

## What Do We Mean by Rural?

If we are to understand the journey from the reality for communities living and working in rural Wales to the reality for policy makers at the national level we must first understand three simple facts about how policy is made and how that process affects how we view things.

### 3 Simple Facts

The first important thing is that policy tends not to be about an area, whether urban or rural. Normally, policy is developed to tackle a certain set of circumstances or to help deliver certain objectives. For example, measures to tackle economic inactivity and action on climate change address circumstances, whilst transport and education measures are about meeting objectives. Some circumstances will tend to occur with greater or lesser intensity in densely or sparsely populated – that is urban or rural – areas whilst others will apply regardless of where you are. The same can be said of objectives where, as ‘One Wales’ clearly shows, most objectives are for the whole of Wales whilst some, such as Communities First areas, are very specific. Where you see policies that are very specific, such as Communities First, they have been developed very carefully and deliberately to tackle a specific set of issues that are predominantly present in the areas that the policy is directed at. This does not mean that the same issues are not present elsewhere, only that they are more prevalent and more embedded in the targeted areas.

The second important thing is that policy has to be based on evidence if it is to achieve what it is supposed to. Anecdotal information is useful as a marker that something may be a certain way, but only evidence – quantitative or qualitative or both – is the only true basis on which to develop a policy that will positively impact on the lives of individuals and communities. The robustness of that evidence is crucial. It must be collected in a reliable way and have a big enough sample size – or enough data captured - to enable it to be analysed and questioned. Only sound evidence that can stand for itself will influence decisions about funding and staff resource. There is a great deal of data available but often it is not designed for a purpose we may wish to use it for, such as the Index of Multiple Deprivation (which has been designed for one very specific purpose), or doesn't have the same basis as data we need to compare it to, for example data at an England and Wales level when we are looking at a policy that will operate at ward level.

The third important thing, and possibly the hardest to fully comprehend, is there is no such thing as a single definition of ‘rural’ because ‘rurality’ is an issue with many facets. In looking at ‘rural’ you could be considering rural land, rural people, rural businesses, rural activities etc. and a definition that fits one of these may not be suitable for use with another. In addition, there could be different definitions depending on whether policy makers want descriptive statistics where a degree of ‘fuzziness’ can be accepted, or are dealing with a funding mechanisms where it cannot.

The National Statistics classification helps with this as it provides a useful default definition and a tool for statistical analysis. Instead of having a simplistic split between

urban and rural, the classification attempts to show the settlement pattern by dividing places between four settlement types and then putting those types into context depending on how far they are from somewhere else. This gives a picture of how many people live in a place and how far that place is from the next place – the further away, the more ‘sparse’ an area is.

Map 1 shows how this classification looks for Wales, Map 2 shows the pattern of domestic address points and Map 3 shows the settlements. Taken together, they clearly show how Wales looks at the national level in terms of where the people are, the distances between them and the large / larger settlements that could act as service centres.

They also show the challenges facing policy makers trying to develop all Wales policies whilst also trying to reach as many people as possible with the resources available.

### Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD)

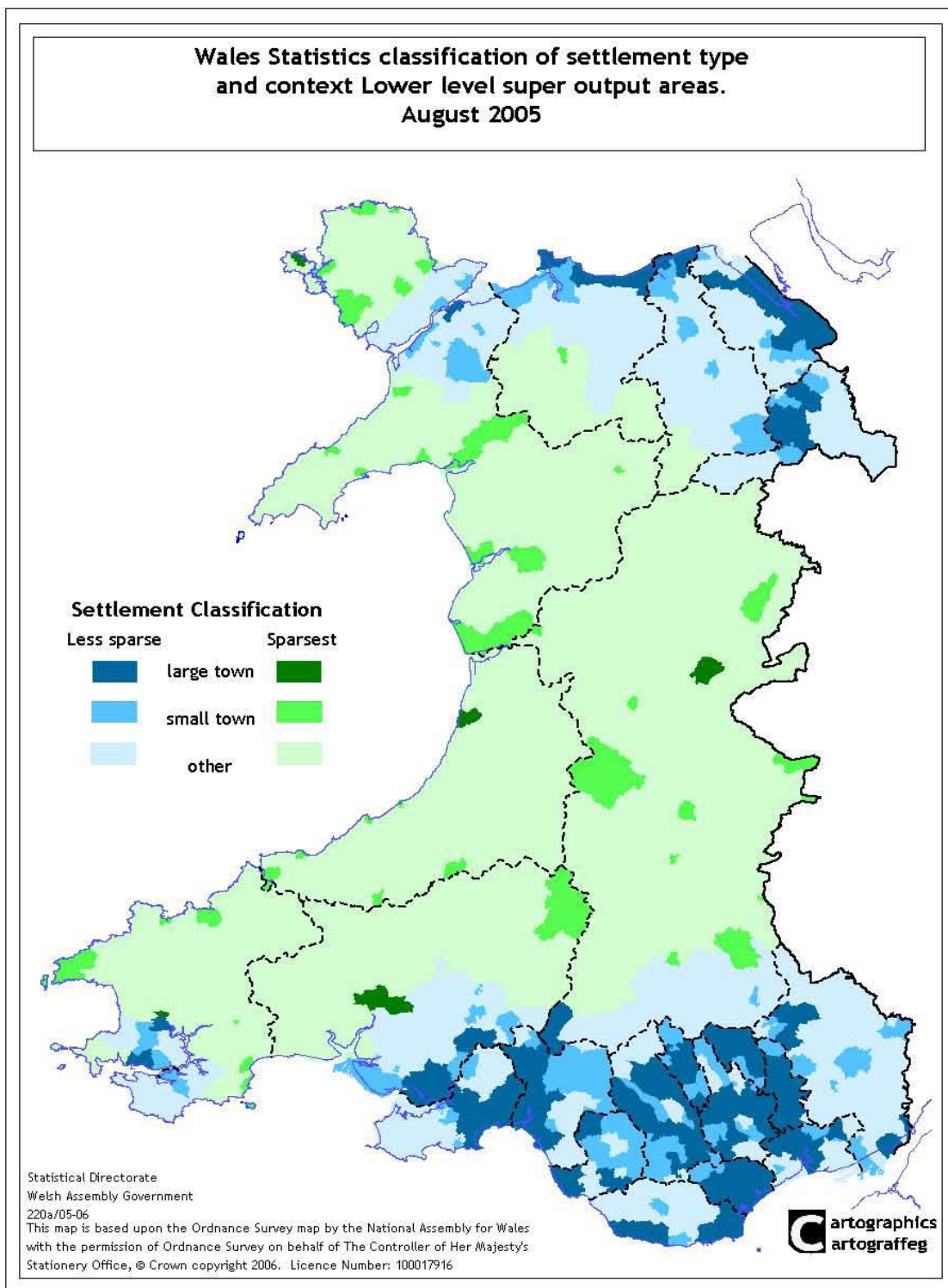
This is perhaps the point at which to explain what the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation is and what it is for.

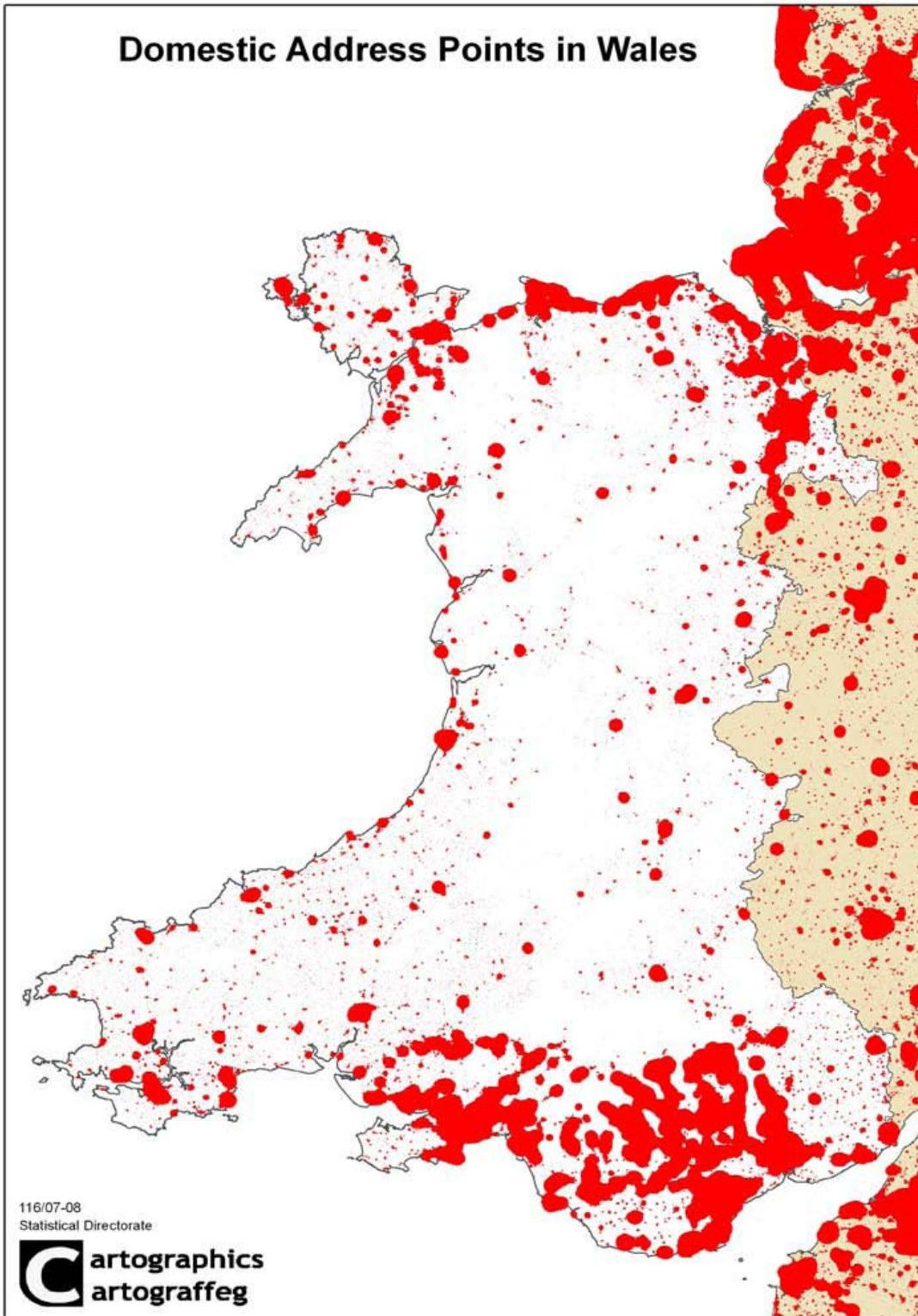
The WIMD is made up of eight domains (or kinds) of deprivation: income, housing, employment, access to services, health, environment, education and community safety. Each domain has a weighting according to the impact it was judged to have on multiple deprivation. Income and employment were classed as the most important factors and were given the biggest weighting in the overall Index as although there is more to deprivation than poverty, not having enough money or a job is a big part of it.

Although an important tool, the WIMD has been developed for a specific purpose and should not be used as a universal solution. It is designed to measure concentrations of deprivation at a small area level and when deciding on whether or not to use it policy makers have to ask two important questions:

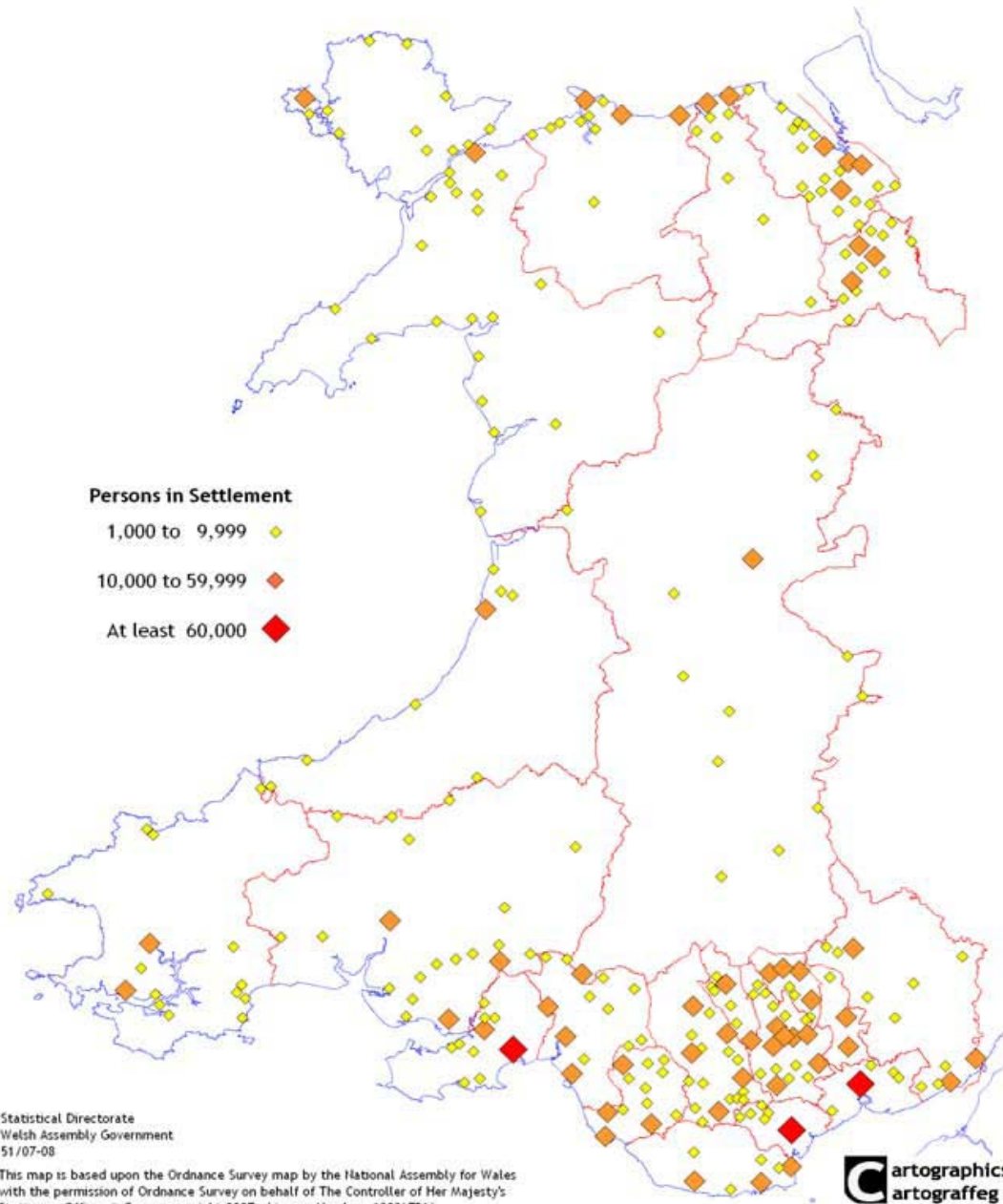
1. Am I interested in localised concentrations of deprivation or in all deprived people?
2. Is deprivation actually concentrated in my area of interest?

These questions are important because although there is a definite concentration of deprivation into a relatively small number of areas, by no means all the deprived people live in an area of high deprivation. For example, a fifth of income deprived people live in areas within the most deprived 10% of areas in Wales – which illustrates how well the WIMD identifies clusters from within the overall population. Almost half live within the most deprived 30% of areas. That still means that around a half of income deprived people are spread over the remaining 70% of Wales. Even in the least deprived areas there are income deprived people.





### Settlements in Wales 2001



When looking at the WIMD it is important to understand that tiny differences in the deprivation score do not mean anything and you cannot say how much more deprived one area is than another. If area A has a score of 40 and area B a score of 20 it does not follow that area A is twice as deprived as area B, or if A were ranked as the 100<sup>th</sup> most deprived area and B the 300<sup>th</sup>, it does not follow that A is three times more deprived than B. Such conclusions are simply wrong.

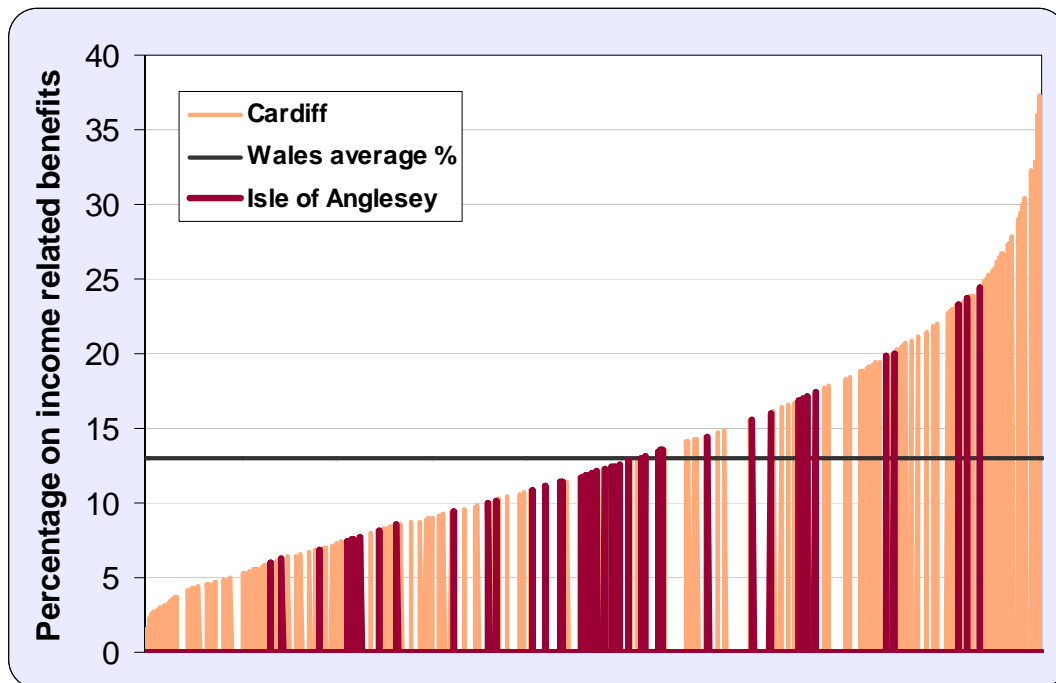
Also, it is an index of deprivation not affluence. If one area is much lower down the ranked list than another then you can say that it is less deprived but you cannot say that it is affluent. Every area has people who are deprived and people who are affluent, but the WIMD only counts those classed as deprived. It makes no difference whether the rest are nearly deprived but not quite, fairly well-off, or really rich. A good illustration of this is the comparison of Cardiff and Anglesey.

For WIMD 2008, the percentage of people on income related benefits in Wales was 13.1% overall. For Cardiff the figure was 13.2% and for Anglesey the figure was 12.9%. So in terms of overall levels of income deprivation, both Cardiff and the Anglesey were comparable and also similar to the overall Wales average. However, as can be seen in Chart 1, the distribution of income deprivation within each local authority was quite different. While there was still a big difference between the most and least deprived LSOAs in Anglesey, there was nothing like the range of variation seen in Cardiff. In particular, there were no LSOAs in Anglesey at the very extremes. This is illustrated in Chart 1

This analysis highlights the fact that with virtually the same income deprivation at the Local Authority level, the distribution within each Local Authority is very different. Cardiff is very polarised whilst Anglesey has much less variation about the average. Hence targeting high concentration in Cardiff makes sense while it doesn't in Anglesey.

The general view is that because Anglesey gets very little in the top 10% then WIMD does not work. This is not correct as it does work because it shows where high concentrations and low concentrations are. The thing to remember is that because you don't tend to get very high or very low concentrations in rural areas you need to tackle deprivation in a different way and spatial distribution is one of the key things to take into consideration.

Chart 1



In summary, the WIMD is a very useful tool for looking at specific issues in small areas and assessing how many people are affected and this is why it is not the right tool to use when looking at rural deprivation. The only domain where it will highlight sparsely populated (i.e. rural) areas is in access to services because the highest concentration of people facing the biggest disadvantage is in the sparsely populated area.

Aside from the WIMD there are a number of other approaches that can be used in considering rural deprivation and rurality measures. The Assembly Government is currently considering these with a view to developing a tool / tools that policy makers can use when trying to quantify rural deprivation. There are a number of areas of work underway including an analysis of data collected for the WIMD, a review of Spatial Plan data and an evaluation of a number of Assembly Government programmes targeting poverty. Another important source of information is the work of the Wales Rural Observatory, which is the main source of survey information, dedicated research and data analysis supporting the Rural Policy Unit and the wider Assembly Government on rural issues.

### 'Deep Rural' Study

This review is tied into the research project being undertaken by the Wales Rural Observatory to take forward the 'One Wales' commitment to work with local authorities to identify and address the issues affecting 'deep rural' areas. The project is an opportunity to address concerns that isolated rural communities are disadvantaged by their distance from the services that are taken for granted elsewhere in Wales and to

explore the range of issues surrounding access to services and the provision of services to 'deep rural' communities.

The first stage of the project was to develop a set of criteria based on service provision and access that allowed 'deep rural' areas to be identified in a clear and consistent way. The outcome of this was a definition of deep rural areas as places that are over thirty minutes average drive time from a settlement of 10,000 people. This is because towns of around 10,000 people normally have a good concentrations of health, financial, leisure and other services, whereas, smaller more remote communities do not enjoy access to the same comprehensive range of services. It is recognised that this definition has its limitations and part of the project will look at its validity and possible alternatives.

Stage two of the project used this definition to identify 'deep rural' areas in the rural parts of North East Anglesey, Gwynedd, Conwy, Denbighshire, Powys, West Gower in Swansea, Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire and North Pembrokeshire. Working with the WLGA, the Wales Rural Observatory, Powys, Pembrokeshire and Gwynedd local authorities, the Assembly Government has identified four suitable communities where studies are being conducted. These communities, listed below, are shown on Map 4:

- North Powys around Llanfihangel yng Ngwynfa near Llanfyllin;
- South Powys around Llangammarch Wells;
- North Pembrokeshire around Tegryn; and
- Lleyn Peninsula around Aberdaron.

The areas were selected not only because they complied with the definition, but also because they included the 180 and 500 households necessary for successful survey work and also because they lacked five or more services from the following list of twelve key services developed by the Rural Observatory:

- Food only shop;
- Post office;
- Petrol station;
- Bank or building society;
- General practitioner;
- Dental surgery;
- Pharmacy;
- Educational establishment;
- Permanent library;
- Police station;
- Bus stop or railway station; and
- Cash machine.



The studies, which started in November 2008, involve residents of the communities and service providers in the public, private and third sectors responding to a questionnaire on a number of service related themes. A proportion of the respondents will also be asked to participate in follow-up interviews. The studies will provide a framework that will allow an all-Wales picture to be developed that will show the issues of concern to rural service providers and the residents who access, or cannot access, those services.

It is expected that the study will highlight issues at three main levels: (i) those common to all four areas, which would indicate the need for action by the Assembly Government; (ii) issues specific to each local authority area, which would indicate the need for action by the local authority working with the Assembly Government; and (iii) issues specific to a community, which would indicate the need for action at the community level with all parties, including local groups, working together. The final report will be available around June 2009.

### Rural Proofing

The part of the Assembly Government responsible for delivering this study is the Rural Policy Unit which was established by the Minister for Rural Affairs in 2008. The Unit plays a fundamental role in raising the awareness of rural issues and helping other parts of the Assembly Government and key stakeholders take account of the needs of rural people, communities, businesses and local authorities. The main tool it uses to do this is Rural Proofing.

Rural Proofing is a commitment by the Assembly Government to ensure that all its Departments take into consideration rural circumstances and needs when developing and implementing any policy, programme or initiative. The concept of Rural Proofing underpins the 'One Wales' commitment to the principles of social justice, sustainability and inclusivity of the whole of Wales and fairness to all. 'One Wales' sets out the Government's vision for achieving an improved quality of life for people in Wales and, within its four year programme, the Assembly Government are committed to supporting rural communities and actions to address the particular needs of deep rural areas.

It is a process that allows the impact of a policy / programme / initiative to be examined carefully and objectively to determine whether it has a different impact in rural areas because of their unique characteristics. If a differential impact is identified then consideration needs to be given to ways of adjusting the policy / programme / initiative to reflect the needs of rural communities and to ensure they are not disadvantaged due to their location. It extends to legislative issues and is part of the Regulatory Impact Assessment that will have to be undertaken for Legislative Competence Orders and Measures.

It is delivered through a targeted support and advice service to help officials consider ways of adjusting a policy / programme / initiative to reflect the needs of rural communities and to ensure they are not disadvantaged due to their location. Every portfolio in the Assembly Government has a dedicated member of the Unit working with

it and that person also proactively scans for new developments and revisions of existing ones under their portfolio.

As of last year, Rural Proofing is a mandatory part of the ‘One Wales’ Policy Gateway Tool - Early Stage, which means that there is a check on rural issues at a pan Assembly, strategic level. Equality for rural communities is also a key consideration of the Inclusive Policy Making process which ensures that the Assembly Government meets the responsibilities under equality legislation. Importantly, a member of the Unit sits on every Policy Gateway – Final Stage session. To date there have been 21 Gateways which are shown below:

Agri-food Strategy	Community Cohesion Strategy
Museums Strategy	Green Jobs Strategy
Transforming Education Provision	Suicide Prevention Action Plan
Family Nurse Service	Welsh Medium Education Strategy
Young Entrants Strategy	Review of Sustainable Development Scheme
Better Woodlands for Wales	Social Enterprise Action Plan
Farming, Food & Countryside – Building a Secure Future	Post Office Development Fund
Review of Land Management – Axis 2	National Energy Efficiency & Saving Plan
Housing Strategy	Financial Inclusion Strategy
Strategic Action Plan for the Welsh Red Meat Industry	Local Sourcing Strategy
Waste Strategy	

It is worth noting that in the time the Unit has been operating the Rural Proofing service it has never met with resistance to the idea that rural areas matter as much as urban. The issue has been a lack of conscious thought about how something would work in a rural area, about the real differences between rural and urban and just how easy or complicated it can be to get the balance right.

### Conclusion

The picture at the national level can be very different from that at the local level. At national level people are usually removed from local realities and have to take a much wider audience into consideration which produces a wider set of needs. Further, when working to deliver pan Wales objectives, it is relatively easy to find solutions that assist the majority of people, communities and businesses but much harder to find solutions

for everyone and often robust evidence on local level effects is not available (e.g. local authority level data but not ward level).

The way in which to achieve policies that work for everyone is to consult those that will be affected, listen to feedback and to be inclusive and intelligent when implementing them. Partnership working is an extremely important element in implementation as it allows people and organisations to play to their strengths. Basically, the Assembly Government is strong on the strategic, good at macro interventions and has a key role in empowering others. Local groups such as Communities First are good at making it happen on the ground, good at making the links to what people need and good at keeping them included in the process. Local Government is the critical link in the chain.