

PRESS RELEASE

POOTS RELEASES INDEPENDENT REPORT ON NON-FARMING RURAL DWELLERS

Environment Minister Edwin Poots today released a report which will help inform planning policy for rural areas.

The Independent Working Group Report on Non-Farming Rural Dwellers covers a range of issues including non farming rural dwellers, the diversity of rural Northern Ireland and the aspirations of local communities.

The Minister said: **“In publishing Draft PPS 21 the Executive recognised that more work needed to be done in relation to non farming rural dwellers and commissioned the Independent Working Group to consider the complexities of the issue and to give us the benefit of their experience”**.

The independent group consisted of experts from the fields of planning, the environment, rural development and the legal profession, and was chaired by Jim McKinnon, Chief Planner of the Scottish Government.

The Minister continued: **“This report will give us a better insight into how to address the needs of the rural community and I am already taking forward one of the Report’s conclusions through the production of new rural design guidance.”**

The Independent Working Group report is available at www.planningni.gov.uk

Notes to the Editor

The review of rural planning policy was initiated in September, 2007 and was undertaken by a Subgroup of the Executive comprising the Ministers for Environment, Agriculture and Rural Development, Enterprise, Trade and Investment, Regional Development, Social Development and both Junior Ministers.

The outcome of the Subcommittee’s work was draft PPS 21 (November 2008) which replaced draft PPS 14. As the issue of non-farming rural dwellers had raised significant comment, an independent report was commissioned.

The group members were: Jim Mackinnon (chair), Stewart Beattie, Patrick Casement, Seamus Caulfield, Martin McDonald, Bill Morrison and independent adviser Rosemary Thomas.

The IWG was required to:

- Devise options to address the issue of non-farming rural dwellers.
- Examine rural planning policies for non –agricultural rural dwellers across the UK and Republic of Ireland.
- Take account of local, national and European legislation.
- Examine examples of the Rural Social Test in the Republic of Ireland and account of any developments in the Ireland/EU infraction case.
- Take account of the other strategic developments, including the proposed review of the Regional Development strategy, Planning Reform and development of a Rural White Paper.
- Take account of views raised by consultees following the emerging findings document and the publication of the revised PPS 14 (PPS 21).

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