



House of Commons

Environment, Food and Rural
Affairs Committee

The Delivery of Education in Rural Areas

Ninth Report of Session 2002–03



House of Commons
Environment, Food and Rural
Affairs Committee

The Delivery of Education in Rural Areas

Ninth Report of Session 2002–03

*Report, together with formal minutes, minutes
of evidence and appendices*

*Ordered by The House of Commons
to be printed 21 May 2003*

HC 467
Published on 5 June 2003
by authority of the House of Commons
London: The Stationery Office Limited
£0.00

The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee

The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and its associated bodies.

Current membership

Mr David Curry (*Conservative, Skipton and Ripon*) (Chairman)*
Ms Candy Atherton (*Labour, Falmouth and Camborne*)
Mr David Borrow (*Labour, South Ribble*)*
Mr Colin Breed (*Liberal Democrat, South East Cornwall*)
David Burnside (*UUP, South Antrim*)
Mr David Drew (*Labour, Stroud*)*
Patrick Hall (*Labour, Bedford*)
Mr Michael Jack (*Conservative, Fylde*)*
Mr Mark Lazarowicz (*Labour/Co-op, Edinburgh North and Leith*)
Mr David Lepper (*Labour, Brighton Pavilion*)
Mr Austin Mitchell (*Labour, Great Grimsby*)*
Diana Organ (*Labour, Forest of Dean*)*
Gillian Shephard (*Conservative, South West Norfolk*)
Alan Simpson (*Labour, Nottingham South*)
David Taylor (*Labour, North West Leicestershire*)*
Paddy Tipping (*Labour, Sherwood*)
Mr Bill Wiggin (*Conservative, Leominster*)

*These Members were nominated as members of the Sub-committee. Mrs Diana Organ was the Chairman of the Sub-committee.

Powers

The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No. 152. These are available on the Internet via www.parliament.uk.

Publications

The Reports and evidence of the Committee are published by The Stationery Office by Order of the House. All publications of the Committee (including press notices) are on the Internet at www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/environment_food_and_rural_affairs.cfm. A list of Reports of the Committee in the present Parliament is at the back of this Report.

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Gavin Devine (Clerk), Tim Jarvis (Second Clerk), Richard Kelly and Dr Kate Trumper (Committee Specialists), Mark Oxborough and Darren Hackett (Committee Assistants) and Anne Woolhouse (Secretary).

Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, House of Commons, 7 Millbank, London SW1P 3JA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 3262; the Committee's e-mail address is: efracom@parliament.uk.

Contents

Report	<i>Page</i>
Summary	3
1. Introduction	4
How does Defra define its role?	5
2. Delivering education in rural areas	7
Transport	7
Information and Communications Technology	9
Protecting and enhancing schools in rural areas	11
<i>Small schools</i>	11
<i>Presumption against closure</i>	12
<i>Extended Schools Initiative</i>	13
Further education and training	14
Rural proofing and joined-up government	15
The role of Defra	17
Conclusions and recommendations	19
Formal minutes	23
Witnesses	24
List of written evidence	25
Reports from the Committee since 2001	26

Summary

The creation of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) in June 2001 was significant in that it established for the first time in England a government department with specific responsibility for representing the interests of rural areas. Education is a key public service and one which presents special challenges for providers in rural communities. We therefore decided to examine how Defra works within government to facilitate the effective delivery of education in rural areas.

Transport and the provision of information technology, particularly broadband, present notable challenges for education providers in rural areas. Policy solutions require co-ordination between various government departments and local statutory bodies which do not all have direct involvement in education provision. We were disappointed to find that Defra does not appear to have established a role for itself as the lead body with responsibility for co-ordinating policy responses in rural areas on these issues. The further education and training sector is particularly important in rural areas because of the link it provides between education and the wider rural economy. Defra has recognised this through its target to increase participation rates in rural areas. However, we found little evidence that Defra is making a significant contribution towards meeting its target.

We found examples of good practice where Defra and the Countryside Agency had offered practical solutions to particular issues for education providers in rural areas. There are mechanisms within central government to ensure rural issues are considered, such as the Cabinet Sub-committee on Rural Renewal. There is also evidence that the Government has taken the specific needs of rural areas into account in the way that it has developed some of its education initiatives. Nevertheless we found little which suggested to us that Defra is monitoring the delivery of education in rural areas or that it has been particularly successful in representing the interests of rural areas in the formulation of education policy. We therefore conclude that, in respect of education, Defra has some way to go before it can be considered to be an effective department for rural affairs.

1. Introduction

1. In June 2001 the Government set up the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and in doing so established, for the first time in England, a government department with specific overall responsibility for rural affairs. The aims and objectives of the new department, published at the time of its creation, made it clear that its remit included acting as the leading voice in government on rural areas. One of the new Department's early key tasks was "to set the future direction of the rural economy by working with partners and stakeholders at the national, regional and local levels to implement the policies set out in the Rural White Paper and to ensure their further development".¹

2. As the Select Committee charged with scrutinising the performance of Defra, we are keen to examine the extent to which it truly is a department for rural affairs. In doing so, we seek to examine the way Defra represents rural areas within government and facilitates effective policy-making. We therefore decided to embark on a series of inquiries that focus on subjects which, though not necessarily within the main policy remit of Defra, highlight particular issues for rural areas; issues where we might expect a department for rural affairs to ensure rural interests are taken into account by other policy-making departments, or to offer direct policy solutions.

3. We decided that our first inquiry into Defra's rural affairs remit would be on the delivery of education in rural areas.² In December 2002, we therefore appointed a Sub-committee to carry out an inquiry within the following terms of reference:

"The Committee will examine the role played by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) in addressing the particular difficulties of meeting educational needs in rural areas. Amongst other matters it will look at:

- the structures and arrangements put in place by Defra to ensure that the needs of rural areas are taken into account in decisions relating to schools made by the Department for Education and Skills and by local authorities; and the effectiveness of 'rural proofing' education policy;
- more specifically, progress in implementing the provisions of the Rural White Paper relating to *Supporting local schools*; and progress in ensuring that rural schools remain open and able to deliver high quality education; and
- what is best practice both in this country and abroad."³

4. We held three oral evidence sessions including one with Ministers from Defra and the DfES. In addition we received written memoranda from 22 different organisations

¹ Defra press release, *Defra – aims and objectives of the new department*, 14 June 2001

² A forthcoming report will examine the provision of broadband in rural areas.

³ Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee press release, *The Delivery of Education in Rural Areas*, 5 December 2002

including 13 local education authorities. We are most grateful to all those who have helped us with our inquiry.

5. In embarking on our inquiry we recognised that the wide and varied nature of education policy required us to be selective in determining the areas on which we could focus. It would clearly have been impractical for us to try to consider the impact in rural areas of each of the many initiatives adopted by DfES. We therefore decided to concentrate on those issues which impact on a range of education providers offering services to students of all ages. For example, issues around transport to and from education establishments were brought up by respondents from the further education sector and the school sector. We also sought to concentrate on those issues where we would expect a department for rural affairs to play a constructive role and to ensure that the particular needs of rural areas are given sufficient weight.

6. We fully endorse the Rural Affairs Minister's comment in his evidence to us that Defra "is not there to second-guess or act as a second Education Department".⁴ This does, however, raise questions about what Defra's role *is* in relation to rural education: how its performance is measured; how effectively it is fulfilling its role; and what this tells us about Defra as a department for rural affairs. In the context of the issues which we identified as of particular importance to education providers in rural areas, it is these questions that our inquiry sought to address.

7. The first part of this report summarises Defra's statements about its role in rural education. It goes on to examine what we considered were the key issues: transport provision; information and communications technology; supporting local schools; further education and training; and rural proofing and joined-up government. Where appropriate, we make recommendations which we believe would help Defra make a constructive and appropriate contribution to the delivery of education in rural areas. We conclude by making some general comments on the role of Defra in the delivery of education and more broadly on its rural affairs remit.

How does Defra define its role?

8. The policies announced in the Rural White Paper, and the subsequently published Public Service Agreement under which Defra operates, set out the Department's role in the delivery of education in rural areas. The Rural White Paper establishes standards for the delivery of public services in rural areas and describes initiatives designed to enable these standards to be met.⁵ Specifically, it commits the Government to ensuring "that people of all ages living in rural areas have full access to the range of opportunities available and that obstacles to access are addressed".⁶ In order to maintain rural schools providing high quality education, the White Paper goes on to describe proposals under three broad headings: supporting local schools and a presumption against closure; information and communications technology; and the use of schools as community facilities.

⁴ Q186

⁵ MAFF and DETR, *Our countryside: the future*, Cm 4909, November 2000

⁶ *Ibid*, para. 4.3.1

9. The White Paper also set out the Government's commitment to 'rural proof' its policy work: that is, to ensure that the rural dimension is taken into account when developing and implementing Government policies. In addition to rural proofing its own work, Defra takes a lead role in this initiative. The Secretary of State chairs the Cabinet Committee on Rural Affairs which co-ordinates policies for rural areas and considers major rural policy issues. The Countryside Agency, an executive agency of Defra, publishes an annual assessment of how central government departments have rural proofed their policies.⁷ It has also produced a rural checklist which is designed to help policy-makers take account of the rural dimension as policy is developed.

10. The evidence of Defra/DfES made reference to the Rural White Paper and rural proofing in its description of Defra's role. It described this role as twofold:

- to assist by making available the knowledge and understanding that Defra and its agencies, especially the Countryside Agency, have about the needs and opportunities in rural areas;
- promoting the need for rural proofing at Ministerial and official level and working to ensure that all departments discharge the commitment to rural proofing contained in the Rural White Paper.⁸

11. In addition to its stated objectives in relation to the Rural White Paper, Defra has specific targets for its remit as a department for rural affairs. Defra operates under a Public Service Agreement (PSA) which sets out the key objectives and performance measures against which the Department is evaluated. The objectives are supported by specific targets within its Service Delivery Agreement (SDA) which is developed in conjunction with spending commitments made as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review. Objective II of the PSA is "to enhance opportunity and tackle social exclusion in rural areas". The SDA contains a target under this objective to "increase participation in job-related education and training among the rural workforce, and the proportion of 16 and 17 year olds living in rural areas taking up further education and training through the programmes of Learning and Skills Councils".

12. The England Rural Development Programme (ERDP), for which Defra now has lead responsibility, recognises the role of education in contributing towards meeting the Government's aim to create vibrant rural communities. National Priority 2 for rural communities is "to maintain and stimulate communities, and secure access to services which is equitable in all the circumstances, for those who live or work in the countryside". This includes a commitment to "improving access to and developing facilities and services - including education, employment, training and recreation to reduce social exclusion and enhance the quality of life in rural communities".

⁷ Countryside Agency, *Rural Proofing: a report to Government*, April 2002

⁸ Ev 58

2. Delivering education in rural areas

Transport

13. The availability and cost of public transport in rural areas, and the special provision made by Local Education Authorities (LEAs) for students attending schools and colleges, were raised by nearly all those who submitted evidence to the inquiry. The Local Government Association described transport as “critical to the success of education in rural areas”.⁹ As a policy area which crosses Government departments it is also an issue where we would expect Defra to take a lead in co-ordinating approaches in rural areas.

14. LEAs have certain statutory duties in relation to education transport. They must provide free transport to school for pupils of compulsory school age if they attend the nearest school and that school is beyond the statutory walking distance (two miles for children under eight years of age and three miles for children aged eight and above). They also have discretionary powers to help other pupils with fares.

15. The statutory walking distances were established in the Education Act 1944. Witnesses told us that they were now out-of-date and did not reflect current realities. It is often unsafe for children to walk two or three miles to school, even if accompanied, mainly because of far heavier traffic than could have been imagined when the legislation was introduced. A representative of the Local Government Association also highlighted potential anomalies within the current system. For example, the family of a child who lives 3.1 miles away from a school may get totally free transport but a child whose family live 2.9 miles away will receive nothing.¹⁰ The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education told us that his Department was “looking at this in conjunctions with colleagues and officials in the Department for Transport”.¹¹

16. We welcome the Education Minister’s statement to us that the DfES and the Department for Transport are examining this issue. **We recommend that the internal review of statutory walking distances be extended to a public consultation with a deadline for implementation of a new system. We urge the Government to overhaul radically the current arrangements. A new system should be based on an assessment of safety issues and the real alternatives to walking and not just crudely based on distance from school. Defra and DfES should ensure that the particular needs of rural areas are taken into account.**

17. The Government is committed, through the England Rural Development Plan, to improving access to rural services such as education. The Minister for Rural Affairs told us that the role of Defra in relation to school transport was to “try to get people to think laterally”.¹² However, we were disappointed that Defra seemed unable to provide any examples of where such lateral thinking had produced original transport solutions in rural areas. A number of other witnesses described innovative schemes which had been

⁹ Ev 43, para 1.4

¹⁰ Q 148

¹¹ Q 227

¹² Q 220

introduced by LEAs. For example, Lincolnshire has introduced a scheme called “park and stride” which encourages car sharing and walking to school from designated parking areas to reduce congestion at the school gates.¹³ Other areas, for example Hebden Bridge in West Yorkshire, have introduced a dedicated ‘yellow bus’ service which operates in partnership with the LEA, local schools and parents.

18. Some Government initiatives rely on good home-to-school transport. For example, the DfES and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport have launched a national strategy for school sport.¹⁴ This includes a target to increase the percentage of 5-16 year olds who spend a minimum of two hours each week on high-quality PE and school sport, within and beyond the curriculum, from 25% in 2002 to 75% by 2006. It aims to reach all children by 2007. We believe that the extra-curricular opportunities this initiative offers should be available to all. In rural areas, this will depend on flexible and low cost home-to-school transport provision.

19. There is clearly scope for innovation in the area of home-to-school transport. Given this, we were disappointed by Defra’s relative lack of involvement in finding solutions. We were also surprised that the Countryside Agency’s recent report on Transport in Tomorrow’s Countryside makes little reference to education transport. We believe that Defra should be involved at a local level with LEAs to bring together resources and implement innovative transport schemes which, where successful, can be replicated in different parts of the country. Defra should identify and fund solutions which would meet the needs of families in rural communities. The aim of these schemes should be to reduce reliance on cars and enable all school pupils to take part in out-of-school activities.

20. In respect of post-compulsory education, provisions in the Education Act 2002 require LEAs, from January 2003, to work with Learning and Skills Councils, and others, to meet the transport needs of students aged 16 to 19. LEAs are required to ensure that students are not prevented from accessing and completing their courses because of the availability of transport or their ability to afford it. The Government has made available £9 million in 2002—03 for up to 76 LEAs to undertake transport development work in relation to post-compulsory students.¹⁵ These LEAs are ‘pathfinders’ and were selected, in part, with reference to the extent to which they cover isolated, rural areas. Additional funding from September 2003 will be made available to help local partnerships provide effective and sustainable transport support. The Government argues that these new arrangements will complement the national extension of the Educational Maintenance Allowances from September 2004 and will “make a significant improvement to transport support generally and for rural areas in particular”.¹⁶

21. The Association of Colleges welcomed the national extension of the Educational Maintenance Allowances and described the approach as “very positive”.¹⁷ However, they told us that colleges were losing students from rural areas because the existing transport

¹³ Q 152

¹⁴ http://www.culture.gov.uk/sport/school_sport/default.htm.

¹⁵ HL Deb 16 December 2002 c 77W

¹⁶ *Ibid*

¹⁷ Q 115

links were ineffective and expensive.¹⁸ They argued that solutions to transport problems in rural areas had concentrated on providing services to enable people to access shops and services and had failed to address problems for people wanting to travel to college or work.

22. We were told of examples of good practice where local authorities, the local Learning and Skills Council and providers are working together to meet the transport needs of post-compulsory students. We remain concerned, however, that such good practice and innovation is not widespread. The Countryside Agency's Wheels to Work scheme funds special schemes, such as subsidised moped hire, to help young unemployed people travel to work. The Rural Affairs Minister told us that the scheme is "one of the greatest successes of recent times". Yet there is no equivalent scheme for post-compulsory students. **Defra should examine the lessons of the Wheels to Work Scheme and fund a similar scheme which would develop innovative transport solutions for post-16 students in isolated rural areas.**

23. **We welcome the steps that the Government has taken to improve transport provision for the 16-19 age group. We particularly welcome the national extension of the Educational Maintenance Allowance and believe that, when introduced, the allowance will help students in rural areas with the additional costs of travel to school and college.** However, it is clear that in certain isolated rural areas, the lack of available and affordable transport is likely to remain a major barrier to participation and retention rates of post-compulsory students. **Defra has a key role in monitoring the effect of the various government initiatives and pilot projects to help post-16 students attend school and college. We recommend that Defra publish examples of good practice by LEAs in rural areas, and also identify those LEAs where students are prevented from attending school and college because of poor transport provision.**

Information and Communications Technology

24. Together with available and affordable transport, the provision of information and communications technology (ICT) was one of the most important issues for many of those who provided evidence to our inquiry. The Government also stresses the importance of ICT as a way of reducing the isolation of rural schools and colleges.

25. The Rural White Paper states that ICT provision "opens up a whole range of possibilities, including: access to study support and discussion groups for teachers and pupils who, for reasons of distance, cannot otherwise link into training or after school hours activities; availability of school ICT facilities for use by the community; and opportunities for fully interactive distance learning, which the roll out of broadband technologies to rural schools will bring".¹⁹ The latest Government target is that "every primary and secondary school in England will have broadband Internet access by 2006".²⁰ The Government has allocated £300 million over the next three years to provide all schools with broadband capability and a sparsity factor is included in the resource allocation

¹⁸ Q 117

¹⁹ Cm 4909, para. 3.4.3

²⁰ Ev 61

formula to take account of the higher costs of providing broadband connections to rural schools.²¹

26. Some LEAs who provided evidence to our inquiry argued that the additional costs of providing broadband in rural areas were not being met by central government as the sparsity adjustment did not reflect the higher costs.²² The funding regime also failed to recognise related costs such as support services which are particularly difficult in small, rural primary schools. However, most felt that, though rural schools would be the last to be connected, the Government's target of connecting all schools to broadband by 2006 would be met.

27. Monitoring progress in rural areas towards the Government's target is not straightforward. The Countryside Agency said that by August 2002, 23% of all schools had a broadband connection with a forecast of 40% by 2003. The Agency also noted that the position in rural schools was not clear "since the DfES do not currently provide an urban/rural breakdown".²³ The DfES' annual survey of ICT in schools has not contained separate figures for rural schools since 1998. The DfES told us that information on the urban/rural split was not available because LEAs are not required to collect it. It relies on "anecdotal evidence" from the Regional Broadband Consortia.²⁴

28. We welcome the Government's commitment to ensuring all schools have a broadband connection by 2006. We also welcome the fact that many witnesses believe that this target will be met. We recommend that the DfES publish regular updates showing progress towards the target. It should ensure that separate figures for urban and rural areas are collected and published. Neither the DfES nor Defra appear to have carried out any work to assess the additional costs of providing a broadband connection to schools in sparsely populated rural areas compared to urban areas. Similarly, we were told that rural schools also have particular problems procuring suitable on-going support for their IT systems. **We recommend that an assessment be made of the additional costs of providing good IT systems in rural schools. Defra should take the lead in assessing whether the additional money for rural schools made available through the sparsity factor adequately reflects these additional costs, and should publish its findings.**

29. The Education Minister told us that the Government considers that a fixed-line broadband connection offers the best possibilities for schools. This is likely to mean that rural schools will be the last to be connected. It may be that a fixed-line connection is the only viable option. This is an issue on which we intend to comment in more detail in our forthcoming report on broadband in rural areas. **We recommend that the DfES consider the extent to which satellite broadband technology can increase the rate at which rural schools are being provided with a broadband connection. We also recommend that the Government assess how broadband connections to rural schools might be exploited by the rural community more generally.**

²¹ *Ibid*

²² see, for example, Ev 105, para. 12

²³ Ev 121, para.4.2

²⁴ Ev 85

30. In response to a question about Defra's involvement in developing the use of broadband in rural schools, and from there by the local community, the Rural Affairs Minister told us that Defra had seconded one member of staff to the DTI's broadband taskforce and one member of staff to a regional development agency.²⁵ Broadband access in schools is a critical issue for rural areas both in terms of the importance to the education provision for children in these areas and the opportunities it offer to help make rural schools the hub of the local community. We do not think that seconding two members of staff is an adequate response to this issue from a Government Department which is supposed to represent the interests of rural areas. **Defra should be taking a lead role in monitoring the implementation of broadband in rural schools and the opportunities this offers to rural communities. Again we are disappointed that its role appears to be largely tangential.**

Protecting and enhancing schools in rural areas

Small schools

31. Many rural schools are also small schools. The Small Schools Fund is allocated to LEAs according to the number of primary and special schools with less than 200 pupils or less and secondary schools with 600 pupils or less. In 2003-04 funding is made as part of the new School Support Staff grant and is worth £80 million per year. The funding is intended to support collaborative projects, such as shared administrative staff. Also, LEAs can retain a small percentage of the funding to set up projects, such as 'clustering' of small schools to share resources. The Government told us that the funding encourages the development of innovative approaches to raise standards.²⁶

32. The National Association for Small Schools described the grant as "very useful".²⁷ Individual LEAs also provided examples of how they had used the grant to develop local projects. **We urge the Government to continue to provide grants to LEAs which support collaborative projects between small schools. The potential benefits of clustering should be explored as widely as possible across the age and ability range. The Government should support clustering and publicise examples of good practice from LEAs.**

33. There are concerns that some small schools cannot effectively deliver the National Curriculum or a sufficiently wide range of extra-curricular activities. The National Association for Small Schools told us that small schools receive good OFSTED reports and deliver "the best SATs results year after year".²⁸ Other witnesses told us that small schools were fully represented among the schools identified by OFSTED "as schools having serious weaknesses or schools requiring special measures".²⁹ **We do not believe there is any substantiated evidence that small rural schools necessarily offer either a better or worse standard of education than larger urban ones. Generalisations about the relative performance of small and large schools should therefore be avoided.**

²⁵ Q 205

²⁶ Ev 60

²⁷ Ev 17, para 3

²⁸ Q 70

²⁹ Ev 95, para 6.1

Presumption against closure

34. The Government recognised the importance of the village school in the Rural White Paper. In an attempt to reverse the number of school closures, in 1998, the Government introduced a policy of a presumption against closure for rural schools. This policy is now given effect in the guidance issued to School Organisation Committees (SOCs) which are the statutory bodies with responsibility for decisions about school closures. The policy does not preclude the closure of a small rural school; it does, however, require the SOC to take into account a number of factors before sanctioning a closure, such as the overall effect of closure on the local community.

35. The policy of a presumption against closure appears to have been effective in slowing the number of closures of rural schools. The Minister told us that the number of closures had fallen from around 30 per year in the years prior to 1998 to an average of four per year in recent years.³⁰ **We welcome the Government’s policy of a presumption against closure of rural schools and the associated fall in the number of rural schools which have closed.** The National Association for Small Schools told us that while they welcomed the Government’s action on closures, they remain concerned. In particular, they suggested that although the presumption against closure policy was an effective one, another government policy militated against it. They argued that the pressure put on local authorities, through the best value framework, to reduce surplus places can increase the pressure on some LEAs to close small schools.³¹

36. A number of LEAs who submitted evidence to our inquiry agreed that the pressure to reduce surplus places was a problem in the context of the presumption against school closure policy. Some also suggested that the policy needed to be supported financially because of the additional costs of maintaining small schools. Cheshire LEA summarised the issues: “Local authorities need to be reassured that in terms of funding flows and inspection frameworks the presumption against closure of small rural primary schools is taken fully into account and will not disadvantage those local authorities with significant numbers of such schools. Maintaining surplus places may bring social benefits but is often a direct cost to the local authority concerned. In order to function at all many small schools require a subsidy within the local funding formula. The new funding arrangements for local government provide, at best, a tenuous link between the presumption against closure policy and the funding needed to support it.”³²

37. We are concerned about the pressures on LEAs to rationalise school places and believe that this can act against the presumption against closure policy. **Defra should take the lead in ensuring that there is consistency in government policies related to rural schools. We recommend that Defra work with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister to revise the best value framework so that LEAs do not face pressure to reduce surplus places by closing small, rural schools that are viable.**

³⁰ Q 188

³¹ Ev 19, para. B1

³² Ev 102, para. 2

38. There appears to be some evidence that, in future, falling rolls in some areas may lead to an increase in the number of closures.³³ We are therefore surprised that there appears to be little work being carried out, other than at a local level, to assess the extent to which population trends in rural areas are likely to affect school rolls. Defra states that it recognises the importance of village schools to the local community. Yet we found no evidence that Defra is monitoring the number of closures in rural areas or the effect that closures may have on the local rural community.

39. We agree that decisions about whether small rural schools remain viable should be based primarily on educational considerations and policy should be led by DfES. Nevertheless, Defra should play a role in dealing with the effects of closure on rural communities. We recommend that Defra work closely with LEAs to monitor school rolls in rural areas and publish a report identifying those areas most at risk. Defra should work with the relevant LEAs and the DfES over decisions about school closures, provide assistance, where appropriate, to maintain village schools, and work with local authorities to support communities where schools are closed.

Extended Schools Initiative

40. An important factor in the viability of small, rural schools is the extent to which they act as a community resource. In the Rural White Paper, the Government describes how a rural school can act as the hub of the local community providing services such as sports facilities, after-school clubs, neighbourhood learning centres, libraries, play schools and nurseries, and lunch clubs for pensioners.³⁴ Provisions in the Education Act 2002 were introduced to make it easier for school governing bodies to provide additional facilities. On 13 March 2003, the DfES announced its extended schools initiative to create 240 extended schools by 2006.³⁵ Funding of £52.2 million over three years will initially be targeted at the most disadvantaged areas and then rolled out progressively to all areas.

41. We welcome the extended schools initiative and support the Government's vision of the rural school as the hub of the local community. We are also reassured by the fact that of the 25 Pathfinder projects, six are based in rural areas: Cambridgeshire, Cornwall, Durham, Lincolnshire, Norfolk and Northumberland. We remain concerned, however, that the use of the deprivation index to identify the most disadvantaged areas for future funding may limit the extent to which the initiative reaches rural areas. The deprivation index often fails to identify small pockets of deprivation in rural areas. The extended schools initiative is particularly important for rural areas where there is less chance that other providers will be offering the services that an extended school will be able to offer. We urge the Government to consider the needs of rural areas carefully as it prepares the extended schools policy and to ensure that rurality is a positive criterion for qualifying for available funds.

³³ The Countryside Agency, *Trends in rural services and social housing 2001-02*, December 2002

³⁴ Cm 4909, para. 3.4.4

³⁵ DfES press release, *Schools to provide a full range of community services by 2006*, 13 March 2003

Further education and training

42. While we welcome the Government's work to protect local village schools and enhance their role, we believe that its statements on rural education concentrate too much on this issue. When considering rural education the Government should look at the role of other important education providers such as further education colleges which face particular problems related to their rurality. For example, we were told that further education colleges in rural areas often have to operate a shortened day to allow students to get to and from college on public transport. The colleges are subsequently put under pressure from the Learning and Skills Council for failing to use their facilities effectively.

43. Colleges have the potential to be centres of the community in much the same way as village schools. They have facilities which may not be in use for certain parts of the day. They are also likely to have developed IT systems and have contacts with local businesses. **We recommend that the Government fund a number of projects in rural areas which seek to enhance the role of further education colleges within the local community. The Government should learn the lessons of such projects and consider broadening the scope of its extended schools initiative to facilitate an enhanced community role for further education colleges in rural areas.**

44. The issues facing further education providers should be of particular importance to Defra given that the Department has a specific target in relation to participation in post-compulsory education and training. We were disappointed to be told that Defra has not "done a great deal to date" towards meeting its target to increase the proportion of post-compulsory students in rural areas taking up education and training.³⁶ It appears that co-ordination between Defra and the Learning and Skills Council has largely been at a national level and has concentrated on understanding and developing better reporting mechanisms related to the Defra PSA targets and associated delivery plan.

45. Defra told us that its PSA target for post-16 education and training in rural areas is "a further development that will benefit rural areas".³⁷ However, targets mean little without concerted policy action on the part of the Department to meet them and it is far from clear what action, if any, Defra has taken to meet its target. The Association of Colleges told us that Defra could make an important contribution by facilitating joined-up thinking at a regional and sub-regional level which is currently lacking.³⁸ We agree. **We recommend that Defra establish mechanisms by which local Learning and Skills Councils, LEAs and providers co-ordinate their work to ensure that the educational needs of rural communities and the rural economy are being met. Particular attention should be paid to enhancing co-operation between school sixth forms and further education colleges so that students in rural areas can be provided with a wide range of educational opportunities.**

46. **We believe it is indefensible that there are no published figures on take-up and retention of students on courses of further education and training, broken down by rural and urban areas. This is despite the fact that Defra's Service Delivery Agreement**

³⁶ Q 103

³⁷ Ev 60

³⁸ Q 103

contains a target to “increase the proportion of 16 and 17 year olds living in rural areas taking up further education and training through the programmes of Learning and Skills Councils”. Defra should publish the current position, indicate what it intends to do to improve participation and retention rates in rural areas, and state by what date it expects to see a demonstrable improvement.

47. From April 2001, the Learning and Skills Council took over responsibility for further education from the Further Education Funding Council and for work-based training from the Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs). Colleges are funded by the Learning and Skills Council under a complex funding methodology which aims to recognise the differential costs of various types of learning; the higher costs of some areas of the country, such as London and the south-east; and the higher costs of engaging and supporting students from disadvantaged backgrounds. There is no recognition of population sparsity within the funding formula. The Association of Colleges told us that sparse populations in rural areas often result in lower student numbers and higher unit costs for colleges.³⁹

48. The Learning and Skills Council told us that in 2002, the National Rates Advisory Group (NRAG) commissioned research into area costs and sparsity.⁴⁰ The consultants found no correlation between sparsity and financial health of providers, or between sparsity and quality measures. However they did consider their work was not conclusive due to the lack of a universal definition of rurality or sparsity and the resultant lack of data. The Rural Issues Task Group of the Learning and Skills Council is taking forward the NRAG research. **We recommend that the Learning and Skills Council and Defra work together to assess the extent of any correlation between sparsity and the costs of providing further education and training. Defra should ensure that there is a clear definition of rurality for this purpose, based on the work currently being carried out by the Countryside Agency, and, if necessary, collect sufficient data to complete the analysis.**

Rural proofing and joined-up government

49. The Rural White Paper placed a great emphasis on the importance of different parts of Government working together at a national, regional and local level. It argued that Government Departments should develop policy in such a way that the particular concerns of rural areas are taken into account from the beginning of the policy-making process. This process has become known as ‘rural proofing’. The Countryside Agency has lead responsibility for providing guidance on, and monitoring, rural proofing. It states that, in order to successfully rural proof their work, government policy-makers should:

- consider whether their policy is likely to have a different impact in rural areas, because of particular rural circumstances or needs;
- make a proper assessment of those impacts, if they are likely to be significant;

³⁹ Ev 31, para. 16

⁴⁰ Ev 126

- adjust the policy, where appropriate, with solutions to meet rural needs and circumstances.⁴¹

50. Rural proofing is primarily the responsibility of the department with lead responsibility for a particular policy. In its memorandum, DfES states that it “has fully embedded rural proofing into its policy development procedures and rural proofing is an integral part of their Business Planning process”.⁴² We were told that there is guidance on rural proofing on the Department’s internal website and that the guidance is supported by the Countryside Agency’s checklist. Indeed, the Countryside Agency’s first annual report on rural proofing highlighted good practice within the DfES.⁴³

51. In our November 2002 report on the role of Defra we noted our support for rural proofing but expressed concern that, without greater impetus, departments would “pay little more than lip service to the process”.⁴⁴ Rural proofing is an undeveloped concept and its effectiveness as a tool for supporting policy-making is difficult to assess. Nevertheless we were encouraged to be told by witnesses that they believed there were areas of education policy where particular attention had been paid to the needs of rural areas. For example, councillors from rural areas told us that the Sure Start scheme had been particularly successful in their authorities.⁴⁵

52. The Countryside Agency noted that rural areas had been specifically invited to bid for Sure Start funds and that the DfES had altered the bidding guidance to reflect the different patterns of social exclusion in some rural areas.⁴⁶ The DfES told us that the guidance was adjusted to allow larger geographical catchment areas and some targeting of families based on referral. The new guidance led to the establishment of 15 Sure Start programmes in identifiably rural areas. This remains a small proportion of the 524 planned Sure Start programmes. **We urge the DfES to continue to encourage the establishment of Sure Start programmes in rural areas.**

53. There are policy areas where we believe the DfES could do more to recognise the particular issues facing rural education providers. For example, we were told that special educational needs provision in rural areas would benefit from clustering schools and pooling budgets to ensure that expertise and good practice is spread.⁴⁷ The National Association for Special Educational Needs also told us that in relation to social exclusion, behaviour and non-attendance “there is a dominance of an urban social inclusion agenda”.⁴⁸ **We recommend that the DfES commission research into problems of social exclusion, special educational needs and non-attendance in rural areas.**

54. The Rural White Paper stated that the need for ‘joined-up’ government was “particularly important in rural areas”.⁴⁹ Defra and the Countryside Agency have a role in

⁴¹ <http://www.countryside.gov.uk/ruralproofing>

⁴² Ev 59

⁴³ Countryside Agency, *Rural Proofing: a report to Government*, April 2002, p 11

⁴⁴ Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, Tenth Report of Session 2001-02, *The Role of Defra*, HC 991, para 34

⁴⁵ Q 183

⁴⁶ Countryside Agency, *Rural proofing Annual Report*, 2002, p 13

⁴⁷ Q 57

⁴⁸ Q 54

⁴⁹ Cm 4909, para. 13.1

facilitating joined-up government to ensure the delivery of services to rural areas, for example in bringing together local partners and providing pump-prime funding for projects. We were told of an example of this work in Lincolnshire. The Countryside Agency provided £50,000 to set up a mobile video-linking service which has helped small rural schools to work together more closely.⁵⁰ The individual budgets of the schools were insufficient to set up such a project. **We welcome the work of the Countryside Agency in supporting Lincolnshire's Rural Academy. This is the type of project where we would expect an Executive Agency of a department for rural affairs to be playing a key role. Unfortunately, it is a rare example. We recommend that Defra support the creation of rural academies in other rural areas.**

The role of Defra

55. At the beginning of this report we noted our agreement with the Rural Affairs Minister's comment that it was not the job of his Department to act as a second education department in relation to rural education. However, in this report we wanted to clarify what Defra's role is in relation to education and how it represents the interests of rural areas in that field.

56. The Departments told us about a number of administrative structures which they had put in place to ensure that the needs of rural areas are recognised in the development and the delivery of education policy. For example, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the DfES chairs a Rural Schools Group. At cabinet level, the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs chairs the Cabinet Sub-committee on Rural Renewal. It is currently difficult to assess the effectiveness of these arrangements. **We recommend that the DfES' Rural Schools Group publish an annual report which sets out the issues it considered and the action taken as a result of its work.**

57. Although there is evidence of structures in place at central government level to ensure work is co-ordinated, there appears to be little involvement from Defra at the regional and local level. We were told that part of the role of Defra is "to assist by making available the knowledge and understanding that Defra and its agencies, especially the Countryside Agency have about the needs and opportunities in rural areas".⁵¹ Yet we received evidence from many rural LEAs who indicated that they had had little or no contact with Defra officials. There also appears to be little contact between Defra and local Learning and Skills Councils. It is difficult to see how Defra can contribute "knowledge and understanding" to the DfES when it does not appear to monitor the effect of Government education policies on rural areas. **If Defra has a role in contributing towards the Government's vision of vibrant rural communities, we believe it has to maintain some presence in those areas or at least have mechanisms in place for monitoring what is happening there.**

58. Where Defra or its agencies has intervened directly in rural areas, the outcomes have generally been positive. We note particularly the work of the Countryside Agency on the Lincolnshire Rural Academy. Such examples remain rare. Many of the witnesses told us that they would like to see Defra involved in providing joined-up government or evidence

⁵⁰ Q 144

⁵¹ Ev 58

of lobbying other Government Departments. **We have highlighted three areas in this report where we believe a department for rural affairs should be playing a key role: transport; schools and colleges as community resources; and broadband and ICT. These are all policy areas which cross Government Departments and would benefit from a single entity taking a lead on behalf of rural areas. We found little evidence of Defra playing a significant role on any of these issues.**

59. We remain unclear in what ways Defra acts as a department for rural affairs. We believe this is because of a lack of clarity in the department itself. We also recognise, however, that it is difficult to assess the extent of Defra's influence on other Government Departments or other statutory bodies such as local authorities or local Learning and Skills Councils. **We recommend that a section of Defra's website be devoted to work within its rural affairs remit. It should contain details of the way Defra has represented the interests of rural areas on particular issues to other policy makers within government. It should also include reports on how effectively Government policies have been delivered in rural areas. This would go some way towards improving Defra's accountability in relation to its rural affairs remit. It would also provide an excellent example of open government.**

60. Most of our recommendations to Defra in this Report relate to monitoring and reporting on the effect of education policy in rural areas. We are surprised and disappointed that Defra is not carrying out this work already. It is the least that a department for rural affairs should be doing if it is genuinely to represent the interests of rural areas. We believe this work should only be the start. Defra and its agencies could contribute to innovative solutions to the problems and issues facing rural areas which its monitoring work has highlighted. Only then will it truly be fulfilling its mandate – as reflected in its title - to be a department for rural affairs.

Conclusions and recommendations

Transport

1. We recommend that the internal review of statutory walking distances be extended to a public consultation with a deadline for implementation of a new system. We urge the Government to overhaul radically the current arrangements. A new system should be based on an assessment of safety issues and the real alternatives to walking and not just crudely based on distance from school. Defra and DfES should ensure that the particular needs of rural areas are taken into account. (Paragraph 16)
2. There is clearly scope for innovation in the area of home-to-school transport. Given this, we were disappointed by Defra's relative lack of involvement in finding solutions. We were also surprised that the Countryside Agency's recent report on Transport in Tomorrow's Countryside makes little reference to education transport. We believe that Defra should be involved at a local level with LEAs to bring together resources and implement innovative transport schemes which, where successful, can be replicated in different parts of the country. Defra should identify and fund solutions which would meet the needs of families in rural communities. The aim of these schemes should be to reduce reliance on cars and enable all school pupils to take part in out-of-school activities. (Paragraph 19)
3. Defra should examine the lessons of the Wheels to Work Scheme and fund a similar scheme which would develop innovative transport solutions for post-16 students in isolated rural areas. (Paragraph 22)
4. We welcome the steps that the Government has taken to improve transport provision for the 16-19 age group. We particularly welcome the national extension of the Educational Maintenance Allowance and believe that, when introduced, the allowance will help students in rural areas with the additional costs of travel to school and college. (Paragraph 23)
5. Defra has a key role in monitoring the effect of the various government initiatives and pilot projects to help post-16 students attend school and college. We recommend that Defra publish examples of good practice by LEAs in rural areas, and also identify those LEAs where students are prevented from attending school and college because of poor transport provision. (Paragraph 23)

Information and Communications Technology

6. We welcome the Government's commitment to ensuring all schools have a broadband connection by 2006. We also welcome the fact that many witnesses believe that this target will be met. We recommend that the DfES publish regular updates showing progress towards the target. It should ensure that separate figures for urban and rural areas are collected and published. (Paragraph 28)

7. We recommend that an assessment be made of the additional costs of providing good IT systems in rural schools. Defra should take the lead in assessing whether the additional money for rural schools made available through the sparsity factor adequately reflects these additional costs, and should publish its findings. (Paragraph 28)
8. We recommend that the DfES consider the extent to which satellite broadband technology can increase the rate at which rural schools are being provided with a broadband connection. We also recommend that the Government assess how broadband connections to rural schools might be exploited by the rural community more generally. (Paragraph 29)
9. Defra should be taking a lead role in monitoring the implementation of broadband in rural schools and the opportunities this offers to rural communities. Again we are disappointed that its role appears to be largely tangential. (Paragraph 30)

Supporting and enhancing schools

10. We urge the Government to continue to provide grants to LEAs which support collaborative projects between small schools. The potential benefits of clustering should be explored as widely as possible across the age and ability range. The Government should support clustering and publicise examples of good practice from LEAs. (Paragraph 32)
11. We do not believe there is any substantiated evidence that small rural schools necessarily offer either a better or worse standard of education than larger urban ones. Generalisations about the relative performance of small and large schools should therefore be avoided. (Paragraph 33)
12. We welcome the Government's policy of a presumption against closure of rural schools and the associated fall in the number of rural schools which have closed. (Paragraph 35)
13. Defra should take the lead in ensuring that there is consistency in government policies related to rural schools. We recommend that Defra work with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister to revise the best value framework so that LEAs do not face pressure to reduce surplus places by closing small, rural schools that are viable. (Paragraph 37)
14. We agree that decisions about whether small rural schools remain viable should be based primarily on educational considerations and policy should be led by DfES. Nevertheless, Defra should play a role in dealing with the effects of closure on rural communities. We recommend that Defra work closely with LEAs to monitor school rolls in rural areas and publish a report identifying those areas most at risk. Defra should work with the relevant LEAs and the DfES over decisions about school closures, provide assistance, where appropriate, to maintain village schools, and work with local authorities to support communities where schools are closed. (Paragraph 39)

15. We welcome the extended schools initiative and support the Government's vision of the rural school as the hub of the local community. We are also reassured by the fact that of the 25 Pathfinder projects, six are based in rural areas: Cambridgeshire, Cornwall, Durham, Lincolnshire, Norfolk and Northumberland. We remain concerned, however, that the use of the deprivation index to identify the most disadvantaged areas for future funding may limit the extent to which the initiative reaches rural areas. (Paragraph 41)
16. We urge the Government to consider the needs of rural areas carefully as it prepares the extended schools policy and to ensure that rurality is a positive criterion for qualifying for available funds. (Paragraph 41)

Further education

17. We recommend that the Government fund a number of projects in rural areas which seek to enhance the role of further education colleges within the local community. The Government should learn the lessons of such projects and consider broadening the scope of its extended schools initiative to facilitate an enhanced community role for further education colleges in rural areas. (Paragraph 43)
18. We recommend that Defra establish mechanisms by which local Learning and Skills Councils, LEAs and providers co-ordinate their work to ensure that the educational needs of rural communities and the rural economy are being met. Particular attention should be paid to enhancing co-operation between school sixth forms and further education colleges so that students in rural areas can be provided with a wide range of educational **opportunities**. (Paragraph 45)
19. We believe it is indefensible that there are no published figures on take-up and retention of students on courses of further education and training, broken down by rural and urban areas. This is despite the fact that Defra's Service Delivery Agreement contains a target to "increase the proportion of 16 and 17 year olds living in rural areas taking up further education and training through the programmes of Learning and Skills Councils". Defra should publish the current position, indicate what it intends to do to improve participation and retention rates in rural areas, and state by what date it expects to see a demonstrable improvement. (Paragraph 46)
20. We recommend that the Learning and Skills Council and Defra work together to assess the extent of any correlation between sparsity and the costs of providing further education and training. Defra should ensure that there is a clear definition of rurality for this purpose, based on the work currently being carried out by the Countryside Agency, and, if necessary, collect sufficient data to complete the analysis. (Paragraph 48)

Joined-up government

21. We urge the DfES to continue to encourage the establishment of Sure Start programmes in rural areas. (Paragraph 52)

22. We recommend that the DfES commission research into problems of social exclusion, special educational needs and non-attendance in rural areas. (Paragraph 53)
23. We welcome the work of the Countryside Agency in supporting Lincolnshire's Rural Academy. This is the type of project where we would expect an Executive Agency of a department for rural affairs to be playing a key role. Unfortunately, it is a rare example. We recommend that Defra support the creation of rural academies in other rural areas. (Paragraph 54)
24. We recommend that the DfES' Rural Schools Group publish an annual report which sets out the issues it considered and the action taken as a result of its work. (Paragraph 56)

Role of Defra

25. If Defra has a role in contributing towards the Government's vision of vibrant rural communities, we believe it has to maintain some presence in those areas or at least have mechanisms in place for monitoring what is happening there. (Paragraph 57)
26. We have highlighted three areas in this report where we believe a department for rural affairs should be playing a key role: transport; schools and colleges as community resources; and broadband and ICT. These are all policy areas which cross Government Departments and would benefit from a single entity taking a lead on behalf of rural areas. We found little evidence of Defra playing a significant role on any of these issues. (Paragraph 58)
27. We recommend that a section of Defra's website be devoted to work within its rural affairs remit. It should contain details of the way Defra has represented the interests of rural areas on particular issues to other policy makers within government. It should also include reports on how effectively Government policies have been delivered in rural areas. This would go some way towards improving Defra's accountability in relation to its rural affairs remit. It would also provide an excellent example of open government. (Paragraph 59)
28. Most of our recommendations to Defra in this Report relate to monitoring and reporting on the effect of education policy in rural areas. We are surprised and disappointed that Defra is not carrying out this work already. It is the least that a department for rural affairs should be doing if it is genuinely to represent the interests of rural areas. We believe this work should only be the start. Defra and its agencies could contribute to innovative solutions to the problems and issues facing rural areas which its monitoring work has highlighted. Only then will it truly be fulfilling its mandate – as reflected in its title - to be a department for rural affairs. (Paragraph 60)

Formal minutes

Wednesday 21 May 2003

Members present:

Mr David Curry, in the Chair

Mr David Borrow	Mr David Lepper
Mr Colin Breed	Mr Austin Mitchell
David Burnside	Mrs Gillian Shephard
Mr Patrick Hall	Alan Simpson
Mr Michael Jack	David Taylor
Mr Mark Lazarowicz	Paddy Tipping

The Committee deliberated.

Draft Report [Delivery of Education in Rural Areas], proposed by Mrs Organ, brought up and read.

Ordered, that the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 60 read and agreed to.

Summary read and agreed to.

Resolved, that the Report be the Ninth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chairman do make the Report to the House.

Several Papers were ordered to be appended to the Minutes of Evidence.

Ordered, That the Appendices to the Minutes of Evidence taken before the Committee be reported to the House.-(The Chairman).

The Committee further deliberated.

[The Committee adjourned.]

Witnesses

Tuesday 25 February 2003

Page

Neil Davies, Judith Bennett and Sarah Lyster, **National Governors' Council**

Ev 2

Peter Gray, **National Association for Special Educational Needs**

Ev 11

Mervyn Benford, Bill Goodhand and Brenda Edwards, **National Association for Small Schools**

Ev 20

Tuesday 1 April 2003

Dr Roger Bennett, David Lawrence and Judith Norrington, **Association of Colleges and the National Association of Principal Agricultural Education Officers (NAPAEO)**

Ev 29

Cheryle Berry, Cllr Saxon Spence and Cllr Don Rule, **Local Government Association**

Ev 48

Tuesday 8 April 2003

Rt Hon Alun Michael MP, **Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs** and Stephen Twigg MP, **Department for Education and Skills**

Ev 71

List of written evidence

National Governors' Council	Ev 1, 8
National Association for Special Educational Needs	Ev 10
National Association for Small Schools	Ev 17
Association of Colleges and the National Association of Principal Agricultural Education Officers (NAPAEO)	Ev 33, 41
Local Government Association	Ev 43
Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Department for Education and Skills	Ev 58, 84
Dorset Local Education Authority	Ev 89
Bath and North East Somerset Local Education Authority	Ev 91
Devon Country Council	Ev 92
Staffordshire Local Education Authority	Ev 96
Oxfordshire County Council	Ev 100
Cornwall Local Education Authority	Ev 100
Cheshire County Council	Ev 102
Leicestershire County Council	Ev 103
Norfolk County Council	Ev 107
Buckinghamshire County Council	Ev 110
Northumberland County Council	Ev 113
Medway Council	Ev 116
Somerset Local Education Authority	Ev 116
Countryside Agency	Ev 119
National Union of Teachers	Ev 122
Learning and Skills Council	Ev 125

Reports from the Committee since 2001

The following reports have been produced:

Session 2002–03

Eighth Report	The Future of Waste Management	HC 385
Seventh Report	Badgers and Bovine TB	HC 432
Sixth Report	Rural Payments Agency	HC 382
Fifth Report	The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000	HC 394
Fourth Report	Water Framework Directive	HC 130
Third Report	The Mid-term Review of the Common Agricultural Policy	HC 151
Second Report	Annual Report of the Committee 2002	HC 269
First Report	Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy	HC 110

Session 2001–02

Tenth Report	The Role of Defra (<i>Reply, HC 340</i>)	HC 991
Ninth Report	The Future of UK Agriculture in a Changing World (<i>Reply, HC 384</i>)	HC 550
Eighth Report	Hazardous Waste (<i>Reply, HC 1225</i>)	HC 919
Seventh Report	Illegal Meat Imports (<i>Reply, HC 1224</i>)	HC 968
Sixth Report	Departmental Annual Report 2002 (<i>Reply, HC 1223</i>)	HC 969
Fifth Report	Genetically Modified Organisms (<i>Reply, HC 1222</i>)	HC 767
Fourth Report	Disposal of Refrigerators (<i>Reply, HC 1226</i>)	HC 673
Third Report	Radioactive Waste: The Government's Consultation Process (<i>Reply, HC 1221</i>)	HC 407
Second Report	The Countryside Agency (<i>Reply, HC 829</i>)	HC 386
First Report	The Impact of Food and Mouth Disease (<i>Reply, HC 856</i>)	HC 323