT/MCTi work in Bridport (the interviewees) and the participants in the postal survey (the respondents). The reasons for, and extent of, their involvement in the work of the MTI/MCTi/BTP are examined. Similarly, their achievements and frustrations, together with any recommendations made, are described and considered.

The chapter is in three parts. Starting with an exploration of people's roles and motivations in relation to their involvement, with their partnership, in their town and/or area, the work done by the partnerships is then reported on and analysed, with a view to determining the degree of success participants attribute to the approaches. The chapter concludes with an assessment of the extent to which partnerships were, or were believed to be, active at the time the research was conducted, and of the value of this information as an indicator of the programmes' success.

**It should be noted that:**

- 1) All direct quotations are shown in *italics*, and, together with other references attributed to interviewees and respondents, are to be found in their original transcribed form in Appendices 3 and 4.**
  
- 2) The narrative is informed by tables and figures containing summarized data from the interview transcripts and survey forms. The summary information is derived from Appendices 8 and 9.**

The summarized data contained in Appendices 8 and 9 were subjected to further manipulation, before being combined to enable illustrative illuminating phrases and words to be identified and extracted. It is these data, finally presented in Appendix 10, and in the tables and figures in this chapter, which guide and inform the narrative. The tables and figures in this chapter are cross-referenced to the appropriate questions in the Appendices.

The next section explores the nature of the participants' involvement in the programmes.

## **7.2 Participants' Involvement: Reasons, Roles, and Motivations**

### **7.2.1 An Overview**

Although the majority of participants were involved in some form of official capacity, either as paid employees of, for example, Town Councils, or as Councillors, their views were, nevertheless, diverse.

For example, a District Councillor from the south west, a respondent to the postal survey, became involved with the MTI/MCTi/BTP in order, "*To hear what people in my community were saying and make use of the process as much as possible, to meet their needs and wishes.*" This does not imply a wish to govern, but, when coupled with the respondent's belief that, in the end, far too much money was spent on, 'the process', resulting in little benefit ("*An awful waste.*"), it does suggest some dissatisfaction with government, and disappointment about a style of governance on the part of one individual in one town. Comments from other participants suggest the opposite. A Town Clerk, serving a town in the south east, wrote that the Council's motivation for involvement was to ensure that it was responding to residents' needs, and noted that the MTI had, "... *been a very worthwhile exercise ... and has produced positive results.*"

Both of these respondents, indeed most of the participants, despite their different experiences, referred to matters of governance as well as government. As discussed in Chapter 3, the distinction between **government** and **governance** is subtle, but both are of central importance to community-led development. Interestingly, no party political points were made about these New Labour Government programmes. This reinforces both the essentially local nature of the Town/Parish Council sector, and the largely non-contentious nature of such programmes, the beginnings of which, in any event, lie in the Conservative Government's 1995 Rural White Paper, which noted the development of a, "... *wider initiative to help revitalise the centre of small market towns ...*" (DoE/MAFF 1995 p57).

Not all participants were involved in the work in an official capacity. Some were involved purely as volunteers. The reasons given for their involvement varied from the specific, for example opportunities for the young or the old, to the more general, such as, "local concern".

In a sense, however, it is possible to regard all of the participants as volunteers. None of the programmes were compulsory. The sums of money available were, in general, small, and largely restricted to covering, or partially covering, the costs of employing support workers (eg Healthcheck Coordinators, Project Managers), or, in BTs, costs associated with sharing experience and expertise (eg travel and subsistence costs). Completion of Healthchecks, or their equivalent, and the development of action plans, all lengthy, time-consuming processes, undoubtedly helped partnerships to win bids for money for projects, but by no means ensured success.

The participants' value to the programmes, town partnerships and the public purse, in terms of knowledge and personal investments of time and effort, should not be underestimated when evaluating community-led development work (indeed should be taken into account and given a value). For, in the main, participants were experienced people, and tended to have leadership and management roles.

In essence, participants' interests were local to their town, or to a wider, but still relatively local, area (eg a District Council area). The evident affection for, interest in, and loyalty to their town and fellow-inhabitants illustrates effectively that civic interest, and civil society, are by no means dead.

The next two sections consider the information gathered from the Dorset interviewees and the respondents to the postal survey. Following this, a more detailed analysis draws both upon the tabular and graphical data, and on direct quotations from the participants, in an attempt to gain a better understanding of the motivations and interests of the people involved, and the strengths and weaknesses of the programmes, and the approaches taken.

### **7.2.2 The Dorset Interviewees' Views**

The information in Table 9 was obtained from the four Bridport-based interviewees who agreed that their contributions could be included in this research, and the five non-Bridport-based interviewees. It illustrates the:

- specific and essentially local interests (eg tourism, young and older people), concern for the town's circumstances (local concern, local action, employment, and wage levels), and work-related reasons (eg professional involvement as part of their duties) of this sample of volunteer and professionally employed members of Bridport's partnership;
- extent to which interest and duty/work lay behind the involvement of the five non-Bridport-based Dorset interviewees.

The latter were, unsurprisingly, less involved with the detailed work of the town's partnership. Those with some involvement in related policy and, more broadly, with the development and management of the MTI/MCTi/BTP were involved as part of their duties. Professional interest played a part, however, and, in two cases, interviewees were directly, if somewhat peripherally, involved in an advisory capacity.

**Table 9**

**Reasons, Roles and Motivations Given by Interviewees  
for Their Involvement in the  
Market and Coastal Towns Initiative/Market Towns Initiative  
and BT Programmes.  
(Data from Questions 1, 3<sup>64</sup> and 4 of Appendix 10)**

They became involved:	Their primary roles/involvement via:	Their motivations:
<b>Bridport-based Interviewees</b>		
Via the Town Council > >	<< Contribution withheld > >	<b>NB</b> As this interviewee's contributions were withheld, no further references to this interviewee are made in subsequent tables/figures.
As a volunteer + Business Steering Group initially + Local Action. Involved with --->>	>> Tourism Steering Group, because of interviewee's --->>	--->> local concern + interest in local economy
As a Social Entrepreneur involved with a social enterprise + Local Action. Involved with --->>	--->> Social Enterprise project, because of interviewee's ->>	--->> Local concern + interest in local enterprise
Out of duty + Youth Steering Group. Involved with --->>	--->> Steering Group, Young People, brought about by interviewee's --->>	--->> professional involvement + concern for young people.
As a volunteer + Local Action + Steering Group involved with --->>>	---> Older People Project ->	--->> Local Concern + older people + Youth
<b>Dorset Interviewees not Local to Bridport</b>		
Out of duty + professional interest, although --->>	--->>> not involved in a partnership.	N/A
Out of duty + professional interest, although --->>>	--->>> not directly involved in Bridport's partnership, but ->	--->>> involved in programmes via work.
Out of duty --->>>	--->>> as an adviser--->>	--->>> via duty
Out of duty --->>>	--->>> although not directly involved.	Duty
Out of duty ... as a member --->>	--->> of Bridport's Employment Steering Group.	Duty

<sup>64</sup> NB Question 2 of Appendix 13 refers to Beacon Towns (Section 7.3 refers).

The information provided by the respondents to the postal questionnaire was necessarily briefer. With this taken into account, however, there are, as discussed below, many similarities arising from the local nature of the work, and the respondents' local interests and loyalties.

### 7.2.3 The Respondents' Views

Table 10 presents summarized reasons given by 26 postal survey respondents for their involvement in the programmes, their roles and motivations for involvement. The greatest number (11) of the respondents were involved as part of their paid employment (eg as officers), or via civic roles as Town Councillors. Others were drawn to the work, either as volunteers or as employees of, eg, an RDA, or by virtue of their stated interests.

<b>Table 10</b>					
<b>Reasons, Roles and Motivations Given by Survey Respondents for Their Involvement in the Market Towns Initiative/Market and Coastal Towns Initiative and BT Programmes</b>					
(NB The number of respondents involved in similar ways are given in the columns next to each question heading)					
<b>(Data from Questions 1, 3 and 4 of Appendix 10<sup>65</sup>)</b>					
Became involved via:	Number	Primary roles given:	Number	Motivations given:	Number
A Council	11	Steering Group Membership (inc. a Councillor & a Project Officer)	6	Local concern	14
Work or duty	5	Lead officer and management	6	"My job" + concern + interest	3
A Regional Development Agency (RDA)	3	Support, Facilitation, Liaison, Coordination	5	Regeneration of town	3
Local Action	3	Leadership role as Chair	4	Town Council + concern + wanted to help	2
A partnership	2	Project Group member	1	Local concern +duty	2
An MTI Healthcheck	1	Programme Officer	1	Duty	2
The church	1	Finance Director & Town Clerk	1		
		"Town Council"	1		

<sup>65</sup> NB Question 2 of Appendix 3 refers to Beacon Towns. These are discussed in Section 7.3.

The preponderance of council-linked respondents is to be expected, given that most of the questionnaires were sent to Town Councils. Finding contacts and addresses for partnerships proved very difficult, for they are, in the main, transient, amorphous organizations, the members of which often have responsibilities and loyalties that lie outside the partnership. Town and Parish Councils, on the other hand, are relatively permanent, public, democratically accountable organizations, with established procedures for maintaining and preserving records, and for transferring responsibilities formally, with, for example, a change in political power, or of the Councillor nominated to represent the Council on a partnership Board or other group.

Within this mixture of duty, volunteering, specific topics of personal interest, and the varied motivations and roles of those involved, lie both the:

> **seeds of success:**

- for example,
  - a common interest in their town/area that persuades and enables people to work together,
  - considerable knowledge about the town/area and its needs,
  - a willingness to give time and energy to the work,
  - a relatively single-minded group of capable people willing to exert influence and lobbying power in order to achieve their aims;

> **threats to success:**

- for example,
  - limited time to participate,
  - limited numbers of people able/willing to participate (with those who did probably drawn from the – narrow - ranks of the already busy),
  - personal/organizational interests that can cause confusion, or conflict with the interests of others, to the detriment of all,
  - aspects of a perhaps poorly understood controlling bureaucracy,
  - the ultimately inevitably limited energy and enthusiasm of those involved (the well-known problem of volunteer fatigue).

When the demands made on people, the relatively small sums of money available, the difficulties and tensions associated with partnership working, and the lack of guaranteed support for projects are considered, it is perhaps a wonder that so many people were – are – willing to become involved in this type of work. The next section draws on the views expressed by participants in an attempt to explore this.

#### **7.2.4 Why do they do it? “All for One, and One for All”, or “Me for Mine, or Not at All”?**

By definition, volunteers bring with them commitment and enthusiasm, as illustrated by one respondent from the south west, who, "*Made sure I attended the first meeting as a local community activist.*", and another, from the south east, who wrote, "*I wanted to do something to change the community and this seemed to offer the best vehicle – I heard about it through the church.*"

Commitment and enthusiasm are not restricted to volunteers. The survey revealed that paid and elected officials are also committed to their town partnerships. In any event, as far as this research is concerned, the interest of interviewees and respondents is largely a given: they took the trouble to participate, with even the two respondents to the postal questionnaire who were not involved with the programmes doing what they could to provide information.

The enthusiasm from one officer from a town in the south east is evident from this quote, "*On taking up the position as Town Clerk **I felt** [writer’s emphasis] that we needed to develop a list of … priorities.*" Similarly, a Councillor from the north west (essentially a volunteer) wrote, "*I was already a local Parish Councillor and prior to that an early retired Local Authority Engineer … so was curious as to how the funding seemingly<sup>66</sup> promised by the MTI scheme could benefit the area.*"

Again, as with the interviewees, people’s reasons for involvement varied, but included the specific concerns and interests of individuals, as well as reasons related to duty and work. They were essentially local in nature.

As the interviewees were drawn from a county-wide pool of people, not all were as closely involved in the work of Bridport’s partnership as others. All of the “non-Bridport” interviewees, however, had experience of both policy and practice. The

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<sup>66</sup> The use of the word, ‘seemingly’, is revealing, used as it was, by an ex-public servant, one well used, perhaps, to the difference between the stated intentions of politically inspired programmes, and the eventual outcomes, inevitably tempered by reality (CLG 2009 p3, Skidmore *et al.* 2006 p27).

majority of the officers had lived and worked in Dorset for many years. Their collective experience embraced the private, public and voluntary sectors, community development, and local, regional, and national policies and priorities.

Their views reflect these differences, with some having a direct, long-term practical involvement with the work in, and for, Bridport and other towns, while others, although relatively remote from this, brought experience and expertise from their work with County and District Councils, and the voluntary sector. The interviewees' complementary views and experiences do, however, help to shed light on the difficulties associated with the development and implementation of two related, but distinct community-led programmes (MTI and MCTi). The programmes, essentially similar in intent, were subjected to significant outside control and influence. They operated within a complicated and often rapidly changing political and policy environment that was itself subject to pressures arising from the introduction of new ways of working, such as, for example, the introduction – if not full acceptance – of community planning (Carnegie UK 2007 p35). The views of the interviewees and respondents suggest that frequent changes in policy direction and pressure to start and complete work confuses people, and can result in unintended consequences. For example, one interviewee, a County Council officer, summarized these views and the associated frustrations thus: "... *it's the short-termism, there's no guarantee, no confidence that you'll be able to continue [the] approach, and that it'll be right for the next time the badges are changed on the organizations or Comprehensive Spending Review comes out [sic], or whatever.*" However, as discussed in the next section, people are willing to work for the common good, but need consistent support and sufficient time in which to do the work.

#### **7.2.5 More Haste, Less Speed; Evolution, not Revolution**

One officer, a long-standing employee of the County Council, noted that Dorset had the first county-wide small towns partnership in the south-west<sup>67</sup>. It helped to bring money into the county to help pay for support for the towns during their Healthcheck work, and was well-placed to contribute to the work of MCTi partnerships. When community planning was introduced, however, the county-wide partnership was discontinued in favour of individual approaches by District Councils.

The loss of a coherent, county-wide approach could, perhaps, help to explain the mixed, sometimes confused, sometimes disappointed, but, given their willingness to

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<sup>67</sup> Established by the writer with colleagues from Dorset's Rural Community Council and local authorities (Morris 1996, 1996a).

participate, not wholly disheartened views obtained from some of the interviewees directly involved in the MCTi work in Bridport. For example, a locally involved council officer said that, "*It seemed like an amazing opportunity for Bridport. ... In the event, it certainly wasn't ... The whole set-up was ludicrous.*" A Bridport-based volunteer explained how the main – core – group seemed to have been selected before the first, presumably inaugural, public meeting was held, whereas another, referring to the same meeting, simply noted that the older people present remarked on the lack of things to do in Bridport.

It is clear that the initial involvement of the interviewees local to Bridport, namely one officer, a social entrepreneur experienced in the ways of government programmes and processes, and two volunteers (both of whom were relatively new to government programmes), stemmed from personal invitations to attend the first public meeting, rather than from any wider invitation to the general public. This approach is understandable, but again hints at the problematic nature of this type of (theoretically) community-led development work, where programmes are limited in terms of time and money, and are relatively bureaucratic. These constraints can conspire to put pressure on those involved to begin work before the organization responsible for initiating action – often a local authority<sup>68</sup> – has been able to form the desired representative partnership (DETR/MAFF 2000 p78), or for the people involved (almost certainly already busy) to acquire the necessary skills themselves, or to recruit someone with those skills.

The pressure to start and to achieve does not serve local needs. Neither can it, on any common sense basis, ultimately meet sponsoring organizations' aims in terms of success and value for money. This pressure carries with it a danger of self-inflicted failure, and is one consequence of a centralizing tendency that makes it difficult to develop wider social accountability within a community (Whittaker, Warren, Turner and Hutchcroft 2004 p186).

Irrespective of this, that the individuals involved volunteered is testament to their interest and commitment, and suggests that it is indeed local loyalties, combined with local knowledge and awareness of local needs, and a belief in their abilities to identify and solve problems, and to capitalize on strengths, that draws people together to work for the common good.

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<sup>68</sup> In many cases local authorities are the accountable bodies responsible for partnerships' finances. This is because Councils, unlike relatively informally constituted volunteer partnerships (eg those that have not become, for example, Community Development Trusts), are both constitutionally and organizationally capable of fulfilling this role. In many cases, therefore, for pragmatic – as well as democratic – reasons, Town, or other, Councils, were integral and essential partnership members.

As to the question posed at the beginning of this section, it appears that people participate in this type of work because they are concerned for, and care about, their town, their home. The suggestion that participants have an, "All for one, and one for all" spirit regarding their partnership has an obvious element of truth. Encouragingly, the data does not suggest that those involved were selfishly committed to their project to the exclusion or detriment of others. Nevertheless, people have their specific interests and so, in view of this, and the essentially voluntary nature of their involvement, "Each for our own, but all for our town", perhaps more accurately reflects most participants' motivations.

As will be seen, answers to subsequent questions by some of the interviewees local to Bridport indicate a level of frustration with the processes and organization of the work. There is also evidence, especially from the two volunteers, of some confusion arising from a lack of general and specific knowledge about both the MCTi and the MTI/BT programmes. In their interviews they referred to the MCTi Core Group, to the Town Council, Healthcheck, Foodcheck, Millennium Initiative, and to the BCI (Bridport Council Initiative) that, "... *had this pot of money ...*" which could be used to help, "... *people set up things.*" A certain vagueness about the specifics of the work is not surprising given the interviewees' equally specific community and professional interests, and their part-time involvement in work characterized by complicated elements with similar names, and various organizational and management structures.

#### **7.2.6 Keep Things Simple, and Stable (Please)**

It follows that there is much to be said for simplicity, consistency and continuity where terminology, processes, and the number and names of programmes and organizations are concerned. There is much in the literature to support this contention (Defra 2004 p90, ESRC 2004 p3, Mrinska 2008), but little appears to change, with, for example, both the Healthcheck and Parish Planning processes having been brought under the umbrella title of Community-led Planning. Although sensible in that it combines two approaches (one for towns, one for villages) into a single, nine-step process (ACRE 2009 p3), such relatively frequent changes of name can, as illustrated above, cause confusion, especially for people, like partnership volunteers, who are neither professionally nor wholly involved in community development work.

The lack of awareness about the detail of the programmes was particularly marked where Bridport's BT status was concerned. Of the local Bridport partnership members interviewed, one volunteer said that the term, Beacon Town, meant nothing. The other volunteer said that BT, "... *status never really I think did much, got much*

*through [sic] to my brain to be honest ... Beacon Town status was there, but was encapsulated into everything we were trying to do.*" The local authority officer had heard of Bridport's BT status, but noted that, "*I've never really taken that on board, to be honest.*" The social entrepreneur, who was closely involved with the BT work, stated more positively that, BT status, "*... gave the ... Trust more credibility with the Town Council, which it hadn't had before ...*", before adding, "*... whether that in itself had any positive benefits is another matter, but it certainly put us on the map a bit more.*"

It is safe to conclude from the above that Bridport's BT status was relatively unknown locally, although the town's website continues to refer to its BT status<sup>69</sup>. Whether it has had, or is having an impact in Bridport and the other BTs is also unknown, because the BTs have not been formally revisited since 2005 (Nichols 2005).

The extent to which the BT Programme was recognized by other participants is discussed in the next section.

### **7.3 Beacon Towns – More Glowing Than Shining**

As BT status was awarded for work relating to a specific topic (eg local food in Bridport, integrated service provision in Hexham and Haltwhistle – see Table 4), it follows that those directly involved in the BT topic work are most likely to know about it, with others involved in unrelated work having little, if any, interest. Nevertheless, in view of the BT programme's close relationship to the MTI (if not the MCTi), it is disappointing that local awareness, at least amongst some partnerships, was low. It is not, however, surprising. The programme, which started in 2003, was effectively over by 2006. This made for obvious difficulties in establishing it, as was the intention, as a highly regarded award designed to, "*... inform the work of other towns partnerships, and the development* [writer's emphasis] *of policy.*" (Nichols 2005 p5).

As far as wider work in Dorset/Bridport is concerned, an argument could justifiably be made that this is because the MCTi was, in effect, south west England's version of the MTI, related, but not identical, and without the direct connection to the MTI/BTP that existed in the rest of England. Although this may go some way to explain the lack of awareness in Bridport, the information in Table 11 indicates that four of the respondents from the eleven Beacon Towns, none of which are in the south west, from which questionnaires were received (out of the eighteen – ie every BT – to which

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<sup>69</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/ykdnaw> (accessed 5<sup>th</sup> January 2010).

questionnaires were sent) either knew little about it, were unaware of the status, or had minimal involvement with the programme.

<b>Table 11</b>	
<b>Extent of Participants' Involvement With, and Knowledge of, the Beacon Towns Programme.</b>	
<b>(Data from Question 2, of Appendix 11)</b>	
<b>Bridport &amp; Dorset Interviewees</b>	<b>Postal Survey Respondents</b>
<b>Three interviewees were aware of BT status</b>	Aware that town was the BT for Information & Communications Technology (ICT)
	Aware, but involvement minimal
	Status attributed to Project Manager's work rather than to the topic (planning & town revitalization).
<b>One interviewee was not aware of BT status</b>	The two respondents from one town were largely unaware of their town's BT status
<b>One interviewee (officer) had marginal involvement but was aware</b>	Aware that town was the BT for the rural Business Improvement District trial
<b>Four interviewees (officers) not involved but were aware</b>	Aware, but work faded
	Aware/involved via Town Council
	Aware, but no real involvement
	Aware that town was the BT for "Heritage"
	Aware that town was the BT for Sustainable Tourism

An example of further evidence of either confusion or a lack of knowledge of BT status, in one town in the Yorkshire and Humber region, from which two completed questionnaires were received, one respondent, the partnership's Chair knew that the town was a Beacon, but noted that the town was **nominated** (a fact hardly indicative of a locally-led desire to participate), and indicated, "... *no real involvement.*" The other respondent, a town councillor, stated categorically that, "*We are not involved in Beacon Towns.*" Although this cannot be taken to mean that the respondent was unaware of the town's status, it does suggest, when the previous respondent's comment is taken into account, a distinct lack of involvement and, possibly, interest. In similar vein, a respondent from a BT in the East Midlands noted that, "*The Mayor attended a Beacon Town function ... Town Council's involvement minimal.*", while another, from the East of England, perhaps revealingly in terms of the programme's apparent lack of a wider, national impact, and low level recognition, recorded, "*We were involved at the early stages but this [BT work] seemed to die a death.*"

This uncertainty (Table 11) is concerning and illuminating, given that most of the respondents held management or leadership roles in their partnership (Table 10). The

concern is compounded by the fact that the majority of respondents were officials or councillors<sup>70</sup>, ie in some way professionally involved with the work of the partnerships, and, more generally, with the work of all tiers of government. A possible reason for the evident disparity in awareness could lie in the selection process. Some towns applied to be BTs via a regional competition (eg the south east), whereas, to judge from the view expressed by the partnership Chair in the preceding paragraph, at least one town was nominated for the award. Although it is not possible to make a causal connection between the extent of participants' awareness and the selection process (ie application or nomination), it is reasonable to assume that volunteers are more likely to be aware, supportive and enthusiastic, than are nominees.

However, while the dominant presence of professional participants is to be expected in view of the way the research was conducted, it does raise questions about the extent to which the wider community (members of the public) were involved in the work. It also, more positively, illustrates the extent to which professional people are prepared to commit to working for the common good, as discussed in the next section.

### **7.3.1 Working for the Common Good (or Trying to)**

People were willing to cooperate. One of the Dorset interviewees noted that, *The idea was to have 10 focus groups. I set aside my own specific interest, [writer's emphasis] which would have been youth, or housing, and trotted off to Tourism.*" People were also prepared to persist with the work, and to take on additional responsibilities. For example, a respondent described a personal progression from a position as the representative of one sectoral interest (education), to membership of two working groups and the chairmanship of the partnership. Another noted, having been a member of the initial small steering group, that, *"Subsequently I have been one of two part-time project officers servicing the various theme and other groups responsible for progressing actions."*

These examples not only indicate how individuals made progress within partnerships, but also chart the development of the partnerships themselves. Similarly, the fact that the Bridport local interviewees remained involved, irrespective of any confusion, frustration or doubts they had about the work and its associated processes, demonstrates the extent to which people are both interested in their town, and prepared to commit to it.

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<sup>70</sup> Namely: 15 officers, five Councillors, and one person who was both a Councillor and a Project Officer.

Involvement with and loyalty to a group or a place is a fundamental human characteristic, and one that has been cultivated in community terms by, for example, the Local Exchange and Trading Systems/Schemes (LETS) and loyalty card experiments in the 1990s (Simms, Oram, MacGillivray and Drury 2003 p44), and, more recently, the Transition Towns movement, the aims of which are both global and local (Derounian and Skinner 2008 p5, Transition Towns 2009). Politicians recognize this characteristic and, in their desire to exploit it, make encouraging references to its potential. Indeed, the rhetoric from all three major British political parties has been similar in its support for locally-led action<sup>71</sup>.

For example, Labour Governments since 1997 have stressed their desire for local people to become involved (interestingly, such references by politicians are often to 'people', or to the abstract notion of 'communities', rather than to local government) as a way to achieve, "*... modernisation of government and democratic renewal.*" (Pearce and Mawson 2003 p52), and have introduced, for example, the Community Empowerment Fund, "*...designed specifically to promote community involvement ...*" (Barnes, Skelcher, Beirens, Dalziel, Jeffares and Wilson 2008 p33).

Messages from other parties are similar. The Conservative Party, in a policy paper about housing, noted that, "*In order to unleash a new wave of community-led development, local people need to become part of the solution, rather than being seen as most of the problem.*" (Conservative Party 2009 p6).

The Liberal Democrat Party's view is similarly supportive, both nationally (Hughes 2007) and from a local government perspective. Boyle (2008 p66) noted that, "*The devolution of decision-making power to increasingly local bodies, usually elected ones, has become a hallmark of Liberal Democrats in local government ...*". He also cautioned, however, that, "*too little policy addresses the central issues of community politics beyond the devolution of power – community politicians need the support of policy about how to cut our giant institutions down to size, how to tackle the growing monopoly power of retailers and other corporates, how to set professionals free of targets and empower frontline staff, and how to engage public service clients in delivering services – and a great deal else besides.*" (p85). This last statement surely strikes at the nub of the problem.

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<sup>71</sup> Interest is not restricted to the major parties. For example, the United Kingdom Independence Party stated that it, ... *is the true party of localism and local democracy – we will give local bodies local independence and control of schools, hospitals and planning – where local people's needs are constantly being overridden by EU and UK bureaucrats.* (Campbell-Bannerman 2006 p3).

Politicians in search of national power might believe in devolution and localism, but find it very difficult to release the reins of power once they have them firmly in their grasp<sup>72</sup>. There is doubt, therefore, as to whether politicians of any party will actually cede long-term power to local partnerships. At the very least there is a need to bring to their attention the potential and actual achievements of those involved in community-led development work; in other words, to make the point, "... *that very local action, set within wider strategic planning and management, provides a key to rural regeneration.*" (Moseley 2009 p14). As will be seen from the next section, local people are willing to be involved and to lead, provided that they are given the opportunities and necessary freedoms.

### **7.3.2 Motivated (Mostly) and Willing to Lead**

The participants in this research were willing to take responsibility, but their freedom to lead and control was limited, and there was potential for confusion, if not conflict, arising from the different priorities and remits of partners. Concerns about the lack of local control over, for example, timescales and finance, and rules imposed from "outside" became more evident as the questions asked of participants moved from the personal to those associated with the work of the partnerships.

Again, participants' concern for their towns and fellow townspeople is evident, as can be seen from Tables 9 and 10, in which their motivations for involvement are listed. Concerns were mostly expressed in relation to each participant's town and area, and although some were generic (eg young people, the local economy, housing), others were specific and described in some detail in the interviews and returned questionnaires.

By way of illustration, one respondent from the north-west, an officer, reported that, "*Members of the community became involved with the MTI scheme because they wanted to bring attention to the problems/issues of rural communities ...*". Another noted a, "*Desire to harness the MTI and resource for the benefit of the towns ...*", and a wish to, "*Ensure representation of the interests of grass root residents.*", while two respondents from a third town referred to the need to protect historic buildings, and noted their concern that the, "... *local population/community was not being listened to.*"

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<sup>72</sup> There is an interesting contrast in their attitude between an apparent unwillingness to devolve power to lower tiers of – of admittedly often politicised - government, and the trend in recent years to devolve some powers (or responsibilities) to the corporate sector and various non-governmental organizations (Quangos).

Specific concerns and interests noted by interviewees from Bridport included employment law and the minimum wage, as well as a perceived opportunity to help, "... *young people to be involved in the future development of this town.*.", public procurement policy and practice relating to local food, the needs of older people, and a wish – unfulfilled it seems – to bring old and young together for mutual benefit. This suggests an interest in, and willingness to address, topics significantly different and more difficult than the stereotypical priorities of hanging baskets and Christmas lights. That is not to suggest that these two old favourites are no longer popular or important – they do, after all, offer partnerships the possibility of the "quick wins" that are necessary both to encourage locals and reassure government (Harris 2002 p329, Owen, Moseley and Courtney 2007 p73). They, and similar others, continue to feature as contributory elements of the projects entered in, for example, AMT's Market Town of the Year Award scheme (AMT 2009).

Somewhat less encouragingly, one respondent's involvement was at the request of the Countryside Agency, "*Presumably [because in this south-east town] there was not a willing and suitable local body.*" to do the work. An interviewee, in answering a question about possible confusion arising from the fact that both the MTI/BT and MCTi operated in the south west, said that people weren't confused, but noted that, "... *the MCTi was such a difficult, convoluted process that I think it eclipsed people's awareness of anything else ...*". In terms of initial expectations of the MCTi, however, at least one participant in the programme (from a town that had suffered badly from the effects of the Foot and Mouth outbreak in 2001) reported that, "... *the opportunity to bid for MCTi status was very appropriate and a real godsend.*"

Implicit in the first of the three comments in the preceding paragraph is the lack of community leadership, interest, involvement, belief in the process, or a combination of all four. That the Countryside Agency saw fit to ask another organization to manage the process could imply a determination by the "centre" to impose its will, or a willingness by the same "centre" to help develop both a partnership in the town (ie to encourage community leadership) and to learn from a place deemed to be challenging and interesting by the programme's sponsor, in order to improve the development process<sup>73</sup>. Some confusion about the contradiction between the **imposition** of a method on a town in order to **encourage** local participation and leadership was also evident from comments made by Bridport interviewees. An RDA officer acknowledged the tensions arising from the consultant-led process imposed on Bridport, and the

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<sup>73</sup> The writer was involved with this particular town and can confirm that the intention was to help and learn, not to impose. In order to be help and learn, however, the community had to be persuaded to participate. This is, therefore, a good example of how one person's help might be seen as an imposition by others!

difficulties that both the RDA's staff, who were relatively inexperienced in community development work, and the Town Council had, in trying, "... *to really energise local people.*"

The second comment – about process - hints at an underlying bureaucracy. This, a seemingly inevitable component and consequence of remotely controlled programmes which have to satisfy rules governing public sector expenditure, has been recognized as a wider topic of political concern (Davies 2002, HM Treasury 2007 p8), not least in terms of the extent to which centralization might reduce people's willingness to, "... *engage with organisations that have no authority.*" (Lyons 2007 p107). Although this quotation refers to councils, it could apply to any organization, including local community-led partnerships. The authority – or ability and freedom – to be able to do things in accordance with local plans and wishes is a necessary, but clearly very difficult to achieve, precursor to locally determined action.

Encouragingly, the third comment suggests that when a clearly-defined and obvious need exists, support and consequent success can quickly follow. This suggests that success in community-led development work stems from obvious and commonly recognized needs, coupled with project and programme designs that allow for a measure of local autonomy. That people are interested in locally-led work is clear, as will be seen from the discussion in the next section about the participants' priorities and hoped-for achievements.

## **7.4 Hopes, Actions and Some (Dis)Satisfactions - Priorities and Achievements**

### **7.4.1 An Overview**

In broad terms, participants stressed their desire for community-led action, influence, and the money and structures needed to enable them to realize **their** plans. There was a mix of views about the extent to which plans had been implemented and projects completed, with a diversity of somewhat contradictory views being expressed by interviewees (this, in part, was due to the interviewees' specific interests – some successful, some not). The majority view of all the participants, however, was that some progress, varying from "very good" to "relatively little", had been made. Similarly, the majority reported that their expectations had been met. To judge from the interviewees' comments, however, the expectations of some were relatively low, or, perhaps simply pragmatic, or related, for example, to the success of action

planning as a **process**, rather than to specific successful outcomes, such as the older people's project in Bridport, or the completion of a major building project. The following sections consider the data in more detail.

#### **7.4.2 People Hoped for Practical Pragmatic Action and Support**

The data in Tables 12 and 13 indicate the extent to which respondents' and interviewees' hopes emphasize action, specifically community-led work, regeneration, a desire to, "get things done", and the wherewithal – time, freedom to act, money – needed to enable them to do this. This pragmatic, action-orientated emphasis is reinforced by the relatively few references to clichéd mantras such as sustainability and visions.

Typical of the postal survey respondents' views is the following from the north-west, "*I could see that this was an opportunity to get money for desirable projects which would not otherwise be undertaken by normal [Local Authority] processes.*" Interestingly, this respondent, not a local authority representative, also noted a wish to overcome the, "... *long-standing (but factually incorrect) complaint ... that the City Council never spent any money*" in the town, suggesting an appreciation of the need to be fair to other local authority tiers, and also to involve them. The same respondent also noted, in passing, that although the partnership had 50 organizations listed as members, in reality the work was left to the 12 people on the executive group, "... *and the whole programme was lucky that these individuals kept their involvement throughout the year and were prepared to undertake various training tasks etc.*" The respondent does not suggest that the 12 people were exhausted by the experience, but the difference between the number of people theoretically involved, and the number actually involved, usefully illustrates two things: one, that the term, community-led, can be misleading, as the number of people from the community is often small and, by definition, therefore, relatively unrepresentative; two, that if most of the work is left to the same, few, people, there is a risk that, eventually, they will suffer from "volunteer fatigue" (CA 2004b p65, Caffyn 2004 p22, Sullivan, Downe, Entwhistle and Sweeting 2006). In a related comment, another respondent stated the hope that the MTI/MCTi/BTP work would, "*Raise its profile with partners – particularly County and District Councils.*", while a third wrote of their hope that the work would, "*Kick start regeneration and improve partnership working.*"

Some respondents referred to 'softer', more aspirational wishes. For example: "... *to establish the community's needs ... and to prepare plans and strategies based on these needs.*"; to gain, "*Enjoyment from working together*"; a hope that the work would bring, "... *legitimacy and expertise*"; and a stated aim, namely, "... *to support*

*the sustainability [of the town] as a key service centre for residents, businesses and the neighbouring parish communities.”* (officer, south-west).

**Table 12**  
**Interviewees' Hopes, Achievements and Satisfaction With the MCTi/MTI and BT  
Programmes**  
**(Data from Question 5, 6 & 7 of Appendix 10)**

Hopes and expectations:	The extent to which action plans have been implemented:	The extent to which the work has met expectations:
<b>Bridport-based Interviewees</b>		
Money + Regeneration + Community-led development + Skill centre ("big project")	Infrastructure survey + Rural transport + Improving relationships	Interviewee's specific project not implemented, but Wheels to Work scheme implemented and surveys completed, but reasons for non-implementation partly due to failure to select and pursue one major project.
Community-led planning / Development Trust, but this --->	--->not implemented + frustration with structures, therefore --->	---> confusing structures locally + Disparate views + promises heard but not fulfilled - but talk about Development Trust continues.
Money + Locally-led projects + Skills centre	Not achieved (in terms of work relating to young people) + disillusion with process. Wheels to Work is working but limited, ("useless"), & fails to meet need --->	---> interviewee expected it to fail, and it did.
Older People helped, so --->	---> yes, implemented (older people's projects), and so --->	---> yes it has, and as a consequence Bridport older people's project has been used as a model county-wide.
<b>Dorset Interviewees not Local to Bridport</b>		
Not a member of the partnership, but --->	---> the programmes and related processes have achieved things. Understanding of, and sensitivity to local needs are necessary, as is the recognition that sufficient time is needed.	Not known (not a member of a partnership)
People working together + money for projects, but --->	--->doesn't know (not a member of a partnership), although --->	---> in general, action planning has worked, but more emphasis should be given to supporting locals to help themselves. People are critical to success.
That links would be made, and resources maximised, but --->	---> the extent to which Bridport's plans have been implemented is not known, but doubtful due to the fact that people don't feel they own the process; and so --->	---> there are gaps from point of view of RDA in terms of evidence base (& Healthcheck not in evidence relative to other towns).
Money	No[t], but merged with community planning work. Community planning has taken over from MCTi. Work does encourage people to become involved, and helps them develop skills, but need to "join-up" new programmes/initiatives with old (to ensure continuity).	Not able to comment (not a member of the partnership).
Community-led development + Community facilities (cinema) + Skills	Work continues, but --->	---> lack of clarity about aims/purposes / poor communication.

**Table 13**

**Survey Respondents' Hopes, Achievements and Satisfaction  
With the MCTi/MTI and BT Programmes**

(NB The number of respondents making **similar** points are given in the columns next to each main heading)  
**(Data from Question 5, 6 & 7 Appendix 10)**

Hopes and expectations:	Number	The extent to which action plans have been implemented:	Number	The extent to which the work has met expectations:	Number	
Community-led work	5	Very good progress	1	19 respondents indicate some progress	Yes	11
Regeneration	3	Good progress	6		Yes, with caveats	5
Get things done	3	Progress	5		Useful, limited	2
Money, investment	3	Progress, economic projects	1		Some	2
Services	2	Good progress, "easier" projects	1		No	3
Environmental, economy	1	Good progress initially	1		No, negative effect	1
Services, Economy, quality of life	1	Progress, "easier projects"	1	7 respondents indicate relatively little progress	4: "not met"	
Revitalize	1	Good progress, frustration	1			
Faster development	1	Some progress, frustration	1			
Increased influence	1	Little progress	1			
Sustainability	1	Relatively little progress	1			
Promote town	1	No progress, "early days"	1			
Legitimacy + expertise	1	Doubtful progress	1			
A vision	1	Some progress (MTI), frustration (BT).	2			
No idea	1	Frustration	1			
Not known	1	No progress - left MTI	1			

#### **7.4.3 Confusion and Frustrations Were Also Evident ...**

Some of the contributions suggested a degree of certainty about aims, but a lack of certainty and some frustration with processes and programmes. For example, one interviewee from Bridport explained that, *"Currently, we're concentrating on doing up a local skills centre ..."*, but then went on to say that the work had nothing to do with MCTi, and that, *"I'm not sure about the BT work ..."*. Another stressed the need, *"... to do community engagement, community planning type stuff, but then you have to end up with structures that can actually deliver ..."*. The interviewee also referred to two hopes, namely that the MCTi would result in a Development Trust or similar structure, and that the process would, *"... acknowledge and respect the existing organizations in the town, and support them as well ... in the end it didn't do either."*

Whether the MCTi/BT work as implemented was capable of meeting the wishes of the interviewees is a moot point. A Bridport partnership interviewee, referring to an initial "hard sell" of the process, said that there was talk, *"... of considerable funding to rejuvenate the town ... we were talking about millions."* (another interviewee put a figure to this, saying that a sum of seven million pounds had been mentioned at a public meeting).

There was some doubt about the type and size of project that potential funding organizations would find acceptable. A Bridport volunteer noted that, *"... our ten groups were a good idea, perhaps, but I kept saying that we need a big project which then we could present to the funders ..."* in a bid for financial support, before saying that, *"... what we were doing was coming out with a whole range of smaller projects."* Implicit in this is that funding bodies, and some members of the partnership, would have preferred a single, larger project. The interviewee referred to the Skill Centre as a hoped-for project, and also to a Wheels to Work scooter hire scheme as, *"The big one that took off."* A Bridport-based officer, however, referred to the Wheels to Work scheme as being something that, *"... was not a local aspiration ... blueprint imposed from outside ... works to a limited degree, and for some people it works very well ...".* The officer remarked that the project, while good in theory, was, in practice, *"... useless ... The whole point is to get young people to college, and to work, and because of restrictions set on the distance [that young people are allowed to travel, they] can't reach the places of learning."*<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, Bridport's Wheels to Work scheme was given as an example of a working scheme in a 2009 report for Derbyshire County Council (Derbyshire CC 2009 p81), suggesting at least a measure of success. Similarly, a page on Dorset's county website suggests that the scheme continues to operate as part of a larger, county-wide initiative (<http://tinyurl.com/y4ybmm>, accessed 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 2010). These things take time!

The impression from these contributions is, as mentioned above, of a somewhat confused process, and somewhat confused people. That the former might have caused the latter is evident from the comments of officers from outside the Bridport partnership. For example, an RDA officer noted that, "*I think it [MTI/MCTi/BTP] raised a lot of expectations about what could and could not be done for the town, certainly around the affordable housing issue.*" (interestingly, given the stress placed on housing by this particular interviewee, it was not the dominant topic for most interviewees). This interviewee further noted that people will not commit to plans that they feel have been imposed upon them, and over which, therefore, they have no ownership.

Uncertainty about the status of the work amongst those less directly involved in Bridport's partnership was evident from comments made by the two District Council officers interviewed. Rather confusingly, one noted that, "*I felt it was in a way sad, because it sort of suddenly came to an end.*", before adding, "... *it sort of died really, although it's still there, it still exists, it doesn't exist in the same way.*" The other officer noted that there were, "... *expectations about community facilities ... about restoring the cinema.*" The cinema was not raised as a topic by Bridport-based interviewees, possibly because, according to this interviewee, it had, at the time of the interviews, already been restored. This interviewee also noted that, "... *delivery wasn't perceived as being the role of the ... [MCTi] ... and I think that was the cause of a lot of tension.*" In conclusion, the interviewee said, "... *the things that went on that appeared to disappear, six or seven years ago, have ... actually re-emerged and gone much further over the last two years than they had done up to then.*", and confirmed that the things making progress were in Bridport's Action Plan.

A similar mix of views was reported by respondents to the postal survey. There were some references to frustrations, due, for example, to project delays<sup>75</sup> that caused, "... *considerable administrative work by the ... executive ... [to ensure that the money in a north-western town] would not be lost.*"; while, in a Yorkshire town, an officer noted that, "... *apparently £350,000 was spent ... no one can remember what it was spent on, except consultants' reports and feasibility studies ... [and] there are no delivered projects that anyone can point to.*" A third, from a town in the south-east, simply reported, "*It is as if the project never took place.*" The majority, however, recorded a measure of progress.

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<sup>75</sup> In one case, a project was withdrawn by the grant recipient. This demonstrates the many "that's life" variables that always have the potential to affect this type of work, which is, by definition, complicated and risky.

#### **7.4.4 ... but Progress was Made**

In spite of the frustrations, confusions, and uncertainties associated with the work the evidence from this research suggests that in some places a lot of progress was made (once again, the lack of information about the non-responders tantalizes and intrigues).

Irrespective of the detailed uncertainties revealed in interviews, both interviewees and respondents indicated that progress had been made (Tables 12 and 13), significantly so in the case of the latter, with nineteen reporting progress. This mix, yet again, of frustrations and progress provokes questions about what might have been achieved had the partnerships been given more time and support.

It is interesting to note that only two interviewees and three respondents referred to money when asked to name their hopes and expectations. This suggests, given the length of time that had passed since the beginning of the programmes, an emphasis on desired ends rather than financial means.

Although it is difficult to gain a clear understanding of the effectiveness of the MCTi/BT work in Bridport, progress was made, albeit gradually and with a degree of scepticism about the – imposed – approach. Time is of the essence. Local people must be given enough of it to allow them to establish and maintain their partnership, and to identify and implement projects. This presumes that local interest, and the stamina levels of the individuals most closely involved, can be maintained.

The generally positive views are reflected in the extent to which participants indicated that their expectations had been met. These are discussed in the next section.

#### **7.4.5 Onwards and Upwards? Some Expectations Met, but Things Could Have Been Better**

Twenty respondents recorded that at least some of their expectations had been met, and two of the Bridport-based interviewees reported a degree of success. There were less positive comments, exemplified by references to delays, local political changes, lack of finance and staff, confusing structures, and disillusion arising from, "... *failures ... to deliver ...*", all of which are familiar and have obvious implications for both present and future community-led development work.

Behind the broadly positive summarized views expressed lie some interesting comments, some of which might begin to hold the key to understanding both the mix of experiences and opinions of participants, and also the problems associated with the programmes; not least the need for simplicity of organizational structures, and long term, consistent commitment to the development and monitoring and evaluation of both the programmes and associated approaches.

For example, one respondent from the north east stated that the amalgamation of two towns into one partnership was, "... *an error owing to dissimilar characteristics of settlements.*", and noted that, "*Funding support [was] too limited.*" The same respondent also noted that the transfer of the work from the Countryside Agency to the Regional Development Agency, "... *moved goal posts to hard line economic development.*", and that the involvement of a private sector organization had, "... *obstructed community involvement and skewed direction of the partnership.*" The implication that public and private sector organizations had complicated matters in what appears to have been an already complicated two-town partnership, provides another illustration of the difficulties associated with this way of working. Nevertheless, and encouragingly, the respondent also noted that although only a limited amount had been achieved, the work was, "*Worthwhile ...*".

Operating a two-town partnership is likely to be difficult, for, as the Dorset County Council officer commented, "... *every town is different ...*". The officer noted that Bridport's partnership, having been built up **over the years<sup>76</sup>** (writer's emphasis), has made progress with, "... *environmental improvements, training provision, community learning centre – and still working hard ...*". Again, implicit in these comments is the need to allow partnerships time to build and develop. It takes time to recruit people to community work and, inevitably, in work that is largely volunteer-led and takes many years to implement, people come and go (in many ways it is work that never ends).

Also, as volunteers, the people involved have their own priorities and prejudices, and are much freer to express their views and work for their pet projects than they would be as employees. Therefore, although the participants in this research are partnership members, they also have their own interests and priorities. In this they are a little like members of a town cricket team in that they are both individual and team players in a part-time team. It should not surprise, therefore, if their views differ, and even conflict, on occasions, although, as discussed in Sections 7.3.1 and 7.3.2, in the main

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<sup>76</sup> From the writer's personal knowledge and involvement at various times, Bridport has had an active partnership since at least 1994 (Chapter 6 refers).

people are willing to cooperate. For example, one volunteer from Bridport first explained how it had taken a long time to overcome the drawback of being an "incomer", someone seen as likely to, "... threaten the insularity, the comfort zone.", before noting that, "*There are some very on the ball local councillors, working very hard.*", and commenting that the, "*MCTi was not dominated by the Council – it was led by the community ...*". There are always exceptions to rules, however, because this view was at odds with another interviewee from Bridport, a social entrepreneur, who said that the MTI and MCTi were seen by, "... certain people involved in the Town Council ... [as] ... something that was going to undermine the position of the Town Council, and so had it in for the process from the start ...". Ultimately, and as in all aspects of life, there are limits to people's willingness to cooperate and to their freedom and ability to do so.

What both the above points illustrate is the importance of Town (and other) Councils in community-led work. One respondent noted how a change in political power in one council led to a decision being taken to leave the MTI. Similarly, another referred to an, "... acrimonious battle ..." with a higher tier council, and noted that the town's position as an atypical urban (seaside) settlement in a rural setting enclosed by, but not within, a National Park, meant that the partnership was ineligible for support from both rural and urban regeneration programmes. More positively, a respondent from another town noted that most of the partnership's 15 projects had been completed or were still being implemented, and that although some projects had been dropped, others had been passed to the District Council. Other respondents also noted the important support provided by District Councils and RDAs.

Taken overall, these groups of motivated, knowledgeable people, often brought together by a desire to help improve their towns, managed, although sometimes confused and frustrated, to work within complicated, but often effective temporary and rather informal management and operational structures, to do a lot of useful work. A mixed bag of achievements it may have been, but, although the participants might not know it, and might not even agree, when their efforts are viewed collectively, they demonstrate the potential that local people have, given the right support, to effect change within their towns. There are, as discussed in the next section, useful pointers here for future community-led development initiatives.

#### **7.4.6 All in All, a Curate's Egg of Experiences and Achievements, but Useful Pointers for Future Work**

As the above has illustrated, differences of opinion, priorities and experiences occur within partnerships and, more usefully, perhaps, in terms of the potential to learn from the experiences of others, between partnerships. Both cases reinforce the need for formal monitoring and evaluation of the programmes and the partnerships. There are many explanations as to why some partnerships do better than others (eg the ability of people to get on well together, the skills, experiences, contacts, knowledge, and financial circumstances of partnership members, weaknesses in the processes that govern the programmes, varying degrees of support from potential funders, mismatches between the wishes of the partnership and the ability of funders to help, and the extent to which ambitions are achievable).

Putting to one side the impossibility of accounting for every variable likely to influence success, it is reasonable to propose that the following conditions should help to minimise the risk of failure:

- Sufficient time to form and organize partnerships, and to create and maintain relationships between members;
- political and wider community support (ie greater awareness and support from the local population) for partnership members;
- straightforward long-term processes and programmes designed to allow and encourage evolution/development;
- partnerships with sufficient power and authority to develop and implement plans;
- partnership members sufficiently well trained and supported to assume the necessary responsibilities;
- effective communication between partnership members and associated organizations;
- organizational and individual patience to enable the plans to be brought to fruition;
- structures that take into account,
  - people's limited time, energy and associated requirements for personal/organizational development,
  - the need for succession strategies.

The varied nature of participants' experiences described and explored above, should not, however, obscure the fact that, when the summary data are taken at face value,

views about progress and expectations are positive. The next section discusses the nature of the progress made in more detail.

## **7.5 Partners' Progress – Achievements Made Suggest Much Potential for Community-led Development, Given the Right Support**

Partnerships have made progress. Table 14 contains a list of partly or fully completed projects mentioned by a minority of the respondents and interviewees. This is included for illustrative purposes only. The significance of this information should not be exaggerated, and cannot be considered to be comprehensive, given that respondents were not asked to provide a list of achievements (or details of projects that had not been implemented).

Nevertheless, the breadth and scale of what has been done, in a relatively short time, is, in the writer's view, impressive. The projects listed broadly reflect the concerns detailed in Table 3 (Moseley *et al.* 2005 p8) in that they benefit the young and the elderly, address housing, transport and tourism needs, and provide answers to various locally identified cultural, environmental and public realm problems. The projects provide a useful indication of what can be done. They also offer an intriguing counterpoint to the more disappointed, frustrated experiences and limited achievements of some partnerships, as exemplified by one respondent who noted that the work had fallen short of expectations, and that, although people were initially supportive, eventually, "... *because of the subsequent failures of the scheme to deliver, the longer term effect has been the opposite.*", in that, "*It 'turned off' people who had not previously been involved.*"

**Table 14**

**Examples of Fully or Partially Implemented Projects  
Provided by Interviewees and Respondents  
(Data From Questions 6 and 7, Appendix 5)**

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Programmes of events</li> <li>2. Small projects fund</li> <li>3. IT projects</li> <li>4. Business Support Fund</li> <li>5. Skills training</li> <li>6. Sports centre feasibility study</li> <li>7. Community Resource centre</li> <li>8. Fire station redevelopment</li> <li>9. Astro turf and sports facilities</li> <li>10. Canal towpath and mooring improvements</li> <li>11. Canal boat project</li> <li>12. Car parking</li> <li>13. Traffic-related projects</li> <li>14. Housing projects</li> <li>15. Improved Car Parking</li> <li>16. Two Youth Café projects</li> <li>17. Traffic management</li> <li>18. Public Realm Improvements</li> <li>19. Restoration of mainline railway station platforms</li> <li>20. Directory of sports clubs</li> <li>21. Credit Union</li> <li>22. Improved police support</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>23. Affordable and diverse Housing</li> <li>24. New Outdoor Youth Facility</li> <li>25. Coastal Strip Evaluation</li> <li>26. Creation of Heritage Rail trips</li> <li>27. Additional Business Space</li> <li>28. Service provision</li> <li>29. Achievement of Quality Town Council status</li> <li>30. Shrub and tree planting</li> <li>31. Local radio projects</li> <li>32. Local festivals (eg arts &amp; youth)</li> <li>33. various village hall improvement projects</li> <li>34. Completion of urban design framework leading to leisure and retail developments</li> <li>35. Sixteen bungalows for elderly, and twenty rented and shared equity homes built and occupied</li> <li>36. Day centre</li> <li>37. Website</li> <li>38. Door to door car service</li> <li>39. Cultural arts programme</li> <li>40. Improvements to riverside</li> <li>41. New neighbourhood groups</li> </ol>
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Such contrasting experiences help to make the point, strongly, effectively, and again, that, from the point of view of public policy development and value for money, programmes such as the MCTi/MTI/BT must be rigorously and methodically supported, monitored and evaluated in order to improve and sustain the approach, and the partnerships in their work.

One advantage of the MTI/BT programmes is, as discussed in Section 1.3, that they were available throughout rural England<sup>77</sup>. This is relatively unusual. Regeneration programmes have tended to be area based. A nationally available programme, drawing on experience from throughout the country could, therefore, help to overcome the problems identified by Mark Shucksmith (2000 p58), who referred to the need for, "... effective partnership working in all [rural] areas." The programmes' potential to inform the development of community-led partnership work is evident

<sup>77</sup> The Healthcheck process was web-based. Therefore the MTI approach was available world-wide. The Healthcheck was adopted and modified for use in one Western Australian town and was at least considered for use in Canada and one large metropolitan unitary council in the south east of England.

from the generally positive views of respondents illustrated in Table 13, and reinforced by those relating to participants' motivations in Table 10. The more varied – discursive – views of the interviewees (Tables 9 and 12) make the case that the experiences and opinions of members within partnerships differ.

The source data (Appendices 3 and 4) reveal in some detail information about the projects. These range from a programme of events (eg celebrating, "... *vastly improved Christmas lights ...*") to designing and building a community resource centre in one town, progress in helping to overcome rural isolation in another, and the opening of 16 bungalows and provision of 20 social houses in a third. However, it is important not to gloss over the less positive, critical comments, because, as discussed in the next section, they represent viewpoints and describe experiences from which others can learn.

### **7.5.1 Naturally, it's not all Positive**

It is not surprising that participants' opinions and experiences were not wholly positive. Although it is probable that those with positive stories are most likely to tell them, those with particularly poor experiences are also likely to tell their tales. It is also probable, for reasons to do with lack of time, enthusiasm for, or commitment to the programmes and the related work, that those whose experiences fall between enthusiasm/success and exasperation/failure (ie the disengaged, the uninterested, and the conscripted) are the least likely to participate. Once again this provokes wistful thoughts about the amount of information about MTI/MCTi/BT partnerships' work that seems destined to remain out of reach to researchers.

However, and again, the views and experiences reported by survey respondents are matched by the fuller information provided by the interviewees. The point was made by a community development officer from Dorset, who said, "*In general action planning has worked, but more emphasis should be given to supporting locals to help themselves.*" The need for support can be inferred from the comments of other interviewees, one of whom remarked, "*We should have gone for a major project head-on, first off, rather than each little group asking for something – too many minimal projects.*" (volunteer, Bridport), while another stated bluntly, "... *I expected it to fail miserably after four years, and that's what it's done.*" (officer, Bridport).

Similar frustrations were evident from others:

*"... [Dorset is] very patrician, the power of Local Authorities at whatever level is very entrenched and any attempt to, you know, question that, or, you know, add in other institutions that might try to effect change is seen as illegitimate."* (Social entrepreneur, Bridport)

*"I think that one of the things that always bugs me though is that the employed folk from the RDA and the people running this often had less ... practical experience and specific experience than a lot of the people from the community ...".* (Volunteer, Bridport)

The second view above was tempered by the same interviewee's comment that the Town Council did not dominate, and that the officers and Councillors were, "onboard" and, "on the ball", respectively. This supportive view was not shared by the interviewee responsible for the first quote, who felt that the MCTi was seen by, "... certain people..." as a threat to the Council's democratic mandate, and that as a consequence, they, "... had it in for the process from the start ..." <sup>78</sup>.

This mix of views is partly a reflection of the participants' personal opinions, priorities, and experiences. It might also indicate an overall lack of time, not only to allow people to prepare for the work, but also to gather sufficient evidence to support partnerships' plans and project bids. The need for evidence was reinforced by an RDA officer, who noted that, "... a lot of the evidence base to actually support the Bridport Community Strategic Plan wasn't apparent ...", before adding that plans in other towns contained, "... a whole bulk of evidence to back up the plan ...". This could mean that Bridport's Healthcheck was too limited for the needs of potential funding organizations, and insufficient for project identification and programme planning, agreement, and management, whereas in other towns, for whatever reasons, partnerships were able to provide the necessary information. In fact, Bridport's 2006 Healthcheck document (Appendix 16) does not refer to an all-embracing governing Action Plan. The Bridport Local Area Partnership, however, which was established in 2004, has a detailed Action Plan which acknowledges as influences both the MCTi and Parish Plans (BLAP 2009 p1).

Comments from the community worker interviewed offer a clue as to why the necessary evidence might not have been available in Bridport. In a reference to other Dorset towns, the interviewee noted that there was a general tendency to favour the use of a consultant to do much of the work, rather than allowing local people, with

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<sup>78</sup> In the writer's experience there was, in practice, a tension between the MTI's desire to involve "the community" (an abstract concept) and the views of some Councillors that this was an attempt to undermine their role as democratically elected representatives of the people. Suffice it to note that, in the main, partnerships worked better in towns where the Council was fully involved and supportive.

appropriate professional support, and sufficient time, to take the lead. Based on the interviewee's considerable experience, and on the comments of an equally experienced RDA officer, who noted the tensions associated with the effective imposition of a consultant to work with Bridport's partnership, more could have been achieved if local people had done (or been able/allowed to do) more of the work (ie if less use had been made of the consultant), assuming that the local people had either the time or the inclination. It was further noted that although there was initial resistance by some to the use of the Healthcheck (it was seen as being prescriptive) its eventual use was beneficial<sup>79</sup>.

### **7.5.2 The Healthcheck, not Perfect, but Useful ... Eventually ... for Some**

The change in view about the value of the Healthcheck was stressed by a Councillor from Faringdon interviewed during the testing of the questionnaire. He stated that the Healthcheck had provided the partnership with information and evidence, and, perhaps more importantly in terms of developing local community development skills and leadership, the confidence to develop arguments, and to challenge - successfully - other authorities in order to achieve their own, locally identified, aims. In Faringdon's case, this meant that the town's view about the number of houses needed in and around the town prevailed over that of the District Council (Hickmore 2007). The knowledge and confidence gained from the Healthcheck process had, in other words, helped the Town Council gain power and influence.

Evidence gathering and helping local people gain skills, knowledge and confidence in their ability to lead (ie "building capacity" in the jargon) are essential pre-requisites to effective locally-led community development work. If politicians' much-trumpeted belief in localism is to become reality, if, "... *the leitmotif of the next phase of constitutional reform – giving people greater control over public services at local level.*" (Bogdanor 2009) is to be realized, the learning implicit in MTI/MCTi/BTP work should be a highly valued and essential component of the work. In order to build on experiential learning, training was given to partnerships until 2005 by CA-sponsored trainers (Plunkett 2005).

Training and time to develop community development skills were necessary, but the belief of those involved in the MTI/MCTi/BTP in what they were doing, and in their

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<sup>79</sup> This was the writer's experience in south east England. Some people thought the Healthcheck too prescriptive, others liked the prescription and the discipline this imposed upon partnerships. It is worth noting that in the south east, at least, CA officers always advised partnerships to use the Healthcheck as a guide, rather than as a series of commandments to be obeyed to the letter. It is also worth noting that in some cases people's initial opposition changed, with experience, into support for the approach.

knowledge of what needed to be done (ie to identify and meet locally identified priorities), is not in doubt, to judge from the views expressed by interviewees and respondents. These are as discussed next.

## **7.6 Topics Addressed and not Addressed by Partnerships**

The data in Table 15 and Figure 1 illustrate the high incidence of phrases such as, working together and community-led development, and the use of related nouns (often abstract) and adjectives such as, community, and social. This is especially true when describing the three most important aspects of the work addressed by partnerships. Social and community concerns lie behind the emphasis placed on the economy by some participants. For example, "*...creating 30 new jobs ... enhancing the underused Canal in terms of commercial usage ... the creation of [a] public social company.*" in one north-west town, and, in another, finding the wherewithal to, "*... implement more of the social and community projects and also give more focus to the rural neighbourhoods.*" Other, more general points, referred to the importance of improving town centres, car parking, and street cleaning. The topics listed in Figure 1 quite closely reflect the main subjects discussed by partnerships in 2004 (Table 7).

**Table 15**

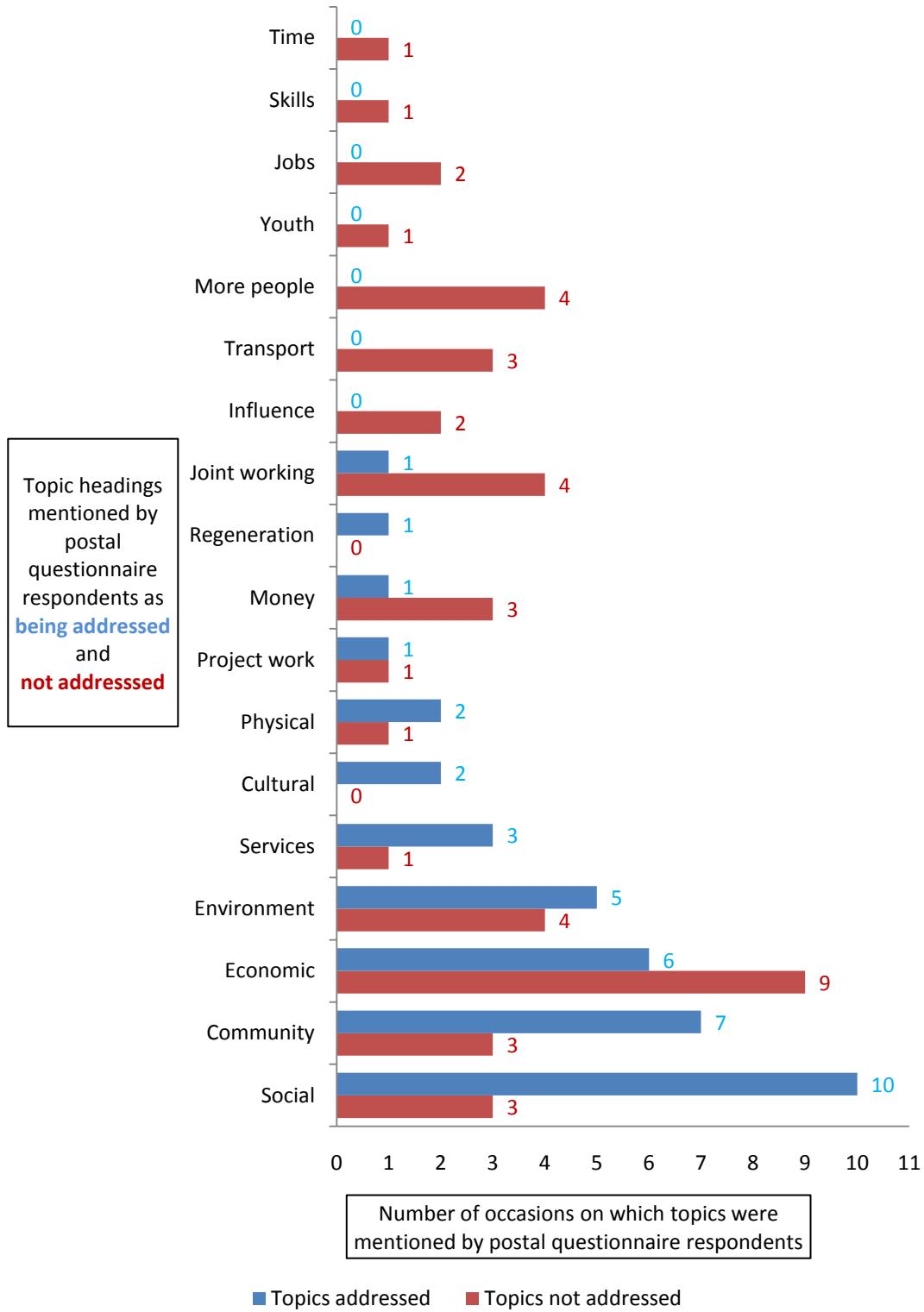
**Interviewees' Views About the Things That Were Achieved and  
the Things That Should Have Been Achieved  
by the Dorset Market and Coastal Towns Initiative/Market Towns  
Initiative, and Beacon Town Partnerships**

**(Data From Questions 8 and 9 of Appendix 10)**

The most important things that <u>have been done</u>	The most important things that <u>should have been done</u>
<b>Bridport-based Interviewees</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Effective evolutionary process, groups and working together</li><li>• Money obtained</li><li>• Locally-led development</li><li>• Support for projects</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create effective structure</li><li>• Provide clear and honest information at the start of the process about what can be done and will be funded (realism)</li><li>• Promises made should be very clear and should be kept</li><li>• Obtain community owned assets</li><li>• Realistic aims</li><li>• Know where the limits are and the power lies</li><li>• More work with, and for, young people</li></ul>
<b>Dorset Interviewees not Local to Bridport</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Community-led development</li><li>• Action Plan as guide and monitor</li><li>• Clarity about roles and trust between people and organizations</li><li>• appropriate independent professional support</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Solve problems associated with the application of short-term programmes to long term development</li><li>• Create appropriate mechanisms and processes</li><li>• Flexibility in approach</li><li>• Recognize that each town and each set of circumstances is unique Support to tackle "volunteer fatigue"</li><li>• Involve hinterland parishes</li><li>• Deal with mismatch between locally expressed needs and wider policies.</li></ul>
One interviewee did not answer specifically, but noted progress in that some locally identified needs are being met.	Three interviewees did not offer answers
Two interviewees did not offer answers	

**Figure 1**

**Respondents' Views About Topics  
That Were Addressed  
Compared With Topics That Respondents Thought  
Should Have been Addressed  
(Data From Questions 8 and 9 of Appendix 10)**



In terms of the topics that were not addressed, community-related needs and aspirations dominate (eg increased influence, transport, more people involved). When the total number of environmental, economic, community and social projects (ie the total of those that were addressed, and those that were **not** addressed) are considered, it can be seen that economic topics are, numerically at least, the most important. It is equally clear, however, that social, community and environmental projects are not significantly less important. Indeed, the success that some partnerships have had in tackling these essentially non-economic topics, suggests that the RDAs' involvement, while undeniably important given their central involvement in the programmes in each region, was not wholly limiting, in terms of restricting projects to those with an economic bias, at least as far as some partnerships were concerned.

Although the greater numerical importance attached to economic projects might suggest that the RDAs' statutorily imposed emphasis on economic matters is not misplaced, it might also suggest a straightforwardly pragmatic acceptance of reality by partnerships, rather than any intrinsic preference for economically biased projects. Alternatively, given that projects are by no means exclusively economic, it might also suggest a certain, and equally pragmatic flexibility on the part of RDAs and their officers.

#### **7.6.1 Local People Want to Meet Local Needs**

Overall, the roles and needs of people predominate. This reinforces the obvious points that the programmes cannot be effective without the commitment of local people, and that local people look primarily for local benefits. Once the programmes are "sold" as aids to locally-led action, any significant centrally imposed deviation from this can only disappoint. Indeed, central control can be viewed by some as being relatively local. Take, for example, this comment by an interviewee, "*I think there should have been a lot more support given to the actual setting up of a well-functioning structure ... the structure that was set up ... was too **dominated by its Directors** [writer's emphasis], [and] didn't have enough accountability to the broader partnership ...*". That this is believed by some might serve only to add to the potential for disappointment.

The difficulties associated with relatively easy to understand but difficult to implement programmes like the MTI/MCTi/BTP were recognized by one Bridport-based interviewee, who said, "*The most important thing to me was the evolutionary process, then groups, and the cohesion.*" This interviewee also remarked on the fact that the

person responsible for running the older persons' group was, ... *inspirational ...*". Interestingly the group leader referred to, who was also interviewed, was very clear throughout about the needs and aims of the group, and commented that its existence owed much to the MCTi, as well as, for example, to a local business, the Learning and Skills Council, local health organizations, the District Council, and Age Concern. This positive view contrasts with that of a Bridport-based officer who asked, in terms of one project, "... *what happened to the promise?*"

### **7.6.2 Local Officials: Strategic, but ... Still Local**

The local authority officers who were not based in Bridport were less clear than those who were about the detail of the work. It is interesting to note, however, that their views tended to the positive. They related less to specific town-centred projects, and more to matters of process and the extent to which the programmes have helped to encourage the involvement and interest of other organizations in meeting the needs, at least as perceived by the officers interviewed, of Bridport's people. For example, the County Council officer, whilst noting the importance – and lack of – sufficient time to develop partnerships, also noted that the process had helped local people to believe in themselves and their ability to influence their town's future. The community development worker interviewed reinforced this general point by stating that the work in a Dorset town (not Bridport) had, "... *led to two members of the ... group becoming town councillors.*" A District Council officer was similarly positive, noting the effect that the work in Bridport had on raising Weymouth College's awareness of, "... *the challenges [for Bridport's people] of getting to their sites from the Bridport area.*"

To an extent it follows that officials remote from day-to-day detailed town-based efforts (and concomitant day-to-day frustrations) are likely to have wider, and possibly more objective and realistic, albeit more limited, perspectives about the work and its potential to effect, quickly, significant change. These, when viewed from a town-based partnership member's perspective, can appear to be relatively negative about some aspects of partnership working, but they can be valuable. For example, as employees, they are less likely to experience "volunteer fatigue", and more likely to be able, if so minded, to bring experience from other places and programmes to bear on the local work. They are well placed to make connections on behalf of "their" partnership with staff in other organizations. Also, the relatively permanent nature of the posts means that their occupants are in good positions to guide slowly, over time, both partnership members, and other, even more remote officials, to eventual success.

This view might lead to raised eyebrows in some partnerships, but, in the writer's experience, given the limitations of the MTI/MCTi/BTP approaches, partnerships' success depend to an extent on the committed, long-term involvement of local authority and other officials. In any event, long-term commitment is essential, given the time it takes to develop and implement a project/action plan. For, as will be discussed in the next section, community-led development work never ends: it is long-term, by definition.

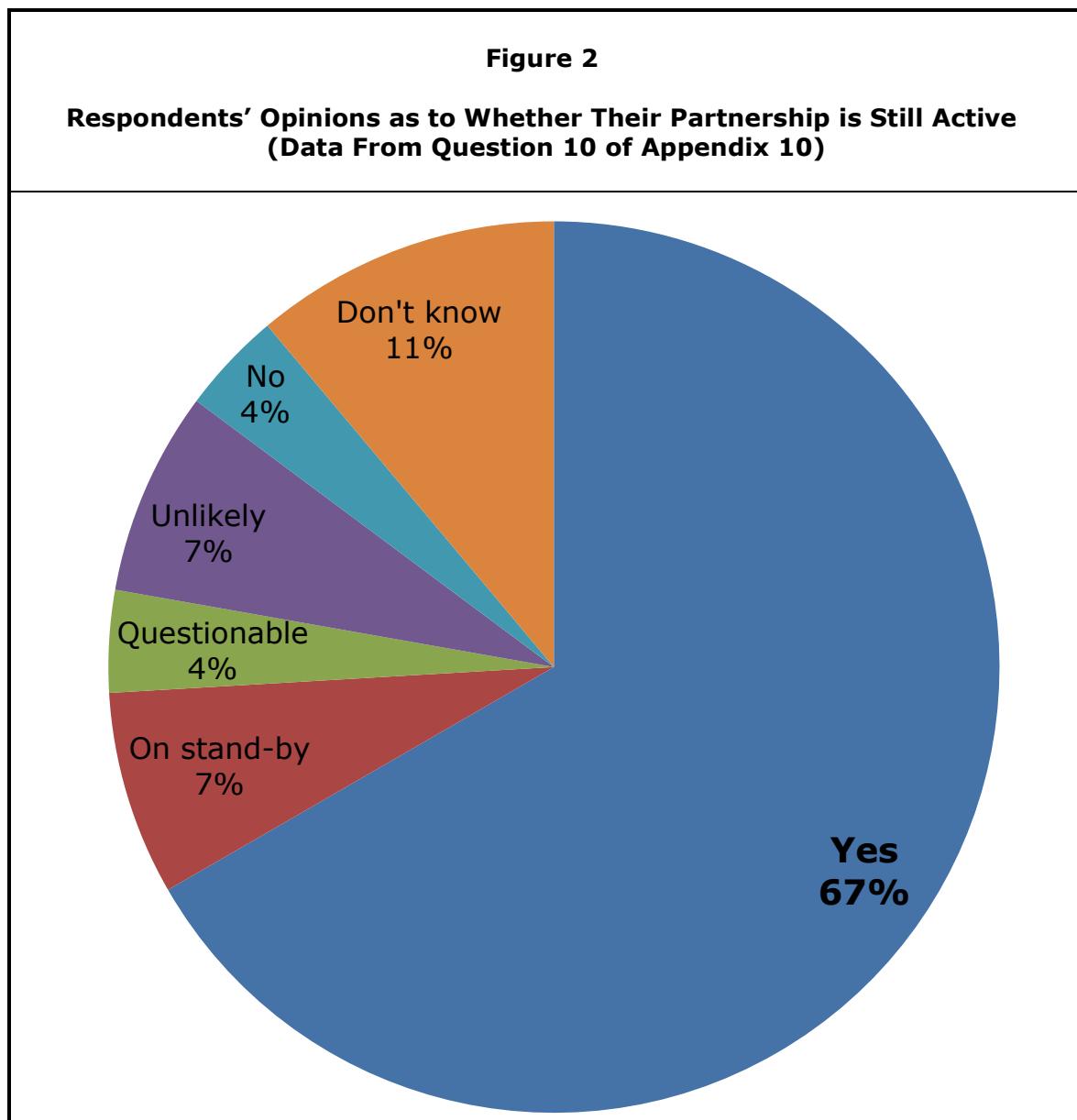
### **7.6.3 Time, of the Essence, but Work Continues in Places**

Clearly, and inevitably, in Bridport, and elsewhere, uniform progress for all projects cannot be guaranteed. Given sufficient time and support, however, it should be possible to develop a partnership, the members of which, if not always in agreement, are able to communicate sufficiently clearly to ensure clarity of purpose, and to establish and implement at least some of their plans. Short-term programmes (3 to 5 years) are unlikely, by definition, to meet long-term needs. As the officer from Dorset County Council remarked, "*Some of the solutions might be longer term, and I don't think that the support mechanisms in place at the moment really support that long term approach ...*". This mismatch must be addressed if successor programmes are not to result in the view expressed by a Bridport interviewee that, "*I basically felt that it turned out to be something of a damp squib.*"

Nevertheless, it is encouraging to note that, notwithstanding the criticisms, frustrations and disappointments expressed by interviewees and respondents alike, the postal survey returns showed that most partnerships (67%) still existed in one form or another (Figure 2). Only 11% of respondents reported that they didn't know if their partnership still existed.

There is, however, evidence of the inherently relatively weak structural nature of (some) partnerships, and the communication difficulties that can arise from this. For example, some interviewees stated that Bridport's partnership was still active, while others stated that it was not (Table 16). The social entrepreneur's view was that the partnership had been replaced by the Local Area Partnership (ie the partnership existed, but in a different form, and with a different name). Of the two volunteers, one was of the view that although the Action Plan was no longer being worked on, much of the work was continuing under the auspices of the Bridport Community Initiative/Bridport Local Area Partnership (BCI/BLAP). The other – whose group is part of the BCI/BLAP – stated that the partnership was not active. Similarly, of the two District Council officers interviewed, one thought that the partnership was active,

"... to a degree ...", while the other said, "No, it's not." It is likely that these differences can be explained by the extent to which the projects or groups are successful, or are seen to be succeeding, their dependency on the new partnership(s) or other groups for their existence, or simply by the degree to which the participants are involved in the work in the town.



**Table 16**  
**Interviewees' Opinions as to Whether the**  
**Bridport Partnership is Still Active**  
**(Data From Question 10 of Appendix 10)**

<b>Bridport-based Interviewees</b>		
<b>Yes: 2</b>		<b>No: 1</b>
<b>Interviewees not Local to Bridport</b>		
<b>Not answered: 3</b>	<b>Don't know: 1</b>	<b>No: 1</b>

The value of the MCTi work in terms of the Bridport partnership's evolution might not be obvious to all, but it should not be discounted. One of the volunteers interviewed said that BLAP, "... *is very productive and has a coordinator – maybe we got into that frame of mind via MCTi*", while two other interviewees noted that the transport forum, older people's group and skills training continued to operate. To what extent their continued existence and success could be attributed to the MCTi is unclear. When interviewees' comments are considered overall, some connection between some of the work and the MCTi is evident, although the degree to which interviewees regard this as wholly positive is in some doubt. Irrespective of any confusion about its genesis, BLAP exists, and, to judge from the minutes of its February 2009 meeting, and the fact that a meeting was scheduled for February 2010<sup>80</sup>, is active. In the words of one interviewee, "... *energies are now on Bridport Local Area Partnership.*"

In other words, although the part played by the MTI/MCTi/BTP in Bridport is neither clear nor straightforward, partnership work continues. Although the extent to which Bridport's partnership used the MTI Healthcheck is not known, other partnerships have, as discussed in the next section, updated their initial Healthcheck.

#### **7.6.4 Some Healthchecks Have Been Redone – and Work Continues**

As the previous section suggests, it does not seem to have occurred to the interviewees that the Healthcheck process may be a useful way in which to gather and periodically review evidence in a structured manner; or, if it has, it has not been accorded any particular value or priority.

The information provided by the respondents is similar. The majority view was that partnerships continued to exist, but the extent to which action plans were being implemented and Healthchecks revisited is less clear. In the two cases where two completed survey forms were received from two towns, the information conflicts,

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<sup>80</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/6ayb29> (accessed 19th February 2010)

reflecting, once again, the difficulties associated with maintaining commitment, momentum, and clarity of communication in this type of work. In simple terms, twelve of the partnerships appeared to have repeated, or intended to repeat, the Healthcheck process, or to have used it to inform subsequent work (Question 10, Appendix 10).

Some partnerships are clearly very active. One respondent from the south-west noted that, "*There is a steering group, 7 theme groups, a Parishes Liaison Group, and a [town's name] Neighbourhoods Group.*", and that, furthermore, each group had an action plan, and, although the full Healthcheck had not been repeated, an annual progress report was published. Another respondent recorded that their partnership's action plan had been active for five years and was to be updated professionally.

Others recorded less progress, or in the case of one respondent from the south-east, the suggestion that, "*This initiative ... could provide much in the way of 'how not to do it.'*"

Most respondents, however, were broadly positive in their outlook, suggesting, given some of the negative views expressed above, a degree of pragmatic satisfaction and an overall determination to continue to work with an approach and within a system which, while in their view far from perfect, had helped them achieve some success. Indeed, pragmatism and determination, as well as concerns about the process and democratic accountability, were evident from the additional comments received from interviewees and respondents. These are discussed in Section 7.7.

## **7.7 Participants' Additional Comments**

Additional comments made by participants (Table 17) about the programmes capture the elements of the full story that are essential to this research. Satisfaction, frustration and disappointment are all evident in the comments made. Pointers for likely success at the local, town partnership, level are given (eg, "... [with] *clear aims and dedicated people with the necessary time, skills, and knowledge, a lot can be achieved.*"), as are those for failure (eg, "*Good relationship with Parish Council needed to overcome concerns about democratic accountability*", and, "*It raised expectations and increased cynicism ...*").

**Table 17**

**Participants' Opinions About the Work and Programmes  
(Data From Question 12 of Appendix 10)<sup>81</sup>**

<b>Bridport-based Interviewees' Comments</b>	<b>Postal Respondents' Comments</b>	
The effects of perceived failure and negative associations/connotations linger – in spite of these, progress is being made.	Inequality is being addressed – exciting plans being developed	MTI has proved to be really beneficial.
Given clear aims and dedicated people with the necessary time, skills, and knowledge, a lot can be achieved.	It has been very worthwhile – good project manager helps.	Some questions are too difficult to answer (nothing available to measure poverty easily).
<b>Dorset Interviewees not Local to Bridport</b>	Healthcheck and Action Plan approach flawed – encouraged a wish list - there should have been a greater emphasis on key issues (training/worklessness – more realism needed in terms of expectations).	Local relationships are good and improving.
Rural/small country towns policy appears to have given way politically to an emphasis on regional/urban/city region-related policies.	Good relationship with Parish Council needed to overcome concerns about democratic accountability.	Review of MCTi Action Plan underway – pleased at how much has been done.
Community-led development takes time, it needs people with skills to help and different methods if you are to "engage" with different sectors – two to four years. It's a continual process – new people will be needed. You can't expect volunteers to do everything for nothing.	Current plans are valid but dependent on RDA approval – must be linked to economic criteria – steering group is not representative of the town.	Well-conceived approach which should be followed up with a second phase.
	It raised expectations and increased cynicism – money spent on 'process'/consultants for little benefit - awful waste.	"A project too far" – insufficient lateral thinking – insufficiently inclusive.

<sup>81</sup> Question 11 relates to the poverty aspects of this research, and is discussed in Chapter 8.

In terms of wider policy implications, one of the officers interviewed noted (Appendix 3) that the relatively recent policy shift towards city regions (Taylor 2008 p 131) has meant that, in Dorset's case, until very recently<sup>82</sup>, "... *the role of the towns has been neglected.*" – and this in a county in which, in the west at least, small towns are the major service centres.

Frustration with process and outcomes was indicated by a member of Bridport's partnership, an officer, who acknowledged that progress was made, but said, "*I think the failure of the MCTi still reverberates. ... history lingers.*"

One interviewee, who, as a volunteer, led the very successful older people's project in Bridport, noted, in commenting on a successful bid for a grant from the National Lottery, "... *fortunately several of us have been in reasonably high-powered jobs, and know our way around, and that helps in a community to ... set up things, because we know what we're doing ...*". The interviewee, an active and experienced retired person was committed to the project's aims, determined to make it work, and had devoted a lot of time to ensuring success, so much so that the model on which the project is based was adopted elsewhere in Dorset (as too has the social entrepreneur's food-based work, for which Bridport was awarded BT status).

The interviewee noted the group's success in establishing art, craft, and physiotherapy classes. When it was suggested that these were essentially middle class activities, and that, therefore, 'the system' might favour educated, articulate people, the interviewee replied, "*No, no, no, it doesn't favour them. It means that they're available to help organize something.*", and went on to note that for some people these activities were their first since leaving school, many of them at 14.

Finally, this interviewee, when asked if the work had addressed poverty, replied that, "*No, I can't see that [it has], no, not financial poverty anyway, no.*"

The MTI and MCTi were not specifically designed to address matters of poverty directly and so this comment is not surprising. It is, however, relevant to this study's interest in rural poverty. The comment in Table 17, that poverty-related questions are too difficult to answer provides an indication of the challenge associated with the poverty and policy-related aspects of the study. These are discussed in Chapter 8. First, however, some conclusions are drawn from the findings discussed in this chapter.

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<sup>82</sup> Dorset's Market Town Forum was, with financial support from the South West RDA, re-established in 2009.

## 7.8 Conclusions

This chapter contains information, a mixture of facts and opinion, obtained from a variety of people, all of whom have in common their participation in community-led development programmes, and their willingness to contribute to this research.

Although not all who were asked to participate in the research did so, more than 50% did<sup>83</sup>. This suggests interest and concern sufficient to indicate that people care about the places in which they live, and are prepared, not only to work hard to improve them, but also to share their experiences. Local loyalties, local knowledge, an awareness of local needs, a belief in their ability to identify and solve problems, and to capitalize on strengths, draws people together to work for the common good. That the people involved volunteered is testament to their interest and commitment.

There are varying views about the programmes, the ways of working, and their usefulness. The views expressed, and the range of experiences described, by interviewees and respondents are similar, suggesting that the approaches taken in the regions, with the possible exception of the south-west, where the existence of the MTI and MCTi did appear to confuse some of those involved with Bridport's work, did not differ significantly. The majority view is that the programmes were broadly successful, although by no means perfect, and the participants provided many examples of success (Table 14) and reasons to be, if not wholly cheerful, then optimistic (Table 15, and Figures 1 and 2), both in terms of projects undertaken, and the extent to which partnerships and work continues. Even when needs are clearly understood, plans agreed, and partnerships cohesive and of one mind, success cannot be guaranteed. However, success will be much more difficult to achieve without partnerships and plans, no matter how imperfect both might be. Similarly, when they do exist – no matter how imperfect – so too does the possibility for improvement and eventual success.

Of equal importance is the need to ensure that all involved understand that with power must come responsibility. Implicit in the notion of devolved power is that some people and some places will be more successful than others. As some people and places are already more successful than others, it is essential that those responsible for devolving power ensure a measure of fairness – that is, to ensure that devolution does not reinforce pre-existing inequalities, and does not put those in poverty at risk of even greater disadvantage. There is, as will be discussed in Chapter 8, evidence

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<sup>83</sup> There was no obvious correlation between town locations and types, and participation in the postal survey (see Appendix 2 for data about the towns to which survey forms were sent).

from this research that support for partnerships from MTI/MCTi/BT-type programmes could help to identify and reduce poverty locally.

It is important to recognize, however, that, if support is conditional on some form of competition for money, a likely unintended consequence will be less support for towns that lack the wherewithal to compete successfully. In these places poverty could increase - devolution could, therefore, reinforce the *status quo*. This risk could be reduced by ensuring that the programmes are widely available, that the sharing of experience between partnerships is encouraged (ie cooperation between people, rather than competition for money), and that the long-term, developmental nature of the work, and the different circumstances and capabilities within each town partnership, are recognized, both for reasons of fairness, and as opportunities for people to learn from one another.

The main points arising from the research that need to be considered when designing or encouraging future programmes can be grouped under three headings: People, Time, Structures. These are listed in Table 18.

**Table 18**

**Community-led Development – What’s Needed for Success?  
A Summary of Points From the Research Relating  
to People, Time, and Structures**

<b>People</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Knowledgeable, individual, unpredictable, loyal, and opinionated, they are crucial, central, need to be nurtured and involved, and trusted with the truth about programme limitations.</li><li>• Need clarity about programme aims, limitations, and governing processes.</li><li>• Need clarity about local needs and agreed aims, for when a clearly-defined and obvious need exists, and is understood and accepted, support and consequent success can quickly follow.</li><li>• Need mechanisms that enable effective and open communication – based on trust.</li><li>• Need support and training (not easy/possible with programmes that last only a few years).</li><li>• Need to have realistic aims and expectations.</li><li>• In the main have a natural affinity with, and loyalty to their town/area, and a desire to contribute.</li><li>• Need structures and processes that recognize that they tire, come and go for all sorts of reasons, and will one day need to be replaced (succession strategies).</li><li>• Disagree at times, and so need ways that encourage constructive debate and enable conflicts to be resolved.</li></ul>
<b>Time</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pressure to start work and achieve quickly does not<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ serve local needs</li><li>◦ meet sponsoring organizations' aims in terms of success and value for money.</li></ul></li><li>• Short-term programmes do not suit long-term community development needs in terms of success and value for money.</li><li>• Recruiting people to community work - work that is often volunteer led - takes many years to implement (in many ways the work never ends)</li></ul>
<b>Structures</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Partnerships need to be simple, stable and organized in such a way that they have defined delegated powers and the wherewithal to get things done, but ...</li><li>• ... also need to reflect the fact that members (often volunteers) will tire, will change, and often have other responsibilities.</li><li>• Long term, consistent commitment to the development, monitoring and evaluation of both the programmes and associated approaches, together with a need to recognize that success cannot be guaranteed, for failure is always - an uncomfortable - possibility.</li><li>• Need to be inclusive (the importance of the role of Town and other Councils in enabling and supporting community-led work should not be underestimated).</li></ul>

Throughout this chapter there is evidence of unexploited strength and potential that supports Counihan's quotation at the beginning of the chapter, that the warmth of human society is to be found mainly at the bottom, ie at the local level. Therefore, where future work is concerned, every effort should be made to exploit the **strength and potential** of local people for local, and wider, benefit. It is important to ensure that local people, with their enthusiasm, knowledge and commitment, are not exploited and, in the process, exhausted and disillusioned. It is also important to ensure that poorer places, which may lack the capacity of wealthier areas in terms of local people's skills and experience, are not disadvantaged or rendered ultimately ineligible, either by lack of ability or good fortune, to participate in community-led development work.

It is possible, therefore, that poor people in poor places can be disadvantaged in terms of their ability to benefit from relatively short-lived programmes like the MTI/MCTi/BTP. It follows that poverty, be it relative or absolute, be it related to individuals or places, has implications for the effectiveness of these – and similar – programmes, and for the people involved in them. If MTI/MCTi/BTP partnerships have, in terms of their local knowledge and achievements, the potential to identify and tackle poverty, it is important to find out what the people who participate in them understand the word, poverty, to mean. Therefore, the next Chapter takes the reader away from matters relating to the programmes and partnerships' achievements and concerns, to a discussion:

- firstly about the extent to which the partnerships' work identified and addressed rural poverty;
- secondly, an exploration of participants' views about rural poverty.

## **Chapter 8 Research Findings Related to Policy and Poverty**

*No society can surely be flourishing and happy, of which the far greater part of the members are poor and miserable.*

Adam Smith, 1723-1790, Wealth of Nations

### **8.1 Introduction**

This chapter explores the views expressed by the interviewees and the respondents to the postal survey about the MTI/MCTi/BTP and their appropriateness as processes for identifying and tackling poverty.

Specifically, participants were asked two questions:

- 1) Do you think the work should have been designed to reduce poverty?
- 2) Irrespective of the answer to Question 1, has the work reduced, or is it reducing poverty, either directly or indirectly?

Finally, participants were asked to define poverty.

The full answers to the three poverty-related questions are presented in Appendices 11 and 12 (relating to policy and practice/achievement respectively), and 13 and 14 (participants' definitions of poverty)<sup>84</sup>.

### **8.2 Participants' Views About Whether the MTI/MCTi/BTP Should Have Been Designed to Reduce Poverty**

As will be seen, some participants' answers to the first question tended to address the second question. Unfortunately, the first two interviewees gave a common answer to both questions. These interviews were the first two of the series used to test the appropriateness of the questions and the development of the questionnaire. They reflect the writer's initial clumsiness as an interviewer, and the inexperience of the interviewee, who was relatively new to the work. With this one exception, however, the interviewees addressed both questions. They were, in the main, more comfortable with the second question, which encouraged and enabled them to draw on their local knowledge and experience. Similarly, respondents to the survey questionnaire also appeared to be more comfortable and confident with the second question. This is to be expected. It suggests that policy needs to be informed, but not governed by, the

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<sup>84</sup> All direct quotations (in italics) and other references attributed to interviewees and respondents in this chapter are taken from, and can be viewed in, the transcripts in Appendices 11, 12, 13, and 14.

experiences and views of those involved in community-led planning and partnership work. Policy making is a strategic, rather than tactical, activity.

In broad terms, the answers given by participants varied from the straightforward (Yes, No), to avoidance (ie, no answer given), or possible failure to understand the question (eg, "*I would rephrase this by using the word, deprivation.*"), and, "*Poverty is not prevalent in our area*"), via equivocation (eg, "*Not necessarily.*"), and, "*In addition, but not solely.*").

The above quotations are taken from the postal questionnaires (Appendix 12). Although, initially, some of the interviews produced a similar range of responses, additional questions were asked in order to encourage the interviewees to be definite in their answers/opinions. For example, one officer initially answered by saying, "*I think that [the] question's a bit more difficult to answer really, because this is about economic vitality, and that should have an impact on poverty, but it isn't about poverty per se.*" Eventually, having been asked a further – and leading – question ("So you don't think it should have been designed to reduce poverty?"), the interviewee replied, "*No. I think it should have an impact [on reducing poverty], but I don't think it should be designed to reduce poverty.*"

Given the qualification in the second sentence (ie "... *but, I don't think it should be designed to reduce poverty.*"), the second answer is not significantly different from the first. It is possible that the writer's follow-up question resulted, because of its leading nature, in an answer that failed adequately to reflect the interviewee's instinctive and preferred uncertainty evident in the first answer. However, prior to being asked the second question, the interviewee said, "... *I don't think the [MCTi] is really going to reduce poverty in rural areas...*". In this case, therefore, it is considered that the answer obtained from the second question is valid. This exchange is included to illustrate the difficulties associated with this type of research, whereby the advantage gained from being able to pursue an interviewee's answer has to be balanced by the danger that additional questioning could result in interviewees being led to give answers that do not accurately reflect their views. As the interviewees involved in this research were all experienced professionals, this danger is considered to be minimal. Nevertheless, the existence of the danger reinforces the need to maintain an objective and questioning approach to the analysis of the information obtained from both interviewees and respondents.

The exchange also illustrates the uncertainties surrounding the nature of poverty in the context of life today in rural England, and the consequent and related difficulties that people have, both in defining it, and addressing it via policy and practice. The concerns expressed in the above discussion about the progression from the first of the two answers to the second, and the leading nature of the questioning, are not about the equivocation associated with the interview and its analysis. They have more to do with the writer's suspicion that the second answer, which implies that poverty alleviation should be an implicit, not explicit, design feature of the programmes, is probably correct.

This is because the research data suggest that the work done by partnerships has, at the very least, the potential to improve the lot of local people. This view is reinforced by the fact that, although participants in the research were able to provide evidence for this (eg good works designed to improve employment prospects, local housing, transport services), they were, as a whole, ambivalent in their views about whether poverty reduction should have been a specified design aim. They were unable – as a whole – to define rural poverty in words suitable for use as design criteria. Their collective definitions, broadly drawn and normative, are familiar (perhaps over-familiar) and accepted (perhaps because they are over-familiar and too little thought about), but do not make it any easier to understand the complicated nature of rural poverty. Therefore these definitions are unsuitable as aids to creating programmes specifically designed to reduce poverty, and do little to help identify the paradoxically well known and yet hidden, marginalized "types" of people who experience rural poverty. They do, however, and once again, help to provoke questions about how the rural poor are, as individuals, to be found. This is discussed in the next section.

### **8.2.1 Identifying the Impoverished Proved to be Difficult ...**

The view that poverty might reduce as a result of the activities associated with the programmes is unarguable. The varied nature of the work done by partnerships, coupled with continuing uncertainties about poverty definitions and lived realities suggests that the programmes might well work their particular magic, but that their effectiveness at identifying, let alone addressing poverty will be nigh on impossible to measure, given the vagaries of life in, around, and beyond England's small towns.

Rachel Woodward (1996) noted how two interviewees in the 1990s Rural Lifestyles research (Clorek *et al.* 1994) argued that some people who **appeared to researchers** to be poor in rural areas, had effectively elected to be so, in terms defined by the researchers, by virtue of the way they **chose** to live. They did not consider

themselves to be poor, but were defined as poor by others, in urban terms, using norms such as the ownership of televisions (Woodward 1996 p65). Woodward also recorded (p65) another interviewee's story about how an ageing woman, with access to a car, and happy in her cottage without running water and electricity (two likely poverty indicators as far as any survey is concerned) in the village in which she had lived for most of life, was persuaded to move to a nearby town, where she lived unhappily, although in greater material comfort.

Finally, Woodward quotes from a letter from a self-employed participant in the research, in which he acknowledges his belief that his family is probably one of the most deprived in Shropshire. He notes the loss of rural services, of affordable housing, of agricultural jobs, and the gentrification of rural life since the 1960s, but only hints at the implications of the changes for his family. In other words, there is no shouting of his plight from the rooftops; a lack of directness which (stereo)typifies the diffidence and tendency to invisibility of the rural poor (Cloke *et al.* 1995 p364).

Woodward contends that people like the letter writer are difficult to find<sup>85</sup> and meet. They are. They are also the very people who most need to be met. They will have different stories to tell from those who are most likely to participate in research projects, and who will, "... *more than likely...* [be] ... *amongst the more wealthy central figures in the rural landscape ...*" (Woodward 1996 p66). The dilemma that Rachael Woodward recognized so clearly, equally clearly applies to this research. The poor – whoever they are, wherever they are – are difficult to find and communicate with. Therefore, their interpretation of their circumstances (ie to what extent do they consider themselves to be poor), as opposed to how others might see them, is, by definition, difficult to define. As one interviewee, a volunteer from Faringdon, said, "*Depends on what is meant by poverty.*" The question implicit in this comment continues to resonate.

In spite of all the work that has been done in the field of poverty research (Chapter 3), and the broad acceptance that poverty in the UK is complicated and essentially relative, both conceptually, and as a reality (CRC 2008 p65), it seems that we are no closer to identifying and helping the rural poor than we were in the 1990s, when Cloke's team noted that rural, "... *marginalised groups may not conform to the classic picture of the rural 'deprived'* – cumulatively suffering from poor job, housing and transport opportunities.", but, "*Rather they may only be experiencing one facet of this*

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<sup>85</sup> As indeed are academic views like those expressed by Woodward.

*list of problems or may just be 'different' from the normal or supposedly acceptable face of members of the rural community." (Cloke et al. 1994 p169).*

Things may, however, be changing. To judge from the evidence presented in Chapter 7, community-led planning initiatives like the MTI/MCTi/BTP have the potential to identify solutions to some of the problems associated with rural poverty; even to clarify empirically some of the uncertainties about rural poverty, if not to identify the individuals most severely affected (although, as it is possible to identify low income groups via the benefits system [Noble and Wright 2000 p305], it follows that it must be possible to identify physically or financially vulnerable individuals). This suggestion can only be properly tested, however, if the approaches are absorbed into the so-called "mainstream" (ie taken as the norm) and progressively and methodically monitored, evaluated, and developed. As many government initiated community programmes are short-term it is important that they are not allowed to exist in isolation, but are so organized to ensure that lessons learnt are applied to the design and implementation of successor "mainstream" programmes.

According to work done for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, if, "*... participatory practice in research into poverty is carried out at local level ... [it] ... can make a crucial contribution to local debates and can also feed into national discussions.*" (Bennett and Roberts 2004 p55). The authors further noted that work done overseas (in the developing 'South') was beginning to address problems experienced by organizations which were, "*... struggling with how to stimulate participatory approaches in mainstream national level research and inquiry into poverty (whether promoted by government or not), and how to ensure that key messages from local work influence national policy and practice as well.*" (p55). It is worth repeating here the reference made in Chapter 5 to the work done in New Romney, Kent, to test the potential for DfID's Sustainable Livelihoods approach and the MTI Healthcheck to inform one another (Butcher et al. 2003). Although the two, "*... approaches share much in common ...*" (p232) the exercise was not wholly successful, due in part to the, seemingly inevitable, lack of time, confusion arising from the use of two methodologies, a lack of information about the use of Sustainable Livelihoods in the UK, and some local resistance (no doubt attributable to the aforementioned) (p233). Butcher et al. concluded, however, that the work had, "*... the potential to contribute to the development of cooperation between northern and southern practitioners ...*" (p233). Whether it has done so is not known<sup>86</sup>, but there can be little doubt that any

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<sup>86</sup> DfID, Oxfam and CA staff, together with representatives of other interested organizations held meetings and hosted a joint event to explore the potential for north-south learning. The work ceased following CA and DfID reorganizations. The meeting notes were posted on the World Wide Web, but, by February 2010, had been removed.

attempts to help develop common, mutually beneficial approaches should be welcomed, and could help to overcome the problems identified nearly ten years ago, namely that, "While 'community involvement' has been important to some experimental programmes, mainstream policies have been driven primarily by bureaucrats and, more recently, business people...." (Foley and Martin 2000 p480).

Ultimately, however, the work done following the MTI/MCTi/BTP approaches does not appear to have helped in the search for an improved definitional understanding of poverty. Attempts to improve both definitions and understanding continue to be made (Brewer, Goodman, Shaw, and Sibieta 2006 p61, Milbourne 2006 p4). This suggests continuing uncertainty about the nature of poverty. It is not surprising, therefore, if uncertainty in the academic, practitioner, policy and political spheres is reflected at the local – community – level and that, as a consequence, the majority of the participants in the research were unable to give clear-cut answers to the two questions relating to poverty and policy. Given the amount of work that has been done over the years, one respondent's view that, "*The Market Towns Initiative represents Minsters' belated recognition of the significance of market towns.*", and that, "*Currently the foundations only are being laid to reduce rural deprivation.*", illustrates the frustrations and challenges associated with this work. That work has begun, however, and, moreover, continues, is cause for hope.

### **8.2.2 ... Poverty Addressed, Despite Definitional Difficulties**

The difficulties experienced by interviewees and respondents are evident from the data in Appendices 11 and 12. As would be expected, officers and project officers understand the accepted, and expected, approach to discussions about poverty, or, at the very least, are familiar with the language and associated policy presumptions. If the nub of the question about programme design was avoided in some cases, belief was expressed in the programmes' potential to address aspects of poverty (access to employment, housing etc.) directly and indirectly. Reference was made to the MTI's potential to identify deprivation in places where conventional Index of Multiple Deprivation scores failed to identify "pockets of poverty"<sup>87</sup>.

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<sup>87</sup> The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2007 (IMD 2007) brings together 37 different indicators which cover specific aspects or dimensions of deprivation: Income, Employment, Health and Disability, Education, Skills and Training, Barriers to Housing and Services, Living Environment and Crime. These are weighted and combined to create the overall IMD 2007.

Again, in essence, the MTI's strength was seen to lie in its straightforward emphasis on community-led work; ie work led by people with a close and innate understanding of their locality. This local knowledge, while unlikely ever to be complete, unbiased and entirely objective, with anecdote used as well as evidence to make an often partial local case, offers a different perspective, and provides different sources of information capable of complementing and informing the more quantitative, remote and impersonal regional and national data. The suggestion implicit in this is that qualitative and quantitative information sources are better suited to different tiers of decision making. This is not new. It was recognized in the late 1990s by the team employed to develop indicators of rural disadvantage for the then Rural Development Commission. They noted in their conclusion that, "... *policy decisions relying on more qualitative data should be made at lower levels, closer to the level of implementation.*" Also noted was the necessity, "... *to pass some information on performance back-up [sic] in order to permit higher-level resource allocation and financial control.*" (Dunn, Hodge, Monk and Kiddle 1998 p117). That the latter **requirement** is accepted and remains in force is not in doubt. In general, however, the preceding **suggestion** has not yet been widely accepted, although the Parish Planning and MTI/MCTi/BT programmes may prove to be pathfinders if the proposed moves towards devolution come to pass.

Similarly, references to educational attainment, skill levels, worklessness, lack of access to facilities and transport, housing affordability, low wages, and the need to safeguard jobs and businesses, indicate an awareness both of the complicated nature of poverty, and the potential of the approaches to help address these topics. As one Dorset-based officer noted,

*"Some of the work is working with disadvantaged people and so is providing better facilities, better access to services – can see that directly in terms of playgroups ... and a whole lot of other things (eg community learning centre, providing skills, entrepreneur courses have encouraged people from social housing estates). It would be terribly, terribly difficult to measure whether we're reducing poverty in economic terms or not. The only way we can do that is via Index of Multiple Deprivation ... every few years ... to see how that's changed things, but still difficult to see if that's directly linked to the work of the partnerships."*

The above should not be taken to suggest that all participants were ambivalent or that they considered that the questions were worthy of complicated, discursive answers. Some answers were much more to the point. For example, one interviewee, a volunteer (and also a Councillor) simply answered, "Yes", when asked if the programmes should have been designed with poverty alleviation in mind, as did three respondents (a project officer, a Councillor, and a Councillor who also worked as a

project officer). Two other respondents, an officer and a Councillor (also a volunteer) answered, equally succinctly, "No", while a third, a volunteer from the south-east, made the interesting point that a specific, and therefore limiting, reference to poverty alleviation in the programmes' design aims, "... could well have meant a lower take up of the concept." It would have been interesting to learn why the respondent thought this. Possible reasons range from local resistance to prescription, and the consequent restriction on local freedoms to establish local needs and priorities, to assumptions about the existence and extent of rural poverty (eg, "Poverty is not prevalent in our area."), via concerns about definitions, as discussed above. Whatever the respondent's reasons, the caution implicit in the comment is worth noting.

Some participants were inclined to a more expansive directness and statements of opinion. A Bridport-based volunteer referred to the town's economy as one in which, "... the poor service the rich," adding, "and that seems to be becoming quite a classic market towns process – we're not alone in that."<sup>88</sup> This interviewee agreed that the MCTi addressed poverty indirectly, but said that, "... it didn't come up with any solutions, and so basically it's been like a lost ten years where nothing has happened." In a more conciliatory manner, an RDA officer said that the MCTi, "... should have an impact on poverty, but it's not about poverty per se.", and acknowledged one of the familiar major and persistent difficulties associated with tackling poverty in rural England: its dispersed, and therefore largely invisible nature (Lyon, North, Ellis, and Botero 2006 p100, PIU 1999 p131). Another Bridport volunteer said, "I think it should have been involved in trying to reduce poverty, yes, and also trying to improve the facilities for people in rural areas, but it's not happened."

With the exception of the five people who expressed definite views (ie yes or no) as to whether the programmes should have been designed with poverty alleviation as an aim, participants' views were uncertain, or, in 14 cases (approximately 30% of the total number), either unclear, or not expressed at all. A respondent from the north-west effectively avoided giving a direct answer by writing, "Poverty usually implies lack of money which does not necessarily mean lack of access to facilities, whereas deprivation does.", and that, therefore, "I would rephrase this [the question] by using the word, 'deprivation'." These examples illustrate the difficulties people have with the subject and the terminology. Not only is the poverty debate extensive and complicated (CRC 2008 p65, Dorling *et al.* 2007 p2, Smith and Middleton 2007), but, as discussed in the following section, definitions are contested (Smith and Middleton 2007 p27).

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<sup>88</sup> See reference to Bridport's nickname (Notting Hill on Sea) in Chapter 5.

### 8.2.3 Complicated Definitions Make for Difficult Analysis

Analysis of the results did not produce a simple, definitive, answer. Indeed, analysis was difficult. Considerable care had to be taken to ensure that conclusions drawn were a fair reflection of the participants' contributions and views. In an attempt to reduce the data to a form suitable for analysis, participants' answers were reduced to one of the following five summary categories:

**yes;** **no;** **equivocal;** **don't know;** **no answer, or, no clear answer.**

The results of this reduction and simplification reflect the variation in opinion. They are presented in Table 19, and illustrated in Figure 3 (the percentages in the pie charts have been rounded to the nearest whole number).

Summary Answers	PO		O		V		C		C&V		C&PO		Totals	%age
	F2F	PQ	F2F	PQ	F2F	PQ	F2F	PQ	F2F	PQ	F2F	PQ		
<b>Yes</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>		<b>2</b>				<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>27.3%</b>
<b>No</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>		<b>4</b>				<b>2</b>			<b>10</b>	<b>22.7%</b>
<b>Equivocal</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>			<b>1</b>						<b>9</b>	<b>20.5%</b>
<b>Don't Know</b>					<b>1</b>								<b>1</b>	<b>2.2%</b>
<b>No, or no clear, answers</b>		<b>1</b>		<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>		<b>1</b>					<b>12</b>	<b>27.3%</b>
<b>Column totals</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>44</b>	

**F2F:** Face to Face Interviews  
(All 14 interviewees who were asked this question, answered it)

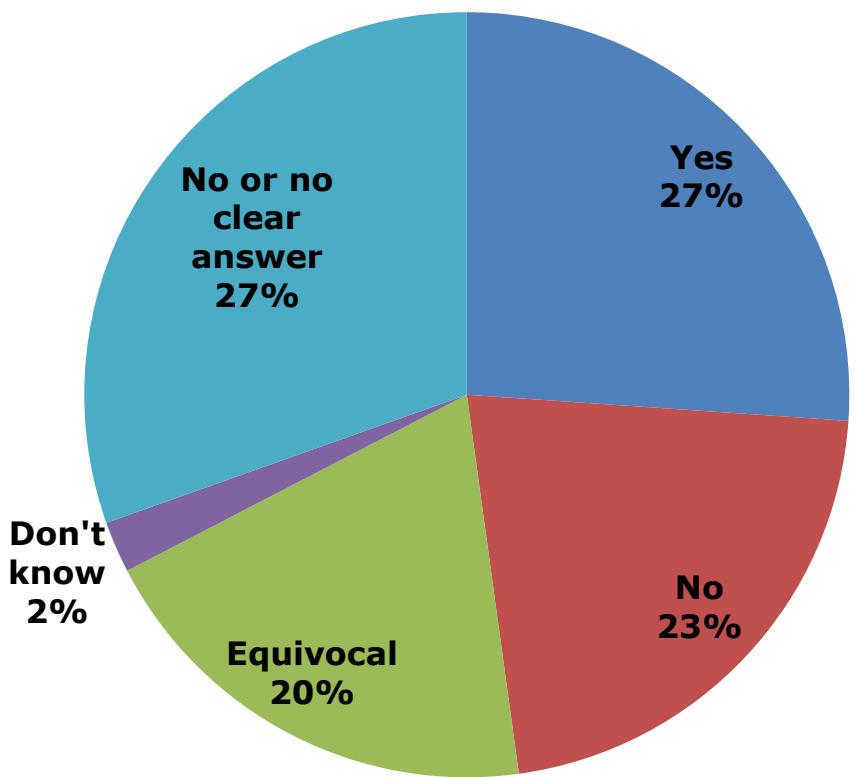
**PQ:** Postal Questionnaire

**Key>** (30 responses from 27 towns out of 48 questionnaires sent – approximately 56% return [27/48])

**PO**, Project Officer; **O**, officer; **V**, volunteer; **C**, Councillor;  
**C&V**, Councillor & Volunteer; **C&PO**, Councillor & Project Officer.

**Figure 3**

**Interviewees' and Respondents' Views About Whether the Market Towns Initiative,, Market and Coastal Towns Initiative, and Beacon Towns Programme Should Have Been Designed to Reduce Poverty**  
(Data, from Table 19, are rounded to the nearest whole number)



Only one person, a volunteer from Bridport, was recorded as a, "Don't know", ie, not having a clearly expressed opinion about whether the programmes should have been **designed** to address poverty (Appendix 11). This is because the answer given was more a reflection of the interviewee's attempt to grapple with both the purpose of the programme ("It was about rural regeneration, wasn't it? ... and who can read the mind of the government ..."), and with possible methods of addressing poverty ("Only the Government could ... fulfil the expectation in areas like this that the minimum wage should be the Minimum Wage."), than an answer to the question. The interviewee's comment that, "*I think [poverty reduction] was the ultimate – one of the guiding factors behind it.*", suggests a hope that the MCTi/BT programmes would help to alleviate poverty in Bridport, although a subsequent comment that the RDA's view was likely to prevail, implies that the interviewee felt that the programme did not address poverty. This view is consistent with the interviewee's belief, expressed in answer to the question about the programmes' success in reducing poverty, that, "... no, I don't personally think it changed ... I don't personally see that it generated any more specific income to breathe more life into the area...".

Although the majority of participants (ie respondents and interviewees) did not give clear answers to this question, approximately 26% of participants tended to the view that the programmes should have been designed to address poverty, while almost 22% thought that they should not have been, and nearly 20% were equivocal (including eight respondents, all of them officers). When the answers obtained from the interviewees and respondents are considered separately, it can be seen that nine out of the ten participants who answered, No, were respondents, whereas of those who answered, Yes, seven (out of twelve) were interviewees. Whether this is a reflection of interviewer bias as discussed above, or of a degree of over-interpretation (Oppenheim 2000 p45) is not known. When considered simply on the basis of the information presented, however, it can be seen that, with approximately 52% of the participants unable or unwilling to be definitive, there is no clear answer to the question. There is – unhelpfully, but not unexpectedly - a diversity of views. As will be discussed in the next section, poverty, on the basis of this research, remains a problematic term.

#### **8.2.4 Poverty – a Problematic Term**

The diverse results described above illustrate the problems faced by the designers of the programmes. A quotation from an interview with a volunteer effectively summarizes the difficulties, almost discomfort, that some people have with the word, poverty: "*Shouldn't use the word, 'poverty' – it's negative, but regeneration is positive, suggests moving forward.*" This view was supported by others, although their words tended to be less specific. For example, an officer interviewed said that the use of a term like, "*economic vitality*" (as opposed to poverty) suggested an, "... *inclusive kind of agenda ...*", and a Councillor, also an interviewee, said, "*Clearly it [poverty reduction] should be one of our principal objectives, possibly one we're not always up front about.*" (writer's emphasis).

That opinion is relatively evenly spread between views suggests that the designers were right to propose relatively non-prescriptive approaches to, "... *help create new job opportunities, new workspace, restored high streets, improved amenities and transport facilities and help with community needs.*" (DETR/MAFF 2000 p75). This diversity, or, in some cases, lack, of opinion also illustrates the difficulties associated with defining and understanding poverty. It may also reflect the evidence-based suggestion that, "... *the British public are only conditionally supportive of anti-poverty policies.*" (McKendrick, Sinclair, Irwin, O'Donnell, Scott, and Dobbie 2008 p7). That this view is somewhat at odds with that of Glennerster *et al.* (2004 p148), who suggest that the public are, with qualifications, and in broadly decreasing numbers, in

favour of anti-poverty policies, provided that they help specific categories (eg the disabled, but not the unemployed), further illustrates the contested complexity of both theory and practice relating to poverty, despite the fact that, "*Britain was the first country to develop poverty measures, and the science has a distinguished and influential history in this country.*" (p169). It also illustrates, perhaps, the effect of growing inequality and low social mobility, whereby the relatively better-off majority become more distant from, and consequently less understanding of, and sympathetic to, the plight of the poor (Brewer, Muriel, Phillips and Sibeta 2008, Wilkinson and Pickett 2009 p159).

The broadly equal spread of views evident in Figure 4 is reflected in the answers given to the second question relating to poverty and policy, namely, whether the work in which the participants were involved reduced poverty, either directly or indirectly. These are discussed in Section 8.3.

### **Section 8.3 Participants' Views About Whether the MTI/MCTi/BTP Reduced Poverty, Either Directly or Indirectly**

The participants' answers (Appendices 11 and 12) were placed into one of five categories (summary answers) following the process outlined in Section 8.1. These are illustrated in Table 20 and Figure 4.

Summary Answers	PO		O		V		C		CV		CPO		Totals	%age
	F2F	PQ	F2F	PQ	F2F	PQ	F2F	PQ	F2F	PQ	F2F	PQ		
<b>Yes</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>			<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>29.5%</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>			<b>1</b>				<b>15</b>	<b>34.1%</b>
<b>Equivocal</b>			<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>					<b>1</b>				<b>4</b>	<b>9.1%</b>
<b>Don't Know</b>		<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>							<b>3</b>	<b>6.8%</b>
<b>No, or no clear, answers</b>				<b>6</b>					<b>3</b>				<b>9</b>	<b>20.5%</b>
<b>Column totals</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>44</b>	

**F2F:** Face to Face Interviews  
(All 14 interviewees who were asked this question, answered it)

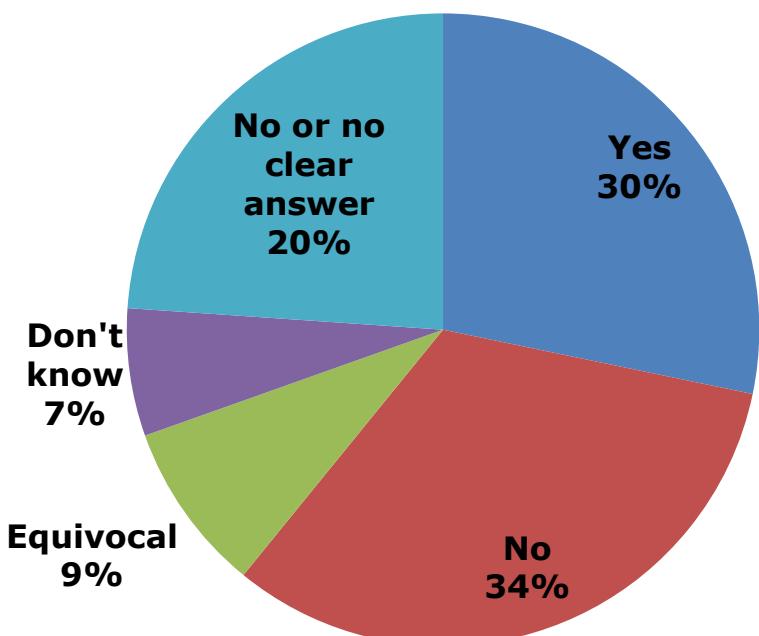
**PQ:** Postal Questionnaire

**Key>** (30 responses from 27 towns out of 48 questionnaires sent – approximately 56% return [ie 27 returns out of 48 sent])

**PO**, Project Officer; **O**, officer; **V**, volunteer; **C**, Councillor;  
**CV**, Councillor & Volunteer; **CPO**, Councillor & Project Officer.

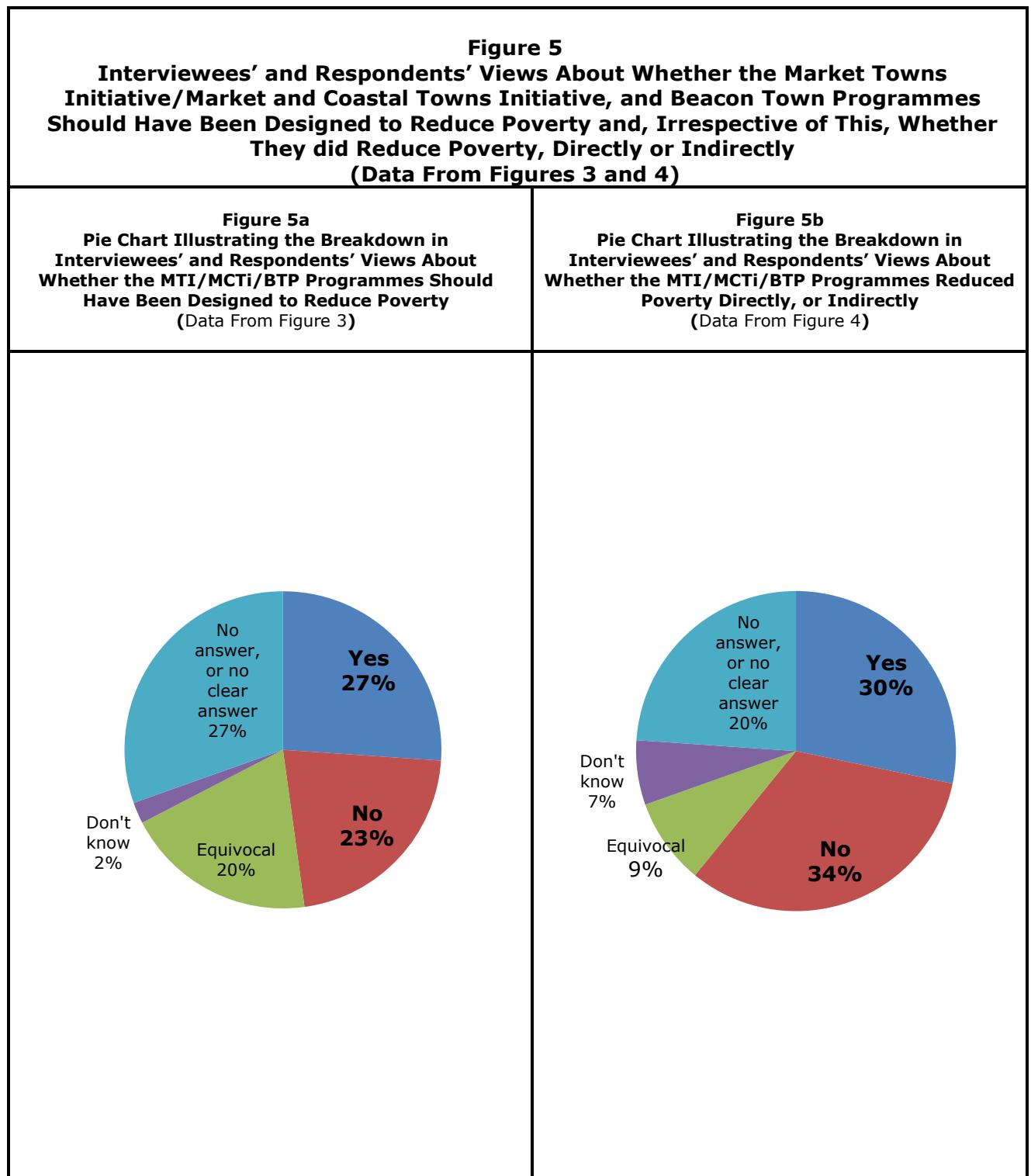
**Figure 4**

**Breakdown of Interviewees' and Respondents' Views About Whether the Market and Coastal Towns Initiative/Market Towns Initiative and Beacon Towns Programme Reduced Poverty, Directly or Indirectly**  
**(Data from Table 20, rounded to nearest whole number)**



To enable easy comparison the summary answers are presented together in Figure 5.

The most significant differences are a reduction in the number of equivocal answers from 20% to 9%, and an increase in the number of definitive (yes, no) answers, from 50% of the total (Figure 3) to 64% (Figure 4), an increase of 6 people (ie from 22 to 28).



Although fewer people recorded, "no answer, or no clear answer" when asked if they thought that the programmes had reduced poverty (20% compared with 27%), the number recording, "don't knows" increased from 2% (one person) to 7% (3 people). Whilst these numbers in themselves are small, the overall increase in definite views probably reflects each participant's involvement in, and knowledge of, their partnership's work. The following comments, which indicate the participants' beliefs that the work had the potential to reduce poverty in their town, illustrate this.

*"The creation of some 30 jobs should result in some extra income for some households. The development of a Children's Centre in conjunction with [name deleted] Office building will reduce deprivation in the area."*

(Officer, respondent, north-west)

*"Yes. ... our 3 vehicle mini-bus service with 17 volunteer drivers has made a major difference for families and the elderly. ... Social housing provision has enriched a good number of families."*

(Councillor and Volunteer, respondent, south-west)

*"No need to use the word, poverty. The work is in the process of addressing poverty. The Healthcheck revealed that disposable income in [name removed] is 72% of the [county] average (ie it's not enough if you live in [county name]). The Healthcheck brought this figure – a 'real driver' – to the forefront."*

(Councillor and Volunteer, interviewee, south-east)

The first two quotations suggest that poverty was addressed and possibly relieved as a result of work designed to have wider benefits (eg the development of the children's centre and additional housing provision). The third quotation refers to the gathering of evidence suitable for use in developing arguments and actions designed to reduce poverty without, as the interviewee cautions, using the word, poverty.

### **8.3.1 Categorizing Participants' Answers - Not Always Easy**

As the numbers in Table 20 illustrate, the majority belief was that the work did **not** reduce poverty (15 compared with 13), although, as recorded above, some answers were definitive, whereas others were less so. This made categorization difficult in some cases. For example, a Project Officer from the south-east stated that, "**I don't think so, but indirectly ... but not as much as it should have done.**" (writer's emphasis). Clearly, in this case, although the answer given is in the negative, the interviewee expresses the view, not only that the work did reduce poverty, albeit indirectly, but also that it, "... *should have done.*"; a view consistent with the interviewee's previously stated belief that the MTI should have been designed to reduce poverty. Similarly, the Bridport-based social entrepreneur interviewed said equivocally, "*No, in a way ...*", explaining that, "... *where we did Planning for Real, the*

*big frustration was always that, how do you get the economics stressed, because people are always going to look at ... superficial issues like green spaces, dog mess ... Christmas lights, or bus journeys ... fine, up to a point, but the critical issue is the economy ... in relation to ... housing and those sorts of things."*

As with the discussion about whether the programmes should have been designed to address poverty (Section 8.2), some of the views expressed are qualified. It was decided that, unless answers were clear (ie unqualified), they would be categorized as equivocal in order to avoid debates about classification ambiguities. For example, an interviewee noted that some of the work was with disadvantaged people, "... *and so is providing better facilities, better access to services ...*", but added, "*It would be terribly, terribly difficult to measure whether we're reducing poverty in economic terms or not. The only way we can do that is via Index of Multiple Deprivation ... but still difficult to see if that's linked to the work of the partnerships*". This interviewee, a Community Development Officer in Dorset, further noted that, "... *people do want to come here [not Bridport, but a Dorset town] and start businesses – difficult to quantify but does come out of the Market and Coastal Towns process, and will have an impact on poverty.*" This interviewee's answer – the above extract is but part of a long and considered response (Appendix 11, question 11b) was categorized as equivocal, even though eventually the interviewee said that the work, "... *will have an impact on poverty*". The categorization was, therefore, based on the interviewee's uncertainty as how to gauge whether the work was reducing poverty, rather than any suggestion that the work lacked the potential to reduce poverty (ie the categorization reflected the interviewee's uncertainties).

Other participants also reflected this innate caution and uncertainty. A Bridport volunteer said, "*It's a matter of degree isn't it, umm, you can say it helped the kids who had scooters to get to work*<sup>89</sup>, *that's a tiny minority.*" Similarly, a respondent wrote, "*To some extent, yes*<sup>90</sup> – *there were links established to Jobcentre Plus*<sup>91</sup>.", before adding that, "... *support to business will have an indirect effect on poverty through increasing job opportunities ...*". Two interviewees (one an officer, the other a volunteer) replied, "*I don't think so.*" [writer's emphasis], while a third said, intriguingly, that, "*It's improved the economy, but I don't think it's improved poverty [in Bridport]*"<sup>92</sup>.

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<sup>89</sup> But not, the reader may recall, to college (Section 7.4).

<sup>90</sup> This illustrates the difficulties associated with categorization of answers. Although recorded as a "yes" it is not definitive and could, some might argue, be recorded under the equivocal heading.

<sup>91</sup> "Jobcentre Plus": the British Government organization that helps the unemployed find work (<http://tinyurl.com/y1zv3fd>).

<sup>92</sup> This – frustratingly - is an example of an answer that, in retrospect, should have been followed-up by the writer in order to explore further the interviewee's meaning.

Other answers, however, were definite. One respondent (a project officer in the south-east) reported, without any further elaboration, "*No, poverty is a national issue.*" (this person's view was that the MTI should have been designed with poverty alleviation as an aim, thereby putting the ultimate responsibility for the programme's success firmly at central Government's door). Another (a serving Councillor and Project Officer from a town in Yorkshire) simply wrote, "Yes", while a third stated bluntly, "*No effect.*" A fourth respondent, undoubtedly expressing some frustration, also reported that the work had had no effect - apart from providing a job for the project manager.

A comment from an interviewee, an officer involved with the work in Bridport, suggested some frustration: "*Without wanting to sound cruel I think they achieved so little that it can't be claimed to have achieved anything at all, particularly from the Employment Group ...*". In subsequent correspondence the interviewee went on to say that although the Employment Group lacked an obvious central purpose (local business participation was low), the local skills training project<sup>93</sup> probably evolved from it, and the group did commission a report about skills. These two comments illustrate how, **given time**, useful work can result from less than satisfactory beginnings. Quite why participation by local businesses in the work of a local employment group was low is not known, but is surprising, and clearly concerned the interviewee. At the very least it suggests a failure of communication, or lack of agreement, between local employers and group members about a topic of significant local importance.

Overall there is more clarity from participants about the programmes' local effects. One third considered that the work had not reduced poverty. Twenty-eight percent believed that it had. It does not follow that those who answered in the negative necessarily believed that the work would not, or could not, reduce poverty, given time. It could be argued that, if the 30% of participants believe that the work had helped in some way to reduce poverty (Figure 4), then it should be possible for the governing process (ie Healthcheck, Action Plan, community involvement, community leadership, partnership working) to be applied successfully for the same purpose elsewhere. Indeed, it might safely be inferred that if the approaches have been thought by some to have reduced poverty, there must be potential to do the same elsewhere. Some thoughts about the limitations of the findings, and of their potential to inform future development work, are discussed next.

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<sup>93</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/y1zv3fd>

### **8.3.2 The Findings – a Mixed Bag – Limited, but There is Potential**

Naturally, local circumstances, the personal experiences and attitudes of the participants, their understanding of, and views about the nature of poverty and its definition(s), the extent to which people in partnerships work together successfully, and the degree to which action plans had been developed and implemented, will have influenced the answers given. There are many questions left unanswered. For example, how many of the disappointed, frustrated or unsuccessful partnerships are from towns where public sector support from rural development programmes, or other sources of encouragement, training and finance, have not been available to help establish community-led planning and development, as an accepted and normal way of working?

It is also important to acknowledge that subjective judgements made by the writer when categorizing the answers, together with any biases introduced during the interviews or in the questionnaire, may have influenced the results. Nevertheless, the data, which reflect the experiences and views of the participants, have a value in terms of their potential to inform future work. The fact that 30% of the participants believed that poverty had, in some way, been addressed by their work, coupled with their recorded achievements (Table 14), suggests that the programmes and their associated approaches have proved their effectiveness, at least for some people, in some places. It follows, therefore, that the approaches should have the potential to be as useful and appropriate elsewhere, both in terms of helping to encourage community-led development, and, more specifically, as a way to reduce poverty, indirectly and directly, no matter how broadly or specifically poverty definitions might be drawn. In fact, if this is true, the quest for the ultimate definition becomes less important. Moreover, improved working definitions and a more instinctive understanding might flow empirically from partnerships' work. At the very least the lessons learnt and the experience gained by practitioners and policymakers alike will help to inform theory and practice relating to community development.

In terms of the participants' reactions to the emphasis on poverty, there is clearly some uncertainty, even discomfort, about poverty *per se*. As can be seen from the data in Appendices 11 and 12, the majority of the participants did attempt to answer the questions about the relationship between poverty and the design and performance of the programmes. The answers vary from a form of denial ("Poverty is not prevalent in our area") to the straightforward ("Yes", "No") via the pragmatically aware conditional comment such as this by a Councillor and volunteer, "No. [Poverty reduction should not have been a design aim of the programmes but] was one of the

*outcomes – our greater need was to find ways to strengthen the economic and social life of the area and through this reduce poverty.”*

Interestingly, this last answer contains both a clear implication that, for this respondent at least, the importance of poverty and its reduction was recognized, and a hint, supported in subsequent answers, that poverty is best defined in terms of economic and social opportunity, and addressed by increasing these and related opportunities. In fact, this respondent's definition of poverty (Appendix 14) emphasizes both financial poverty (ie insufficient money) and closely related material poverty (eg poor housing). To what extent participants' views were governed by their personal understanding of, and beliefs about poverty, however, is unclear. The majority did, however, attempt to define poverty. These attempts are discussed in Section 8.4.

#### **Section 8.4 Definitions of Poverty Offered by Interviewees and Respondents**

All 15 interviewees who were asked to define poverty, did so<sup>94</sup>, whilst only 16 of the 30 respondents offered their definition of poverty (Appendices 13 and 14 respectively). Of the fourteen (45%) respondents who did not answer the question, ten wrote nothing, and four either deflected the question (eg, "... *only government can address that problem.*"), seemed to misunderstand it (eg, "*Poverty is not accurately described in my answers to [the previous questions].*"), or appeared to believe that a definition is not possible or appropriate due to geographical and age restrictions (ie, "*Not in rural deprivation area – very retired community in the main.*").

That 45% did not answer the question, either directly or at all, is indicative of the difficulties associated with understanding the fragmented, dispersed, hidden, culturally distinct nature of rural poverty (Woods 2005 pp268-269) and those affected by it, many of whom will be unaware of, or unable or unwilling to contribute to programmes like the MTI/MCTi/BTP. As Hitchman (2001 p136) noted, programmes like these tend to be dominated by the relatively well-off, time rich or professionally involved, educated, articulate middle classes. These, although by no means a coherent, unified, or ill-intentioned body, nevertheless have the wherewithal and, "... *the motivation to defend their investment in the 'rural idyll'.*" (Woods 2005 p86), and, by virtue of their relatively high incomes and keenness to live in rural England, to increase house prices, a fact not lost on one interviewee who noted, "*There is a shortage of accommodation*

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<sup>94</sup> Although, in total, 14 people were interviewed during the course of the research, the four Faringdon and Carterton interviewees involved in trialling the questionnaire were not asked to define poverty. This was an omission.

*for rent in Bridport*", and a respondent who wrote of the, "Lack of appropriate housing..." for people on low incomes.

These two quotations from participants indicate that they recognize the connection between financial poverty and other, consequential, forms, such as the inability to rent accommodation, let alone buy a house. The quotations also illustrate the fact that they did not, as demanded by the question, **define** poverty, so much as attempt to work their way towards a definition. This was particularly so for the interviewees. Not only do the transcripts contain the words of the conversations, but every effort has been made to include the numerous pauses, sighs and other exclamations that punctuated the interviewees' considerable, and considered, efforts to provide definitions.

Examination of the data suggest that most interviewees and respondents are drawn to poverty as relative, rather than absolute, both conceptually and in reality. The definitions offered are consistent with, and, to judge from the words used, clearly informed by the literature, as well as by the participants' experience.

There are no suggestions that people are unable to obtain the means of survival (eg food, water, clothing), but neither are there references to other types of poverty that exist, for example that relating to "hidden" homelessness (eg sleeping in caravans or on friends' sofas) (CRC 2006c p23). One interviewee, with experience overseas (mainly in Africa) noted that poverty in developing countries is marked by child mortality, whereas, "... poverty in this country is more about, 'Well, I'm not as well-off as other people'. ... and ... while it's defined in that way, it will never go away." Circumstances in many developing countries are markedly different from those in the United Kingdom. It is worth noting, however, that while child mortality in the UK is relatively low in international terms, there are noticeable differences in life expectancy within the UK. For example, life expectancy for a woman born in East Dorset in the mid-2000s is about seven years longer than that for a woman born in Blaenau Gwent (ONS 2008 p82); a fact also noted by the authors of a 2010 review of health inequalities in England (Marmot 2010 p16).

Another interviewee, a County Councillor, commented that poverty is an, "... interesting word ... because it's one where we don't feel comfortable using it sometimes I think in the UK and so we invent euphemisms for it ...". The interviewee continued by saying that, "...people in poverty are socially excluded, they are not receiving ... the same benefits available to the majority of people, and I think that would be my definition.", before further expanding the definition to include access to

money, schools and everyday services such as waste collection, and noting that some people who are asset rich, who live, "... *in a nice area in a nice house ... are actually in a degree of poverty.*"

These examples from two interviewees effectively cover the breadth of answers obtained from all those who offered definitions. One respondent, an officer from an RDA, replied that, "*I see poverty in terms of access to, err, to support services, as well as finance and material things.*" This definition is both all-embracing and lacking in detail. It neither defines how much money, nor specifies material needs. Only one participant, an interviewee with 40 years' experience as a public servant in rural development mentioned the official definition of relative poverty (ie people living on or below 60% of the national median income), but immediately qualified, or clouded, the statement by saying, "... *but that's different to disadvantage*". Another interviewee perhaps provided the most effective summing-up of the definitional difficulties, by saying, "*Oh, phew, that's a hard question isn't it. I leave that to others ...*", before adding that, "*I usually go from the Index of Multiple Deprivation*".

Although the breadth of the definitions offered makes analysis difficult, an attempt is made in Section 8.5 to make sense of the data.

## 8.5 Poverty Definitions - Analyzing the Data

In an attempt to capture the essence of the participants' offerings, the data were analysed using the method described in Chapter 4. Significant phrases and words were identified and marked by highlights, and the keywords associated with these were extracted and listed (Appendices 13 and 14). The keywords and the frequency with which they appear are presented in Table 21.

Table 21			
Keywords Associated With Research Participants' Attempts to Define Poverty (Data From Appendices 13 and 14)			
Keyword	Frequency	Keyword	Frequency
Money	18	IMD	3
Access	12	Statistics	4
Education	2	Government	1
Skills	1	Exclusion	2
Opportunity	2	Time	1
Culture	1	Relative (poverty)	4
Housing	2	Uncertain	3

The words and their frequencies illustrate the many poverty indicators mentioned by participants. The number of references to money (ie 18 out of the 52 keywords derived from the 31 participants who offered definitions) is consistent with the CRC's survey of rural attitudes, in which 42% of the 1,010 people surveyed described disadvantage in terms of poverty and low income (CRC 2006 pp202-203). The descriptions from the CRC survey and the definitions offered by participants in this research are similar. The CRC's survey report includes seven quotations. For illustrative purposes, these, together with seven quotations that broadly represent the range of definitions offered by the 31 participants who gave them (Appendices 13 and 14), are presented in Table 22.

**Table 22**  
**Selection of Quotations Describing how Participants  
 in the Commission for Rural Communities'  
 Survey of Rural Attitudes to Disadvantage  
 Viewed Disadvantage, and Some of the  
 Definitions of Poverty Offered by Participants in This Research  
 (CRC 2006 pp202-203, and Appendices 13 and 14)**

<b>CRC</b>	<b>This Research</b>
<b>Living below the poverty line;      unable to find employment through      mental or physical disadvantage.</b>	<b>People without the means and resources      to provide for themselves.</b>
<b>Born into the wrong circumstances      and unable to leave them behind.</b>	<b>Poverty in terms of ... opportunity, errr,      either to ... ummm ... careful with words      ... maintain a reasonable quality of life,      say for the individual, family, in terms of      access to services, opportunities that you      might reasonably expect in this day and      age, umm, inevitably I'm thinking in      terms of income to the family unit,      individual, and how it can be secured.</b>
<b>Disabled people with little money;      people with no jobs; and around      this area people who are      disadvantaged because of lack of      public transport.</b>	<b>Two things: 1) straightforward economic      side, wage levels, not enough money,      security of income; 2) much wider idea of      access to a quality of life at the same      level as everyone else, and to decent      housing, decent transport, decent      services and facilities.</b>
<b>Not having the same chances as      everyone else ie family or money.</b>	<b>The inability to actively share in society's      wealth in such a way which excludes you      from the average expectations that      society has.</b>
<b>Less able to participate in things      others do, eg disability or lack of      funds.</b>	<b>Poverty is not having the means to meet      the needs that you, and those nearest      you, have [pause] to any satisfactory      degree. It means seeing people around      you who are clearly in a better situation.      It means feeling that you are lesser than      those people. It means a feeling of      devaluing yourself and being devalued.      It can mean a feeling of hopelessness, a      feeling of having no positive future that      you can see.</b>
<b>I suppose it's like a lack of access      to services and facilities that the      general population have access to      for whatever reason. I think it is      normally financial.</b>	<b>Obstruction of access to service through      inadequate public transport and cost of      travel. Withdrawal of public services      from rural areas. Low wages. Lack of      affordable housing. Ageing population      with fixed income.</b>
<b>Low income; poor housing; poor      schools; poor services in general.</b>	<b>People unable to access decent housing,      education, health care etc. due to lack of      funds.</b>

With one exception, disability,<sup>95</sup> the topics referred to in the CRC's research (2006 pp202-203) were mentioned by the participants in this research, and all closely match the indicators of rural disadvantage identified in the late 1990s (Dunn *et al.* 1998 pp110-115). This is hardly surprising, for, on any common sense measure, within headings such as employment, income, housing, service provision and accessibility, transport, health and disability, and physical isolation, lie virtually the whole of life. As Dunn *et al.* noted, "*From within [the] mass of data we have failed to find any simple, straightforward and unambiguous single indicators of rural disadvantage.*" (p109). To judge from this and the CRC's research, little has changed in terms of either concerns or obvious progress since Dunn *et al.* did their work.

Referring, once again, to this research, twenty references to access, specific types of access, and housing (also related to money, eg affordability, either for rent or purchase) are listed in Table 21. The definitions offered in connection with these are generally to the point, and familiar. For example,

*"Lack of appropriate housing and unable to purchase because of low income. Off bus routes and unable to afford a car. In need of childcare and family support but none or little in area."*  
(Councillor and Volunteer, respondent, south-west)

*"People without the means and resources to provide for themselves."*  
(Councillor and volunteer, respondent, East of England)

*"Poor housing and environment."*  
(Officer, respondent, East Midlands)

*"Obstruction of access to service through inadequate public transport and cost of travel. Withdrawal of public services from rural areas. Low wages. Lack of affordable housing. Ageing population with fixed incomes."*  
(Councillor, respondent, north-east)

*"Broadest sense, ie, financially, access to services, opportunity etc."*  
(Councillor, respondent, south-west)

*"Those with sufficiently low disposable income that their quality of life is below a minimum that we would judge to be acceptable in the UK in the 21st century."*  
(Volunteer, respondent, East Midlands)

*"Households struggling to meet their basic daily living costs, with no safety margin."*  
(Volunteer and Project Officer, joint respondents, Yorks and Humber)

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<sup>95</sup> Although none of the participants in this research used the word, disability, the Disability Discrimination Act was referred to by a Bridport volunteer in connection with matters relating to accessibility.

The references to statistical sources include unemployment and incapacity benefits. The references to relative poverty include the cost of living, and the obvious presence of people living in better circumstances. These can lead, for those in poverty, in the words of one interviewee, a County Council officer, to, "... *a feeling of hopelessness, a feeling of having no positive future ...*", for those, in the words of another officer interviewed, "... *who have access to fewer resources than most of the rest of the population.*"

One of the respondents who referred specifically to relative poverty (a Project Officer who is also a Councillor) also mentioned the following factors as some form of compensation for being poor in a rural area: a low crime rate, excellent schools, a good community spirit and access to a high quality natural environment. These can only compensate, however, if the relatively poor are able to benefit from them. Poor people are the least able to vote with their feet, and are further disadvantaged if choices, in, for example, education and health services, are limited (CRC 2008 pp26-33).

An overall low crime rate in an area may mask higher crime levels in particular localities within the same area. These often affect the poor disproportionately (Putnam 2000 pp307-318, Wilkinson and Pickett 2009 p132). Similarly, good schools within catchment areas characterized by relatively expensive housing can be dominated by the better-off. Although a town might be surrounded by a high quality environment (eg beautiful countryside), the ability to enjoy it will depend, to some extent, on people having the necessary minimums of time, money, and transport. According to Cheshire (2007 p.vii), places in which people live together on a mix of incomes and housing tenures are relatively successful compared with places where people are concentrated in predominantly rich or poor neighbourhoods. However, the presence of desirable things, in close, but effectively unreachable proximity to the poor, may exacerbate any sense of impoverishment.

The literature supports this possibility. Cheshire makes the obvious point, albeit in the context of urban life, that the poor in these mixed places are unable to benefit from the local environment as much as their wealthier neighbours, not least because they have less to spend (p35). Cheshire also notes (p.ix) that there is, "... *scant clear-cut evidence that making communities more mixed makes the life chances of the poor any better.*" Quite what the scant evidence is, is not specified.

What can be deduced from this? That, if one is to be poor, it is better to be poor in a place where the wealthy and the less well-off live, if not cheek by jowl, then at least

relatively close to one another? It is obviously better not to be poor at all, but, if, as the literature and the participants in this research suggest, poverty in the United Kingdom is taken to be relative, rather than absolute, then, as the interviewee who has worked in developing countries noted, poverty, "... *will never go away.*"

To judge from evidence in the developing "south", poverty, all too obviously absolute, is as persistent as relative poverty is in the developed "north", despite the efforts put in by charities and others to alleviate it. When viewed like this, simplistically perhaps, but realistically, given the evidence, humankind's efforts to relieve poverty have not achieved much. It follows that politicians and policymakers are faced with a dilemma. No matter how hard they try, and no matter how close they get, with the help of academics and practitioners, to identifying, and re-identifying, the factors that influence relative poverty in rural England (ie the familiar and generally accepted headings of income, access to transport, services, sources of finance etc.), the problems of relative poverty cannot, by definition, be solved. This is especially true during periods of increased inequality, such as that between the years 1977 and 2006/7 (ONS 2009).

This dilemma is made worse by the two tendencies of poor people in rural England discussed earlier in this chapter. The first is a cultural predisposition to remain relatively invisible within a "rural idyll" that has been effectively mythologized by both the well-off, and the self-denying poor (Cloke *et al.* 1995, CRC 2006 p198). The second, frustrating for some, is to appear apparently happy with their lot in a social environment that, if not idyllic, is at least preferable to the alternatives. Consequently, the rural poor can be seen to occupy a contradictory and conflicted place within a crowded, but narrow, occasionally contested, academic arena. The implications of this for politicians and policymakers were captured effectively by Burchardt (2002 pp198-208), who noted, "... *the profound and dynamic interplay between social change on the one hand and attitudes to the countryside on the other.*" (p208). These contradictions, in turn, ensure that actually identifying the rural poor is, by definition, difficult, irrespective of the various methods and terminological refinements that have been adopted and discussed over the years.

Indeed, and as discussed in Chapter 2, the increasingly refined language of poverty (ie moves towards the use of terms such as disadvantage and social exclusion) could be regarded in one of two ways, as a route to improved understanding, or an unintended form of sophistry, for, as Cloke *et al.* suggested,

*"... 'deprivation' has in some ways been appropriated by public agencies with their own axe to grind, and ...this in turn has permitted a discursive appropriation of the term 'deprivation' as a blunt double-sided metaphor which at once acknowledges the problematic issues of opportunity restructuring and denies radical policy responses to their issues."* (Cloke *et al.* 1995 p364) (emphasis as in the original).

Essentially, the information obtained from this research about the difficulties associated with defining poverty is consistent with the literature. The definitions offered reflect the fact that the characteristics associated with relative poverty are well known and generally accepted. They are relatively easy to identify and describe in broad terms (access, housing, finance), but difficult, if not impossible within current political limitations and financial and social constraints, to solve. In truth some of the solutions to the problems of poverty are evident from the literature and the information gathered from this research, eg taking whatever steps are needed to improve access to facilities and services, building more affordable housing for rent and sale, improving incomes, creating structures to solve the problems of financial exclusion. However, in the same way that a – perhaps the - primary cause of poverty is financial (insufficient money), so too are the barriers to implementing the solutions financial, both in crude money terms, and also in terms of the political, economic, cultural and social constraints that limit both the sums of money and society's willingness to spend them.

Therefore, although causes and solutions have been identified, the nature of relative poverty is such as to suggest that although its effects can be ameliorated, its existence is a constant. History and experience suggest that, despite the wealth of consistent, frequently produced academic and empirical research findings into rural poverty, pragmatic political imperatives will continue to focus efforts on the more obvious, concentrated and numerically bigger problem of poverty in urban areas. Given the difficulties described above, and evidence that ...

- rural living is increasingly popular amongst older people (ie 35 and over) (CRC 2008 p17),
- levels of deprivation are relatively low (p65),
- community spirit is generally high (CRC 2008a p205), and

- satisfaction with rural life is high even amongst those who are disadvantaged (OPM 2009 p13) ...

... it is not surprising that the contrary data and arguments about the drawbacks of rural life for the mainly hard to find minority of rural dwellers<sup>96</sup> does not succeed in changing policymakers' predisposition to tackle disadvantage in ways that better meet the needs of big urban areas (CRC 2008a p210), in which poverty is more concentrated, more obvious. In view of these complications, an added danger for those interested in and concerned about rural poverty, and for those who experience it, is that, in difficult financial times, politicians will find reasons to abandon the search for solutions.

In terms of this research, however, most of the participants were able to define poverty normatively, and understood that rural poverty is a complicated mix which varies from the simple (lack of money), to the more subtle and sophisticated definitions associated with disadvantage, deprivation, and social exclusion. Their views about whether the programmes should have been designed to address poverty explicitly are fairly evenly split (Figure 3) between those who thought they should have been, those who thought that they should not have been, the equivocal, and the uncertain. Similarly, the data in Figure 4 illustrate a range of views, with those who thought that their work had not reduced poverty (approximately 34%) exceeding those – some 30% of respondents - who believed that their work had helped, indirectly, or directly, to identify and alleviate aspects of poverty in areas covered by their partnerships.

When these findings, and those discussed in Chapter 7 are considered, the evidence, although by no means definitive, suggests that the MTI/MCTi/BTP, and other, related approaches, have, in a relatively short time, satisfied and met at least some of the aims of some of the partnerships and, have, in some places, helped to reduce rural poverty; perhaps even to raise awareness and increase understanding about its nature. In other words, the approaches have worked. They should, therefore, work for others. The implications of this for future policy and practice are discussed in Chapter 9, in which conclusions are drawn, and recommendations made.

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<sup>96</sup> There is a perceptual "gap" between a vision (actual and metaphorical) of rurality based on "traditional" (mainly, but by no means exclusively, southern) "market towns", and difficulties in "seeing" the equally rural credentials of ex-mining towns in, eg, Yorkshire where, "Research shows that profile and perceptions of Yorkshire's ex-coalfield towns are often problematic. Places which continue to define themselves as ex-coalfield communities are hindering their progress by doing so." (Newby and Poulter 2009 p2).

## **Chapter 9 Conclusions and Recommendations**

*We are all interdependent in this fast globalizing world of ours, and due to this interdependence none of us can be the master of our fate on our own. There are tasks which each individual confronts but which cannot be tackled and dealt with individually. Whatever separates us and prompts us to keep our distance from each other, to draw boundaries and build barricades, makes the handling of such tasks yet more difficult. We all need to gain control over the conditions under which we struggle with the challenges of life – but for most of us such control can be gained only collectively.*

(Bauman 2001 p149)

### **9.1 Introduction**

This research aimed to do the following discrete, but related, things:

- 1) Assess the effectiveness of the MTI and the BTP in terms of the programmes' strengths, weaknesses and achievements.
- 2) Add to the body of knowledge relating to rural poverty.
- 3) Draw, from the above, conclusions about the extent to which:
  - rural poverty is recognized and understood;
  - the MTI/MCTi/BTP have been effective, both in overall terms, and as approaches capable of identifying and reducing poverty in rural areas.

The first aim was achieved. Sufficient information was gathered to enable conclusions to be drawn about the efficacy of the approaches. The data gathered enabled participants' views to be reported and analysed. The limitations arising from the relatively small, but statistically and qualitatively significant number of participants, were recognized and discussed (Chapter 4).

Judging the achievements of the second and third aims was more problematic. This is not because of the data, the quality of which was similar to that used to address the first aim, but because of the contradictory nature of rural poverty, which appears from the review of the literature (Chapter 2), and from the data gathered, to be intuitively simple to understand, yet slippery and persistently elusive to explain and solve. For example, the data:

- demonstrate the, "...lack of consensus about the meaning of terms commonly used by those who discuss [rural poverty].” referred to by Noble and Wright (2000 p296);

- hint that rural poverty might be thought by some to be the anachronistic phenomenon to which Cloke *et al.* referred, but argued against, in their rural lifestyles work (1995 p360);
- contain a variety of comments relating to rural poverty's invisibility, low-wages, and high subsistence levels of self-employment, as discussed, for example, in Peter Kenway's illuminating article (2000 pp12-18) about poverty's **perceived** statistical invisibility (p17).

Although this helped to confirm these complicated realities, and offered pointers towards the potential that people involved in community-led development have to think about and (try to) deal with poverty, the research produced no clear cut majority view. In fact, participants' opinions, in the main considered and reflective, covered the gamut of views and expected definitions.

Similarly, participants' views about the relationships between programme design, and the specification of poverty identification and alleviation as design aims, were sufficient in number and clarity for useful analysis (Chapter 8). When categorized, the data were inconclusive; there was no clearly expressed majority view. However, there is sufficient information within the data to enable broad conclusions to be drawn, and recommendations made. Conclusions, presented and discussed in Section 9.2, are used to inform recommendations made in Section 9.3 for further research, and for the future direction of community-led development work.

## **9.2 Conclusions**

### **9.2.1 The MTI/MCTi/BTP – Frustrating, but Fruitful Frameworks for the Future**

The 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century thinker and town planner, Professor Sir Patrick Geddes, believed that if the relationship between the people, their work and where they lived and worked was satisfactory, "... *the form of government was a mere detail.*" (Abercrombie 1945 p3). That was then. To judge from this research, even in places where the balance between Geddes's triad appears to be satisfactory, government, and its close relation, governance, are much more than mere details. The extent to which the MTI/MCTi/BTP have helped to improve matters of government and governance has been the subject of this research, while its object has been to assess how much progress in terms of community-led development has been made as a result of the programmes.

This research suggests that the approaches work, a view supported by the broad conclusions drawn by individuals (Walker 2005) and researchers (Entec 2004 p45). Although the findings of this research do not quite match Entec's enthusiastic conclusion that, "... *an overwhelming majority of project officers and partners recognise the MTI as a successful venture ...*" (p60), the programmes met the expectations of most of the participants (Table 13), and resulted in a variety of projects (Table 14).

While the programmes succeeded in encouraging local people to work with officials and others, the experiences of the people who took part in this research nevertheless varied, from satisfied to disillusioned. For example, the majority of the respondents to the postal questionnaire recorded both a measure of satisfaction with the work, and progress towards the achievement of their aims (Table 13). The Dorset interviewees, however, all of whom were involved in aspects of MTI/MCTi/BTP work in Bridport or elsewhere in the county, described a more complicated mix of success, failure, and frustration. Their longer, more discursive answers (summarised in Table 12, and given in full in Appendix 3) provide an insight into the difficulties inherent in partnership working, and, perhaps inevitably, the different experiences of those involved. Nevertheless, progress was made.

The approaches worked best when needs were clearly identified, easily understood, and agreed (as, for example, in towns affected by Foot and Mouth outbreaks), and supported by the right mix of people and organizations. Given the uncertainties associated with partnership work (eg time, money, human relationships, local circumstances), and concerns, expressed by some participants, about a lack of representativeness, these conditions represent an ideal that is unlikely wholly to be achieved. However, where supportive conditions exist, the evidence obtained from this research suggests that a lot can be – and has been – done by local people working together for the benefit of their town.

**It is concluded**, therefore, that the approaches exemplified by the programmes studied in this research are worthy of further development.

In addition to this rather bald conclusion, the data produced clear messages from participants about how the approaches could be improved. These suggestions tended to the practical and should be relatively inexpensive to implement, with the emphasis, as explained in Chapter 7, on the need for consistency and stability of approach. Indeed, if participants' contributions in terms of experience, skills and

time were given a monetary value, the programmes would, it is suggested, be shown to be very cost-effective.

The work of the MTI/MCTi/BT partnerships continues in the majority (67%) of the towns that participated in this research (Figure 2, page 153), a figure close to the, "... *seven in ten* ..." respondents to Entec's survey who, "... *thought the revitalisation of their town would continue ... without the assistance of the MTI.*" (Entec 2004 p52). However, as the work in 2011 is regional at best, it is un-monitored, un-evaluated and uncoordinated nationally (see the letter from Isaac Fabelurin in Appendix 1). Putting to one side the undoubtedly benefits of regionally-led, regionally appropriate work, which were, in any event, accepted as an essential part of the MTI/BT approach, the loss of the national coordination and experience-sharing elements is to be regretted. Improved coordination, the need for which was recognized by Moseley *et al.* (2004 p4), would, even now, help to overcome the lack of information about the effectiveness of town partnerships identified by Paul Courtney (2007). There were, as reported in Chapter 5 (page 83), signs that coordination and overall management were beginning to improve, for example, in the south west (BDOR 2006 p14).

Consequently, **it is concluded** that programmes should be designed for the long-term in order to ensure overall cost-effectiveness (ie in financial, programme outcome and output terms, training for participants), and methodological effectiveness (ie the experience gained from the work of those involved must be gathered and used to improve the way things are done).

The varied experiences of the participants in this research, and the acknowledged limitations of partnership working explored in Chapter 7, should not obscure or detract from the considerable achievements made by partnerships. The potential to share experiences, not only between town partnerships, but more widely with wider area-based, urban, and even overseas partnerships, is considerable. The potential to learn from one another is two-way, for other partnerships bring with them their own discrete findings and strengths. For example, Julie MacLeavy (2009 p871), in her analysis of work in Bristol, found that although, "... *community partnerships ... secured measurable improvements in local economic, social and environmental conditions in several instances ... [the approach followed did] ... not constitute genuine empowerment.*", and suggests that matters might be improved if local initiatives were given more prominence, greater priority, and were more effectively integrated. MacLeavy's suggestions chime well with the tenor of this research.

When considered overall and objectively (ie away from the day-to-day pressures of actually working in partnership), and having made due allowance for the difficulties, setbacks and frustrations (or learning opportunities) faced by those involved in the work, the information provided by participants about their involvement in the MTI/MCTi/BTP suggests that they have the knowledge and ability to lead the development of community work in rural areas, and to inform related work elsewhere. There is, therefore, an opportunity for those involved in rural partnership work, who are, according to the CRC (2006d p38) part of a satisfied constituency, to do more leading, and less pleading. At least this could help to blunt the challenges from those who doubt the notion of rural deprivation (Miles 2007), and encourage a debate with those who question aspects of relative poverty, with its potential, depending on where the poverty line is drawn, to allow, "... scope for righteous indignation by inflating the figures more or less at will ..." (Dennis 1997 p143), or who believe it to be a, "... measure of equality...", rather than poverty (Munkhammar 2007 p41). More positively it might encourage locals to continue work which, according to the findings of this research, has the potential both to identify and address aspects of rural poverty, and to help in the search for an improved understanding of its nature and effects.

The next section discusses the extent to which rural poverty is understood, both in general terms, and by reference to this research.

### **9.2.2 Rural Poverty – Recognized but Lacks a Coherent Policy Response**

The data about relationships between the programmes' design aims and poverty, the effectiveness of the partnerships' work in addressing poverty, and participants' definitions of rural poverty, suggest two things:

- 1) when the data are considered with the findings of the literature review (Chapter 2), it is difficult to argue for yet more research into the nature of relative rural poverty,<sup>97</sup> at least until recommendations arising from past work have been implemented, and used to develop a coordinated, longitudinal research and monitoring programme designed to inform developments in policy and practice;
- 2) that the experience of those involved in community-led development work in rural England's small towns could be usefully exploited to help achieve this.

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<sup>97</sup> A concept which appears to be well understood, broadly accepted, and, given the numbers affected – some 10 million in the UK in 2008 - should be familiar to many (McKendrick, Sinclair, Irwin, O'Donnell, Scott and Dobie 2008 p5).

Absolute poverty presents a different challenge. In view of its (relatively) extreme nature, identifying the individuals affected (as opposed, for example, to demographic categories such as the elderly, or the disabled) should be (relatively) easy compared with identifying those affected by relative poverty, deprivation, disadvantage and social exclusion.

As discussed in Section 2.3.6, the factors that contribute to social exclusion do not have equal weight. Insufficient money lies at the heart of most aspects of poverty, no matter how described. Earned incomes depend upon people's skills and qualifications, age, and health, as well as on local economic conditions. Noble and Wright (2000 p298) concluded that income measurement is an effective way to identify those in poverty, but, as Hulley and Clarke (1991 p10) noted in their discussion about individual and structural approaches to understanding social problems, "... *identifying poverty is not the same as explaining it.*"

If there are people in rural England in absolute poverty, ie without sufficient food, water, shelter and clothing to meet their basic needs, then they should be readily identifiable by their obvious distress, and helped, be it by charities, statutory organizations, or the benefits system (see for example, Noble and Wright 2000). Indeed, according to Peter Kenway's (2000 p17) selective analysis of 17 rural Districts, the poor are not actually hidden by statistics. His findings are logical. So much is known about the plight of the rural poor, and the much researched, widely accepted, and common sensible factors that affect them, that their much mentioned invisibility can only be attributed to the reticence and pride of the individuals affected (Cloke *et al.* 1995 p364, Milbourne 2006 p11), or to the blindness of those who cannot or will not see or acknowledge that they exist, or who, "... *see disadvantage as an aspect of rural life rather than a particular problem.*" (CRC 2006 p198). Ironically, the second category could include the rural poor themselves, who, "... *tend to express general satisfaction with their local areas and to feel included within the social fabric of their local communities.*" (Milbourne 2006 p12).

The discussions above and in Chapter 2 suggest that rural poverty is understood conceptually, is well researched and documented, but is far from solved. To hope to solve it may be a hope too far, given the generally accepted and permanent nature, indeed inevitability, of relative poverty, and the changing circumstances that cause people to be moved into and out of it. In addition to this, the very quietness of "rurality", due in part to the lack of public transport and employment opportunities, attracts the relatively wealthy to live in relatively expensive housing, and serves to strengthen the odds against the rural poor (Cloke *et al.* 1995 p354). It is unlikely,

however, that transforming rural England into a version of urban England, perhaps by quadrupling fuel prices to encourage the use of public transport, implementing the, "... *big building programme* ..." called for by the Scott Committee (HMSO 1942 p45), providing playing fields for children (p55) and acting on Professor Dennison's minority view (p112) that, "... *it is by the introduction of some [non-agricultural] industrial development that there is most hope of... [improving]... social and economic conditions in the countryside ...*", would either meet with universal approval, or, given the existence of urban poverty, achieve very much. In any event, as it is nearly 70 years since Lord Scott submitted his committee's recommendations, it is unlikely that they will be implemented soon.

Nevertheless, the research, both academic and action-orientated, that has been done over the years, has led to an improved, if increasingly sophisticated and nuanced, understanding of the things that cause rural poverty, and an appreciation of the things that help to reduce it. There are drawbacks, however, associated with the complicated notions of deprivation, disadvantage and social exclusion, in that sophisticated definitions can lead to sophisticated responses. For example, politicians and policy makers may argue that because rural poverty affects relatively few hard to find (and possibly hard to convince) people whose circumstances are, or may be, affected by a wide range of factors, any meaningful policy response will simply cost too much. A common response to this is to ask for more research, the outcome of which is likely to be an updating, or more subtle rewriting and reassessment, of what has gone before. The two positions, therefore, offer benefits to those on both sides of the argument: they provide reasons to postpone action for the policymakers and politicians, and extra work, and new knowledge, for academics and practitioners.

Quite what the benefit for the rural poor might be is harder to explain.

Politically, acceptance that rural poverty is complicated, and therefore difficult to solve, helps to avoid, or minimize, equally difficult and contentious debates about poverty's causes being primarily about a lack of money (and its corollary that more money, via, for example, an increase in benefits or the minimum wage would help to solve it). Recent research into the concept of social exclusion as applied to rural older people (Moffatt and Glasgow 2009) noted that, "... *most scholars ... agree ... that the most significant difference for poorer older people are policies that have increased their income.*" (p1299), before concluding that, "*The dynamic processes surrounding poverty and social exclusion ... could be better understood and problems better addressed ... if researchers would tease out how reductions in social exclusion contribute to an increase in income and how increases in income obviate aspects of*

*social exclusion among older people.*" (p1301). That such a need has to be so clearly spelt out after so many years of research and experience, and so many attempts to reach a clear understanding of the causes and effects of poverty in its various forms, as discussed in Chapter 2, simply emphasizes the lack of a coherent policy response. It also suggests a lack of wider societal concern, and/or political will, to solve income-related problems for the poor. Pragmatically, therefore, although Moffat's and Glasgow's research relates specifically to older people, it would be sensible, in terms of future work, to assume that their conclusions apply to other age groups, and to conduct research accordingly. It is possible that the pragmatic, empirical, potentially long-term, exploratory, experiential approaches exemplified by the MTI/MCTi/BTP could make a practical contribution to this type of investigation.

However, this research did not set out to solve the problems of rural poverty. It set out to explore how rural poverty might have been identified and addressed pragmatically and empirically by local people who chose to participate in the MTI/MCTi/BTP. The evidence from this research suggests that most of the participants understood, and chose to define, rural poverty in ways that are essentially normative. There was some clarity from participants about the programmes' local effects (Section 8.3.1), and, in view of this, it is concluded that the work done, and the approaches followed, have the potential to help reduce poverty.

When this finding, and those relating to the achievements of at least some of the partnerships discussed in the previous section are taken together, it is concluded that small town partnerships are capable of contributing both to empirical research into rural poverty, and to its identification and alleviation at the local level. The recommendations which flow from this conclusion are discussed in Section 9.3.

### **9.3 Recommendations**

In Section 7.4.6 the impossibility of accounting for all of the variables governing a given partnership's success was noted. It was suggested that the conditions listed in Table 23 could help to minimize the likelihood of failure. **It is recommended** that future programmes be designed to take these points into account.

<b>Table 23</b>
<b>Conditions Necessary to Help Minimize Partnerships' Likelihood of Failure (Data from Section 7.4.6)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sufficient time to form and organize partnerships, and to create and maintain relationships between members.</li><li>• Political and wider community support (ie greater awareness and support from local populations) for the members of partnerships.</li><li>• Straightforward long-term processes and programmes that are designed to allow and encourage their evolution/development.</li><li>• Partnerships with sufficient power and authority to develop and implement plans.</li><li>• Partnership members sufficiently well trained and supported to assume the necessary responsibilities.</li><li>• Effective communication between partnership members and associated organizations.</li><li>• Organizational and individual patience to enable the plans to be brought to fruition.</li><li>• Structures that take into account people's limited time and energy, and the associated requirements for personal/organizational development and succession strategies.</li></ul>

Reference was also made in Chapter 7 to the tensions that could arise between partnerships and Town Councils. If the latter were not involved in, or supportive of, the work of the former, concern could arise amongst Councillors that their role as democratically elected representatives of the people was being undermined, or bypassed. Tension between the two is undesirable and likely to be unhelpful, and the involvement of a local authority in a partnership's work offers two potential benefits, namely, democratic legitimacy, and a statutorily constituted and generally stable,

permanent organization that can act as the partnership's legal and financial accountable body.

**It is recommended**, therefore, that future programmes designed to involve "the community" (in truth a fairly abstract term) encourage the involvement of Town Councils in partnership working, without making their involvement a pre-requisite to the establishment and maintenance of a partnership. It is acknowledged that there is a difficult balance to strike here, between the desirability of encouraging community-led work along the lines of the MTI/MCTi, and the possible wish of an elected Town Council to do things differently. There is also a difficult balance to strike between the designers of community development policies and programmes, and those – in the communities – who will implement them. It is important to note that there will be occasions when the requirements of the designers and funders will be proved to be correct, even though opposed by some in the community. An example of this is the Healthcheck, which was criticized initially by some partnerships, but was eventually valued (Entec 2004 pp6-7, Walker and Young 2004 p2). There are, therefore, balances that must be struck if the full potential of joint working is to be realized.

The tension referred to above draws attention to the importance of establishing the correct relationship between government and governance. Reference was made in Section 3.2.1 to the idea that, "... *governance leads to a greater focus on outcomes, and is more able to address cross-cutting issues.*" (Wilson 2004 p10). It was also noted that the involvement of many organizations (and, therefore, people), each with their own priorities and ways of working, can be both beneficial, and unhelpful (Bevir and Rhodes 2001 p115, Flinders 2002 p53, Hart and Doak 1994 p202). According to Graham Pearce and John Mawson (2003 p54) the growth in these more complicated ways of doing things stems from central government's concern about people's lack of confidence in formal politics. This, in turn, appears to stem, in part at least, from local government reorganizations, increased control by central government, removal of powers, and, somewhat ironically, developments in governance mechanisms involving partnership working (Morris and Nichols 2007 p34) and a, "... *succession of pilot programmes and special projects ...*" (Benington 2006 p8). These last include the MTI/MCTi/BTP amongst their number.

In view of the above it can be argued that central governments, of all political hues, are willing to try many different ways to encourage people to become involved in **governance**, but are, on the evidence to date, unwilling to cede power to other tiers of **government**. The loss of power from today's Town Councils to District Councils resulting from the 1974 reorganization of local government referred to in Section 6.3

illustrates effectively the drift towards larger units of local government, while the removal of local authority powers over aspects of local education, social housing, and transport (Morris and Nichols 2007 p21) equally effectively illustrates the drift away from local authority control. With the loss of direct powers have come pressures to participate in the new ways of working (eg in partnership). Councillors' roles have, therefore, moved from oversight, to scrutiny (Stevens 2006 p175). However, the nature of an MTI-type partnership, with members primarily interested in and knowledgeable about a single town and its surrounding parishes, is such that Town Councillors are well-placed to provide a measure of democratically accountable oversight and scrutiny, as well as financial and organizational support to their fellow locals, whose interests may lie less in politics, but, to judge from this research, be similar in terms of their motivations and desire to help.

The fact that local people are best placed to understand and reflect local circumstances was also noted in Section 5.10. This referred to local people's ability to take a lead in regeneration work (Entec 2004 p59). Therefore, the potential for partnership members and Town Councillors to add value to one another's work, given good will and common sense, is obvious. They should, and as evidenced by this research, do, work together for the (their) common good.

The latent power of local people has, it appears, begun to be tapped. The work that has been – is being – done has, despite the frustrations of some and the disappointment of others involved in this research, relatively unobtrusively, and in ways largely unacknowledged by central government, achieved a lot (Table 14, page 143), and those involved acknowledge the progress that has been made (Table 13, page 135). There is also evidence that the work done has helped to identify and address aspects of rural poverty (Chapter 8). Therefore, if the conclusions drawn from this research are correct, the MTI/MCTi/BTP, for all their imperfections, have the potential to enable local people to help improve policy and practice as they relate to community-led development programmes in general, and to rural poverty in particular. In view of this, **it is recommended** that the design of future programmes should take into account this potential, both implicitly, in terms of recommended approaches, and more specifically in evaluations.

If the successors to these programmes are to build on the initial work of the partnerships associated with this research, they must be designed for the long-term, sufficiently flexible in approach to enable them to evolve, and capable, in terms of their governing rules and regulations, of encouraging and supporting local people to become and remain involved. There will need to be:

- clear succession strategies to avoid "volunteer fatigue";
- truthful initial communication about what is possible, and realistic expectations about what can be achieved from this relatively informal, but structurally complicated, way of working;
- trust in, and respect for, the members of partnerships, balanced by commensurate responsibilities and powers.

Policymakers should, therefore, look at the benefits of this type of approach, not solely in terms of what is achieved locally, but also in terms of what can be shared for wider – national - benefit. An intention of the BTP was to monitor the progress of the partnerships relatively informally, but regularly, by visiting each BT and reporting on its partnership's experiences, using the case study approach followed by Claire Nichols in her two reports for the Countryside Agency (Nichols 2004, Nichols 2005). It was also intended that, with the exception of some financial help to enable them to share their experiences (£3,000/partnership/annum), they should be left largely to their own devices over a period of, say, 10 years, in order to enable their progress to be tracked, and their experiences used to inform policy and practice about the difficulties typically faced by partnerships. It was hoped that, by so doing, BTPs would form the core of a longitudinal study of small town partnerships. In the event, it was not to be. The BTP effectively ended as a consequence of the various 'machinery of government' changes that occurred after 2005 (Chapter 5 refers).

**It is recommended**, therefore, that future programmes be designed to enable progress to be monitored and evaluated, and that mechanisms be put in place to ensure that participants' experiences will be shared, and good practice disseminated.

## **9.4 Concluding Thoughts**

Finally, to build on the preceding sections in this chapter, and to draw on the experience gained from the five years that it has taken to complete this research, I turn to and reflect upon the beliefs that prompted my interest, and which are explained in Chapter 1, namely:-

- 1) That community-led initiatives like the MTI/MCTi/BTP have the potential to identify and address rural poverty at the local level.
- 2) The definitions and statistics used to explain and describe rural poverty are inadequate, if not inaccurate, for two reasons:
  - i. They have failed to produce a simple, coherent, widely and clearly understood idea of what it is that constitutes rural poverty. As a consequence rural poverty is difficult to understand conceptually and practically.
  - ii. The generally accepted notion that poverty is relative is unhelpful. Research during the last 25 years suggests that approximately 20-25% of rural households live in poverty, with rural areas containing, "... around 16% of all of England's households living in poverty." (CRC 2006 p20). Although the arithmetic and theory are sound and accepted, the fact that the population of rural England is growing, that its economy is relatively vibrant in terms of business start-ups (CRC 2008 pp103-108), and that the people who live there are generally prosperous, healthy and happy (CRC 2007, Poverty Site 2009) allows the figures to be challenged or dismissed (Miles 2007).

In terms of the first, I believe that this research has demonstrated that the approaches used in the MTI/MCTi/BTP can help identify and address rural poverty, if for no other reason than local people are likely to be aware of their neighbours' problems and concerns. I believe that future programmes should not specify poverty relief as an aim, but that their potential to help local people identify and address poverty should be recognized implicitly. Ideally there should be one national programme. It should guide, rather than prescribe, and be sufficiently flexible to allow for local differences. Its design should allow sufficient time for partnerships to find out what needs to be done (the Healthcheck), to work out how things should be

done (action planning), and, finally, to do the things that need to be done (project implementation).

The programmes should be regularly monitored and formally evaluated. If done sensitively and sensibly this would not be onerous. Relatively short interviews/questionnaires, perhaps similar to those used in this research, should be mandatory, and would, I believe, produce data suitable for informing the development of both policy and practice.

The programmes at the heart of this research, with which I have been involved for more than 10 years, were essentially mechanisms for granting money to groups of people who wanted to work to improve their towns. They were governed by rules and regulations which controlled and limited what local people were allowed to do. There was, I think, something patronizing, confidence-sapping, even infantilizing and emasculating about the extent to which some of the partnerships were controlled. In my experience things worked best when partnerships were given the freedom to adjust the process to suit their circumstances. For example, if up to date local statistics were available to a partnership, then the Healthcheck would be used to guide their work, rather than rigidly control and direct it.

Similarly, there was something concerning about the MTI's emphasis on local leadership by partnerships, rather than Town Councils. This suggested either a lack of trust in local government, or an unwillingness to cede power (if not responsibility) from central government and its agencies (or both). The fact that Town Councils are, although often political in composition and ways of working, essentially partnerships established – democratically - to work in, and for, their towns, and with colleagues in nearby settlements. That it is desirable for MTI/MCTi/BT partnerships to involve, or be supported by, Town Councils has been referred to in this thesis several times. It would be interesting to discover what could be achieved by a bold representative Town Council, with a strong democratic mandate, an interested and involved electorate, sufficient locally raised money, and the powers to demand, rather than bid for, the support of outside organizations.

One cannot help but wonder why, in the search for the holy grail of community development and leadership, and for locals who are involved in, and committed to their town, Town Councillors have, in terms of partnership working, come to be seen in some cases as peripheral, rather than central, community leaders? Although this question is beyond the scope of this study, the failure by central government to turn its rhetoric about devolution into action suggests either significant administrative and

legislative barriers, a lack of confidence in local government and governance, an unwillingness to cede power, an unwillingness by some Councils to exercise their right to precept, or a combination of all these factors. Whatever the reason(s), the question deserves an answer.

My second belief, that the definitions and statistics used to explain and describe rural poverty are inadequate, was more difficult to deal with. This research suggests that ideas about rural poverty, its various guises and its definitions, are well accepted. Whether they are well understood is another matter. This will no doubt be the subject of more research. I hope, based on these research findings, that the potential of small town partnerships to add to the body of knowledge will be accepted and further explored.

Rural poverty is an enigma. As discussed in Chapter 2, and confirmed by this research (Section 8.5), it is defined and debated in terms that range from the straightforward to the complicated. It is not easy to understand, let alone solve. Although my suspicion remains that the notion of poverty as **relative**, rather than absolute, is unhelpful to the rural poor, I am no closer to a definitive answer as to whether it is. Nevertheless, as this research suggests, helpful or not, relative poverty is, to many, the accepted measure used to inform policy and practice (even though not wholly or satisfactorily understood). This should not be allowed to obscure the fact that, irrespective of the sophisticated and contested debates about the nature of poverty, its definitions, and unresolved arguments about where to draw the poverty line, the blindingly obvious need for a sufficient minimum income, be it from benefits or wages, is undeniable, and was referred to by 18 of the 31 contributors to this research who attempted to define poverty (Table 21).

More positively, it appears that the MTI/MCTi/BTP had begun to make a useful contribution to community-led development policy, and to the work of town-based partnerships. Essentially, these relatively straightforward techniques helped people to help other people. It would be a lost opportunity, and an insult to those who gave, and continue to give, time and effort to make these programmes work, not to build on their experience, and their experiences. As England's small country towns face, as they have always faced, changes in how people live, work and shop, the time is right to help local people work together to improve local circumstances, add to our understanding of rural poverty, and try to find ways to solve it.

However, this research also suggests that a simple, clear, agreed definition of poverty will continue to elude even the most experienced people. This was effectively

illustrated by one interviewee, a senior Hampshire County Council Cabinet Member, who, when asked to define poverty, paused for thought for a long time, before saying, "*This [question] is an interesting one ... .*" It certainly is, and unless concerted, considered and coordinated efforts are made to learn from all sources of expertise, including locally-led small town partnerships, it seems likely to remain so.

# **People Helping People**

**An Assessment of the  
Market Towns and Related Initiatives,  
and the  
Extent to Which They Addressed  
Rural Poverty  
(Volume 2 of 2)**

**Submitted by Gordon Ralph Morris, MSc (Seale Hayne, University of Plymouth), CertEd(FE) (University of Greenwich), to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Politics, June 2010.**

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**I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other university.**

**Signed: .....**

# **Appendices**

## **Appendix 1**

**Letters From Three Department of Farming and  
Rural Affairs Officers About the Market Towns  
Initiative, Written in Reply  
to Requests for Information From the Writer**

Nobel House  
17 Smith Square  
London SW1P 3JR

Telephone 020 7238 5339  
Website [www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)



From the Secretary of State's Private Office

Gordon Morris Esq  
Tanglewood  
Leigh  
Sherborne  
Dorset  
DT9 6HL

February 2007

Dear Mr Morris

**Community Development in England's Country Towns**

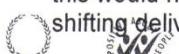
First of all like I would like to apologise for the delay you have experienced in receiving a reply to your letter of 28th October 2006. There are a number of reasons for this, but it is nevertheless quite unacceptable, and I am sorry you have had to wait so long for a response.

I understand a number of meetings were held in 2005, to discuss the future of those workstreams the Countryside Agency would no longer be responsible for from 2005/06. These discussions were informed by the Modernising Rural Delivery Programme, and Rural Strategy 2004, which stated Defra's intention of devolving decision-making and funding for economic regeneration to the Regional Development Agencies. The regeneration of market towns, building on the work of the former Market Towns Initiative, was part of this devolved responsibility.

At the time the then Minister for Rural Affairs, Alun Michael, said this did not mean there was no place for some national co-ordination to:

- make sure that the lessons learnt at regional and local level were widely shared;
- ensure that excellence was highly publicised to set the standard for others;
- or to ensure a strong network of market towns partnerships.

For this reason, Defra continued funding for Action for Market Towns through 2005/06, to bridge the transitional period, and to allow AMT to seek wider support, both from RDAs and market town partnerships themselves. However, it was decided not to extend funding beyond this period because this would have run counter to the Department's underlying principle of shifting delivery functions out of Defra. To continue support for national



market towns services, moreover, could not be justified given that the Market Towns Initiative had been "mainstreamed" in each of the regions.

In discussions with the RDAs at that time, on how they would develop market town regeneration, it was accepted that delivery would vary, as each region's experience of market town regeneration activity, coupled with regional needs would shape how they would take forward future investment in market towns. RDAs indicated they were keen to ensure that market town partnerships gained from the benefits of networking and sharing best practice within regions. At the same time, they wanted to ensure that this best practice was not only shared between the partnerships themselves, but also through engagement in wider regeneration networks, such as Regional Centres of Excellence, something that Defra fully supported.

I apologise again for the unfortunate delay in replying to your letter of 28<sup>th</sup> October 2006.

Yours sincerely



BETH CROOK

Private Secretary to the Secretary of State



Gordon Morris Esq  
Tanglewood  
Leigh  
Sherborne  
Dorset  
DT9 6HL

Date 30 March 2007

Dear Gordon

#### Community Development in England's Country Towns

Thank you for your letter of 26<sup>th</sup> February 2007, seeking further information on RDAs' sharing of best practice regarding the Market Towns Initiative.

There is evidence that good practice in market town regeneration is being shared, not just between RDAs but also within and between regions (see information attached at Annex A). However, there is not, nor was there ever any intention of creating, a national forum specifically for building on the work of the Market Towns initiative, or the Beacon Towns.

The purpose of devolving funding and responsibilities for rural socio-economic regeneration to RDAs, as set out in Rural Strategy 2004, was to enable each region to take forward future investment in rural areas (including in market towns) as appropriate to the region. While some regions have decided to continue with a dedicated market towns programme, others have chosen different vehicles – the East of England Development Agencies “Investing in Communities” programme for example, which is addressing issues in both urban and rural communities. For this reason, sharing of good practice will, quite rightly, cover the breadth of RDA activities.

In pursuing your interests in rural policy, you may find the following of interest:

- Communities and Local Government Select Committee report on coastal towns  
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmcomloc/351/35102.htm>
- A forthcoming Environment Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee hearing on the rural economy  
[http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary\\_committees/environment\\_food\\_and\\_rural\\_afairs/efra\\_england\\_s\\_rural\\_economy.cfm](http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/environment_food_and_rural_afairs/efra_england_s_rural_economy.cfm)



**NB** This letter, attached to which was the Annex overleaf, is from Diane Roberts of Defra. The second page of the letter was slightly damaged, but as it contained only her signature, it has not been included in this Appendix.

## ANNEX A

In terms of sharing good practice between RDAs but also within and between regions, **specifically on market towns**, this is being achieved through:

- The RDAs' extranet, which has a section dedicated to market towns;
- Through the use of websites within the regions. For example, [www.rmtportal.com](http://www.rmtportal.com) and [www.mcti.org.uk](http://www.mcti.org.uk);
- Events. For example, One North East is holding a conference to present the findings of its Retail Distinctiveness Project on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2007. This full-day event includes a keynote speaker from Defra, a panel discussion on market towns and sustainable communities, tours of Alnwick market town, workshops and a networking event. Invitations to the event have been widely circulated, including to all RDAs. Further information can be found at:  
<http://distinctiveness.onene2dev.raki.enigmainteractive.net/page/index.cfm>

In addition, RDAs are sharing good practice **on a range of rural matters, which also relate to market towns**. For example:

- 'Rural Round-up', a monthly internal bulletin targeted at RDA rural leads;
- 'Regional2Central' - the joint Defra/RDA in-house e-newsletter. This featured a series of market town regeneration stories from across the English regions in the Spring 2007 edition;
- Quarterly meetings of a cross-RDA Rural Affairs Network. Last year a meeting was hosted by the North West and provided RDA rural leads with an opportunity to view at first hand NWDA's work to regenerate a particular market town;
- The Regional Centres of Excellence of course continue to play an important part in contributing to regeneration, including in markets towns. For example, skills and design excellence, which is shared through their own networks.

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Website: [www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)

**CCU Ref:** DWOE175293

Mr Gordon Morris

[G.Morris@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:G.Morris@exeter.ac.uk)

29 March 2010

Dear Mr Morris,

**Market Towns Initiative**

Thank you for your letter of 8 March about Market Towns Initiatives. I have been asked to reply.

The Market Towns programmes were run primarily through and by Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), with Countryside Agency funding integrated into these regional level programmes. We are aware that some regions have evaluated their programmes and we would recommend you contact East of England Development Agency (EEDA) who should be able to co-ordinate your request in their role as lead rural RDA. EEDA's contact details can be found on their website at:  
<http://www.eeda.org.uk/contact.asp>

Similarly, we are not aware of any evaluation of the national Countryside Agency element of the programmes. However, contact with the Commission for Rural Communities may turn up evaluation data from their predecessor body.

Apologies that we are not able to be more helpful, but the delegated approach to the delivery of these programmes means that responsibility for delivery and evaluation sits primarily with the RDAs.

Yours sincerely,

Isaac Fabelurin  
Defra - Customer Contact Unit



## **Appendix 2**

**Copies of the Postal and Interview  
Questionnaires  
Used in the Research,  
Together With the  
Writer's Covering Letter of Explanation,  
and  
Data About the Towns to Which Survey Forms  
Were Sent**

## **Writer's Covering letter of Explanation**

Addressee <>

Date **NB The survey took place in the early months of 2008**

Dear

### **Research Into Aspects of the Market Towns Initiative and Beacon Towns Programme**

I am writing to ask for your help with a research project designed to assess the effectiveness of rural policy in identifying and addressing poverty. I am also interested in assessing the extent to which the Market Towns Initiative and Beacon Towns Programme have helped, directly or indirectly, to address poverty\*.

As your town was – indeed, might still be – involved in one or both of these programmes, I would appreciate it very much if you, or someone you know who was involved with the work, would complete the enclosed questionnaire. Your co-operation in the survey is, of course, entirely voluntary, but I would be very grateful if you would take part. It should not take more than 20 minutes to complete the enclosed form.

All information will be treated in the strictest confidence. Your details will not be passed to any other organization and neither your, nor your Council's, or Partnership's views will be identifiable from the survey results. The names of the towns surveyed will be listed, but the research results will not be "town-specific", unless permission is sought and given.

My intention is to use the information from the questionnaires, and some face-to-face interviews, to support a detailed study in one Market/Beacon town. My hope is that, when I have completed the work I will have a good insight into the effectiveness of the two market towns programmes, and a better understanding of rural poverty and the ways in which it can be identified, and perhaps tackled by community-led partnerships.

If you have any questions, please let me know. In the meantime, I look forward to hearing from you, and many thanks, in advance, for your time and co-operation.

Your sincerely

Gordon Morris

Centre for Rural Policy Research

Tel. 01935 873051 / 07917 577285

Email: [gm223@ex.ac.uk](mailto:gm223@ex.ac.uk) or [gm@tanglewood.u-net.com](mailto:gm@tanglewood.u-net.com)

University of Exeter web link: <http://tinyurl.com/2lbcjz>

Enc. Questionnaire

\* In part my interest stems from the fact that, as an employee of the Countryside Agency, I was involved in the development and implementation of both the MTI and the BT Programme.

**The Postal Questionnaire**  
**(Answer boxes reduced in size from that of the original)**

**Name of person completing questionnaire:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact telephone number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Town:** \_\_\_\_\_

1 How did you become involved in the Market Towns Initiative (and/or, if in the South West, the MCTI)?

2 If applicable, how did you become involved with Beacon Towns work, and in what capacity?

3 What was your involvement (e.g. steering/project groups)?

4 Why did you become involved (i.e. what were your motivations)?

5 What did you expect/hope the MTI (MCTI) and BT work would achieve for your partnership?

6 To what extent have the MTI/MCTI and BT action plans been implemented (i.e. what's been done, and what hasn't, and why hasn't it)?

7 Has the work, when considered overall, met – or is it meeting - your expectations in terms of, e.g.,

7a) physical improvements

7b) other "softer" outcomes such as increased community involvement?

8 What, in your view, in order of importance, are the three most important elements of the work that have been done?

1)

2)

3)

9) What, in your view, in order of importance, are the three most important elements of the work that should have been done?

1)

2)

3)

10 ) Is the partnership still active? If so:

10a) is the action plan being implemented?

10b) has the Healthcheck been revisited?

11 Some might say that the MTI's (MCTI's) broad approach, with its initial call for, "... businesses and communities in ... towns ... to respond to [and] maintain their physical fabric, economic vitality and a good quality of life for people both in the town itself and the surrounding rural areas." (RWP p75) should have resulted in work designed to reduce poverty?

11a) Do you think that the work *should* have been designed to reduce poverty?

11b) Irrespective of your answer to 11a, has the work reduced, or is it reducing, poverty, either directly or indirectly?

11c) In answering the above, how have you defined poverty?

12 Is there anything else you'd like to add ... ?

Thank you very much for completing the questionnaire. Please return it, if possible before 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2008, in the stamped addressed envelope provided.

If you have any questions, please do contact me:

Gordon Morris

Tel. 01935 873051 (home) / 07917 577285 (mobile)

Email: [gm@tanglewood.u-net.com](mailto:gm@tanglewood.u-net.com)

University of Exeter web link: <http://tinyurl.com/2lbcjz>

14<sup>th</sup> December 2007

+++++

**The Interview Questionnaire**  
**Questionnaire and Interview Notes – Bridport Interviewees**

Introduce myself, but restrict description of work to impact/policy effectiveness of MTI (thinks, what about MCTI given that it's the south west?). Do not mention poverty interest until Question 9. Explain general flow of the questions.

++++++

Questionnaire/Line of Questioning

- 1** How did you become involved in the Market Towns Initiative (and/or MCTI)?
- 2** How did you become involved with Beacon Towns work, and in what capacity?
- 3** What was your involvement (steering/project groups)?
- 4** Why did you become involved (what were your motivations)?
- 5** What did you expect/hope the MTI (MCTI) and BT work would achieve for Bridport?
- 6** To what extent have the MTI/MCTI and BT action plans been implemented (i.e. what's been done, and what hasn't, and why hasn't it)?
- 7** Has the work, when considered overall, met – or is it meeting - your expectations in terms of, e.g., physical improvements, other "softer" outcomes such as increased community involvement?
- 8** What, in your view, in order of importance, are the three most important elements of the work (either been done, or should have been done)?
- 9** Have you – or others – identified any "gaps" in the work that could – or should – have been done?
- 10)** Is the partnership still active? If so:
  - 10a) is the action plan being implemented?
  - 10b) has the Healthcheck been revisited?
- 11)** Some might say that the MTI's (MCTI's) broad approach, with its initial call for, "... businesses and communities in ... towns ... to respond to [and] maintain their physical fabric, economic vitality and a good quality of life for people both in the town itself and the surrounding rural areas." (RWP p74) should have resulted in work designed to reduce poverty?
  - 11a) Do you think that the work should have been designed to reduce poverty?
  - 11b) Irrespective of your answer to 11a, has the work reduced, or is it reducing, poverty, either directly or indirectly?
  - 11c) In answering the above, how have you defined poverty?

- 12)** Anything else you'd like to add ... ?

Proposed hierarchy of interviewees:

Authorities/professionals

Dorset County and West Dorset District Councils (lead officer and local councillors);  
Bridport Town Council – Clerk and (lead?) Councillor? Rural Community Council

Active Members/Workers

Steering Group Chair/members; Project leader(s) (?); Others – e.g. primary school Head/Governor involved in fresh fruit project

"Others"

Beneficiaries/"people on the street" ... others ... ?

++++++

**Questions to keep in my mind:** Should MTI have addressed poverty? Was it designed to? If not, why not? Was it because everyone involved from design to implementation was "middle class"?

## Data About the Towns to Which Survey Forms Were Sent

Towns (Region) (NB Survey forms were completed by the towns highlighted in green)	RERC Type <sup>98</sup>	Population From 2001 Census (coincides with MTI)	IMD 2000 Rank (DETR 2000) (1 most deprived, 8401 least deprived)
Alcester (NW) <sup>99</sup>	2	7068	6428
Aylesham (SE)	6	3643	1384
Barnard Castle with Middleton-in-Teesdale (NE) (BT)	2	6714	1335 (1335)
Battle (SE)	3	5190	1430
Belper (EM) (BT)	8	21938	1005
Bridport (BT) (Case Study Town)	3	12977	1230
Brigg (BT)	2	5860	2450
Carnforth (NW)	2	5350	2335
Carterton (SE) (BT)	4	12958	3125
Craven Arms (WM) (GS)	2	2031	2403
Crediton (SW) (GS)	2	7092	1135
Crook (NE)	6	8407	1340
Desborough (NW)	7	8073	2820
Evesham (WM) (BT)	7	22179	1840
Faringdon (SE) (BT)	4	6187	3120
Fordingbridge	2	5755	1740
Haltwhistle & Hexham (NE) (BT) (OSS)	2	14493 (ie 3811 and 10682)	2925
Harleston (EE)	2	3899	2630
Haverhill (EE)	4	22010	3525
Keswick (NW) (BT)	3	4984	905
Killamarsh (YH)	6	9415	1035
Kingsbridge (SW)	3	5521	1125
Launceston (SW)	2	7135	820
Longtown (NW) (BT) (OSS)	2	2019	915
Louth (YH)	2	15930	2510
Lutterworth (EM)	8	8752	2415
Malton (YH)	2	11966	2725
Morpeth (NE)	1	13555	2920
Neston (NW)	1	15018	620
New Romney (SW)	7	9406	2250
Newmarket (EE) (BT)	4	16947	3510
Pulborough (SE)	5	3906	3825
Retford (EM)	2	21314	3010
Richmond (YH) (BT)	2	8178	4410
Spalding (EM) (BT)	7	22081	2525
Stroud (SW)	N/A	32052	1625
Sturminster Newton (SW)	2	2317	1215
Thirsk (YH) (BT)	2	9099	2710
Thorne-Moorends (YH)	6	16338	4410
Trowbridge (SW)	2	34401	3925
Ulverston (NW)	2	11210	930
Uttoxeter (WM) (BT) (GS)	2	12023	3410
Walton on the Naze (EE) (OSS)	3	16572	1560
Whitby (YH) (GS) (BT)	2	13594	2730
Whittlesey (EE)	7	12442	515
Wickham (SE)	2	1915	1765
Wiveliscombe (SW)	2	2804	3315
Wolverton (SE) (BT)	NA	8253	420

<sup>98</sup> For information about the Rural Evidence Research Centre's settlement types see RERC 2009.

<sup>99</sup> NE, North East; YH, Yorkshire & Humber; EE, East of England; EM, East Midlands; SE, South East; SW, South West; WM, West Midlands; NW, North West. BT, Beacon Town; GS, Gateway Station; OSS, One-Stop Shop.

## **Appendix 3**

### **Anonymized Answers to Programme-Related (ie Non-Poverty) Questions Obtained From Face to Face Interviews**

Interviewee	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Question 1</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>How did you become involved in the Market Towns Initiative (and/or the MCTi)?</b></p>	<b>Stimulus for Involvement</b>
County Council Officer	<p>First became involved in the 1990s when Dorset Market Towns Forum was set up to assist regeneration, economies, communities etc. via networking. Also to add weight to funding bids. First county-wide partnership in the south west. Helped towns to share experience (eg via town-based work such as Community Learning Centres, Development Trusts). Helped to win SRB6 money for training and assemble database to support towns as they started Healthchecks.</p> <p><u>Forum had value for learning from one another.</u></p> <p>Submission made to Rural White Paper team – would have mentioned towns. Forum was dropped when community planning was introduced – it could have been built on because we had county and district-wide partnerships. North Dorset built their partnerships around their towns (the right route) – other DCs were going to, but in the end didn't, reverted to a District-wide approach. Therefore the town focus was lost, with ability to network and consequent benefits were lost as well.</p> <p><u>With change to community planning came loss of focus and "group strength" to learn for towns.</u></p> <p>If the partnership had stayed together we would have had more towns participating in MCTi.</p>	Duty and professional interest
Community Development Worker	<p>First involved when working as Community Development Worker in West Dorset (for WDDC). Bridport was a pilot town in MCTi – DC provided support for the partnerships. Hugh tried to ensure that there was wide community representation on the partnership. DC was member of the partnership Now working with Sturminster Newton partnership. In Sturminster Newton and Shaftesbury local politics still plays a part. As ever a question of how well people get on. Some difficulty in involving parishes – they felt that the work was mainly about Sturminster Newton – parishes are often resistant to the idea of partnership. DT11 Forum in Blandford area started with the parishes (ie led by parishes, not town).</p>	Duty and professional interest
Town Councillor	Contribution withheld in accordance with interviewee's instructions	Council and Local Action
Partnership member (Volunteer)	<p>Was asked to become involved by West Bay businesses (eg JB's – they have a kiosk) – via her own, and her late husband's contacts – they asked her to represent the traders in the Bay on MCTi – traders very disparate in their views (hence looked for independent, interested person – attended public MCTi meeting on behalf of/for Traders/West Bay, and out of interest). The Bridport MCTi <b>core</b> group had already been chosen when the meeting was held (ie people already in place). The evening was interesting – people wanted to know how the core group had been chosen . Never did find out – a mixture of Council representatives, town coordinator (NB by GM: in some ways self-selecting).</p>	Volunteer and Business and Steering Group and Local Action

Partnership Member (social entrepreneur)	<p>It was through two routes. I work for something called Local Food Links – came out of an organization called West Dorset Food and Land Trust, and the Food and Land Trust has always, although it does specific things like cookery training, cookery workshops, work with schools and that sort of stuff, it's always been interested in the broader issue of rural development and has been a long-standing member of the Development Trusts Association ... and so as part of that we worked with the Market Towns Initiative, I guess, to do a what was called a Foodcheck of Bridport, so it was like a Market Towns Healthcheck, but specifically focussed on food. ... It wasn't an integral part of the Healthcheck – the idea was that it was a sort of pilot that could be adopted by other market towns and could be an adjunct to the Market Towns Healthcheck elsewhere, and so it didn't emerge from the local process, it emerged from - in parallel to it really ... I'm not sure really (if it was adopted by other towns) – but it comes back to funding and flavours of the month and whatever, so, there was a town in Oxfordshire, Faringdon, that did one, but I don't know how many others did it, or whatever. So, yes, that was one of the links and then as a result of that Bridport was chosen as a Beacon Town for local food.</p>	Social Enterprise and Local Action
Partnership Member (Officer)	<p>Well, I was invited ... because at that point I was the [details removed], but Bridport Youth Centre and the work I do has always extended deeply into the community and continues to do so, whether in London or here, and so we have very close relationship with the Town Council and lots of other organizations, and because I believe Bridport Town Council generally wants to consult and involve with young people, I know it's very much the thing to do whether it's appropriate or not, hmm, I believe that they do want to. It seemed like an amazing opportunity for Bridport. It was sold as that by a very skilled front man that came down to sell the whole idea, hmm, I'm a generally an extremely positive person used to delivering positive results . This seemed a means of doing that. In the event, it certainly wasn't. ... The whole set-up was ludicrous.</p>	Duty and Youth Steering Group
Partnership Member (volunteer)	<p>Bridport Town Council sent round letters to all the various people doing activities. I happened to be President [details removed] at the time so they asked me if I could go to a meeting to represent the **. I think it was probably 1999. I would think it was '99, because we started setting up the Forum in 2000. I think it was going to be the sort of Millennium initiative thing, to a certain extent involved with that. However, the meeting was at the Town Hall and representatives from all sorts of areas came representing their various things, but it was noticeable that it predominantly older people. There were some young people, but not many. So, of course the older people have got the time to do more things – so called! – but I'm a very busy lady, and so are most of my friends. Anyway, hmm, at that meeting we discussed things and when we were discussing it was obvious that older people, all the older people there said there isn't enough provision for things to do in Bridport, so the, well the Councillor who was there picked this up, and they'd also involved Age Concern and Help the Aged. <u>By GM: Who was leading this work at the time?</u> Right at the beginning it was the Town Council, and I think Linda was involved, who's the Manager of the thing. Anyway, that was briefly it. It was very vague at the time as to what was going to happen. <u>By GM: Do you relate to the term Market Towns Initiative or Market and Coastal Initiative?</u> The Market and Coastal. BCI (Bridport Council Initiative) had this pot of money that they were going to be able to help people set up things. And a group of the older people decided that we get together and see if we could get something going. We didn't know what we were going to do, but we formed a little group to just discuss it.</p>	Volunteer and Local Action and Steering Group

Regional Development Agency Officer	<p>I'm in the area team, covering Bournemouth and Poole. The RDA, along with partners, launched the MCTi, and we were involved with a couple of the pilot towns in Dorset, the main one being Bridport, and then, following on from that I was directly involved with Sturminster and Shaftesbury. [This was] around about 2000 to 2001. <u>By GM: Are you still involved?</u> I'm involved in helping some of the towns try and deliver small scale project activity that's relevant from the RDA's involvement, so on the economic rather than the social or environmental. <u>By GM: Has most of your involvement been on the economic side?</u> Yes, it has, yes, yeah. <u>By GM: Have you had any involvement on the social or economic sides?</u> What we've been trying to do is get the towns to think more broadly, broader than either the economic sector or the social sector, so we're trying to get them to look across the piece really, umm, so if they're looking at facilities we're getting them to look at, you know, multi-functional facilities that can be used for a range of different purposes by a number of different organizations.</p>	Duty
District Council Officer	<p>I'm not specifically involved [in the MCTi or MTI], I just help the projects that are looking for funding, and so I'm not specifically involved with Market and Costal Towns, although I do know about the programme. <u>By GM: What has your involvement been, then?</u> Emm, just individual projects that come out of it, particularly in Bridport, err, there were some individual projects, and I can't remember which ones they were they were. It was a little while ago. I think it was about three years ago when they were building up their projects, and, err, projects were looking for funding from it, but it's been very quiet recently. <u>By GM: Were you aware of Bridport's role as a Beacon Town?</u> I was, yes. <u>By GM: Did you make any connection between the market towns work, the Beacon Towns work, and your projects? Were they specifically related or were they projects that may have come forward anyway?</u> They may have come forward anyway.</p>	Duty
District Council Officer	<p>The 'how' bit I can't recall, other than that was an employment group formed ... in Bridport. I wasn't involved with the higher levels of management of the MCTi, but there was a very functional group that I was there to support in some way if it was appropriate. <u>By GM: Who was on that group?</u> [Names removed] from industry, but, interestingly, none of them running businesses in the town itself, but quite some way out. [Name removed] in a number of different guises [was there]. I'm not quite sure what role he had at the time. Also, some sort of support officer from the Town Council, which I think varied over time ... a guy called, [name removed], I think, here's no longer in the area. There were number of others, so people from Job Centre Plus, Weymouth College, Colfox School, emm, plus ourselves. It varied from meeting to meeting – sometimes local Councillors, sometimes not. This was pre-2000 I would have said, I don't think it went on much beyond that. About that time it got very political. It changed its name, gained charitable status and it started to fall out with lots of people, and the group just gradually faded away. It moved from being a Bridport Market and Coastal Towns' Initiative to being the Bridport Community Initiative, but it decided to adopt some form of status, I presume charitable, because it perceived then that it could attract and hold funds to do what it wanted to do. <u>By GM: But it was part of the MCTi?</u> It was all part of the Market and Coastal Towns Initiative.</p>	Duty

Interviewee	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Question 2</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>If applicable, how did you become involved with Beacon Towns work, and in what capacity?</b></p>	Note
County Council Officer	<p>Not a great deal of involvement with Beacon Towns work (Bridport) – [Council] gave support for partnership in general and various aspects of the food development through Rural Renaissance (West Dorset Food and Land Trust). I think there was an understanding of what the BT programme was about (everyone very pleased to have one on the patch) but, as an Authority Dorset didn't get that involved.</p> <p><u>BTs offered the chance to learn beyond Dorset, and for Dorset to help towns elsewhere.</u></p> <p>Market towns still have strategic priority with DCC as important employment and service centres. Also would like to see more made of their development potential. The problem we (DCC) have at the moment is that the Regional Spatial Strategy is very much urban-focussed on strategically important towns and cities, so majority of growth is pushed to Bournemouth and Poole (SE Dorset Conurbation) – there is some recognition that Dorchester and Weymouth are potential growth areas, but in effect what is left to distribute around the towns is very limited, and there is little heed paid to the roles that towns could play ... so we would like – our view is - a more dominant role for the [market] towns. From a <b>regional</b> perspective towns are not as important as they were in policy terms as they were a few years ago, except in places like Cornwall where there isn't a major urban area, and so the focus has to be on the 5 major towns in Cornwall, but elsewhere it's your Plymouth, Bristol, Swindon, Bournemouth, Poole, Gloucester/Cheltenham where the majority of the growth is focussed, which seems to be saying that the city region approach [whereby] you put your efforts into the cities and the benefits will ripple out across the region as opposed to a more dispersed investment pattern of the towns having real possibility for growth therefore spreading your investment further. The lead for city-regions approach comes from the Regional Assembly no doubt heavily influenced by the Government Office and the Government. The Regional Spatial Strategy provides the planning context for investment [for the County Council] and also when it comes to the regional level – say on the transportation side – there's a regional funding allocation, so if we're looking to draw down funds from that the guide for that is the Regional Spatial Strategy, so increasingly as housing, transportation and, I suppose, more regeneration funding is done on a regional basis it will look to the RSS [Regional Spatial Strategy] to see where the priority should be – increasingly there'll be more on the urban areas, so while we'll make a case for other investments, it'll be ... the crumbs from the end of the table rather than the main course. The case was made at the Examination in Public of the RSS that there was too much focus on the urban areas, and that there ought to more scope for those towns with the potential to develop in sustainable ways to do so. We await the outcome – Panel report due early in 2008, but ... will be surprised if GOSW – who have the ultimate say – change their mind, because government policy is still ... city/urban areas.</p>	Marginal involvement
Community Development Worker	[Interviewee] was not involved in Bridport's BT work (as far as s/he can remember) – work managed largely by [name removed].	Not involved but aware

Town Councillor	Contribution withheld in accordance with Respondent's Instructions	Contribution Withheld
Partnership member (Volunteer)	Bridport was one of the original MCTi pilot towns. Beacon Town status didn't ever really ... , I went to a lot of conference with our Town Coordinator, [name removed], and went to lots of, emm, inputs [sic], but Beacon Town status never really I think did much, got much through to my brain to be honest. I think we were too busy trying to get the Market and Coastal Town financial aspect relevant to Bridport. ... We've got various aspects of the food, and the various aspects 'cos I'm still involved with the Bridport Food Festival ... Chaired by [name removed] who is ... [name removed] was the Chair of the Market and Coastal Towns Initiative, [name removed] has got his own food interest and obviously he's got his own company, he initiated Bridport Food Festival but the last three or four years there's been a committee which [name removed] chairs, and, like everything else, I'm there as Chair of Tourism. BT status was there, but was encapsulated into everything we were trying to do.	Aware
Partnership Member (social entrepreneur)	... and Q3 How did we become involved? A very good question, errm, I think, again, you know, I mentioned the Food and Land Trust and Local Food Links, but then the other parallel process was in, I guess, the late '90s, Dorset Community Action and the Rural Development Commission had been promoting market towns regeneration and for some reason Bridport was always lagging behind but there was a group that was set up called Bridport 2000 ... and that didn't really go very well, certainly it didn't fit the ethos of what we were trying to do elsewhere so I know that I certainly was a bit against all of that. Anyway, after that the Town Council employed a ... Town Coordinator and then that person linked in to the Market and Coastal Towns Initiative and the Market Towns Initiative – Stephanie Sutton – and so she then worked with some consultant [name removed] to get a process going in 2000, and that culminated in an organization called Bridport Community Initiative and so those processes were going along in sort of parallel ... and I was on the Steering Group for all those (pre-BT). The Beacon Towns thing, I'm not, you know, not quite sure quite how in a way that came from , but I think it was the Town Council that saw the opportunity to apply, and basically the idea was that it be done as a thing around food, so it got selected on that basis, but interestingly it was the stuff that was focussed on the stuff that the Food and Land Trust had done, and so the Beacon Towns report on Bridport was really just a sort of resume of activity of the Food and Land Trust. (Did being a Beacon Town help your work?). I suppose ... (the interview was suspended at this point – [Interviewee] had to take a telephone call) ... what it did it gave the Food and Land Trust more credibility with the Town Council, which it hadn't had before ... whether that in itself had any positive benefits is another matter, but it certainly put us on the map a bit more.	Aware
Partnership Member (Officer)	I've heard of the BT work. I've never really taken that on board, to be honest. For me it was four years of being involved and involving young people in the Coastal and Market Towns Initiative <u>By GM,</u> <u>"Does the term, Market Towns Initiative mean anything to you?"</u> Not particularly, no.	Aware

Partnership Member (volunteer)	No (BT means nothing)	No
Regional Development Agency Officer	No I didn't [become involved with the Beacon Towns work in Bridport].	Not involved but aware
District Council Officer (Social)	N/A	Not involved but aware
District Council Officer (Business)	Not at all. <u>By GM: Does the term, Beacon Town, mean anything to you?</u> Oh yeah, Bridport got a Beacon for food particularly, and I guess a lot of that would have been driven by [name given], because of the – of what they acquired their beacon for, and because of his personal involvement in number of things down there. And of course he is still significant in local foods in Bridport.	Not involved but aware

Interviewee	<b>Question 3</b> <b>What was your involvement (eg steering/project group)?</b>	Keywords
County Council Officer	N/A	Not involved
Community Development worker	Not involved directly (see above).	Not involved
Town Councillor	Contribution withheld in accordance with Respondent's Instructions	Contribution withheld
Partnership member (Volunteer)	<p>The idea was to have 10 focus groups. I set aside my own specific interest, which would have been youth, or housing, and trotted off to Tourism. In the back of my mind the issues relating to that are that we rely heavily on tourism for the economic vibrancy of the area. However, if it's not carefully managed the residents get a raw deal because everything's geared towards the visitor. I shortly discovered that I became the Chair of the Tourism Focus Group. This meant I was on the Steering Group of the Bridport MCTi, and I ended up as Vice-Chair of that. I was there all the way through and it was actually my summation and my motion to close down when we eventually had become private, the Bridport Community Initiative, that's a long way into it – so I spanned the whole thing. I've been Chair of Tourism right the way through, until we became a limited Company which we still are.</p>	Tourism Steering Group

Partnership Member (social entrepreneur)	<p><b>Includes answer to Q2</b></p> <p>How did we become involved? A very good question, errm, I think, again, you know, I mentioned the Food and Land Trust and Local Food Links, but then the other parallel process was in, I guess, the late '90s, Dorset Community Action and the Rural Development Commission had been promoting market towns regeneration and for some reason Bridport was always lagging behind but there was a group that was set up called Bridport 2000 ... and that didn't really go very well, certainly it didn't fit the ethos of what we were trying to do elsewhere so I know that I certainly was a bit against all of that. Anyway, after that the Town Council employed a ... Town Coordinator and then that person linked in to the Market and Coastal Towns Initiative and the Market Towns Initiative – [name removed] – and so s/he then worked with some consultant, [name removed], to get a process going in 2000, and that culminated in an organization called Bridport Community Initiative and so those processes were going along in sort of parallel ... and I was on the Steering Group for all those (pre-BT). The Beacon Towns thing, I'm not, you know, not quite sure quite how in a way that came from , but I think it was the Town Council that saw the opportunity to apply, and basically the idea was that it be done as a thing around food, so it got selected on that basis, but interestingly it was the stuff that was focussed on the stuff that the Food and Land Trust had done, and so the Beacon Towns report on Bridport was really just a sort of resume of activity of the Food and Land Trust. <u>By GM: Did being a Beacon Town help your work?</u> I suppose ... (the interview was suspended at this point – interviewee had to take a telephone call) ... what it did it gave the Food and Land Trust more credibility with the Town Council, which it hadn't had before ... whether that in itself had any positive benefits is another matter, but it certainly put us on the map a bit more.</p>	Social Enterprise
Partnership Member (Officer)	<p>I chaired the Young People's Group. It was divided, I believe, into ten major interest groups. I don't have the paperwork because I, literally, destroyed it. And what we did, I don't want to pre-empt your questions ... ?</p>	Steering Group Young People

Partnership Member (volunteer)	<p>The older people who were interested in doing something, they formed what they called a little steering group and we met with Wendy, whose other name I forget, from Age Concern, Dorchester ... [name removed]. She's a very important person in all this – also a chap called [name removed], and he had contact with people like Bournemouth University, and, therefore, as we got going and the steering group gelled, we decided that we would make a survey – questions – and send them out to as many households as we could, and this report here is the result of that survey, and it was done, all the replies that came back were coordinated by the people in Bournemouth University who were studying this sort of thing themselves, and so it was good for them, and we didn't have to pay for any of this – which was great, so they produced this. <u>By GM: was this part of MCTi?</u> Oh, yes, yes. Anyway, that went on and we just grew from there, and we had our first meeting, and I think about forty people turned up, and we decided that we were going to form something, didn't quite know what, but we decided that we'd probably call it a forum because we'd done all the areas around, DT6, DT7 and DT8 (Post Code Areas) which covers all the little villages around. We set up four groups – at least we tried to set up four groups – and that was Access, Learning and Information, Health, and Transport. They were the groups. We decided we'd do it for the over-50s, because some people were retiring early, you see, it had to be people who were not working really, because they haven't got the time if they're working full-time, to then sort of give the amount of time that we've had to give to it. So those four groups, and we had three leaders, but we couldn't get a fourth for the Health Matters one until later, but they started work in their groups and then reported back to the main committee what they were doing, and they got people from the forum first meeting to sign up. Well, I said I'd do the Access Group originally. I didn't want to be chairman, and so I did the Access Group, and they, over the years, they've improved the access into shops, we improved the pavement surfaces and road surfaces as much as we can, I mean there's limitations because of money, of course, but the worst parts have been done, and certainly most of the shops, I mean we went in to visit shops and said, "You know that there's a law coming in that you've got to have easier access etc., and what are you doing about it?" <u>By GM: the Disability Discrimination Act?</u> That sort of thing, yes.</p>	Steering Group Older People
Regional Development Agency Officer	<p>Well, I was involved as an adviser really, emm, I was sort of advising on the RDA's role and remit, emm, what we could and couldn't support, and really making the links with key partners, the likes of the Learning and Skills Council, local colleges, business organizations, like the Federation of Small Businesses or local Chambers [of Commerce] – really trying to get people to look wider than just the residents of the town and the surrounding area. <u>By GM: And how did that go, did you manage to get the Federation of Small Businesses involved, for example?</u> It was mixed, very mixed, and I don't think we managed to get the Federation involved until I went on secondment to North Dorset District Council, and was actually using those linkages then from a local authority perspective, really engaging them, in a different way, and so not directly in the steering groups of the local community partnerships, but very much on the periphery, but then the results of their discussions feeding into the overall community plans. [My last dealings with Bridport were] probably about five years ago.</p>	Adviser

District Council Officer (Social)	N/A	Not involved
District Council Officer (Social)	N/A	Not involved
District Council Officer (Business)	<p>It [my involvement] was just on the Employment Group, attending the meetings, providing information, supporting if they actually did any projects, and the only one they really did was an employment and skills study. Going back to your earlier point about when did it finish, that employment skills study was, I think, 2001, 2002, so it must have gone through until about 2003, 2004, and, yeah, we provided a lot of information to the consultant engaged to complete that piece of work.</p> <p><u>By GM: Was the District Council involved in any other groups?</u> Oh yeah, there were quite a – quite a number of the groups that were formed had representatives from across the Council involved, depending on what the group was, the most appropriate person went along.</p>	Employment Steering Group

Interviewee	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Question 4</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Why did you become involved (ie what were your motivations)?</b></p>	Keywords
County Council Officer	N/A	Not involved
Community Development worker	Involvement with Bridport not significant, but very much involved/central to work in Sturminster Newton and Shaftesbury.	Work
Town Councillor	Contribution withheld in accordance with Respondent's Instructions	Council
Partnership member (Volunteer)	<p>If there was going to be something which could have an holistic approach on the area, draw it together, be constructive with regards to the infrastructure and the housing and the employment and youth and the whole thing, because I believe in holistic structures, then it was something I was interested in. <u>(By GM – interviewee had returned to the SW for a better quality of life – and needed something useful to do)</u> I thought it was incredibly constructive and useful if we could do anything which could financially aid it. ... one of the things that concerns me down here – still – is the minimum wage. When we first arrived the minimum wage here wasn't the minimum wage for the country – when I got involved in conversations about employment law, you know, oh well. we don't really do that down here, Bridport we work as a community. I've always been a process and procedures person (teacher, manager) – I'm basically a manager.</p>	Local concern / interest in local economy
Partnership Member (social entrepreneur)	<p>I suppose our link was partly on the Eat the View side of the Countryside Agency – public procurement side, so I suppose we'd always had those connections to the Countryside Agency and the link through to MTI was a logical link and I suppose ... but I must say, in Bridport, it was always a bit – the MTI side of things – was always much more in the background and it was more the MCTi that drove things, I think. <u>By GM: Was there a big difference between the MCTi and MTI?</u> Mmmm, well, not in practice, I mean to the extent that MTI did things like Parish Planning, and MCTi sort of doing something quite similar, I suppose. <u>By GM: Did it confuse people?</u> No, because as I say, I think the MTI in Bridport, really, the only visible aspect of it was the Healthcheck that was done quite early on in the process, otherwise they were there as a funder, but it didn't really – you know, the MCTi was such a difficult, convoluted process that I think it eclipsed people's awareness of anything else really.</p>	Local concern / Local enterprise
Partnership Member (Officer)	Because it looked like a very good opportunity for young people to be involved in the future development of this town.	Professional involvement / Concern for young people

Volunteer	<p>Most of it, as far as I was concerned, was centred around the lack of opportunities for older people, and I didn't know much about the youth. We had tried to cooperate in later days ... we did try, but it just didn't work ... We hoped ... and make the wealth and experience that older people have got – to sort of be able to hand over some of it and the knowledge they've got to younger people. That was one of the things ... but it just didn't work.</p>	Local Concern / Older people / Youth
Regional Development Agency Officer	<p><u>By GM: What did you hope the MCTi and BT work would achieve for Bridport?</u> I think it was really a case of getting local people involved and actually having a say in their local communities, rather than the traditional way of dealing with things where there was an expectation that local authorities would do things to them, it was really trying to get them involved and having a say about identifying issues and needs and looking at solutions to those solutions and needs really, in partnership, um, obviously drawing on the strengths of key partners like local authorities, umm, and the experience of them as well, and obviously drawing on their advice and guidance. <u>By GM: Did that work?</u> To a degree. It varied, right the way across the piece. I think there were always tensions, emm, certainly with the pilot towns, emm, and Bridport in particular, where, erm, we bounced in consultants to actually help them with the process, and instead of actually having it firmly rooted in the community there was little buy-in in the early days, so it really did take an inordinate amount of effort by the RDA area team staff, as well as the Town Council, in particular, to really energise local people. <u>By GM: Why were consultants 'bounced-in' if it was going to be locally led?</u> Well, I think it was because it was a pilot, and it was a test bed, and there really wasn't, umm, an understanding about the range of skills that was required by Agency staff, umm, and when the MCTi was introduced, the RDA very much led the process, err, so it wasn't fully aware of the range of skills and experience that its staff would need, and so, therefore, it decided to buy those in. <u>By GM: So, was this more about the RDA staff than local capacity?</u> Emmm, yeah, I think it possibly was, but then bringing in so-called experts to actually look at different methods of engaging local people ... <u>By GM: Did the RDA team try to engage local people before bringing in the consultants?</u> No, ... the consultants were brought in very early on. <u>By GM: What prompted that, because initially it was going to be community-led, so ... did someone wake up one morning and think, "Ahh, this isn't working, or we could be better, or ...?"</u> I really don't know. I really don't know. I think it was possibly that they chose to do it that way, I mean, right across the Region as far as I'm aware, so that there was standardization of the way it was done. <u>By GM: [The consultant's] involvement wasn't just Bridport was it?</u> No, he was right across the Region on the pilot towns that were chosen. ... <u>By GM: Were Sturminster and Shaftesbury pilot towns?</u> No they weren't, no. <u>By GM: And, in your experience, how did their achievements, performance compare in terms of the process?</u> I would say that they were much more rooted in the community and very much led by local community people, so it wasn't led by the town council, it wasn't led by the RDA, it was very much local people, and in Sturminster, for instance, there was an issue about the closure of the livestock market that brought everyone together, and it was on that basis that we actually developed the MCTi process in Sturminster ... without consultants. <u>By GM: And Shaftesbury ... ?</u> Yes ... there's ... they really haven't, because there's ... [disagreement between] individuals who are Councillors who don't necessarily like the way the Town Council is being run and managed, and who therefore saw the MCTi as a process to take it down a different route ... but Sturminster is fantastically, you know, working fantastically well. /cont.</p>	Duty  NB In view of the interviewee's less direct involvement with the work in Bridport, the questions asked were rephrased in order to capture the interviewee's broader experience of both programme and policy/ies.

	Regional Development Agency Officer	Continued from above/ <u>By GM: Of the three, then, and given their different experiences, that in Bridport there was a consultant-led process, in Shaftesbury and Sturminster, they were both locally-led, and yet the performance of all three has been very different with Sturminster, to judge from what you've just said being in some ways, more successful, is that true?</u> Sturminster, without a doubt, has been the most successful one. <u>By GM: Is that because of people in the community, or because of the circumstances to do with the closure of the livestock market? I think it's a mixture of both. I think the circumstances really was (sic) the catalyst to bring everyone together, and that was still their main focus until they delivered the mixed-use development on the market site, within the last year, eighteen months, but they did have some very, very experienced and very strong leaders in the community who came together, By GM: So not so divisive, but going ahead and sorting out the difficulty? Yes.</u>	As above
District Council Officer (Social)	District Council Officer (Social)	N/A	Duty
District Council Officer (Business)		N/A	Duty

Interviewee	<b>Question 5</b> <b>What did you expect/hope the MTI (MCTi) and BT work would achieve for your partnership?</b>	Keywords
County Council Officer	N/A	Not a member of the partnership
Community Development worker	<p>[District Council] wanted to see MCTi make for better partnership working at the local level and access to funding to make projects happen.</p>	People working together / money for projects
Town Councillor	<p>Contribution withheld in accordance with Respondent's Instructions</p>	Contribution withheld

Partnership member (Volunteer)	<p>I think in the beginning it, I think, it was the hard sell, I don't remember ... who came to talk to us, but it was, you know, there was all this money available and, you know, you could put forward these schemes and you could get this money – ummm – expectation never matched reality and I think that what we weren't told was the fact that you got a brokerage table and all these people initially came and sat round it and we put forward your projects, but what we hadn't been told was that obviously these people might say they could fund some of this project or part of it, but ultimately you still had to go through the form-filling and the application, blah, blah, blah, blah blah, and I think the – initially we were hoping that ... [at this point a helicopter flew overhead! – some words missed therefore] ... so the aim was to see if we actually could recharge, regenerate the area, and I was interested in that as well as everybody else, and ultimately I think ummm the brokerage system didn't work ... I'm probably jumping – well, you know, people spent a lot of time and effort coming from all these walks of life to listen to these projects (ie the financers, the groups, the RDA, and other people), but ultimately we hadn't realized that they would say, "No, no, no, or yes", and we hadn't at that point clicked ... We thought they'd be less bureaucracy, because this is the way it was sold to us – less bureaucracy. It was told to us that there would be less bureaucracy, and we very quickly realized this was a misnomer and we very quickly dispensed with the brokerage table because we didn't want to spend our time sitting around a table wasting our time any more than we expected these guys to come along from the business community and funders to come and do that. It was a nonsense. The (would-be) funders also felt this. I think our ten groups were a good idea, perhaps, but I kept saying that we need a big project which then we could present to the funders, and then they could fund different aspects each, right, and what we were doing was coming out with a whole range of smaller projects. The one big project we all of us wanted, and are still trying to get in the area is a resource base, a skill centre rather, sorry, a skill centre, because we wanted some more specific training for the youth in this area. The big one that took off, that we did manage to get funding for, was the scooter scheme – Wheels to Work. That as the employment group that took that one forward. ... It became apparent to me that ... the RDA wanted something they could attach their name to, lots of little things didn't really interest them. ... It was a lot of effort, local people put in a lot of time, as did a lot of other folk, and I think it was an interesting process to me, but it very quickly became apparent to me and to a lot of others that it needed streamlining and sorting.</p>	Money / Regeneration / Community-led development / Skill centre ("big project")
Partnership Member (social entrepreneur)	<p>Well, my feeling is that it's very important to do community engagement, community planning type stuff, but then you then have to end up with structures that can actually deliver, and I think – so that was the hope, you know, that we would get a Development Trust, or some similar structure out of that process, which would then be in a position to, you know, to deliver, but also, that the process would also acknowledge and respect the existing organizations in the town, and support them as well, so, you know, you could identify a gap for a Development Trust but you would also ... support other organizations, and I think in the end it didn't do either.</p>	Community-led planning / Development Trust

Partnership Member (Officer)	<p>Well, what was kind of pledged was an input – or potential input - of considerable funding to rejuvenate the town, and we were talking about millions. <u>By GM Did someone stand up and talk millions?</u> As far as I can recall, yes. It was a very, very – he'd have been brilliant at the London Palladium. He was [details removed] – very personable – excellent, yeah, gave an extremely good performance, enthused everybody, and I'm used to enthusing people, so I recognize the skill. Hmm, and yes, we identified lots of potential projects – I don't believe any of them materialised, in the end. So, I'm used to working with young people, I'm used to identifying with them their aspirations, anything from the girl, a very young parent, who wants to do business studies and couldn't afford it, and we've supported her with that. Anything from that to a guy on an ASBO [Anti-Social Behaviour Order], to someone who wants to start up a girls' football team, to someone who wants to create a motor project, skate park – we've done all of that, continue to do all of that. Currently we're concentrating on doing up a local skills centre, and I'm chairing that, so we're well use to working with young people... <u>By GM: Does any of that owe anything to the MCTI?</u> Nothing, absolutely nothing at all. ... I'm not sure about the BT work [and what it would achieve for Bridport]. I never identified it with the Market and Coastal Towns Initiative.</p>	Money / Locally-led projects / Skills centre
Partnership member (volunteer)	<p><u>By GM: Interviewee's work and involvement has been mainly with the Older People's Forum.</u></p>	Older People

Regional Development Agency Officer	<p><u>By GM: Has the work that's been done in Bridport met your expectations there?</u> I don't think so, but I don't think that that's necessarily down to the local community, per se. I think it raised a lot of expectations about what could and could not be done for the town, certainly around the affordable housing issue. I think that there was an expectation that, because they'd identified that issue, affordable housing, the real need for affordable for local people, that it would actually be addressed, and that wasn't the case, and certainly it wasn't the RDA's remit to deliver that. There are still issues over, emm, a large industrial estate, with the old rope works at St Michael's [trading estate] – the South West Quadrant – still being talked about, and still nothing actually happening there at the moment, emm, and so although there is, I suppose to a degree there's willingness, there isn't the resource to be able to commit to making the difference. <u>By GM: I picked up from what you said that, to a certain extent at least, the arrival of the consultant was something that didn't help?</u> Mm mm. <u>By GM: Now, did that apply to all the towns where the consultant worked, or in some cases did the consultant-led work, work, if you see what I mean?</u> I don't know, I don't know. My only experience is Bridport, and I think, whether it was the town and the people in the town that didn't take too kindly to, ummm, having consultation done to them, as opposed to with them, I really don't know, but certainly there was friction there, they didn't get the degree of engagement that I think was expected right at the beginning. You don't get the 'buy-in' to the actual Community Plan in that respect and you certainly don't get the long-term commitment of local people to actually deliver against that plan, because they don't feel ownership</p>	Duty  NB In view of the interviewee's less direct involvement with the work in Bridport, the questions asked were rephrased in order to capture the interviewee's broader experience of both programme and policy/ies.
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<p style="text-align: center;">Regional Development Agency Officer</p>	<p><u>By GM: Can I just check one thing – initially did the town, in its broadest sense, expect to lead the work, and was the imposition, if that's not too strong a word, of the consultant a bit of a surprise to them, or was it always on the cards that the consultant would be involved?</u> It was always on the cards, as far as I'm aware, that the consultant would be involved. I think there was an expectation by the town that they would actually <b>lead</b> the process, and be supported by the consultant, but I think the time it took to try to engage people, and I don't think that there was the understanding that it included beyond the town boundary, you know, into the rural hinterland areas, I don't think there was a real understanding of that, and so the focus was really on the town itself and the people within the town and no wider than that. Emm, so I think that in itself caused difficulty, and didn't get the real engagement. <u>By GM: That the town didn't want to go beyond, into its hinterland, or it did?</u> I, I think there was a misunderstanding that it was expected to go beyond the town, but the focus was, because of the people that were involved, they lived in the town, they worked in the town, and they didn't, they didn't think wider than the town boundary, and they weren't, I don't believe they were actually encouraged to do that until after the consultant had left. <u>By GM: One of the things about the MTI, as opposed to the MCTi, was that there was a presumption, in terms of the Countryside Agency's [CA] money, that town partnerships would work with their hinterland parishes. Was there a conflict between the two initiatives?</u> I think a lot depended on at what point in time the CA were engaged in the whole process. I mean, take the Shaftesbury example, the CA were engaged at the same time that the MCTi money was actually approved, and so therefore there was an opportunity to link them together. I'm not sure whether that happened in Bridport, because I wasn't the case officer at the time. <u>By GM: Were they seen as two separate things [the MTI and the MCTi]?</u> I think a lot depends on the personnel involved. Because I was the case officer in North Dorset, you know, I looked at the whole range of resource that was available, and therefore making the links, and maximising that resource that was available, whereas I don't necessarily think that all partners or all case officers looked at it like that, and certainly if you didn't have a creative, ummm, Economic Development Officer in the local authority, then you wouldn't actually get that way of looking at things either, so ... . <u>By GM: What do you mean by that, in terms of West Dorset and the Bridport work?</u> Emm, I would say I don't believe, necessarily, that West Dorset were fully engaged with the MCTi process in Bridport ... or the MTI, either of them. <u>By GM: Were they on the Partnership Board or whatever it was called?</u> I don't know.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Duty</p> <p><b>NB</b> In view of the interviewee's less direct involvement with the work in Bridport, the questions asked were rephrased in order to capture the interviewee's broader experience of both programme and policy/ies.</p>
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District Council Officer (Social)	<p>Well, I hoped that there would be more funding about. I was quite disappointed that there wasn't enough funding attached to it. ... I felt that there should have been more money locally, err, for projects to go ahead, and it seemed like a badge, and it seemed like a, sort of, emm, a sort of badge, rather than anything that could happen. Things can't happen without funding, and you have a project and you expect it to draw in lots of funding, and I think local people expected it to draw in more as well. I felt it was in a way sad, because it sort of suddenly came to an end. If there's no money there there's no driver to employ people, emm, there's no ability to employ people, and projects do die, they can't all rely on voluntary help, on voluntary support. <u>By GM: Do you know what brought it to an end?</u> Umm, well, certainly in Bridport there was a Coastal and Market Towns Office and there was an officer there, and, err, the funding ended, and SWRDA didn't come back up and replace the funding for it, so it sort of, sort of died relay, although it's still there, it still exists, it doesn't exist in the same way.</p>	Money
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District Council Officer (Business)	<p>Emm, that's an interesting question, because the perception had always been that it would have satisfied community aspirations, and there have been a lot of consultation in Bridport that the Council have been involved with, and I've been on the edge of, particularly around the South West Quadrant, lots of expectations about community facilities, errmmm, about restoring the cinema. They were expectations that the community had identified as being important ... <u>By GM: Through the Action Plan?</u> ... through the Action Plan and so on ... <u>By GM: The Healthcheck?</u> ... yeah, but actually not perceived as, errr (pause) delivery wasn't perceived as being the role of the Market and Coastal Towns Programme, and I think that was the cause of a lot of tension. Our role would have been, I presume, to support the practical projects that might have emerged, but, apart from the employment study I'm not conscious of any practical projects the employment group got off the ground. <u>By GM: And the South West Quadrant is still the South West Quadrant?</u> The South West Quadrant is still the South West Quadrant, with a Planning Decision due any day ... It's interesting that a number of things that came up have ... are starting to go somewhere, emm, the cinema I mentioned, there was lot of concern about the cinema being closed, it being an historic building, about seeing something happen with it, and it is now open, and now run as cinema and, I believe, privately owned. Emmm, the South West Quadrant, you know the history of the South West Quadrant, probably better than me, emmm, that's continued. We have a Planning Application which is to be determined shortly. We've got a grant into the Regional Development Agency that we submitted in April that was, emmm, left over, money left over from Market and Coastal Towns Programme, emmm, that hopefully the RDA will determine before the end of this Financial Year that will support infrastructure costs. One of the other issues from the Employment Group was something about skills and local skills provision or access to skills. There is a group now working in Bridport, BLAST Bridport, Local Action for Skills and Training ... that's part of, part of, or linked into BLAP somehow. They've got a consultant working with them, not quite sure how it's funded, must be RDA, I think, and Town Council, who's, emm, trying to work out how to deliver what their key aspirations are. So, the things that went on that appeared to disappear, six or seven years ago, have, have actually re-emerged and gone much further over the last two years than they had done up to then. <u>By GM: And they were all in the Action Plan?</u> Yeah.</p>	Community-led development / Community facilities (cinema) / Skills  <b>NB</b> Action Plan projects are being implemented.
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Interviewee	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Question 6</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>To what extent have the MCTi and BT action plans been implemented (ie what's been done, and what hasn't, and why hasn't it)?</b></p>	Summary
County Council Officer	<p>Substantial achievements made and a number of areas where there are some hard lessons have been learnt – every town is different, every town's experience has been different right from the way things were instigated, sometimes from the community, sometimes a local authority going in and lighting the spark and encouraging [the work] – a number of different models have developed throughout Dorset: Lyme Regis with their own Development Trust off the ground with a bit of initial support from local authorities, Bridport (one of the pilot towns in the MCTi) went through several painful processes trying to develop partnerships (collapsed then coming back again). Lyme Regis is a really good example of a Trust that has worked well, ironically outside the MCTi (although has joined ... more recently) so there's some very good examples of community development and where the community has come together effectively to work as a community to identify issues, identify problems, and then begin to look for solutions and how to [implement them]. Again one or two really good examples of solutions being delivered – the classic one is Sturminster Newton, decimated by the closure of the market ten years ago, got into the MCTi; factions developed, but, in the end, a partnership emerged which united everybody – now the market site has been redeveloped with a very strong community presence and the Exchange Building – a superb facility for local community use, and something they've seen grow from the [closed market] for community use.</p> <p><u>These things take time – 10 years.</u></p> <p>The buzz around the place is quite remarkable. Lyme Regis latched on to Heritage Coast [World Heritage designation], initiated Fossil Festival – really helped to pull the town together, give meaning to the town.</p> <p>Bridport has been through a number of phases of building up a partnership, and though there are less tangible benefits [things to see] partnership can chalk up a few successes; there have been environmental improvements, training provision, community learning centre – and still working hard ... It's a good case study.</p>	<p><u>By GM: relating to Dorset, not only to Bridport.</u></p> <p>The programmes and related processes have achieved things.</p> <p>Understanding of, and sensitivity to local needs are necessary, as is the recognition that sufficient time is needed.</p>
Community Development Worker	<p>[By GM: interviewee did not know about Bridport's action plan] ... but Gillingham has done an Action Plan (went through the MCTi process, but no money).</p>	<p>Doesn't know about Bridport.</p>
Town Councillor	<p>Contribution withheld in accordance with Respondent's instructions</p>	<p>Contribution withheld</p>

Partnership member (Volunteer)	<p>We had got the Survey for Infrastructure funded (the roads, the busses). Again, the idea was that we would hope to come out with something where we could get – eventually we got a Hoppa Bus- that came years down the line. The evolution is still there, despite the fact that I don't ... – it's still happening – very much so. It was the catalyst, and I think the good thing about it to me was that it brought a large range of people within the community with a huge range of experience and expectation together. These people didn't necessarily know one another before. I think that one of the things that always bugs me though is that the employed folk from the RDA and the people running this often had less .... practical experience and specific experience than a lot of the people from the community and – I'm bleating on to the District Officers all the time about this – they are appointed but they don't have – can't have – half the knowledge of the range within the community members. The attitude down here is that if you are an incomer or come back in when you've worked away, you're an incomer, and for a long time your views are sort of , like, "Well, you're an incomer" – well, utter crap. These are the views [also] of local Councillors as well – people within the system.</p> <p>Newcomers can threaten the insularity, the comfort zone. Not the ordinary local folk, but the kind of Councillors at that level. I know them all ten years down the line, and that's lessened slightly, and I can see why some people might see me as a threat, I open my mouth, I say what I mean. To get vibrancy into the area you need to match the two – newcomer and local – together, otherwise you stay insular, and you can't see the ability that other people bring – the richness to actually achieve and diversify, and that to me is crucial. Certainly I and other people never intended to throw out the good things. There are some very, very on the ball local Councillors, working very hard. MCTi was not dominated by the Council – it was led by the community and [name removed] got that right. The Town Council was 'onboard' – definitely. And so were the officers. Can't fault any of them for that.</p>	Infrastructure survey / Rural transport / Improving relationships
Partnership Member (social entrepreneur)	<p>Err, I don't think they've been implemented at all, no, and I think, that what happened was, that people spent so long and got so frustrated, because of the whole process and the lack of delivery that in the end, a lot of people kind of walked away from that process of trying to draw different strands of community together ... there's been a thing called BLAP, Bridport Local Area Partnership, that's come out of the Strategic Partnership, West Dorset Partnership and stuff, but one of the problems I think with MTI and MCTi was, certain people involved in the Town Council feeling that this was something that was going to undermine the position of the Town Council, and so had it in for the process from the start, really <u>By GM: So, a challenge to their democratically given powers?</u> Emmm, that was their perception, the idea that a Town Council has a democratic mandate, a questionable assertion, but they wouldn't question it. I mean in a way that's more a classic sort of Dorset thing where, you know, civil society to the extent it exists is very limited and tends to be very focussed on particular things like, you know, sports or arts or a village hall or the church or whatever, and that sort of element of kind of civil society that you see elsewhere in the country, particularly in urban areas where you're actually trying to address some of the, maybe deeper issues, has always struggled I think in Dorset to get off the ground ... <u>By GM: Any idea why?</u> ... it's a very kind of conservative with a small 'c' and a big 'C' county, it's very patrician, the power of the Local Authorities at whatever level is very entrenched and any attempt to, you know, effectively question that, or, you know, add in other institutions that might try to effect change is seen as illegitimate.</p>	Not implemented / frustration with structures

Partnership Member (officer)	<p>I don't believe they [the action plans] have [been implemented]. ... again, I can only concentrate on the young people's side of it. ... there were lots of projects. The major one was a sort of youth internet cafe, hmm, but there were others. There were things like a picnic site created by young people for the benefit of others ... very positive things, all sorts of things, not one of them was realized.</p> <p><u>By GM: Do you know why?</u> Well, I can remember very well the first 'Brokering Table' meeting, where people from different potential funding organizations were brought together with people from the local steering group and asked how they could support particular projects. ... It was one of the most depressing meetings I've ever been to. There was no support forthcoming and everybody very quickly lost heart – it picked up again later on. The only project for young people that has been realized from that has nothing to do with local aspirations. That's not to say that it's not a useful project. It's the scooter scheme. I chaired that for a little while – it's useless. The whole point of that is to get young people to college, and to work, and because of restrictions set on the distance you can't reach the places of learning. It just doesn't make any sense at all. ... It's ludicrous, and it's not to say that I don't support the theory of Wheels to Work ... the point is that the MCTi, as I understood it, was to identify local aspirations and help their development. That was not a local aspiration. That was a blueprint superimposed from outside because it was going to work. It works to a limited degree, and for some people it works very well ... . I was offered that before the MCTi ever appeared on the scene, to base it here, and then along came the MCTi and they swiped it because it was one of these quick wins things – this phrase, win-win, quick win, got so annoying after a while, because there were no winners, so, what I'm saying is, of all of the young people's ideas, not a single one has been realized within the MCTi. After four years, I resigned, and told them why I resigned, ...</p>	<p>No (in terms of work relating to young people) / disillusion with process / Wheels to Work ... working but limited/"useless" /fails to meet need</p>
Partnership Member (volunteer)	<p><u>By GM: In terms of the Older People's Forum, plans have been implemented, and continue to develop.</u></p>	<p>Yes, implemented (older people's projects)</p>
Regional Development Agency Officer	<p><u>By GM: In terms of the work done, what in your view are the three most important elements of the work?</u> 1) I think a longer-term commitment by partners was essential in terms of turning the strategy into action. The RDA and the CA provided funding to actually support a project officer down in Bridport, and a project assistant. Emm, that worked reasonably well, although because there was not necessarily any leadership locally the work wasn't managed very well. ... [the project officer]had an excellent rapport with local people, but local people either took to her, or they didn't, and so – [the project officer] had a very strong personality - and so it worked to a degree, but unless you actually had a really strong steer [the project officer] tended to do what [the project officer] thought was needed, and not necessarily what was needed. 2) They did do some really good, in-depth research into affordable housing needs. They did set up an affordable housing group that actually looked at self-build as an option for affordable housing, but I don't think that got beyond actually talking about it and looking at a couple of examples from elsewhere in the country, emm, it didn't have the resource to be able to do anything practical like land site assembling, you know, site assembly, or even putting it into practice, so, those were the two that really spring to mind. [3<sup>rd</sup> example not given]</p>	<p>Long-term commitment / research (affordable housing) /</p>

District Council Officer (Social)	<p>No, I think it's kind of actually linked, it's merged in now with community planning, with town planning [with BLAP] and I feel that now it's all kind of merged together, emm, and sometimes you hear, "Oh, we're a Coastal and Market Town Initiative", and it's a word, but it doesn't have much attached to it anymore, and now we've moved on to something else, which is, you know, community planning and town planning. <u>By GM: Do you think that the move from one to another, the work that BLAP is doing was usefully informed by the MCTi work?</u> To some extent it was, yes. It was a ground, it formed a grounding for it, emmm, but, yes, to some extent it was. <u>By GM: You could see that as part of a natural evolution?</u> Errr, not a natural evolution as such. It's what happens, new initiatives come up, new ideas come forward from government, and people respond to them, people respond to whatever is available to them, really. <u>By GM: Do you get any sense that the community planning work and the Market and Coastal Towns Initiative work are coherent, logically related?</u> I don't actually, I think, I think it's, because, I, I, from afar, and I'm not involved, and I don't get involved specifically with Bridport, but from afar I think that, errm, everything is linked on to the action plan, is linked with community planning now. I don't, I don't really see it linking. <u>By GM: Do you see it as 'stand alone' rather than a progression from one to the other?</u> Well, it can be a progression, it is a sort of progression, but it's a progression that would have happened. If you didn't have Market and Coastal – if you take away the Coastal and Market Towns Initiative (<i>sic</i>) you still got that happening in other towns, you've still got community planning aspect happening where there was never a Coastal and Market Towns Initiative, so, you know, you can look at it from that point of view, and say that it's happened. <u>By GM: Do you think that – although you can't talk for North Dorset – do you think that, compared with the work done in Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton, that the MCTi work added value to the work that's going on in Bridport?</u> Yes, it does get people active. All these initiatives get people up and excited and start to work together and you start to form committees, and you start to get people, you know, up and motivated as it were, to do things in their community, but it's hard to say ... I can't. I probably know just as much about Shaftesbury and the things that are happening in North Dorset as much as I do in Bridport, really, because I live in North Dorset, so if you look at Shaftesbury, they have also got very, very active – they've got a lot of community people who are very busy doing things, so, as I say, it does actually activate people. <u>By GM: You use the word, motivate – how does the end of the programme affect motivation?</u> They've got this mindset, they develop this mindset, they can see that things can only be achieved in a small way, so it does develop people's skills. I think that that's an important issue, that these initiatives do engage people and develop their skills that they can take it forward and move on, and take them to other areas. <u>By GM: Is there in your experience anything that can be done to ensure that current initiatives are better 'joined-up' with successor programme?</u> [Long pause] I think they should be joined up, and they should be joined up, I don't know, I think they should be joined up somehow. I think people should get recognition for participating in these schemes, and I think that, but I don't actually know how it can be joined up. I think it's joined up under the sort of BLAP schemes.</p>	<p>No, but merged with community planning work / community planning has taken over from MCTi / work does encourage people to become involved, and helps them develop skills, but need to "join-up" new programmes/ initiatives with old (ensure continuity).</p>
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District Council Officer (Business)	[They are being implemented] as much as I know, yeah, the key issues that were there, I suppose the ones that have been most important have floated to the top, have been picked up by a number of people, and certainly I don't think that [name removed] ... a key local politician, is prepared to let some of the key projects drop, so has been pushing for those on a number of different fronts.	Work continues
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Interviewee	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Question 7</b></p> <p><b>Has the work, when considered overall, met – or is it meeting - your expectations in terms of, eg,</b></p> <p><b>a) physical improvements,</b></p> <p><b>b) other “softer” outcomes such as increased community involvement?</b></p>	Summary
County Council Officer	N/A	Not known
Community Development Worker	<p>Action planning has helped to join up thinking. There was a resistance to the Healthcheck initially because people thought it was prescriptive. <u>By GM: In the south east some people wanted it to be more prescriptive!</u> <b>NB Interview paraphrased:</b> could have done more re action plan if they'd done more themselves and used consultant less – process seemed to "bend towards using the consultant". If [name removed] had been in Sturminster Newton a year or two before the partnership would have had the confidence to tackle the action plan in a different way – could have done a lot of the consultation themselves with professional guidance/back up. Yes, it's worked. [Name removed] sees quite a difference between those that have done a Healthcheck (type) exercise – capacity has been built ("Absolutely"). It's about people though – Blandford and Gillingham had rocky years, but, eventually, for various reasons (new community worker in Gillingham, village pressure plus MoD plans for camp in Blandford). Although approaches are not necessarily MCTi the "basic structure" and approach are the same (ie similar to MCTi).</p>	<p>In general action planning has worked but more emphasis should be given to supporting locals to help themselves. People are critical to success.</p>
Town Councillor	Contribution withheld in accordance with Respondent's Instructions	Contribution withheld

Partnership member (Volunteer)	<p>We didn't actually achieve what we wanted. We always wanted – that was my pet thing – an Angling Jetty at West Bay ... we've now negotiated float fishing ... RDA not interested/could not see that a Sea Angling Jetty in the area and the first in the country would help the financial efficacy of the area although we'd had an economic impact survey done which proved that 12 jobs worth would be funded into the area by people who came to fish – static vans, Bed &amp; Breakfasts. We did get the money for the scooter scheme ... did have money for surveys, but, no we didn't have anything, unless my memory's completely flipped, of anything that stands out. Various groups got grant aid. Definitely wanted the Skill Centre, there's a group still working on that and the youth – I think that [name removed] actually chairs it – not sure about that, I think he does, but ummm, we desperately wanted the skill base, we wanted to also turn one of our – the old library into a community-base building. So, in some ways it seems as though we've been treading water, but I think, taking the financial aspect out I don't think you can sort of minimise the value to the community from the point of view of 'community cohesion' (my phrase – interviewee agreed) ... [name removed] got some funding through for the Land Trust. We had the Leader plus money coming along in the middle of all this as well. We did get some money from that to run part of the Food Festival – this'll be the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> one, this year. So, it's more about community cohesion – we actually wanted to have 'harder' stuff and I think, but, again, I think that we were too disparate in our, what we were asking for. We should have gone for a major project head-on, first off, rather than each little group asking for something – too many minimal projects. That's my own belief.</p>	<p>Interviewee's specific project not implemented, but Wheels to Work scheme implemented and surveys completed, but reasons for non-implementation partly due to failure to select and pursue one major project.</p>
Partnership Member (social entrepreneur)	<p>I put a lot of time into that MCTi-MTI process. I suppose that, I mean part of the problem is that there ended up sort of three levels, there was the broad base of people the Steering Group, and then there was a little, well they set up a company, there was just three or four of them, and – the Bridport Community Initiative, it was going to be the delivery body, but it ended up that the Directors of that were people, mmm, who either didn't have the kind of experience of what that kind of body might do, or actually were sort of that kind of conservative patrician culture. <u>By GM: So, did it meet your expectations?</u> Emm, no, it didn't meet my expectations. <u>By GM: Were you surprised by that?</u> There were a lot of promises made by the Regional Development Agency in particular saying, if you go through this process, they will then be funding available for Bridport. A lot of people, you know, basically, engaged, because they feel the more resources that can be brought into Bridport the better. And so there was, you know, hope and an expectation that it might, you know, effect change in the south west quadrant, or deal with, you know, youth training, or, those sort of issues. <u>By GM: Were they led to believe that that might be the case, then?</u> Yeah, there were explicit promises. That chap [named person] sat up at Colfox School and said that, you know, £7 million if you go through this process ... it probably was the policy at the time, and so a lot of people got involved for that reason, and then were just basically, you know, run a merry dance, and were very disillusioned by the end of it. So, you feel now, just now, people are starting to talk about a Development Trust again for Bridport and recognizing that kind of structure, that there are gaps to be filled, so, you know, that's only going to take, that'll have taken ten years. There probably is a bit of a consequence (of MCTi/MTI) because during that process people looked at things like Lyme Regis Development Trust and saw what that had been doing, so, ...</p>	<p>Confusing structures locally / Disparate views / Promises heard but not fulfilled but talk about Development Trust continues ...</p>

Partnership Member (Officer)	Yes, I expected it to fail miserably after four years, and that's what it's done.	Interviewee expected it to fail and it did.
Partnership member (volunteer)	Oh yes. Now it has. You see, ... we became autonomous, we got our own bank account and BCI [Bridport Community Initiative] gave us some money to start it up – the Bridport Area Older People's Forum. Over the years it's evolved into a really good thing, and we have a very big voice in Bridport. Bridport Town Council support us very well and agree with what we're doing. West Dorset (District Council) and Dorset (County) Council. We were the first forum to set up, and, in fact, through us forums have started to grow all over Dorset, and now we've got a Senior Forums of Dorset of which we are a member, and that's how that has grown, so it's all over Dorset now. ... <u>By GM: there is now – has been for 5 years - a forum coordinator based with Age Concern in Dorchester. The Coordinator's job is to help set up and support forums – this appointment is a consequence of MCTI work in Bridport.</u>	Yes and as a consequence Bridport project has been used as a model county wide
Regional Development Agency (officer)	<u>Have you identified any gaps in the work that could, or should, have been done?</u> Yes, a lot of the evidence base to actually support the Bridport Community Strategic Plan wasn't apparent, it wasn't presented, certainly the RDA doesn't hold that information. I don't know if anything was done in sufficient detail to provide anything that was robust enough to be able to actually evidence the need and issues. <u>By GM: So, there was no Healthcheck done?</u> I don't know, I didn't see one, but, certainly, when you compare the Bridport Plan to the Shaftesbury Plan, for example, and the Sturminster Plan, there's a whole bulk of evidence to back up the plan itself. <u>By GM: Did they do CA Healthchecks?</u> They did [in Shaftesbury] and, as far as I know they did [in Sturminster].	Gaps from point of view of RDA: evidence base; Healthcheck not in evidence relative to other towns
District Council Officer (Social)	I don't really know what it's done to be honest. I haven't really seen a significant difference. <u>By GM: Are you in a position where you would expect to be able to see a significant difference, or is just that your job means that you're not close enough?</u> I don't think I'm close enough to be able to make that judgement, no, no, I don't think I would have a fair view on it, no.	Not able to comment.

District Council Officer (Business)	<p>Emmm, to say that I probably didn't have high expectations therefore it must have been met is probably unfair. but, err, our role clearly, I don't think our role was the leadership role, it was an enabling and supporting role for stuff that the group wanted to develop and run with, emmm <u>By GM: I meant in a broader sense, not just West Dorset District Council ...</u> right, I don't know if I have, I don't have the answer to that, ehh, but certainly from a WDDC role it was enabling ... . My frustration perhaps is that the employment group wasn't, first of all made up of local businesses in the town, but really people from outside of the town. <u>By GM: Any idea why?</u> I guess apathy ... <u>By GM: From within the town?</u> ... yeah, the people who were sat around the table as part of the employment group were the sort of people who (pause) want to get involved ... [name removed] as you know gets involved in lots of food things, [name removed] in the Federation of Small Businesses, and in a number of national groups, [name removed] exactly the same. ... <u>By GM: What's happened to the employment group?</u> Oh, the group just stopped. ... it just stopped. <u>By GM: And why?</u> I think it's, it wasn't achieving anything, emm, but I don't think it actually knew what it wanted to achieve, really. Errr, and to demonstrate that I recall, I don't recall many of the meetings, but I do recall one classic meeting where there were the half a dozen or so businesses there, and probable eight or ten, far more support organizations sat around the table to try and help the process, and the, it was a skills discussion about basic food hygiene courses, and the fact that there were none being delivered in Bridport at all for the businesses, and yet four of those people sat round the table immediately responded saying that actually we're doing them, and we're doing them, and we're doing them, they're happening in the town, and, you know, there's one met yesterday, and there's one next week, emm, it really, I think it was more about communication – that was the message for me. Things are happening, but people aren't aware of it, or they're not tapped into the right communication channel, emm, therefore the businesses weren't clearly identifying what it was that was needed that wasn't already there, therefore they weren't able to move forward, and the group sort of lost its momentum, because it wasn't going anywhere. <u>By GM: So they group didn't pick up on that and think, ooh, there's an opportunity here ... ?</u> No.</p>	<p>Lack of clarity about aims/purposes / poor communication</p>
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Interviewee	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Question 8</b></p> <p><b>What, in your view, in order of importance, are the three most important elements of the work that <u>have been done</u>?</b></p>	Emphasis of Work Done
County Council Officer	Most important elements: 1) empowering the local community to believe that it can influence its own future (eg Sturminster Newton).	Community-led development
Community Development worker	<p>1) Action plan is a critical element – pulls together all the issues and puts them down on one piece of paper, and brings them all together, and is a really useful working document to keep going back to use of updating and including new consultations, parish plans. You do not have to have done a Healthcheck to have an action plan eg parish plan serves the same purpose, but do need some form of "Where are we now?" work.</p> <p>2) People's confidence and trust in one another to work together on issues – particularly means organizations like the Town Council who know what their role is and what it isn't and have trust in one another – the key to partnership working – happy to work with other groups, and to trust them to do what they know best how to do where there's joint interest. In every place that [the interviewee] has worked in has found tensions in terms of democratic responsibility/accountability/who's in charge-ism – [interviewee] ... examples of work between Town Council and a Sturminster estate residents' group where work to rebuild a play park led to two members of the estate resident's group becoming Town Councillors <b>NB</b> By GM: interviewee thinks that <u>there is evidence – anecdotal? – that parish planning, Healthcheck work, "... in its broadest sense does bring new people into the system"</u>; 3) independent facilitator/community worker (having someone from outside is probably better in principle but not essential – eg [name removed] in Lyme Regis, and it always takes time for newcomer to settle in etc.). <u>By GM: For interviewee it took a year or so before [interviewee] felt accepted/trusted/part of it.</u></p>	Action Plan as guide and monitor / Clarity about roles and trust between people and organizations / appropriate independent professional support
Town Councillor	Contribution withheld in accordance with Respondent's Instructions	Contribution withheld
Partnership member (Volunteer)	1) The most important thing to me was the evolutionary process, then groups, and the cohesion. The people who spent their time running the groups and formulating them and working with them, the [person] who ran the Older Person's Groups for a very long time was inspirational – [name removed] I think. There are two [name removed], and I'm not good at remembering (some things!). 2) The money 3) –	Effective process, groups and working together / Money

Partnership Member (social entrepreneur)	<p><b>Includes answer to Q9.</b></p> <p>I think there should have been a lot more support given to the actual setting up of a well-functioning structure; I think the structure that got set up was not a good structure because it, the Bridport Community Initiative, was too dominated by its Directors, didn't have enough accountability to the broader partnership that had been created. 2) The promises about funding should have been followed up, you know, some money came through, but very little – some very big figures were bandied around; I don't think the process was well supported by SWRDA, because they also brought in this consultant ... quite appalling really, incredible waste of money; 3) I think the third area was that, I mean, to me, most initiatives require some assets to make them endure, whether it's a church or a village hall, or a, you know, whatever really, so I think assets are really important, otherwise it's always the need to refresh people, because people come and go ... and that's what, I suppose, we've tried to do here, to move on from farmers' markets and working out in the community, to having a base from which we can operate, now I'm thinking that if we're really going to thrive and prosper we need to own somewhere which is purpose built.</p>	Effective structure / Promises made should be very clear and should be kept / community owned assets
Partnership Member (officer)	<p>I'm going to take one, which is the most important one, that if, from the young people's point of view, if an amount of effort put into engaging young people and involving them, and they come up with ideas that, at the time people say, "Oh, what good idea, that's a great idea", then you work with them to see that idea to fruition. You don't then ignore it, you don't find ways to prevent it from happening , and I believe that happened from time to time, particularly with the youth cafe ... what happened to the promise?</p>	Locally-led development
Partnership Member (volunteer)	<p><u>By GM (paraphrased): The interviewee said that the Older People's Forum's existence and development is almost certainly due to the support given by the MCTi.</u></p>	Support for projects
Regional Development Agency Office	N/A	Not answered
District Council Office (Social)	[Long pause] No, I really can't answer that, no.	Not answered

District Council Officer (Business)	<p>I'm not sure I've got a view (pause) really. A lot of the things that were done have at various times re-emerged and been updated, the skills study that was done, ummm, has re-emerged and been updated and adapted, and is now part of the BLAST group. It certainly attracted the interest of Weymouth College about three years ago, emmm, and the issue (pause) it was really trying to address was access to training, particularly for young people, but also for businesses, emm, those aren't easy challenges to solve, err, but I guess we're gradually moving some way down that route, Weymouth College is certainly much more aware of the challenges of getting to their sites from the Bridport area, and are broadening the number of sites that they operate from. <u>By GM: You mean they are moving out, the college is moving out - outreach?</u> Yeah, the college is, is, just finishing, emm, a construction centre, for example, in Dorchester, and it's gradually bringing more and more of its business training into Dorchester, and it's quite prepared to go out, to do outreach work. ... <u>By GM: Does Weymouth College send staff to Bridport? Does it run courses in Bridport?</u> Oh, it does, it does, it delivers courses across Dorset, down through West Dorset to Bridport and Lyme Regis.</p>	Not answered but has seen progress in that some locally identified needs are being met.
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Interviewee	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Question 9</b></p> <p><b>What, in your view, in order of importance, are the three most important elements of the work that <u>should</u> have been done?</b></p>	Keywords
County Council Officer	<p>Where I have a beef it's the short-term nature of the work and how that's ... led to the process not really being followed through ... inevitably when you're working with a community, things don't happen overnight, it takes time to develop a partnership, for the partnership to come up with a real feel for the community, what the issues are, what needs to be addressed, and how they might be addressed, and you might have to go through that circuit two or three times as Bridport have done before you can say, "Yep, we ... agree to that." That can take time, and then, inevitably, the process after that is the move from the identification of the problems and the approach, to actually implementing that and I think that what was never really thought through at one stage was the implementation. There was a lot of support to get communities up to that stage – here's our action plan, put it on the table. There was talk of brokerage tables, which never worked, and at that stage there was a question about, "Well where's the real buy-in from the people who can actually provide the support or the investment to make these things happen?" and it was almost back to the start again. That realization that what the community was looking for isn't what the support agencies were looking for. If that [MCTi] process had pulled those things together at a much earlier stage then, I'm not saying that necessarily their aspirations would have been lowered, but there might have been a bit more of a reality check of what can be achieved by when. Long-term community engagement work takes a long time, needs a lot of planning and cross-department/government agreement and participation. [Need to recognize] that Sturminster's Exchange Building are one-offs, and that you're not going to get every town coming up with that type of scheme. Some of the solutions might be longer-term, and I don't think that the support mechanisms in place at the moment really support that long-term approach, so you might be saying this is where we want this town to be in 25 years, but you're working on 3 year funding programmes, and you're never quite sure whether that's going to be continued, or whether you're going to have to divide up your vision, your aspirations, over that time. Then again, the political ... way of things is 4 or 5 year time periods and ... it's the short-termism, there's no guarantee, no confidence that you'll be able to continue that approach, and it'll be right for the next time the badges are changed on the organizations or Comprehensive Spending Review comes out, or whatever.</p>	Short-term programmes applied to long term development / Appropriate mechanisms and processes / Flexibility – recognize that each town and each set of circumstances is unique
Community Development worker	Three problems: 1) People on Sturquest Partnership have been members for 10 years – they are tired, have put "enormous amount of effort" – we need new people and difficult to achieve; 2) lack of involvement by parishes (2 or 3 involved, some ambivalent, some antagonistic); 3) Policies want local view taken into account, but doesn't always work (ie after consultation, say, "... we'd like to do this, and powers that be say, No". Still a problem between the professionals' – eg Highway', planners', economic development officers' – views and willingness/ability (< because bound by government policies, guidelines etc.).)	Support to tackle "volunteer fatigue" / Involve hinterland parishes / Mismatch between locally expressed needs and wider policies
Town Councillor	Contribution withheld in accordance with Respondent's Instructions	Contribution withheld

Partnership member (volunteer)	<p>I basically felt that it turned out to be something of a damp squib. It always seemed at conferences with other towns that we were struggling to retain the enthusiasm that had come with the original concept. Got totally fed-up with the people who said that, "There's all this money". We said, "No, it isn't working like that. You're saying that the money is there. What you never told us was, you know, there are only certain things it can fund." The money was finite, and had to be dispersed over a huge area. Should have been given a guide that we should have had as to What Might Be Most Appropriate That They Might Fund, because they obviously knew what they might fund, and what they might not, and so what was the point of pointing through so many of these things to be determined. Original concept was good, handled very well in our area ... by our Town Council, Town Coordinator, [name removed] (then Leader of Council and Chair of Bridport MCTi prior to [name removed]) – unfortunately I don't think we channelled – or, as I said, what we perhaps would have got - didn't have as far as I'm concerned enough lead information as to what would be the appropriate projects that could be funded. ... we spent a lot of time and effort that could have been better channelled had we have had more information from ... the government departments that were supposed to be dealing with it - primarily the RDA. It wasn't real – they could not, from the beginning, deliver what they said they could.</p>	Clear and honest information at the start of the process about what can be done and will be funded (realism)
Partnership Member (social entrepreneur)	<p>Includes answer to Q8)  I think there should have been a lot more support given to the actual setting up of a well-functioning structure; I think the structure that got set up was not a good structure because it, the Bridport Community Initiative, was too dominated by its Directors, didn't have enough accountability to the broader partnership that had been created. 2) The promises about funding should have been followed up, you know, some money came through, but very little – some very big figures were bandied around; I don't think the process was well supported by SWRDA, because they also brought in this consultant ... quite appalling really, incredible waste of money; 3) I think the third area was that, I mean, to me, most initiatives require some assets to make them endure, whether it's a church or a village hall, or a, you know, whatever really, so I think assets are really important, otherwise it's always the need to refresh people, because people come and go ... and that's what, I suppose, we've tried to do here, to move on from Farmers' markets and working out in the community, to having a base from which we can operate, now I'm thinking that if we're really going to thrive and prosper we need to own somewhere which is purpose built. ...</p>	Effective structure / Promises made should be very clear and should be kept / community owned assets
Partnership member (officer)	<p>Maybe too much was attempted. Self and professional interest often gets in the way. ... I think that there are all sorts of elements there, what it felt like, the image that was presented was that it wasn't a local problem but everyone was battering their head against the unseen power beyond Bridport . Now, how true that was, I don't know.</p>	Realistic aims / no where the limits and the power lie
Partnership Member (volunteer)	<p>Well, I wish there had been something earlier on that had got going with the youth, and really got going with the youth ...</p>	More work with/for young people
Regional Development Agency Officer	<p>N/A</p>	Not answered

District Council Officer (Social)	N/A	Not answered
District Council Officer (Business)	<p>I don't know how the employment group was set up, but it did seem remiss that people like the Chamber of Trade weren't actively involved. Ummm, and that would have brought more buy-in from businesses in the town. <u>By GM: Is this back to the apathy point you made earlier?</u> It's back to the sort of apathy thing, and those who were involved were, are those who wanted to get involved in making a difference, seeing change, having their voice heard generally anyway. Err, so that always seemed a bit strange. I don't really know why that was never cracked, emmm <u>By GM: It sounds almost as if those who got involved were, in some sense (pause) too big for Bridport?</u> Yes. <u>By GM: ... and those who didn't get involved were those who, maybe, have had their eyes on Bridport if you could only have got them along there?</u> Yeah, yeah. There's another cruel thought as well, that says that those who would have been from the town and from, perhaps the Chamber may have struggled to have lifted their vision from the sort of minutiae of car parking, dog pooh, and Christmas lights that Chambers seem to focus on. That's a bit harsh, because I know that they do, and can, look beyond that, but, errr <u>By GM: But in a sense that gap's always been there, hasn't it – different pressures?</u> Yes.</p>	Clarity about purpose / Help locals to develop their vision

Interviewee	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Question 10</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Is the partnership still active? If so:</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>a) Is the action plan being implemented?</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>b) Has the Healthcheck been revisited?</b></p>	Work continues to some extent?
County Council Officer	N/A	Not answered
Community Development worker	N/A	Not answered
Town Councillor	Contribution withheld in accordance with Respondent's Instructions	Contribution withheld
Partnership member (Volunteer)	<p>MCTi became a Limited Company – Bridport Community Initiative – because they thought they might be able to access more community funding, might get more as a Trust. The Action Plan not being worked on now, people did run out of enthusiasm and energy, but, more importantly, the focus groups are, all are still functioning - MCTi has evolved and the Bridport Local Area Partnership were coming onboard. From the MCTi, Older Persons' Group, very vibrant, Environment Group still very vibrant, the Youth Group – ... with [name removed] as Youth Leader – is still very vibrant and still working. ... Employment Group is covered ... by Chamber of Trade and Commerce and Tourism. ... Bridport &amp; District Tourism Association is a Limited Company with 50+ members. Infrastructure Group went into WATAG – Western Area Transport Action Group [name removed]. ... Good links with local Parish Councils ... Bridport Local Area Partnership is very productive and has a coordinator – maybe we got into that frame of mind via MCTi. Original Action Plan not being worked on. Healthcheck hasn't been revisited as far as I'm aware – energies now on Bridport Local Area Partnership.</p>	Yes
Partnership Member (social entrepreneur)	<p>No, it got replaced by the Local Area Partnership. One of the good things is that one or two groups like the old people's forum really came together under the MCTi process and also transport forum, I think, came together, so those two groups, I think, are still going. One of the key things within the Action Plan was around the south west quadrant, certain key issues that were raised completely being overlooked by the District Council doing their own partnership with the existing landlord on the estate and ignoring all ... well, now they've got some money from SWRDA to do the design and take it to outline planning permission ... the credit crunch has now hit. (Re the Healthcheck) [Name removed ] is the Local Area Partnership Coordinator ... based at the Town Council ... in its own right, is good, and ... worth finding out where it is now.</p>	No

	Partnership Member (officer)	Well, what's been formed now is something called BLAP [the Bridport Local Area Partnership] ... that's reasonably positive, I think. Some of the people involved in the MCTi are involved, but I think not many. I'm involved as the Chairman of BLAST, Bridport Local Area Skills Training ... yes, [the successor action plan] is being implemented. b) No idea.	Yes
	Partnership Member (volunteer)	I don't think that it [the Partnership] is [active]. I've not heard that it is. a) Healthcheck? Is that that yellow folder thing? b) -	No
	Regional Development Agency Officer	N/A	Not answered
	District Council Officer (Social)	It is to a degree, I think, I'm not sure.	Don't know
	District Council Officer (Business)	No, it's (the Partnership) not (still active) 10a) and 10b) I'm not aware that the Healthcheck's been revisited. The employment skills work has been revisited, but through other organizations for other purposes. Weymouth College were keen to look at something down there, so they secured some money and revisited the work in one way, and then the RDA were keen to spend a pot they'd allocated to revisit skills work, and they've pushed again for BLAP, through its BLAST [skills training] sub-group, to go back and revisit the skills. ...	No

Interviewee	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Question 12</b>  <b>Anything else you'd like to add?</b></p>	Summary
County Council Officer	<p>Interesting to note that 1995 RWP gave policy focus, 2000's RWP brought in aspects of delivery, but I think to some extent that some of the strong messages from the first White Paper have kind of been lost with the regional agenda – and it's crazy that in a place like the south west which is more rural than any other region in terms of its population and the proportion of the population that actually live in the market/country towns is greater than any other region that ... there hasn't been sufficient focus on the towns themselves and the roles that they play. It's been much more this national city-region approach which the government is rolling out is being applied here as well. Ok, that's got a role to play – obviously the Plymouths, the Swindons, Bournemouths, Poole, do, to a certain extent, drive what happens in the area but, particularly in Dorset's case, the further west you go, the sphere of influence of the conurbation decreases – so, by the time you get to, beyond Winfrith, a few people might travel to from Weymouth or Dorchester into the conurbation [and people go the other way], but it isn't really appropriate to think that that is going to drive that area – the role of the towns has been neglected.</p>	<p>Rural/small country towns policy appears to have given way politically to an emphasis on regional/urban/city region-related policies.</p>
Community Development Worker	<p>[Nothing to add]</p>	
Town Councillor	<p>[Nothing to add]</p>	
Partnership member (Volunteer)	<p>[Nothing to add]</p>	
Partnership Member (social entrepreneur)	<p>[Nothing to add]</p>	

Partnership Member (officer)	<p>Just one thing. I think that the failure of the MCTi still reverberates. An example of that is when we have a BLAST meeting, bearing in mind that this is trying to offer young people the chance to improve their skills and become more employable in the worst possible situation economically just now – and it's getting worse as we know ... and for that we have to go to, I hate using jargon, but we have to go to 'stakeholders' ... and a number of them say to us, "Yeah, you've been talking about this for years". No, we haven't! MCTi talked about it for years and did [nothing], what we're doing is, we're doing it! We've been doing it for 18 months and we've moved on an amazing pace, but people look at Bridport, and they think of the history of chat, aspiration without action. That's really annoying to me. I know we're doing something positive, I know we're getting there, I don't know what the ultimate destination will be, other than it will be offering more than we've got now by far, but we've still got this initiative thing, which was misnamed, hanging on our shoulders a little bit ... history lingers.</p>	<p>The effects of perceived failure and negative associations/connotations linger – in spite of these, progress is being made.</p>
Partnership Member (volunteer)	<p>No. Well, of course, we have taken over some of the deficiencies of the adult education system because we – our forum – we run classes, two lots of art classes, ... we got some grants ... over the last six years or so, to run things. One of my missions in life, to get enough money to do things, we hire really well-qualified tutors ... it's incredible what they're achieving, and, you know, ... some of them said, "I haven't done anything since I left school", at fourteen most of them too. Umm, and the movement class, we have a retired physiotherapist who specialized in exercises for older people, and the craft class, we've had various people come, that's what we needed money for, we rent a room ... all our material is sourced locally, so that's helping. We set it up, this system with the classes, I got £5,000 from the small Lottery to set it up, made a case. I mean, fortunately several of us have been in reasonably high-powered jobs, and know our way around, and that helps in a community to, you know, set up things, because we know what we're doing ... <u>By GM: So, do you think that "the system" favours the educated, articulate ... ?</u> No, no, no, it doesn't favour them. It means that they're available to help organize something. <u>By GM: Yet you don't think that the effort that people of good will and good intentions have put in through things like the MCTi have done anything to address fundamental issues of poverty?</u> No, I can't see that they have, no, not financial poverty anyway, no. <u>By GM: That's lovely,</u> thank you very much.</p>	<p>Given clear aims and dedicated people with the necessary time, skills, and knowledge, a lot can be achieved.</p>

Regional Development Agency Officer	<p>I think if you're working in the public sector, I think there's a real misunderstanding that you – in the public sector – can actually drive a process at a speed you want it to run at if you're involving local people. It can't happen. If you want real engagement, if you want real buy-in and ownership of both the process and any actions that come out of it, it does take time, and it takes skill, and it takes a range of methods to be able to engage different sectors of the community. <u>By GM: How much time, do you think?</u> Well, it can take anything over two years, up to four years really. It's, it's an ongoing process, you know, it just doesn't stop. It continues, and once an issue has been addressed, and you move on to something else, the likelihood is you'll get a different set of people engaged and involved, umm ... <u>By GM: What are the implications of that for public sector policy and programmes to do with this sort of community-led development?</u> I think it's all very well for Government to actually introduce new policy and strategy to involve local people. There's an expectation that that will be free, gratis, that it doesn't come at a cost. In real terms it does come at a cost. It should come at a cost to the public sector if they're expecting people to get engaged, err, obviously we've got low unemployment at the moment, so a lot of people are out working. If they're expecting volunteers to deliver services and activities that the public sector are currently providing – that could be anything from, I don't know, a tourist information centre to a phone helpline, or anything like that, it comes at a cost. Just because volunteers are involved you can't expect them to actually do it for nothing at all.</p>	<p>Community-led development takes time, it needs people with skills to help and different methods if you are to "engage" with different sectors – two to four years. It's a continual process – new people will be needed. You can't expect volunteers top do everything for nothing.</p>
District Council Officer (Social)	<p>[Nothing to add]</p>	<p>-</p>
District Council Officer (Business)	<p>No thanks. Thank you.</p>	<p>-</p>

## **Appendix 4**

### **Anonymized Answers to Programme-related (ie Non-Poverty) Questions Obtained From Postal Questionnaires**

**(With Points of Interest Shown Shaded)**

<b>Question 1</b> <b>How did you become involved in the Market Towns Initiative (and/or the MCTi)?</b>	<b>Stimulus for Involveme nt</b>
We identified the project in [RDA's] literature.	Local action
Representative of Town Council on joint [name of town] and [name of town] Market Towns Partnership	Council
Not sure – before my time.	Not involved
Employed to undertake the Health Check & manage the Programme.	Duty
I attended the first of the MTI public meetings at the local High School out of curiosity. I was already a local Parish Councillor and prior to that an early retired Local Authority Engineer...so was curious as to how the funding seemingly promised by the MTI scheme could benefit the area.	Council
On taking up position as Town Clerk I felt that we needed to develop a medium term list of priorities. Saw an article on Healthchecks and applied for grant to pay for Project Manager who produced Healthcheck Report and was then employed as [name of town] Fast Forward Project manager.	Council
Made sure I attended the first meeting as a local community activist.	Local
Council led a 'Town Team' in the initiative in 2003.	Council
[name of town] was selected as a tier 1 town and I was already in post as Town Centre Officer	Work
As Town Clerk for [name of town]	Council
As Town Clerk it was my duty to get involved in something that could have brought a large amount of resource to the community.	Council
In 2001 members of [name of town] Community (Town Councillors and others) heard of the government's Market Towns Initiative and decided to bid for the available funding. A Healthcheck was conducted in 2001 and issues/problems developed into an Action Plan of projects. The [name of town] Area Partnership was registered as a Limited Company in 2003.	Partnership
I was employed by the [name of town] Forum to deliver the MCTi Community Strategic Plan.	Partnership
Initially through original bidding process then as lead officer in Accountable Body.	Council
I was appointed as Town Clerk in 2007 and can find no record of MTI. [name removed] Town council are Action for Market Towns members. As far as I can discover in archive files [name removed] has/didn't participate in partnerships/projects, but have recently attended AMT funding event.	Didn't
[Name removed] District Council and [name of town] Town Council set up a Town Centre Development Group consisting of "Local stakeholders". This group applied to the Countryside Agency for funding for a Healthcheck & subsequently secured funding for 3 years for 50% of a Project Manager post to deliver the Health check outcomes. We are now almost 2 years into a second 3 year period delivering outcomes from a subsequent Vision and Masterplan for the Town Centre.	Council
In two ways: 1 Healthcheck project 2 Planting at entrance to town	MTI Healthcheck
In two ways: 1 Part of the SE Market Towns Group – regional and local promotion, and 2 Director of ... delivery agent for the [name of town] MT Healthcheck ....	Work
I wanted to do something to change the community and this seemed to offer the best vehicle – I heard about it through the church.	Church
I became involved in 2002 as [name of town] Town Manager. [name of town] had applied to become an MTI town, but actually became an additional (name of county) town with funding of £100k over three years.	Work

[RDA proposed] [town] as a part of the MTI. This support ( <i>sic</i> ) by [name removed] District Council. I attended first public information meeting, and got elected as Chair.	RDA
We were asked to join when it started.	Nominated
We were involved in the first wave of the MTI in Yorkshire.	RDA
I was then the Town Clerk and we obtained £25,000 to develop a strategic plan for [name of town]. This later became a Community Area Plan for the [name of town] Community Area which included the neighbouring parishes of [names of other settlements].	Council
Attended public meeting for organisations in the Town in 2001. As regional committee member of Civic Trust was nominated by [name of town] Civic Society to sit on MTI steering group.	Local
Through [name removed] employed by [name of town] Town Council for approx. one year.	Council
Wrote the bid for MCTi as a Director of the [name of town] Area Partnership (Parish Councillor and resident for 35 years).	Work
Council received direct appeal from [RDA] regarding the scheme. The Head of Economic Development and I met with them to discuss [name of town].	RDA

<b>Question 2 If applicable, how did you become involved with Beacon Towns work, and in what capacity?</b>	<b>Note</b>
In latter stage the MT Partnership was awarded Beacon Status for IT – visitor website, IT training courses, IT-equipped business incubator units.	BT for IT
Mayor attended a Beacon Town function (at Stoke Rochford) – Town Council's involvement minimal.	Minimal involvement
Work of ... Project Manager recognised as being worthy of Beacon Town status.	Project Manager's work
We were involved at the early stages but this seemed to die a death.	Work faded
[name of town] was awarded Beacon Town status for being a test bed for piloting local business process – the [name of town] Business Improvement District was the first rural bid in the country. [Name removed] was instrumental in setting up the bid and also provided additional funds for the first two years through the MTI scheme.	Business Improvement District
N/A (although [name of town] is a Beacon Town)	Unaware of status
Town Councillor and Mayor	Via Town Council
As a result of the [name of town] ... Community Initiative, a year-long study, funded by the Countryside Agency, [name of town] was selected as a Beacon town in 2003 to demonstrate Heritage and Access led regeneration.	Heritage
Simply [name of town] became a BT via Countryside Agency – no real involvement.	Nominated
We are not involved in Beacon Towns. We have in [name of town] a Regeneration Initiative (MTI) we were in the 2 <sup>nd</sup> tranche, so we are now 2 years out of that, but continuing. <u>BY GM: this question was not answered, although [name of town] is a Beacon Town.</u>	Unaware of status
Invited to join Beacon Town Initiative by secretary in May 2005. [RDA] had granted £3000 legacy funding 2005-6 to 'complete' development of a sustainable tourism strategy for [name of town] under BT programme. Little progress had been achieved 2003-5, so local BTI members deposed the former chairman; installed a new one; and asked [name removed] to be project manager (see attached doc 'BTI – Process Issues' for more detail) Mr [person's name] (MTI Steering Group) was ... Invited to join Beacon Town Forum, by secretary, in July 2005.	Sustainable tourism

<b>Question 3</b> <b>What was your involvement (eg steering/project group)?</b>	<b>Keywords</b>
I was project leader.	Project Leader
Active member of Steering Groups involved in recruitment of Project manager and assistant plus development of Action Plan.	Steering Group member
Nothing	Not involved
Programme Officer	Programme Officer
Was one of the initial volunteers to join one of several working groups who eventually produced the Health Check. This led on to the Executive and then Chairman	Volunteer / Chairman
General support to Project Manager. Accounting Officer for project. Member of several Steering/Project Groups.	Support / Accounting officer / Steering Group Member
Member of management group throughout and occasionally working groups.	Management
As Clerk I helped set and service Town MTI Groups. Now am Financial Director of MTI.	Town Clerk / Finance Director
A Market Town Partnership was established to deliver the MTI programme and I was appointed manager with full responsibility for steering or delivering projects.	Management
On initial market town Steering Group.	Steering Group member
Liaison with project worker.	Liaison
[Name of partnership] has a Steering Group composed of community volunteers representatives of a cross-section of the business community (retail, tourism etc.), community organisations, Councillors, with additional Observer representation including statutory authorities etc.	Steering group
My role is to facilitate project development and prepare funding bids; develop and strengthen strategic partnerships, and engage and support with (sic) community groups.	Facilitation / Strengthen / Support
-	No Answer
Lead officer in Accountable Body. Roles included bidding for funds, claim returns, joint preparation of performance plans, attendance at Board meetings and project approval panels, etc.	Lead officer
My role in the above was as a representative of the education sector on what became [name of town] Improvement Partnership. I am now Chairman of the partnership & sit also on our two working groups, 'Transport & Environment' & 'Social, Business & Community'.	Lead / Chairman
Project group	Project Group Member
In two ways: 1 Part of the SE Market Towns Group – regional and local promotion, and 2 Director of ... the delivery agent for the [name of town] MT Healthcheck.	Support
Project team member (then) team leader (then) Chair.	Lead / Chair
I was the District Council's lead officer for the [name of town] Local Area Forum (a partnership of public, private and voluntary sector groups within the town). The Forum was the vehicle for submitting a bid. I prepared the bid and was responsible for coordinating finance.	Lead Officer
As town manager I was the co-ordinator of the Beacon Town work.	Coordinator
I am/was Chair of [name of town] Regeneration Initiative – from inception in 2001 to present.	Lead / Chair
Steering Group.	Steering Group Member / Councillor
Stakeholder (Town Council)	Town Council

I was a member of a small steering group which organised the initial lengthy consultation process from which our Community Area Plan was developed. Subsequently I have been one of two part-time project officers servicing the various theme and other groups responsible for progressing actions.	Steering Group Member / Project Officer
None	None
MTI – [Respondent 1] chaired Transport & Environment Focus Group / member of Steering group. BT – [Respondent 2] Project Manager - [Respondent 1] Forum member / chaired Transport group for Lottery bid	Lead / Manage
Steering Group member and ran one of the project groups on Childcare and Health.	Steering Group Member / Lead

<b>Question 4</b> <b>Why did you become involved (ie what were your motivations)?</b>	<b>Keywords</b>
To try to keep services in the local area.	Local Concern
a) Desire to harness the MTI and resource for the benefit of a town under economic and environmental stress. b) Ensure representation of the interests of grass root residents. c) Fulfil Ward Councillor obligation	Local concern / duty
N/A	Not involved
Paid Employment, however I have worked in community development and rural matters for some years.	Job / Interest
Perhaps I was already inclined to believe in helping the community I lived in and also accustomed to doing so by some 30yrs service in LAs. After my initial curiosity I soon realised that the majority of the volunteers involved in the process had no understanding of the complexity of normal LA work. It was obvious that I could be very useful, in my experience at Director level, in assisting the whole process so continued my involvement.	Local Concern
To ensure that the Town Council was responding to needs/wants of residents. To help Town Council develop a proactive approach.	Help Town Council
To hear what people in my community were saying and make use of the process as much as possible, to meet their needs and wishes.	Local Concern
The potential that the MTI offered for regenerating the town was too tempting to refuse.	No answer
Because [name of town] is my home town and I have lived and worked here for 30 years.	Regeneration
As Town Clerk it was my duty to get involved in something that could have brought a large amount of resource to the community.	Duty
Members of the community became involved with the MTI scheme because they wanted to bring attention to the problems/issues of rural communities such as [name of town] and attract some of the funding which traditionally all went to either the known areas of deprivation in West Cumbria or to large economic development programmes such as those in Carlisle and Barrow.	Local Concern
I was involved in Regeneration and MTI consultation in the NW as a local resident and in a professional capacity. Here, as a profession (it's my job) and as a local resident of [name removed].	Job / Local Concern
[Name removed] was identified by [name removed] Council as a rural priority for regeneration, a view reinforced following its role at epicentre of Foot & Mouth outbreak. Secondary motivation was availability of external resources.	Regeneration
No record of MTI involvement, but concern as AMT member.	Local Concern
An interest in how the town develops and a willingness (& ability) to commit more time as my professional responsibilities have reduced (as retirement beckons!). I have lived and worked in [name of town] for around 30 years.	Local Concern
Improve our town	Local Concern

As Director of ... asked to deliver the Healthcheck by the Countryside Agency. Presumably there was not a willing and suitable local body.	Job
As I moved towards retirement I wanted to find a community outlet for my expertise and energy.	Local Concern
I hoped that the scheme would bring direct benefits for the town and in doing so demonstrate the benefits of the Forum.	Local Concern
Prior to being appointed as town manager I had been a County Councillor for eight years, and helped to set up the [name of town] Partnership in 1995. The [partnership] was one of the first regeneration partnerships in [county].	Local Concern
Being able to do something; being part of a successful business play part within its community; seeing the business as an integral part of the community.	Local Concern
Chairman of Planning on the Town Council.	Duty
Commitment to regeneration of our community and to access funds.	Regeneration
I wanted to improve the life & well being of the community and our Town Council was a pro-active Town Council, thus as Town Clerk I was pleased to get involved.	Local Concern / Duty
MTI: concerned to protect historic built heritage of town: as a geographer also had strong views that action was needed on the transport & environmental issues facing the town and surrounding. BT: concerned that the local population/community was not being listened to by local government and agencies - plus government policies only paid lip-service to the issues facing communities in sparsely-populated rural areas.	Local Concern
Town Council wanted to promote town.	Council's Concern
We had already set up the [name of town] Area Partnership and, after Foot and Mouth badly affected the area the opportunity to bid for MCTi status was very appropriate and a real godsend.	Local Concern

Question 5 <b>What did you expect/hope the MTI (MCTi) and BT work would achieve for your partnership?</b>	Keywords
We wanted to identify services and keep them.	Keep Services
Improve townscape to engender resident pride and interest visitor investment. Implement effective traffic management. Improve employment prospects and moderate migration of young people.	Environmental / Economic
Not known	Not Known
The creation of a long term strategy and body to oversee its implementation and to secure the area for the future.	Sustainability
I could see that this was an opportunity to get money for desirable projects which would not otherwise be undertaken by normal LA processes. I also thought that it would overcome the long standing(but factually incorrect) complaint in [name of town] that the City Council never spent any money there etc etc! It is worth noting that whilst the Partnership consisted, on paper, of some 50 organisations , it soon became apparent that work was being left to the Executive of twelve and the whole programme was lucky that these individuals kept their involvement throughout the years and were prepared to undertake various training tasks etc.	Increased Investment
Give it impetus Raise its profile with partners – particularly County and District Councils.	Increased Influence
I hoped it would increase the possibility that tangible results would be achieved earlier than otherwise.	Get Things Done
Council looked for town revitalisation	Revitalize
The MTI proved to be the catalyst for bringing together the local authorities and private sector to help regenerate the town.	Regeneration through partnership
A vision of [name of town] for the future.	A Vision

Identify needs and produce an action plan to satisfy those.	Get Things Done
The aim of the partnership is to support the sustainability of [name of town] as a key service centre for residents, businesses and for the neighbouring parish communities. Regeneration	Maintain Service Function
My involvement came after publication of Plan – eg after consultation and Health Check. That process identified needs and issues and a range of ways to address them – providing me with a baseline from which to take projects and initiatives forward.	Get Things Done
Community led economic and social regeneration.	Community-led Regeneration
-----	No answer
It has been a way of levering resources & expertise into our community to enable development to take place more quickly than would have happened if we had solely relied on the Town or District Councils acting separately.	Faster Development
Improve the business and quality of life of our town	Economy / Quality of Life
No idea!	No Idea
It gave it legitimacy and expertise	Legitimacy / Expertise
That it would result in a set of tangible projects, resulting from public involvement, that would attract external funding.	Money to do things
Both programmes acted as a catalyst to achieve local, community led programmes of regeneration. The Beacon Town programme raised our profile onto the national stage and helped with funding applications.	Community-led Development / Influence
1) Enjoyment from working together; 2) Better dialogue and communication ( <i>in?</i> ) various parts of the community; 3) Get community projects/wants off the ground.	Community-led Development
Obtain money & expertise to enable us to improve the life of residents and do work to the environment generally. Grants.	Money to make things better
Kick start regeneration and improve partnership working.	Regeneration Through Partnership
We wanted to establish the community's needs and aspirations and to prepare plans and strategies based on these needs in to an Action Plan to address these needs. Our Community Area Plan runs from 2004-2014 and there was an update in 2006.	Community-led Development
MTI – an agreed action plan / long term strategy for the town and area, that would result in funding / investment in infrastructure and appropriate development. BT – an agreed strategy and action plan to support & develop the [name of town] area as a leading 'sustainable tourism' destination – with funding!	Regeneration/Sustainability
Better promotion of facilities	Promote Town
Funding to pay and employ a professional to get the area self-assessed so we might end up with an assessment of what the community felt we needed and an action plan to achieve it.	Community-led Development

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Question 6</b>  <b>To what extent have the MTI/MCTi and BT action plans been implemented (ie what's been done, and what hasn't, and why hasn't it)?</b></p>	<b>Summary</b>
<p>The [name of town] Market Town group has developed into [name of town] Together.</p>	Progress
<p>Amalgamation of [name of town] and [name of town] an error owing to dissimilar characteristics of settlements.  Funding support too limited.  Transfer of responsibility from the Countryside Agency to Regional Development Agency moved goal posts to hard line economic development.</p>	Frustration
<p>Don't know.</p>	Not known
<p>Of the Action Plan produced in 2002 approximately 50% of the plan has been implemented in some form. In some cases projects and aspiration of the area which have taken 20 years have been fulfilled. However many key or major improvements still need to be delivered to secure the area and its future.</p> <p>Projects delivered.</p> <p><b>[name of town] Connect.</b> – The project has established a sound operational base and partnership working between private sponsors and County Council.</p> <p><b>[name of town] Events Programme</b> – A very successful range of events have been held over the year with the vastly improved Christmas lights celebration being the pinnacle of the calendar.</p> <p><b>Small Project Fund</b> – The project has provided grants to 12 local groups. However the benefits of the additional support for groups from Community Futures is also a major investment into the social and community sector of the area. Many of the community groups have developed new skills in managing projects as a result of their involvement with the project.</p> <p><b>Business Support Fund</b> – The fund has proven exceptionally popular and demand outstripped supply with the project securing additional funds from CARP in September. The project has also delivered above its contracted outputs.</p> <p><b>[name removed] – Skills course</b> – The skills programme has been operating from the beginning of the academic year providing much needed intervention to the low skilled population of the area.</p> <p><b>Joint Sports Centre Feasibility Study</b> – Final Report received with relevant technical studies complete. Outline business plan and clear development plan for the project delivery.</p> <p><b>Community Resource Centre</b> – The major capital project within [name of organization removed] portfolio has completed all necessary design and planning requirements and has begun on site with the project to complete October 2008. This will see the delivery of a new community facility in [name of town], with joint working between Early Years, Youth and Community Service, the High School and [name removed] Ltd. This is the delivery of an aspiration going back at least 20 years.</p> <p><b>Fire station redevelopment</b> – [Name removed] Ltd working closely with [county] Fire Service have negotiated a draft operational position to develop the site. [Name removed] Ltd have secured the funds and appointed architects and economic consultants to bring the project to outline planning stage RIBA Stage C. This will complete in the summer 2008.</p> <p><b>Extra projects included during this year have included:</b></p> <p><b>Community Astro Turf</b> – Located and lead by [name of town] High School the new facility is complete and open for community and public use.</p> <p><b>Canal Tow Path Improvements</b> – Led by British Waterways. This project delivered improvements to the towpath surface from [name of town] north to the outskirts of the town.</p> <p><b>Canal Mooring improvements</b> – British Waterways have invested in the provision of a floating mooring facility for visiting boats adjacent to the towpath. The visitor mooring, approximately 40m long, provide space to moor 5 regular sized narrowboats.</p> <p><b>New Canal Boat Project</b> – As a result of the very successful 3 year project, funded externally to the MTI programme, the partnership of British</p>	Good Progress

<p>Waterways, ... County Council, [name removed], and the Operator decide to seek to secure the long-term future of the project by commissioning a new purpose build passenger canal boat. With support from [name removed] MTI the procurement process for their was undertaken in the winter of 2007/8 and the build for the project is underway with all [name removed] MTI funds invested in the early purchase of materials, design and the first phase of the build. The new boat will be in operation mid-summer 2008.</p> <p><b>Incomplete Projects</b></p> <p>Improved Car Parking Youth Café Reduce traffic in Centre of [name of town] Public Realm Improvements. Restoration of mainline platforms at [name of town] Affordable and diverse Housing New Outdoor Youth Facility New Outdoor Youth Facility Coastal Strip Evaluation Creation of Heritage Rail trips Additional Business Space</p>													
<p>The MTI approved Plan has, as amended, been implemented very close to its final budget. The overall programme was only approved some 6 months into the three year target . This delay plus some key projects being unavoidably delayed or withdrawn(by the proposed fund recipient!) resulted in considerable administrative work by the [name removed] executive so that the fund would not be lost. Substitute scheme had to be found etc etc .</p>	Good progress / Frustration												
<p>1 Many have been completed 2 Major project –building of Community Centre – is currently underway. 3 Redevelopment of town centre delayed for reasons beyond our control (land ownership change).</p>	Good progress												
<p>A very limited extent – certainly no major projects have been achieved. Some 'early wins' were achieved. Two big problems: 1) lack of admin support; 2) none of the Agencies had funds for the projects identified.</p>	Little progress												
<p>Several plans have been carried out (arts and heritage centres provided). Negotiations ongoing for various redevelopments.</p>	Progress												
<p>The action plans were fully implemented resulting in further [District Council] support (my post) and funding for a further 6 years at the end of the MTI programme. See attached evaluation report.</p>	Good progress (initially)												
<p>It is in its infancy – nothing has been implemented yet (as at 18<sup>th</sup> February, 2008).</p>	No progress (early days)												
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Action Plan Headlines</th> <th>Extent of implementation</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>A) Regeneration through tourism – celebrate the heritage of the [name removed] Valley</td> <td>1/2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>B) Rural isolation – provision of quality services</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>C) A Quality Town Council</td> <td>2/3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>D) Develop sport &amp; entertainment facilities.</td> <td>2/3</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>1/2</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Action Plan Headlines	Extent of implementation	A) Regeneration through tourism – celebrate the heritage of the [name removed] Valley	1/2	B) Rural isolation – provision of quality services		C) A Quality Town Council	2/3	D) Develop sport & entertainment facilities.	2/3		1/2	Good progress
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D) Develop sport & entertainment facilities.	2/3												
	1/2												
<p>The MTI action plan included social, economic and environmental objectives/projects. Given that the aim aim (<i>sic</i>) of the RDA is economic development all of the projects we have implemented had to have economic benefits – some environmental projects – eg the Foreshore project – also had economic benefits but, there were some social, community projects we had no funding to implement.</p>	Progress (economic projects)												
<p>Many small community projects have been assisted through delivery, and a wide range of strategic objectives are currently being developed and delivered – it's a slow process working in partnership.</p>	Some progress / Frustration												

The original MTI Healthcheck process resulted in an action plan that contained over 100 projects across economic, environmental and social themes. The vast majority of these projects have not been tackled due to the lack of available financial and staff resources. The projects that were tackled related to those in the economic theme. This was wholly due to the offer of financial assistance from the [RDA] to support a 3 year economic programme.	Relatively little progress
-----	No answer
The Healthcheck provided an agenda for the first three years of the LIP project & some significant aspects of the action plan were achieved. Of particular importance was the securing of funds to carry out a vision & Masterplan for the Town Centre that has itself set an agenda for the second three years that we are now almost 2 years into. The Masterplan is a 10-15 year visions and some major steps forward have taken place though key issues such as traffic, public realm etc. are hard work, longer term & will be ongoing.	Progress ("easier" projects)
Healthcheck completed Entrance to town improved by shrub/tree planting	Progress
[name removed], the local partnership, was not a strong partnership and, upon the completion of the Healthcheck and initial grant aid, seemed to remove itself from public view. Having said that it did complete a "Lookers Pie" project with a Local Heritage Initiative Fund (?) grant, investigate a "Reels on Wheels" project that came to "nowt", and did undertake a local radio project that is very "wobbly". [Name removed] itself appears to have run out of core funding and, therefore, interest appears to have waned. It is quite possible that this is a gross underestimate of its achievements but, as a local resident, I am unaware of progress. It was a remarkably silent project!	Doubtful progress
Initial plans are probably 50% completed – that not done is due to lack of volunteers mainly but also in the transport area aspiring to do things that were beyond our organisational capability.	Good progress ("easier" projects)
Of the projects identified, probably 50% have been delivered. Most of them would have been achieved without MTI.	Progress
The [name of town] Initiative strategic framework set out a 5-15 year strategy for the revitalisation of the town. It contained 44 projects. To date about half the projects have been successfully completed including the flagship £2.7m Station regeneration and the award winning [name of town] Heritage Partnership Scheme. One casualty project was the [name removed] Hydro Scheme. We intended to rebuild a 12 <sup>th</sup> century weir that had been washed away in 1968. However, after three years of development work, local landowners became very concerned last summer during the floods and the project had to be shelved.	Progress
Numerous schemes, small (village hall kitchens, roof repairs), large (youth venture) (festival)	Good progress
We started with 15 different projects suggested by the residents at the original consultations and most of these have now been completed or are ongoing. Some things have passed over to District Council funding, some have been dropped.	Good progress
About half the projects on the MTI Action Plan have come to fruition although on a central timescale that in the plan ( <i>sic</i> ).	Progress
We have made progress and we continue to make progress. One very significant requirement was the need to regenerate major areas of the Town Centre and an early move working with the County and District Councils and [RDA] was the commissioning of an Urban Design Framework jointly funded. A "Transforming [name of town]" Steering group was formed to oversee the UDF and then to encourage developers to come to [name of town] to regenerate the Town Centre. The District Council has been the leader but with strong support from the County and Town Councils & the Chamber of Commerce. This is beginning to produce results with major Planning Applications received and some now given permission. A major leisure/recreation development will start in Summer and a smaller retail one in April 2008.	Good progress

<p>MTI : apparently £350,000 was spent, but no-one can remember what it was spent on, except consultants' reports and feasibility studies that came to nought. Certainly there are no delivered projects that anyone can point to.</p> <p><b>BT</b> : Beacon Town Forum produced its Sustainable Tourism Strategy – then submitted the Lottery Bid to gain funds to implement it in full, since no support of any kind was forthcoming from [the] Borough Council or [the RDA].</p> <p>For the EU project, the matched funding was provided solely by volunteer time – again no support provided by [the] Borough Council or [the RDA]. The Forum became a Community Interest Company in Oct 2007 and has secured business start-up funding to re-develop visit[name of town].com to implement some of the needed actions – local food, arts &amp; crafts, environmental awareness, etc. Also trying to start a [name of town] Area Development Trust as an umbrella group/consortium of local organisations and groups working towards a Sustainable Community agenda, much wider than just sustainable tourism.</p> <p><b>Why no action / support from local Govt / agencies?</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. From 2002 onwards [name of town] town residents have been engaged in an acrimonious battle with [the] Borough Council and [the RDA], to prevent a 7-acre 'waterfront' development on [name of town] Upper Harbour.</li> <li>2. [name of town] is classed as an urban area (see CRC reports re plight of the 7 towns classed as "urban settlements in remote/sparsely-populated areas"). This effectively bars [name of town] town from rural funding programmes, yet it fails to secure 'urban' funding as [name of town] does not have the typical urban problems of crime, social cohesion, or large deprived areas.</li> <li>3. [name of town] town is wholly enclosed by the National Park, yet is not part of it. All the surrounding villages for which [name of town] is the service centre ARE within the National Park. Planning controls and economic development policies differ significantly. Achieving co-ordinated action for the town and hinterland between [the] Borough Council, the National Park Authority, and [the] County Council (plus all the other agencies) is 'challenging', to say the least.</li> </ol>	<p>MTI: No progress / Frustration</p> <p>BT: Some progress / Frustration</p>
<p>None – [officer's name] now left &amp; political power within Town Council agreed to leave this initiative.</p>	<p>No progress (left MTI)</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Extra housing built and occupied – 16 bungalows for local elderly (&amp;) 20 rented and shared equity homes built and occupied.</li> <li>2) New day centre for the frail and elderly mentally impaired</li> <li>3) Dial-a-ride door to door car service – 4 years old</li> <li>4) Several (most) of the village halls have been refurbished.</li> <li>5) The town has its own radio station with a 5 year licence.</li> <li>6) Website for the area well-established and used.</li> </ol>	<p>Very good progress</p>

<p><b>Question 7</b></p> <p><b>Has the work, when considered overall, met – or is it meeting – your expectations in terms of, eg,</b></p> <p><b>a) physical improvements</b></p> <p><b>b) other "softer" outcomes such as increased community involvement?</b></p>	<p><b>Summary</b></p>
<p>a) We wanted a community teaching kitchen and a community farm</p> <p>b) There is greater coordination between groups and the local authorities.</p>	<p>Yes</p>

a) Worthwhile but only limited physical improvements achieved to date.	Useful, limited, relationship problems
b) Excessive influence of (name removed] Ltd obstructed community involvement and skewed direction of partnership.	
Don't know.	Not known
a) Some met. Still outstanding major improvements to Town centre. However the key partner (HGV operator) in the process of moving.	
b) A major outcome is the creation of a new social enterprise company which has been successfully delivering projects for the past 2 year and will continue to develop community participation in the local area.	Yes
a) physical improvements..yes ..Canal Tow Path extension/upgrading, picnic site, moorings, new boat service ..community Astroturf at High School ..new flexible Office services provision(combined with Children's/Youth Centre ..improvements to local community halls ..works to aid some 14 businesses to expand their workforce	
b) other "softer" outcomes such as increased community involvement? ..local community has seen their perceived needs listened too ( <i>sic</i> ) and some local action happening on the ground ..the local sports clubs have been brought together for the first time to take part in a joint exercise to establish a new joint facility....in particular this will be useful for the youngster of the area ..cultural arts programme has proved to the local community that they are not forgotten and can take part etc.	Yes
c) Limited for reasons above (see 6.3)	
d) More than met. Profile of town is much higher. Residents more involved through working on various projects.	Yes
a) Has fallen well short	
b) Initially, yes. However, because of the subsequent failures of the scheme to deliver, the longer term effect has been the opposite. It 'turned off' people who had not previously been involved.	No, negative effect
a) To limited extent	Limited extent
b) Not too much. Several groups in town still, 'do their own thing'.	
a) physical improvements – the basis of the regeneration programme was an environmental programme to improve the riverside and to a lesser extent the town centre. The riverside programme won two national awards for its excellence (RDA/Market Towns 2004 and BURA). The physical improvements to the riverside environment is astonishing ( <i>sic</i> ) and has attracted new business, jobs and homes to the town. Fortunately [name of town] was a Tier 1 MTI town and we were given some leeway in respect of the outcomes (ie not all about jobs, businesses, training).	Yes, but shortage of volunteers & fatigue
b) Community involvement did feature in the programme but in the main this was induced by the MTP managing projects that involved the community. Finding community champions that are willing and capable to run projects is difficult. That said we ran a 3-year Community Chest programme that was very successful, particularly with Village hall/Sports facilities capital improvements. 2 projects involved local High Schools but as soon as their interests were met they did not support the MTP further.	
a) N/A	
b) N/A in part but yes greater community involvement in the early stages of MTI check.	Some
a) Partly b) Partly	Some
a) Yes, many of the projects have had physical improvements – see newsletter	
b) There has been community consultation and involvement throughout and the [name removed] has an open office policy/approach and is accommodated along with other community organisations in a public access office. However, with a whole scheme of projects to deliver and one full-time staff member, the focus has had to be on project delivery.	Yes, but could have done more

a) Yes – the THI (?) of town centre buildings and traffic management is working well; other physical differ ( <i>sic</i> ) – new footpath constructed with County but play areas hindered by Districts – proposed New Link Rd slowed by RDA.	Yes
b) Yes – the original consultation engaged wide sections of communities – who were keen to be further involved with Task Groups as they were established, particularly with emotive subjects such as Play & Young People & Sport.	
a) Plans were overly ambitious in original Action Plan for a town centre streetscape improvement scheme. However, the final outcome/scheme was disappointing in terms of scale of impact, even from perspective of reduced expectations.	
b) MTI provided small amount of support in terms of grants to community organisations but this was seen as "another" grant to go for and not necessarily having any ownership from locals. Concentration on business development of programme restricted opportunities for involvement.	No
-----	No answer
When reliant for success on public sector funding one's expectations do tend to diminish over time! Perhaps a better concept is 'realistic expectations'.	
a) Yes, our expectations are being met. We have a major public realm project that is being worked on & if, as we hope, funding is confirmed during the next three months then we will be able to deliver as much as anyone could reasonably expect over the current three years of the project. Certainly positive about physical improvements.	Yes, given realistic expectations
b) The project has generated some significant community involvement that would not have otherwise taken place. For most people, though, their involvement is confined to one regular meetings every 5-6 weeks. I anticipate that if the project goes into another 3 year cycle next year then the focus will be more 'community activity' based rather than 'economic development project' based.	
a) Yes b) No	Physical yes, "softer" no
Not at all. It is as if the project never took place.	No
a) 50% b) 90%	Yes
Not answered.	No answer
7a) physical improvements Yes, the town is looking less tired and hang dog. The Heritage Partnership Scheme has grant aided 34 property improvements to buildings in the conservation area.	Yes
7b) other "softer" outcomes such as increased community involvement? Yes, many of the projects, particularly the Station have galvanised the local community.	
a) yes, market place improvements, signage b) More/better dialogue with Council, Council members, various organisations.	Yes
a) Resurfacing of several alleyways in the market place area. Interpretation boards showing the history of the town. Blue plaques for buildings of historic importance. Tourism leaflets. b) Funding for a large marquee for the Rotary Club's annual Festival – for the use of other organisations as well. A Youth Cafe for the benefit of young people – very successful. New buildings and internal improvements at the (volunteer run) cinema.	Yes

a)	Yes	Physical yes, "softer" no
b)	No	
a)	There have been housing developments in the Town Centre with more underway and these have been of a high quality. The major leisure & retail based developments are due to commence in 2008 with more retail/residential developments in the pipeline. There has been a lack of progress with the site which had been expected to be the first retail/leisure based development as the developer has not had the finance.	
b)	Community involvement and community development has been taking place. The Town Council has played a strong role in this & our group The [name of town] Community Area Future Partnership is also playing its part. Both District & County Councils have been supportive. We now have more Neighbourhood Groups mainly Tenants' & Residents' Associations & a [name of town] Neighbourhoods Partnership meeting every 2 months. The Police through their Neighbourhood Policing Teams are playing an important part in this and by working together we are making progress. It is more difficult in some rural areas.	Yes
a)	N/A	
b)	N/A	N/A
a)	No	
b)	Yes indirectly – in that the community appears to "given up" expecting any outside help to solve the issues it faces; there is a very strong community spirit and an attitude of helping itself because no-one else will. The local town/parish councils are seeing a resurgence of interest and recruits – partly as a result of deep scepticism about the applicability of initiatives such as Local Strategic Partnerships and Local Area Agreements to remote rural areas - and partly through demographic change, with more educated, professional, 'in-comers' retiring to the area, with the confidence and time to challenge policies and strategies imposed 'from above'.	No
a)	16 bungalows for the elderly opened Sept. 2006; 20 social houses for rent and shared equity opened March 2008	
b)	Police Community Support Officer established in the area; Credit Union operating in the area; Community Office set up by the county – now 6 meetings a week in old bank with [community association] and District and Parish Councils; annual 10 Parishes Arts Festival; Directory of Sports Clubs; the communities expect to be consulted – MCTi created the concept of the 10 Parishes.	Yes

<b>Question 8</b> <b>What, in your view, in order of importance, are the three most important elements of the work that have been done?</b>		<b>Emphasis of Work Done</b>
1)	Strengthened coordination with District Council	
2)	Create a community teaching kitchen	Social / Services
3)	... greater access to public transport especially busses	
4)	There is greater interaction with the police	
1)	Limited townscape improvements designed to link into further phase.	
2)	Establishment of an action plan via community involvement.	Environmental / Social
3)	Commissioning of a Traffic Management Plan leading to a legal overhaul of the town's traffic regulations.	
-----		Not answered
1)	Building of New community Resource Centre	
2)	Successful operation and now building of a new Canal Boat for visitors	Physical / Social
3)	Creation of [name removed] Ltd – Social Enterprise company.	
1)	creating some 30 new real jobs by encouraging small business expansion in a controlled and systematic way.	
2)	enhancing the underused Canal in terms of commercial usage and local amenity for all.	Economic / Social
3)	inspiring the creation of CARP Ltd, the public social company which is continuing the work started by the MII initiative.	

1) Increased community awareness in Town Council and made Town Council more responsive to local residents. 2) Made partners (particularly County and District Councils) take Town Council more seriously. CTC now cited as 'good practice' in many areas. 3) Produces a number of worthwhile projects although not all of these were originally identified as high priorities.	Community / Project Work
1) "early wins" included help for rural bus service. 2) 3) 4)	Services
1) Focussed ideas on redevelopment needs 2) Provided cultural assets 3) Given groups in need another group (MTI) from which to seek support.	Economic / Cultural / Social
1) Riverside and Town Centre Regeneration 2) Creation/protection of riverside businesses and jobs 3) The formation of a Market Town Partnership	Economic / Partnership Working
1) Producing a Market Towns Healthcheck document 2) Working towards a Town Design Statement 3) Community engagement	Environment / Community
1) Provision of Information Service to visitors/residents AND new improved leisure facilities – eg gym 2) Provision of physical signs/street furniture – eg 'Brown Signs', fingerposts, maps AND development of [name of town] Museum 3) Development of a web site AND development of Borderhoppa community transport	Services / Environment
1) Facilitation of projects that had been 'discussed' as needed for a considerable amount of time but needed an organisation such as [name removed] to drive them forward, eg, the Foreshore Project, the Learn to Earn Centre. 2) Proving the need in [name of town]. Representing the issues and needs of [name of town] and breaking through the misconception of [name of town] as a rural idyll. 3) In addition to the £1 million of [RDA] funds the projects have drawn in an additional £2.8 million of match funding – resulting in an investment of £3.8 million into the regeneration of [name of town] in the past 3 years.	Economic
1) Establishing a Community Learning Partnership 2) Influencing County & RDA, with focus on improving economic wellbeing & opportunities 3) Employing a team of people to deliver the CSAP (?).	Community
1) Penetration of small business expansion grant and support programmes into micro businesses that have not engaged with public sector before. 2) Establishment of 'trust' amongst local businesses of support available locally through MTI office. 3) Encouragement of local tourism sector to work together and in conjunction with public sector.	Economic
-----	Not answered
Not sure what you mean by 'the work'. 1) Delivering our Masterplan priorities 2) Involving a wider cross-section of the community in local decision making. 3) Building new working relationships with the Town Council	Community Involvement
1) Survey of our residents 2) Physical improvements to town 3) Outside funding	Community-led Development / Money
<b>Incorrect placing – moved to Q9.</b> Things that <b>SHOULD</b> have been done: 1) A dynamic partnership 2) Great public participation 3) Good communication	Not known

1) Community feeling that [name of town] is a good place to live 2) Increasing profile of [name of town] as a place to visit 3) Solving some of the "people problems" of [name of town]	Social / Economic
Not answered	Not answered
1) Physical improvements can be easily seen and have the biggest psychological impact in terms of improving the 'feel good factor'. 2) Partnership working, to try and bring all the conflicting interests together to reach a consensus which is in the best interests of the town. 3) Improving public awareness of the importance of the historic assets we possess and that these should be preserved and enhanced for future generations.	Social / Cultural
1) Communication 2) Given community a place to bring ideas/suggestions/proposals and for help to enable (?) 3) Contribution to District Community Plan. 4) The [name of town] Clock Youth Cafe – a club where young people can go relaxation ( <i>sic</i> ) & classes & training. Advice on job seeking etc. 5) Opening of a rural field for sport, building for Scouts, planting trees etc. in a village 5 miles out of [name of town]. 6) Improvements to the alleyways etc.	Community development
1) Environmental Improvements, eg, Market Place. 2) Infrastructure such as pedestrian bridge. 3) -	Social / Environmental
1) The work on the regeneration of [name of town] Town Centre, in particular the success, largely thanks to the District Council, in getting RDA on board to finance the and commission the Urban Design Framework, the formation of the "Transforming [name of town]" with the County, District & Town Councils, & the business community as members. 2) Working closely with the County Council under the Local Transport plan to improve pavements and roadways in Town Centre & to develop more cycleways giving better access to pedestrians & cyclists to the Town Centre. 3) The involvement of our schools and college in the development of our various plans. Also the involvement of the Police and Local Authorities in young people's issues trying to reduce Anti-Social Behaviour by providing more for young people to do.	Regeneration / Social (youth)
No answer given	Not answered
1) MTI Healthcheck provided a useful information base 2) MTI / BTI brought together local residents and organisations who realised they had very similar ambitions and aspirations for the town and area – but these differed significantly from those being planned by the administering local authorities & agencies. 3) The sheer frustration at the total lack of implementation - experienced by the local residents who participated in the MTI /BTI - did eventually result in a strong Beacon Town Forum, which continues to grow and develop on a wholly voluntary basis.	Community Involvement
1) Housing – we have met some needs by working with the Community and a local housing association. 2) Childcare – We now have a centre for Childcare and Family Support. No longer must we look to our near towns (11 miles away). 3) Play and recreation facilities across the area have had a boost – financial, and local people volunteering.	Social

Question 9 <b>What, in your view, in order of importance, are the three most important elements of the work that should have been done?</b>	Keywords
1) Public transport remains a problem on the evenings 2) Jobs creation is continuing 3) Sports provision is not delivered	Transport / Jobs / Social

1) Comprehensive townscape and green area facelift inclusive of street cleansing. 2) Implementation of a comprehensive traffic management strategy. 3) Town Centre Management plan to develop high quality retail distinctiveness. 4) Development of a balanced economic development strategy.	Environment / Economic
1) Additional Business Space 2) Public Realm Improvements. 3) Improved Car Parking	Economic / Environment
1) Due to the programme's short three year life it fails therefore to deal with schemes which arise from the community when they begin to be aware of what it is all about 2) More professional staff resource should have been made available to support the emerging momentum created by the MTI programme and allowed to continue afterwards 3) -	More time / More people
As for Question 8 above.	Community / Project Work
1) Paid admin support should have been continued. 2) Lead Agencies should have made funds available for at least one major scheme to be implemented. 3) -	More people / More money
1) Actual redevelopment of older parts of town 2) Cohesions ( <i>sic</i> ) among town groups 3) Cohesion/cooperation with adjacent town in same MTI. In practice, the two towns are still totally separate.	Redevelopment / Community development
As per question 8 above	Economic / Partnership Working
None	None
As for Question 8 above.	Services / Environment
1) As above (ie Q8) – for a voluntary partnership in my view the Partnership has achieved an enormous amount. 2) Had it been possible (ie funding and staffing permitting) it would have been good to be able to implement more of the social and community projects and also give more focus to the rural neighbourhoods. 3) More funding should have been made available – there was no NWDA funds until 2005 (late)	Economic
Specific projects that should have been delivered but struggled to get funding in place: 1) Renovation of Town Hall to create a Community Centre 2) Construction of the [name removed] Valley Link Road (County Council dropped it from CTP) 3) Youth issues – Extreme Sports Youth failed to secure £s.	Money for projects
1) Comprehensive package of activity to tackle low skills and worklessness. 2) Larger impact of physical townscape scheme. 3) Use process to galvanise local priorities and to enhance (small 'p') political voice of town	Economic / Physical / Environment / Local influence
For the period that we have been working through then the above (ie Q8) elements are also what we should have been doing. Priorities may well change for the future & depends heavily on future potential funding sources.	Community Involvement
1) More links with Town Council instead of through Community partnership 2) More involvement in the town 3) Visit us!	Council Influence / More people involved
Answer given: "As I local resident I simply do not know!" Following brought forward from Q8: Things that SHOULD have been done: 1) A dynamic partnership; 2) Great public participation; 3) Good communication	Working together

1) We have failed to create a Village Design Statement 2) Lack of achievement on Transport 3) Slow development of web site due to naivety about what involved.	Transport
Provided the opportunity to attract external funding into the town – after all this is what we were told was one of the objectives of MTI.	Money for projects
1) To address the brain drain of young talented people, who leave to make their fortunes elsewhere. This is a problem that is found in most rural areas and is not unique to [name of town], but the shortage of well paid, challenging jobs in rural areas will mean that young people will continue to be drawn to the cities to work. 2) Provision of affordable housing to encourage young people to stay in the area. 3) As a partnership we have not engaged well with young people.	Social (youth) / Economic (youth)
Continue to engage and be active; attract others/wide area; attract business NB Respondent did not give these in order of importance – take them to be of equal importance	Involve people / Economic (attract business)
No answers given	No answer
1) The Regeneration Partnership has not done anything to involve the Council in their work. It has been aimed mainly at sustaining itself and has not helped as many organisations to progress their projects as it should – only the chosen few. 2) - 3) -	Closer working / Involve Town Council
4) Slow to be developed have been environmental issues but much of the difficult ( <i>sic</i> ) has been poor levels of government funding for rural areas to enable better recycling to take place. 5) Health and Social care issues also suffer from underfunding & with our local Primary Care Trust being one with substantial deficits has meant significant changes to Health care provision. Previous attempts at integrating Health & Social Care teams founded on failure to agree cost allocations and the rebuilding of relationships has taken time. We are involved in meaningful consultation but new facilities are taking time. 6) Affordable housing issues both in the Town and Villages are hard to address, but progress is beginning to be made at last.	Economic / Social
1) Improve the local transport network – to provide access to work & services for local residents & to encourage visitor access without car use. 2) Produce a Town Plan, to protect and enhance the historic setting, buildings and ambience of the town – particularly in respect of traffic management & parking. 3) Provide LOCAL vocational training a) in catering, hospitality, customer service, heritage interpretation and other tourism-related skills, to improve the quality of the visitor experience b) for agricultural/fisheries workers to convert their skills and experience to environmental tourism / protection workers eg countryside rangers, sail-training, bird watching, sea-angling, etc.	Transport / Skills / Jobs
No answer given	Not answered
1) Youth work – difficult to find a coordinator with so many small centres in the area. 2) Develop more workspaces for local businesses to develop – held up by Planners, and now finance. 3) Coordination of tourism attractions and accommodation – not done locally enough.	Youth / Economy

Question 10 10 ) Is the partnership still active? If so: 10a) is the action plan being implemented? 10b) has the Healthcheck been revisited?	Work Continues to Some Extent?
No a) The local issues are being delivered and identified by "[name of town] Together" b) Yes	Yes

a) The MTI has been superseded by the [name of town] Vision Initiative.	Yes
b) Under the auspices of the Regional Development Agency [consultants - names removed] have produced vision and retailing action plans.	
Don't know.	Don't know
a) Yes b) Yes, to an extent	Yes
10a) The implementation has been extended by Region because of unavoidable delays...so the Executive has been put on standby in case it is needed during the 6 months extension. I as Chairman am performing some formal opening visits etc. 10b) Not by the CARP Executive	On Stand-by
a) Yes, a few outstanding (?) projects underway. b) No – but we hope to do so once current major project (community centre) is complete.	Yes
No. a) Questionable, tho' I suggest [that] statutory agencies would say they take it into account. b) No	Questionable
Yes. a) Yes b) No	Yes
a) The MTP acts jointly as a Local Strategic Partnership (metamorphosed) and has annual action plans to deliver that follow on from the MTO Action Plan. b) Yes, but not successfully. It requires expert knowledge, ability and dedicated time to update this. However, there have been various surveys carried out that would have contributed to a new Healthcheck, which have been used as guidance for further Action Plan projects.	Yes
a) Yes, gradually b) No, still very new	Yes
Yes, a) Yes b) Yes	Yes
Yes, a) Some projects within the action plan have been implemented as part of the NWDA scheme – The Partnership is now in the process of developing new projects for Stage 2 b) One of the projects of the [Regional Development Agency] scheme was to commission the [name of town] Town master plan – available on the [partnership] web page on <a href="http://www.[name of town].org">www.[name of town].org</a>	Yes
Yes: a) Yes – strategic objectives now so many projects delivered. b) Yes – The Forum has held two Setting Priorities workshops since publication, and staff update 'Needs' as new [Indicators of Multiple Deprivation] data becomes available.	Yes
a) Partnership is still in existence but activity is limited pending outcome of major bid to attract additional staff resources. b) In a way, yes, as they have decided to concentrate on economic regeneration and not try and tackle the very wide range of projects in original Action Plan/Healthcheck.	Yes
-	Don't know
a) The Vision and Masterplan for the Town Centre is being actively progressed b) It has been built on rather than revisited.	Yes
Not really, no. a) – b) We have not redone it, but we still refer to it and use it.	Unlikely

This initiative has a lot to learn from others about success but could provide much in the way of "how not to do it"!	No
a) Yes b) Yes	Yes
a) No (but not as a result of MTI situation) b) It was revisited a number of times in light of the fact that it was clear no external funding was to be provided.	No
10a) Yes 10b) No not as an exercise	Yes
Yes a) Under review with new Chair b) No	On stand-by
a. Yes b. Yes	Yes
No answer given.	Don't know
Very, There is a Steering group, 7 theme groups, a Parishes Liaison Group & a [name of town] Neighbourhoods Group. a) There are action plans for each group and many of the actions involve working with the County, District & Town Councils to influence them in the provision of facilities and services for our residents. The Chamber of Commerce, Schools & College, Police & the Primary Care Trust are all involved. b) We have carried out and published a Snapshot on our detailed Action Plan (Community Area Plan). Each year we publish a brief update but we have not carried out a full Health Check on the scale of the 2005 Local Community Snapshot.	Yes
MTI - no; BT - yes. a) BT - yes, but by local volunteer effort only, with no major funding. b) Updated in 2004 by an external consultant	Yes
No a) No answer given b) No	Unlikely
Yes a) For 5 years – now being reviewed and will be updated (employing a professional to review the Action Plan). b) No	Yes

**Question 12**  
**Anything else you'd like to add?**  
**(main points are highlighted)**

[Name removed] is addressing social inequality and there are exciting plans to develop the village into a town.
The current Vision Initiative has an Officer Working Group inclusive of the Town Clerk. Its public face is represented by the a Steering Group established by the Regional Development Agency and District Council. It is not representative of the town. Current action plans are valid but dependent on RDA project approval linked to hard-line economic development criteria.
Given my 30yrs involvement (to Director level plus 12yr Parish Councillor etc) in LAs I can say that if the MTI system was extended and thus involve the local communities in a way which currently it does not then the community at large would benefit.
It has been a very worthwhile exercise which has given focus to our activities and has produced positive results. But we were lucky enough to secure the services of an excellent Project manager!
The process was never certain to produce objectives shared by a majority but could have been helpful if outcomes had been better. Instead, it has raised expectations and increased cynicism due to failure to deliver. A substantial amount of money was spent on 'the process', ticking the boxes, paying consultants etc., with very little benefits. An awful waste!
The MTI was well conceived and should be followed up with a phase 2 programme to enable further progress to be made with successful projects.

No, thank you.
Some questions are too difficult to answer – eg Q6 and Q11b add 11c (nothing available easily to measure poverty with)
The Partnership has been lucky to source core funding to continue (only in recent weeks). Once the RDA programme (which ended on 31 March) is fully closed the partnership will focus on developing new projects and funding bids – based mainly but not solely on implementing the masterplan and original action plan.
Yes – in [name of town] we have been lucky to secure £ to employ a team – a regen coordinator & Social Exclusion Officer. However, this has been a difficult questionnaire as it doesn't cover the full breadth of work we do – you may wish to talk to me or my colleague
As referred to above the initial process (ie Healthcheck and Action Plan) was flawed in my view and encouraged a 'wish list' to be developed. There should have been a greater focus on key issues and far, far more realism in what could be achieved whilst still being ambitious. Local (community based) delivery took a high proportion of resources and alternative models should have been considered. There was not enough emphasis (partly due to knowledge of issues) on training/worklessness issues or commitment to tackle them.
The MTI has proved really beneficial to a community such as [name of town].
I am a Town Councillor and I was Mayor 2005-2007.
This was a "project too far" for [name of town] or at least for those who were on the partnership. The project could have had a greater impact if more careful thought had been given to the individuals on the partnership. From memory the partnership was put together by the then Town Mayor and reflected the circles in which she moved. There was insufficient lateral thinking.
The relationship with the Parish Council is an ongoing issue: their "democratic" mandate versus our "consultative" mandate
TRI is active, with committed members; enjoys good and increasingly better relationship with wider aspect of community life within the District. Its role is to provide a point of call for the community to bring their wants/desires/issues for the improvement of [name of town] and its District and take these forward towards reality.
Please let me know if you need examples of strategy documents, action plans etc. though these are mainly BTI consultants' reports and the later Beacon Town Forum work, rather than MTI.
Our review of the MCTi Action Plan is underway. We are pleased at how much has been done and expect to prioritize actions for the future over the next 2-3 months.

## **Appendix 5**

### **Anonymized Answers to Poverty Questions Obtained From Face to Face Interviews**

<b>Q11a</b> <b>Do you think that the (market towns) work should have been designed to reduce poverty?</b>	
Key: PO, Project Officer; V, Volunteer; CV, Councillor & Volunteer; O, Officer; C, Councillor	
PO	It hasn't really reduced poverty in [name removed] – can't really answer the question – it's one for the [name removed] Executive.
V	Depends what is meant by poverty. [I]t (MTI) has definitely helped, because, ... you wouldn't be regenerating an area unless it was poor, or feeling poor. In Faringdon rents are low (low demand?), disposable income is low (for Oxon – ie relative), job situation "not good", also a "brain drain". Shouldn't use the word, "poverty" – it's negative, but regeneration is positive, suggests "moving forward". MTI has reduced poverty – eg Faringdon may still have a lot of single Mums, but as a result of the work that fact has been recognized, and is being addressed. Whether that will change the situation is another matter, but there is now a <u>single mothers' support group</u> – the Mums are working together.
PO	It should have – would fit in with MTI work .
C,V	Yes
O	By implication it was [designed to reduce poverty], you know, catch-phrases like quality of life actually cover everything ... and economic vitality would suggest an inclusive kind of agenda whereby problems of poverty, be it lack of employment etc., are addressed, though it wasn't specifically brought out at the time I don't think in any particular way, that, err, poverty was something that should be identified and addressed. Poverty addressed by implication – not explicit. There was work through the Indicators of Deprivation trying to identify poverty in the small pockets were it did occur – does occur, and that provided something of a focus on rural areas, but I think even that's probably been moved away from slightly, and, erm, there's recognition that there are pockets of deprivation, people in a less than desirable situation, but I'm not sure that the policy approach has really addressed them.
O	Not particularly. Should be addressing the things identified in the Rural White Paper – not necessarily in the same order – as part of that it should be looking at tackling inequality and poverty – inequality and poverty shouldn't be the main focus of it.
C	Should the work have been designed to reduce poverty? "I'm not convinced about that. Clearly it should be one of our principal objectives, possibly one we're not always up front about." ... BLAP do see the Skill Centre as a key element of anti-poverty work – wages are low, so need to try to narrow the gap with, say housing affordability.
V	It was about rural regeneration wasn't it? Only the government could in some ways, actually, fulfil the expectation on areas like this that the Minimum Wage should be the Minimum Wage. ... You've got to have the work, and you've got to have the salary that goes with that quality of work. ... Difficult to say, I'm not one of the instigators, and who can read the mind of the government ... when they put it forward. I think it was the ultimate - one of the guiding factors behind it. ... if you could have financed your projects then you would have helped to regenerate the fabric of the area – umm – but, when you have an overseeing group like the RDA who ultimately makes the decisions on what you're putting through on what you want, and their idea of the fabric of the area might be different from your own, then, no, I don't think it did address those issues.

V	Mmmm, well, it's a complex question, and in relation to Bridport the issue here is that poverty is caused by the combination of low wage jobs and very expensive housing, and so what should have happened really over the last ten years is a concerted effort to focus on the economy of Bridport and really try to, you know, generate jobs, more jobs that are going to pay more, basically, and address that issue of affordability, but the reality of what's happened is that the main development in the last ten years is more and more housing that's sucked in, you know, early retired or retired people. It's made housing much more unaffordable and it's meant that the jobs that are there are, you know, the hospitality and tourism, caring, retail, and, as a result, they are all minimum wage jobs, so we've created this economy in Bridport which is basically a service economy, you know, where the poor service the rich, and that seems to be becoming quite a classic market towns process – we're not alone in that. <u>By GM: So was it designed to address poverty?</u> ... Yes, people could say that's what it was designed to be – there was a Housing Needs Survey funded, I'm sure, through the MTI, the Healthcheck looked at those sorts of issues, there were training needs surveys done. <u>By GM: So, you think it did it indirectly?</u> It did it, but it didn't come up with any solutions, and so we basically it's been like a lost ten years where nothing has happened.
O	Yes, that's exactly what we're doing through BLAST
V	I think it should have been involved in trying to reduce poverty, yes, and also trying to improve the facilities for people in rural areas, but it's not happened.
O	No, not solely
O	I think that question's a bit more difficult to answer really, because this is about economic vitality, and that should have an impact on poverty, but it's not about poverty per se. This comment [the quote from the Rural White Paper] is about producing an economic vibrant society, but that doesn't actually address poverty, does it, and I don't think the Coastal and Market Towns Initiative (sic) is really going to reduce poverty in rural areas, it's so dispersed. <u>By GM: So you don't think that it should have been designed to reduce poverty?</u> No. I think it should have an impact, but I don't think it should be designed to reduce poverty.
O	Emmm (long pause) it, yeah, it should have raised the wealth of the area, it should have raised people's abilities to secure and retain jobs, improving the general economy, therefore lifting people away from poverty. <u>By GM, So it should have been designed to reduce poverty?</u> Yeah.

<b>Q11b</b> <b>Has the work reduced, or is it reducing, poverty, either directly or indirectly?</b>	
Key: PO, Project Officer; V, Volunteer; CV, Councillor & Volunteer; O, Officer; C, Councillor	
PO	It hasn't really reduced poverty – can't really answer the question – it's one for the Executive.
V	Depends what is meant by poverty. [I]t (MTI) has definitely helped, because, ... you wouldn't be regenerating an area unless it was poor, or feeling poor. In Faringdon rents are low (low demand?), disposable income is low (for Oxon – ie relative), job situation "not good", also a "brain drain". Shouldn't use the word, "poverty" – it's negative, but regeneration is positive, suggests "moving forward". MTI has reduced poverty – eg Faringdon may still have a lot of single Mums, but as a result of the work that fact has been recognized, and is being addressed. Whether that will change the situation is another matter, but there is now a single mothers' support group – the Mums are working together.
PO	I don't think so, but indirectly training (some work is about identifying land for employment opportunities and skills), but not as much as it should have done.
C,V	No need to use the word, poverty. The work is in the process of addressing poverty. The Healthcheck revealed that disposable income in Faringdon is 72% of the Oxfordshire average (ie it's not enough if you live in Oxfordshire). The Healthcheck brought this figure – a "real driver" – to the forefront. So, relative poverty is seen as a problem in Faringdon
O	Perhaps Dorset isn't the best example, but it certainly did [address poverty indirectly] for a while – there was, following the Rural White Paper, a real focus on the towns, but I can't help thinking it's been slightly lost with the regional agenda, and I think the regional agenda is, when all is said and done, the key player at the moment. <u>NB Long pause when prompted to say whether poverty had been reduced, directly or indirectly</u> I think you could find instances of where it probably has done [ie reduce poverty] on a small scale – places like Bridport where there was a recognition of a need for training and "up-skilling" to make people employable (sectoral approach – one or two projects which did focus on the worklessness issues in towns) – certainly ... Portland (ie where there have been crises like the Naval Base closure and Sturminster Newton market closure) – ok, it's an employment approach to the poverty issue, of making sure that there's someone within the family who have the opportunity to gain employment, which is seen as if you've got the skills, you get the wage, that helps to address issues related with poverty. I suppose the other aspect is that there's been quite a bit of attention in terms of accessibility – trying to ensure that people aren't too disadvantaged by their location, either to get access to the towns, or to school facilities or whatever, and again there have been quite a few initiatives .. to address [poverty] issues.
O	Some of the work is working with disadvantaged people and so is providing better facilities, better access to services – can see that directly in terms of playgroups, access to facilities and a whole lot of other things (eg community learning centre – providing skills, entrepreneur courses – have encouraged people from social housing estates). It would be terribly, terribly difficult to measure whether we're reducing poverty in economic terms or not. The only way we can do that is via Index of Multiple Deprivation ... every few years ... to see how that's changed things, but still difficult to see if that's directly linked to the work of the partnerships. General point about communities have about moving forward – people to do want to come here and start businesses – difficult to quantify but does come out of the Market & Coastal Towns process and will have an impact on poverty. Businesses in [town name] are keen to stay – town was going down, but is now turning round and staying where it is or going up – there are people in [town name] who are keen to set up businesses. There is a Chamber of Commerce – a struggle to get it started but it is reasonably active – it's got some good ideas.
C,V	Has the work reduced, or is it reducing, poverty? So much to do with poverty is associated with forces beyond the control of a local committee. Maybe we can address some of the impacts of poverty.

V	It's a matter of degree, isn't it, umm, you can say it helped the kids who had the scooters to get to work, that's a tiny minority. I'm personally, I know you have to chip away at things ... but I don't see, the tourism aspect, as I've said, brings the financial viability of the area alive, markets were already functioning, umm, no, I don't personally think it changed – people might disagree with me – but I don't personally see that it generated any more specific income to breathe more life into the area apart from the indirect reaction of maybe making a lot more local people think slightly more positively.
V	No, in a way, you know, when we did the work, where we did Planning for Real, the big frustration was always that, how do you get the economics stressed, because people are always going to look at the more superficial issues like green spaces, or dog mess, or ... Christmas lights, or bus journeys which, you know, fine, up to a point, but the critical issue is the economy, you know, the structure of the economy, you know, in relation to ... housing and those sort of things.
O	I don't think so.
V	I don't think so, no.
O	Not as far as I know.
O	It's improved the economy, but I don't think it's improved poverty.
O	Without wanting to sound cruel I think they achieved so little that it can't be claimed to have achieved anything particularly from the Employment Group, which was the one I was closely involved in.

## **Appendix 6**

### **Anonymized Answers to Poverty Questions Obtained From Postal Questionnaires**

**Q11a**  
**Do you think that the (market towns) work  
should have been designed to reduce poverty?**

Key: V, volunteer; O, officer; C, Councillor; PO, Project Officer; X, No Reply

X	
PO	Yes
X	
O	[No answer given]
C	Action plans should be aligned to a meaningful definition of rural poverty.
X	
X	
O	I feel that the approach taken indirectly addressed poverty.
V	I would rephrase this by using the word "deprivation". This covers a more fundamental aspect of community life in rural areas. Poverty usually implies lack of money which does not necessarily mean lack of access to facilities, whereas deprivation does.
O	-
X	
C	Yes
O	No
O	Not per se. The creation of or safeguarding of jobs and businesses provides the basis for making wealth and reducing poverty. The [name removed] Regeneration Environmental programme crossed boundaries and also supported social aspects that benefited those in need/in poverty.
O	[Not necessarily]
X	
O	[Not necessarily]
O	[Not answered]
PO	In addition, but not solely
X	
X	
O	In our patch poverty is an issue on part of the town, but a greater issue is isolation and other disadvantage faced by our community (rural, older people, young people, geographic location).
O	Depends on local circumstances in the towns chosen. The problem with the original guidance to potential MTIs was that it was too broad and resulted in a 'wish list' from the local community that could never be delivered. [name of town] has identifiable problems of low skills, poor educational attainment and worklessness which broadly did feature in the original Action Plan and RDA funded programme.
O	-----

V	Work that seeks to develop the economic vibrancy of a town inevitably helps to improve its prosperity, job opportunities etc., & hence helps to reduce poverty. In the long-term for market towns poverty is reduced not by giving the poor money but by providing opportunity.
X	
X	
X	
C, V	No
V	No – as this could well have meant a lower take up of the concept.
V	Not specifically.
O	From my perspective MTI did not deliver on its stated objective of levering in external funding. A clear objective (with or without poverty) that as deliverable should have been the key focus.
C, PO	Yes
X	
X	
X	
V	Main function was to research/identify community issue and wants and then enable these.
C	Poverty is not prevalent in our area.
O	No - in our consideration people generally want the physical environment improved.
PO	There are areas of deprivation in our Community Area particularly in [name of town] and work is done in these areas. Our area has a very low level of unemployment but we are a low wage economy with a higher than average level of manufacturing, food, beds (sic?) and light engineering, and of course retail. Our aim is to try to upskill our labour force and to attach better paid jobs.
X	
X	
X	
V & PO	No. A good quality of life in a beautiful environment and a community with strong social capital is why people choose to remain here, return here, or retire here – in the full knowledge that they will inevitably have lower incomes as a result. Low incomes are not a problem if house prices and living costs are commensurate. Some form of protected housing market for full-time residents would do most to reduce poverty, together with better transport links, to improve access to work, further education and services ( ie the [name of town] to Middlesbrough railway service).
O	[Not answered]
O	[Not answered]
CV	No. This was one of the outcomes - our greater need was to find ways to strengthen the economic and social life of the area and through this reduce poverty.
PO	[Not answered]

**Q11b****Has the work reduced, or is it reducing, poverty, either directly or indirectly?**

Key: V, volunteer; O, officer; C, Councillor; PO, Project Officer; X, No Reply

X	
PO	No, poverty is a national issue.
X	[No answer given]
O	
C	The Market Towns Initiative represents Ministers' belated recognition of the significance of market towns. Currently the foundations only are being laid to reduce rural deprivation.
X	
X	
O	Yes indirectly
V	The creation of some 30 jobs should result in some extra income for some households. The development of a Children's Centre in conjunction with [name of organization deleted] Office building will reduce deprivation in the area.
O	Don't think so.
X	
C	No answer given
O	No answer given
O	It is both directly and indirectly reducing poverty and supports the Improving Health and Wellbeing priority of the Community Plan and before that the Healthcheck.
O	No answer given
X	
O	Don't know
O	Not answered
PO	Some projects - ie The Learn to Earn, Routes to Work, and Children's Gate are targetted to help the unemployed and disadvantaged.
X	
X	
O	Yes - we strive to improve access to opportunities be they learning and skills, childcare, transport.
O	To some extent yes – there were links established with Jobcentre Plus and a grant scheme established to assist people off benefits through access to job related training. However, this element of the programme was substantially less than the business assistance given. Support to businesses will have had an indirect affect on poverty through increasing job opportunities, etc.
O	-----
V	See 11b.
X	
X	
X	
C, V	No
V	Neither – apart from the project manager.
V	Yes, through improving the commerce of the area.

O	No measure were ever put around poverty regarding [name of town]'s involvement in MTI. It was felt that the specific initiatives would contribute in part to the town's overall well-being and support its rural hinterland.
C, PO	Yes
X	
X	
X	
V	N/A
C	No answer given
O	No effect.
PO	What has been achieved has helped reduce poverty by keeping unemployment low. The influx of migrant workers, mainly from Poland, has however kept wages at a lower level than would otherwise have been the case. However, without the influx of the migrant worker, there would have been a shortage of labour which could have led to a relocation of some of our businesses.
X	
X	
X	
V & PO	Through the work – no. [name of town]'s economy was regenerated through the increase in publicity and tourism brought about by the visits of the Australian replica of HMS Endeavour – the [name of town]-built ship in which Captain Cook 'discovered' Australia. After that major shot-in-the-arm, it continues to get repeat and new visitors because of the heritage & charm of the town; Heartbeat; the North York Moors Steam Railway; the beauty of the coast and country – and the friendliness of the locals. (data from Beacon Town Forum visitor surveys). None of which are attributable to any regeneration programmes or initiatives!
O	Not answered
O	Not answered
CV	A) [Name removed] our 3 vehicle mini-bus service with 17 volunteer drivers has made a major difference for families and the elderly. B) Social housing provision has enriched a good number of families.
PO	Not answered

## **Appendix 7**

### **Full Definitions of Poverty Offered by Interviewees and Survey Respondents**

Interviewees	
<b>Q11c</b> <b>How do you define poverty?</b> <b>Key: PO, Project Officer; V, Volunteer; CV, Councillor &amp; Volunteer; O, Officer; C, Councillor</b>	
O	Ermمم. Oh my goodness. Poverty, I suppose, poverty for me would be something around people being significantly below a certain income level. Whether that's, you know, the median or the official definition - I mean there are official definitions, what is it, 60% of the median, whatever, but to me that's poverty, but that's different to disadvantage ...
O	[Sigh] Well, it's a relative thing. It's people who have access to fewer resources than most of the rest of the population. So, when I've worked [in] developing countries where poverty meant, you know, the obvious, you know, the child dies before the age of five, but poverty in this country is more about "Well, I'm not as well off as other people". Ummm, - [pause] - ummm, and so, in a sense, while it's defined in that way, it will never go away.
O	[Long pause} Where there's either a very low income or it comes below a level where someone's quality of life is below what is typically thought of as bearable, where there have to be choices between things which are pretty much basic necessities but one thing has to give for another. Emmm, yeah.
C	This is an interesting one actually. ... Well, you'll get the political approach from me, and you'll get the technical approach from [officer in attendance]. But, yes, it's an interesting word isn't it, poverty, because it's one where we don't feel comfortable using it sometimes I think in the UK and so we invent euphemisms for it [mentions social exclusion] and we've used that term instead of poverty very often. It's interesting that when we work with our colleagues abroad that they are very keen, you know they talk about poverty - they talk about poverty, they talk about, "The Poor", about doing something for the poor, which is something we would not do. But I think that ... <u>By GM: Have they defined it?</u> Well, I'm not sure if they've defined it or not, but my definition would be, and it's going back to the other words again, my definition would be to say that it is, it is, the people, errr, poverty, errr, people in poverty are socially excluded, they are not receiving the, or they are not in receipt of the same benefits available to the majority of people, and I think that would be my definition. Now, you can then drill down and say what are those benefits, and those benefits are things like, that revolve around access, access to resources, so you've got the simple answer like access to simple resources - have they got enough money, or have they got any money, but you've also got access to other resources, you've got access to the resources that have to be taken for granted, the fact that our dustbins are going to be emptied or that there's a school close by to send our children to, or whatever that might be, and this is where I think the rural poor, err, errr, ... begin to appear because many of them may be asset rich, they are living in a nice area in a nice house they are actually in a degree of poverty, they are deprived of some of the basic facilities that the rest of us take for granted .... that's how I see it. [Hands to officer]...
O	... Well, it's one of those questions that is ... (?), to begin to define poverty you have to define what type of poverty you're talking about, because I think that there are a number of different facets to poverty. I suppose if you look back historically financial poverty was the one that would probably be regarded as the norm in terms of people not having enough to maintain living standards. Go back to the workhouses, all largely judged on finance. I think we, you know, interpret poverty in a much broader sense: poverty of opportunity, poverty of education, poverty which is still financial. I think for me it's about having sufficient resources, a bed (?) of resources in order to maintain a quality of life that would be regarded as the norm for that community or society. Errr, and even that is very simplistic, because you can take all those words and the thing can begin to be picked to pieces, and certainly our colleagues in Romania would certainly see poverty in financial terms and that, I think, would be their interpretation. <u>By GM: Why is that do you think?</u> I think, at the moment, their society has a more simplistic view and the gap between the haves and have-nots is much greater and so it's far easier to actually say that that person has, and that person hasn't, therefore that person who hasn't is in poverty. I think that if you look at the UK, look at the different regions and County Councils, counties of the UK, if you took a dozen Members from the strata of society out and showed them

	people and said does this represent poverty to you you'd probably have the same range of different answers. But if you're looking at particularly rural poverty I think that's deprivation of a whole raft of things and poverty really is still about the ability to have sufficient available resources – [Previous interviewee] mentioned people who are asset rich but they can still be in poverty unless they're prepared to dispose of their assets. I think it's a very complex question.
O	Poverty in terms of ... opportunity, errr, either to ... ummm ... careful with words ... maintain a reasonable quality of life, say for the individual, family, in terms of access to services, opportunities that you might reasonable expect in this day and age, umm, inevitably I'm thinking in terms of income to the family unit, individual, and how it can be secured.
O	Two things: 1) straight forward economic side, wage levels, not enough money, security of income; 2) much wider idea of access to a quality of life at the same level as everyone else, and to decent housing, decent transport, decent services and facilities.
C,V	How have you defined poverty? "Straightforward indices of income - what people have to live on. There are a lot of other issues – such as access issues – to jobs, to training, to transport, advice, services; eg, "We will be a poorer community if – as is rumoured - we lose our Citizens' Advice Bureau, for example." – advice about debt etc. - would have to go to Dorchester by bus. A lot of access issues related to poverty. There is a shortage of accommodation for rent in Bridport – house prices and rentals are being pushed up because of second homes.
V	My definition of poverty comes from my pre-work experience, my previous life. Poverty, physical poverty, umm, can be determined because I think there should be more equality of wealth. Poverty in quality of life is determined by the individual. I've seen people who are very poor be very happy, and people who have a lot of money be very miserable people. That's not in this area necessarily, that's as I say in my previous work experience. Umm, I think the overall, umm, thing of an area, you could bring a lot more money into this area and destroy the basic fabric, which is again why tourism is struggling to – that word, sustainability, accessing enough people to give us enough finances for the business and to produce jobs, but not destroying the very thing that people come for and that the people living here want. Err, umm, people live on farms and, umm, my mother was brought up of bread and dripping ... so poverty is, ummm, I think, very difficult thing in this day and age. People these days tend to think unless they've got – I would as well – unless they've got the amenities, fridges, cookers, washing machines ... that's probably not a general view on poverty, that's ... [END]
V	It's a relative thing, and, err, it's a time thing, you know, people that I know, that are poor in Bridport are doing two jobs, you know, so they have no quality of life because they're having to, you know, do a job during the day, and then they, you know, fit in a bit of time with their kids, then they have to do another job; now, that to me is poverty, that you don't have time to, for yourself, for your family, because your wages are so low you're forced to. <u>By GM: Do you think that any of those people will have heard of the MTI or MCTi?</u> No. <u>By GM: Do you think that the MTI or MCTi has done anything for those people?</u> In Bridport? No.
O	Poverty is not having the means to meet the needs that you, and those nearest you, have [pause] to any satisfactory degree. It means seeing people around you who are clearly in a better situation. It means feeling that you are lesser than those people. It means a feeling of devaluing yourself and being devalued. It can mean a feeling of hopelessness, a feeling of having no positive future that you can see.

V	Well, there's two sorts of poverty. There's cultural poverty and actual financial poverty, hmm, in my book. The people who are poor, I mean, this area the wages are very low compared to the rest of, (sic) so a lot of people are on minimum wage, and really minimum wage, and a lot of farm workers are, and farm workers mostly live out in the country and most of them aren't able to afford cars, transport of some sort, and if they have it's broken down, whatever, and yet all the time facilities for people who live in rural areas is (sic) being cut, post offices, busses, there's hardly any transport in a lot of areas, all sorts of things like that, and they're not being thought about. ... The other thing [about poverty] is that because there's no rural transport in the evenings – there's the odd bus that goes to pick people up when they do their shopping , but there's nothing in the evenings. ... That's one of the cultural things. people from outside a town cannot get into to the theatre, the concerts, the things that go on in the town. It's cultural access – you cannot access the things that go on in here unless you've got your own transport.
O	I see poverty in terms of access to, errr, to support services, as well as finance and material things.
O	I define poverty as people living on very low wages in rural areas, without ... struggling on very low paid jobs.
O	Oh, phew, that's a hard question isn't it. I leave that to others, I usually go from the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

<b>Survey Respondents</b>	
<b>Q11c</b>	
<b>How do you define poverty?</b>	
<b>Key: PO, Project Officer; V, Volunteer; CV, Councillor &amp; Volunteer; O, Officer; C, Councillor</b>	
PO	3 million children are identified to be in poverty and only government can address that problem.
O	[Not answered]
C	Obstruction of access to service through inadequate public transport and cost of travel, Withdrawal of public services from rural areas. Low wages. Lack of affordable housing. Ageing population with fixed incomes.
O	The inability to actively share in society's wealth in such a way which excludes you from the average expectations that society has.
V	See 11b
O	People unable to access decent housing, education, health care etc. due to lack of funds.
X	Broadest sense, ie, financially, access to services, opportunity etc.
O	Poor housing and environment
O	I didn't but to me poverty is where individuals or family structures do not have sufficient funds to maintain themselves from their existing funds despite living conventional life styles.
O	Not in (a) rural deprivation area - very retired community in the main.
O	"Some questions are too difficult to answer. Nothing available easily to measure poverty with.
O	[No answer]
PO	[No answer]
O	Using Index of Multiple Deprivation data - number of people on benefits, number of people in part-time or full-time employment.
O	Poverty and its relief was never referred to as a key issue in the process in [name of town]. However, important issues related to poverty could be identified through published statistics eg unemployment and Incapacity Benefit claimants, Index of Multiple Deprivation and these were used to justify the interventions.
O	[No answer]
V	Those with sufficiently low disposable income that their quality of life is below a minimum that we would judge to be acceptable in the UK in the 21st century.
C, V	People without the means and resources to provide for themselves.
V	Availability of disposable income to local residents.

V	Inability, due to cash and knowledge limitations, to really look after self and family.
O	[No answer given]
C, PO	Poverty can be absolute or relative but in the UK it is relative. It is depriving people from those things that give quality to their lives. In [name of town] and N Yorks incomes are below the national average, but the cost of living is the same. So in relative terms people are not as well off as the national average. However, there are compensations like a low crime rate, excellent schools, a good community spirit and access to a five star natural environment.
V	N/A
C	[No answer given]
O	As manifested by social problems.
PO	Poverty is not accurately described in my answers to 11a and 11b.
V & PO	Households struggling to meet their basic daily living costs, with no safety margin.  NB A high proportion of [name of town] households are below the official poverty level, ie household income of below 60% UK median income (32% of [name of town] households in 2004 – CACI paycheck) But very many of those households would not regard themselves as poor – or be locally regarded as poor. Extended family networks are still very strong in this area. Seafaring communities traditionally pulled together to look after the widows, orphans and weaker members – and though fishing has declined, that ethos remains.
O	[Not answered]
O	[Not answered]
CV	Lack of appropriate housing and unable to purchase because of low income. Off bus routes and unable to afford a car. In need of childcare and family support but none or little (in) area.
PO	[Not answered]

## **Appendix 8**

### **Summary Answers Deduced From Interview Transcripts**

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Stimulus for Involvement</b>	<b>Beacon Town work - Involvement?</b>	<b>What was your Role?</b>	<b>Motivation for Involvement?</b>
County Council Officer	Duty and professional interest	Marginal involvement	Not involved but aware	Not involved
Community Development Worker	Duty and professional interest	Not involved	Not involved but aware	Work
Town Councillor	Council and Local Action	Contribution Withheld	Contribution withheld	Council
Partnership member (Volunteer)	Volunteer and Business and Steering Group and Local Action	Aware	Tourism Steering Group	Local concern / interest in local economy
Partnership Member (social entrepreneur)	Social Enterprise and Local Action	Aware	Social Enterprise	Local concern / Local enterprise
Partnership Member (Officer)	Duty and Youth Steering Group	Aware	Steering Group Young People	Professional involvement / Concern for young people
Partnership Member (volunteer)	Volunteer and Local Action and Steering Group	No	Steering Group Older People	Local Concern / Older people / Youth
Regional Development Agency Officer	Duty	Not involved but aware	Adviser	Duty  NB In view of the interviewee's less direct involvement with the work in Bridport, the questions asked were rephrased slightly in order to capture the interviewee's broader experience of both programme and policy/ies.
District Council Officer	Duty	Not involved	Not involved but aware	Duty
District Council Officer	Duty	Not involved but aware	Not involved but aware	Duty

	Q5	Q6	Q7
Interviewee	Hoped-for Achievements	Action Plan Progress Summarized	Has Work met Needs?
County Council Officer	Not a member of the partnership	By GM: relates to Dorset, not only to Bridport. The programmes and related processes have achieved things. Understanding of, and sensitivity to local needs are necessary, as is the recognition that sufficient time is needed.	Not known
Community Development Worker	People working together / money for projects	Doesn't know.	In general action planning has worked but more emphasis should be given to supporting locals to help themselves. People are critical to success.
Town Councillor	Contribution withheld	Contribution withheld	Contribution withheld
Partnership member (Volunteer)	Money / Regeneration / Community-led development / Skill centre ("big project")	Infrastructure survey / Rural transport / Improving relationships	Interviewee's specific project not implemented, but Wheels to Work scheme implemented and surveys completed, but reasons for non-implementation partly due to failure to select and pursue one major project.
Partnership Member (social entrepreneur)	Community-led planning / Development Trust	Not implemented / frustration with structures	Confusing structures locally / Disparate views / Promises heard but not fulfilled but talk about Development Trust continues ...
Partnership Member (Officer)	Money / Locally-led projects / Skills centre	No (in terms of work relating to young people) / disillusion with process / Wheels to Work ... working but limited/"useless"/fails to meet need	Interviewee expected it to fail and it did.
Partnership Member (volunteer)	Older People	Yes, implemented (older people's projects)	Yes and as a consequence Bridport project has been used as a model county wide
Regional Development Agency Officer	Duty NB In view of the interviewee's less direct involvement with the work in Bridport, the questions asked were used to capture the interviewee's broader experience.	Long-term commitment / research (affordable housing) /	Gaps from point of view of RDA: evidence base; Healthcheck not in evidence relative to other towns

District Council Officer	Money	No, but merged with community planning work / community planning has taken over from MCTi / work does encourage people to become involved, and helps them develop skills, but need to "join-up" new programmes/initiatives with old (ensure continuity).	Not able to comment.
District Council Officer	Community-led development / Community facilities (cinema) / Skills <b>NB</b> Action Plan projects are being implemented.	Work continues	Lack of clarity about aims/purposes / poor communication

Interviewee	Q8	Q9
	Emphasis of Work Done	Things That SHOULD Have Been Done
County Council Officer	Community-led development	Short-term programmes applied to long term development / Appropriate mechanisms and processes / Flexibility – recognize that each town and each set of circumstances is unique
Community Development Worker	Action Plan as guide and monitor / Clarity about roles and trust between people and organizations / appropriate independent professional support	Support to tackle "volunteer fatigue" / Involve hinterland parishes / Mismatch between locally expressed needs and wider policies
Town Councillor	Contribution withheld	Contribution withheld
Partnership member (Volunteer)	Effective process, groups and working together / Money	Clear and honest information at the start of the process about what can be done and will be funded (realism)
Partnership Member (social entrepreneur)	Effective structure / Promises made should be very clear and should be kept / community owned assets	Effective structure / Promises made should be very clear and should be kept / community owned assets
Partnership Member (Officer)	Locally-led development	Realistic aims / no where the limits and the power lie
Partnership Member (volunteer)	Support for projects	More work with/for young people
Regional Development Agency Officer	Not answered	Not answered
District Council Officer	Not answered	Not answered
District Council Officer	Not answered but has seen progress in that some locally identified needs are being met.	Clarity about purpose / Help locals to develop their vision

<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Q10</b> <b>Work continues to some extent?</b>
County Council Officer	Not answered
Community Development Worker	Not answered
Town Councillor	Contribution withheld
Partnership member (Volunteer)	Yes
Partnership Member (social entrepreneur)	No
Partnership Member (Officer)	Yes
Partnership Member (volunteer)	No
Regional Development Agency Officer	Not answered
District Council Officer	Don't know
District Council Officer	No

<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Q12</b> <b>Summary</b>
County Council Officer	Rural/small country towns policy appears to have given way politically to an emphasis on regional/urban/ city region-related policies.
Community Development Worker	Nothing to add
Town Councillor	Nothing to add
Partnership member (Volunteer)	Nothing to add
Partnership Member (social entrepreneur)	Nothing to add
Partnership Member (officer)	The effects of perceived failure and negative associations/connotations linger – in spite of these, progress is being made.
Partnership Member (volunteer)	Given clear aims and dedicated people with the necessary time, skills, and knowledge, a lot can be achieved.
Regional Development Agency Officer	Community-led development takes time, it needs people with skills to help and different methods if you are to "engage" with different sectors – two to four years. It's a continual process – new people will be needed. You can't expect volunteers top do everything for nothing.
District Council Officer (Social)	Nothing to add
District Council Officer (Business)	Nothing to add

## **Appendix 9**

**Summary Answers Deduced From Survey  
Respondents' Answers  
(Derived From Data in Appendices 4 and 6)**

<b>Q1 Involved via:</b>	<b>Q2 BT Involvement</b>	<b>Q3 What was your role?</b>	<b>Q4 Motivation for Involvement</b>
Local action	N/A	Project Leader	Local Concern
Council	IT	Steering Group member	Local concern / duty
Not involved (respondent not in post)	Minimal	Not involved	Not involved
Duty	N/A	Programme Officer	Job / Interest
Council	N/A	Volunteer / Chairman	Local Concern
Council	Project manager's work	Support / Accounting officer / Steering Group Member	Help Town Council
Local	N/A	Management	Local Concern
Council	N/A	Town Clerk / Finance Director	No answer
Work	Work faded	Management	Regeneration
Council	N/A	Steering Group member	Local Concern
Council	N/A	Liaison	Duty
Partnership	Business Improvement District	Steering group	Local Concern
Partnership	N/A	Facilitation / Strengthen / Support	Job / Local Concern
Council	Unaware of status	No Answer	Regeneration
Didn't	N/A	Lead officer	Local Concern
Council	N/A	Lead / Chairman	Local Concern
MTI Healthcheck	Via Town Council	Project Group Member	Local Concern
Work	N/A	Support	Job
Church	N/A	Lead / Chair	Local Concern
RDA	N/A	Lead Officer	Local Concern
Work	Heritage	Coordinator	Local Concern
RDA	Nominated	Lead / Chair	Local Concern
Nominated	Unaware of status	Steering Group Member / Councillor	Duty
RDA	N/A	Town Council	Regeneration
Council	N/A	Steering Group Member / Project Officer	Local Concern / Duty
Local	Sustainable tourism	None	Local Concern
Council	N/A	Lead / Manage	Council's Concern
Work	N/A	Steering Group Member / Lead	Local Concern

<b>Q5 Hoped-for Achievements</b>	<b>Q6 Action Plan Progress Summarised</b>	<b>Q7 Has Work Met Needs?</b>
Keep Services	Progress	Yes
Environmental / Economic	Frustration	Useful, limited, relationship problems
Not Known	Not known	Not known
Sustainability	Good Progress	Yes
Increased Investment	Good progress / Frustration	Yes
Increased Influence	Good progress	Yes
Get Things Done	Little progress	No, negative effect
Revitalize	Progress	Limited extent
Regeneration through partnership	Good progress (initially)	Yes, but shortage of volunteers & fatigue
A Vision	No progress (early days)	Some
Get Things Done	Good progress	Some
Maintain Service Function	Progress (economic projects)	Yes, but could have done more
Get Things Done	Some progress / Frustration	Yes
Community-led Regeneration	Relatively little progress	No
No answer	No answer	No answer
Faster Development	Progress ("easier" projects)	Yes, given realistic expectations
Economy / Quality of Life	Progress	Physical yes, "softer" no
No Idea	Doubtful progress	No
Legitimacy / Expertise	Good progress ("easier" projects)	Yes
Money to do things	Progress	No answer
Community-led Development / Influence	Progress	Yes
Community-led Development	Good progress	Yes
Money to make things better	Good progress	Yes
Regeneration Through Partnership	Progress	Physical yes, "softer" no
Community-led Development	Good progress	Yes
Regeneration / Sustainability	MTI: No progress / Frustration	No
	BT: Some progress / Frustration	
Promote Town	No progress (left MTI)	N/A
Community-led Development	Very good progress	Yes

<b>Q8 Emphasis of Work DONE</b>	<b>Q9 Things That SHOULD have Been Done</b>
Social / Services	Transport / Jobs / Social
Environmental / Social	Environment / Economic
No answer	No answer
Physical / Social	Economic / Environment
Economic / Social	More time / More people
Community / Project Work	Community / Project Work
Services	More people / More money
Economic / Cultural / Social	Redevelopment / Community development
Economic / Partnership Working	Economic / Partnership Working
Environment / Community	None
Services / Environment	Services / Environment
Economic	Economic
Community	Money for projects
Economic	Economic / Physical / Environment / Local influence
No answer	No answer
Community Involvement	Community Involvement
Community-led Development / Money	Council Influence / More people involved
Misplaced answer (see Q9)	Working together
Social / Economic	Transport
Not answered	Money for projects
Social / Cultural	Social (youth) / Economic (youth)
Community development	Involve people / Economic (attract business)
Social / Environmental	No answer
Environmental	Closer working / Involve Town Council
Regeneration / Social (youth)	Economic / Social
No answer	No answer
Community Involvement	Transport / Skills / Jobs
Social	Youth / Economy

<b>Q10</b>	
<b>Work Continues?</b>	
Yes	
Yes	
Don't know	
Yes	
On Stand-by	
Yes	
Questionable	
Yes	
Don't know	
Yes	
Unlikely	
No	
Yes	
No	
Yes	
On stand-by	
Yes	
Don't know	
Yes	
Yes	
Unlikely	
Yes	

## **Appendix 10**

### **Tabular, Hierarchical Answers to Non-Poverty Questions Obtained From Face to Face Interviews and Postal Questionnaires (Derived From Data in Appendices 8 and 9)**

**Question 1**  
**How did you become involved in the Market Towns Initiative  
 (and/or the MCTi)?**

<b>Interviews</b>	<b>Postal</b>		
Duty and professional interest	Council	Council	Council
Duty and professional interest	Council	Council	Council
Council and Local Action	Council	Council	Council
Volunteer & Business & Steering Group & Local Action	Council	Work	Work
Social Enterprise and Local Action	Work	Work	RDA
Duty and Youth Steering Group	RDA	RDA	Partnership
Volunteer and Local Action and Steering Group	Partnership	Local	Local
Duty	Local action	MTI Healthcheck	Church
Duty	Duty	Nominated	
Duty	Not involved	Didn't	

**Question 2**  
**If applicable, how did you become involved with Beacon Towns work, and in what capacity?**

<b>Interviews</b>	<b>Postal</b>		
Marginal involvement but aware	BT for IT	Sustainable tourism	
Not involved	Minimal involvement		
Contribution Withheld	Project manager's work		
Aware	Unaware of status		
Aware	Business Improvement District		
Aware	Work faded		
No	Via Town Council		
Not involved but aware	Unaware of status		
Not involved but aware	Nominated		
Not involved but aware	Heritage		

**Question 3**  
**What was your involvement (eg steering/project group)?**

<b>Interviews</b>	<b>Postal</b>		
Not involved	Lead / Chairman	Lead / Chair	Lead / Chair
Not involved	Volunteer / Chairman	Lead / Manage	Steering Group Member / Lead
Tourism Steering Group	Lead Officer	Lead officer	Management
Social Enterprise	Management	Project Leader	Steering Group Member / Project Officer
Steering Group Young People	Steering Group Member / Councillor	Steering Group member	Steering Group member
Steering Group Older People	Steering group	Support / Accounting officer / Steering Group Member	Project Group Member
Adviser	Programme Officer	Town Clerk / Finance Director	Town Council
Not involved	Facilitation / Strengthen / Support	Support	Liaison
Not involved	Coordinator	None	Not involved
Contribution withheld	No Answer		

<b>Question 4</b> <b>Why did you become involved (ie what were your motivations)?</b>			
<b>Interviews</b>	<b>Postal</b>		
Not involved	Local Concern	Local Concern	Local Concern
Work	Local Concern	Local Concern	Local Concern
Council	Local Concern	Local Concern	Local Concern
Local concern / interest in local economy	Local Concern	Local Concern	Local Concern
Local concern / Local enterprise	Local Concern	Local Concern	Local concern / duty
Professional involvement / Concern for young people	Local Concern / Duty	Regeneration	Regeneration
Local Concern / Older people / Youth	Regeneration	Job / Local Concern	Job / Interest
Duty	Job	Duty	Duty
Duty	Council's Concern	Help Town Council	
Duty	Not involved	No answer	

<b>Question 5</b> <b>What did you expect/hope the MTI (MCTi) and BT work would achieve for your partnership?</b>			
<b>Interviews</b>	<b>Postal</b>		
Not a member of the partnership	Community-led Development	Community-led Development	Community-led Development
People working together / money for projects	Community-led Development / Influence	Community-led Regeneration	Regeneration Through Partnership
Contribution withheld	Regeneration through partnership	Regeneration / Sustainability	Get Things Done
Money / Regeneration / Community-led development / Skill centre ("big project")	Get Things Done	Get Things Done	Money to make things better
Community-led planning / Development Trust	Money to do things	Increased Investment	Economy / Quality of Life
Money / Locally-led projects / Skills centre	Environmental / Economic	Maintain Service Function	Keep Services
Older People	Revitalize	Faster Development	Increased Influence
Duty	Sustainability	Promote Town	Legitimacy / Expertise
Money	A Vision	No Idea	
Community-led development / Community facilities (cinema) / Skills	No answer	Not Known	

<b>Question 6</b> <b>To what extent have the MTI/MCTi and BT action plans been implemented (ie what's been done, and what hasn't, and why hasn't it)?</b>			
<b>Interviews</b>	<b>Postal</b>		
<u>NB relates to Dorset, not only to Bridport.</u> The programmes and related processes have achieved things. Understanding of, and sensitivity to local needs, are necessary, as is the recognition that sufficient time is needed.	Very good progress	Good progress	Good progress
Doesn't know.	Good progress	Good Progress	Good progress
Contribution withheld	Good progress	Progress	Progress
Infrastructure survey / Rural transport / Improving relationships	Progress	Progress	Progress
Not implemented / frustration with structures	Progress	Progress (economic projects)	Good progress ("easier" projects)
No (in terms of work relating to young people) / disillusion with process / Wheels to Work ... working but limited/"useless"/fails to meet need	Good progress (initially)	Progress ("easier" projects)	Good progress / Frustration
Yes, implemented (older people's projects)	Some progress / Frustration	Little progress	Relatively little progress
Long-term commitment / research (affordable housing) /	No progress (early days)	Doubtful progress	MTI: No progress / Frustration BT: Some progress / Frustration
No, but merged with community planning work / community planning has taken over from MCTi / work does encourage people to become involved, and helps them develop skills, but need to "join-up" new programmes/ initiatives with old (ensure continuity).	Frustration	No progress (left MTI)	
Work continues	Not known	No answer	

<b>Question 7</b> <b>Has the work, when considered overall, met – or is it meeting - your expectations in terms of, eg, a) physical improvements; b) other "softer" outcomes such as increased community involvement?</b>			
<b>Interviews</b>	<b>Postal</b>		
Not known	Yes	Yes	Yes
In general action planning has worked but more emphasis should be given to supporting locals to help themselves. People are critical to success.	Yes	Yes	Yes
Interviewee's specific project not implemented, but Wheels to Work scheme implemented and surveys completed, but reasons for non-implementation partly due to failure to select and pursue one major project.	Yes	Yes	Yes
Confusing structures locally / Disparate views / Promises heard but not fulfilled but talk about Development Trust continues ...	Yes	Yes	Yes, given realistic expectations
Interviewee expected it to fail and it did.	Yes, but could have done more	Yes, but shortage of volunteers & fatigue	Physical yes, "softer" no
Yes and as a consequence Bridport project has been used as a model county wide.	Physical yes, "softer" no	Useful, limited, relationship problems	Limited extent
Gaps from point of view of RDA: evidence base; Healthcheck not in evidence relative to other towns.	Some	Some	No
Not able to comment.	No	No	No, negative effect
Lack of clarity about aims/purposes / poor communication.	Not known	N/A	Not answered
Contribution withheld			

<b>Question 8</b> <b>What, in your view, in order of importance, are the three most important elements of the work that have been done?</b>			
<b>Interviews</b>	<b>Postal</b>		
Community-led development	Community Involvement	Community Involvement	Community development
Action Plan as guide and monitor / Clarity about roles and trust between people and organizations / appropriate independent professional support	Community	Community-led Development / Money	Community / Project Work
Effective process, groups and working together / Money	Environment / Community	Economic	Economic
Effective structure / Promises made should be very clear and should be kept / community owned assets	Economic / Partnership Working	Economic / Social	Economic / Cultural / Social
Locally-led development	Social	Social / Economic	Social / Environmental
Support for projects	Social / Services	Social / Cultural	Regeneration / Social (youth)
Not answered but has seen progress in that some locally identified needs are being met.	Physical / Social	Environmental / Social	Environmental / Physical
Not answered	Services	Services / Environment	Not answered
Not answered	Not answered	Not answered	
Contribution withheld	Not answered	Not answered	

<b>Question 9</b> <b>What, in your view, in order of importance, are the three most important elements of the work that should have been done?</b>			
<b>Interviews</b>	<b>Postal</b>		
Short-term programmes applied to long term development / Appropriate mechanisms and processes / Flexibility – recognize that each town and each set of circumstances is unique	Economic	Economic / Social	Economic / Partnership Working
Support to tackle "volunteer fatigue" / Involve hinterland parishes / Mismatch between locally expressed needs and wider policies	Economic / Environment	Economic / Physical / Environment / Local influence	Environment / Economic
Clear and honest information at the start of the process about what can be done and will be funded (realism)	Involve people / Economic (attract business)	Social (youth) / Economic (youth)	Youth / Economy
Effective structure / Promises made should be very clear and should be kept / community owned assets	Transport / Jobs / Social	Transport / Skills / Jobs	Transport
Realistic aims / no where the limits and the power lie	Community / Project Work	Community Involvement	Redevelopment / Community development
More work with/for young people	Closer working / Involve Town Council	Council Influence / More people involved	Working together
Clarity about purpose / Help locals to develop their vision	More time / More people	More people / More money	Money for projects
Not answered	Money for projects	Services / Environment	Not answered
Not answered	Not answered	Not answered	
Contribution withheld	Not answered	None	

<b>Question 10</b> <b>10 ) Is the partnership still active?</b> <b>If so: 10a) is the action plan being implemented?</b> <b>10b) has the Healthcheck been revisited?</b>			
<b>Interviews</b>	<b>Postal</b>		
Not answered	Yes	Yes	Yes
Not answered	Yes	Yes	Yes
Contribution withheld	Yes	Yes	Yes
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
No	No	No	On stand-by
Not answered	On Stand-by	Questionable	Unlikely
Don't know	Unlikely	Don't know	
No	Don't know	Don't know	

Question 12			
Interviews	Postal		
Rural/small country towns policy appears to have given way politically to an emphasis on regional/urban/ city region-related policies.	Positive views	Positive views – managed to get money for projects	Positive views – professional support is necessary
The effects of perceived failure and negative associations/ connotations linger – in spite of these, progress is being made.	Positive developments	Lucky to have managed to get money.	Town Council, Partnership – where does democratic accountability and authority lie?
Given clear aims and dedicated people with the necessary time, skills, and knowledge, a lot can be achieved.	Concerns about representativeness	Expectations should be realistic to avoid disillusionment; bureaucracy should be minimal	Expectations should be realistic to avoid disillusionment; time for capacity building necessary
Community-led development takes time, it needs people with skills to help and different methods if you are to "engage" with different sectors – two to four years. It's a continual process – new people will be needed. You can't expect volunteers to do everything for nothing.	Evolve MTI into community-led development work	More time needed	Poverty-related questions too difficult (no easy way to measure)

## **Appendix 11**

### **Answers to Policy and Poverty-Related Questions (all Interviews)**

<b>Category</b> <b>V, volunteer; O, officer; C, Councillor; E, employee; PO, Project Officer.</b>	<b>Interviewees' Answers to the Question, "Do you think that the [market towns] work should have been designed to reduce poverty?"</b>	<b>Summary Answers; Yes; No; Equivocal, e; Don't know, dn; No, or no clear, answers, x.</b>
PO	It hasn't really reduced poverty in Faringdon – can't really answer the question – it's one for the ... Executive.	e
V	Depends what is meant by poverty. [I]t (MTI) has definitely helped, because, ... you wouldn't be regenerating an area unless it was poor, or feeling poor. In Faringdon rents are low (low demand?), disposable income is low (for Oxon – ie relative), job situation "not good", also a "brain drain". Shouldn't use the word, "poverty" – it's negative, but regeneration is positive, suggests "moving forward". MTI has reduced poverty – eg Faringdon may still have a lot of single Mums, but as a result of the work that fact has been recognized, and is being addressed. Whether that will change the situation is another matter, but there is now a single mothers' support group – the Mums are working together.	x
PO	It should have – would fit in with MTI work (NB [names removed] do not score as "poor" in IMD terms, so can't get much support, but all have pockets of deprivation at Ward level. [Name removed]'s view is that MTI could help to fill this gap (ie where money specifically for poor communities can't be used in places like [names removed]). <u>NB by GM The 2005 MT Healthcheck handbook only has one reference to poverty – in connection with charitable status (page 61).</u>	Yes
C&V	Yes	Yes
O	By implication it was [designed to reduce poverty], you know, catch-phrases like quality of life actually cover everything ... and economic vitality would suggest an inclusive kind of agenda whereby problems of poverty, be it lack of employment etc., are addressed, though it wasn't specifically brought out at the time I don't think in any particular way, that, err, poverty was something that should be identified and addressed. Poverty addressed by implication – not explicit. There was work through the Indicators of Deprivation trying to identify poverty in the small pockets where it did occur – does occur, and that provided something of a focus on rural areas, but I think even that's probably been moved away from slightly, and, erm, there's recognition that there are pockets of deprivation, people in a less than desirable situation, but I'm not sure that the policy approach has really addressed them.	Yes
O	Not particularly. Should be addressing the things identified in the Rural White Paper – not necessarily in the same order – as part of that it should be looking at tackling inequality and poverty – inequality and poverty shouldn't be the main focus of it.	e

C	Should the work have been designed to reduce poverty? I'm not convinced about that. Clearly it should be one of our principal objectives, possibly one we're not always up front about. ... BLAP do see the Skill Centre as a key element of anti-poverty work – wages are low, so need to try to narrow the gap with, say housing affordability.	e
V	It was about rural regeneration wasn't it? Only the government could in some ways, actually, fulfil the expectation in areas like this that the minimum wage should be the Minimum Wage. ... You've got to have the work, and you've got to have the salary that goes with that quality of work. ... Difficult to say, I'm not one of the instigators, and who can read the mind of the government ... when they put it forward. I think it was the ultimate - one of the guiding factors behind it. ... if you could have financed your projects then you would have helped to regenerate the fabric of the area – umm – but, when you have an overseeing group like the RDA who ultimately makes the decisions on what you're putting through on what you want, and their idea of the fabric of the area might be different from your own, then, no, I don't think it did address those issues.	dn
V	Mmmm, well, it's a complex question, and in relation to Bridport the issue here is that poverty is caused by the combination of low wage jobs and very expensive housing, and so what should have happened really over the last ten years is a concerted effort to focus on the economy of Bridport and really try to, you know, generate jobs, more jobs that are going to pay more, basically, and address that issue of affordability, but the reality of what's happened is that the main development in the last ten years is more and more housing that's sucked in, you know, early retired or retired people. It's made housing much more unaffordable and it's meant that the jobs that are there are, you know, the hospitality and tourism, caring, retail, and, as a result, they are all minimum wage jobs, so we've created this economy in Bridport which is basically a service economy, you know, where the poor service the rich, and that seems to be becoming quite a classic market towns process – we're not alone in that. ... <u>By GM: So do you think it was designed to address poverty?</u> Yes, people could say that's what it was designed to be – there was a Housing Needs Survey funded, I'm sure, through the MTI, the Healthcheck looked at those sorts of issues, there were training needs surveys done. <u>By GM: So, you think it did it indirectly?</u> It did it, but it didn't come up with any solutions, and so we basically it's been like a lost ten years where nothing has happened.	Yes
O	Yes, that's exactly what we're doing through BLAST	Yes
V	I think it should have been involved in trying to reduce poverty, yes, and also trying to improve the facilities for people in rural areas, but it's not happened.	Yes
O	No, not solely	e

O	I think that question's a bit more difficult to answer really, because this is about economic vitality, and that should have an impact on poverty, but it's not about poverty per se. This comment [the quote from the Rural White Paper] is about producing an economic vibrant society, but that doesn't actually address poverty, does it, and I don't think the Coastal and Market Towns Initiative (sic) is really going to reduce poverty in rural areas, it's so dispersed. <u>By GM: So you don't think that it should have been designed to reduce poverty?</u> No. I think it should have an impact, but I don't think it should be designed to reduce poverty.	No
O	Emmm (long pause) it, yeah, it should have raised the wealth of the area, it should have raised people's abilities to secure and retain jobs, improving the general economy, therefore lifting people away from poverty. <u>By GM. So it should have been designed to reduce poverty?</u> Yeah.	Yes

<u>Category</u>	<b>Interviewees' Answers to the Question, "Has the work reduced, or is it reducing, poverty, either directly or indirectly?"</b>	<b>Summary Answers: Yes; No; Equivocal, e; Don't know, dn; No, or no clear, answers, x.</b>
V, volunteer; O, officer; C, Councillor; E, employee; PO, Project Officer.	<b>Interviewees' Answers to the Question, "Has the work reduced, or is it reducing, poverty, either directly or indirectly?"</b>	
PO	It hasn't really reduced poverty in Faringdon – can't really answer the question – it's one for the ... Executive.	No
V	Depends what is meant by poverty. [I]t (MTI) has definitely helped, because, ... you wouldn't be regenerating an area unless it was poor, or feeling poor. In Faringdon rents are low (low demand?), disposable income is low (for Oxon – ie relative), job situation "not good", also a "brain drain". Shouldn't use the word, "poverty" – it's negative, but regeneration is positive, suggests "moving forward". MTI has reduced poverty – eg Faringdon may still have a lot of single Mums, but as a result of the work that fact has been recognized, and is being addressed. Whether that will change the situation is another matter, but there is now a single mothers' support group – the Mums are working together.	Yes
PO	I don't think so, but indirectly training (some work is about identifying land for employment opportunities and skills), but not as much as it should have done.	No
C&V	No need to use the word, poverty. The work is in the process of addressing poverty. The Healthcheck revealed that disposable income in [name removed] is 72% of the Oxfordshire average (ie it's not enough if you live in Oxfordshire). The Healthcheck brought this figure – a "real driver" – to the forefront. So, relative poverty is seen as a problem in [name removed].	Yes
O	Perhaps Dorset isn't the best example, but it certainly did [address poverty indirectly] for a while – there was, following the Rural White Paper, a real focus on the towns, but I can't help thinking it's been slightly lost with the regional agenda, and I think the regional agenda is, when all is said and done, the key player at the moment. [ <u>Long pause when prompted to say whether poverty had been reduced, directly or indirectly</u> ] I think you could find instances of where it probably has done [ie reduce poverty] on a small scale – places like Bridport where there was a recognition of a need for training and "up-skilling" to make people employable (sectoral approach – one or two projects which did focus on the worklessness issues in towns) – certainly ... Portland (ie ie where there have been crises like the Naval Base closure and Sturminster Newton market closure) – ok, it's an employment approach to the poverty issue, of making sure that there's someone within the family who have the opportunity to gain employment, which is seen as if you've got the skills, you get the wage, that helps to address issues related with poverty. I suppose the other aspect is that there's been quite a bit of attention in terms of accessibility – trying to ensure that people aren't too disadvantaged by their location, either to get access to the towns, or to school facilities or whatever, and again there have been quite a few initiatives .. to address [poverty] issues.	Yes

O	Some of the work is working with disadvantaged people and so is providing better facilities, better access to services – can see that directly in terms of playgroups, access to facilities and a whole lot of other things (eg community learning centre – providing skills, entrepreneur courses – have encouraged people from social housing estates). It would be terribly, terribly difficult to measure whether we're reducing poverty in economic terms or not. The only way we can do that is via Index of Multiple Deprivation ... every few years ... to see how that's changed things, but still difficult to see if that's directly linked to the work of the partnerships. General point about communities have about moving forward – people to do want to come here and start businesses – difficult to quantify but does come out of the Market & Coastal Towns process and will have an impact on poverty. Businesses ... are keen to stay – town was going down, but is now turning round and staying where it is or going up – there are people in Stur[minster Newton] who are keen to set up businesses. There is a Chamber of Commerce – a struggle to get it started but it is reasonable active – it's got some good ideas.	e
CV	Has the work reduced, or is it reducing, poverty? So much to do with poverty is associated with forces beyond the control of a local committee. Maybe we can address some of the impacts of poverty.	e
V	It's a matter of degree, isn't it, umm, you can say it helped the kids who had the scooters to get to work, that's a tiny minority. I'm personally, I know you have to chip away at things ... but I don't see, the tourism aspect, as I've said, brings the financial viability of the area alive, markets were already functioning, umm, no, I don't personally think it changed – people might disagree with me – but I don't personally see that it generated any more specific income to breathe more life into the area apart from the indirect reaction of maybe making a lot more local people think slightly more positively.	No
V	No, in a way, you know, when we did the work, where we did Planning for Real, the big frustration was always that, how do you get the economics stressed, because people are always going to look at the more superficial issues like green spaces, or dog mess, or ... Christmas lights, or bus journeys which, you know, fine, up to a point, but the critical issue is the economy, you know, the structure of the economy, you know, in relation to ... housing and those sort of things.	No
O	I don't think so.	No
V	I don't think so, no.	No
O	Not as far as I know.	No
O	It's improved the economy, but I don't think it's improved poverty.	No
O	Without wanting to sound cruel I think they achieved so little that it can't be claimed to have achieved anything particularly from the Employment Group, which was the one I was closely involved in.	No

## **Appendix 12**

### **Answers to Policy and Poverty-Related Questions (Respondents to Postal Questionnaire)**

<u>Category</u> <b>V, volunteer; O, officer; C, Councillor; E, employee; PO, Project Officer.</b>	<b>Q11a, Postal Do you think that the (market towns) work should have been designed to reduce poverty?</b>	<b>Short Answer to Q11a</b> <b>Yes;</b> <b>No;</b> <b>Equivocal, e;</b> <b>Don't know,</b> <b>dn;</b> <b>No, or no clear,</b> <b>answers, x.</b>
<b>PO</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>O</b>	[No answer given]	x
<b>C</b>	Action plans should be aligned to a meaningful definition of rural poverty.	Yes
<b>O</b>	I feel that the approach taken indirectly addressed poverty.	e
<b>V</b>	I would rephrase this by using the word "deprivation". This covers a more fundamental aspect of community life in rural areas. Poverty usually implies lack of money which does not necessarily mean lack of access to facilities, whereas deprivation does.	x
<b>O</b>	[No answer given]	x
<b>C</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>O</b>	No	No
<b>O</b>	Not <i>per se</i> . The creation of or safeguarding of jobs and businesses provides the basis for making wealth and reducing poverty. The [name removed] programme crossed boundaries and also supported social aspects that benefitted those in need/in poverty.	e
<b>O</b>	Not necessarily	e
<b>O</b>	Not necessarily	e
<b>O</b>	[No answer given]	x
<b>PO</b>	In addition, but not solely	Yes
<b>O</b>	In our patch poverty is an issue in part of the town, but a greater issue is isolation and other disadvantage faced by our community (rural, older people, young people, geographic location).	x
<b>O</b>	Depends on local circumstances in the towns chosen. The problem with the original guidance to potential MTIs was that it was too broad and resulted in a 'wish list' from the local community that could never be delivered. [Name removed] has identifiable problems of low skills, poor educational attainment and worklessness which broadly did feature in the original Action Plan and [name removed] funded programme.	e
<b>O</b>	[No answer given]	x
<b>V</b>	Work that seeks to develop the economic vibrancy of a town inevitably helps to improve its prosperity, job opportunities etc., & hence helps to reduce poverty. In the long-term for market towns poverty is reduced not by giving the poor money but by providing opportunity.	x
<b>C, V</b>	No	No
<b>V</b>	No – as this could well have meant a lower take up of the concept.	No
<b>V</b>	Not specifically.	No
<b>O</b>	From my perspective MTI did not deliver on its stated objective of levering in external funding. A clear objective (with or without poverty) that as deliverable should have been the key focus.	x
<b>C, PO</b>	Yes	Yes

<b>V</b>	Main function was to research/identify community issue and wants and then enable these.	No
<b>C</b>	Poverty is not prevalent in our area.	x
<b>O</b>	No - in our consideration people generally want the physical environment improved.	No
<b>PO</b>	There are areas of deprivation in our Community Area particularly in [name removed] and work is done in these areas. Our area has a very low level of unemployment but we are a low wage economy with a higher than average level of manufacturing, food, beds ( <i>sic?</i> ) and light engineering, and of course retail. Our aim is to try to upskill our labour force and to attract better paid jobs.	x
<b>V</b>	No. A good quality of life in a beautiful environment and a community with strong social capital is why people choose to remain here, return here, or retire here – in the full knowledge that they will inevitably have lower incomes as a result. Low incomes are not a problem if house prices and living costs are commensurate. Some form of protected housing market for full-time residents would do most to reduce poverty, together with better transport links, to improve access to work, further education and services ( ie the [name removed] railway service).	No
<b>PO</b>	<u>NB Two respondents from this town.</u>	No
<b>O</b>	[Not answered]	x
<b>O</b>	[Not answered]	x
<b>CV</b>	No. This was one of the outcomes - our greater need was to find ways to strengthen the economic and social life of the area and through this reduce poverty.	No
<b>PO</b>	[Not answered]	x

<u>Category</u> <b>V, volunteer; O, officer; C, Councillor; E, employee; PO, Project Officer</b>	<b>Question 11b (Postal) Has the work reduced, or is it reducing, poverty, either directly or indirectly?</b>	<b>Short Answer to Q11b</b> <b>Yes;</b> <b>No;</b> <b>Equivocal, e;</b> <b>Don't know,</b> <b>dn;</b> <b>No, or no clear,</b> <b>answers (x).</b>
PO	No, poverty is a national issue.	No
O	[No answer given]	X
C	The Market Towns Initiative represents Ministers' belated recognition of the significance of market towns. Currently the foundations only are being laid to reduce rural deprivation.	dn
O	Yes indirectly	Yes
V	The creation of some 30 jobs should result in some extra income for some households. The development of a Children's Centre in conjunction with [name of organization removed] Office building will reduce deprivation in the area.	Yes
O	Don't think so.	E
C	[No answer given]	X
O	[No answer given]	X
O	It is both directly and indirectly reducing poverty and supports the Improving Health and Wellbeing priority of the Community Plan and before that the Healthcheck.	Yes
O	[No answer given]	X
O	Don't know	dn
O	[No answer given]	X
PO	Some projects - ie The Learn to Earn, Routes to Work, and Children's Gate are targetted to help the unemployed and disadvantaged.	Yes
O	Yes - we strive to improve access to opportunities be they learning and skills, childcare, transport.	Yes
O	To some extent yes – there were links established with Jobcentre Plus and a grant scheme established to assist people off benefits through access to job related training. However, this element of the programme was substantially less than the business assistance given. Support to businesses will have had an indirect effect on poverty through increasing job opportunities, etc.	Yes
O	[No answer given]	X
V	See 11a	X
C, V	No	No
V	Neither – apart from the project manager.	No
V	Yes, through improving the commerce of the area.	Yes
O	No measures were ever put around poverty regarding [Town's] involvement in MTI. It was felt that the specific initiatives would contribute in part to the town's overall well-being and support its rural hinterland.	e
C, PO	Yes	Yes
V	N/A	dn
C	[No answer given]	X
O	No effect.	No

PO	What has been achieved has helped reduce poverty by keeping unemployment low. The influx of migrant workers, mainly from Poland, has however kept wages at a lower level than would otherwise have been the case. However, without the influx of the migrant workers, there would have been a shortage of labour which could have led to a relocation of some of our businesses.	Yes
V	Through the work – no.  [Name removed]’s economy was regenerated through the increase in publicity and tourism brought about by the visits of the Australian replica of HMS Endeavour – the ... ship in which Captain Cook ‘discovered’ Australia.	No
PO	After that major shot-in-the-arm, it continues to get repeat and new visitors because of the heritage & charm of the town; Heartbeat; the [name removed] Railway; the beauty of the coast and country – and the friendliness of the locals. (data from Beacon Town Forum visitor surveys).  None of which are attributable to any regeneration programmes or initiatives!  <u>NB Two respondents from this town.</u>	No
O	[No answer given]	x
O	[No answer given]	x
CV	Yes. A) ... our 3 vehicle mini-bus service with 17 volunteer drivers has made a major difference for families and the elderly. B) Social housing provision has enriched a good number of families.	Yes
PO	[No answer given]	x

## **Appendix 13**

### **Poverty Definitions Offered by all Interviewees**

Category of Respondent O, Officer, C, Councillor V, Volunteer	Poverty Definitions Offered by Interviewees	Keywords
O	Ermmm. Oh my goodness. Poverty, I suppose, poverty for me would be something around people being significantly below a certain income level. Whether that's, you know, the median or the official definition - I mean there are official definitions, what is it, 60% of the median, whatever, but to me that's poverty, but that's different to disadvantage ...	Money
O	[Sigh] Well, it's a relative thing. It's people who have access to fewer resources than most of the rest of the population. So, when I've worked [in] developing countries where poverty meant, you know, the obvious, you know, the child dies before the age of five, but poverty in this country is more about "Well, I'm not as well off as other people". Ummmm, - [pause] - ummm, and so, in a sense, while it's defined in that way, it will never go away.	Relative Access
O	[Long pause] Where there's either a very low income or it comes below a level where someone's quality of life is below what is typically thought of as bearable, where there have to be choices between things which are pretty much basic necessities but one thing has to give for another. Emmm, yeah.	Money
C	<p>This is an interesting one actually. ... Well, you'll get the political approach from me, and you'll get the technical approach from [officer in attendance]. But, yes, it's an interesting word isn't it, poverty, because it's one where we don't feel comfortable using it sometimes I think in the UK and so we invent euphemisms for it [mentions social exclusion] and we've used that term instead of poverty very often. It's interesting that when we work with our colleagues abroad that they are very keen, you know they talk about poverty - they talk about poverty, they talk about, "The Poor", about doing something for the poor, which is something we would not do. But I think that - <u>By GM: Have they defined it?</u> - well, I'm not sure if they've defined it or not, but my definition would be, and it's going back to the other words again, my definition would be to say that it is, it is, the people, err, poverty, err, people in poverty are socially excluded, they are not receiving the, or they are not in receipt of the same benefits available to the majority of people, and I think that would be my definition. Now, you can then drill down and say what are those benefits, and those benefits are things like, that revolve around access, access to resources, so you've got the simple answer like access to simple resources - have they got enough money, or have they got any money, but you've also got access to other resources, you've got access to the resources that have to be taken for granted, the fact that our dustbins are going to be emptied or that there's a school close by to send our children to, or whatever that might be, and this is where I think the rural poor, err, err, ... begin to appear because many of them may be asset rich, they are living in a nice area in a nice house they are actually in a degree of poverty, they are deprived of some of the basic facilities that the rest of us take for granted .... that's how I see it. [Hands to officer] ...</p>	Exclusion, Access, Money

O	<p>... [Takes over from Councillor] ... Well, it's one of those questions that is ... to begin to define poverty you have to define what type of poverty you're talking about, because I think that there are a number of different facets to poverty. I suppose if you look back historically financial poverty was the one that would probably be regarded as the norm in terms of people not having enough to maintain living standards. Go back to the workhouses, all largely judged on finance. I think we now interpret poverty in a much broader sense: poverty of opportunity, poverty of education, poverty which is still financial. I think for me it's about having sufficient resources, a bed (?) of resources in order to maintain a quality of life that would be regarded as the norm for that community or society. Errr, and even that is very simplistic, because you can take all those words and the thing can begin to be picked to pieces, and certainly our colleagues in Romania would certainly see poverty in financial terms and that, I think, would be their interpretation. <u>By GM: Why is that do you think?</u> I think, at the moment, their society has a more simplistic view and the gap between the haves and have-nots is much greater and so it's far easier to actually say that that person has, and that person hasn't, therefore that person who hasn't is in poverty. I think that if you look at the UK, look at the different regions and County Councils, counties of the UK, if you took a dozen Members from the strata of society out and showed them people and said does this represent poverty to you you'd probably have the same range of different answers. But if you're looking at particularly rural poverty I think that's deprivation of a whole raft of things and poverty rally is still about the ability to have sufficient available resources – [Previous interviewee] mentioned people who are asset rich but they can still be in poverty unless they're prepared to dispose of their assets. I think it's a very complex question.</p>	<p>Access (opportunity)</p> <p>But</p> <p>Uncertain</p>
O	<p>Poverty in terms of ... opportunity, errr, either to ... ummm ... careful with words ... maintain a reasonable quality of life, say for the individual, family, in terms of access to services, opportunities that you might reasonable expect in this day and age, umm, inevitably I'm thinking in terms of income to the family unit, individual, and how it can be secured.</p>	<p>Access, Money</p>
O	<p>Two things: 1) straightforward economic side, wage levels, not enough money, security of income; 2) much wider idea of access to a quality of life at the same level as everyone else, and to decent housing, decent transport, decent services and facilities.</p>	<p>Money, Access</p>
CV	<p>How have you defined poverty? Straightforward indices of income - what people have to live on. There are a lot of other issues – such as access issues – to jobs, to training, to transport, advice, services, eg "We will be a poorer community if – as is rumoured - we lose our Citizens' Advice Bureau, for example." – advice about debt etc. - would have to go to Dorchester, by bus. A lot of access issues related to poverty. There is a shortage of accommodation for rent in Bridport – House prices and rentals are being pushed up because of second homes.</p>	<p>Money (making for access difficulties)</p>

V	<p>My definition of poverty comes from my pre-work experience, my previous life. Poverty, physical poverty, umm, can be determined because I think there should be more equality of wealth. Poverty in quality of life is determined by the individual. I've seen people who are very poor be very happy, and people who have a lot of money be very miserable people. That's not in this area necessarily, that's as I say in my previous work experience. Umm, I think the overall, umm, thing of an area ,you could bring a lot more money into this area and destroy the basic fabric, which is again why tourism is struggling to – that word, sustainability, accessing enough people to give us enough finances for the business and to produce jobs, but not destroying the very thing that people come for and that the people living here want. Err, umm, people live on farms and, umm, my mother was brought up of bread and dripping ... so poverty is, ummm, I think, very difficult thing in this day and age. People these days tend to think unless they've got – I would as well – unless they've got the amenities, fridges, cookers, washing machines ... that's probably not a general view on poverty, that's ... [END]</p>	Uncertain
V	<p>It's a relative thing, and, err, it's a time thing, you know, people that I know, that are poor in Bridport are doing two jobs, you know, so they have no quality of life because they're having to, you know, do a job during the day, and then they, you know, fit in a bit of time with their kids, then they have to do another job; now, that to me is poverty, that you don't have time to, for yourself, for your family, because your wages are so low you're forced to. <u>By GM: Do you think that any of those people will have heard of the MTI or MCTi? No.</u> <u>By GM: do you think that the MTI or MCTi has done anything for those people?</u> In Bridport? No.</p>	Relative, Money, Time
O	<p>Poverty is not having the means to meet the needs that you, and those nearest you, have [pause] to any satisfactory degree. It means seeing people around you who are clearly in a better situation. It means feeling that you are lesser than those people. It means a feeling of devaluing yourself and being devalued. It can mean a feeling of hopelessness, a feeling of having no positive future that you can see.</p>	Relative (hope)
V	<p>Well, there's two sorts of poverty. There's <u>cultural poverty</u> and <u>actual financial poverty</u>, hmm, in my book. The people who are poor, I mean, this area the wages are very low compared to the rest of, (sic) so a lot of people are on minimum wage, and really minimum wage, and a lot of farm workers are, and farm workers mostly live out in the country and most of them aren't able to afford cars, transport of some sort, and if they have it's broken down, whatever, and yet all the time facilities for people who live in rural areas is (sic) being cut, post offices, busses, there's hardly any transport in a lot of areas, all sorts of things like that, and they're not being thought about. ... The other thing [about poverty] is that because there's no rural transport in the evenings – there's the odd bus that goes to pick people up when they do their shopping , but there's nothing in the evenings. ... That's one of the cultural things. people from outside a town cannot get into to the theatre, the concerts, the things that go on in the town. It's cultural access – you cannot access the things that go on in here unless you've got your own transport.</p>	Cultural (access), Money
O	I see poverty in terms of access to, errr, to support services, as well as finance and material things.	Access, Money
O	I define poverty as people living on very low wages in rural areas, without ... struggling on very low paid jobs.	Money
O	Oh, phew, that's a hard question isn't it. I leave that to others, I usually go from the Index of Multiple Deprivation.	Uncertain, IMD

## **Appendix 14**

### **Poverty Definitions Offered by Respondents to the Postal Questionnaire**

<b>Category: V, volunteer; O, officer; C, Councillor; E, employee; PO, Project Officer;</b>	<b>Poverty Definitions Offered by Respondents to the Postal Questionnaire</b>	<b>Keywords (x, not answered)</b>
PO	3 million children are identified to be in poverty and only government can address that problem.	x
O	[Not answered]	x
C	Obstruction of access to service through inadequate public transport and cost of travel. Withdrawal of public services from rural areas. Low wages. Lack of affordable housing. Ageing population with fixed incomes.	Access
O	The inability to actively share in society's wealth in such a way which excludes you from the average expectations that society has.	Exclusion
V	Answer as for Q11b (see Appendix 12)	x
O	People unable to access decent housing, education, health care etc. due to lack of funds.	Access
C	Broadest sense, ie, financially, access to services, opportunity etc.	Money Access
O	Poor housing and environment	Housing
O	I didn't but to me poverty is where individuals or family structures do not have sufficient funds to maintain themselves from their existing funds despite living conventional life styles.	Money
O	Not in rural deprivation area - very retired community in the main.	x
O	Some questions are too difficult to answer. Nothing available easily to measure poverty with.	Don't know
O	[No answer]	x
PO	[No answer]	x
O	Using Index of Multiple Deprivation data - number of people on benefits, number of people in part-time or full-time employment.	IMD
O	Poverty and its relief was never referred to as a key issue in the process in [name removed]. However, important issues related to poverty could be identified through published statistics eg unemployment and Incapacity Benefit claimants, Index of Multiple Deprivation and these were used to justify the interventions.	Government statistics IMD
O	[No answer]	x
V	Those with sufficiently low disposable income that their quality of life is below a minimum that we would judge to be acceptable in the UK in the 21st century.	Money
C V	People without the means and resources to provide for themselves.	Money Education/skills
V	Availability of disposable income to local residents.	Money
V	Inability, due to cash and knowledge limitations, to really look after self and family.	Money Education
O	[No answer given]	x

CPO	Poverty can be absolute or relative but in the UK it is relative. It is depriving people from those things that give quality to their lives. In [name removed] and [name removed] incomes are below the national average, but the cost of living is the same. So in relative terms people are not as well off as the national average. However, there are compensations like a low crime rate, excellent schools, a good community spirit and access to a five star natural environment.	Relative
V	N/A	x
C	[No answer given]	x
O	As manifested by social problems.	x
PO	Poverty is not accurately described in my answers to 11a and 11b (see Appendix 12).	x
V & PO	Households struggling to meet their basic daily living costs, with no safety margin.  NB A high proportion of [name removed] households are below the official poverty level, ie household income of below 60% UK median income (32% of [name removed] by households in 2004 – CACI Paycheck <sup>100</sup> ) but very many of those households would not regard themselves as poor – or be locally regarded as poor. Extended family networks are still very strong in this area. Seafaring communities traditionally pulled together to look after the widows, orphans and weaker members – and though fishing has declined, that ethos remains.	Money
O	[Not answered]	x
O	[Not answered]	x
CV	Lack of appropriate housing and unable to purchase because of low income. Off bus routes and unable to afford a car. In need of childcare and family support but none or little (in) area.	Housing Money Access
PO	[Not answered]	x

<sup>100</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/6y5fxpc>

## **Appendix 15**

**Letters Received From Commission for Rural  
Communities' and Regional Development  
Agencies' Staff in Reply to the Writer's Letter  
of Enquiry (Also Included) About The  
Whereabouts and Availability of Original  
Market Towns Healthcheck Documents**

Copy of letter sent to the Chief Executives of the Commission for Rural Communities, and the South East, South West, North East, North West, Yorkshire and Humber, East Midlands, West Midlands, and East of England Regional Development Agencies.

22<sup>nd</sup> September 2009

Dear

**Market Towns Initiative  
Healthcheck Documents, Location & Availability**

I am conducting research into the Market Towns Initiative (MTI) and would appreciate your help, please.

My understanding is that, following Lord Haskins' review in 2003 and the subsequent reorganization of the Countryside Agency, completed MTI Healthchecks were retained by Regional Development Agencies and the Commission for Rural Communities.

Please would you, firstly, tell me if this is your understanding, and, if so:

- provide the names of the towns for which your organization holds Healthcheck documents;
- let me know if their existence is publicised to enable them to be used as models/examples for other town partnerships.

Please address your reply to me, care of Dr Matt Lobley, at the above address.

Many thanks.

Yours sincerely

Gordon Morris MSc MIIE MCMI



Gordon Morris MSc MIIE MCMI  
c/o Dr Matt Lobley  
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CB24 9ZR  
t 01223 200808  
f 01223 713939  
e Deborahcadman@eeda.org.uk  
w www.eeda.org.uk

30 September 2009

Dear Mr Morris

**MARKET TOWNS INITIATIVE – HEALTHCHECK DOCUMENTS LOCATION & AVAILABILITY**

Thank you for your letter of 22 September. Due to the data protection act we will need to contact the partnership towns to ask them to provide you with the MTI Healthcheck documents direct.

If you are happy with this approach please contact [jan.holmes@eeda.org.uk](mailto:jan.holmes@eeda.org.uk) who will arrange for towns concerned to be contacted to ascertain their willingness to share this information. However we would not endorse the approach taken by all of the towns and would be reluctant to suggest they are used of examples of best practice.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Deborah Cadman'.

Deborah Cadman, OBE, BSc, MA, MSc  
Chief Executive



Gordon Morris MSc MIIE MCMI  
c/o Dr Matt Lobley  
School of Humanities and Social Sciences  
Centre for Rural Policy Research  
Amory Building  
Rennes Drive  
Exeter  
EX4 4RJ

20 October 2009

Dear Gordon

**Re: Market Towns Initiative: Healthcheck Documents Location & Availability**

Further to your letter of 22 September to my Chief Executive, regarding your research into the Market Towns Initiative, it was fortuitous that we were able to meet and speak to the relevant staff of Action for Market Towns (AMT) at their recent Convention at Melton Mowbray, in order to resolve the issue raised in your letter.

As discussed with you, emda commissioned AMT back in 2002/3 to develop and maintain a regional Market Towns website which would be hosted under its own url – [www.emtowns.org.uk](http://www.emtowns.org.uk) and subsequently via the main AMT website. This was paid for by emda and included our ownership of the Intellectual Property Rights. Whilst the website primarily consisted of a database of all the jointly funded emda/Countryside Agency MTI market towns based within our region, it also included copies of each town's completed Health Check.

In addition to the MTI towns the emtowns website also provided a comprehensive and accessible record of all Market Towns activities in the East Midlands. This was intended to be the key public repository for the information you have requested.

However, on receipt of your letter we were concerned to note that the East Midlands section of the AMT website is no longer available. This is a concern for emda as we had not been formally notified of any removal or change to this site, or when it occurred, so we were keen to find out from AMT where the information is now.

Following our conversations at the AMT convention last week, I understand that AMT staff are now working to rectify this situation, and we look forward to seeing the information available once again through the website. Once this error has been rectified I am confident that you will be able to access all of the information that you requested in your letter.

Finally I would like to say how good it was to see you again, Gordon and I look forward to hearing about the outcome of your research.

Yours sincerely

M. Fischer

**Melanie Fischer**  
**Rural Policy Manager**  
cc: Jeff Moore, Chief Executive



Apex Court, City Link, Nottingham, NG2 4LA  
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16 October 2009

Gordon Morris  
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#### **Market Towns Initiative – Healthcheck Documents Location & availability**

Thank you for your letter of 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2009 asking about healthchecks undertaken for market towns by the Countryside Agency and the Market Towns Initiative operated by RDAs. Health checks were undertaken on market towns in the West Midlands, in 2001 and 2002 for the following towns; Evesham, Leek, Cheadle, Kington, Craven Arms, Oswestry, Wem, Alcester, Atherstone, Polesworth, Market Drayton, Pershore, Uttoxeter, Bromyard, Bridgnorth, Highley, Alverley, Bewdley, Ledbury and Whitchurch.

You asked if the existence of these healthchecks is publicised as models for other towns. The concept of healthchecks and the model we used was promoted at the time they were done and there is still a strong awareness of the concept amongst market towns in the region. However, the original series of healthchecks, listed above, is now rather dated and it is some time since we have promoted them as models of good practice. Our need for an evidence base to underpin the rationale for intervention in market towns has moved on significantly since these health checks were carried out, and we now look firstly at underlying economic statistics such as wage levels, proportions of the workforce in knowledge based industry, unemployment and low skill levels to determine priorities for intervention. In other words, health checks are now of rather more use in providing fine grain information to inform local action at a town level, but aren't particularly useful in determining priorities at a regional or sub-regional level.

There has been some, albeit limited interest from market towns in the region to undertake a healthcheck, and the online model available from Action for Market Towns seems to be the one that now has currency. If you would like to find out more about our support for market towns in the West Midlands, please contact Jon Payne tel 07766 477042  
[jonpayne@advantagewm.co.uk](mailto:jonpayne@advantagewm.co.uk)

Yours sincerely

Mark Pearce

Corporate Director for Economic Regeneration



6 October 2009

Gordon Morris MSc MIIE MCMI  
University of Exeter  
School of Humanities and Social Sciences  
Centre for Rural Policy Research  
Amory Building  
Rennes Drive  
Exeter  
UK EX4 4RJ

Dear Gordon

**Health-check Documents – Market Towns**

Thank you for your letter dated 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2009 and your research on the health checks from the former Market Towns Initiative.

Your assumption that the work on Market Towns continued following Lord Haskins review in 2003, and the subsequent closure of the Countryside Agency, is correct. The original Market Towns Initiative which stemmed from the Governments first Rural White Paper was a joint one between the Countryside Agency and the Rural Development Agencies. In the South East we refer to them as 'small rural towns' as the words 'market towns' was quite confusing as there are many very large towns in the region which have markets.

The first phase of our SEEDA support was a joint approach with the former Countryside Agency and the health check continued as part of the programme approach. The first phase was followed by a region wide programme which was launched in 2004 and this still includes the formal health check which had to be completed before any town could access the programme. This current programme does not end until September 2011 so health checks will continue until then.

However we did not take ownership of the health check documents and we do not hold a library of these documents.



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**Tel** +44 (0)1483 484 200 **Fax** +44 (0)1483 484 247 **email** [seeda@seeda.co.uk](mailto:seeda@seeda.co.uk) **web** [www.seeda.co.uk](http://www.seeda.co.uk)

Many of the towns who worked with the Countryside Agency were members of 'Action for Market Towns' and this organisation does hold many of the 'health checks' which are available to its members. Their web site is <http://towns.org.uk/>

The current programme is supported by a regional group called the South East Rural Towns Partnership (SERTP). They have helped many towns complete their health checks and some of these are available to view on their website at :-

<http://www.setowns.org.uk/?page=HealthchecksCompletedDocuments>

I hope that you will find this information useful

Yours sincerely



**Valerie J Carter**  
Rural Director

# **NORTHUMBERLAND**

**Northumberland County Council**

Gordon Morris MSc MIIE MCMI  
c/o Dr Matt Lobley  
University of Exeter  
School of Humanities & Social Science  
Centre for Rural Policy Research  
Amory Building  
Rennes Drive  
Exeter EX4 4RJ

Your Ref: Health Check Documents  
Our Ref: Market Towns  
Enquiries to: John Smith  
Direct Line: 01670 534517  
Fax: 01670 534508  
E-mail: John.Smith@northumberland.gov.uk

Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2009

Dear Mr Morris

**Re: Market Town Health Check Documents**

With reference to my letter of 8 October, Miller produced these documents (which were commissioned by One North East) with some input from the Sub Regional Partnerships.

The reports contain information copyright of One North East and its licensors. Therefore, if you are contemplating using or copying the information in any way, you must first seek written permission from the Agency under the Re-Use of Public Sector Information Regulations, for which there may be a charge.

If you wish to make such a request, please could you contact:

Nicola Barnett  
Legal Services  
One North East  
Stella House  
Goldcrest Way  
Newburn Riverside  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE15 8NY

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



P. John M Smith  
Senior Project Officer  
Regeneration Funding & Programmes Team

c.c. Frances Rowe

Richard Robson, Executive Director of Place

County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 2EF

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**Northwest**

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

DH/LVF

31 October 2009



Mr G Morris MSc MIIE MCMI  
c/o Dr Matt Lobley  
Centre for Rural Policy Research  
University of Exeter  
Amory Building  
Rennes Drive  
Exeter  
EX4 4RJ

Dear Mr Morris

**Market Towns Initiative - Healthcheck Documents, Location and Availability**

Further to your letter of 22 September, addressed to Steven Broomhead, I can confirm that in April 2005, the NWDA took responsibility for a portfolio of socio-economic projects from the Countryside Agency. Included in the portfolio was funding for a number of Market Town Project Officers who were involved in implementing the Countryside Agency Health Check toolkit.

In the spring of 2001, the NWDA began a process to invest in a number of Market Towns in the North West. The Countryside Agency were partners in the process and their health check toolkit was used by the towns helping benchmark and establish priorities.

All of the towns who were part of the NW Market Town Initiative were managed by an Accountable Body, the Local Authority, who were responsible for audit, promotion etc and any publications. For information the Towns and their Accountable Bodies were:

Aspatria/Silloth/Wigton, Keswick, Cockermouth – Allerdale District Council  
Millom, Egremont – Copeland Borough Council  
Ulverston, Lakes – South Lakeland District Council  
Longtown – Carlisle District Council  
Penrith – Eden District Council  
Carnforth – Lancaster District Council  
Clitheroe – Ribble Valley District Council  
Garstang – Wyre District Council  
Padiham – Burnley Borough Council  
Frodham – Cheshire West  
Neston – Ellesmere Port  
Sandbach – Cheshire West

I trust this information help.

Yours sincerely

11 **DAVID HUNTER**  
Head of Rural Development

Northwest Regional Development Agency  
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13 October 2009

JH/09/3742

*Dear Mr Morris,*

**Market Towns Initiative – Healthcheck documents, location and availability**

Thank you for your letter of 22 September 2009 and my apologies for the short delay in reply.

I have sought information in relation to your queries/requests in order to further my understanding. My colleagues inform me that we did not deploy the Countryside Agency's Market Town Initiative approach in the South West, as by the time it came on stream, we were already implementing the Market and Coastal Towns Initiative (MCTi) in the region – [www.southwestrda.org.uk/what-we-do/regeneration/market-towns/index.shtml](http://www.southwestrda.org.uk/what-we-do/regeneration/market-towns/index.shtml).

The MCTi adopted a similar approach to the Market Towns Initiative, but rather than a town health check being produced, we worked with local partners to produce a Community Strategic Plan (CSP). These were strategic documents that set out the local community's vision for their area. We have retained these documents, and my colleague Carole-Ann Warburton (telephone 0117 933 0223) will be happy to supply you with a list of towns which completed a CSP, as well as the CSPs themselves, should you require them.

*Yours sincerely,*  
*Jane Henderson*  
Jane Henderson  
Chief Executive

cc: Carole-Ann Warburton – South West Regional Development Agency



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**Tackling rural disadvantage**

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2nd November 2009

Mr Gordon Morris MSc MIIE MCMI  
C/O Dr Matt Lobley  
University of Exeter  
School of Humanities and Social Sciences  
Centre for Rural Policy Research  
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Rennes Drive  
Exeter  
EX4 4RJ

Dear Gordon,

Thank you for your letter to Sarah McAdam on the Market Towns Initiative Healthcheck and please accept my apologies for our delay in responding.

On the storing and availability of Market Town Healthchecks following the Lord Haskin's review and the reorganisation of the Countryside Agency:

- After the reorganisation of the Countryside Agency, the Commission for Rural Communities retained policy documentation relating to the market towns health check and market towns work. However we did not retain individual healthcheck documents for towns involved in the programme.
- As such, some documentation is available from the Commission for Rural Communities via our warehouse or website – see for example the Countryside Agency publication "Three Market Town Health Check Stories" <http://www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/files/CRN%2077%20ThreeMarketTownsHealthcheckStories.pdf> or the Countryside Agency publication "Market Towns Initiative: Evaluating the first year" <http://www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/publications/crn60markettownsinitiativeevaluatingthefirstyear> - but this does not include a comprehensive record of all market town healthchecks completed under the programme.

I would be happy to talk further if this would be of help,  
[matt.griffith@ruralcommunities.gov.uk](mailto:matt.griffith@ruralcommunities.gov.uk) on 01242 533211

Yours sincerely,

Matt Griffith  
Senior Advisor  
Rural Economies Team

## **Appendix 16**

### **Bridport's Healthcheck Document**

REPORT FROM THE BRIDPORT & WEST BAY TOWN PLAN SUB-COMMITTEE

BRIDPORT TOWN CENTRE RETAIL PRODUCTS & SERVICES 2006 'HEALTH-CHECK' AUDIT  
(With additional data on West Bay)

CONTENTS

Section	Subject
1	INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND Purpose of the audit Scope Physical area covered Method employed
2	CONCLUSIONS
3	APPENDICES ATTACHED TO THIS REPORT Survey Form Map of areas surveyed Results for 'Survey 1' in 2006 & 2000/01 Results for 'Survey 2' additional premises Results for the combined Surveys 1 and 2 Results for 'Survey 3' – West Bay

Bridport Town Council, May/June 2006

## 1. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

One of the Bridport & West Bay Town Plan projects identified in 2005 was to carry out a Town Centre Retail Business ‘Health-Check’ Audit in 2006. In earlier years ‘Health-Check’ surveys had been carried out in 2001 by consultants on behalf of the West Dorset District Council (WDDC), and in 2002 funded by the Countryside Agency for the Market & Coastal Towns Initiative.

### 1.1 The Purpose of this Current Audit

The purpose of this current Bridport Town Council (BTC) audit is to discover the range of retail products and services available in the Bridport Town Centre area, and to use that information in three main ways:

- To compare, where possible, the current audit results with the corresponding sections of the earlier 2001 and 2002 surveys in order to observe any trends that may have emerged.
- To provide an accurate analysis and profile of the types of products and services available in order to support the BTC Planning Committee’s future recommendations on Town Centre business planning applications, and to help WDDC in their planning decisions.
- To determine if there are significant gaps in the products and services on offer in Bridport’s Town Centre.

A further ‘Procedural’ purpose was to define and publish the full working method and detailed data in order to make accurate comparisons when future BTC Retail/Services Health-Checks are undertaken.

### 1.2 Scope

The scope of this 2006 BTC audit is limited to the analysis of factual data on the Town Centre Retail business activity for ‘Products & Services’. The 2001 Health-check also covered this aspect but extended into more subjective (but valuable) opinion ‘Satisfaction’ surveys on the ‘Quality and Range of Products and services’, the ‘Reasons’ for choosing certain stores & location, and so on. In this survey we draw no conclusions on the quality of service or satisfaction, but purely what is available and how it has changed over the last few years. Nor do we draw any conclusions regarding the profitability or otherwise of the providers of any retail products or services.

There is a wider range of products and services available in Bridport in our Street Market, Business Park and in the various Trading Estates, but these are not included in the present Town Centre audit. This is in line with the 2001 and 2002 Health-Checks.

Finally, we have carried out an audit of the retail Products and Services available in West Bay. This was not covered in any previous audits (2001 and 2002) and so comparisons cannot be made with earlier years. However some conclusions can be drawn, and comparisons will be possible when future audits are carried out.

### 1.3 Physical Area Covered

Since the 2001 WDDC Survey was carried out, the West Dorset District Council have extended slightly their definition of what constitutes the Bridport Town Centre. Their latest version is to be found in the appendices to the 2006 ‘Moderated Version’ of the Local Area Plan. We have followed this latest version, and our map defining which streets are covered is shown in our Appendix 3.2 (that part with a solid black line boundary). The results of the 2006 BTC audit using the WDDC boundary is referred to as ‘Survey 1’ and the detailed results can be found in Appendix 3.3.

However, there are still retail businesses and services (still excluding Trading Estates) that most residents would consider to be within the Town Centre, but which are excluded by the WDDC boundary. These are notably in the most westerly part of West Street and the beginning of West Allington; in the lower end of East Street; and in the Tannery Road/St. Michael’s Lane/Gundry Lane areas. We carried out a second audit (*Survey 2*) that encompassed these additional areas (the results are in Appendix 3.4).

These additional ‘Survey 2’ results were added to the ‘Survey 1’ results to provide a wider retail picture (shown in Appendix 3.5). The map in our Appendix 3.2 shows this extended boundary by the dotted black lines.

Finally, a survey of retail Products and Services available in West Bay was undertaken. This is referred to as ‘Survey 3’, and the results are presented in Appendix 3.6. The area covered starts at the Haddon House Hotel and extends southward to the sea, eastward including Station Road, and westward to the far edge of the Caravan park. Guest Houses and holiday accommodation (except Hotels) was excluded from the survey.

### 1.4 The Method Employed

The Survey Form shown in Appendix 3.1 was used by BTC Councillors to record details of every business within the defined areas (Map shown in Appendix 3.2, and West Bay). All side-streets and alleys within the boundaries were audited using the Survey Form.

For each business, the name of the business or the number of the building was recorded as well as:-

- The *main* product area or service provided,
- Any *secondary* and *distinct* products and/or services provided,

- Whether they were part of a wider group (using the definition of whether they had one or more branches in towns beyond Bridport).

The reason for recording *secondary* products/services is that a very limited and false picture of what is available would emerge if just the main products were recorded. For example, some smaller shops offered diverse items from clothes to gifts, and others from key-cutting to luggage, and craft to Dry Cleaning.

## 2. MAIN CONCLUSIONS

The main conclusions regarding Bridport Town Centre are presented below:-

2.1 There were 187 premises identified in Survey 1 (Appendix 3.3) offering ‘Retail Products and Services’ in the Town Centre as defined by WDDC, and a further 40 in the slightly extended area examined in Survey 2 (see the map in Appendix 3.2). A total number of 227 premises were recorded in the combined Surveys 1 and 2.

2.2 The WDDC survey in 2001 covered an area somewhat smaller than that surveyed in our current 2006 ‘Survey 1’ (Appendix 3.3). The 2002 survey was a little wider and found 165 premises, whereas by comparison, using the revised WDDC boundary, the 2006 ‘Survey 1’ recorded 187 premises.

2.3 The 2001 survey found that 75% of the premises could be classified as ‘Local’, that is, run by independent local businesses with no outlets in other towns. The current 2006 Surveys found that:

- Within the new wider WDDC boundary used by Survey 1 (Appendix 3.3), local businesses constituted 71%
- Within the further extended boundary of the combined Surveys 1 & 2 (Appendix 3.5), local businesses constituted 76%.

2.4 It is concluded that there is no major shift in the overall proportion of ‘local’ businesses operating in Central Bridport in 2006 compared with 2001.

2.5 No record was made in 2001 or 2002 of Vacant Premises, but it is known that several were unoccupied at that time. The 2006 survey results (Survey 1, Appendix 3.3) showed that there were no vacant shops in the Town Centre, although one that had earlier been vacant was being shop fitted as a new restaurant and has not actually opened for business. Survey 1 and 2 combined (Appendix 3.5) revealed that only 2 premises in the extended wider Town Centre area were unoccupied. It was also noted that in the intervening years, one retail premises in South Street had obtained planning permission to convert to apartments.

2.6 The fifth column of figures in the 2006 ‘Survey 1 plus 2’ results, (in Appendix 3.5) shows the results from the 2002 survey. Comparing these two survey results from 2002 and 2006 ‘Survey 1 plus 2’ results (using primary products/services only) it can be seen that:-

1. The main ‘primary’ product/services areas that have *increased* most numerically are:-

- Art Galleries/Picture Framing (up from 2 to 7),
- Restaurants (from 4 to 8), with one more opening shortly.
- ‘Other’ Food Outlets (ie. non-Supermarket, non-Health Foods) up from 2 to 5.
- Hairdressers (up from 10 to 12), and that figure excludes several hairdressers located on trading estates and at West Bay.
- The apparent increase from 5 to 10 in Accountants/Solicitors should be discounted because the 2001 survey used a different categorisation

2. The main Town Centre ‘primary’ product/service areas that have *decreased* numerically are:-

- Antiques (from 12 down to 5), with one more for sale at present.
- Clothes/Shoes (from 18 to 11), but this still leaves a wide choice
- Dry Cleaning as a ‘Primary’ service (from 1 to zero in the Town Centre as far as we can determine). It is offered as a secondary service by one retailer.
- Other gaps in outlets offering Town Centre ‘Primary’ services & products are TV/Radio Specialist Suppliers (1 in 2001) although there is still one at West Bay; and a Private General Recruitment Agency (although a specialist Medical Agency was noted South Street).

2.7 Comparing the 2002 results with the 2006 combined Surveys 1 & 2 results (Appendix 3.5), there appears to be a wider spectrum of products and services available today. These include Alternative Therapy providers, wider choice of styles between different Art and Picture Framing premises, specialist Food Outlets, a few more ‘niche’ Furnishing/Home/Gift outlets such as Malibar Trading, Computer and Telephone retailers/service providers, and a wider cuisine variety and larger number of Restaurants & Take-aways.

2.8 Using the combined Surveys 1 & 2 results (Appendix 3.5), and counting both ‘Primary’ and ‘Secondary’ providers of products/services, some areas are well provided for in the Town Centre resulting in considerable competition (such as hairdressers, pubs, restaurants, cafes, take-away, clothes & shoes, & banks/building societies).

2.9 Conversely others Town Centre product/services are catered for by only one or two outlets (fishmonger, laundry, and off-licences for example).

2.10 Using the combined Surveys 1 & 2 results (Appendix 3.5), and counting both 'Primary' and 'Secondary' providers of products/services, the top five products/services in terms of the largest numbers of alternative suppliers are:

1. Clothes and Shoes at 14 outlets (although this is 4 less than recorded in the 2002 survey)
2. Gifts (at 13)
3. Take-aways, including 'secondary' take-away providers, for example, Husseys South Street warm baked items (at 13)
4. Hairdressers at 12
5. Restaurants (at 8) and Cafes (at 11, which includes 'secondary' cafe providers such as Husseys Tea Room in West Street where the 'primary' service is Bakers/Bread).

2.11 The Street Markets held on Wednesdays and Saturdays, and the Farmer's Market, have not been taken into account in this retail product/service survey. There are not only similar products on sale in the markets, but also additional Products/Services. These have not been taken into account (in line with the two earlier surveys by the WDDC in 2000/01 and the Countryside Agency in 2002), nor was it the intention to assess their impact on retail sales in shops.

The main conclusions regarding the West Bay Area are presented below:-

2.12 We were unable to identify similar earlier data on West Bay Retailing in order to draw comparative results.

2.13 There are 42 providers of Retail Products and Services in West Bay. Permanent Kiosks have been included in this total.

2.14 Looking at 'Primary' service providers, the majority of Products and Services were in the Hospitality/Prepared Hot Food area with:-

- 9 Take-aways
- 4 Cafes
- 3 Pubs
- 2 Restaurants (with a further 5 'Secondary' restaurants found in Pubs, the hotel, and the Trawlerman Fishmongers).

2.15 Similarly, the availability of food for home preparation was well represented by 2 Mini-Marts, 2 fish/sea food retailers, and a Butcher.

2.16 Clothes/shoes could be found in 3 'Primary' outlets, with a similar number of Angling/Sports equipment retailers.

### 3. APPENDICES

The following appendices appear in the next section:-

- The Survey Form used (Appendix 3.1, pages 1 and 2)
- Map of the Town Centre areas surveyed (Appendix 3.2)
- Results from 'Survey 1' in 2006 & 2002 (Appendix 3.3, pages 1 and 2)
- Results for the 'Survey 2' extended Town Centre (Appendix 3.4, pages 1 and 2)
- Results from the combined Surveys 1 and 2 compared with the 2002 survey results (Appendix 3.5, pages 1 and 2)
- The 'Survey 3' data on West Bay for future comparative use (Appendix 3.6, pages 1 and 2)

<b>Street Name/Street side (N., S., E., or West)</b>															
<b>Shop Name or #</b>															
<b>Product/Service</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>												
Accounts/Solicitor															
Alternative Therapy															
Amusements															
Angling															
Antiques															
Architect															
Art/picture framing															
Baby															
Bank/Building Soc															
Baker/Sandwiches															
Betting															
Book															
Builders/Joiners															
Butcher															
Cafe															
Camera/Photography															
Cars & Bikes															
Charity Shop															
Chemist															
Clothes & Shoes															
Computer/Telephone															
Craft															
Dentist															
DIY/Paints etc.															
Dress Hire															
Dry Cleaners															
Electrical/Hardware															
Vacant premises															
Estate Agent															
Fishmonger															
Flowers															
Food (Health Food)															
Food (other)															
Funerals															
Furnishings															
Gift shop															
Green Grocer															
Hairdresser															

**Column 2 = Secondary product(s) and/or service(s)**  
**Column 3 = Tick if it has branches outside Bridport**

Street Name/Street side (N., S., E., or West)			APPENDIX 3.1 (2 of 2)		
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Shop Name or #	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
<b>Product/Service</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>												
Health & Beauty															
Household (minor)															
Insurance															
Jeweller															
Keycutting															
Laundry															
Luggage															
Music															
Newsagent															
Nursery															
Off-Licence															
Optician															
Pets															
Photocopying															
Pub															
Public Service															
Restaurant															
Second-hand															
Social Club															
Sports equipment															
Stationers/Cards															
Supermarket															
ShoemenderCobbler															
Surveyor															
Take-away															
Toy Shop															
Travel Agent															
Video/DVD hire															
Other															

Map of the Town Centre areas surveyed

(Appendix 3.2)

[By Gordon Morris: map not included in original document](#)

<u>Product/Service 2006 survey</u>	# of premises offering this primary product/ service	# of premises offering secondary products/ services. May be > 1 per premises	The total # of premises offering each product/ service	The # of premises with associates outside Bridport	For contrast the <u>2002</u> results are given below	Change 2002 v 2006. Pri- mary product & service only
Accounts/Solicitor	7	2	9	1	5	
Alternative Therapy	1	1	2			
Amusements	1		1			
Antiques	3		3		12	
Architect					3	
Art/picture framing	5		5		2	
Baby	1	3	4	1	2	
Bank/Building Soc	9	1	10	9	11	
Baker/Sandwiches	6		6		3	
Betting	1		1	1	1	
Book	3	2	5	1	4	
Builders/Joiners	1		1			
Butcher	2	1	3		4	
Cafe	6	4	10		8	
Camera/Photography	1	2	3		1	
Cars & Bikes	2		2		4	
Charity Shop	8		8	7	9	
Chemist	3		3	3		
Clothes & Shoes	11	3	14	3	18	
Computer/Telephone	4	1	5	3		
Craft	1	3	4		1	
Dentist	2		2			
DIY/Paints etc.	1		1			
Dress Hire	1		1			
Dry Cleaners		1	1		1	
Electrical/Hardware	3	3	6		4	
Vacant premises	0		0			
Estate Agent	8		8	8	7	
Fishmonger	1		1		1	
Flowers	3		3		2	
Food (Health Food)	2	2	4		3	
Food (other)	3	2	5		2	
Funerals	1		1		3	
Furnishings	6	3	9		9	
Gifts	5	7	12		5	
Green Grocer	3	1	4		1	
Hairdresser	10		10		10	
Health & Beauty	1	4	5			

APPENDIX 3.3 (2 of 2)

Product/Service	# of premises offering this primary product/ service	# of premises offering secondary products/ services. May be > 1 per premises	The total # of premises offering each product/ service	The # of premises with associates outside Bridport	For contrast, the <u>2002</u> results are below.	Change 2002 v 2006. Primary product & service only
Household (minor)	5		5	1		
Insurance	1	3	4			
Jeweller	3	1	4		3	
Keycutting	1	1	2			
Laundry	1		1			
Luggage		1	1			
Music	1	2	3			
Newsagent	2		2		2	
Nursery	1		1			
Off-Licence	1		1	1	2	
Optician	3	1	4	3	2	
Pets	2		2		1	
Photocopying		2	2			
Pub	8		8	1	11	
Public Service	5		5	4		
Restaurant	7		7		4	
Second-hand	1	1	2			
Social Club	2		2			
Sports equipment	1		1			
Stationers/Cards	5	3	8	2	6	
Supermarket	1		1	1	1	
ShoemenderCobbler	1		1			
Surveyor	1		1			
Take-away	3	8	11		4	
Toy Shop	1	2	3		2	
Travel Agent	3		3	3	3	
Video/DVD hire	1	2	3	1		
<b>Total # of Premises</b>	<b>187</b>				<b>165</b>	
<b>Total # of Groups</b>				<b>54</b>		

**NOTE:** In the heading of the fourth column of figures on the right, ‘The # of premises with associates outside Bridport’, the word “associates” is used because some organisations may be part of a group all owned by one plc (eg. W. H. Smiths), whereas others may be part of a more loosely aligned franchise or ‘buying group’ such as Spar.

## SURVEY 2 – EXTENDED AREA; E., W., &amp; S ST.. APPENDIX 3.4 (1 of 2)

Product/Service	# of premises offering this main product/service	# of premises offering secondary products/services. May be > 1 per premises)	The total # of premises offering each product/ service	The # of premises with associates outside Bridport	
Accounts/Solicitor	<b>3</b>		<b>3</b>		
Alternative Therapy	<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>		
Amusements					
Antiques	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>		
Architect	<b>2</b>		<b>2</b>		
Art/picture framing	<b>2</b>		<b>2</b>		
Baby	<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>		
Bank/Building Soc					
Baker/Sandwiches					
Betting					
Book	<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>		
Builders/Joiners					
Butcher	<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>		
Cafe	<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>		
Camera/Photography	<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>		
Cars & Bikes	<b>2</b>		<b>2</b>		
Charity Shop					
Chemist					
Clothes & Shoes					
Computer/Telephone	<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>		
Craft					
Dentist	<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>		
DIY/Paints etc.					
Dress Hire					
Dry Cleaners					
Electrical/Hardware	<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>		
Empty premises	<b>2</b>		<b>2</b>		
Estate Agent					
Fishmonger					
Flowers					
Food (Health Food)					
Food (other)	<b>2</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	
Funerals	<b>2</b>		<b>2</b>		
Furnishings	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>		
Gifts		<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>		
Green Grocer					
Hairdresser	<b>2</b>		<b>2</b>		
Health & Beauty	<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>		

Product/Service	# of premises offering this main product/ service	# of premises offering secondary products/ services. May be > 1 per premises	The total # of premises offering each product/ service	The # of premises with associates outside Bridport	
Household (minor)					
Insurance					
Jeweller					
Keycutting					
Laundry					
Luggage					
Music					
Newsagent	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>		
Nursery	<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>		
Off-Licence					
Optician					
Pets					
Photocopying					
Pub	<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>		
Public Service	<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>		
Restaurant	<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>		
Second-hand	<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>		
Social Club					
Sports equipment	<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>		
Stationers/Cards		<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>		
Supermarket					
ShoemenderCobbler					
Surveyor					
Take-away	<b>2</b>		<b>2</b>		
Toy Shop					
Travel Agent					
Video/DVD hire					
<b>Total # of Premises</b>	<b>40</b>				
<b>Total # of Groups</b>				<b>1</b>	

**NOTE:** In the heading of the fourth column of figures on the right, ‘The # of premises with associates outside Bridport’, the word “associates” is used because some organisations may be part of a group all owned by one plc (eg. W. H. Smiths), whereas others may be part of a more loosely aligned franchise or ‘buying group’ such as Spar.

SURVEYS 1 & 2 COMBINED RESULTS			APPENDIX 3.5 (1 of 2)			
Product/Service	# of premises offering this main product/service in 2006	# of premises offering secondary products/services. May be > 1 per premises	The total # of premises offering each product/service	The # of premises with associates outside Bridport	For contrast the <u>2002</u> results are given below	Change 2002 v 2006. Primary product & service only
Accounts/Solicitor	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	+5
Alternative Therapy	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>			
Amusements	<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>			
Antiques	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>		<b>12</b>	-7
Architect	<b>2</b>		<b>2</b>		<b>3</b>	-1
Art/picture framing	<b>7</b>		<b>7</b>		<b>2</b>	+5
Baby	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	0
Bank/Building Soc	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>	-2
Baker/Sandwiches	<b>6</b>		<b>6</b>		<b>3</b>	+3
Betting	<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	0
Book	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	
Builders/Joiners	<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>			
Butcher	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>		<b>4</b>	-1
Cafe	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>		<b>8</b>	+1
Camera/Photography	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>		<b>1</b>	+1
Cars & Bikes	<b>4</b>		<b>4</b>		<b>4</b>	0
Charity Shop	<b>8</b>		<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	-1
Chemist	<b>3</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>		
Clothes & Shoes	<b>11</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>18</b>	-7
Computer/Telephone	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>		
Craft	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>		<b>1</b>	0
Dentist	<b>3</b>		<b>3</b>			
DIY/Paints etc.	<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>			
Dress Hire	<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>			
Dry Cleaners		<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>	-1
Electrical/Hardware	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>		<b>4</b>	0
Vacant premises	<b>2</b>		<b>2</b>		?	-
Estate Agent	<b>8</b>		<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	+1
Fishmonger	<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>	0
Flowers	<b>3</b>		<b>3</b>		<b>2</b>	+1
Food (Health Food)	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>		<b>3</b>	-1
Food (other)	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	+3
Funerals	<b>3</b>		<b>3</b>		<b>3</b>	0
Furnishings	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>		<b>9</b>	-2
Gifts	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>13</b>		<b>5</b>	0
Green Grocer	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>		<b>1</b>	+2
Hairdresser	<b>12</b>		<b>12</b>		<b>10</b>	+2
Health & Beauty	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>			

Product/Service	# of premises offering this main product/service in 2006	# of premises offering secondary products/ services. May be > 1 per premises	The total # of premises offering each product/service	The # of premises with associates outside Bridport	For contrast, the <u>2002</u> results are below.	Change 2002 v 2006. Primary product & service only
Household (minor)	5		5	1		
Insurance	1	3	4			
Jeweller	3	1	4		3	0
Keycutting	1	1	2			
Laundry	1		1			
Luggage		1	1			
Music	1	2	3			
Newsagent	4	1	5		2	+2
Nursery	2		2			
Off-Licence	1		1	1	2	-1
Optician	3	1	4	3	2	+1
Pets	2		2		1	+1
Photocopying		2	2			
Pub	9		9	1	11	-2
Public Service	6		6	4		
Restaurant	8		8		4	+4
Second-hand	2	1	3			
Social Club	2		2			
Sports equipment	2		2			
Stationers/Cards	5	5	10	2	6	-1
Supermarket	1		1	1	1	0
ShoemenderCobbler	1		1			
Surveyor	1		1			
Take-away	5	8	13		4	+1
Toy Shop	1	2	3		2	-1
Travel Agent	3		3	3	3	0
Video/DVD hire	1	2	3	1		
<b>Total # of Premises</b>	<b>227</b>				<b>165</b>	
<b>Total # of Groups</b>				<b>55</b>		

**NOTE:** In the heading of the fourth column of figures on the right, ‘The # of premises with associates outside Bridport’, the word “associates” is used because some organisations may be part of a group all owned by one plc (eg. W. H. Smiths), whereas others may be part of a more loosely aligned franchise or ‘buying group’ such as Spar.

SURVEY 3 RESULTS; WEST BAY			APPENDIX 3.6 (1 of 2)		
<u>Product/Service 2006 survey</u>	# of premises offering this primary product/ service	# of premises offering secondary products/ services. May be > 1 per premises	The total # of premises offering each product/ service	The # of premises with associates outside Bridport	
Accounts/Solicitor					
Alternative Therapy					
Amusements	2				
Angling	2				
Antiques					
Architect					
Art/picture framing	2				
Baby					
Bank/Building Soc					
Baker/Sandwiches					
Betting	1				
Book					
Builders/Joiners					
Butcher	1				
Cafe	4				
Camera/Photography					
Cars & Bikes					
Charity Shop					
Chemist					
Clothes & Shoes	3				
Computer/Telephone					
Craft					
Dentist					
DIY/Paints etc.					
Dress Hire					
Dry Cleaners					
Electric/H'ware/TV	1				
Vacant premises	1				
Estate Agent					
Fishmonger	2				
Flowers					
Food (Health Food)					
Food (other)					
Funerals					
Furnishings					
Gifts		3			
Green Grocer		1			
Hairdresser	1				

Product/Service	# of premises offering this primary product/ service	# of premises offering secondary products/ services. May be > 1 per premises	The total # of premises offering each product/ service	The # of premises with associates outside Bridport		
Health & Beauty						
Household (minor)						
Insurance						
Jeweller						
Keycutting						
Laundry	1					
Luggage						
Music						
Newsagent	1					
Nursery						
Off-Licence						
Optician						
Pets						
Photocopying						
Pub	3			1		
Public Service		1				
Restaurant	2	5				
Second-hand						
Social Club						
Sports equipment	1	2				
Stationers/Cards						
Supermarket						
Shoemender/Cobbler						
Surveyor						
Take-away	9	1				
Toy Shop						
Travel Agent						
Hotel	1					
Chandler	1					
Paving/Gravel	1					
Mini-Mart	2			1		
Video/DVD hire						
<b>Total # of Premises</b>	<b>42</b>					
<b>Total # of Groups</b>				2		

## **Appendix 17**

### **"Market Town" A Difficult Term, Difficult to Define**

Defining the rural and understanding the threats posed to rural life have long been the subject of debate. There has been a steady stream of reports, books, and studies in the years since 1940 (Bracey 1959, Bradley and Lowe 1984, Cloke 1983, CRC 2007, CRC 2006, CRC 2006d, Dunn, Hodge, Monk and Kiddle 1998, HMSO 1942). Although the terms "rural" and "urban" have been defined (Defra 2004, ODPM 2002a), it should be noted that the researchers who helped develop these definitions also concluded that, "... *no single existing definition of urban and rural areas could meet the needs of all users.*" (ODPM 2002a p5). This cautionary note applies with equal force to the attempts made to define market towns. Is the term, market towns, useful and meaningful, or simply a confusing and nostalgic abstraction?

There are many country towns that do not have markets, are not particularly attractive, and yet provide market services for both their immediate and hinterland populations. The term, market town, conjures up images of Borchester and Barchester, of Dorchester and Bakewell, a mix of bucolic fantasy and fact. Its relatively recent use in rural development circles stems from the mid-1990s, when, according to a Rural Development Commission (RDC) internal paper, "... *consultations connected with the preparation of the Rural White Paper [of 1995] confirmed that there was widespread concern about the future of market towns as service centres... and agreed that the White Paper should refer to our proposed initiative*<sup>101</sup>.*"* (RDC 1996 p1). The paper referred to the RDC's discussions with local authority associations, the Association of Town Centre Management (ATCM) and the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI), which led to, "... *the idea of [establishing] a market towns forum along the lines of the successful Historic Towns Forum.*" (p1). It was from this proposal to Commissioners, and following further meetings with the Association of District Councils, Civic Trust, Crime Concern, ATCM, and representatives of local authorities and local community groups, that the creation of Action for Market Towns (AMT) stemmed. The proposal to create AMT was also informed, in part, by conferences organized by the RDC in Dorset (Morris 1996, 1996a), Berkshire and Devon, and by other locally initiated – and continuing - work, including that by Nicholas Falk in Stroud (Falk 2005), and Julian Owen of Kent County Council, who worked on the Isle of Thanet in the 1990s (Owen 2007), and also with the United States-based Main Street Programme<sup>102</sup>.

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<sup>101</sup> Which it did (DoE/MAFF 1995 p57).

<sup>102</sup> The Main Street Programme, which helps local people develop organizational capacity and individual skills via topic-based training, encourages economic development in town centres/business districts via four main topics: Design, Economic Restructuring, Promotion, and Organization (<http://tinyurl.com/cong6t>).

In a strategy review paper for the RDC, Alan Rogers noted that, although, "*The English village, and the community which inhabits it, represents for many people an image of an ideal society ... [and that] ... These sentiments are powerful, if unwitting, contributors to the development and direction of rural policy.*" (Rogers 1993 p2) "... 'rural community' does not necessarily mean 'village, in the sense of a nucleated cluster of dwellings..." (p6). Neither, it is suggested, does 'rural community' mean 'market town'. Rogers refers to the possibility that, as the country's population ages, the urban to rural flow might, "... more accurately be found to be an urban-to-small-village-to-market town movement or some other combination over the life-cycle of the household." (p10), and notes that, "... major economic changes ... are primarily focused upon employment which is town-based (even though the workers may choose to live in villages)." (p18). Rogers's use of the single word, town, in the context of employment destinations, and market town in terms of household life-cycle, is interesting in that, to this writer at least, it suggests that the latter represent idyllic retirement destinations (and final resting places), whereas town, rather more prosaically, suggests offices, factories – something altogether bigger, somehow less desirable (except, presumably, for those who need to work), and more urban.

It is possible that Rogers' paper was the catalyst for the RDC's interest in towns, and so helped to inform the Commissioners' decision to set up AMT. The preference for the word, *market*, rather than *country*, is an indication that, with its strong rural connotations, it was believed to be both appropriate and powerful in terms of its ability to resonate with, and influence, the - mainly London-based - decision takers<sup>103</sup>. The term is exclusive in that it suggests prosperous communities living an idyllic lifestyle in the shadow of an Abbey Close, rather than of coal field communities living in the shadow of a redundant pithead. The tendency to think mainly in terms of the former category can be seen in small, but significant ways. For example, by the emphasis on Ludlow and Dorchester, two traditional **market** towns, in the case studies selected as part of a discussion about how to define the countryside (Jones 2000 pp6-8)<sup>104</sup>, the references to Sleaford, Oswestry, Richmond, Ibstock, Towcester, and Ripon in the Rural White Paper (DETR/MAFF 2000 pp75-81)<sup>105</sup>, and the general use of colourful, positive photographs of busy high streets

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<sup>103</sup> The writer, then an employee of the RDC, was involved in the work that led to creation of AMT, and was interviewed, unsuccessfully, to lead the process (ie to become, in effect, AMT's first Chief Executive). There was some debate about whether to use *market*, or *country*, in the title, suggesting that the term's power, both to influence, and confuse, was recognized. The writer opted for the latter, for reasons evident from this Appendix.

<sup>104</sup> This is borne out by the writer's experience. During the selection process for Beacon Towns the case for the inclusion of non-traditional towns like Carterton and Wolverton, had to be made much more strongly than that for towns like Richmond and Hexham.

<sup>105</sup> This tendency to use traditional towns as case studies continued throughout the life of the Market Towns Initiative (MTI), although the MTI assessment summary (CA 2004) included atypical Wolverton along with Craven Arms, Bewdley, and Malton. This, it is suspected, reflects the fact that the

and bustling market places<sup>106</sup> (See Plates 1 and 2 in Chapter 6). The choice of these stereotypical towns tends to reinforce the image of a rural England that is homogenously attractive, uniformly comfortable, and relatively wealthy. These choices give an impression of England's country towns that is not only inaccurate, but also unfair to the people whose livelihoods have largely disappeared in non-traditional, or "single-purpose" towns, such as those that depended on coalmining, fishing, or a much reduced seasonal seaside holiday trade (CRC 2006a, Defra 2004b p8, Shucksmith 2000 p46).

At the very least, "...'hybrid' issues such as market towns and rural coalfields that combine elements of the urban and the rural often fall between two stools." (Ward, Lowe and Bridges 2003 p209). Officially, and irrespective of their locations and functions, the, "... *Rural and Urban Definition for England and Wales ... creates a set of detailed categories for all settlements, classifying them in terms of their immediate population density as hamlets, villages, rural towns and urban (all settlements over 10,000 population) and in terms of their wider population density as sparsely or less sparsely populated.*" (CRC 2006b p17). For those with an eye for detail, however, things are not necessarily straightforward. For example, for an urban area to qualify as an Urban Settlement it must have a minimum population of 1,000 and should extend to 20 hectares or more. Some of these urban settlements, with small populations but urban land characteristics (eg built-up sites either side of a road, or mine buildings) are within rural areas (ODPM 2002 pp15-16). There are, therefore, inevitably, areas "... that are difficult to classify particularly where there are single urban centres surrounded by predominantly rural hinterlands." (ODPM 2002 p23).

In essence, the acceptance of the agreed rural definition appears to be pragmatic, rather than arbitrary, in that it reflects custom and practice. For example, from 1994 a general rule was applied by the then Rural Development Commission whereby most settlements with populations greater than 10,000 were deemed to be urban, and therefore ineligible for RDC support (Rogers 1999 p120). The selection of this cut-off point has merit in that it is clear and easy to understand. If, however, it is used as a bureaucratic barrier to eligibility for help from rural development organizations and programmes, it can appear simplistic and unhelpful. This is certainly true where country towns are concerned, given that their populations are said to vary, "... between 2,000 and 20,000." (DETR/MAFF 2000 p74), or between, "... 2-30,000." (AMT 2006, CA 2002 p89), and, in reality, in

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programme was biased towards traditional towns and the often articulate middle class residents with the time and inclination to participate in the Initiative.

<sup>106</sup> By way of contrast it is interesting to note how the CRC, with its emphasis on disadvantage, makes extensive use of black and white photography to communicate its messages.

strictly accurate terms, between about 60,000 and 90,000 for traditional market towns such as Taunton and Maidstone (ONS 2007). Defining the term, "market town" for the purposes of rural policy is difficult, given the variations in population and functions, a fact recognized by John Shepherd, in a report to Defra, in which he posed the question, "... *how should larger (>10,000 population) market towns be defined and incorporated in the [new rural] definition?*" (RERC 2004 p4). It is unclear whether the question was ever answered, or whether, for pragmatic reasons, it has been ignored on the understanding that some things are best dealt with on a case-by-case basis<sup>107</sup>.

The are other definitional difficulties. According to Shepherd, who was much involved in the research that led to the adoption of the new definitions, "*The definition identification of 'rural towns', however, is not necessarily all places under 10,000 since the approach is ... based upon a distance decay effect of local density.*", and, "*'Larger Market Towns' only enter into the rules for classifying Local Authorities. These are Urban Areas ... between 10,000 and 30,000 population that are deemed to have a 'hinterland serving' function based upon the 'over provision' of certain services, ie it basically rules out Urban Areas that are disconnected (in land use terms), suburbs etc.*" (Shepherd 2007).

In addition to the new definitions, new ways of working based on partnership have been introduced as approaches to governance have evolved, and the trend towards regional working has gathered pace (Morris 2006). For example, Rural Development Areas and Programmes, and national programmes of work such as the MTI, the Vital Villages Programme, and the Local Heritage Initiative, have given way to Regional Development Agency-led programmes such as the south west's Rural Renaissance, to Community Strategies, Local Area Agreements, and Local Strategic and ChangeUp Partnerships that encourage a wide range of public, private, and voluntary sector organizations to contribute to development work, regionally and locally (Capacity Builders 2007, ChangeUp 2007, Defra 2006 p93, IDeA 2007). It might, therefore, be more helpful, if less precise, simply to use the phrase, small towns, especially as the CRC noted, in line with Shepherd's view, that, "...*certain urban areas with between 10,000 and 30,000 population are held to be 'larger market towns' and are taken into account in assessing the rurality of a district.*" (CRC 2005 p138). Precision, however, is not a synonym for accuracy, which might explain why, prior to the mid-1990s, the term, market town, was used cautiously in the literature, with 'country town', or simply 'town' being used as a counterpoint to 'village' (Chalkin 1989, Chamberlin 1984, Cloke 1983, Howkins 1991, Marsden, Murdoch, Lowe, Munton, and Flynn 1993, RRG 1994).

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<sup>107</sup> The ONS website, [www.statistics.gov.uk/geography/nrudp.asp](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/geography/nrudp.asp) does not make things clear.

Given the current emphasis on evidence-based analysis, work on rural definitions appears likely to continue, because, although, "*Many academics have long been wary of using the word rural in anything other than a loose and generic sense, with some suggesting that it is unhelpful to use it at all ... policy makers have pragmatic reasons for requiring definitions.*" (Winter and Rushbrook 2003 p10). Practitioners are drawn, equally pragmatically, towards the loose and generic, especially when it allows for local interpretation of local needs and circumstances. Interestingly, the Rural Evidence Research Centre's most recent approach makes the case for definitional flexibility, in that, for study purposes, the Centre gathers together 1,630 settlements with between 1,500 and 40,000 population under the heading, Rural Towns and Large Villages (Shepherd 2009).

From a practitioner's point of view, an abstract term like market town can be a helpful and influential description. There is a paradox here. In view of the definitional complexity "market town" as a term appears to be largely irrelevant, and potentially confusing. Its resonance masks its imprecision. On the other hand, compared with the official definitions, the term is instantly recognizable, and means something to everyone, even if that something is different, or no longer exists. Again, its resonance masks its imprecision.

Nevertheless, the reality is that the term has migrated from the literary and historical worlds to the worlds of policy and academe. In use as a standard term for more than ten years by central government (DCLG 2006, DETR/MAFF 2000, DETR 1998, DoE/MAFF 1995 p57), by AMT, although its literature also refers to, "small towns" (AMT 2007a), by Regional Development Agencies<sup>108</sup> (RDA 2007), the Countryside Agency and its successor, the CRC (CA 2004, CA 2004a, CRC 2005, CRC 2006a<sup>109</sup>, CRC 2007), and others (ARHC 2006, Francis 2006, Simms, Oram, MacGillivray and Drury 2003). Academics, too, now routinely, if sometimes ambivalently, use the term (Caffyn 2004, Powe and Shaw 2004, Richardson and Powe 2004, Ward, Lowe and Bridges 2003, Woods 2005 pp155-157).

Findlay, Stockdale, Findlay and Short (2001 p1) note that, "*As a discipline becomes increasingly fragmented into subdisciplines [sic], the borderline areas may become neglected...*", even though, "*Such territories of research may be none the less very pertinent to policy-making.*" Similarly, as discussed above, the point at which urban

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<sup>108</sup> Although, for example, the south east's and south west's regional structures are the South East Rural Towns Partnership and the Market and Coastal Towns Initiative, both of which hint at difficulties in defining, 'market towns'.

<sup>109</sup> The 2006 State of the Countryside Report (CRC 2006c) also refers to, 'rural towns', 'larger towns', 'English towns', 'sparse towns', and, 'our towns'.

becomes rural is difficult to define, because, "While we may recognise an urban to rural transition, this takes place across many different variables, such as density of human settlement, remoteness from urban centres, balance of particular economic sectors and patterns of land use." (Hodge and Monk 2004 p264). Clearly, a similar difficulty, and a similar number of variables apply to defining the point at which an 'urban' town becomes a 'rural' town with specifically rural functions and needs.

In conclusion, one is drawn to Alan Rogers' stated intention, in his paper for the RDC, not to concentrate on definitions, because, "*That way can lead to arid academic conundrums which often seem, by their clever deconstructions, to destroy the very thing which they sought to elucidate.*" (Rogers 1993 p4). The point was reinforced by a respondent to a CRC survey into rural disadvantage, who said, "*We do not feel that more work needs to be done regarding definitions, as this may actually dilute the existence of a common understanding between policy makers, and a common understanding is important if things are to progress effectively.*" (CRC 2005a p5). Although these views have much to commend them, and defining a market/small/sparse/English/rural/country town is clearly difficult, possibly pointless, confusing, and energy sapping, the use, casual and considered, of, market town as a "catch-all" definition, appears to be here to stay.

To answer questions about the term's usefulness, therefore, is difficult, for it appears to be both helpful, and unhelpful, depending on the purpose for which it is used. It is, however, this writer's belief that rural policy and practice would be better served if the term was used literally, or not at all. To talk, generally, for example, of small country towns, rather than market towns, might be less evocative, less romantic, and even less popular, but it would better reflect the fact that these are diverse places, with roles, histories, problems and potentials that deserve a descriptive term that more accurately reflects the reality of 21<sup>st</sup> century rural England.

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