

Findings of the 2009

RURALSERVICES

survey

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Published July 2010
ISBN 9781844950416



The Headlines

A continuing but slowing decline in rural services.

- One in five (22%) of villages have a Post Office.
- 12 Post Offices have closed since 2005 and four Post Office branches have been replaced by an Outreach Service.
- 77% of Dorset villages have no General Store.
- 31 rural villages now have a petrol station (down 33 since 1991). Four rural petrol stations have closed since 2005.
- 42% of Dorset's rural settlements have at least one public house.
- 5 public houses have closed since 2005 and 2 were reopened.
- 77% of villages have a place of worship.
- One settlement retains a bank, and 20% of the villages have a cash point.
- Just over half of the villages have a village hall (with two thirds of these villages having a population of less than 500).
- 30 village halls (or other community venue) have been connected to broadband through a programme called "Connecting Dorset".
- 65 villages have a school.
- 9% of villages have access to a GP surgery.
- Eight of the villages have a library. And just over half of the villages are visited by a mobile library.
- North and West Dorset lost the most facilities.
- 10 larger villages (population greater than 500) do not have a General Store.
- 11 villages with a population of over 500 have no school.

Rural Services Survey 2009 - Introduction

Dorset's rural services survey (RSS) establishes the number of villages with or without key facilities and services across the County. It also looks at the provision of services within these villages and provides a rural evidence base for policy decisions.

To provide consistent monitoring within Dorset, the County Council has undertaken a number of rural services surveys over the past three decades to establish a detailed account of the level of service provision in our rural settlements and provide that essential rural evidence base.

In 2009, the Research and Information group undertook the latest of these rural services survey for the villages in the County; this was the first major survey to be undertaken since 2005.

Monitoring of rural services has been ongoing at the County Council on an annual basis through desk research and the latest available data is published on the Internet. The 2009 survey provided an opportunity to compare the data with previous surveys and to make sure that the information that we have on the website www.dorsetforyou.com/villagesurvey is both up to date and accurate.

Background and Context

To put the 2009 Rural Services Survey into a national context, it has been important to consider Government Policies both past and present. Back in 2004, the Labour Government published its Rural Strategy, the strategy followed on from the Rural White Paper "Our Countryside: The Future – A Fair Deal for Rural England". The 2004 Rural Strategy focused on three priorities for rural policy:

- Economic and Social Regeneration - **supporting enterprise across rural England**, but targeting greater resources at areas of greatest need.
- Social Justice for All - tackling **rural social exclusion** wherever it occurs and **providing fair access to services and opportunities for all rural people**.
- Enhancing the Value of our Countryside - protecting the natural environment for this and future generations.

One of the principle actions suggested was to improve the focus and delivery of rural policy in the strategy and to improve the rural evidence base. In Dorset the provision of evidence to support policy drives the continual monitoring of rural services throughout our County.

The newly elected coalition government has recently developed and published a new programme for government, set against a backdrop of huge financial constraints. Examples of how the new government initiatives might affect rural services and facilities include:

- Reduction in public spending or cuts which potentially could mean less money for village halls, libraries and other publicly owned buildings.
- A commitment to ensuring that Post Offices are able to offer a wide range of services in order to sustain the network, for example, looking at developing new sources of revenue (i.e. PO bank).
- A proposal to investigate measures to help with fuel costs in remote rural areas, starting with pilot schemes.

The data from the rural services survey also provides a very important evidence base for policies throughout Dorset County Council as well as partner organisations. It links into a range of policies and strategies including:

- The Local Transport Plan (LTP) - a principle aim of which is to improve accessibility within the County
- The Dorset Community Strategy - which looks at building strong and inclusive communities.
- The Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) - planning policy initiatives at a District and Borough level.

The survey provides information to local communities and is useful at a parish level to provide evidence for grant applications and parish plans.

It also coincides with the Rural Pathfinder 2005-2008 status conferred on Dorset County Council to explore more effective ways of delivering rural policy issues.



Background and Context (continued)

Dorset's rural context

54.4% (229,271)¹ of Dorset's population live in urban areas (about 5% of the total land area) while 45.6% (192,167)¹ live in rural areas and Dorset villages (making up about 95% of the total land area). Most of Dorset's land area is considered rural, with many small settlements, 84% with a population of under 500.

The County has a number of small market towns and only two towns with a population of over 20,000; Christchurch (47,000)² in the far east of the County and Weymouth & Portland (63,600)² on the south coast. In East Dorset there are a number of suburban villages which have not been included in the survey as they have grown far too much to be described primarily as rural settlements.

Dorset currently has the highest proportion of population above retirement age of any County Council in the country, and this older population is expected to continue to grow. In Dorset's rural areas, 23.2% of the rural population are 65 and over (44,579 people)¹ and 11.2% of the rural population are 75 and over (21,546 people)¹.

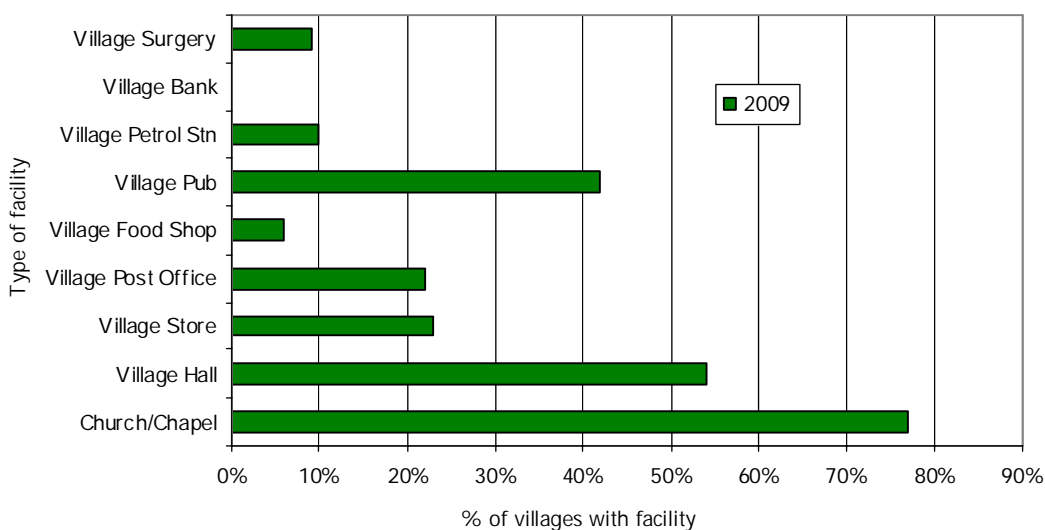
For most, access to services and facilities is not a major problem. However, for the more vulnerable members in our communities (older people, people on low incomes and those without access to private transport) any reduction in services & facilities can be a major issue.

The nationally recognised measure of deprivation, Indices of Deprivation 2007, includes a domain that measures accessibility or geographical access to services. As part of the domain, there is a sub-domain measuring geographical barriers to housing and services. This sub-domain has identified 101 areas in Dorset within the top 20% most deprived nationally for this measure of deprivation. Seven areas in the County are within the top 1% for access deprivation nationally.

In terms of actual numbers this translates to approximately 173,298 people² in Dorset living in the top 20% most deprived areas in the country for barriers to services in accordance with the ID 2007.

The Survey

In 2009, data was collected for 326 villages in the County, with a village defined as a settlement that contains a Church or a Chapel or one that has a resident population of 40 people or more. Population in the settlements has been calculated by using patient register data from 2008. The data in this survey relates specifically to the village not the parish as in some cases a single parish may contain a number of settlements. The methodology for defining the settlement boundary is included in (appendix A).



¹ Patient Register 2009

² 2009 ONS Mid Year Estimates

The 2009 Survey

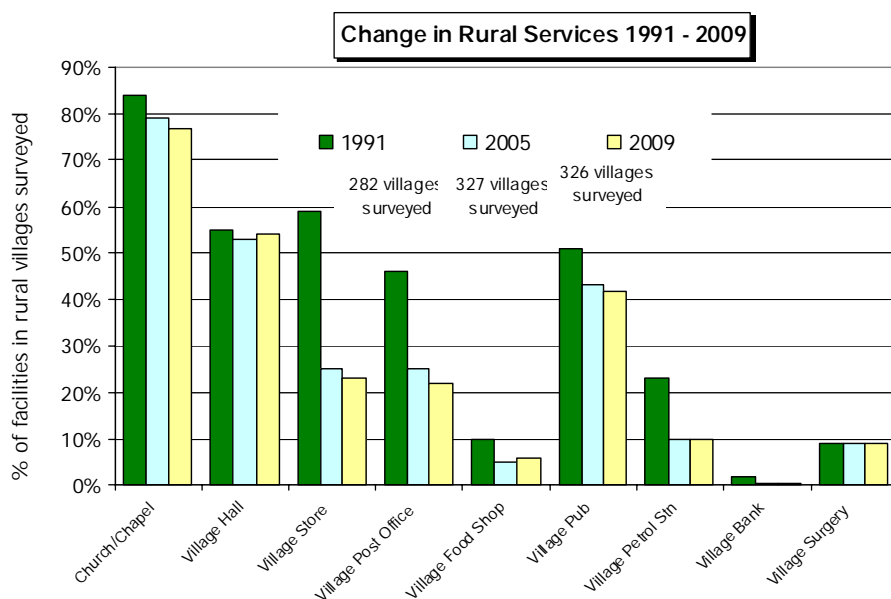
Why is this important?

People living in rural areas have a range of service delivery needs. These include affordable housing issues, local transport, community broadband access, and access to facilities such as village halls, shops, schools and so on.

Rural facilities such as the village shop, post office, school, pub or hall provide a focus for the village, and they help to engender a sense of a community and provide informal support and help to many local residents, as well as providing basic services close at hand. Without these basic services rural settlements become no more than dormitory villages for the nearest town or centre of employment.

Closure of services within a village can dramatically curtail social interaction and this can reduce the quality of life for those residents who cannot easily access the larger settlements. These tend to be the more vulnerable members of our community – older people, people on low incomes and those without access to private transport.

Recent trends nationally have shown that less people are visiting public houses, and opting instead to purchase drink to consume at home, with a possible impact on public houses. The current economic difficulties may also affect consumer demand particularly when it comes to purchasing goods from local shops which might be more expensive than larger national stores that can offer a greater range of products and home delivery. More use of the internet is also likely to have encouraged this way of living and a change in people's habits. These changes may have put pressure on rural facilities.



Findings of the 2009 Survey

Since the 2005 village facilities survey more facilities have closed in Dorset's rural settlements. The loss of village shops and rural post offices identified in previous surveys, has continued, with a significant drop in the number of villages with a Post Office. West Dorset and North Dorset have seen the greatest fall in village facilities, with the most noticeable loss being the Post Office, particularly affected by the 2008 Post Office Review.

The key findings from the 2009 survey are set out in this document under the headings for each service studied. More detailed information for each of the settlements is included in appendix B.

The 2009 Survey (continued)

The table below shows results from the surveys undertaken since 1979. Some facilities (Post Offices, shops and petrol stations) have seen a significant decline over the past 30 years whilst others such as village halls and pubs have fared much better.

	1979	1984	1988	1991	2002	2005	2009
Total Villages	308	301	290	282	330	326	326
with...							
Church/Chapel	253	253	240	237	263	257	251
Village Hall	157	165	158	154	168	173	175
Village Surgery	46	47	40	26	26	29	28
Village Pub	153	152	147	145	141	141	137
Village Petrol Stn		98	93	64	39	32	31
Village Bank	10	10	8	7	1	1	1
Village Food Shop		37	33	27	15	17	19
Village Store		223	199	167	89	80	74
Village Post Office	171	158	140	129	89	82	71
Village Library	-	-	-	-	-	8	8
Village School	-	-	-	-	-	65	65

NOTE: comparison of data from this table with the text may not always match as a small number of facilities that existed may not have been recorded in previous surveys.

The tables below highlight the results from the 2009 survey and the distribution of facilities across the rural settlements within each of Dorset's Districts and Boroughs

2009	Total Villages	Villages with Church/Chapel	Village Hall	Village Surgery	Village Pub	Village Petrol Station
Christchurch	3	2	1	1	3	0
East Dorset	39	27	16	4	14	1
North Dorset	87	67	51	8	34	12
Purbeck	38	25	23	5	21	5
West Dorset	157	129	83	10	64	13
Weymouth & Portland	2	1	1	0	1	0
Total	326	251	175	28	137	31

2009	Village Bank	Village Food Shop	Village Store	Village Post Office	Village Library	Village School
Christchurch	0	0	2	2	0	1
East Dorset	0	3	6	6	0	9
North Dorset	1	3	21	20	1	18
Purbeck	0	4	12	10	3	9
West Dorset	0	9	33	33	4	28
Weymouth & Portland	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	1	19	74	71	8	65

Public Buildings

- **Just over half of villages have a village hall**
- **Many small villages have a village hall**
- **30 village halls (or other community venues) have been connected to broadband through a programme called 'Connecting Dorset'**
- **Approximately 60 village halls have undergone refurbishment since the last survey was undertaken**

Church/Chapel

- The village church, or chapel, continues to be the most widespread facility in the rural community with 77% of the villages containing a place of worship. The survey investigated the incidence of churches and chapels, but did not seek information about their use. It is therefore not possible to draw conclusions regarding the frequency of use, or the service provided to the villages. However, the trend in recent years has been for parishes to be grouped and served by one minister or priest. Churches, particularly in the smaller villages, therefore tend not to be used as frequently as in the past, but rather on a rota basis.
- Information collected from previous surveys indicated that the church continues to provide an important channel of communication for the rural areas. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this has continued to be the case; church newsletters and parish notice boards are both common features within Dorset.

Village Halls

The village hall plays an important role as a focal and meeting point for many rural communities. They provide a place where people of all ages can meet for social, educational and recreational activities and are often the most valued asset in any community. A diverse range of activities take place in village halls, including parish meetings, Artsreach events, Toddler Groups, Youth Clubs, Scouts and Guides.

- 54% of villages in Dorset have a village hall and about 85% of the villages with a population of over 100 have a village hall.
- Thirty village halls (or other community venue) have been connected with broadband internet over the past two years.

The previous survey undertaken in 2005 also included a questionnaire asking details about the village hall status, quality and capacity. The results have not been updated as part of the 2009 survey but are shown below:

- 59 village halls have a capacity to seat 100 or more people within the building and 98 can accommodate 100 or more people standing.
- 59 village halls have sports equipment including table tennis, short mat bowls, volley ball, badminton and skittles.
- The survey also looked at whether the settlement had any other buildings that were used for community purposes, such as church or school halls. 39 villages had other buildings that could be used by the community and 31 had schools that could be used as a village venue.

Public Buildings (continued)

The key challenge faced by many of our rural settlements is the provision of a community facility that can provide a modern and safe environment for the residents to meet and socialise. There are a growing number of rural settlements that now have a modern well-designed village hall that is fit for purpose such as Portesham, Stratton, Frampton, Osmington, Tarrant Gunville and Durweston.

There have been some major renovations, refurbishments, extensions and replacements occurring at village and community halls across Dorset in the past few years. Health & Safety legislation, The Disability Discrimination Act and successful grant application, often provide the necessary impetus for development.

Recent examples include:

- Spetisbury, in North Dorset - the current village hall is intended to be sold for development, and a new hall will be built elsewhere in the village.
- Netherbury, in West Dorset, received money for a refurbishment and extension (from a £250,000 boost from the Big Lottery Fund to revamp their village hall).
- Ashmore, in North Dorset – the old pre-WW1 hut used for community facilities in the village has been replaced by a new hall, with internet facilities and an improved public open space.

Over the last three years there have been new halls built at Studland, Leigh, Litton Cheney and Horton/Chalbury. There has also been significant work at Puddletown, Okeford Fitzpaine, Godmanstone, Tolpuddle and Milborne St Andrew.

Recreation Areas

- **120 villages with designated recreation facilities**
- **Lottery funds have provided opportunities to develop recreational areas**
- **New housing development can often provide developer contributions towards play areas**

Over 120 of the villages surveyed in Dorset have designated recreation areas for the use of their community, these include facilities such as sports fields, tennis courts and children's play areas. Many villages have included schemes to redevelop, expand or create recreation areas in their parish plans.

These facilities offer the population of rural settlements another important opportunity for social interaction, be it for older children or young adults using football pitches or skate parks to parents meeting up at children's play areas.

Recreation areas also have an important function as they can offer space for community events such as village fetes.

Play has been shown by experts to be as important to the mental, physical and social development of children and young people as formal education. Recreation areas can provide a place where people are able to play freely and safely and make informed choices about how, where and when to play.

A recent example is Tolpuddle's Orchard Meadow Play Area which utilised a wide range of grant sources to produce a well equipped and designed play area in the centre of the village.



Tennis courts at Charlton Down

Post Offices & Shops

- **12 Post Offices have closed in rural settlements since 2005**
- **One in five villages have a post office**
- **Three quarters of Dorset's villages do not have a General Store**
- **Four village shops closed since 2005**
- **There are now a number of community run stores (for example, Thorncombe, Halstock & Briantspuddle)**

Post Offices

Post Offices are an important facility for many villages; they are often combined with a shop. It is usually this combination that makes the whole service viable and an asset to the village and community.

The large branch network provided by the Post Office enables convenient access to a range of services. This is of particular importance to people in rural areas who are elderly, disabled, or who do not possess their own means of transport, as without it they would find it difficult to carry out a range of essential activities ranging from withdrawing cash and paying bills, applying for official documents and sending/receiving letters and packages.

Post Offices in rural areas can also provide a range of services which are more difficult to quantify but which are nevertheless very important. They can, for example, provide a focal point for communities and aid those who may require additional assistance in completing official forms.

In 2007 the government initiated a review of the Post Office network brought about by a need to rationalise the service. Over 18 months, beginning in October 2007, around 2,500 branches were closed across the UK, with more than 500 replaced by Outreach services. Outreach services were brought in to mitigate the impact of a branch closure.

The review of the whole Post Office branch service considered both urban and rural services. Over Dorset as a whole, 23 Post offices closed as a result of the Network Change Programme – 15 in rural areas and 8 in urban areas. This report looks solely at rural post offices and it is worth noting that not all of the "rural" closures mentioned here are covered by the Rural Services Survey because the threshold for "rural" in Post Office closures terms included settlements up to a population of 10,000, which would include a number of the smaller Dorset towns.

With regards to the rural villages surveyed across Dorset, four post office branches were proposed to become Outreach Services. The villages affected were Buckhorn Weston, Chettle, Kings Stag and Buckland Newton. Buckhorn Weston lost the village shop because of the change to an outreach service, but the other 3 villages mentioned have a general store remaining.

There have been seven village Post Office closures since the 2005 survey as a direct result of the Network Change Programme. An additional five Post Office closures have also occurred aside from this (a total of 12 losses altogether since 2005).

As postmasters retire or move, the Post Office may take this as an opportunity to reduce the service (or introduce an Outreach service). Communities have in some cases been able to keep a Post Office service running, as they consider the loss of the facility to be too detrimental to their village.



Post office at Bradford Abbas

Post Offices & Shops (continued)

Village shops

It does seem that there has been a slowing down in the rate of closures of village shops with only four losses since the last survey.

However, similar to other businesses the recent recession continues to put pressure on local village shops in rural settlements. Some communities have managed to pull together to help prevent closures. For example, Thorncombe village shop has become a community enterprise. The shop was bought by the village and renovated last year (www.thorncombe-stores.co.uk) with the help of funding (from Chalk & Cheese; a small independent organisation set up to improve the quality of rural life, through working with local people).

Other community owned shops include Briantspuddle in Purbeck and Halstock in West Dorset, both of which have a Post Office within the shop. These shops have worked in association with Sainsburys to provide a range of produce competitively priced.

Facilities lost since 2005	Village Store	Post Office
Christchurch	0	0
East Dorset	-2	-1
North Dorset	-1	-4
Purbeck	-1	-3
West Dorset	0	-4
Weymouth & Portland	0	0
Total losses	-4	-12
Facilities gained since 2005	Village Store	Post Office
Christchurch	0	0
East Dorset	0	0
North Dorset	2	0
Purbeck	0	0
West Dorset	1	1
Weymouth & Portland	0	0
Total gain	3	1

Public Houses

- **42% of Dorset's rural settlements have at least one public house**
- **Five public houses have closed since 2005 and two were re-opened**
- **Community owned public house set up in Shipton Gorge, West Dorset**

Rural pubs continue to find times difficult with economic constraints impacting on potential customers and competition from supermarkets providing cheaper alcohol.

Since 2005, five village pubs have closed. Four of the closures were in West Dorset (Cheselbourne, Godmanstone, Morecombelake & West Bexington) and one in North Dorset (Fiddleford Inn). Purbeck and West Dorset both saw the reopening of a public house.

Pressure for re-development of public houses for residential purposes continues in our rural settlements, however, in the majority of cases applications have looked to develop the car parks, outbuildings and gardens and keep the pub trading.

The community in Shipton Gorge, West Dorset, raised substantial funds and re-opened the New Inn as a community owned pub (in August 2006).

In West Dorset another local community is striving to re-open their local. Palmers Brewery has offered the campaign group SOS (Save our Swan) five years of free rent to help re-open the long derelict pub in Toller Porcorum (closed in 1999). The group also has a grant from the District Council to pay for a business plan to see if the pub could be viable and local residents are waiting for an independent report on the feasibility of re-opening the village pub.

42% of Dorset's rural settlements have at least one public house, making it one of the most common facilities in our villages after the village hall and the Church or Chapel.



New Inn , Shipton Gorge

Petrol Stations

- **31 villages have a petrol station**
- **33 rural petrol stations have closed in the past twenty years**
- **Four rural petrol stations have closed since 2005**



Marnhull

Since 1991, 33 villages have lost their rural petrol station. There are now only 31 rural villages with a petrol station left in Dorset, of which only a handful are not located on a major through road. The days of the small, local, village garage undertaking repairs and providing fuel pump service are almost gone.

Of the remaining 31 villages with a petrol station, 71% of them have a shop. Shops attached to some petrol stations can often act as a general store to the village, supplying everyday food and goods.

There have been some changes since 2005 but overall, and as a result of some petrol stations re-opening or being newly recorded in the survey, the data shows that there has only been a small reduction in the provision of petrol stations. Across the County, four villages have lost a petrol station.

Closures that have occurred include one of the petrol stations in Marnhull, North Dorset although one still remains within the village and a petrol station in Winterborne Stickland in North Dorset.

GP Surgeries

- **9% of villages have a permanent or visiting surgery**

The village surgery can provide a range of services and primary care that would not or could not be provided solely by a Doctors visit. Those most likely to use a GP Surgery in our rural settlements are also those that are less likely to have access to private transport such as the elderly, mobility impaired and low income households. With our ageing population, health care and access to GP surgery is increasingly important.

In 2009, 28 rural villages had access to a GP Surgery. Some of the villages have access to a visiting surgery, often located and functioning on a part time basis from the village hall.

Examples of villages that have access to GP Surgeries operating on a visiting basis include Halstock in West Dorset and Alderholt and Sturminster Marshall in East Dorset.

According to analysis carried out at Dorset County Council 96% of rural households can access a GP surgery within 30 minutes by public transport. These public transport services may, however, be limited to certain days and times.



GP Surgery , Child Okeford

Education

- **One in five of Dorset's villages has a school**
- **Five villages have more than one school in their village**

65 of the villages surveyed in Dorset have at least one school, five of which have more than one school. These are located in East Dorset (Cranborne); North Dorset (Marnhull); Purbeck (Bovington and Wool); and West Dorset (Puddletown).

The primary school continues to play an important role in the life of rural communities. The existence of a primary school in a village will often accompany a fuller range of facilities even in relatively small villages. In recognition of this the government produces an annual list of designated rural primary schools.

The purpose of this designation is to highlight to decision makers a national presumption against closure. Where closure is proposed a list of factors must be taken into consideration including the likely effect of the closure on the local community and any alternatives that could be considered. It also means that the decision makers must consult parents and the district and parish councils. Of the 84 schools listed on the Designated Rural Schools List, 55 of these are within villages that we survey as part of the rural services survey.

District	Number of Designated Rural Primary Schools (government list)	Number of schools that fall within a village surveyed as part of the RSS
Christchurch	0	0
East Dorset	10	8
North Dorset	27	15
Purbeck	10	5
West Dorset	32	27
Weymouth & Portland	5	0

Between 1945 and the early 1960s, 26 primary schools were closed in Dorset, this rose to 30 between 1964 and 1973, before decreasing to 25 primary school closures between 1974 and 1984. In the four years up to the 1988 survey the primary schools at Halstock and Buckhorn Weston were closed. Since 1988 no further rural primary schools were closed until 2005 when Milton Abbas First School became the first village school to be closed in the County for 17 years.

Recent Developments

- Overmoigne First School was closed and replaced by the new Frome Valley School in Crossways (in September 2006).
- Shillingstone Primary School - work has started on a new building. Planning permission was granted in September 2009, with work starting in November 2009. It is hoped that the building work will be completed by October 2010.

Libraries

- **8 Dorset villages have a permanent library**
- **Just over half of Dorset's villages are visited by a mobile library service**



Libraries in our rural communities offer a wide range of services from borrowing books for all ages, information, talking books, DVDs and videos, CDs, Computers with free internet access, events and displays.

The information needs of rural communities and in particular for those without easy access to transport are often catered for by these small village libraries. They also offer an informal meeting place.

The library service provision for rural communities in Dorset faced potential closures in 2006, following a drive to find substantial savings across the County Council to bridge an overall funding gap of £20 million. However, none of the libraries proposed for closure in 2006/07 were actually closed and the library service continues to have 34 libraries across the county.

As a consequence of the consultation with local communities, following the threat of closure back in 2007, a number of the rural libraries are now being supported by volunteers. In Burton Bradstock, and Puddletown libraries, staff provide a number of core opening hours with volunteers covering additional hours to provide a fuller service to their local community.

All libraries have seen a reduction in their opening hours from the summer of 2007, following decisions made by the County Council in order to balance the service budget.

There has been no change, therefore, in the provision of static library services in our rural villages, and eight of the rural settlements in the 2009 survey still have static libraries. These can be found in Stalbridge in North Dorset; Corfe Castle, Lytchett Matravers and Wool in Purbeck and Burton Bradstock, Charmouth, Crossways and Puddletown in West Dorset.

Although very few villages are large enough to support a library, the majority (almost 55%) of our rural settlements are visited by a mobile library on a weekly basis, this can provide an essential service to villagers. More specific data about Dorset's rural and mobile libraries including mobile library time tables can be accessed from Dorset's internet site www.dorsetforyou.com/libraries.

Banking Facilities

- **One rural settlement retains a bank and fifty seven villages have at least one cash point machine**

Within the settlements surveyed only Stalbridge, a very small market town in North Dorset, retains a bank. However, many post offices offer banking facilities or their equivalent and over 50 of the rural villages surveyed in 2009 have at least one cash point machine within the village, whether in a post office, shop, garage or public house.

It is worth noting that many of these cash points although providing a very important service do charge for their use. There is also the opportunity to undertake banking via the internet and with more villages providing internet access through their libraries, public houses and village halls this also offers an alternative to conventional banks.

57 of the villages (almost one in five) have at least one cash point.



Broadband and Internet

- **Thirty villages have been connected to broadband in the past eighteen months.**

Launched in 2008, 'Connecting Dorset' (grant-funded through Rural Renaissance, with additional contributions from BT and Magna Housing) is a countywide project, bringing broadband to rural settlements, for the benefit of their communities. The project has provided computer hardware and internet access to villages where there are still a significant amount of excluded people. Rural residents who cannot access the internet are becoming more excluded from many aspects of life, so a connection in their village is very useful, increasing digital inclusion. Systems have been set up in accessible village venues such as the village hall, or other similar locations.

One particular innovative example is a Co-operative Pottery sited in the middle of Symondsburry, just outside Bridport. This installation was supported by the Walbridge Trust, a local charity, and as a direct result of these actions a public internet facility is now available 18 hours a week to local residents. A recent broadband installation also took place in The Shave Cross Inn near Pilsdon, a remote rural area of West Dorset. The Connecting Dorset facility has been installed in the Function Room adjoining the pub. Out of the 40 halls or community venues that have been connected so far (June 2009), 30 are within the villages surveyed for the RSS. These include:

Abbotsbury, Stanways Hall	Broadmayne VH
Briantspiddle VH	Cerne Abbas VH
Broadoak VH	Charlton Marshall VH
Charlton Down VH	Harman's Cross VH
Hazelbury Bryan VH	Leigh VH
Kingston Maurwood College (Stinsford)	Lytchett Matravers VH
Lytchett Minster & Upton Community Association	Maiden Newton Youth & Community Hall
Martinstown (Winterborne St Martin) VH	Milborne St Andrew VH
Milton Abbas Reading Room	Morden VH
Netherbury VH	Puncknowle & Swyre VH
Puddletown Library Extension	Shave Cross Inn (near Pilsdon)
Sixpenny Handley VH	Stourpaine VH
Studland VH	Sturminster Marshall VH
Stymondsburry Pottery	Thornford VH
Winfrith Newburgh VH	Winterborne Stickland Pamela Hambro VH

There is also an initiative planned to bring high speed broadband across the County as part of the Olympic legacy but this project is reliant on proving financial viability to British Telecom.

Transport

- **Annual Average Traffic flows have increased**
- **Demand Responsive Transport introduced**

The provision of public transport in Dorset faces a number of difficult challenges:

Rural public transport services have undergone a sea change in the past couple of decades. The 1985 Public Transport Act led to the de-regulation of the public transport network and this has put significant pressure on non-profit making rural services. The County Council subsidises a very high percentage of the public transport services that run in the County, with only a few routes serving the major urban areas run commercially. In recent years the greatest loss of service has been in communities at the edge of the conurbation following rationalisation of the urban network.

Traffic counts have indicated that daily traffic flows have continued to increase across the county.

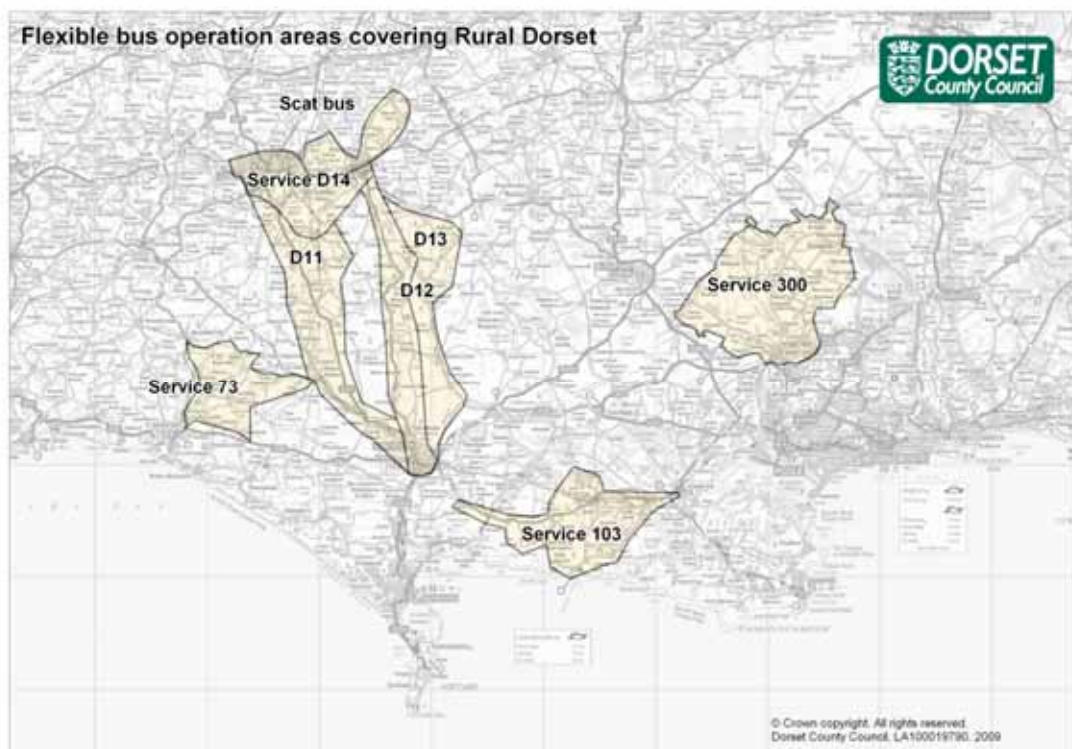
Surveys undertaken for Dorset County Council have found that although accessibility does not necessarily deteriorate with increased rurality, for those without private transport in rural areas access to services is a real issue.

Flexible Bus Services

The County Council has invested in the provision of a number of "Demand Responsive Transport" (DRT) services to improve accessibility for Dorset's rural residents. The first of these services in west Dorset covered the route between and around Bridport and Maiden Newton. This route has shown a 37% increase from the first year of operation (2006).

The County Council is looking to provide these services with low floor easily accessible vehicles but the difficult terrain on this route has so far prevented the introduction of a suitable bus.

The areas shown below are where DRT services have been introduced. In each case more scheduled points have been introduced to help users understand what journeys are on offer. Generally, services have shown growth in passenger numbers in part because of the introduction of concessionary passes but usage for Service 300 remains relatively low.



Transport (continued)

Community Transport

Community transport schemes have a proven track record of providing services for those people and communities who find it difficult to access public transport services, particularly older people and those with disabilities.

There are a number of community transport schemes operating in Dorset:

The **NORDCAT** (North Dorset Accessible Transport) scheme was established in 2001 under a partnership between the County Council and North Dorset District Council using funding obtained under the Rural Bus Challenge. The scheme operates dial-a-ride services to the towns of Shaftesbury, Blandford, Sturminster Newton and Gillingham from outlying parishes. It is available to people who are physically unable to use existing public transport services and to those who are not served by conventional services. NORDCAT also operates SCATBUS; a similar service in Sherborne and adjacent parishes.

Axe Valley and West Dorset Ring & Ride uses a 15 seat, wheelchair accessible minibus with a tail lift. Those eligible to use the service include older people, people with disabilities and those living in isolated areas with no other transport facilities. A second vehicle is to be provided by the West Dorset Partnership extending the area of coverage further into Dorset.

Swanage Hopper is an accessible door-to-door service available within Swanage and Langton Matravers for anyone with mobility problems, parents with young children and for people who do not have access to a mainstream bus service on one day per week.

Wareham Home Hopper, organised by Helping Hands and the Wareham Transport Action Group, provides transport in the Wareham, Bere Regis, Wool, Holton Heath and Corfe Castle area for any person who finds it difficult to use public transport.

Vision Wimborne is a charity aiming to improve life for people living in Wimborne Minster and the surrounding areas. This is a dial-a-ride service for people with severe mobility problems and offers door to door transport from home to destination and return.

The Weymouth & Portland and Dorchester Dial-A-Bus service has been set up to provide wheelchair accessible transport for older people and people with disabilities who find it difficult to use existing transport services. There are two schemes available that serve Weymouth town centre, Dorchester town centre or Dorchester Tesco, which can be used for any reason except for hospital appointments.

Dorset Country Cars is a voluntary car scheme supported by Dorset County Council. The scheme helps those in rural areas who are not fit enough to use public transport or who have no other means of transport to enable them to make essential trips.

Other local initiatives provide services similar to Dorset Country Cars. The Dorset POPPs Initiative is developing further car share schemes in the County.

Shared Taxis – The County Council has introduced a number of shared taxi schemes in rural communities. These offer a low cost method of providing journeys for small numbers of people. The schemes at Sydling St Nicholas and Alderholt which replaced bus services have been successful and sometimes require a larger vehicle. Shared taxi operations which offer entirely new journeys, or journeys which have not been operated for some time, struggle to attract more than one or two passengers despite being the subject of requests from local communities.

Appendices

Appendix A

- Settlement Methodology

Appendix B

- Settlement Facility Summary

Appendix A – Settlement Methodology

The village settlement boundaries have been defined using a buffer of 250-350m around address clusters identified using GIS. The intention is to give an accurate illustration of the village, in relation to where its residents live.

