

Enabling Affordable Housing in Rural Wales

A Good Practice Manual
for Rural Housing Enablers
and RHE Steering Groups
RHE Network Task and
Finish Group **2008**

Written for the RHE Network in Wales by
David Hedges, Cyngor Da September 2008



Cartrefi
Cymunedol



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Housing



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Introduction

This manual is designed to help new RHEs and Steering Groups to understand their roles, how RHEs work and where to find more good practice and learning points. Much already exists on RHEs and their work and this manual cites it as reference material - pointing to it rather than including it. The production of affordable rural housing is not a linear process from inception to completion so it's essential to identify and understand the key issues which influence the production process. This manual provides some building blocks around which the experience of doing the job, networking, advice and guidance from Steering Groups will shape the performance individual RHEs.

The first version of this manual was written in the autumn of 2008 - a time of significant uncertainty in the housing market, the global financial markets and the UK economy coupled with changes brought about by the Essex Review. For RHEs and their Steering Groups to improve the delivery of affordable homes during this time is a big challenge and calls for creativity and innovation, breaking new ground and forging new solutions.

RHEs and their Steering Groups have differing roles. Essentially the Steering Group and its members are there to provide strategic

direction and to review and monitor progress against a programme of work agreed with the RHE. Whilst it's acknowledged that Steering Group members may have limited time to commit to the work of the RHE, their contribution mustn't be restricted to meetings of the Steering Group. A key part of the RHEs role is to network and forge and nurture relationships with key partners. By definition Steering Group members will work for these partner organisations. So between meetings, Steering Group members should make the time to assist the RHE in getting to know and understand the role of the partner organisation, the role it plays in the development of affordable housing locally and where it can help the RHE in delivering their work programme. So whilst Steering Group members will not have an operational role, their contribution between Steering Group meetings will certainly assist the RHE in their operational goals.

The first part of the manual is described as Good Practice for Steering Groups and later there's a section titled Good Practice for RHEs. Steering Group members and RHEs are encouraged to read both as there are issues for everyone to consider.

Good Practice for Steering Groups

In establishing a local RHE Project, Steering Groups need to:

- _ set-up to guide the work of the RHE
- _ be strategic rather than operational
- _ have members representing the local partnership created to carry forward the RHE project – all partners if possible – not just funders
- _ have members who are committed to the RHEs work
- _ be well organised, disciplined and focussed

The key action for the Steering Group will include the following:

2.1 Terms of Reference

Each local RHE Steering Group needs to work through and agree the clear Terms of Reference at their first meeting. This needs to include the following:

- _ Role - Setting the strategic direction, managing and supporting the overall delivery by the RHE, monitoring and review the RHEs work programme. Day to day management of the RHE should be by the host employer, not the Steering Group. Consider having a sub group to work on particular issues (such as continuation funding).
- _ Objectives – the Steering Group aims to achieve the goals and objectives set out in the Work Programme and in doing so, support and encourage the RHE, monitoring and reviewing their progress as appropriate.
- _ Responsibilities – provide strategic direction, information, support and advice to the RHE to meet agreed targets
- _ Meetings – quarterly seem to be popular – rotating the host and chair ensures active involvement. Electing a chair for

a period is an alternative. RHEs can act as secretary. Consider avoiding having a consistent chair who is also host employer – having them as Treasurer is one idea.

- _ Membership – ensuring the Steering Group is representative of the key partner organisations. If there are posts such as Affordable Housing Officer in the local authority consider involving them. Certainly have a local authority planning representative and it's a good idea to have the RHEs line manager on the Steering Group. It will help if representatives are senior enough to make most decisions without referral back.

NOTE: There is a template for Steering Group Terms of Reference in the Resources section

2.2 Early action – the Steering Group also needs to agree on other fundamentals:

- _ Funding - The budget for the local project and the sources of income – it's really important to be clear on the various funding contributions at the outset. It's likely that some information on the budget and spending priorities has been put together before the first formal meeting and this is the opportunity to ensure it's accurate and agreed by all members. The budget should set out the income and expenditure heads and be the basis of review at regular intervals as the project proceeds. Agree on a Treasurer who will take responsibility for reporting and action.
- _ Recruitment – a Recruitment Panel needs to be established, which will need to include a representative of the hosting organisation – involve a small number of Steering Group members to make the task easier and quicker.
- _ Host Employer – which member of the Steering Group is to employ the RHE and where they might be based? Remember

that the independence of the RHE is critical to their success.

- Administrative support – RHEs will need support in carrying out basic administration and especially in relation to work on housing need surveys. Consider what resources are available and agree on how and who will provide it at the outset – perhaps this is something which Steering Group members can collaborate in offering.
- First draft work programme – including the key elements, priorities and performance measures. Involve the RHE once they are in post in refining the draft as this will help the RHE to take ownership of the programme and priorities.
- Initial publicity – consider whether you want to generate local media interest in the RHE project. As part of this agree on the branding to be used – logos, literature etc. Alternatively, make this a task for the RHE in the first few weeks in post.
- Meeting management – agree how often meetings will take place, where they'll be held, who will chair, prepare agendas and reports and take and circulate action points. There is no hard and fast rule which ensures success – it's up to each Steering Group to decide on a way of working that suits its members. Ensure the production of agendas and action points is timely and inclusive.

NOTE: There is a template for meeting agendas is included in the Resources section

- Networking – there's no substitute for learning by doing. RHEs need to network with each other, RHEs in England, housing, planning and other practitioners and policy staff as well as local communities. This should be encouraged and supported. Being an RHE can be a tough, lonely and challenging role. Steering Group members need to understand this and help RHEs find ways through the many barriers they'll face. Be realistic and optimistic.

2.3 Partnership working

The key to success for RHEs lies in their ability to network, to create and foster

relationships with all the key players in the affordable housing sector. This is because of the vital role effective communication plays in the process of getting solutions off the ground. The issue is sensitive for most local communities. There are misunderstandings and concerns about what may or may not happen in the future and policy and practice can be riddled with inconsistency. It's important that channels of communication are opened as soon as the RHE starts in post and are nourished by regular and meaningful contact. This is a key area where Steering Group members can assist – helping the RHE to establish these networks, pointing out who they should be contacting and what roles their organisations play.

2.4 Doing the Job

There is no substitute for the experience of doing the job. RHEs can access resources from a range of sources and hear from others about how to do the job, but everyone's experience will be different. Newly employed RHEs must exploit all available opportunities to learn from others. There is wide acceptance that the job of being an RHE has the potential to be a lonely one. It's important for RHEs and Steering Groups to ensure this doesn't happen. RHEs need to know that as well as the support of their employer and Steering Group they have the network of other RHEs in Wales and the extended network with RHEs in England. The RHE Network in Wales will be ensuring that a programme of regular and ongoing training and mentoring provides plenty of opportunities for RHEs to engage with others doing the same job in a different part of the country. Experience would suggest that existing RHEs already have extensive networks at a local level and have established broader regional ones, as well as links into England. Individual RHEs have found it valuable to share problems, solutions and experiences generally with their peers through regular phone and e-mail contact, as well as the occasional meeting. Contact like this should be something newly employed RHEs seek to develop for themselves and the experience of joining an existing network will provide a great start.

2.5 The role of the Work Programme

It is essential for RHEs and their Steering Groups to develop a work programme. This

should set out the key priorities for the RHE, deadlines or milestones for achievement and the monitoring and review of performance. These are the tools that the Steering Group and RHE can use and adapt as the RHEs work develops over time. It will be important to ensure that flexibility is built into the programme to allow for the unexpected, and for opportunities when they emerge. Most RHEs, when they start, will have the benefit of some previous relevant experience and may have worked in the area where they are going to be based. It may also be the case that they can immediately plug into a current programme of work being managed by some of the stakeholders and existing partnerships. Steering Group members may also be able to signpost RHEs to any relevant policy and strategy documents.

Steering Groups will need to agree on outcomes against which performance will be measured. There are obvious ways in which these outcomes can be related to progress made by the RHE in developing schemes with communities and measuring this activity. It's easier to measure outputs rather than outcomes to start with, so consider early targets such as awareness raising, setting up promotional material and a website etc. Later this can move onto the number of community councils contacted, visited etc. The next stage might include the numbers of local housing need surveys completed. Ultimately it will include the number of affordable homes developed. Consider included the following categories:

Activity

- _ Number of Affordable Housing units delivered
- _ Number of units on sites being considered
- _ Number of units on sites with full Planning Permission achieved
- _ Number of units on sites with Outline planning permission achieved
- _ Number of units on sites where Planning Applications have been made
- _ Number of Housing Needs Surveys completed

- _ Number of Surveys in Progress
- _ Number of Surveys Planned

Other Activity

- _ Number of Presentations to community councils and other organisations
- _ Number of community councils RHEs are in communication with
- _ Number of responses to relevant to consultations
- _ Amount of communication with Assembly Members
- _ Amount of Input into local policy with the local authorities

Initial Outputs

- _ Producing suite of stationary and publicity material appropriately branded
- _ Gaining publicity for the new appointment in local press

The Work Programme needs to set targets based on reasonable expectations of what can be achieved over time. Steering Groups need to remember that delivering new homes on the ground takes time. It would be reasonable for example to list a number of areas of priority – perhaps community council areas where the need for affordable housing has been identified – and in the short term to expect the RHE to have made contact, given a presentation, undertaken a housing need survey, reported the results etc.

2.6 RHE induction, capacity building and mentoring

Ideally the induction programme and training programme should be designed around the needs of the appointed RHEs. The Steering Group and the host employer will need to identify the training needs of the newly employed RHE and ensure an appropriate programme of training is put in place to meet their needs. This is best done via a skills audit. Contact with a limited number of training providers should identify suitable generic training courses the RHE can attend. The best solution will be to tailor programmes to fit the backgrounds, experience and skills of the RHE. There will obviously be benefit

if training opportunities can involve existing RHEs in Wales, other newly employed RHEs as well as RHEs in England. There may also be a number of opportunities to access RHE training opportunities via RHE Networks in England. It's clear that much of the training for RHEs is best done 'on the job'.

For Steering Group members it's important to ensure that sufficient time and resources are provided for training within work programmes and budgets. Carrying out a skills audit should identify training needs against the following set of knowledge and skills:

Basic knowledge and skills

- _ The RHE role – background, what it involves, awareness raising, justifying your existence, performance monitoring, working with your steering group etc – led by existing RHEs and Steering Group members
- _ Rural housing issues and why the need for affordable housing solutions in rural communities has become so crucial – led by existing RHEs and Steering Group members, WAG officials and academics
- _ Housing and Planning Policy Contexts, how to set priorities and feed into the process – strategy and policy, assessments, delivery plans, TANs, exception sites etc.
- _ How local authorities work
- _ How Housing associations work
- _ The planning system and housing development
- _ Partnership working and getting the best out of stakeholders – Community Councils, local communities, landowners and developers, planners and housing officials
- _ Raising awareness of the role – understanding opportunities and how to exploit them
- _ Community development – what it is and how it works – how to get the best out of a community and ensure they are involved in what you do

Detailed knowledge and skills

- _ Housing Needs Surveys and their analysis – how to use the LGDU tools and interpret and report on the results
- _ Site Finding, Appraisal and Feasibility
- _ Understanding of design briefs and Scheme development
- _ How the Social Housing Grant System works - what it is, how LAs bid for it, how its allocated and spent
- _ Sustainable housing design – the Code for Sustainable homes and what it means
- _ Housing allocation, nomination, common waiting lists etc.
- _ Empty Homes – how to identify them and the options available to bring them back into use for affordable housing
- _ Tenure Options –Homebuy, shared equity, tenure mixing and tenure neutrality
- _ Community Land Trusts – what they are/ how they work

Inter personal skills

- _ Communication (including public speaking), facilitation, mediation, negotiation, leadership, assertiveness, how to deal with conflict and difficult people

Capacity Building

Existing RHEs have benefitted from contact with colleagues in Wales and in England. There is a Wales & West Midlands Network which existing RHEs belong to and they are keen to continue to attend network meetings and events where relevant. The new funding expansion of the RHE network in Wales should also reinforce opportunities for RHEs in Wales to meet regularly. This should be encouraged by Steering Groups. One other important way that RHEs can develop their knowledge and skills is to learn from each other by spending time meeting and communicating outside of Network meetings. It's essentially a form of peer support and allows individual RHEs to share their experience – their difficulties,

frustrations, solutions, successes and more. This is informal and should remain so but there's no harm in acknowledging its value and building in time for RHEs to do this within work programmes.

Shadowing is an obvious way in which RHEs can learn quickly about the role and what's involved. Shadowing opportunities should be built into the RHE induction programme so that RHEs can better understand the depth and breadth of issues involved in providing solutions to rural housing needs.

Mentoring

Steering Groups should consider the opportunity to establish RHE Mentors, linking an RHE with someone who can be independent and dispassionate. Mentoring is a partnership between two people (mentor and mentee) normally working in a similar field or sharing similar experiences which:

- _ supports and encourages people to manage their own learning to maximise potential, develop skills and improve performance
- _ can be a powerful personal development and empowerment tool and
- _ is an effective way of helping people to progress in their careers and is becoming increasingly popular as its potential is realised.

It's recommended that each Steering Group introduces a mentoring opportunity into the later stages of the induction programme.

2.7 Understanding why RHEs are needed

The crisis in affordable housing in rural areas created a need for a new approach. The shortage of affordable housing in rural areas impacts on opportunities and choices for everyone. The supply of affordable homes to rent has been reduced by the Right-to-Buy and the dramatic rise in house prices and the increase in demand for second homes has meant that people on modest incomes have been priced out of the market. Often these are people working in key service areas. Many village schools, post offices and shops have closed - all businesses and services vital to maintaining a sustainable

community. So people are forced to move out of rural areas, away from communities in which they have been born and grown-up. Areas have drained of skilled individuals, eroding local communities and increasing a sense of social exclusion. Without a range of suitable properties within a community it's difficult to encourage sustainable communities and maintain a vibrant, living countryside. Developing affordable housing is one of the crucial issues that influences the economic and social strength of rural communities, and is a major contributor to long-term community sustainability. Even when local authorities and their partners work together to do something positive there is 'nimbyism', bureaucracy and difficulties in getting partners around the table to win the trust of a community and develop a scheme to completion. This is where RHEs come in.

They were first established in England with pilots in 1989. It was a response, led by the Rural Development Commission and Joseph Rowntree Foundation to the increasing evidence of the lack of rural affordable housing and the limited activity by statutory agencies and housing associations to addressing the issue. In 1995 it became a national programme in England, funded first by the Rural Development Commission, the Countryside Agency and then Defra.

RHE funding under its 2 year Rural Social and Community Programme ended in March 2008. At its height the programme funded over 40 RHEs across England. The aim of the funding programme in England was to provide independent support for rural communities to help identify housing needs and find solutions (usually in the form of new development) and to provide first hand experience to local and national policy makers to help ensure new planning and funding arrangements would increase the supply of rural affordable housing. In Wales the history is even more recent with the first pilot being funded by the Assembly Government (WAG) and a partnership of local authorities, housing associations and the Brecon Beacons National Park in 2003. Gwynedd's RHE project started in 2004, the Conwy & Denbighshire and Pembrokeshire RHE projects in 2005. Key reports by Hughes-Isherwood Regeneration Consultants in

2006 and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation Commission on Rural Housing in Wales in 2008 argued for an expansion in the RHE Network in Wales. In July 2008 WAG announced additional funding to be matched locally by housing associations and local authorities.

Three significant reviews of RHE programmes in England have shown:

- _ consistent support for RHEs as a source of advice and expertise for all stakeholders, providing a mediating/brokering service, vital for sensitive issues and environments.
- _ RHEs have to be independent from any stakeholder.
- _ weakness in some line management and support arrangements
- _ concern about funding uncertainty, low pay and limited training/career opportunities
- _ concern over the pace and quantity of delivery. Delivery of new homes can be long but once RHEs have become established delivery rates increase.
- _ providing rural affordable housing is complex and sensitive - obstacles are: finding suitable sites; gaining/retaining community support; and securing public funding.
- _ RHEs can only work within the policies in their area and the level of local political support and leadership given to providing rural affordable housing.

Good Practice for the RHE

Enabling – the work of an RHE

The role of the RHE is changing. Even in the few years of their existence the nature of the work they do has been moulded by the changing economic, social and housing landscape. In the future, opportunities for RHEs to engage with local communities to secure affordable housing solutions will change and solutions will need to be more creative and ingenious. A ‘typical’ scheme or project doesn’t exist – they are all unique but this manual adopts the approach that it’s important to understand the various stages in the process of moving from inception, when work with a community begins, through to a completed scheme. This isn’t a linear process which starts at the beginning and proceeds neatly through each stage to the end.

The process needs to begin with an understanding of the rural housing context and the various factors which influence it.

3.1 Context

RHEs need to understand the local housing and labour markets as they will determine the dynamics of housing need and the priorities and action of local housing and planning authorities, housing associations and others. Steering Group members have a key role in helping RHEs to understand and interpret this information. RHEs will be questioned by lots of stakeholders during their work and so they need to know not only what the local approach is but why it’s shaped the way it is. RHEs also need to know and understand how this national policy framework is interpreted at a local level and get to know their ‘patch’. There are some key strategy and policy documents to understand.

Context: Local Housing Market Assessments

RHEs will be able to gain an understanding of what’s happening locally by studying the local authority Housing Market Assessment.

All local authorities need to assess housing need and demand in order to plan housing services sustainably. They need to derive data on the number of households which need additional housing and to determine what this means in terms of market and affordable housing provision to have a basis to develop sound planning policies (including affordable housing policies) in their Development Plans - to provide the right mix of housing choices. These assessments may not be confined to the local authority boundary (as markets don’t respect artificial boundaries) and many assessments look to sub-regional areas. A typical example of an assessment is that prepared by Torfaen Borough Council – see the web page at:

<http://www.torfaen.gov.uk/Housing/HousingMarketAssessment/Home.aspx>

Guidance prepared by WAG on preparing assessments is available at:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/housing/strategy/publications/marketassessguide/?lang=en>

Context: Local Housing Strategies

Local Authorities in Wales have seen a significant change to the way they plan the delivery of services. The Beecham Review was the catalyst for much of the recent change. In late 2005 the Welsh Assembly Government agreed plan rationalisation proposals which have reduced the number of plans that local authorities have to submit to WAG reduce from 32 (at the time of the review) to just four: the Community Strategy, the Health Social Care and Well-being Strategy (HSCWBS); the Children and Young People’s Plan (CYPP) and the Local Development Plan. The Community Strategy is the overarching strategy, setting the overall strategic direction and priorities, which should then be reflected within the other statutory and non-statutory strategies which authorities have to prepare. During both their

preparation and implementation, the four plans should be interlinked and cross-refer to one another, and their overall impact continually reassessed. Cross-cutting issues, such as housing, impact on all four statutory plans. So where, following rationalisation, specific plans and strategies no longer have to be prepared, local authorities have to ensure that strategic and operational goals are met and monitored. The Local Housing Strategy will contain these goals, particularly those in relation to the provision of affordable housing. Over time RHEs will need to know and what the four key strategies say about affordable housing and understand where housing issues connect to other issues in relation to health, education, environmental and other agendas. In the meantime RHEs need to know what the Housing Strategies contain. An example of a local authority strategy can be seen here:

[http://www.carmarthenshire.gov.uk/attached_files/geraint/Housing%20Strategy%20\(Eng\)%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.carmarthenshire.gov.uk/attached_files/geraint/Housing%20Strategy%20(Eng)%20(2).pdf)

Steering Group members can help the RHE and provide pointers to key reference material such as reports and briefings prepared for Committees and Cabinet Members which summarise issues which may be relevant at a local level.

Context: Planning Policy and Guidance

RHEs need to understand and keep up to date with local planning policy as this is one of the key drivers in the development of successful affordable housing on the ground. WAG guidance on the development planning process is extensive. Local planning authorities have been working towards the production of Local Development Plans (LDPs) which have succeeded the Unitary Development Plans (UDPs). The first LDPs are not expected to be adopted until 2011. For more information see:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/planning/devplan/?lang=en>

For more information on the broad context of planning policy see:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/planning/policy/?lang=en>

In 2006 Planning and Housing reforms were introduced in Wales with the publication of:

- _ Local Housing Market Assessment

Guidance
(see above)

- _ Ministerial Interim Planning Policy Statement (MIPPS) re: Planning Policy Wales
- _ Revised TAN 1 on Joint Housing Land Availability Studies
- _ Revised TAN 2 on Planning and Affordable Housing and
- _ The Affordable Housing Toolkit

TAN 1 standardises the monitoring of housing land supply across Wales. TAN 2 includes guidance on affordability, affordable housing and land use planning, the roles of key stakeholders, local Housing Market Assessments and the Development Plan, setting affordable housing targets, affordable housing policy approaches etc. Local Development Plans set out policies on the development and use of land. They are used to decide planning applications and must be followed unless there are sound planning reasons for not doing so. This is where to find information on the local authorities approach to targets for affordable housing, thresholds and quotas where developers are asked to make a certain proportion of new housing development affordable. Discussions and negotiations with developers are acknowledged through conditions attached to a planning consent – through Section 106 Agreements for example.

Local Authorities may also have Supplementary Planning Guidance on Affordable Housing to provide detailed guidance to users of the planning system on how current policies on affordable housing are applied and to provide certainty to developers and communities about the affordable housing requirements of housing developments. The provision of affordable housing is a material planning consideration and local planning authorities may refuse to grant planning permission for housing developments which don't include an element of affordable housing. Local authorities will expect will expect developers to have taken into account the need for affordable housing when proposing new housing developments.

Supplementary planning guidance should explain the policy background and set out detail on the way policy is implemented.

See an example of supplementary planning guidance for affordable housing here:

http://www.gwynedd.gov.uk/gwy_doc.asp?doc=15207&cat=5118&Language=1

The range of supplementary planning guidance can be seen here:

http://www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/content.asp?nav=109&parent_directory_id=646&id=4979

Context: Action on Affordable Housing Delivery and Sustainable Development

In summer 2008 WAG introduced the concept of Affordable Housing Delivery Plans (AHDPs) or Affordable Housing Delivery Statements (AHDS's) and consulted on draft guidance. (The final version of the guidance is still awaited)These documents will build on work already undertaken by local authorities and are intended to be an interim measure ahead of the adoption of Local Development Plans. It is expected that they will include targets for the provision of affordable housing and set out the means by which they will be achieved. Full details of the draft guidance and consultation are on the following website:

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/consultation/affordablehousingplan/?lang=en>

In July 2008 WAG also issued a consultation entitled 'Planning Policy Changes to Support Sustainable Development in Rural Areas: Meeting Housing Needs'. The consultation paper seeks comments on drafting planning policy on essential dwellings to meet the legitimate needs of rural businesses, affordable housing in rural areas; and Low Impact Development (LID). The consultation closes on 10 October 2008.

This paragraph needs to be updated to reflect the results of the consultation

Steering Group members need to ensure their RHE is aware of what local strategy and policy documents need to be read and understood and which ones may be useful reference texts.

3.2 Engaging with the local community

Once RHEs have gained an understanding of the various markets influencing housing

choices and the policy context at a local level they should be able to develop their work programme in partnership with their Steering Groups and to identify clear priorities. It's at this stage they are likely to need to engage with the local community and it's the community council which the RHE is most likely to be working with. It is seen as representing the community but remember that there may be people in the community who don't feel that their interests are represented, so at every stage of the process try and ensure they have opportunities to express their views.

Engaging - what works best?

Affordable housing is often such a controversial and sensitive issue that it excites a response from the community and presents different opportunities for the RHE. These are the typical options for engaging with local people:

- _ Community council meetings - these can be quite formal and present limited opportunity for discussing issues. Some community council meetings might be designed around the subject of affordable housing, perhaps a special meeting, called to let the local RHE give a presentation on their work and to encourage the council to discuss their interest in wanting to take action on the issue. Some community councils may feel the issue is so important that they will create a task and finish group or working party just to look at affordable housing – giving a great opportunity for the RHE to engage!
- _ Public meetings - these are meetings called to discuss issues of importance to the community. Many RHEs have been to public meetings on affordable housing and contributed to the discussion. They have the potential to galvanise enthusiasm, interest and commitment and can help to demystify the issue of 'who gets housed'. They can help to introduce a level of information to counter its absence – which helps to deal with issues of ignorance and prejudice and can help people to make 'better' choices about the options available to them as a community. They can however sometimes be counter productive and develop into

confrontations between different groups or individuals in the community whose views on problems and solutions may be very different. Sometimes they can also be very large gatherings of people and make it difficult to generate a discussion in which everyone can contribute.

- _ Open Days, Drop in Days and Surgeries - designed to maximise opportunities for involvement, meaning it may be more convenient for people who work away from the community, people who can't easily attend meetings in the evening or people who are seen as 'hard to reach'. If they are designed carefully they can allow time for plenty of discussion, for questions to be asked and answered and for some key information on housing needs, available solutions and case studies to be made available for people to look at in their own time.

Engaging – who should be involved?

It's important for an RHE to be as inclusive as possible, get the local community to take ownership of the eventual solution and make sure everyone gets accurate information – misinformation or rumour often creates hostility. So RHEs need to involve a number of different people in the process:

- _ People in need – people who need affordable housing solutions – single people, young people, older people, couples etc.
- _ Hard to reach groups – people who perhaps are not active in the local community, generally do not participate, vulnerable people etc.
- _ Local landowners – who may be interested in what the community is trying to do and may be prepared to make some of their land or property available
- _ Community 'movers and shakers' or 'informal community leaders' who can play significant part in the development of local opinion e.g. the local shopkeeper or the 'Lollipop lady'

Engaging – giving presentations

One of the things which RHEs quickly develop experience of is giving presentations. It is a skill which needs to be honed. The

key to successful presentations lies in good preparation, effective delivery (often aided by some technology) and confident answers to the many questions which will follow. Many RHEs use a standardised approach to presentations which is tailored to suit local circumstances. It may be more appropriate to speak to the audience without using any technology – projectors, screens, flip charts etc. But more often than not the use of a brief, interesting and relevant slide presentation in PowerPoint allows the RHE to use images, diagrams and tables to convey quite a lot of information more effectively. Prepare well. Contact with the Clerk to the Community Council can help an RHE know what to expect, how formal or informal the meetings usually are, if there are particular people with a burning interest likely to be there, whether there are members of the community council who are violently opposed to development etc. Ideally try and find out as much as possible about the community and its interest in the issue of affordable housing beforehand. Research profiles on the population, existing housing, employment and income as well as any relevant housing history to the community – the development and subsequent sale of council homes, previous attempts to develop affordable housing, private development etc. Steering Group members can help to point out some of the key sources of information. Some tips on successful presentations include:

- _ Keeping the presentation to 10-15 minutes at most - allow time for questions
- _ Don't show too many statistics and tables and when you do - keep them simple.
- _ Bring plans showing development boundaries for villages in the community council area – they show allocated land and potential for exception sites.
- _ Bring an example copy of a housing need survey questionnaire to give the Community Council as a handout as that is the first stage in the process.

Engaging – responding to questions

RHEs will face many questions from individuals and communities who may have fears about what increasing the supply of affordable homes might mean. It's important to tackle some of the myths, misconceptions and ignorance. The Hampshire Alliance for Rural

Affordable Housing (HARAH) has produced a booklet titled 'Frequently Asked Questions' – see the Resources section for the detail.

Here are some examples of concerns and questions and how an RHE might respond:

- What is affordable housing? - Rural affordable housing is housing provided in rural communities for people who cannot afford to rent or buy a home locally. Affordable rented housing is usually owned by a housing association, and rented at a weekly rent that is affordable to people on low incomes. There are also forms of shared equity which allow people to buy their home at a more affordable price. The housing associations receive grant funding from the Welsh Assembly Government towards the cost of developing the schemes and this enables the housing to be rented or sold at a more affordable price.
- What are the benefits of affordable housing? - An affordable housing scheme can make a huge contribution to the local community. It not only meets the housing needs of local people, but it can help maintain the viability of services and amenities in the community, such as the local school, a village shop and post office. It may also help maintain the social balance and social network.
- Fears that more housing means building over the countryside – Affordable housing schemes are designed to meet local needs. They are often developed on 'exception' sites are intended to meet the local affordable housing need, are by nature small in size, often of only 6-10 units, and have to be built on a site adjacent to existing development. These sites don't pave the way for mass development as this is totally against planning policies.
- Why not use empty homes? - bringing empty properties back into use is very important and an important part of the RHE's role is to work with the community to achieve this. Many local authorities have Empty Homes Strategies and employ Empty Homes Officers. As well as looking to develop affordable housing on sites in local communities there may be opportunities to use empty homes and properties as part of the solution.
- Fears that affordable housing won't end up being available to local people - Houses built on 'exception sites' will only be allocated to those with a connection to the community, for example, if they were born and brought up there, already live there, work there, have close family ties or have previously lived there. If no-one meets these criteria, then there is a cascade effect where houses are offered to those in the next community, then the next, then the next etc. until the houses are filled. A robust Housing Needs Survey will provide figures proving the need and therefore the correct number of affordable units can be built.
- Rent is a waste of money - Unfortunately with the current housing market, renting is the only option for many people, even those on a good income. If people are able to stay in their village and near to their place of work they are often very happy to rent. People who rent from a housing association or local authority have tenancy agreements which give them security and provide services which mean that the homes are maintained and repaired – these services are included in the rent. Affordable housing schemes may also be 'shared equity' where no rent is paid and where the occupier owns their home.
- We don't want change - This is a common concern and it is natural to feel this way. However, a small development of affordable housing can be a real asset to your community. All villages have grown and changed over the years and have developed in different ways. Change does not always have to be a bad thing. The development of an affordable housing scheme will also provide opportunities for the local community to engage with the process and have a say in the final result.

3.3 Housing Need

It's important to produce clear evidence before anyone will take the issue of affordable housing needs seriously. This will reinforce any issues of denial amongst members of the

community, help put accurate numbers against rumours or unsubstantiated claims about need. It will also underpin the RHEs work to find appropriate solutions and will be essential in supporting applications for planning consent and funding for schemes. It will also help in any discussions and eventual negotiations with private developers who may want to develop homes and where any planning consent may place conditions on them to provide a certain number of affordable homes.

Housing Need - where to get the information

The best way to identify need accurately is to research it. There may already be information on housing needs included in local authority and housing association waiting lists or registers but the most accurate way of getting up-to-date information is through carrying out a housing need survey of every household in the community. It may also be sent out to people who have had to move away but are known to want to return. There are plenty of examples of the kinds of survey forms to use and typical letters to send out with them so that people understand why there's value in answering the questions – see the reference to the Local Government Data Unit below. It's important to use a survey form that asks questions which will produce unambiguous results and capture as much factual and hard facts as possible as this makes analysis more straightforward. It's also important to send out any survey form with a letter which explains why the survey is being carried out, makes clear that the responses local people make will be confidential, explains how the information will be used and thanks them for participating. Consider ways of encouraging a good response by offering incentives with prizes for people who return a completed survey form.

Carrying out a Housing Needs Survey

In Wales the RHE Network has developed an approach to Housing Need Surveys along with the Local Government Data Unit (LGDU). There are on-line resources available at www.dataunitwales.gov.uk/rhan/ (a username and password is required) including guidance on getting the best from the survey, methodology, reporting, how to do a pilot, questionnaires, spreadsheets and more. This is a good site to get to know and use.

Here is an indicative process RHEs can follow in carrying out a survey:

1. RHE presents model Housing Needs Survey Form and covering letter to Community Council (CC) for comment and approval
2. CC suggests changes to covering letter to reflect local circumstances. Housing Needs Survey Form amended to include community references
3. CC approves final covering letter and Survey Form
4. RHE arranges printing & bundling together of covering letters, Survey Forms and 'Freepost' envelopes
5. RHE arranges delivery of Survey Forms etc. to CC.
6. Delivery of Survey Forms and letter to every home in community. Additional copies of Survey Forms etc. available from CC Clerk. Unless the community is very active and keen to deliver the survey forms by hand one issue can be finding the resources to pay the postage for sending them out. Some RHEs are able to persuade the community council to cover these costs as their own budget may be limited. It may be tempting to send the survey form out with the community newsletter to keep costs down, however experience suggests that this may significantly reduce the return rate. It's also good to avoid sending out survey forms during school holidays. Think about and discuss with the community council the potential for having forms collected by hand too. Some RHEs in England have tended to ask communities to arrange hand delivery of survey forms. Some have delivered forms by hand, but it's not a good use of time and the response rates may not vary. One advantage is you get to know villages well, with the possibility of spotting pieces of land or empty properties for future consideration!
7. Householders complete Survey Forms. Part 1 of the Form completed by all

households. Part 2 completed only by households with an unmet housing need. Forms returned to RHE in 'Freepost' envelopes. Allow 3 weeks for this. Consider reminder letters or follow-up phone calls if funds or time allows.

8. RHE collects Survey Forms. Analysis of collected information starts one week after the closing date to allow for late returns and delays in the 'Freepost' service. Target for completing analysis is 6 to 8 weeks, a high workload may dictate longer. As well as the LGDU resources RHEs will need something to help with the analysis of all the data you'll generate. Some RHEs in Wales use Keypoint, a commercially available analysis tool. For details see: www.camsp.com/index.php There's also a programme called SNAP, for details see <http://www.snapsurveys.com/>
9. RHE produces a Survey Report showing 'high level' Results and Conclusions. Return rates will vary. In Wales RHEs have experience of rates from 18–65% but a minimum 30% response rate should be the aim. 35-40% rates are considered good. The evidence that the survey and analysis of need provides will consist of the numbers of people or households seeking accommodation within a given area or settlement and who cannot afford to rent or buy in the private market. It includes information on numbers and ages of people in need, the kind of housing required, where they want to live, whether they have any particular needs and how much they can afford to pay.
10. RHE posts copies of Survey Report to CC. It's important to share the results in an easy-to-understand and accessible way. Pembrokeshire's RHE has placed reports of all the completed surveys on a website (www.rhe-pembs.co.uk/surveys.asp). A useful reference text is Cumbria Rural Housing Trust's Rural Housing Needs Toolkit which provides some detail on organising, planning,

carrying out and analysing a survey – see the Resources section for the details.

11. RHE attends meeting of CC to explain Survey Report, Results and Conclusions in detail and to answer any questions
12. CC endorses findings of Survey
13. RHE sends copy of Survey Report to Local Authority Planning Department

The whole survey process can take 2-3 months to complete.

3.4 Identifying solutions

Once the analysis of the community's housing needs is complete and it's been reported to all the key stakeholders it's important to act on the conclusions and begin to develop solutions to the identified needs. RHEs need to explain to communities the time it can take to develop the right solution and it's important not to raise unrealistic expectations. What kinds of options are available?

What are the options?

Solutions - Exception sites and planning agreements - these are sites in communities which have not been allocated for development in the Local Plan but which might be suitable for small schemes of affordable housing for local people. Exception sites will still have to satisfy some key appraisal tests, such as access to facilities, physical and environmental criteria and be seen to meet long term needs. Sometimes planners are resistant because they see the approach as breaching the integrity of the planning system, it can be opportunity driven and can produce 'hope value' amongst landowners who believe their land may at some stage in the future be included within a development boundary.

Planning permission for a development on an exception site is always conditional on the applicant signing a Section 106 Planning Agreement (Town and Country Planning Act 1990). It's used in relation to exception sites to ensure that the purpose (affordable housing, in perpetuity to meet local needs) for which the

applicant stated that the land would be used is followed through and enforced. Many people are familiar with s106 planning agreements used to secure other planning gain benefits, but those attached to planning permission for exception sites are not quite the same as they seek to secure “exceptional” benefits.

An exception site contains only affordable houses available in perpetuity for rent or for shared ownership sale to local people. A definition of the “local connection” required is normally included in the agreement and will stipulate the type of connection and the length of residence which will qualify. A list of neighbouring communities from which applications for housing can be sought is always included to allow for occasions where there are no applicants from within the community where the development is located. A further safety net normally allows the catchment area to spread to the entire local authority area. This is designed firstly to ensure that houses are never left empty and secondly to reassure the banks and building societies (who lend finance on the schemes) as to the security against which they provide that finance. The agreement often stipulates the type, size and tenure of the housing in a scheme - detail included in the planning application and will relate to the identified needs in the community.

In July 2008 WAG funded Good Practice Guidance on S106 agreements to assist local planning authorities. It provides a useful summary of a number of the key issues to consider in developing affordable rural housing and has lots of useful resources. A copy is available here:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/planning/policy/guidance/s106guidance/?lang=en>

Solutions - Mixing tenures - working with a developer will usually involve developing a scheme where some of the homes are intended for private sale on the open market and where others are affordable homes, designed to meet the local needs and to be available for local people. The affordable housing may be for rent with a local housing association, so that

the completed scheme is a mix of housing for sale and rent. It may also be the case that some of the homes are ‘shared equity’ where local people have the chance to buy some of their home with a mortgage and where the local housing association retains some of the equity in the home – this makes it cheaper than buying outright. In Wales the dominant form of shared equity housing has been developed under what’s called the Homebuy scheme. Many Homebuy schemes are funded by WAG with Social Housing Grant (SHG). Others are developed without SHG. For more information on Homebuy look at:

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/housing/private/buyingandselling/homebuy/?lang=en>

Funding for Homebuy has been uncertain but during 2008 WAG was considering launching a revised scheme.

Solutions – Gift Aid of Land – as well as looking to persuade landowners to sell land and developers who want to build some affordable homes there may be an opportunity to develop schemes on land gifted to the local community.

Solutions - Renovation and/or conversion of empty and derelict properties - for many communities the only practical solution may be the development of new homes on a site in or on the edge of a community. This might be a piece of land which has been developed in the past or never developed before. But another solution may lie in the renovation or conversion of existing buildings in the community. In 2008 with a slow down in the economy, a slump in the housing market, falling prices and a housing production process effectively being mothballed the opportunities to develop solutions using the planning system, particularly s106 schemes dwindled to nothing. This has meant that the option to bring empty property back into use has taken on a much greater significance. Many local authorities have strategies for dealing with empty homes and employ staff whose job it is to get the empty homes back into use.

Local authorities also have powers to use Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMOs)

to take over management of empty properties . They allow an authority to secure occupation and proper management of privately owned houses and flats that have been unoccupied for a specified period of time and where certain other conditions are met.

There may also be opportunities to provide housing in conjunction with commercial property – typically a flat over a shop. There have been initiatives to develop homes in this way, such as HARPS – Housing Above Retail Premises Schemes.

There may also be opportunities to work with local authorities and housing associations to develop leasing schemes with private owners as a way of bringing empty homes into use. These will probably be short-term but could provide an option in some communities.

Another idea which local authorities may wish to look at is the use of second homes and holiday homes. There may be opportunities to provide some temporary accommodation ‘out of season’ or leasing over a longer period.

The Empty Homes agency is a campaigning charity which aims to get more empty homes back into use –for more information see: <http://www.emptyhomes.com/>

At the time of going to press the Welsh Assembly Government is compiling good practice guidance on bringing empty homes back into use.

Solutions - Self Build

Many people are able to build their own homes by self-building – buying a plot and either building a home themselves or by project managing the building by builders and other trades-people. Affordable self build has been completed on a community basis in the past and help may be available to groups which want to come together to build for themselves – see

<http://www.communityselfbuildagency.org.uk/>

Solutions - Supported Housing

The housing need survey may identify people in the community who need some care and support. Local authorities may well identify these support needs as a result of other areas of their work but there is a chance that the survey may identify people who have

‘slipped through the net’. RHEs should discuss how best to respond with the local housing authority so that the most appropriate solution can be found.

Solutions – Community Land Trusts

Community Land Trusts (CLTs) are ‘community controlled organisations’ that own, develop and manage land and buildings for the benefit of the local community. By separating the value of land from the buildings that stand on it, the trust captures the value of any public and private investment, as well as planning gain and land appreciation. There may be interest in the local community in finding out more about a CLT and whether it offers a solution. RHEs need to make contact with Land for People to find out more about CLTs, what they do and where they fit. See the Resources section for more information.

3.5 Finding suitable properties

This can be the most critical stage in the process of finding a solution to local housing needs as with no available site or empty property its unlikely there’ll be a project! The local authority may know of sites and properties as there may have been some previous planning history of development and proposed development in the community. The development planning process may have identified potential sites and properties as part of work on establishing development boundaries and it’s important for RHEs to understand where the boundary is and how important it is in the planning process. People are also usually very knowledgeable about who owns land and properties in their community and may have already identified some and this process may have been the spur for getting a survey done – some RHEs consider that identifying a site or property is sometimes worth doing before carrying out a survey – as it avoids raising expectations which might be dashed if its not possible to find a suitable site or property to meet a need after a survey is complete. If the local community hasn’t already done the exercise it’s important to ask them to identify as many of the landowners in the community as possible. This list of landowners can then be used by the RHE to find out if they would have any interest in making some available for affordable housing.

Any relevant land owned by community councillors needs to be identified at the outset to avoid conflicts and the risk of compromise at a later date. In small close-knit communities these conflicts are bound to arise and it's more helpful to acknowledge them and design a way of ensuring it's the widest community interest which benefits most - so if a councillor has some land they need to declare an interest and opt out of any discussions or decisions by the community council on taking forward any plans to purchase and develop the land - ensuring negotiations over its value are dealt with by an independent valuer.

Finding Public land owners

One important landowner may be the local authority. It's worth checking with the housing, planning and estates departments and asking them to search their records and registers. The unitary authorities will have taken ownership of land from the county and district councils they replaced at the last local government reorganisation. It's possible that they aren't aware of small parcels of land in their ownership and so a search may prove fruitful.

Finding Private landowners

There are many private landowners who may be willing to help. As well as local farmers and estates it's also possible that land may be owned by the utility companies (electricity, water, gas etc.), the railway companies who may still own tracts of old railway line, sidings, stations, signal boxes etc. which are no longer required for operational purposes which may be suitable for development.

Finding Assembly and Publicly owned land

It may be that land in the community may be owned by government at a national level. In March 2007 WAG published a protocol for the disposal of its land and that owned by Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies (ASPBs) for affordable housing. See:

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/housing/publications/protocoldisposeland?lang=en>

Finding - How many sites?

One risk at this stage of the process is that it may be tempting to move ahead with a single site approach - especially if the community or

a local landowner has suggested a site they regard as suitable at the outset. It's important to go through the exercise of identifying all potential sites and then listing them, along with their strengths and weaknesses. This should mean every opportunity is evaluated at an early stage. Moving ahead with a single site approach is risky because it may fail in an evaluation at some later stage and then you have to go back to searching.

By having several sites to consider it provides more flexibility if and when difficulties emerge with a particular site. In this case you can revert to another priority.

3.6 Assessing suitability

There is a real skill in assessing a site or building's suitability for development or redevelopment. There are lots of issues which have to be weighed up, lots of things to measure and lots of parties to the process of gaining approval to a project. These are all skills which can be learned with the right conditions and training will be included in the RHE Wales Network's induction and training programme. RHEs need to understand the language, roles, process and position of planners and planners need to understand the role of RHEs. Key to success is a good relationship between the both. RHEs need to know what planners look for in projects and what they expect to see in any formal proposal.

RHEs will probably, in consultation with the Community Council, identify a number of potential sites and properties for the development of a project. Each should be appraised so that a list can be drawn up in some sort of priority. In appraisal it's useful to have a checklist which ensures a site or property is: Checked against the prevailing policy context, its physical and environmental constraints and benefits, its economic constraints and benefits and its social constraints and benefits. Each of these elements can be broken down into some detail so for example in relation to physical/policy issues, it's possible to consider the site's or property's relationship to existing settlements and boundaries, its current use, whether it slopes or is flat, whether it's large enough to accommodate sufficient homes, whether its

protected in some way etc. A basic checklist is included in the Resources section below. For an example of an extensive site appraisal see:

www.residentialdesignguide.co.uk/chapter2siteappraisal.html it's the Site Appraisal part of the Peterborough Residential Design Guide.

3.7 Working up a scheme

The process of developing affordable housing isn't a linear one. The earlier stage of site identification and appraisal may see the involvement of a developer in which case there will be little or no opportunity for the local community to make a choice of developer from a list – the site may come with its developer! Where this isn't the case then choice is an option. It will usually be possible to identify a local housing association or if there is more than one then the community council may wish to go through a selection process. Once a developer has been identified a design brief needs to be worked up, on which a project proposal can be based. This involves bringing together all of the information and analysis gathered to date and turning a site into a proposal for a project which meets the housing needs of the community and includes all the essential ingredients of a successfully designed and sustainable project.

Schemes need to be designed to the highest sustainability standards. In Wales housing association schemes are being developed to higher environmental standards than typical private sector schemes. It's important to understand what these standards are and how they influence the design and costing of schemes. One issue for local people will be the affordability of space and water heating and schemes minimising this will be preferred.

RHEs need to get community support for proposals if they are to succeed and need to ensure that there are opportunities for consultation once a design has been sketched out. It's often at this stage that objections are made as individuals realise what's actually intended for their community. It's important to distinguish between objections which are ill-informed and those which are genuine. Also there may be sound material planning issues connected with access, drainage or utilities. Ensure that the developer's expertise

is available to answer any difficult questions and use sketches and models if costs allow as this often makes it easier for people to visualise what's intended. Some people find plans difficult to understand. One popular approach to involving people in exercises like this is Planning for Real®. It's a technique developed by the Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation (NIF) focused around 3D models of a settlement or neighbourhood. These models are placed in accessible local venues and used as the centrepiece of a community consultation process, which invites local people to generate solutions for improving their physical surroundings. There is usually an interim consultation to identify key issues and then a facilitator leads the main event, with a further session reporting back.

Experts such as planners, architects and the police can attend but only in the role of advisers. See the Resources section for more details.

Try and accommodate as many of the community's needs at this stage. If changes are significant and have a big impact on the costs and viability of the scheme then it may be necessary to go through the same process of community consultation with revised scheme proposals. It may be useful to show examples of successful schemes which have received planning permission to explain some of the key features of the scheme and why they matter.

3.8 Securing Funding

Once it's been established that a scheme is feasible and that it's possible to achieve a proposal that meets the expectations and satisfaction of all the stakeholders it will be important to get the financial resources in place to develop it.

This is the stage where frustration can creep into the process as the proposed project has to 'compete' with others, in other communities, rural as well as urban – especially in the context of funding available to housing associations. Hopefully it will have been the case that the potential of a project in the community has been identified at an earlier stage and it may have been 'written into' bids for Social Housing Grant (SHG). In Wales the SHG Grant programme is managed by WAG. Bids are made for the available resources by

local authorities and allocations are made by WAG which housing associations then deliver. The process is quite a complicated one and during 2008/9 is likely to change as a result of recommendations made to WAGs Deputy Housing Minister.

Training on the way the SHG process works will be included in the RHE induction and training programme. A useful reference text is WAGs Affordable Housing Toolkit. For more information on SHG look at:

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/housingand-community/grants/shg?lang=en>

RHEs have a key role to play in helping to identify potential schemes for inclusion in SHG programmes for future development. Steering Group members can help RHEs by explaining how this process as well as how the financial viability of schemes works and how lenders view them.

3.9 Gaining Planning Consent

If the local community has been involved in the process of developing a scheme, it's supported by clear evidence of need, it's been designed in an inclusive way and has the finance secure then that will improve the chances of success. Local planning authorities prefer to be consulted at an early stage in the development of proposals. Steering Group members can help RHEs by explaining who to approach and at what stage.

Time spent by the RHE in understanding the local housing and planning policy context will pay dividends at this stage, as will the relationship they have with the planners, mentioned above. For examples of the kind of information produced by local planning authorities explaining how they deal with planning applications for affordable housing see the following web documents:

http://www.powys.gov.uk/uploads/media/Affordable_Housing_IDCG_Feb_07_en_01.pdf
and

<http://www.breconbeacons.org/the-authority/planning/strategy-and-policy/spg-and-dc-guidance-notes/affordable-housing-development-control-guidance-note>

3.10 Ensuring local people can access new solutions

One of the major concerns of local communities is access to the new homes by local people. Sensitivities can be heightened at the point planning approval is gained and local communities begin to realise a scheme may be developed. It's vital that RHEs have informed all those who identified a housing need at the point the survey was done to register with the local authority and housing association if they haven't already done so. If the development of the scheme has taken a very long time to reach this stage there may be a need to do a follow-up survey. Where a housing association is developing a scheme for rent the local authority is likely to nominate people in need for consideration by the association. Local people need to know that their local connection will be an important factor in this process.

3.11 Building and Celebrating success

RHEs and communities need to celebrate success. Not only is it important to mark achievement in a public way with all the stakeholders involved it's also important for everyone to recognise that the struggle has been worthwhile. It's also an opportunity for promotion and awareness-raising and a big chance to show other communities what can be achieved.

Recruitment

Each RHE is unique, with their own mix of skills and experience. Steering Groups need to recruit RHEs with the right blend of experience, enthusiasm and attitude. You can 'grow your own' with most of the skills being learned on the job, along with induction, a training programme, mentoring and peer support. Steering Groups need to manage the recruitment process and should set up a smaller Recruitment Panel to do this. A recruitment checklist template is provided on Page 9.

4.1 Advertising

Issues to consider:

- _ The staged start of the new RHE posts means staged recruitment with individual advertisements for each of the posts. A generic advertisement has been produced for Steering Groups to adapt and which will refer to the wider RHE network.
- _ Advertise in the main UK daily and Welsh press, key housing and planning publications and also on some key websites.
- _ Circulate information about the new post through local authority, housing association and other voluntary organisation briefings and websites.
- _ Keep detail to a minimum and point potential applicants to a website where a full recruitment pack is available to download. Use linked websites and pages, to direct people interested in the posts to useful information on the work of RHEs.
- _ Allow a facility for electronic application - this offers more choice and reduces some of the costs of recruitment.

4.2 The Recruitment Information Pack

The Recruitment Information Pack should include:

- _ A copy of the advertisement
- _ The Job Description
- _ The Person Specification
- _ Information on Pay and Terms and Conditions
- _ Information about the role of an RHE and the RHE Network
- _ Information about the area where the RHE will work
- _ An Application Form
- _ Details of the application process including the closing date for applications and the date and location of interviews.

4.3 Job Description and Person Specification

The templates are designed to offer flexibility. It's clear that the nature of the job an RHE does has to change to reflect the changing conditions in the housing market. Opportunities to work with the benefits yielded by the planning system and work with developers are evolving and the role now needs to adapt and evolve into a more diverse and innovative one. This can mean less certainty and an acknowledgement that past approaches may be less effective. The Job Description and Person Specification Templates below assume a post doing the full range of tasks, but they can be adapted to suit.

4.4 Pay and Terms and Conditions

Having consistency of pay and terms and conditions across all the RHE posts acknowledges that the RHEs will be doing the same job, albeit in different places, which will have their own distinctive set of issues and opportunities. However it's accepted that there may be some variation of pay at a local level to allow for the influence of local labour and housing markets. It will also be the case that the terms and conditions of employment

will largely be determined by the RHEs host employer.

Issues to consider include:

- _ RHEs need a number of different skills to perform effectively including initiative, project management, self motivation and promotion
- _ for many RHEs the work is isolated
- _ there has been a high turnover in RHE posts
- _ funding so far has been insecure
- _ RHE posts are good training grounds for personal skill development, but have limited training and career development opportunities
- _ there has been a call for the comprehensive raising of standards, development of professional progression and a vigorous approach to Continuing Professional Development (the UK Affordable Rural Housing Commission 2006)
- _ there is a long lead in time before results, in terms of new homes, appear, but once an RHE has become established, the rate of delivery increases.
- _ equivalent posts are seen as local authority enabling officer or housing association development officer (RHEs don't have the same financial responsibilities but do use community development skills not employed by HA staff)
- _ It has been difficult to recruit to some RHE posts and some funding partners have looked at making salaries and benefits more competitive
- _ in England many RHEs are employed by Rural Community Councils with pay and conditions tied to those of local government. Feedback suggests RHEs can be paid anything from £19,000 to £32,000 for doing the same job - a reasonable average is £23,000 to £27,000 (SO1/SO2)

- _ Carmarthenshire Council has evaluated its proposed RHE post at SO1/SO2 and is setting the salary in the SO2 band
- _ in Wales the existing RHEs are contracted and paid as follows:
 - _ Monmouthshire/Powys: £27,500 - £36,000 (bespoke scale) – permanent contract
 - _ Conwy and Denbighshire: £23,749 - £27,594 (Spinal points 29-34) 4 year contract
 - _ Pembrokeshire: £23,749 - £27,594 (points 29-34) 3 year contract
 - _ Gwynedd: £24,545 - £28,172 (pts 30-35) 1 year contract

The new posts are likely to include the full range of duties and require the full range of skills and experience in candidates. If contracts are to be fixed term (3 years +) and in order to attract good candidates, it is recommended salaries are pitched between £23,000 and £30,000.

As well as pay, consideration needs to be given to other benefits which can be offered to enhance a post's attractiveness. The basic message for Steering Groups is: make the post of a new RHE as attractive and flexible as possible in order to maximise the recruitment pool. A template of 'ideal' terms and conditions for an RHE post is included on Page 13.

4.5 Information about the role of RHEs and the RHE Network in Wales

It's important to give potential applicants an idea of what the job will involve and how it fits into the wider Network. A template is included on Pages 14, 15 and 16.

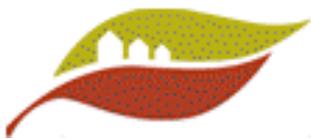
4.6 Information about the area covered by the post

This is useful for potential applicants who are not based in the area and who may not be familiar with it. It's an opportunity to include information on the area's characteristics as well as relevant publications, policies, strategies and plans etc and could usefully point potential applicants at websites providing information on the area. It's also an opportunity to 'sell' the area where the RHE will work, to potential applicants.

Communication and branding

An important characteristic of an RHE is their independence from any one partner. The success of affordable housing solutions at the local level depends on winning and sustaining the trust of local people – including convincing local communities that the RHE doesn't represent any one particular interest. It's important therefore that the RHE uses a brand which is distinctly different from any one of the partners. The expanded Network provides an opportunity for all RHEs to use a common brand, aiding recognition of their work and helping to promote and raise awareness of their existence and what they do.

Existing RHEs already have a significant amount of existing branded material it is recommended that the network agrees a common brand which is not significantly different from what most RHEs use now, adapting the existing leaf design used by 3 of the 4 RHEs and combining it with bilingual text. New Steering Groups could use whichever wording they felt was most appropriate and combine the leaf image with a geographical reference to the individual RHE, here are some examples:



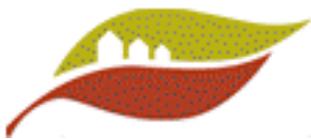
**Rural Housing Enabler
Pembrokehire Galluogydd Tai
Gwledig Sir Benfro**

Finding solutions to local housing needs
Canfod atebion am anghenion gartrefi lleol



**Hwylusydd Tai Gwledig
Wrecsam wledig a Sir y Fflint
Rural Housing Enabler Rural
Wrexham and Flintshire**

Finding solutions to local housing needs



**Hwylusydd Tai Gwledig Ceredigion
Rural Housing Enabler Ceredigion**

Branding needs to be used on everything produced in printed and electronic form as well as pop-up displays, stands and promotional material. It will become familiar and recognisable conveying messages about the role RHEs perform in one

simple way. Used habitually it will become familiar to communities, stakeholders, media and others.

As well as having common branding there should be collective use of communication material generic in form but capable of local application. Leaflets could be produced, for example, describing what RHEs do, with examples of the kinds of help they can give to local communities, either with contact information for all the RHEs in Wales or a facility to overprint with contact details for the local RHE. This would again avoid the need for individual RHEs to get their own leaflets designed and printed. Existing RHEs will already have their own leaflets but could, when the supply runs out, use a common one.

The Network should also have one place on the internet for finding out about the work of all the RHEs. It's possible to design something bespoke and arrange for a website to be hosted, by an existing stakeholder (perhaps a local authority or housing association) or to add an RHE option to something which already exists, such as the Welsh Housing Notice Board (www.whnb.org.uk) - an Assembly funded initiative to bring together and promote the work of the housing networks that meet regularly across Wales. The RHE Network could become a user and have its own sections on the site. Individual RHEs and Steering Group members could become registered users and access pages which would be restricted for their use only. Publicly available pages would explain the RHEs role, where they work, contact information, news of progress etc.

RHEs contact details (in whatever form) need to ensure independence of any of the steering group members or employers. Any form of communication that includes reference to being based at the offices of a local housing association or local authority, a phone number which connects to the employer's telephone answering service when the RHE is out, an e-mail address which includes the domain name of the employer and franking machines using the employer's logo should be avoided. Basing an RHE in the offices of the host employer doesn't have to mean the independence of the RHE is compromised.

Templates

The following templates are provided:

- 6.1 Recruitment Checklist
- 6.2 Job Description
- 6.3 Person Specification
- 6.4 Information about the post including Terms and Conditions of employment
- 6.5 Information about the role of an RHE and the RHE Network
- 6.6 Induction programme

6.1 Template for Recruitment Checklist

RHE Recruitment Checklist Action	By who	By when	Date completed
Establish recruitment panel and deadlines for key stages in the process especially the closing date for applications, date for interview and target date for appointment.			
Agree Job Description, Person Specification, Information Pack, advertisement, recruitment timetable, location of interview etc.			
Place advertisements			
Respond to requests for information packs			
Prepare applications for short listing			
Agree criteria for short listing			
Shortlist candidates for interview			
Agree criteria and format for interview			
Invite candidates for interview			
Interview			
Decide on whether to appoint, re-interview etc.			
Make offer subject to satisfactory references & CRB check			
Acceptance of Offer and Appointment			
Satisfactory References and CRB check sought & received			
Confirmation of appointment			
Start Induction			

6.2 Template for RHE Job Description

Job Title

Rural Housing Enabler for (insert geographical area)

Purpose

To find affordable and sustainable housing solutions to meet housing needs in the rural communities of (insert geographical area), working in partnership with those local communities and others, disseminating experience and good practice, promoting more understanding of rural housing issues and contributing to rural housing policy-making.

Base

(insert location where post will be based)

Responsible to

(insert title of Line Manager of host employer and title of local Steering Group)

Responsible for

(insert title of any posts responsible to the RHE)

Core Duties

Understanding local housing and labour markets, strategic housing/planning strategies and policies and prioritising a work programme with the steering group

Acting as an independent broker

Ensuring the interests of local communities are considered at every stage in the process of developing sustainable solutions

Raising awareness of affordable rural housing needs and their impact on the social and economic fabric of rural communities

Researching and identifying housing need – undertaking surveys and analysis, ensuring results are fed into appropriate local authority

strategies and communicated to all key stakeholders

Encouraging people to register on housing waiting lists

Building effective partnerships & networks with stakeholders involved in delivering affordable housing solutions

Promoting sustainable and innovative solutions to increase affordable housing supply

Identifying potential sites, empty and redundant buildings and other opportunities and undertaking appraisals to assess their suitability for sustainable housing solutions

Contributing to the preparation of scheme development briefs

Liaison with appropriate funders and developers

Identifying and helping to secure scheme funding

Assisting in negotiating Section 106 agreements with developers to provide affordable housing

Optional Duties

Sharing experience with other RHEs and other stakeholders

Responding to requests for advice and guidance from members of the public and stakeholders

Regularly reporting progress to the Steering Group

Acting as secretary to the Steering Group

Producing regular information for publication through newsletters, briefings etc

Contributing to appropriate websites –

updating them with information on progress with the programme of work, highlighting notable achievements and good practice

Assisting in the organisation of and attending appropriate events

Attending appropriate meetings

Employer related Duties

Ensuring the organisation's equal opportunities policy is followed through in practice in the work of the post-holder.

Attending and participating in appropriate internal meetings of the organisation.

Working cooperatively with other staff members.

Being particularly aware and responsive to the needs of the organisation's elected members, trustee directors and member organisations where appropriate.

Complying with the monitoring and recording requirements of the organisation for the purposes of accountability.

Carrying out additional tasks which may be required from time to time by the Steering Group.

Version (insert Version number)

Date last updated (insert date as appropriate)

6.3 Template for RHE Person Specification

Key Competencies	Essential	Desirable
<p>Organisation Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> _ Ability to prioritise and set and meet targets, ensuring deadlines are met _ Good analytical skills _ Work on own initiative 		
<p>Decision making skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> _ Ability to make logical decisions, have an unbiased rational approach and be able to mediate/negotiate 		
<p>IT Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> _ Competency 		
<p>Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> _ Good understanding of rural housing and planning policies, organisations and rural issues 		
<p>Creativity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> _ Ability to seek innovative solutions and appraise complex issues 		
<p>Qualifications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> _ Good standard of education 		
<p>Work Experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> _ Experience of Working with communities _ Experience of Project Management _ Experience of undertaking research and analysis and preparing reports _ Experience of partnership working in the public, private or voluntary sector _ Previous experience or good understanding of the planning system 		
<p>Personal Qualities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> _ Enthusiasm _ Self motivation and initiative _ Well developed communication and interpersonal skills _ Full driving licence and unrestricted access to a vehicle 		

Version (insert Version number)

Date last updated (insert date as appropriate)

6.4 Template for RHE Terms and Conditions of Employment

Steering Group	Include details of the Steering Group and its members
Employer	Include the name of the host employer
Contract period	Ideally a permanent contract or one with a reasonable length – 3-4 years – the longer the term the better. One of the issues which blights these posts is the insecurity of funding.
Salary	Circa £23,000-30,000
Hours of Work	35-37 hours per week
Leave	These posts will involve a considerable amount of work outside normal office hours. Employers should consider overtime payments, Time Off in Lieu, and/or allowances for evening meetings.
Office	Independence is key but it's possible to base RHE posts in an office environment with staff from the same employer without compromise. Consideration should be given to home or remote working.
Travelling Expenses	Reasonable travelling expenses will be paid.
Pension	RHEs should have the opportunity to join a pension scheme.
Probation	There should be a probationary period of six months.
Language	The post should comply with the employer's Welsh Language scheme.
Equal Opportunity	The employer should be an equal opportunities employer.
References/ Disclosure	Offers of employment should be subject to satisfactory references and may possibly require a Criminal Records Bureau disclosure.

Version (insert Version number)

Date last updated (insert date as appropriate)

6.5 Template for Information about the role of RHEs and the RHE Network in Wales

There is a shortage of affordable housing in rural areas, which impacts on the opportunities and choices for all rural people. With the dramatic rise in house prices, in migration and increase in demand for second homes over the last few years, people on modest incomes and first time buyers have found themselves priced out of the market in rural areas. Without a range of suitable properties within a village it is difficult to encourage sustainable communities and maintain a vibrant, living countryside. Developing affordable housing is one of the crucial issues that influences the economic and social strength of rural communities, and is a major contributor to long-term community sustainability.

Rural Housing Enablers (RHEs) work with communities to effect change for the better, through advice and guidance on building new properties, and encouraging alternative ways of providing accommodation for people on low incomes to remain within the community. The opportunities available to find solutions depend on the prevailing economic situation and the operation of housing, labour and other markets at a local level. RHEs need to innovate and create solutions in what may appear to be uncharted territory. The RHE's job involves:

- Helping to increase the supply of affordable housing in rural communities and finding innovative and creative ways of doing this
- Acting as an independent “honest broker” facilitating the often lengthy and complex process of developing affordable housing schemes in rural areas to encourage sustainable communities.
- Helping to meet the needs of those people who would not be able to afford accommodation on the open market
- Working closely with village communities, community councils, local authorities, housing associations, developers,

landowners, farmers and anyone else involved in the process of providing affordable housing

- Identifying local need through housing needs surveys
- Carrying out research and policy analysis on rural housing issues
- Promoting wider initiatives such as the use of empty properties, Community Land Trusts, etc.

RHEs undertake some diverse tasks such as:

Working with a Steering group – preparing a work programme in conjunction with the Steering Group, preparing agendas and papers for meetings including reports outlining progress against the work programme, and for example summarising the stages each community council has reached in developing affordable housing solutions.

Regularly collecting and preparing information - housing association, council and other housing waiting lists, labour market information from Nomis (Official labour market statistics), neighbourhood statistics (Hometrack information desirable), current information on prices for houses and plots and the availability of rented accommodation from estate agents websites plus strategic housing information and the planning authority's local plans. Plans of community council areas showing communities where the planning authority would consider future development – showing development boundaries if they exist.

Making presentations - to various audiences including the public, community councils, local authority members, housing association boards etc.

Carrying out Housing Need Surveys – adapting standard survey questionnaires to

suit, envelope filling, delivering, collecting and analysing returns using appropriate software. Prepare reports showing results and disseminate.

Identifying opportunities to develop affordable housing solutions – working with housing, planning and other professionals, councillors, community representatives and local people on working-up schemes to develop new homes, convert redundant buildings, bring empty homes back into use etc.

Publicising progress – attending open days, agricultural shows, community fairs and like events, generating PR material, speaking to the media etc.

The history of Rural Housing Enablers is a recent one. In England RHEs have been around since 2000 and much of rural England has seen the development of RHE activity – with over 50 RHEs being employed. In Wales the Assembly Government funded a pilot RHE post in North Monmouthshire and South Powys with additional financial support of a number of other partners in 2003. Three other posts have followed in September 2004 when the Gwynedd RHE project (covering the Dwyfor and Meirionydd areas of the county) started; August 2005 when the Pembrokeshire RHE started and January 2005 when the RHE for Conwy & Denbighshire started.

In May 2008 the Joseph Rowntree Foundation published a report on Rural Housing in Wales – the report of its Commission. It made a number of key

recommendations which included the view that RHEs provide a valuable role in responding to housing needs in rural Wales. The Commission recommended that the Assembly Government and local planning authorities should create a national network of at least twelve rural housing enablers.

In July 2008 the Assembly's Deputy Housing Minister announced funding for expanding the network in Wales - £150,000 for Rural Housing Development through a local enablers scheme. WAG would provide £150,000 and Local Authorities and Welsh Housing Associations would each provide match funding. The funding would help to create six new RHE posts in the following areas: Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire, Rural Wrexham and Flintshire, North Powys, Mid Powys and Ynys Mon. This post is one of the posts directly supported with funding from the Welsh Assembly Government and the other funding partners.

Each RHE post is managed by a steering group made up of the funding partners and other stakeholders. This Group will set out the strategy and agree the work programme with each RHE, who will be employed by and receive line management support from one of the partners. The really important characteristic of an RHE is that they are independent of any one partner. This is essential if they are to gain the trust of local communities.

6.6 Template for RHE induction programme

Weeks 1-2

Meet and get to know the line manager and colleagues in the employer organisation;
Get to know the employers working practices, working environment, facilities and services;
Get e-mail and phone access sorted
Set up meetings with steering group members, key stakeholders and communities where there may already be some affordable housing being developed, planned or contemplated.
Start to gather all the relevant strategy and policy documents that will need to be read and understood
Start to gather available good practice, detailed guidance, files on community action to date (if there is any); Issue media release and follow-up

Weeks 3-4

Attend meetings and visits;
Attend first steering group meeting;
Develop the Work Programme in conjunction with the Steering Group identifying key priorities for the first year and details of how performance will be measured;
Shadowing: an existing RHE: local housing and planning staff; local housing association staff, etc.
Start to develop a contact database
Carry out skills audit to identify training needs

Month 2

Attend the RHE Network in Wales meeting;
Prepare communication material including leaflets, displays, standard slide presentation etc.
Get to know the tools available for doing housing need surveys
Undertake first presentation to a Community Council
Undertake first housing need survey
Attend first training courses
Attend a local authority planning and housing committee meeting

Month 3

Prepare agenda for next Steering Group meeting including a report on progress;
Undertake further presentations and need surveys;
Attend further training courses;

Months 4-6

Review progress and work programme with Steering Group
Pass Probationary Period!

Months 7-12

Establish mentoring relationship between RHE and mentor (see more below)

Resources

This part of the manual includes:

- 7.1 Key reference material
- 7.2 A template for Steering Group Terms of Reference
- 7.3 A template for Steering Group Meeting Agendas
- 7.4 Ways of Working

- 7.5 Basic Site Assessment Checklist

- 7.6 Planning & Affordable Housing Policy Map
- 7.7 Case Study: Castell Y Gog
- 7.8 Mapping the Production process
- 7.9 Roles and Responsibilities of Gwynedd RHE Partners

Key Reference material

Below are links to key reports and publications which will provide plenty of essential reference material for Steering Group members and RHEs, helping to explain why the work of RHEs is so important, what the role involves and the process of developing affordable housing schemes.

Key Reports and publications

1. Affordable Housing Task and Finish Group (June 2008)

Report to the Deputy Minister for Housing (the Essex Report)

Some fundamental recommendations for change to get more affordable housing. <http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/housing/publications/essexreview/?lang=en>

2. Cambridge Centre for Housing & Planning Research & Three Dragons for WAG (June 2008)

Delivering Affordable Housing using Section 106 agreements: Practice Guidance

Designed to assist local authorities in making better use of planning agreements, it's another excellent reference text full of good practice examples.

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/planning/policy/guidance/s106guidance/?lang=en>

3. Hughes-Isherwood Regeneration Consultants (October 2006)

Wales: Rural Housing Enablers – Report on the Current and Future Arrangements

An excellent summary of the key issues facing rural housing, the policy context and good practice examples. Helped make case for funding for an expanded RHE Network.

Summary Report from CHC - <http://www.chcymru.org.uk/5546.file.dld>

4. Joseph Rowntree Foundation (June 2008)

Commission on Rural Housing in Wales

Another benchmark report at a key point in the development of rural housing action in Wales. Recommendations also influenced WAG decisions on RHE funding.

<http://www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/details.asp?pubid=958>

5. Welsh Assembly Government (June 2006)

The Affordable Housing Toolkit

Practical advice for local authorities and partners on boosting the supply of affordable housing. Essentially a signposting document to raise awareness of different policies, tools, and functions and provide examples of good practice from around Wales.

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/housing/publications/affordablehousingtoolkit?lang=en>

Other reference texts

6. Business in the Community (2006) (as part of HRH the Prince of Wales's Affordable Rural Housing Initiative)

Creating a Sense of Place: A Design Guide

www.princes-foundation.org/files/affordableruralhousing.pdf

7. Centre for Rural Development (March 2004)

Meeting affordable housing needs in rural communities - A Good Practice Guide

Housing Corporation

8. Countryside Agency (2005)

Review of the Rural Housing Enabler Programme

www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/files/CAX183-review%20of%20the%20rural%20housing%20enabler%20programme.pdf

9. Cumbria Rural Housing Trust (2006)

Rural Housing Needs Toolkit

www.crht.org.uk/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=13&Itemid=26

10. Defra (2006)

Affordable Rural Housing Commission Final Report

www.defra.gov.uk/rural/pdfs/arh/comm-report/affordable-housing.pdf

11. Excellence Wales Case Study

Gwynedd Affordable Housing project and Gwynedd Rural Enabler Project

www.gwynedd.gov.uk/upload/public/attachments/934/Exc_Wales_Case_Study_Gwynedd_RHE_Project1.pdf

12. John Lancaster (2008)

Affordable Housing – Enabling Six Years of Delivery in Rural Hampshire

Community Action Hampshire

http://91.186.0.9/~action/fileadmin/user_upload/Document_Library/RHE_AffordableHousingReportJul08.pdf

13. John Lancaster and Colin Savage (2007)

Affordable Rural Housing - Lowering the costs

Community Action Hampshire

<http://www.action.hants.org.uk/index.php?id=121>

14. Jo Lavis and Margaret Clark, Countryside Agency

The Future of the Rural Housing Enablers scheme

www.countryside.gov.uk/LAR/archive/board_meetings/annexes/CA_AP00_48.asp

15. Mantell Gwynedd (May 2007)

Gwynedd Rural Housing Enabler Scheme Evaluation Report

Mantell Gwynedd

<http://www.mantellgwynedd.com/eng/amd.html>

16. Matthew Taylor (2008)

Living Working Countryside

Taylor Review on rural economy and affordable housing

www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planning/planningpolicyimplementation/reformplanningsystem/matthewtaylorreview/

Useful websites

1. ACRE – Action with Communities in Rural England

www.acre.org.uk/index.html

2. CHC - Community Housing Cymru – for lots of resources on housing associations and their work

including links to individual associations and key publications

www.chcymru.org.uk

3. CIH – Chartered Institute of Housing – the professional body for people working in housing – again lots of useful resources and links

<http://www.cih.org/>

4. Commission for Rural Communities – Affordable Rural Housing Commission

www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/projects/affordable_rural_housing_commission/overview

5. For an extensive glossary see: www.defra.gov.uk/rural/pdfs/arh/arh-glossary.pdf

6. HARAHA - Hampshire Alliance for Rural Affordable Housing - www.haraha.org.uk/

7. Land for People – information on Community Land Trusts

www.landforpeople.co.uk

8. NHF - National Housing Federation – the trade body for housing associations in England – lots of resources on housing association activity in rural England www.housing.org.uk RHT - the Rural Housing Trust - www.ruralhousing.org.uk/

9. NIF - Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation – for details of Planning for Real®

<http://www.nif.co.uk/planningforreal/>

10. Planning and the delivery of affordable housing (2007) Seminar Report

WAG held a series of seminars aimed at providing practitioners with an update on national policy developments in delivering affordable housing through the planning system and to set out the basic 'building blocks' needed for delivery. The seminars allowed practitioners the opportunity to debate the key issues they were facing and to highlight and share good practice.

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/planning/policy/deliveringaffordablehousing/?lang=en>

11. RHT – the Rural Housing rust – www.ruralhousing.org.uk/

12. SERCC – South East Rural Community Councils - see particularly the page with case studies and links: www.sercc.org.uk/index.php?page=page_affordable_housing

13. WHNB – Welsh Housing Noticeboard - www.whnb.org

14. WLGA – Welsh Local Government Association – for lots of resources on local authorities in Wales -

see particularly the pages on housing and housing links - www.wlga.gov.uk

7.2 Template for Steering Group Terms of Reference (Insert Name) RHE Steering Group

The RHE Project has been developed to help to meet the housing needs of people in rural areas. The project aims are to raise awareness of housing needs in rural areas and the means to tackle them; facilitate the provision of rural housing, influence local and regional strategies that impact on affordable housing and provide information to help address national issues relating to affordable housing in rural areas.

To meet these objectives the RHE will build on the strengths of the existing programme by retaining the independent nature of the RHE and the need to work closely with local communities to identify their housing needs and find appropriate solutions. The project will support the supply of affordable housing in the rural areas of
(insert areas):

- _ working with the rural communities to assist identification of the local housing needs
- _ raise awareness of the need for affordable housing
- _ help identify suitable sites for development
- _ support preplanning negotiations
- _ dissemination of information regarding all rural housing issues

The role of the Steering Group is to facilitate and support the delivery of affordable rural housing steering the priorities and workplan of the RHE. The Steering Group will have no management responsibilities for the RHE, who will be line managed by (insert name of employer and title of post). The Steering Group will act in a supporting and advisory capacity to the RHE by:

- _ Giving strategic direction to the project within agreed aims and objectives
- _ Providing information, support, advice and guidance to the RHE

- _ Assisting the RHE to meet agreed targets
- _ To involve/invite the RHE to participate in events to raise the RHEs profile

The membership of the group consists of: (insert names of members). Further members may be invited who can demonstrate support for the RHE and have an interest in the project objectives.

Members will bring specific skills, expertise, knowledge or experience relevant to achieving the project's aims, particularly planning, housing, development, land valuation and awareness of rural community needs.

Responsibilities include:

- _ Supporting and participating actively in the work of the Steering Group
- _ Helping set targets to measure the success of the project, and reviewing them against the prevailing economic, political and social conditions
- _ Monitoring project progress against agreed targets and suggesting ways to achieve aims and objectives and/or improve performance
- _ Giving advice, assistance and help in progressing specific initiatives
- _ Using specific skills, knowledge and expertise of the RHE to achieve sound decisions and strategies to further the aims of the project by
- _ Participating in discussions and providing accurate information
- _ Directing the project on new initiatives and other areas of work

Meetings

This group will meet (insert number) times per year, and receive quarterly progress reports.

7.3 Template for Steering Group Meeting Agendas

(Insert title of RHE)

Steering Group meeting

(Insert location of Venue)

(Insert date and time of meeting)

Draft Agenda

1. Introductions
2. Apologies
3. Agreement on Meeting Chair and member recording action points
4. Review of Action Points from last meeting
5. Work Programme Progress Report (every meeting)
 - _ Key points
 - _ Publicity, events and campaigning
 - _ Community Council activity
 - _ Scheme progress
 - _ Performance monitoring (six monthly)
 - _ Work Programme Review (annually)
6. Financial Review – progress against budget (six monthly)
7. Administrative Issues (as appropriate)
8. Members Round Up – strategic issues influencing the RHEs work (every meeting)
9. Any Other Business
10. Date and Venue of next meeting

7.4 Ways of working

The RHE for North Monmouthshire and South Powys has drawn up a protocol to assist members of the Steering Group and partner organisations to understand when a housing association should get involved in the work the RHE is doing on the ground. Consider whether your Steering Group needs one. Here's an extract:

'It is imperative that in order for the RHE process to be most effective, a trusting relationship between the RHE and the community council must be built up and maintained. As soon as the community council show support for the development of affordable housing by agreeing to a CLA, then all housing association (HA) partners must refrain from pursuing development opportunities in that particular community council area. Therefore, as soon as the Community Level Assessment is scheduled.....any development must be initiated by the RHE in partnership with the relevant community council. There may well be instances whereby land owners approach HAs with potential development sites (when the Need survey has been completed).... If this is the case then it is the responsibility of the HA to make the land owner aware of the RHE process and pass contact details of potential development site owners (or agent) onto the RHE before any preparatory work takes place'.

'It will be the responsibility of the RHE to provide monthly updates to the development teams of all HA partners, on or around the first week of every month. If for any reason the RHE does not provide updated details of his work progress, then it is to be presumed that the position has not changed from the previous update'.

7.5 Basic site assessment checklist

Name of Site _____

Site details

Exception

Infill

Site access

Already exists

Not available but potential exists

Unavailable or affected by severe limitations or restrictions

Other.....

Highways

Site is unaffected by highway issues

Site has impact on County Highway Network

Site has impact on Trunk Road network

Site is affected by severe highway issues

Access to local primary ^[1] and key ^[2] services and facilities

No primary services within the village

No key services within the village

1-2 primary services within the village

1-2 key services within village

Other.....

Access to local public transport services

Site within 800m of railway station

Site more than 800m from railway station

No bus service to urban area

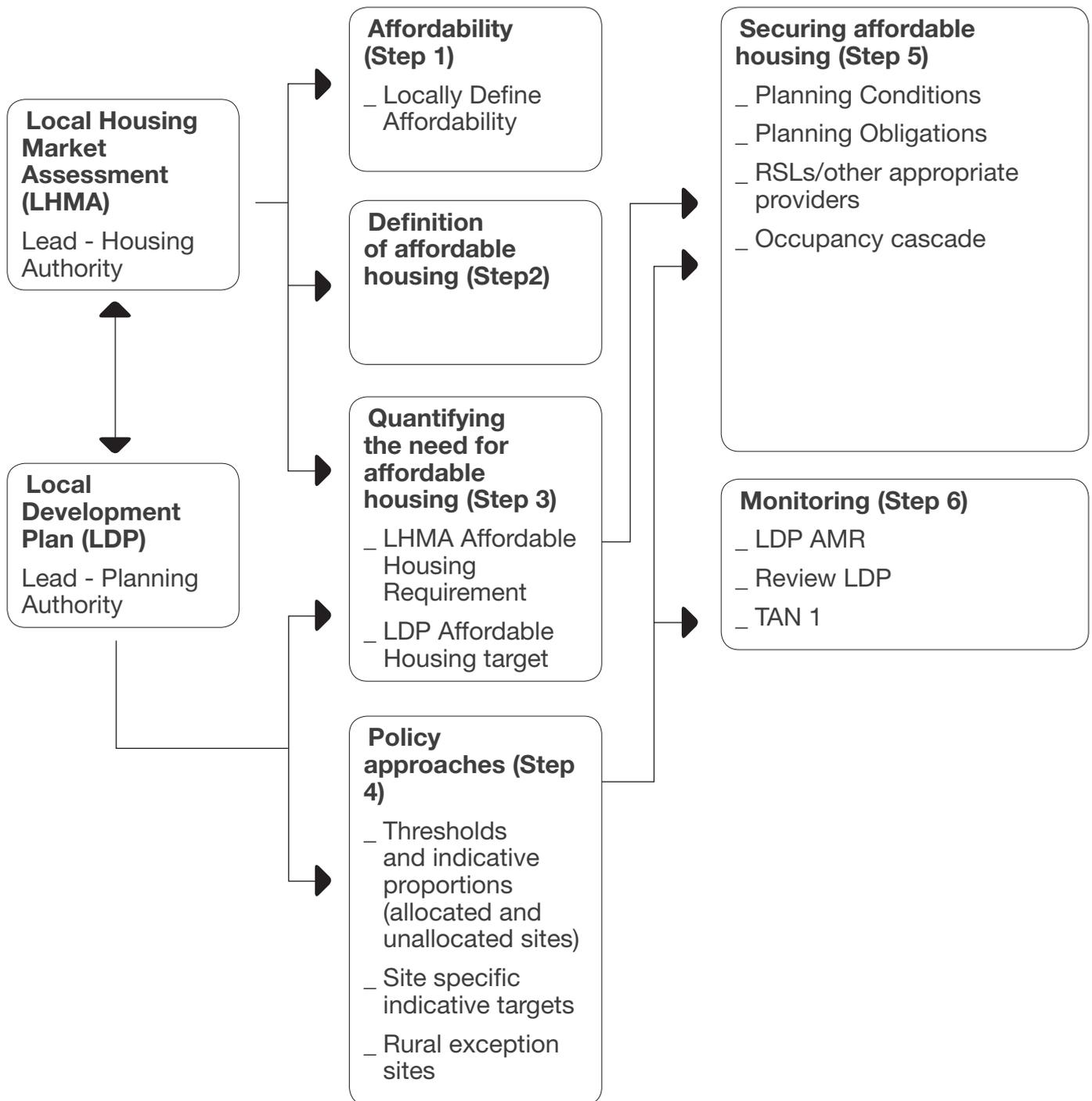
Bus service to urban area

Below is a diagram showing the relationships between planning and affordable housing policy and steps in the process:

[1] A primary service is a secondary school, NHS health facilities, public leisure facility, shops and employment opportunities

[2] Key services are primary school with spare capacity, general store, community/village hall, public house and post office.

7.6 Planning and Affordable Housing Policy Map



(From a presentation by Neil Hemington, Head of Economic and Social Planning Policy, WAG – 2007)

7.7 Case Study: Castell y Gog, Dyffryn Ardudwy

The success of the Gwynedd RHE's work with local communities was evidenced by the inclusion of five schemes (30 units) in the SHG Programme for 2006/08. Gwynedd Council's application for the 2008/09 SHG Programme included 3 further schemes (15 units), two of which were included. The Dyffryn Ardudwy scheme was one of the priorities for the 2006/08 SHG programme.

The affordability ratio – i.e. house prices to average earnings – in the Dyffryn Ardudwy & Talybont Community Council area was the 12th highest in the County according to Gwynedd Council's research into the housing market. It's a rural settlement on the Meirionnydd coast, within the Snowdonia National Park, where new development is tightly controlled because of the area's natural beauty. It was decided by the project Steering Group, which includes representatives of all the partner organisations, that Dyffryn Ardudwy & Talybont would be a priority area for the Gwynedd RHE when he took up his position in the Autumn of 2004.

There was little evidence of local housing needs prior to the involvement of the RHE. He initially approached the County Councillor and community council in late 2004. The results of a simple questionnaire distributed through local post offices at the beginning of 2005 motivated the community council to do a more comprehensive housing needs survey. A detailed housing needs questionnaire was distributed by community council members to nearly 300 homes, approximately one-in-three of all households. A total of 65 questionnaires were returned and 20 households were assessed as having genuine housing needs. The RHE and community council then started to investigate existing buildings and plots which could be utilised to respond to the identified needs, in consultation with officers of the National Park Authority. By late Summer 2005 there was consensus that a site in local



authority ownership outside the development boundary, Castell Coch, was the preferred option.

Cymdeithas Tai Eryri was invited to submit proposals for the site. The initial feasibility study indicated that a development of ten family houses was possible. In October 2005 Gwynedd Council submitted a bid for a ten unit scheme as one of its priorities for the SHG programme in 2006/08. The final proposals included a bungalow for a family from the adjoining community council area of Harlech who had a disabled child.

A successful open day was organised in the village hall in December 2005 with members of the community council, the RHE and officers of Cymdeithas Tai Eryri in attendance. Members of the public were given the opportunity to question staff, register their needs and comment on the draft plans and designs for the site. Some concerns were raised about flooding from the site during heavy rainfall and access difficulties because of the narrow road to the site. The Association subsequently commissioned consultant engineers to identify solutions to the flooding problem and also revised the plans to widen the road and provide a pavement.

Confirmation was received in the Spring of 2006 that the SHG bid had been successful. Discussions commenced between the RHE, the community council and Cymdeithas Tai Eryri about the principles of a special allocations policy namely:

- _ prioritising applicants who have lived or worked within the local community council area for a period of five years;
- _ allocating the housing to local people with the greatest housing needs;
- _ offering the housing on a neutral tenure basis (i.e. tenancy or shared equity) according to successful applicants' circumstances.

Planning permission was granted as a rural exception site by Snowdonia National Park Authority in July 2006. The planning consent contained two special conditions: the signing of a S106 agreement; and obtaining the Environment Agency's approval for matters relating to rainwater disposal. Compliance with these conditions took seven months by which time we were nearing the Assembly Government's deadline for project approval in order to commit the SHG allocation for 2006/07.

The scheme is one of the first developed by the Association via "open-book" procurement methods through the UNDOD Partnership. A value engineering exercise was undertaken with the lead contractors and consultants prior to agreeing a build cost of £934,756. This was in excess of the Acceptable Cost Guidance by £60,000. The additional costs were the result of abnormal items namely:

- _ design requirements of the planning authority such as stone boundary walls and additional landscaping
- _ investment in a rainwater harvesting system and a "hydro-break" drainage system in order to meet the Environment Agency's requirements

The application for project approval was duly submitted to the Housing Directorate at a total cost which was £60,000 (105%) over the Acceptable Cost Guidance.

The application was not approved. An appeal to the Director of Housing eventually led to project approval being granted at 102%. The reduced costs were achieved by the Association claiming lower "on costs". Construction commenced in March 2007 and was completed in February 2008.

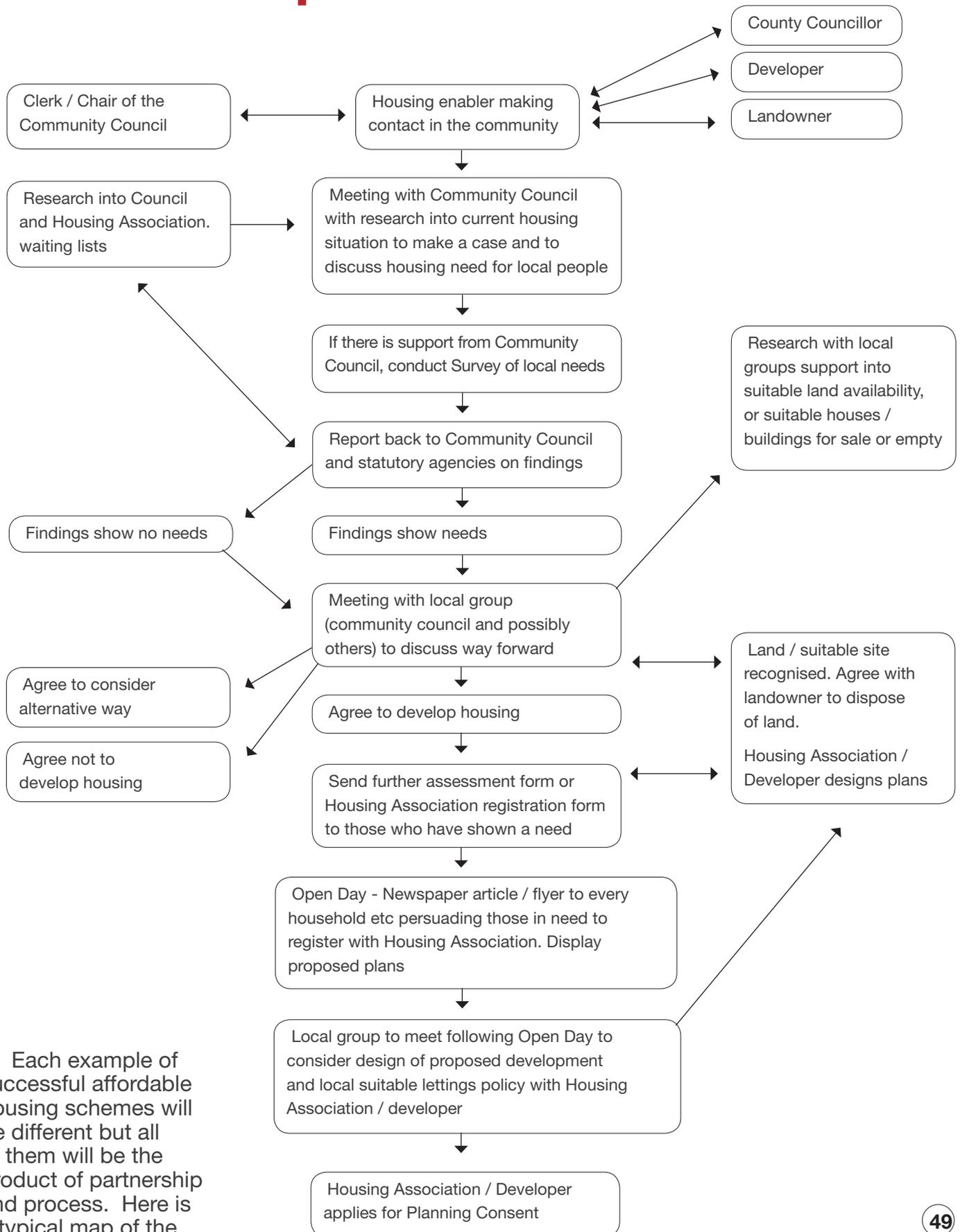
The scheme was named "Castell y Gôg". As noted earlier the bungalow was pre-allocated to a family from Harlech who had a disabled child (an exception to the community connection condition). The closing date for applications for the remaining housing was 2 November 2007. A total of 49 applications were received, of which:

- _ 12 applicants did not satisfy the community connection condition
- _ 25 applicants claimed to satisfy the community connection condition
- _ 12 other applicants claimed a connection with an adjoining community council area

The Association then worked with the community council to consider the evidence applicants provided as proof of local connection. Offers of housing were made to the successful applicants, all of whom had the option of buying an equity share (50%-70%) in their new homes. The section 106 agreement ties the Association to basing the price of equity shares on SHG acceptable cost guidance e.g.

	ACG	50% Share	70% Share	Weekly Rent
3 bedr/ 5 person house	£118,900	£59,450	£83,230	£62.75

7.8 Mapping the production process



Each example of successful affordable housing schemes will be different but all of them will be the product of partnership and process. Here is a typical map of the process.

7.9 Roles and Responsibilities of Gwynedd RHE Partners

Rural Housing Enabler, Snowdonia National Park Authority, Gwynedd Council, Community Councils, Cymdeithas Tai Clwyd/Eryri, WAG.

*** lead input
 ** medium input
 * some input

copy in on discussions

	Activity	RHE	Hous Ass	SNPA			Com- munity Council	Gwynedd Council				WAG
				Policy	DC	Legal		Aff. H Officer	Housing	Plan- ning	High- ways	
Cam 1: Foundation Stage	County Strategy	#	#	**			#	***	***	***	**	**
	Housing Market Assessment input	#	*	***				***	***			
	Housing strategy formulation (housing waiting list etc.)	#	*	***				***	***			*
	Settlement priorities (for sustainable communities)	#	#	***	*		#	***	***	***	**	**
	Community Strategy			***				***	***			
	NPA Management Plan			***								
	Initial liaison with CC/County.Cllr	** *	*	*	*	*	*	#	#			
Cam 2: Housing Need Survey stage	Agree format of HNS with CC and LA	** *	*	**			**	**	**	#		
	Community Publicity regarding Survey	** *	#	*			**	#				

	Organise printing and delivery	** *	**				**	*				
	Data input, analysis and report	** *	*									
	Agree content of report with CC and obtain support	** *					*					
	Publish final report, publicity & distribute to partners	** *	*	*			*	*	*			
Cam 3: Site identification stage	Selection of RSL / CLT / Private developer	**					** (ymtic)	*	***			
	Early discussions with planners	** *		#	** (sw- yd- dog)			*		** (swyd- dog)		
	Undertake site search with CC	** *	#	#	*		**	#		*		*
	Initial negotiations with landowner	** *		#	*		*	#		*		
	Informal input from Highways	** *		#				*			**	
Cam 4: Project Stage	Choice of architect (if not in-house)	#	***				#					
	Ongoing liaison with CC	**	**				**					
	Initial scheme feasibility / Concept Plan Stage	#	***		*			#	*	*	*	
	First draft plans	*	***	#	**			#	*	**	*	
	Open day – Community consultation. Registration of need	** *	**	*	*		*		**	*		
	Survey of land and pollution	#	***	#	#		#	#		#		

Cam 5: Planning application and Bid to WAG Stage	Planning application (language impact assessment and evidence of need)	*	***	#	**		*	#		**		
	S106 negotiation (including Local Special Policy)	*	**	***	*	**	#	***		**		
	Bid to WAG	#	**	*				*	***			**
	Ongoing liaison with CC											
Cam 6: Completion Stage	Ongoing liaison with CC	**	***	*			*					
	Ongoing liaison with CC	**	***	*			*					
	Public Relations, publicity and acknowledgements	**	***	**			**	*				