



**Sustainable**  
URBAN FRINGES  
SURF



# FINAL REPORT OF THE BRADFORD WORTH VALLEY SUSTAINABLE URBAN FRINGES (SURF) INTERREG IVB PROJECT

Prepared For Bradford City Council, Airedale Partnership

Authors: Kevin Thomas & Michelle Wishardt

CUEM Research Unit, Leeds Metropolitan University





## PART 1 INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND TO SURF

### The SURF Project

This report on the Bradford Worth Valley (BWV) project is part of a much wider action project in the 'North Sea Region' which involved both major cities (e.g. Hamburg and Antwerp) and smaller localities such as BWV. The focus of the Sustainable Urban Fringes (SURF) transnational project work was on the urban fringes of city regions. It was funded to the tune of €4.6million to explore how to enable urban fringe areas to realise the maximum potential and to help them contribute and add value to the competitiveness and sustainability of nearby cities<sup>1</sup>.

The SURF project formed part of the Interreg IVB North Sea Region programme running from 2009 to 2013. The project involved 13 partners from 5 countries: the UK; the Netherlands; Belgium; Germany; and Sweden, who worked together and shared information to produce a robust and coherent set of outputs to benefit the future recognition, planning and management of the urban fringe. The EU regional policy directorate recognised that urban fringe/ periurban/ urban-rural interface areas (there is no agreed title) were somewhat overlooked when it came to the growing EU commitment to supporting and enabling urban regeneration and sustainability.

As was argued in the original bid for Interreg funds this means both that urban fringe areas fail to realise their potential and cities fail to maximise their potential for sustainability, which is so important in an age when EU cities are expected to become 'smarter, sustainable and inclusive' (DG Regio, 2011). Urban fringes hold the key to many aspect of sustainability for cities, most obviously by providing 'green infrastructure' that wildlife and city residents need for a healthy long-term future. Also it has been recognised recently that the kind of assets that urban fringes contain can be critical to urban functioning, providing 'critical infrastructure' to maintain urban liveability – water supply and treatment, waste recycling, energy production and so on. In these ways the urban fringe helps cities to remain viable, even if these contributions are rarely explicitly acknowledged.

As well as supporting viability the bid argued that urban fringes can help the cities that they surround be more economically competitive. At a time when the EU recognises the critical importance of cities in maintaining Europe's global competitiveness and economic sustainability it is important that the complementary role of periurban areas in helping establish sustainability is acknowledged. The findings of other recent Interreg projects and EU funded research projects support the potential role that urban fringes can make and, like SURF, have argued that this complementary role needs to be understood better and reflected in policy-making about cities and city regions<sup>2</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Further information on the project can be found in the overall report: *Connecting Urban and Rural: Final Report of the Sustainable Urban Fringes Project (2012)* available on the website [www.sustainablefringes.eu](http://www.sustainablefringes.eu)

<sup>2</sup> One example is PLUREL [http://www.plurel.net/images/PLUREL\\_final\\_publishable\\_activity\\_reporty.pdf](http://www.plurel.net/images/PLUREL_final_publishable_activity_reporty.pdf)

Figure1 Location of the SURF Partners

## Partners



- UK**
  - Aberdeen City Council
  - School of the Built Environment at Leeds Metropolitan University
  - City of Bradford (Airedale Partnership)
  - Norfolk County Council
- Netherlands**
  - City of Enschede
  - Saxion University
  - City of Almelo
  - City of Hengelo
- Belgium**
  - Province of East Flanders
  - Province of West Flanders
- Germany**
  - City of Hamburg
- Sweden**
  - Municipality of Harryda

As the awareness of climate change and other environmental challenges grows it is also clear that the urban fringe offers an essential territory for adaptation and resilience for urban futures. Building resilience to flooding and maintaining water supplies and renewable energy are key concerns of our cities and depend on urban fringes for their achievement.

To make sense of these challenges and potentials the SURF partnership, coordinated by Aberdeen City Council, set out on a programme of analysis, explanation and comparison across the partner areas, building in recent advances in policy-making and research as appropriate. In particular SURF was tasked to explore new approaches to governance and to develop policy recommendations and dynamic approaches to urban fringe planning, development and management.

To pursue this SURF carried out a programme of urban fringe research and analysis which was outlined in the project 'conceptual and analytical framework'. This document categorised the partners into four main theme groups, on which the project could focus. These were:

1. Economy, competitiveness and enterprise
2. Role and value of green spaces

3. Spatial planning and stakeholder engagement
4. Governance

In addition, the analytical framework provided a programme to maximise contributions from the project partners sharing information on urban fringe projects in their own city regions. Wider knowledge of the urban fringe was drawn through exchanging best practice information with associated European projects and networks. A series of twice-yearly partner conferences with invited academics and policy experts was undertaken, including one hosted by the Bradford project in June 2011.

The project focused on, first, clarifying the functions of these areas, then on approaches to the effective management and development of the urban fringe and the processes and practices that could be used there. When the functions of the urban fringe are itemised (see Figure 1) this reveals both its significance economically, socially and environmentally, and it shows that the urban fringe can make a real contribution to the sustainable development of city regions.

Figure 2 Urban Fringe Key Functions

What is the value of the urban fringe? Functions recognised by SURF
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing urban residents with access to nature and recreation</li> <li>• Protecting nature and biodiversity</li> <li>• Providing space for urban expansion including housing and industry</li> <li>• Providing ecosystem services for towns and cities</li> <li>• A location for urban support services ('critical infrastructure') such as waste transfer, energy production, water supply, sewage treatment, recycling facilities and landfill sites</li> <li>• Sites for major transport infrastructure, airports motorways etc.</li> <li>• Growing food for the towns and cities</li> <li>• Locations for sustainable living</li> <li>• A source of health and wellbeing</li> <li>• A source of cultural identity and regional heritage</li> <li>• A source of enterprise and productivity</li> </ul>
<p>source: SURF (2012 ) <i>Connecting Urban and Rural: Final Report of the Sustainable Urban Fringes Project</i> , available on the website <a href="http://www.sustainablefringes.eu">www.sustainablefringes.eu</a></p>

The obvious contributions of the urban fringe go alongside some significant challenges to be found there. Challenges acknowledged within the project included poor connectivity within the UF, high levels of pressure for urban expansion and infrastructure development, together with frequent lack of formal political recognition of these challenges and limited supply of resources, legal measures and expertise to address them satisfactorily

Alongside this SURF examined governance approaches for the urban fringes, identifying the need for a ‘soft governance’ approach for these environments at a local and national level. Evidence from SURF partner projects illustrated the benefit and potential of working in collaboration with stakeholders and influencers for the urban fringe and aligning the needs of their city and/or region to the development of the urban fringe.

**What did SURF reveal and recommend?**

The detailed SURF findings can be found in the Final Report. A number of suggestions were made about raising the profile of urban fringe areas and their challenges/ potential within EU policy-making and funding circles. In this short section we outline the key overall recommendations of the project for policy makers:

Figure 3 Key SURF Recommendations

SURF Project Policy Recommendations at Different Spatial Levels	
Local level	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognise and promote the opportunities for multifunctionality presented by urban fringes</li> <li>• Recognise that an attractive urban fringe gives cities a positive and stronger identity</li> <li>• Build up a recreational infrastructure in and around the urban fringe</li> <li>• Engage citizens and other stakeholders in collaborative thinking and actions on the opportunities of urban fringes</li> <li>• Build up an informal network next to the formal structures</li> <li>• Recognise the value of urban fringe-specific enterprises, rooted in identifiable urban fringe space, communities and opportunities</li> <li>• Recommend the use of the SURF toolkit for project development activities in the urban fringe</li> </ul>	
Regional and city-region level	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a strategic approaches to urban fringes with special attention to green infrastructure, competitiveness and spatial planning</li> <li>• Recognise that spatial planning for urban fringes is an iterative planning process instead of an imposed procedure</li> </ul>	
European Policy Level	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formally recognise the value and potential of urban fringe areas within each European city region and promote accessible knowledge of the opportunities they offer</li> <li>• Formulate long term visions for urban fringes within Europe</li> <li>• Utilise soft governance ideas to complement existing hard government structures which often fail to serve the interests of the urban fringe</li> <li>• Create policy that recognises the identity and explicit needs of the urban fringe</li> </ul>	
Source: SURF (2012)	

In the next sections we explore in more detail what these suggestions may mean for the BWV and the Leeds City Region context.

## The Bradford Perspective

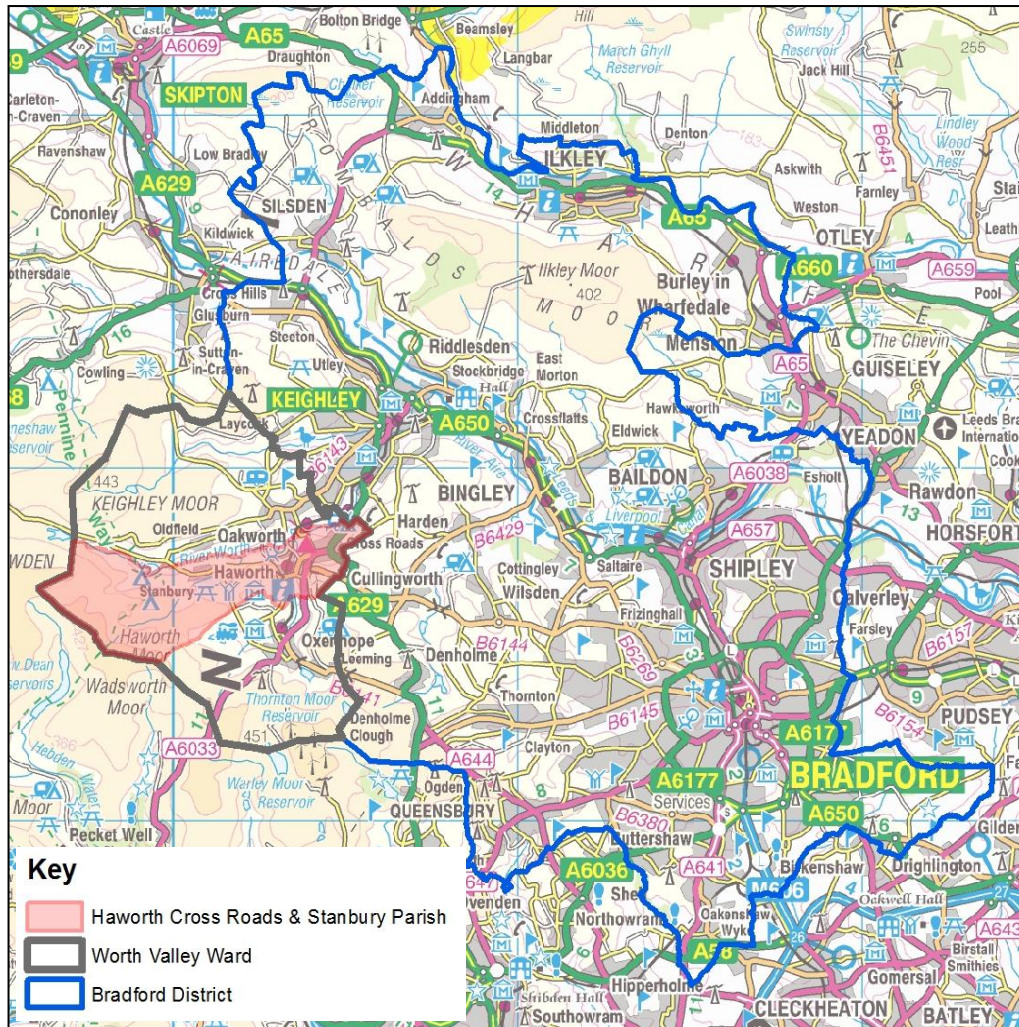
As well as hosting one of the five partner conferences in June 2011 the Bradford project joined with Leeds Met University to hold a Leeds City Region conference in April 2011. This was designed to explore in some detail the particular focus of the Bradford SURF project. This emphasised ways to encourage community engagement in urban fringe issues to try to integrate with more strategic-level plan-making in the wider city of Bradford and, especially, the city region. The SURF personnel engaged very actively with community leaders and community decision-making processes to try to enable this kind of strategic engagement with particular attention paid to the Parish Plan, as described in part 3.

The city region conference (covered in detail in part 2) allowed for both a national perspective on urban fringes, considering for instance the implications emerging Coalition Government measures on localism in English planning, and a rare opportunity for community-level urban fringe activists and practitioners to pool their thoughts about urban fringe challenges and current policy developments.

Through the partner conference workshops and other SURF network exchanges, the Bradford SURF experience was shared with other urban fringe areas and lessons were learned by the Bradford partners from others, a key principle of all Interreg projects. In the concluding section we draw on some of the lessons of other SURF partners to make suggestions for how the urban fringe approach in Bradford might be enhanced.



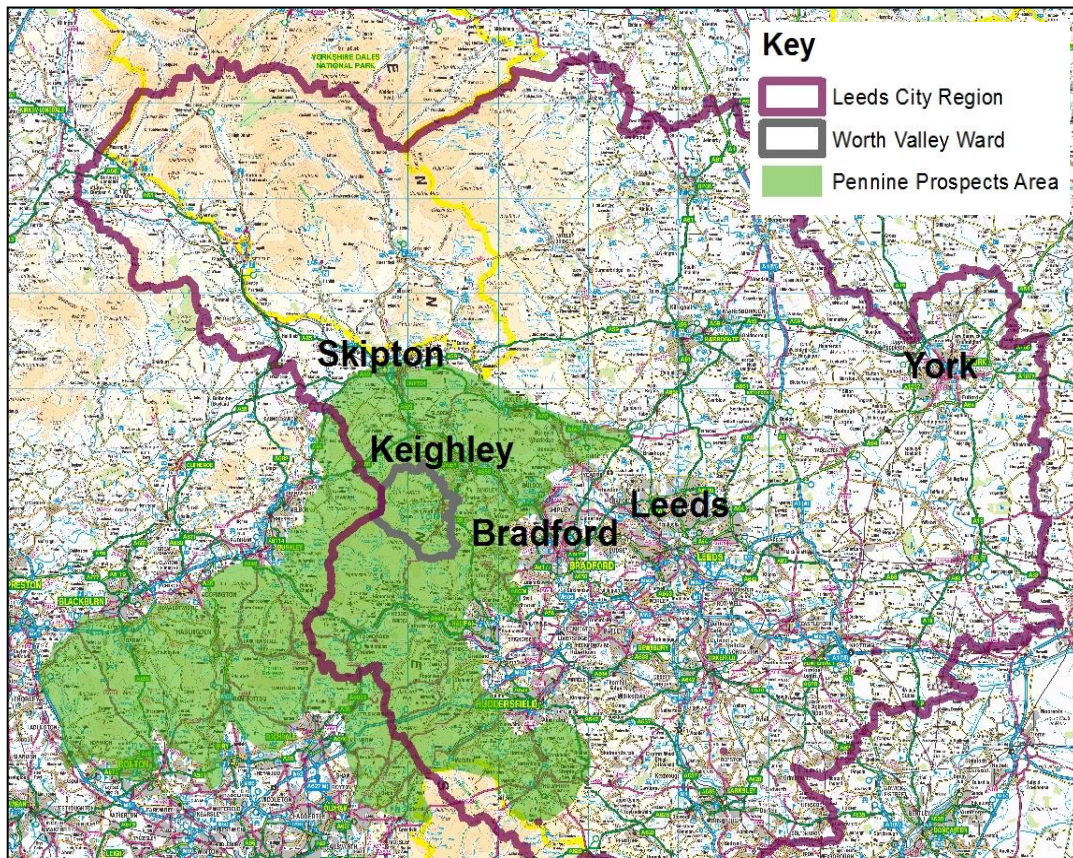
Fig 4a: Location of SURF study area within Bradford District



Reproduced from Ordnance Survey material © Crown copyright. Bradford Metropolitan District Council



Figure 4b: Location of the South Pennines area and the Leeds City Region



Reproduced from Ordnance Survey material © Crown copyright. Bradford Metropolitan District Council Licence

## PART 2 URBAN FRINGES AND THE LEEDS CITY REGION

*'To engage communities in the urban/rural fringe of Airedale, in particular the Worth Valley so that they understand and develop their contribution to the competitiveness of the Leeds City Region and the Yorkshire Region through local action'*

(SURF Bradford overarching aim, 2009)

*"[In the South Pennines] There are high levels of civic participation and real community spirit demonstrating a passionate, bottom-up approach to rural development."*

(Pennine Prospects, 2008, p.7)

### Introduction

In this section we present the outcomes of the city-region aspects of the Bradford SURF activities. The city-region level was seen as important across the SURF partner network and Bradford took a leading role in exploring this aspect of the network's work. The most significant element of city-region work led by Bradford was the conference held in April 2011 entitled *'Connecting the Leeds City Region to its urban/rural fringes: Investing in the future by working together for a sustainable and competitive city region'* This was sponsored jointly by the SURF Partners within Airedale Partnership of Bradford MDC and Leeds Metropolitan University (Centre for Urban Development and Environmental Management) and was held at the Rose Bowl, Leeds Metropolitan University.

As well as reporting on key elements of the Leeds Conference proceedings and discussions a follow-up survey of delegates was undertaken in December 2012/ January 2013. This was to provide an update on the 'state of play' for urban fringe communities in the Leeds city region and to try to take account of how governance changes which were starting to emerge in early 2011 were playing out nearly two years later. The results of the survey are reported at the end of this section.

### The Leeds City Region SURF Conference Summary

#### **Some background to the Conference**

The April 2011 conference was both an initiative to address the SURF project issues at the regional level, engaging with urban fringe community representatives and was more broadly a response to a perception that the assets and communities of the urban hinterland which surrounds the core towns and cities are often overlooked or under-valued in city region planning and development.

Most specifically it provided an opportunity for assessing this issue in the context of political developments in the UK, in particular the uncertainty following the apparent 'downgrading' of the regional tier of planning (e.g. abolition of the regional spatial strategies) and the contrasting enhancement of the local. Over 80 Local authority practitioners, planning and economic development professionals, District Councillors, Parish Councillors, business leaders, land owners, NGO's and researchers were brought together to discuss issues. Including:

- *What place would urban rural fringe areas have in local community agendas?*
- *Where will they find themselves in the new emphasis on city region's and their economic competitiveness?*
- *What potential is there for local community agendas, urban rural fringe areas and the city regions' interests to be mutually developed?*

### **City Regions and the Urban/Rural fringe – a changing context**

There have been numerous changes made recently in the governance of urban fringe areas, especially since 2010 when the new Coalition Government came in. Although these changes were not aimed specifically at urban fringe areas and their full impact is still emerging, they are affecting the way urban fringes in England can be managed, so we start with a brief outline of key changes as a background to the conference discussions, and we return to the governance changes in part 3.

At the time of the conference the Localism Bill was emerging and seven months later the Localism Act 2011 was passed. This Act effectively removed the regional tier of governance including those agencies tasked with economic development – Yorkshire Forward (the RDA), the Regional Assembly, Government Offices for the Regions etc.. In their place were Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs) which the Government envisaged would stimulate private sector led growth, however these were afforded no statutory power in the Act. It did introduce a new right for communities to come together in forums or other configurations to draw up a neighbourhood development plan, normally co-ordinated by parish and town councils and supported by local authorities but with augmented role for citizens and independent providers.

As well as localism measures the Localism Act seeks to encourage local planning authorities to do joined-up thinking at a more strategic level with a 'duty to cooperate'. Another Coalition Government initiative, the new Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) are designed to encourage economic growth planning and in the Leeds city region case the LEP has the same boundary as the city region. Similarly 'Local Nature Partnerships', were launched by DEFRA in 2012 to be comprised of self-sustaining local groups which would, it was hoped, oversee the natural environment as a system and to embed its value in local decisions for the benefit of nature, people and the economy. How these partnerships might work in urban rural fringe areas, which often span administrative boundaries, remains unclear but LNPs may have potential to help deliver strategies such as 'green infrastructure' alongside city region bodies.

**The Bradford Worth Valley (BWV) in the Leeds City Region (LCR)** - The LCR Partnership was selected in 2009 to become one of only two pilot city regions to be given greater powers and control over funding for a variety of policy areas to help '*adapt to changing economic circumstances*'. Significantly, the Partnership acknowledged that to ensure that the city region functioned as a single economic space, it was imperative to *inter alia*: enhance linkage between the urban and non-urban communities; recognise the area's rural or ex-urban offer and to ensure that future strategy is '*rural-proofed*', i.e. to create a level playing field between urban and ex-urban areas across the city region. Airedale, and the Bradford Worth Valley within it, has been identified as a key economic growth area with the city region containing settlements which link the core areas to their rural hinterland. The Airedale Partnership set out to pro-actively engage communities within the Worth Valley to respond

to this challenge especially to look at ways of *'releasing the capacity of communities to define and contribute to their own quality of life'* in a way that relates to adjacent community aspirations and creates synergies in a wider urban fringe context and so provides *'support to the integrated resources and delivery mechanisms of the city regions'*. The specific mechanism engaged was to look at how parish plans were being developed and assess advantages which they, and the element of self-determination which they enabled, might be able to provide in the new localised context.

## Key Conference Presentations

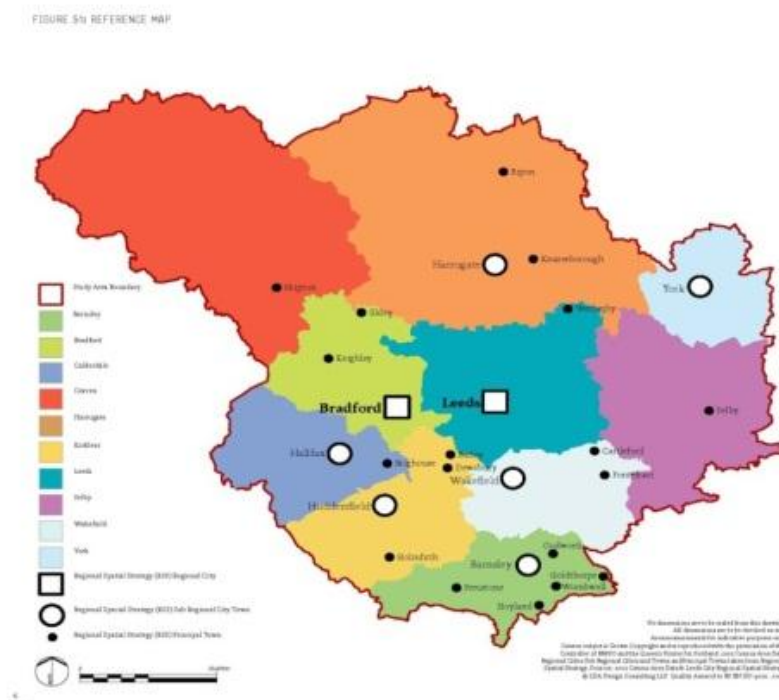
**Tony Pexton**, chair of the Rural Affairs Forum opened the conference, describing the urban rural fringe as an old issue now set within the new context of the city region. The focus on the urban means that rural areas are often below the radar, and there is a danger that with funding cuts and the emphasis on economic development through the LEP could mean that they continue to be so. As such it's important that the message of how they contribute to economic activity, and also issues such as climate change, is communicated.

The presentations by Sally Hinton and Pam Warhurst were especially pertinent to setting the context for the Bradford SURF project so they will be outlined before the other contributions.

### Sally Hinton, Strategy Manager, Leeds City Region

Sally Hinton talked about the progress made so far in the development of LCR, described as a functional economic area with a population of 3 million, over 103,000 businesses, and an economy of £52 billion which represents 5% of UK GDP.

Figure 5 Map of the Leeds City Region



Sally explained how the city region took a holistic approach that considers the area as a whole with a focus on how the rural, urban and fringe areas work together rather than separately. The rural areas are seen as an important part of the LCR, with a 'rural offer' that is an important element to attracting investment to the LCR. Examples of priorities within the LCR that relate directly to the rural areas included: housing demand which concentrated in rural areas inflates property prices; business innovation and employment in rural areas which is key to the overall economic growth of LCR (40% of job growth in the CR coming from Craven, Harrogate and Selby LA areas) and green infrastructure – seeking to use green space in the LCR to promote sustainable growth and development, adapt to climate change, increase well-being and improve biodiversity.

However she emphasised that we are now in a period of change following the election of the Coalition Government in 2010. At a national level the Commission for Rural Communities has been replaced by the Rural Communities Policy Unit. Alongside other changes, ministerial priorities are shifting towards, for instance the competitiveness of farming and rural tourism. The impact on the LCR has yet to be seen, however initial implications are that there are fewer available funding streams, a need to review priorities and there will be closer working with the private sector with a shift from public/private towards private/public partnerships. The new LEP did not have a formal position on rural issues though they are interested in research into rural businesses as drivers for the LCR economy.

#### **Pam Warhurst, Chair Pennine Prospects and Chair of the Forestry Commission**

Pam Warhurst spoke about urban-rural complementarity, the need for the urban/rural divide to be overcome and how to work together, with recognition of the interconnectivity of the urban and the rural. It is important to areas such as the South Pennines, which includes the Bradford SURF project area, that the needs and desires of the people of the conurbation are taken into consideration. The landscape does not just belong to the people that live there, but also the people who live in the urban areas, such as Leeds, that the rural area relates to. Discussion needs to enable the establishment of a shared vision of what is wanted from the area. For example, a rural green space can be used for carbon storage functions through the planting of trees. However covering the entire area in trees would impact upon the functionality the area provides in terms of recreation. It is important that there is a discussion as to where the balance lies between the different multifunctional interests.

She outlined the huge functional opportunities that green spaces that link rural and urban areas, have to offer: recreational opportunities; food related opportunities both through locally based initiatives, such as Incredible Edible Todmorden, and also in using the entrepreneurial potential of people living in the landscape to increase business opportunities. Environmental functions including the provision of clean water, carbon capture and species preservation and the potential as a test-bed for developing more sustainable and liveable places were also stressed. Pam gave the example of flooding in Leeds and Sheffield which led the RDA to take an interest in the uplands, which had previously not been the case. It should not need something to go wrong in order that the urban understands the role of the rural in its existence. The green spaces can be described as providing a 'natural life support function' that should be formally recognised. In conclusion, Pam described how both rural and urban spaces are about life and living. Whilst the urban may provide iconic buildings



the rural provides great landscapes. Both need to relate to one another in order to provide shared, holistic outcomes and the rural needs to make the case for why it is important to the urban area.

**Joe Ravetz** Co-director of the Centre of Urban & Regional Ecology, University of Manchester

Joe Ravetz has written widely about the pursuit of urban sustainability and this talk reported some findings of the project PLUREL ('Peri-urban Land Use Relationships - Strategies and Sustainability Assessment Tools for Urban-Rural Linkages' a European Commission funded project). He spoke about the importance of urban rural fringes to the city region. LCR, he said, was a rural and urban region with fluid boundaries, but centred on Leeds. This was based upon a range of criteria, for example commuting distance travelled. Some of the problems that the city region is confronting, such as urban expansion are particularly focused on the urban fringe and responses to this and the resultant counter effects are multi-faceted, including infrastructure, services, housing, employment, economy and population. The city region is not just a receptacle, but 'a living thing with complex relationships'. Links happen between each of the different elements and operate both ways, e.g.

- Urban to peri-urban (urban rural fringe) – housing and commercial development, health and education facilities, transport infrastructure, leisure and tourism
- Peri-urban to urban – access to services, employment and markets
- Peri-urban to rural – leisure & tourism, land-based employment, ecosystem services – social cultural functions
- Rural to peri-urban – ecosystem services – providing functions: farming, forestry, minerals, energy, water. Supporting functions: flood retention, soil stability, climate moderation.

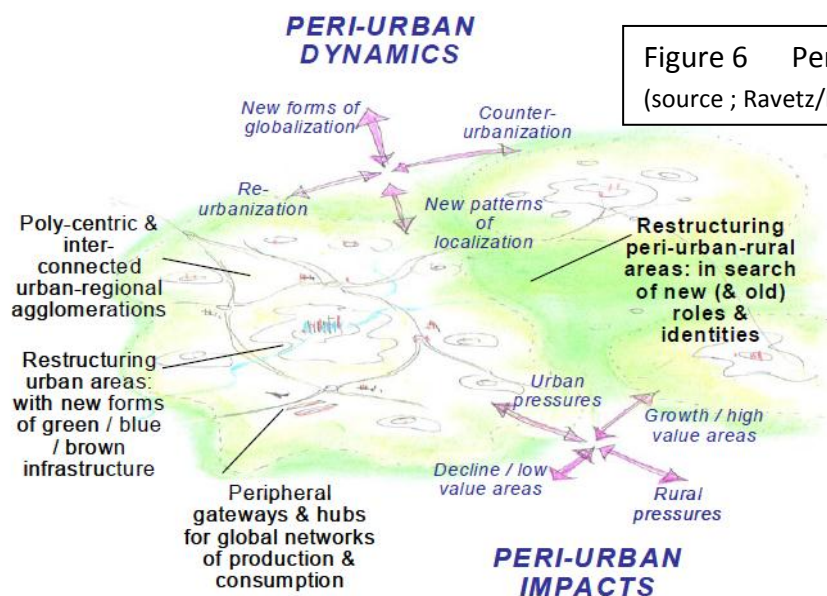


Figure 6 Peri-urban Dynamics (source ; Ravetz/PLUREL)

Another way of conceptualising the relationship was through the urban/rural development and containment/conservation paradigms. Joe compared alternative long-term futures for the urban fringe, focusing on four possible scenarios, within the private/public and local/global dynamics. These included: 'high growth'; 'self-reliance' (with the peri-urban area reliant on private sector for investment); 'sustainability', and 'fragmentation' scenarios (where peri-urban areas become 'peri-society' areas). In the more immediate term Joe stressed that with the new Coalition agenda it is important to consider what different policies mean for the peri-urban areas.

## Selected Workshop sessions on 'Making the urban/rural fringes work'

### Workshop 1 – Economic development & the urban/rural fringes

Facilitator – Prof John Shutt (Leeds Met University)

The abolition of the Regional Development Agencies including Yorkshire Forward by the new Coalition Government creates major problems for economic development in the region which continues to underperform despite all the recent investment. The Government funds for the English regions for economic development are disappearing to be partially replaced by the new Regional Growth Fund (RGF). However this is not regional but controlled from London and worth only a third of the previous budget for RDAs. In addition it is not clear how the EU funds previously channelled through the RDAs will now be managed or whether there will be any capacity remaining at regional or lower levels to bid for and manage EU funds. The ability of the region to respond to current economic challenges by promoting growth is therefore severely compromised.

Overall there is now very little strategic capacity left to think in a joined-up way about the future of the region or its city regions as local councils continue to cut back staff, central Government regeneration funds and RDA funds shrink or disappear and the regional plans for economic development and spatial planning are abolished.

*This raises many questions for what is possible for urban fringes in the Leeds City Region. If the economic development infrastructure in England is being largely abolished is there anything that urban fringe areas can do to respond?*

It was pointed out that the SURF programme was set up to explore how the urban fringe could help make cities more competitive, rather than to focus on rural concerns, understandable though this was for delegates. The EU itself has little interest in the urban fringe, but has more interest in cities and their regions as drivers of EU competitiveness and the aims of 'Europe 2020'. Interreg funds for projects such as SURF are provided with this emphasis in mind and there are other programmes for exploring rural policy issues. The city region was seen by SURF as a sensible spatial scale to enable both rural interests and urban interests to combine to mutual economic benefit. This combination could be seen as helping the EU more widely to achieve global competitiveness because CRs with their urban fringes were seen as potential drivers of competitiveness.

There is a general problem for local economies in the urban fringe, with the pressure from developers and land owners to convert employment land in local plans into housing uses. Related to



this is the problem of keeping young people in the urban fringe where house prices are so high because growth in commuting has raised the price of rural housing well beyond young people's reach. Urban fringes have an advantage in attracting a mobile IT-literate population who don't need to work in the cities to run their businesses. They can live in attractive rural surroundings, so some ways to attract these businesses would be helpful to the UF. A linked suggestion was that as jobs grow in urban fringe locations (business parks and so on) more housing provided nearby would reduce commuting and contribute to city region sustainability. There was some discussion of housing development, covered in other workshops.

It was argued that major housing development needed to be located where good public transport links exist (for sustainability and to guard against future fuel price rises) and would also need substantial investment in infrastructure such as sewage works. This implied a strategic and joined-up planning process and it was not yet clear how this would be provided following Government changes.

*Overall the strong challenges created by the new limited arrangements for urban fringe economic development were noted but delegates saw some hope in very local initiatives helping compensate for the loss of wider strategic capacity. There was a strong feeling the urban fringe areas need joined-up thinking which saw the relationship between the changing economy, housing supply and cost, transport and access and property development pressures and planned accordingly.*

## **Workshop 2 – The sustainable City Region & the role of Green Infrastructure.**

**Facilitator – Chris Marshall (Natural England)**

Chris started off by outlining the city region context. The LCR is very diverse with ten local authorities including national parks, remote rural areas and urban areas. As such it has a mix of urban and rural elements with some parts that already benefit from rural elements and others that are not connected to the rural. Chris linked this to the CR's work on a GI strategy that seeks to lead to more connectivity between these elements. The CR has developed a GI strategy with 4 key foci: economy/ climate change/ health /biodiversity

These foci are represented through a range of different priorities, illustrated in the diagram below, that cut across different policy agendas, for example economic growth, health and biodiversity

Chris raised questions about who the urban fringe was for. There are opportunities and challenges in terms of community engagement and working with other sectors such as health and business. A key challenge is deciding which priorities count, for example a housing development rather than investment to retain GI. GI can help sell houses and increase their value and as such it appeals to housing developers.

Workshop members discussed the issues relating to GI and housing development. A mechanism is needed to plan for GI in advance rather than being reactive once housing has been built. Section 106 was seen as resulting in a reactive approach to GI. The community needs to 'get ahead' of planners if they are to have an input. Neighbourhood plans offer some potential for this. However wealthier neighbourhoods with time on their hands are more likely to benefit than deprived areas.

Figure 7 Green Infrastructure Priorities



It was stated that the designations of brownfield and Greenfield land needs challenging. Brownfield land in the UF still has amenity value in terms of wildlife.

*It was acknowledged that the strategic, regional level is important for linking up areas, but a danger that it will be lost if the focus is exclusively on local areas.*

**Workshop 3 – The challenge of locally effective governance of the urban/rural fringe**  
 Facilitators - Sheena Spence and John Dunsford (Yorkshire Local Council Association)

The aim here was to address how parish councils and the city region can work together. Parish councils are linked with the current Government’s localism agenda, where the role of parish councils is included albeit under the guise of terms such as local or neighbourhood council to move away from ecclesiastical connotations. Parish councils can be both urban and rural and more parish councils are currently being created.

Regarding the Government’s new powers in relation to neighbourhood plans, it is important to consider how different plans at different scales fit together. Rather than neighbourhood plans focusing just on the parochial issues, some may want to look more strategically and as such have the potential to make a good contribution to the CR. It was noted that whilst not all parishes may want to produce a neighbourhood plan, if they don’t do so there will be an assumption that people are happy with higher level plans.

Key issues in the urban fringe context are those of vertical and horizontal two way working. Sheena drew on previous experience as evidence of the ability of local community bodies to input into higher level decision-making. There is a problem that many parish councils are not aware of the CR. Work needs to be undertaken to get the information to them and start to look at how they can be involved. At the same time to ensure effective community planning it is important to make sure that whilst the parish council should take a lead in local planning, they should make sure they are giving

the community the opportunity to get involved. This might involve training for local people as they need support in developing a plan that responds to wider plans. The experience of working on the Heptonstall Forward local plan was drawn on.

### **Summary of reflections from the LCR conference**

- Certain key problems faced by the city region are especially focused on the urban fringe, such as urban expansion and related counter-effects e.g. infrastructure demands. The conflict between development and containment/conservation is especially played out in the urban fringe (JR).
- There is a need, particularly for urban fringe areas, to collaborate across boundaries and this has been accentuated with the new localism framework with mutually aware and supportive plans. Urban fringe boundary areas typically exhibit either competition or a lack of communication, hence the need for a more holistic approach (PW).
- For the city region to function as a single economic system there is a need for collaboration between urban and non-urban communities. The required interconnectivity however now is operating in a system with diminishing capacity for joined up, strategic planning at the regional level (JS) or supportive funding.
- 'Rural proofing' has not been effective (DM) and the perception of the value of the rural and the urban rural fringe may not be any further enhanced by the loss of regional capacity and focus on the city in the city region. The 'life support functions' of outlying urban and rural areas needs recognition (PW).
- The 'rural offer' within LCR is important in attracting investment and accounts for a significant proportion of growth. The future is unclear though with the private sector growing in importance and the lack of formal position of the LEP on rural issues (SH).

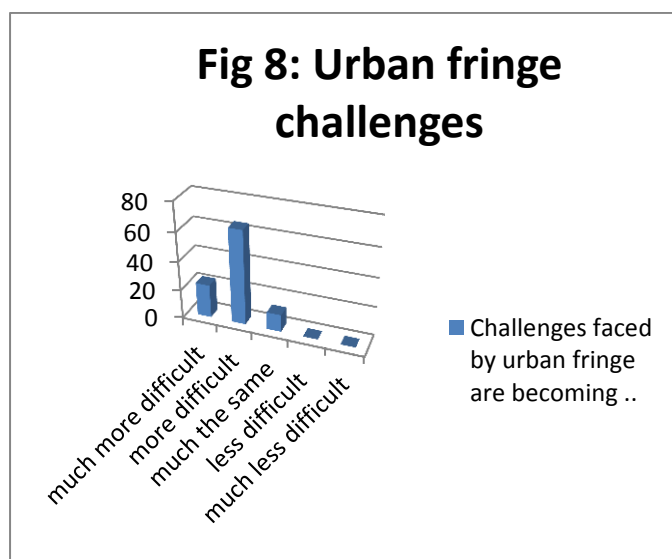
## The Leeds City Region Conference Delegates Survey Findings

### Feedback from the follow-up survey of conference delegates

A follow-up survey of LCR conference delegates was conducted in December 2012/ January 2013. This survey was intended partly to provide an update on the issues covered by the LCR conference and to check on the transition to new arrangements affecting urban fringes, notably the implications for planning of the Localism Act 2011. The Localism Bill was a talking point at the April 2011 Conference but it was still a work in progress. The survey was also meant to identify whether issues affecting UF areas discussed in April 2011 still maintained their relative priority and urgency. Questions were asked which reflected the focus topics of the earlier conference, such as: *what place do urban rural fringe areas now have in local and city region agendas? What are the implications of the increased emphasis on city region competitiveness? What potential is there for urban fringe community agendas and the city regions interests to be mutually developed?* Eighteen respondents from predominantly urban fringe and rural areas provided a quite detailed reflection of the situation in the urban fringe in Leeds City Region. Despite the fact that almost half were actively engaged with neighbourhood forums and other forms of community engagement, they did not on the whole feel either empowered by the new localism agenda or have much confidence that the interests of urban fringe areas were being taken seriously. This was despite the fact that a large proportion also thought that the challenges faced by such regions were becoming greater. The details of the responses are given below.

#### *Challenges in urban fringe areas*

The first question related to the challenges faced by urban rural fringe areas and produced unsurprisingly a substantial depiction of growing problems. No respondent considered that these were being dealt with adequately or being lessened in any way.



Transport was the most frequently mentioned issue of concern – listed as one of three key challenges by all respondents. The problem of a lack of public transport infrastructure on the urban fringe (including poor bus services) was the focus for some, others focused on the consequent congestion, air pollution and overcrowding of arterial routes and rail routes through the urban fringe.

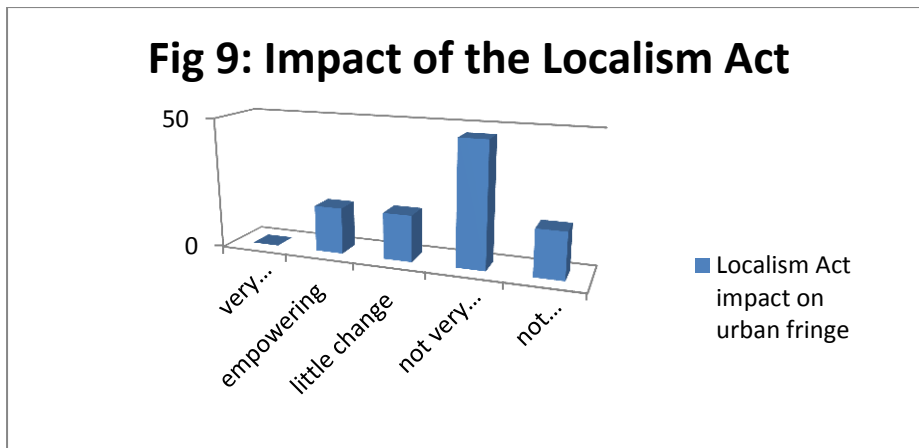
The second most commonly issue identified related to housing and development; the *'loss of greenfield areas to ever more housing development'* and *'green space going'* was repeatedly identified as a challenge in terms of policy, need and pressure. Urban sprawl and *the 'popularity of the urban fringe to live in, compared to within urban areas'* was a pressing challenge for fringe areas, as was the associated increasing demands on social infrastructure – e.g. school places, medical care etc. A decline in employment opportunities was commented on and associated in one instance with housing development. Employment buildings had been observed to have been demolished to make space for this. The problem of lack of affordable housing in the urban fringe was also highlighted.

Another frequently recognised issue concerned the relative inattention – and resources - given to rural and urban fringe areas compared to urban areas, *'no money being spent in area'*. The relative concentration on city centres and the contrasting lack of funding for more rural areas, especially the 'very rural' were thought to be particular challenges. On the other hand one respondent felt that the 'oversimplification' of the terms urban and rural were unhelpful, as was, according to another, the *'big brother takeover'*. Rising crime, policing needs and retail issues were also of concern to some.

In relation to Leeds City Region in particular, the following land development challenges were recorded; *'Pressure for development in the Green Belt; Leeds City Council will have to release some Green Belt land in order to meet housing land requirements'*. *'Pressure for new infrastructure that doesn't easily fit in the urban area, but needs to be near big centres of population such as wind farms and waste incinerators and the fragmentation of wildlife habitats'*.

### *The impact of the Localism Act*

Respondents were then asked about the impact of the 2011 Localism Act on urban rural fringe areas. The perception recorded, if accepted as a snapshot of feeling on the ground, was not encouraging. Although 18% did feel that the legislation had been empowering, an equal number felt that there had been little perceptible change and the rest considered that it had been either 'not empowering' or 'not empowering at all'.



### *Involvement with Neighbourhood Forums*

A more tangible assessment of the impact of the Localism Act concerned respondents' level of participation with Neighbourhood Forums. Nearly half indicated an active engagement which included involvement in both work and voluntary capacities, while about 20% expressed an intention to become involved. The degree of engagement ranged from chairing a community networking group working to change planning legislation, shadow-chairing an emerging local nature partnership to involvement in specific initiatives, issues and participation, but *only 'in the background'*.

### *Co-operation with neighbouring communities*

A question of particular pertinence to urban fringe areas was that relating to co-operation. Survey participants were asked, 'Do you think there should be more cooperation between neighbouring areas to deal with urban fringe issues? If so, what form should this take?'

Most thought that there should be and some provided with suggestions on where it was needed and ideas on how to achieve it. A few expressed reservations about what could be achieved though, including that such co-operation '*would not address the conflict between the interests of urban fringe areas and those of the urban area*'.

Co-operation across local authority boundaries was thought to be necessary, particularly with a view discussing and seeking agreement about '*the impact of local development framework (LDF) housing targets on neighbouring LAs*'.

*'Local Authorities do need to work together, especially in the north. This they are beginning to do, helped to some extent by the local enterprise partnerships (LEP's), but they have so little dosh and not much influence [...]. That said, they are probably the only game in town, combined with the City Region initiative. It could be made to work'*.

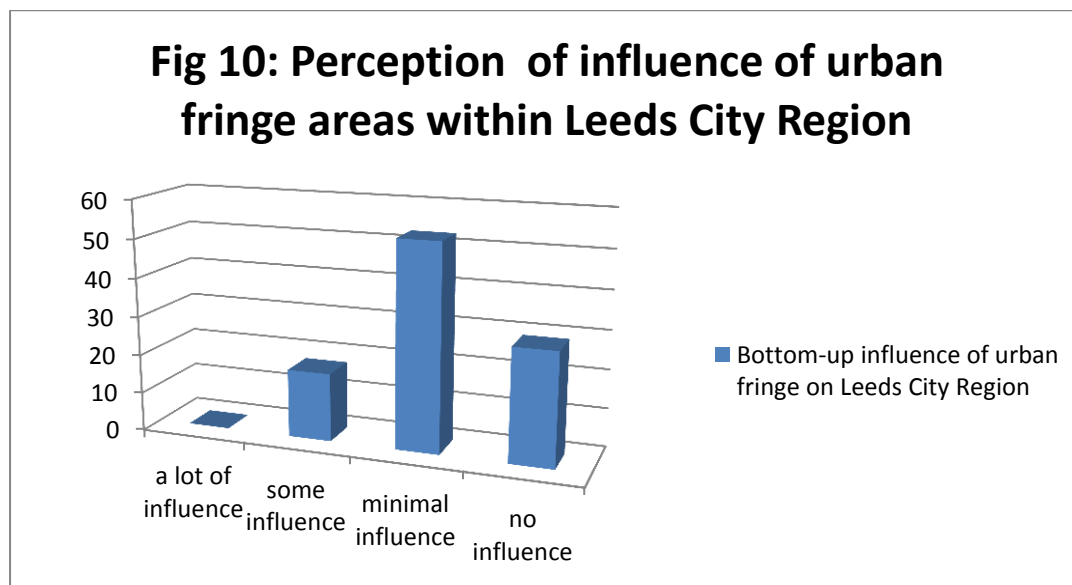
*'There has got to be more joined up working. Groups need to be set up across County area boundaries, e.g. North and West Yorkshire. Principal authorities and Members of Parliament need to*

*grasp this concept of cross border working. At Parish level this already happens, we are able to set up our own networks. Pity the higher tiers of Local authority can't do the same'.*

Ideas about how to improve co-operation between neighbouring authorities included: meetings of all relevant parties - well publicised - at a place and time of day to suit the majority; regular joint meetings with community involvement and representation; evaluation and auditing of process and outcomes; attending each other's local meetings to share views and more dedicated events such as the conference held in 2011.

On a positive note a couple of respondents expressed the belief that more co-operation was in evidence, *'..yes, and this is starting to happen in disenfranchised areas to the North West of Leeds and North East of Bradford'* and that the 'Duty to Co-operate' would require it. Although one cautioned that although *'in terms of spatial planning, this will probably form part of the normal "Duty to Cooperate" (it will) most likely relate to specific areas or projects rather than a general urban fringe policy'*.

*The influence of urban fringe communities within LCR*



A sensitive issue for many urban fringe communities concerns their weight relative to urban areas in the broader city region context. The survey asked, *'Do you consider urban fringe communities have any bottom-up influence on Leeds City Region?'* The common perception of comparative powerlessness here was confirmed with a majority (53%) reporting *'minimal influence'*.

Few examples of where any influence might be exacted were given. One respondent thought it likely to be limited to a potential, *'as objectors to/campaigners against urban extensions or deletions of green belt'*. Another more positive potential influence was seen *'for the emerging local nature partnership to be able to meld delivery bodies, usually bottom up activities, with strategic/policy people, so that the situation is improved'*.



### *Suggestions for enhancing the role and representation of the urban fringe*

Finally, respondents were asked for suggestions on how to improve the profile of the urban and rural fringe within the City Region. This evoked a variety of ideas. A couple felt that representation was key. Leeds City Region needed, according to one *'a person with a rural interest and remit'*, another, someone representing the Yorkshire Local Councils Association.

The inadequacy of collaboration procedures and the consultation process were also raised. Since urban fringe areas have *'common' or 'similar problems'*, *'they need to work together to enable them to be heard and have more influence on decisions that affect them'*. Parishes should be involved in the decision making process. It is necessary to, *'get away from the paternalistic attitude adopted by the principal authorities'*. *'Quite often local knowledge is far more informed'*. Officers from the principal authority should be made to *'come out and talk to first tier elected members'*. Listening to communities themselves is important, in relation for instance to concern about new development.

*'Council officer(s) (should) not to have arrived at conclusions before community views are gathered'*.

*'Communities need to feel confident that new development will bring public benefit and not just private profit. This is true for all communities, not just those in the urban fringe. The government knows that development lacks public support and that so far they have failed to convince people to say "Yes" rather than "No" to things like housing growth and wind turbines'*.

A specific comment in this context called for the abolition of 5 year land supply requirements and for local communities to be given a right of appeal against planning decisions which adversely affect the environment and quality of life for them and future generations. Similarly residential development in areas where no working opportunities exist and householders are forced to commute to service their mortgages should be curbed.

Another reflected the different perspectives and interests of those in and outside of urban metropolises. Decisions regarding development in the urban fringe, it was argued, should be taken which actually *'take into account independent research (rather than relying) on skewed research paid for by developers who have vested interests ... development (should be forced) to take place on land banked brownfield sites in urban centres'*.

Improvements in the reciprocal communication between LCR and urban fringe communities was highlighted, pointing for the need for information for local plans and specifying ways that people on fringe communities could make themselves heard. One suggested the use of social media, such as twitter or blogs to give a platform to their opinions.

Another set of suggestions focused on the attributes of the urban fringe itself, *'greater identification of the 'assets' of the urban fringe'*. The interdependency between areas should also receive attention and this should not be one way. As well as the benefits fringe areas offer to the urban core, awareness of *'the benefits urban fringe areas derive from cities, i.e. what would the urban fringe areas be like socially and economically without the nearby urban area?'* should not be forgotten.

A constructive proposal concerning the role of urban fringe areas as connecting the rural and the urban, looked at how such connections could be used in the future by Leeds City Region.

*'Although it's an overused phrase, there is the potential for 'green infrastructure' to be able to be planned, designed, implemented and managed so that it assists in melding the many communities that exist across the [sub] region. There is also scope to address the ethnic/plural communities in the same way, and I think this is the great challenge for the LCR'.*

### **The contribution of the survey to issues addressed in the conference**

The perception that the pressure of urban expansion on the urban fringe was growing was clear. This was seen to be articulated through plans for housing, various other development and 'unwelcome impositions' such as waste processing and it confirmed the assertion made at the conference that many city region wide problems are especially played out arena of the urban fringe. This awareness and associated concern did not however translate into an acknowledgement of importance or influence. Rather, there was a sense of disillusion about the relative inconsequence felt by those representing such areas, the influence of urban fringe areas considered by most to be minimal or non-existent. This was also reflected in transport and inadequate resource allocation.

Thus despite conference calls for the need for communication between urban and non-urban communities, those representing the latter in this survey did not generally feel collaborative relationships to be fair or reciprocal. Something approximating an unwritten hierarchy of influence disadvantaging fringe communities was inferred. On the other hand, there was a more positive approach to horizontal forms of collaboration across boundaries. The need for co-operation with neighbouring communities was both endorsed by survey respondents and considered to be potentially facilitated by the 'new duty to co-operate'. The potential here was tempered with the observation that this may be 'bitty', rather than strategic, in the way it plays out in practice.

The impact of other changes in regional organisation and governance arrangements, discussed with anticipation in the conference, on the urban fringe had mixed reception in the survey. Although most respondents are either engaged or planning to become engaged with neighbourhood plans, a majority thought that changes were further disadvantaging urban fringe. Rural areas generally too were perceived to be undervalued and their associated green infrastructure functions threatened. Given the emphasis on the economy in the new LEAs, it was of interest that the survey did not reveal a lot of awareness of the economic 'rural offer' of the urban fringe. A lack of employment and expenditure was alluded to, but perhaps both issues of self-promotion and the breadth of vision of the LEP and LCR need to be addressed.

## PART 3 THE JOURNEY TAKEN BY THE BWV PARTNERS WITHIN SURF

*Bradford looked to support the development of the next parish plan for the area, with the addition of engaging with local communities, and incorporating not only local issues but also those of the wider city region. Within this, Bradford looked to incorporate sustainable practices that would provide the plan with a level of resilience for its longevity within the project area. This involved a high degree of collaboration and connectivity with local residents, business owners and visitors and aligning local needs with those of the wider city area*

(SURF Final Report, p.18)

### Introduction

Part one introduced the background to urban fringe thinking and policy-making in terms of the 'big picture' in the SURF areas of the North Sea Region of the EU and part two focussed on the city region scale. This chapter explains how the Bradford SURF partners approached the project in the Haworth, Stanbury and Cross Roads parish area where the BWV SURF project is focused. Haworth is one of the smallest settlements in the SURF network, although it also next to one of the largest conurbations in the network, in the Leeds City Region. Appropriately, the Bradford project focussed on ways to encourage community engagement in urban fringe issues and ways to facilitate plan-making that could integrate with more strategic-level plan-making in the wider city of Bradford and, especially, the city region.

The approach taken in BWV was recognised by other SURF partners as representing good practice, was followed with great interest by other partners and a case study of the Bradford approach is presented in the SURF Final Report. In addition the BWV approach to 'business engagement with parish planning' is adopted as a valuable tool as part of the SURF Toolkit that accompanies the Final Report<sup>3</sup>. The SURF personnel were very actively engaged with community leaders and community decision-making processes to try to enable this kind of strategic engagement. This took a number of forms, paying particular attention to the Parish Plan, as described below.

The most high-profile attempt to link community level to city region level thinking was the LCR SURF conference held in April 2011 and already explained in part two. This was intended as a way of enabling community-level agencies and activists across the city region to collectively engage with urban fringe issues and the institutions dealing with them. It also provided a broader perspective than was possible simply from a BWV standpoint and it raised issues that were not present or not prominent in Haworth but are important in urban fringe areas on a wider canvas. Many of the issues raised in the LCR conference are also present in Haworth, of course, and these will be recognised in what follows.

---

<sup>3</sup> Sustainable Urban Fringes Toolkit (2012) SURF project, Aberdeen:  
<http://www.sustainablefringes.eu/nmsruntime/saveasdialog.asp?IID=527&SID=16>

The main value of taking this Haworth perspective is not so much in identifying unique issues, problems or challenges. The main value lies in exploring and explaining how these community level issues and responses are dealt with, in particular how local people organise to engage with issues and how effective the mechanisms they use to respond may be. This section is also an opportunity to outline the relatively high level of scrutiny that these processes have received in the Haworth area. This scrutiny relates to a number of studies, some internal to and some external from the SURF project. A major study into ways to enable effective community participation was commissioned for the SURF project from Rose Regeneration, which looked into ways to promote engagement in and effectiveness of the parish plan. Within the SURF process a number of community interventions were made, led by the project team, including the early SWOT process which involved meetings with community leaders and the Parish Council. Some of the results of this work have been published by the SURF project or are available from the SURF website (e.g. CUDEM/ Bradford SURF Project, 2011).

External to SURF, Haworth was used as a case study in a Carnegie Trust funded study of how communities in market towns in Yorkshire influenced higher level strategy making (Carnegie, 2009). In addition there have been a number of student projects supported by the SURF project team which contributed additional data. All these studies, taken together, represent an unusually high level of attention paid to community engagement in an urban fringe area, probably uniquely so in the LCR area.

### **The changing context for making plans in the LCR urban fringe**

The attention being paid to BWV coincided with a set of political developments following the Coalition Government elected in 2010 which seemed to offer new challenges and possibilities for community level planning in England's urban fringes. The Localism Act 2011 has already been discussed in part two in a city region context. From a Haworth perspective, it appears to offer the potential to reinforce bottom-up influencing of decision-making at a very localised level, especially where there are already well established measures and bodies in place, such as parish plans, and well organised local action groups who could mobilise to take advantage of the new neighbourhood forum/ plan mechanism.

Of course the new Act emerged well after the SURF project began and, although there has been much debate amongst communities in the LCR (see part two) it is too soon to point to any concrete development in the Haworth area. What is clear is that the introduction of Coalition-style localism together with the abolition of previous local service planning and engagement mechanisms has created ongoing upheaval and uncertainty in the ways that communities in Bradford, such as Haworth, can organise to have their voices heard at higher levels of decision-making and this has added to the challenges for urban fringe communities that were already known about.

The enhanced possibilities for community-led activism is the latest in a long line of government attempts to reinvigorate the community level of planning engagement. The Labour Government 1997-2010 paid much attention to promoting community empowerment in local government services under 'localism' and 'sustainable communities' labels. For example the planning system had to increasingly evidence community participation in plan making. Across local authority services community strategies had to be prepared and evidence provided that communities had indeed been

consulted about them by the council-led local strategic partnership (LSP). Some city councils, including Bradford, instated mechanisms to promote subsidiarity in consultation, decision making and to promote feedback on service delivery. A pertinent example is the Bradford Neighbourhood Forum network run by the council to nurture communication between communities and the council and between the various services active in localities, promoting 'joined-up' service delivery. The ward officer for the Haworth area gave a presentation at the SURF Bradford conference in 2011 explaining how she acted as a 'bridge' between communities that often felt excluded from council decision-making and officers and councillors more used to operating at city level.

These provisions applied to all areas in England but most urban areas lacked real community level governance, whereas rural and urban fringe areas tended to have parish and town councils with a tradition of very localised democratic representation. One programme to promote community activism was the 'market towns initiative' sponsored via Yorkshire Forward, the regional development agency<sup>4</sup>. This included both deeper rural and urban fringe settlements such as some in the South Pennines. A report of 2009 (Carnegie, 2009) examined community engagement in the Haworth area and made positive comments about the supportive nature of the relationship between the Haworth, Stanbury and Cross Roads Parish Council and the spin-off community planning steering group. Officers, who were also members of the SURF team, were reported as making a 'positive impact' and working well with community representatives and the community planning process (LSP) was engaging effectively with local residents.

This piece of research looked at how urban fringe communities engaged with higher level and wider scale planning of public services. It reported that overall there were clear attempts by city councils to engage with localities but that localities often failed to engage upwards very well: "...at the community level, there was little awareness of the potential value of their ability to influence strategy and actions at the LSP level" (Carnegie, 2009 p.22). A key reason given for this lack was that the limited resources and energies of local activists were more focused on local issues and concerns and rarely had the resources to 'look up' and engage with city-wide decision processes.

Figure 11 is a simplified summary of key changes since 2010 which have affected the context for urban fringe community engagement with higher level strategic decision-making. The changes represent a mixture of reassignment of personnel to activities seen as more critical than urban fringe concerns at a time of major public service resource shrinkage and changes resulting from Coalition Government political agendas to reduce regulation, remove 'QUANGOs' and 'get regional bodies off councils' backs'. These changes and cuts are not by any means angled towards urban fringes but they are making the job of representing urban fringe community needs and priorities at higher levels more difficult. For instance the BWV SURF approach was originally based on a community development model. This entailed much 'behind the scenes work' with local people to facilitate a broad engagement with parish planning. This was often time-consuming patient work by officers building understanding and encouraging networks for longer-term interactions with policy-makers. If successful this would create more robust and representative community involvement than the quite common reliance on a few activists who were prepared to lead discussions.

---

<sup>4</sup> The regional development agencies in England were abolished in 2010 and the market towns initiatives terminated.

Following personnel reassignment after local government spending cuts this kind of intensive engagement is no longer feasible and there is a fear of less robust and representative interactions in future. This could affect the legitimacy of emerging 'localism' branded approaches to plan-making and heighten tensions if mediation between development parties becomes problematic. The table therefore presents a partial picture, showing only the formal institutional changes not the shrinking resource levels available to pursue engagement. As well as these localised challenges the capacity to take a strategic overview of common local issues is now reduced with the disappearance of the RDA, Yorkshire Forward, which formerly oversaw rural development across the region (helping Pennine Prospects to gain LEADER status, for example) and whose expert team is now dispersed. Less obviously the grouping of rural development officers, coordinated from Calderdale (a 'beacon council' for rural development under the previous government) who used to help West Yorkshire partners keep abreast of urban/ rural fringe developments is now searching for a new structure and context.

On the positive side there are signs that the government will increasingly empower the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to take on some of the strategic planning capacity that was lost when RDAs were abolished. However it is too early to know whether the LEP for the Leeds City Region will develop an urban fringe perspective or seek to engage with communities there, but it is unlikely to have significant resources to do so in the near future. At an intermediate scale the Pennine Prospects rural development company for the South Pennines<sup>5</sup> area has been successful in recent years in securing funding for a number of innovative projects to add to the LEADER project from 2008-2013. The Pennine Prospects (PP) boundary includes the BWV area and the current Watershed Landscape project to protect nature and improve access to the high moorland landscape will help to promote tourism and the visitor economy, already important to Haworth. Related PP projects include recreational route mapping and local food production which can also benefit Haworth. Looking forward, PP is also helping coordinate a South Pennines response to the government's new 'local nature partnership' initiative. Depending how this evolves (and also on what resources are provided) the LNP mechanism could become a good means for promoting cooperation between parishes and possibly act as a bridge to higher level planning processes in the city of city region.

---

<sup>5</sup> The South Pennines is essentially a shared urban fringe between the Leeds and Manchester city regions with a history of inter-local authority cooperation going back to the 1970s

Figure 11 Summary overview of changing mechanisms for the Bradford urban fringe before and after 2010

Level/ type	Before 2010	early 2013
<b>Regional scale</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spatial planning</li> <li>• Economic development</li> <li>• Rural development</li> </ul>	Yorkshire Forward & Yorkshire Regional Assembly produce regional spatial and economic plans, coordinate rural development funds from EU and UK Govt (LEADER, Market Towns etc.)	Regional agencies abolished and plans redacted Central Ministerial oversight of EU & UK Govt funds
<b>City Region scale</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic development</li> <li>• Green Infrastructure &amp; Environmental</li> <li>• Spatial planning</li> </ul>	Leeds City Region Board leads on economic growth plans, green infrastructure etc. Spatial planning left to other levels; West Yorkshire rural officers group focus on UF issues in sub-region	LCR Board and new LEP take over growth planning; possible role in spatial planning; limited engagement with environmental & social issues; West Yorkshire Rural Partnership uncertainty
<b>Trans-boundary</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• South Pennines landscape</li> <li>• Local nature partnerships</li> </ul>	South Pennines rural/ fringe development agencies: Pennine Prospects LEADER & related projects	South Pennines rural/ fringe development agencies: Pennine Prospects LEADER & Lottery funded landscape projects (potential) Local Nature Partnerships
<b>City/ District scale</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community planning</li> <li>• Spatial planning</li> </ul>	Bradford Council coordinates community strategy via LSP; neighbourhood forum & community officers liaise with parishes	LSP ended; community officers reassigned – reduced local-city liaison
<b>Parish/ locality scale</b>	Parish Councils active in urban fringes	Parish Councils active in urban fringes New Localism measures may boost community engagement

### Key Elements of the Haworth project

We now turn from background issues affecting the BWV area to the more ‘bottom-up’ developments supported through the project. The Bradford SURF project builds on previous experience in both promoting local economy and urban development and in engaging with localities at the fringe of a major conurbation within a city-dominated political structure whose outer boundary happens to include many communities that consider themselves to be rural. An Airedale Masterplan was developed in 2005 to ensure that there was a blueprint for the economic regeneration of Airedale to mirror that of the Bradford City Centre. The Bradford SURF project is essentially a spin-off from the Airedale Masterplan, with logistical and personnel support provided from the partnership office in Keighley, in the lower Worth Valley. It has the semi-rural areas of the upper Worth Valley as one of its key priorities - an ideal location on the urban fringe in which to build on the skills gained by Bradford during its work as a Department for Communities and Local



Government recognised Beacon Council in ‘Empowering Communities and Developing Rural Services’. The aim is for the SURF work to embed in parish planning both governance and awareness raising processes that will increase and sustain local competitiveness, enhance engagement and forge a stronger bond between local governance, emerging neighbourhood plans and the wider Leeds City Region.

Approximately 6,000 people were living in the area in 2001. There were about 2,500 jobs in the locality and 553 businesses (Rose Regeneration, 2011). In terms of relative deprivation indicators the area has higher than average income and skills levels and better housing standards, but lower levels of health than average. The area is well known for its connection to the literary work and lives of the Bronte sisters. This along with the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway and the conservation of the typical South Pennine village appearance means that it plays a significant part in the tourism of the region, including attracting substantial numbers from the Far East.

### **The Haworth SWOT findings**

A key element of the Bradford SURF project, in common with all other SURF partners, was the strengths/ weaknesses/ opportunities/ threats analysis carried out at an early stage. The SWOT technique is a simple but effective way of engaging local stakeholders in a participatory planning process and was successful in Haworth in securing a wide range of participants in different forums. Because the Bradford project was assigned to the ‘governance’ theme of SURF the discussions of SWOT adopted this emphasis – not a hardship as this theme fitted very neatly with the thrust of the activities around the Parish Plan. The following table summarises the points made in the four quadrants of the SWOT and key points are discussed in more detail in the following paragraphs.

Fig 12: Bradford SURF SWOT analysis Summary table

Fig 12: Bradford SURF SWOT analysis Summary table	
<b>Strengths</b> <i>(What gives the community strong governance potential?)</i>	<b>Weaknesses</b> <i>(What contributes to weak governance?)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community pride and identity</li> <li>• Strong community base</li> <li>• Strong parish council</li> <li>• Strong parish plan</li> <li>• Small rural community with a good quality of life</li> <li>• Business rooted in the area, large number of home workers</li> <li>• The good reputation of the area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unequal relationship with Bradford Council</li> <li>• The future prosperity of the city centre/major urban areas is an overriding consideration for regeneration activity</li> <li>• The perceived distance from the centre of regional decision making in Leeds</li> <li>• A lack of cohesion between some groups in the community</li> <li>• Commuter mentality of some residents who do not connect to local business</li> <li>• The restrictions and lack of local decision making of the spatial planning system</li> <li>• Lack of joined up thinking and activity by local Groups</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b> <i>(enhanced or new ways of working that would strengthen governance?)</i>	<b>Threats</b> <i>(what might undermine effective governance?)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing new community leaders/key players and activists to move Haworth projects forward</li> <li>• Working more closely with strategic agencies such as Bradford Council, Yorkshire Forward, Leeds City Region</li> <li>• Identify the overall strengths of the Worth valley</li> <li>• Continue to develop activities that meet the vision of the parish plan.</li> <li>• Business to get involved with the community and to support liaison with external agencies.</li> <li>• Further enhancement of the local business networks to support economic development</li> <li>• Growth of home working</li> <li>• Increase involvement at meetings by creating an informal environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Top down decision making by external bodies</li> <li>• No clear routes of communication to strategic planners and decision makers</li> <li>• Little understanding locally of the regional strategies and their impact at a local level</li> <li>• Lack of local engagement with policy makers.</li> <li>• Assumed perceptions of the Worth valley held by external organisations</li> <li>• Apathy within the community</li> <li>• Over-reliance of delivery organisations on the use of the internet</li> <li>• Lack of action by the parish council and the local community has slowed down the delivery of the parish plan</li> <li>• Lack of awareness of the Parish Plan and the potential for future activity</li> </ul>

## **The Haworth Parish Plan**

The existing Haworth, Stanbury and Cross Roads Parish Plan was issued in 2009 and is due for review in 2012/13. This is in line with the completion of the SURF project. As a result of lengthy community consultations the Parish Plan was published in 2009 in response to then Government policy on community-led planning. This was a visionary statement and initial action plan designed to show what the local citizens thought was necessary to maintain and improve life in the three villages. It sought to enable partners and service delivery agencies in their forward planning to link to the vision and action plan. The Plan was designed to contribute to the Bradford Council area plan for the Keighley constituency and ultimately the District wide 'sustainable community strategy' of the Local Strategic Partnership for the Bradford district.

The villages included in the Plan lie in the western (upper) end of the Worth Valley. In spatial planning terms parts of the villages are classed as conservation areas, requiring special attention to the retention and enhancement of their townscape qualities and protection from insensitive new development. The areas around the villages are designated as either Green Belt or Village Green Space in recognition of their outstanding natural beauty, historical and environmental importance. The area is included in the South Pennines Character Area, a formal classification used by Natural England to identify distinct homogeneous areas on the basis of geology and natural habitats. This categorisation has been used to underpin a number of cooperative initiatives linking local authorities and other local agencies across the border between the Yorkshire and North West regions since the 1970s on nature conservation, tourism promotion etc. The latest example of this cooperation is the Pennine Prospects initiative which has attracted EU rural development funding as a LEADER project for community-led rural development and has also obtained Heritage Lottery Fund support for promoting tourism and related enterprises across the South Pennines.

## **Findings from SURF engagement with the parish level**

As already stated, there has been a good deal of exploration of the state of community level involvement in higher level planning in the Haworth area. On a 'localist' level the Parish Plan process remains the key formal basis for engaging the community in forward thinking about the area and for linking this to higher level plans and strategies. The Bradford SURF partners, together with CUDEM and other contributors have paid a lot of attention to this process.

An important finding is the relatively high levels of 'enterprise' to be found in the area. More than 500 small and medium enterprises exist including many very small firms including a growing number of 'homeworking' enterprises set up by migrants from Bradford and Leeds. There is a perception that the area is something of a magnet for 'lifestyle' entrepreneurs who want to work and live in attractive rural/ urban fringe surroundings close to big city facilities, perhaps also drawn by the strong cultural heritage links of the area as 'Bronte country' and attractions such as the Worth Valley Steam Railway.

As well as individual enterprises there is a high level of networking between enterprises and some cooperation and sharing of services. Local enterprises were aware of the 'visitor economy' and were active in optimising opportunities to exploit it, including a degree of horizontal integration between

enterprises, for instance local retail outlets for local farm meat producers and the promotion of local produce by gastro-pubs in the area. As well as private enterprises there were a number of active voluntary associations and synergies between the two have helped support enterprise promotion agencies, notably the (former) 'Whoyano' local business network which received SURF support to promote business networking and enterprise formation in the valley. Despite this lively picture (or perhaps because of it) recent surveys have shown awareness of gaps in the local enterprise offering, for instance the limited range of retail outlets in Haworth beyond the more chintzy tourist offer and the scope for better exploitation of the heritage attractions for local job creation.

The substantial number of local associations mapped by the 2011 survey (Rose Regeneration) can be taken as an indication of high potential levels of community engagement in policy-making. However the survey also showed concerns that much of this activity was borne by a small number of 'movers and shakers' with quite a limited set of activists supporting them or prepared to deputise for them and this made some of the Parish planning processes vulnerable to short-term personnel constraints. Knowledge, connections and influence can be condensed into a small number of individuals in urban fringe areas and this can make engagement with higher level plan-making and decision-influencing susceptible to the risk of personal circumstances, unlike public bodies which tend to have greater resources. In the Haworth area respondents suggested greater use of social media to keep people informed and engaged, which might in turn encourage more people to become movers and shakers.

It is not feasible to detail here all the community engagement activities found in the Haworth area. The focus of the SURF team has been to look for ways of building on what is there and seeking improvements which means a critical and reflective approach has been taken, highlighting barriers to better engagement and seeking opportunities to overcome them. From this challenging perspective, key findings of the deliberation are as follows:

1. Policy and institutional churning creates barriers to effective engagement
  - a. See figure 11 above
  - b. Localism - neighbourhood planning has created a new context linked to formal spatial planning which has to be learned and absorbed by urban fringe communities
2. Locally developed plans may take years to develop through good stakeholder engagement; meanwhile the political policy can change virtually overnight.
3. Replacement of a community development approach with more limited officer-community engagement approach. One effect can be to marginalise urban fringe communities in strategic discussions
4. Partnerships and alliances are difficult to keep motivated and focussed over time. The Parish Council may see the parish plan as a five year working document, other organisations tend to focus on reaching their organisations targets within a year and then moving on to other priorities.
5. Local agencies with limited resources can be over-dependent on a few activists, making long-term engagement with discussions difficult
6. Higher level strategies (district and city region) can be too abstract to attract local participation
7. Urban fringe community issues too detailed for strategic deliberation, so rural policy officers group may provide useful discursive bridge from communities to strategists

8. Communities may focus energies on fighting mainstream service cutbacks and have less to spare to engage in forward planning,
9. Recent government policy has removed many rural support agencies and city level services to urban fringe areas are also reducing

What can be done to address these issues affecting community engagement and the Parish Plan?

Following discussion with key stakeholders, informed by the analysis supplied by Rose Regeneration, some key ideas for the future development of the parish plan were developed. Stated simply:

1. The plan needs to be locally based but show awareness of the strategic context, especially in identifying potential impacts of emerging strategies on the locality and in spotting possible opportunities for locally useable initiatives and funding streams
2. It needs to be pragmatic and contain measures that are achievable in parameters of the planning system and not just a community 'wish list'.
3. In order for the plan to be effective there needs to be improved opportunities for local people to have some influence over strategies and policies that affect them. This would give rural communities a stronger voice.
4. A good quality parish plan should enable external agencies to aggregate issues and actions and therefore be in a position to act as advocates on behalf of the community, so an intelligent understanding of external body agendas is needed
5. There should be stronger links between the local economy, the plan and business support opportunities which can be dealt with in specialist policy 'silos' and fail to exploit beneficial synergies.

## PART 4 REFLECTIVE CONCLUSION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This section draws together the particular findings from the Bradford partners' activities with the overall SURF project deliberations to provide a summation of learning and some suggestions for future policy-making. The initial idea of this section was to focus solely on 'bottom-up' issues and policy measures to reflect the localised perspective of the BWV. However this has been modified for two reasons. First, SURF has been an interregional dissemination process for exchanging learning between regions of Europe, in this case the 'North Sea Region', so it is both important and useful to seek opportunities for transferable learning from other SURF partners with similar predicaments. Second, the policy lessons about improving urban fringe conditions and exploiting urban fringe potential are not just confined to the local scale. The lessons for EU and national scales has been covered by the SURF Final Report so this section concentrated on sub-national scales.

The transnational element of SURF contributed to the development of the BWV project by helping provide focus for the Bradford partners. The 'governance' theme within the SURF analytical process that Bradford joined required some in-depth discussions about how urban fringe localities across the North Sea Region related to their surrounding communities and political structures. In Bradford's case the city regions scale was a regular topic for SURF workshops and other actions.

Comparison with other SURF partner areas showed many differences in how urban fringe communities conducted policies, arranged representation and came to decisions. Interesting examples of ways to mobilise community engagement were found in Flanders and the Netherlands. For instance the West Flanders partner had formed a coalition of their equivalent of parish councils to carry out various local regeneration projects which linked agriculture to other enterprises and farmers to commuters in ways that integrated with other local council services. Some Dutch partners had successfully mobilised local communities around the protection and promotion of public parks and recreation spaces where urban visitors could enjoy urban fringe spaces whilst consuming local farmers' products and creating jobs in restaurants and recreation.

Other scales are important, for instance from the beginning the city-region scale was recognised as important to SURF and the Bradford project made a particular effort to articulate the significance of localities engaging with city region issues and institutions. The overall SURF findings are organised in spatial levels, to reflect the political and institutional realities of how urban fringes are perceived, or ought to be perceived, in the EU, as reported in Figure 3 above, and these conclusions will reflect the spatial level distinctions drawn by the SURF project. Also, rather than repeat the various conclusions reported above, this section will confine the policy suggestions to two at each of the spatial policy scales: one reflecting learning from across the SURF project area and one reflecting particular lessons from the Bradford project experience.

### Locality and Community Level

The Bradford project focused on what was feasible for urban fringe policy engagement at a parish scale, the most localised formal representative level in English governance. It was found that there

was a strong sense of community in the BWV area of Haworth, Cross Roads and Stanbury Parish. Active engagement by SURF partner officers and the involvement of consultants and other SURF partners, including CUDEM, together with the involvement of community representatives in the SURF conference in June 2011, all contributed to quite an intense period of interaction and discussion about Haworth's potential. In addition the close attention paid through the SWOT process and the consultants' surveys to community perspectives in the BWV enabled an unusually detailed knowledge to develop over the SURF project period.

Two background factors dominated in discussions about ways forward for 'governance' in the BWV area: the potential impacts of austerity measures on local services and resources and the effects on local planning of the Localism Act 2011. Both are discussed above but are worth emphasising here because both create considerable uncertainty, the first because of concerns that resources to support community engagement will be very limited in future as well as raising doubts about the capacity for local business leaders to divert energies to policy discussion during 'hard times' for business. The second appears to offer much potential for urban fringe communities to help shape the spatial planning of their localities but is a new and uncertain mechanism which is also constrained by spare capacity amongst community leaders.

#### **Key policy suggestions at locality level**

- The well-developed community engagement mechanisms that currently enable BWV communities to help shape their locality and its services need to be nurtured to remain viable and if new opportunities such as planning localism are to be grasped effectively.
- Based on experiences in other SURF areas, the potential of managing and maintaining recreational and tourist facilities to act as a catalyst for community engagement should be explored.

#### **City and regional level**

This category refers to levels between locality and national. This is a fast shifting scale in English governance terms with the recent abolition of regional bodies and strengthening of city region scale bodies emerging as key factors. Structures in other SURF partner areas vary considerably. There are few strong regional arrangements but there are many relatively informal city region bodies present. The city region bodies tend to focus on economic vitality of groups of cities and, increasingly, on developing 'low carbon' and 'smart city' scenarios for conurbations and their fringes.

A key aim of SURF has been to promote urban fringes as complementary to the competitiveness and sustainability of their city regions. It has emerged that SURF network urban fringe communities are well aware of their complementary role and it appears the 'multifunctional' nature of urban fringes that supports city viability is universally accepted in fringe areas. The role of urban fringes in supplying 'ecosystem services' which benefit whole conurbations, is also widely accepted as part of this recognition. There is also, however, concern in SURF fringe areas that the higher political levels within city regions often fail to recognise enough that complementary role, or they recognise it and undervalue it relative to other strategic considerations such as urban expansion and infrastructure provision.



The Leeds City Region (LCR) appears the most coherent of the city region bodies present in the SURF network and has done much to acknowledge the importance of urban fringes. The current Green Infrastructure Strategy of the LCR is an indicator of this (LCR, 2010). Other SURF network members, such as Harryda (Gothenburg CR) and Hamburg took a close interest in how the Bradford project engaged with the LCR. The SURF regional conference held in Leeds in 2011 was an attempt to understand how urban fringe areas around LCR engaged with the city region level of policy deliberation and part 2 summarises the outcomes of this. There was realistic acceptance found amongst delegates that LCR has to focus its efforts onto 'the bigger picture' of city region dynamics and that urban fringes may rank relatively low, especially in present economic circumstances and severe resource constraints, but there was also optimism that dialogue between urban fringe communities and LCR level could be improved.

The most varied governance arrangements observed in SURF could be found at intermediate levels above localities and below cities and city regions. There were several interesting cooperative arrangements found between parish/ commune bodies to pool resources to tackle issues at a district level, often encouraged by city and regional councils to enable 'critical mass' to be reached where individual communities were too small individually. The West Flanders SLS arrangement was interesting in this respect but BWV can lay claim to a similar arrangement with the presence of the Pennine Prospects (2008) which is the latest iteration of a long-standing alliance between localities in the South Pennines area to mutually promote urban fringe economic and cultural development. Pennine Prospects is currently thriving and is now engaged in another new government initiative – local nature partnerships – which may develop into a useful mechanism for coordinating environmental management initiatives embracing areas such as BWV.

#### **Key policy suggestions at city region level**

- The Leeds City Region should maintain the precedent set by the LCR Green Infrastructure Strategy in recognising the key complementary role of urban fringes for supplying ecosystem services and should pay similar attention to the potential urban fringes offer for supporting economic, social and cultural development in the city region.
- Based on experiences in other SURF areas, LCR should be promoting more widely the relatively strategic and enlightened approach being taken here to city-region scale urban fringe resource planning.

#### **Key policy suggestions at intermediate level**

- The potential offered by emerging forms of governance cooperation at intermediate level such as those around 'rural development' with Pennine Prospects and around nature protection with local nature partnerships, should be exploited by the BWV community.
- Based on experiences in other SURF areas, cooperation between parishes/ communes to deliver some local services bid for and manage regeneration projects can be an important sources of mutual collective benefit.

## References

- Carnegie Rural Action Research Programme (2009) *Making the Connections: How Communities Can Achieve Influence through Community Planning; Lessons from 3 Case Study Towns in Yorkshire*. London, The Carnegie UK Trust.
- CUDEM/ Bradford SURF Project (2011) *Sustaining the City Region's Urban Fringe: Towards better Parish Plans in Bradford - Bradford (Worth Valley) Development Phase*, SURF Project website.
- DG Regio (of the EU Commission) (2011) *Cities of Tomorrow: Challenges, visions, ways forward*, from the website: [http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm)
- ESDP, 1999 – *European Spatial Development Perspective – Towards Balanced and Sustainable Development of the Territory of the European Union*, the European Commission.
- Leeds City Region (2010) *Leeds City Region Green Infrastructure Strategy*, LCR Board, Leeds.
- Leinfelder 2009. 'Formalisation of 'Open Space' as 'Public Space' in Zoning': the Belgian Experience', in van der Valk, A & van Dijk, T. (eds) *Regional Planning for Open Space*, London, RTPI Library Series, pp.225-247
- METREX (2011) *Urban-rural Relationships in Metropolitan Areas of Influence: Best Practice Examples of Metropolitan-rural Cooperation*, Hamburg, Ministry of Economy, Transport & Innovation
- Pennine Prospects (2008) *South Pennines LEADER: Local Development Strategy Core Strategy 2008-2013*,
- Rose Regeneration (2011) *Study into the potential of the Haworth Cross Roads and Stanbury Parish Planning process*, Commissioned by Bradford SURF project/ Airedale Partnership.
- SURF Project (2010) *The SURF Conceptual & Analytical Framework; Interim Output of Work Package 3*, produced by the Scientific Partners, Leeds, Leeds Metropolitan University
- SURF (2012) *Connecting Urban and Rural: Final Report of the Sustainable Urban Fringes Project*, available on the website [www.sustainablefringes.eu](http://www.sustainablefringes.eu)
- Thomas K and Littlewood S (2010) From Green Belts to Green Infrastructure? The evolution of a new concept in the emerging soft governance of spatial strategies, *Planning Practice and Research*, 25 (2) 203-222.

