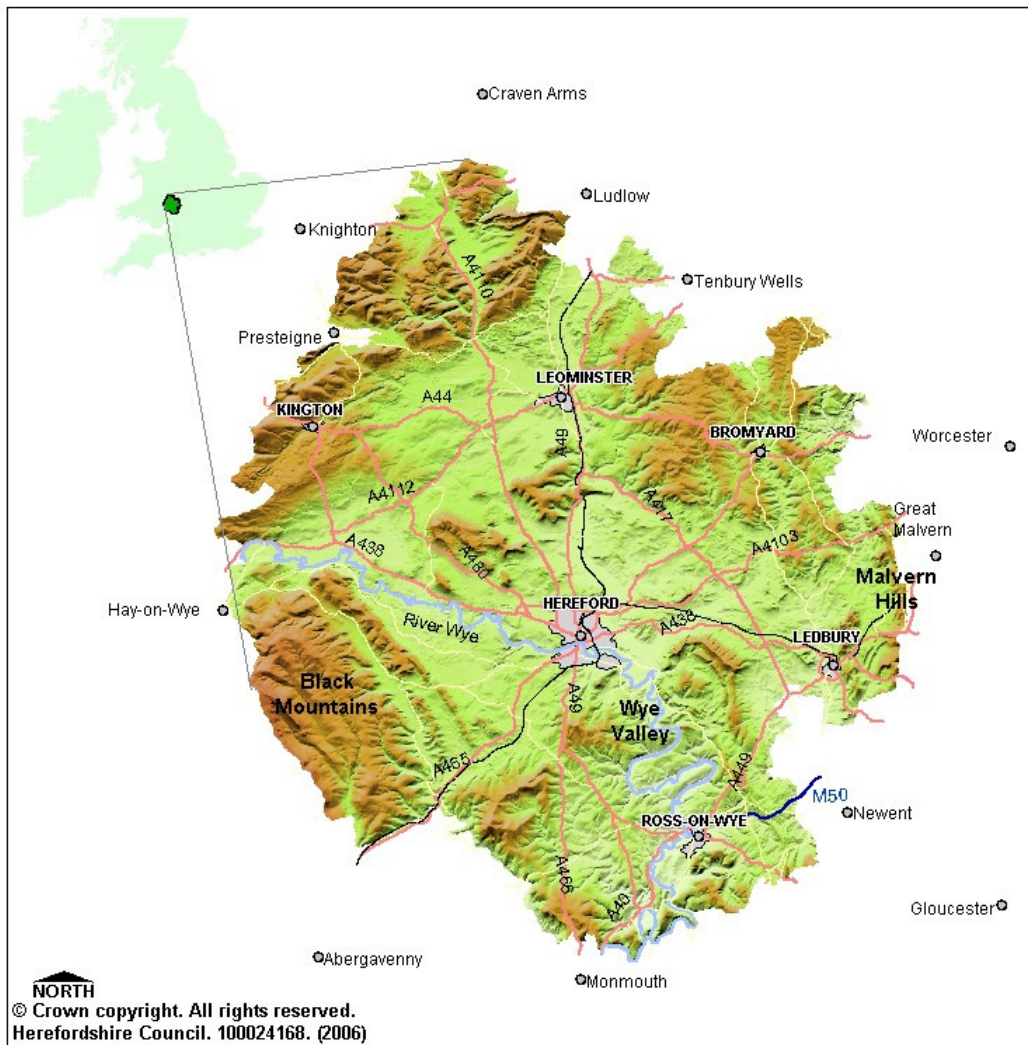


HEREFORDSHIRE STORY OF PLACE



LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT 2008 - 2011

The Story of Place

	Page
The Vision	2
Herefordshire and its Distinctive Environment	2
Demography of the County	3
Pockets of deprivation	5
Economic Development	5
Education and Skills	7
Worklessness	8
Travel, Communications and Access to Services	8
Stronger Communities	9
Third (voluntary, community and non-profit) Sector	9
Culture, sport and leisure	10
Healthy Communities	11
Housing and Affordability	12
Safer Communities	13
Crime Levels	13
Road Safety	14
Environmental Issues	14
Road Maintenance	14
Waste and Recycling	14
Response to flooding, disease and other potentially damaging issues	14
Links to Local and Regional Strategies	15
Our Priorities	18

THE STORY OF PLACE

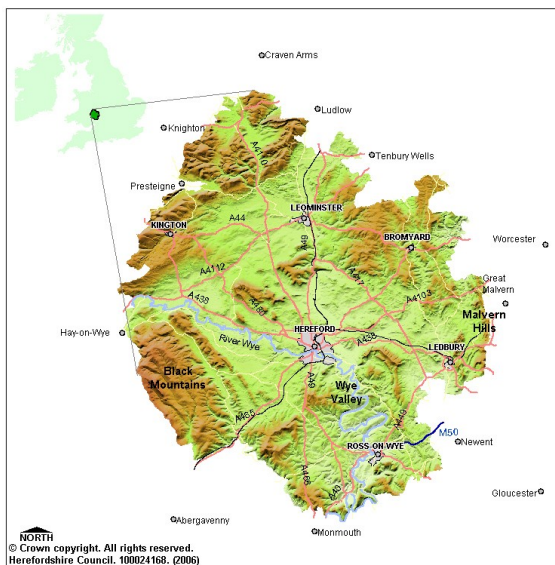
HEREFORDSHIRE

The Vision

Herefordshire will be a place where people, organisations and businesses, working together within an outstanding natural environment, will bring about sustainable prosperity and well-being for all (Herefordshire Sustainable Community Strategy)

Herefordshire has a great deal to offer those who live here, work or visit, including a rich heritage, a beautiful natural environment and a wide range of cultural and leisure opportunities. Herefordshire is ambitious for its employment sector, and the education of young people is of a high standard. It is a safe place to live and work, with low levels of crime. There are, however, challenges for the county that are reflected in the chosen priorities. The rural nature of the area often creates a barrier to providing equal services to all, and businesses find the infrastructure in the county a challenge. Its widely dispersed and often sparsely populated communities need support if they are to have a sustainable and successful future. Further, the ageing population will mean an increase in the demand for social care support. All these challenges have to be addressed with a substantially lower level of Government funding than the average for unitary authorities; Herefordshire Council receives 19% less total grant per head of population than the average of the 47 similar authorities in 08/09. It is ranked 38 out of 47 for the level of funding per head of population, 1 being the highest).

This document presents a picture of Herefordshire, describing the main trends and highlighting the key issues and challenges that need to be addressed in order to achieve the vision. It goes on to set the priorities to which the Council and its partners are committed to working together to address the challenges.



Herefordshire and its Distinctive Environment

Herefordshire is a predominantly rural county of 842 square miles¹, situated in the south-west corner of the West Midlands region bordering Wales. It is entirely land-locked and has borders with Shropshire, Worcestershire, Gloucestershire and the Welsh counties of Monmouthshire and Powys. The city of Hereford is the major location

¹ 218,283 hectares; 2,183 square km

for employment, administration, health, education facilities and shopping. The five market towns of Leominster, Ross-on-Wye, Ledbury, Bromyard and Kington are the other principal centres.

Herefordshire has beautiful unspoilt countryside, a distinctive heritage and remote valleys and rivers. The county is bordered in the east by the Malvern Hills, and in the south-west by the Black Mountains. The Malvern Hills, and the Wye Valley in the south of the county fall within designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Parts of the rivers Wye and Lugg are Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). In 2004, 85% of Herefordshire's rivers were judged to be very good/good for biological quality and 83% for chemical quality; both compare favourably with rivers in other English Authorities².

At 0.8 persons per hectare, Herefordshire has the 4th lowest population density in England (relative to the other 149 top tier authorities³). More significantly, Herefordshire has a higher proportion of its population living in very sparsely populated areas (0.5 or fewer residents per hectare) than any other English county level authority⁴. Just below one-third of the population lives in Hereford City (54,800 people), about a fifth in the market towns and almost half in the rural areas. The population living in the market towns is as follows: Leominster (11,100), Ross-on-Wye (10,100), Ledbury (9,700), Bromyard (4,500) and Kington (3,200)⁵. Using the official definition, 55% of the population live in a rural area.⁶

Demography of the County

The current population of Herefordshire is 177,800⁷. It has grown by 1.7% between 2001 and 2006, an increase of 2,900. This is slightly below the growth of the population of England and Wales as a whole (2.6%).

While the overall population has remained relatively static, there have been dramatic changes within age groups. The number of 25-34 year-olds in Herefordshire fell by 18.7% (3,800 people) over the period – almost three times the national decrease. The largest absolute change in the county was an increase of 4,000 people in the 55-64 year-old age group. The increase in the number of people over 65 has been more than double the equivalent national increase. The biggest proportionate change was a 20% increase in the number of people aged 85 and over.

The net effect of these changes has been an increase of 1,200 people in the working age population⁸ of Herefordshire between 2001 and 2006. At 1.2%, this growth is lower than the national increase (3.7%).

The county's population has a considerably older age profile than that of England and Wales; 23.9% of the population is over retirement age, while 2.7% are aged 85 and over, (compared with 18.8% and 2.1% respectively nationally). There are fewer persons of working age (58.1%

² Environment Agency

³ Top tier authorities are those authorities that are responsible for services that must be provided at the county council level, i.e. county councils, unitary authorities, metropolitan districts or city councils and London boroughs.

⁴ 2001 Census, Office for National Statistics (ONS)

⁵ Mid-2005 Population Estimates for Lower Super Output Areas, Wards & Market Towns in Herefordshire, ONS, Crown copyright 2007

⁶ Rural/Urban Area Classification (2004), Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) & Mid-2005 Population Estimates for Lower Super Output Areas, Wards & Market Towns in Herefordshire, ONS, Crown copyright 2007

⁷ 2006 mid-year estimate, Office for National Statistics (ONS)

⁸ 16 to 59 for females; 64 for males.

compared with 62.2%) and under 25 (27.4% compared with 30.9%). Students living away from home are excluded from the county's population, and the county's proportion of under 16s is only slightly lower than the national figure (18.0% compared with 19.0%).

The total population of Herefordshire in 2011 is forecast to be 182,400. This is a 2.6% increase from 2006, and equates to an average growth of 0.5% per annum; by 2026 the population is forecast to be 193,600. The average annual rate of growth over the forecast twenty years is 0.4%, which is lower than over the last fifteen years (0.7% per annum between 1991 and 2006) – but very slightly higher than in the last five years (0.3% between 2001 and 2006).

The number of under 16s is forecast to continue to fall until 2016, although at a slightly lower rate (0.9% p.a.) than in recent years (1.3% p.a. between 2001 and 2006). Numbers are then expected to stabilise at around 29,000 (9.4% below 2006 levels).

The numbers aged 16 to 64 will continue to increase very slightly until 2011 (a 1.0% growth from 2006, compared to 2.6% between 2001 and 2006), but will then begin to fall steadily as the post-war 'baby-boomers' move into retirement age and are replaced by smaller cohorts of younger adults. There are forecast to be 103,600 people in this age-group by 2026 (5.4% fewer than in 2006)

The number of people aged 65 and over is forecast to continue to increase, but more rapidly than in recent years (an average of 3.4% p.a. between 2006 and 2026 compared to 1.4% p.a. since 2001). By 2026 the number of Herefordshire residents of this age is forecast to be 61,000 (68.0% higher than in 2006). In particular, the number of people aged 85 and over is expected to more than double, from 4,800 in 2006 to 10,200 in 2026. People in this age group are, nationally and locally, the biggest users of health and social care and Herefordshire faces a real challenge to meet their needs.

One of the main challenges faced in supporting those growing older in Hereford is how to help people to live safely and independently in their own homes. Many older and disabled people are supported by informal carers (normally family), who often require support in their own right if they are to continue to undertake this very valuable work. The need for such support has been highlighted by recent inspections and is a key priority within the Local Area Agreement. (Key Improvement Areas as identified by CSCI were Outcome 2 - To ensure plans to improve services and opportunities for adults with disabilities are progressed to enable adults with complex and specialist needs to have the same opportunities of independence and choice and Outcome 4 – Continue with the development of the range of alternative services to provide choices and reduce the dependency on traditional residential services).

Provision of services to all members of the community is a particular challenge in sparsely populated rural areas and a robust multi-agency approach is needed if the difficulties are to be overcome. The developing public service arrangements, which bring together key areas of planning, commissioning and delivery under one Chief Executive for Herefordshire Council and the Primary Care Trust, present a unique opportunity for partnership working that will benefit the community.

Currently Herefordshire performs poorly in terms of people who feel they can influence decisions, with only 30% agreeing they could influence decisions affecting their local area (33% their local community).⁹

⁹ Herefordshire Satisfaction Survey 2007

Herefordshire has low proportions of ethnic minorities; experimental statistics¹⁰ suggest that, in 2005, only 3.7% of the county's resident population was from ethnic minorities (6,600 people). This is very low compared to nationally (15.3%), but has grown rapidly since 2001, when it was just 1.4% of the total county population.

There are no official statistics of numbers in traveller communities in Herefordshire; however, estimates from a variety of sources range from 670 to around 1,000 individuals¹¹.

Herefordshire has substantial numbers of short-term international migrants; approximately 2,000 seasonal workers from overseas are employed (annually) on farms through the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme but local data suggests that this only represents about a third of the total. It also appears that the number of short-term migrants coming into the county has increased substantially since Accession in May 2004.

Pockets of deprivation

The most deprived areas in Herefordshire are within Hereford (South Wye and Central) and Leominster. The Golden Post - Newton Farm area in South Wye was ranked the 2,570th most deprived area nationally out of 32,482 areas; Leominster Ridgemoor was ranked 4,605th. Conversely, the least deprived areas are concentrated to the east of the county, in some of the fringes of Hereford and directly north and west of the city, and around Ross-on-Wye¹².

The Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index highlighted that 62% of children living in the Ridgemoor area of Leominster are in income-deprived households (ranked 982nd most deprived nationally out of 32,482 areas, with rank 1 being most deprived).

Herefordshire has relatively low claim rates for Income Support (IS) (4% compared to 6% for England) and Pension Credit (17% compared to 21% for England)¹³. A large proportion of those claiming IS in Herefordshire are also claiming Incapacity Benefit; (59% of IS claimants were claiming Incapacity Benefit as well in Feb 2007, compared with 33% who were lone parents)¹⁴.

Where appropriate, activity will be focussed on these areas in order to reduce inequalities by improving the life-chances of disadvantaged groups. This is a key aim of the Local Area Agreement and one of the criteria that has been used to identify the priorities.

Economic Development

Between 2003 and 2004, the number of people employed in the county increased by 2%. The sectors experiencing the largest increases were education and transport, storage and communication; those with the largest decreases were hotels and restaurants, public administration and defence.¹⁵

¹⁰ Population Estimates by Ethnic Group for 2001-2003, Office for National Statistics (ONS)

¹¹ University of Chichester report 2004 and Herefordshire Council Survey 2006

¹² According to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (2007), which measures deprivation across 7 domains and ranks all 32,482 Super Output Areas in England; Office for the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM, now DCLG)

¹³ DWP benefit statistics, February 2007 and 2001 Census, ONS - Crown copyright

¹⁴ DWP benefit statistics, February 2007

¹⁵ 2003 & 2004 Annual Business Inquiry

In 2001, the sectors with the greatest number of employees in Herefordshire were wholesale, retail and repair trades (18%), manufacturing (17%) and health & social work (12%); comparable figures for England and Wales were 17%, 15% and 11% respectively. Agriculture accounted for 7% of employment in Herefordshire, compared with 2% nationally.¹⁶

Agriculture continues to be a significant part of the county's economy, with the numbers employed in this sector having increased by 6% between 2001 and 2005 - possibly in part due to a shift towards more labour-intensive farming activity such as small fruit. In contrast, numbers employed in agriculture in the West Midlands region and England have decreased by 4% and 6% respectively. The largest proportion (31%) of Herefordshire's agricultural workforce is self-employed, which is also the case regionally and nationally (34% for both). However, the county has a much higher proportion of casual agricultural workers than the region or England (27% compared to 16% and 13% respectively), and the numbers of these workers have grown much more rapidly in the county over the last 4 years (60% increase, compared to 10% regionally and a 2% decrease nationally).¹⁷

Herefordshire has relatively high levels of self-employment (20% of the economically active¹⁸ population, compared with 11% regionally and 12% nationally) and part-time employment¹⁹ (28% of those employed, compared with 25% regionally and nationally).

Herefordshire has a thriving tourism sector, which is estimated to support 5,610 full time equivalent jobs²⁰, which equates to approximately 7% of those in employment²¹. Of these tourism jobs, 59% are in the hotels and restaurants sector²¹. The value of tourism to the county is £291 million, and though this is significant to the local economy, the Visitor Economy for the West Midlands (2007) shows that the county has the lowest income in the region with potential for significant improvement. The tourism product reflects the distinctiveness of the county, including capitalising on food and drink production, reflective of the agricultural nature of the county. Also, new technologies and creative industries, often in the form of micro-businesses, play a part in diversifying the economy of the county.

The third (voluntary, community and non-profit) sector had an estimated income of £95 million in 2005: £28 million from voluntary activity; £63 million from sale of goods or services; and £4m from investments; with expenditure of £86.3 million. 28% of income is raised from contracts, primarily with local authorities. 90% of estimated expenditure is spent on activities which benefit the public. The sector employs an estimated 2,708 workers, which equates to 3.9% of the workforce.²²

In 2007, average (median) gross weekly earnings for full-time employees working in Herefordshire were £384.40, compared with £430.00 for the West Midlands region and £462.00 for England.²³ Herefordshire's earnings are the 13th lowest out of the 14 West Midlands authorities. Herefordshire's workers tend to do longer hours: 9.3% working 60 or more, compared with 5.8% in the West Midlands²⁴. Research for the County's economic development strategy shows that many

¹⁶ 2001 Census, Office for National Statistics (ONS)

¹⁷ Agricultural Census 2004, Department for the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs

¹⁸ Those people aged 16-74 either in employment or actively seeking employment; 2001 Census, ONS

¹⁹ People aged 16-74 in employment working for 30 hours or less per week, on average, in the 4 weeks before the 2001 Census, Office for National Statistics (ONS)

²⁰ Heart of England Tourist Board, 2001

²¹ Calculated using the estimated numbers in 'tourism' employment from the Heart of England Tourist Board 2001 and the numbers in employment from the 2001 Census, ONS Crown-Copyright

²² Valuing the Voluntary and Community Sector in Herefordshire and Worcestershire, January 2007, Sustain Consultancy and GuideStar UK

²³ 2007 Annual Survey of Hours & Earnings, Office for National Statistics (ONS)

²⁴ 2001 Census, ONS - Crown Copyright

residents with high-level skills are working outside the county because of lack of opportunity in the local area. The objective is to address this through better-paid work and supporting entrepreneurship.

Two longer-term strategic projects that aim to stimulate and regenerate economic growth in Herefordshire are the Edgar Street Grid and Rotherwas Futures. Rotherwas Futures will transform the existing Rotherwas Industrial Estate, creating new jobs and helping Herefordshire's economy to compete in the longer term. The Edgar Street Grid Development will regenerate 100 acres within the city centre, creating hundreds of opportunities for local people through development of leisure facilities, retail outlets and other business developments. Both developments are ambitious and will take time to deliver but when fully implemented will provide a huge economic boost for the whole of Herefordshire.

Education and Skills

Herefordshire has a high proportion of young people achieving 5 or more GCSEs at grades A*-G (93.6% in the June 2007 exams compared with 91% of the top performing English Authorities). This proportion falls to 51.7% of those achieving 5 or more GCSEs at grades A*-C, (compared with the average of 46% across all English Authorities). The percentage of young people leaving care aged 16 or over with at least one GCSE at grade A*-G or equivalent was 77% in the June 2006 exams, maintaining performance above statistical neighbours (59%) and all English Authorities (55%).

Whilst the focus of the Children's Trust in Herefordshire is on maintaining and improving educational achievement for all children and young people at all key stages, the Local Area Agreement places particular emphasis on improving participation in, and achievement for, young people in education, employment and training, through the development of an area-wide programme for 14-19 learning. Particular attention will be paid to those who are at risk of being socially disadvantaged, such as children looked after, those leaving care, teenage mothers, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and young offenders. The proportion of young people aged 16 and above, known to the Youth Offending Service, and who are in education, employment and training is lower than the national target of 90% with current levels (December 2007) at 80.8%. Contributory issues are the types of jobs on offer; a lack of motivation; substance misuse; some young people not being job ready and behaviour issues.

The 2007/2008 outturn for 16-18 year olds not in education, employment and training (NEET) was 5.4%. Whilst this is low and compares favourably with national figures (7.7% on 2006/2007), the general economic situation in the county means will put pressure on its ability to achieve the 2010 target of 4.7%. Issues include an increase in jobs without training; an increase in NEET from those in post-16 education, coupled with an increase in immigration which has impacted on jobs which had traditionally been the preserve of young people. The main pockets of NEETs are in South Wye and Leominster and include families where worklessness is part of the culture in those communities.

Although 19% of the adult population holds qualifications at Level 4 or 5 (compared to 16% regionally and 20% nationally), the overall skills level of the adult population is low, with 17 areas in Herefordshire falling within the 25% most deprived in England in terms of Adult Education, Skills and Training²⁵. At the time of the 2001 Census, 29% of 16-74 year old age group had no qualifications, compared to 34% regionally and 29% nationally. This impacts in a number of ways, not least on the potential for service providers and local businesses within the county to gain and

²⁵ According to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (2007), which measures deprivation across 7 domains and ranks all 32,482 Super Output Areas in England; Office for the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM, now DCLG)

retain the appropriate level of skills needed for them to provide high quality services and to remain competitive within changing markets.

Worklessness

A priority within the Local Area Agreement will be to encourage and support those disadvantaged in the labour market to gain the skills, confidence and experience that they need in order to gain and sustain meaningful employment

Levels of those registered as unemployed continue to be relatively low; 1.5% in January 2008, compared with 3.4% for the region and 2.6% for England.²⁶ There are, however, high levels of worklessness in some areas of the county, in particular, three wards in Hereford City and parts of Leominster. These areas have higher unemployment levels, higher numbers of people who are inactive, higher numbers of lone parents claiming income support, and higher numbers of people claiming income support who are also entitled to incapacity and severe disablement benefits and carers allowance.

In Herefordshire, in February 2007, there were 5,080 people in receipt of Incapacity Benefit and 1,300 lone parents in receipt of Income Support. 4,460 people have been in receipt of Incapacity Benefit and outside the labour market for more than six months.²⁷ Research shows that 37% of people claiming Incapacity Benefit are doing so owing to mental health problems and that General Practitioners spend more than one-third of their time addressing such problems.²⁸ Poverty linked to worklessness divides our communities and deprives many children of a fair chance in life.

Volunteering has a large part to play in moving people closer to the labour market, building skills, confidence and self-esteem amongst those who may otherwise suffer social and economic exclusion.

Travel, Communications and Access to Services

Transportation and communication infrastructure is a key issue for the county, as it impacts on employment, health, access to services and quality of life. Herefordshire has high levels of car ownership: nearly 37% of households have 2 or more cars²⁹, compared with 30% regionally. 18% of households in Herefordshire, however, don't have a car, so potentially a significant number of people have to travel to work or access services using public or community transport or, where feasible, by walking or cycling. Access to public transport is particularly poor in the north and western parts of the county where many residents, particularly older people, depend on third sector-run community transport schemes.

Amongst Herefordshire residents who work, (whether inside or outside the county), there is relatively low use of public transport for commuting, (4% in county; 11% regionally; 15% nationally), but relatively high levels of walking or cycling (16% compared with 12% regionally; 13% nationally) and home-working (15% compared with 9% regionally and nationally)³⁰. Most travel to work is undertaken by car, with little difference in the profile between those living in the town and in

²⁶ Monthly Unemployment Claimant Counts, Office for National Statistics (ONS)

²⁷ DWP benefit statistics, February 2007 and 2001 Census, ONS - Crown copyright

²⁸ Jobcentre Plus research

²⁹ 2001 Census, ONS - Crown Copyright, Cars & Vans

³⁰ Usual method of travel for people aged 16-74 in employment the week before the 2001 Census, ONS

the rural areas. Many people travel relatively short distances, which is a major factor in traffic congestion.

Traffic often has to travel through Hereford City and the market towns, which puts extra pressure on the road network and often leads to congestion and delays during peak times. Traffic congestion has been highlighted as of particular concern to the local community³¹ and it is a priority to address this in the Local Area Agreement.

Accessibility of services is a key issue in the sparsely populated rural areas, with 76 out of the 116 super output areas in Herefordshire falling within the 25% most deprived in England in terms of geographical access to services³². Access to services is being addressed in two ways: bringing people to services through developing and sustaining rural transport networks, and bringing services to people through the enhanced use of shared facilities. For example, increased use of local schools and fire stations would help to make provision of services sustainable, as would an increase in the ability to access services and information electronically. Although the percentage of the population using broadband facilities has risen, (40% in 2006 compared with 27% in 2005)³³ there are still a significant number of people who are disadvantaged by not having access to high-speed communications. Dial-up connections are both slow and expensive; this impacts on the community (for instance, by leaving people isolated or unable to shop and get bargains on-line) and also the ability of local businesses to remain competitive.

Stronger Communities

As part of the 2006 Herefordshire Satisfaction Survey³⁴, residents were asked to select 5 aspects affecting quality of life from a list of 20 that they felt were most important in making somewhere a good place to live, and 5 aspects that most needed improving in Herefordshire. Combining the responses to these two questions gives the five aspects that were most commonly identified as important and in need of improvement in Herefordshire. These were:

- affordable, decent housing
- clean streets
- health services
- level of crime
- level of traffic congestion.

Parish Plans and Community Forums/PACTS have also been used to highlight issues of concern to local residents and an analysis confirms that the five areas above are of significant concern to communities across Herefordshire.

Third (voluntary, community and non-profit) Sector

Herefordshire has a particularly, diverse and independent third sector³⁵ (VCS), with a wide range of voluntary organisations, community groups, social enterprises and housing associations

³¹ 2006 Herefordshire Satisfaction Survey, Herefordshire Council's Research Team

³² According to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (2007), which measures deprivation across 7 domains and ranks all 32,482 Super Output Areas in England; Office for the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM, now DCLG)

³³ State of Herefordshire Report 2007

³⁴ 2006 Herefordshire Satisfaction Survey, Herefordshire Council's Research Team

³⁵ VCS is also referred to as 'The Third Sector'

contributing significantly to all aspects of life in Herefordshire. An estimated 18%³⁶ of the population volunteer and there are 1,580 voluntary and community organisations, two-thirds of which are registered charities. The sector has grown strongly in the past decade, benefiting from a coordinated approach to recent infrastructure investment.³⁷ Although the sector is now in a strong position in terms of being able to support the needs of those who are often at the margins of society, the inevitable turnover of volunteers requires continued effort and investment so that the level of provision can be maintained.

The sector plays a strong role in planning and delivery, as a partner in the joint commissioning of services and in the context of a diversification of the provider base, which should see the sector's share of the market grow.

The sector also plays a strong role in signposting, advocacy, advice and support. The preventative and early intervention role of the sector helps to mitigate the costs of services and treatment that would otherwise have to be provided.

In recognition of this significant role the third sector plays, partners have recently signed up to a Herefordshire Compact, which will govern the development of working relationships between sectors and provide a firm foundation for the future.

Additional impacts of the sector include developing new skills and building confidence; combating rural isolation and social exclusion; filling gaps in statutory provision; and giving choice in relation to arts, sport and educational activities.

As many funding streams come to an end, the sector is facing a particularly challenging future to maintain its capacity. Small groups, particularly those located in sparsely populated rural areas often struggle to keep going and lack the capacity to engage with wider agendas such as the delivery of services.

The third sector has been actively involved in identifying the priorities and indicators which sit within the Local Area Agreement and will be a key partner in the delivery of activities which will support these priorities.

Culture, sport and leisure

The county has a distinct cultural heritage and countryside, access to which depends on a huge network of public rights of way, . The network of cultural centres contribute to access of services, with 70% of respondents finding it easy to access a library and 69% for sports and leisure centres. Sport centres provide opportunities to increase health, with 55% of respondents using sport and leisure facilities / events in the last 12 months. These include LIFT, which is a GP referral scheme (77% feel healthy as a result of their referral). 59% of respondents of the 2007 Satisfaction Survey had used libraries in the last 12 months, 40% museums and galleries, 79% parks and open spaces. Herefordshire Voice Survey (2006) shows that just over half of respondents (51%) use the Courtyard Centre for the Arts (the main arts venue in the county) and those who were involved in three of the main cultural events in the county showed high levels of satisfaction (h.art week 86%; walking festival 95%; contemporary crafts fair 87%). These events also make a contribution to the tourism offer, which supports the economic growth of the businesses involved and the county as a whole. However, what these figures do not show is the positive impact cultural

³⁶ 2005 mid-year estimate, Sustain Consultancy GuideStar Research, January 2007

³⁷ 2005 mid-year estimate, Sustain Consultancy GuideStar Research, January 2007

activities can have on the engagement of those who are disenfranchised and at risk of social exclusion, specifically young people, older people and those vulnerable through disability and/or mental health problems.

Healthy Communities

In general, health in the county is relatively good. People in Herefordshire live longer than the average regionally and nationally: life expectancy is 77.6 years for males and 82.4 for females, compared with 76.9 and 81.1 respectively in England³⁸. However, there are pockets of poor health: nine areas in Herefordshire (7 in Hereford City, both North and South of the river, and 2 in Leominster) are within the 25% most health deprived areas in England³⁹. After accounting for differences in age-structure, death rates from all causes for the period 2003-05 were 24% higher for deprived parts of Herefordshire than for the county as a whole.⁴⁰

There are some causes of death where local rates are slightly above the national rates, but numbers are small and subject to year-on-year variation. The female death rate from stroke, the male death rate from accidents, and the death rates from some skin cancers remain persistently above what might be expected. Amongst children, there was a small increase in 2005 in the number dying in the first year of life, and also the number of low birth weight. Child dental health is poor, and this has been the case for some years.⁴¹

Health inequalities exist in Herefordshire, as they do elsewhere and these are most clearly measured in terms of the differences in mortality rates cited above. These are significantly affected by different patterns of risk-taking behaviour and in particular smoking, drinking too much, and being overweight or obese are all more prevalent in areas of high social deprivation.

In respect of smoking, the largest concerns relate to 35-44 year olds (29% of 35-44 year olds in Herefordshire smoke, compared to 22% regionally⁴²); teenagers, in particular 15 year olds girls (25% reported that they smoked)⁴³; and pregnant women (around 17% of pregnant women had smoked during the last two years).

With regard to alcohol, the priority is to reduce hospital admissions, which have risen from 204 in 2002 to 516 in 2006, and where there has been a sharp rise among young people, with admissions of under 16 year olds rising from 9 in 2002 to 30 in 2006. Analysis of admissions by deprivation quartile shows that 46.8% of all alcohol-related admissions in 2002-6 were from patients in the most deprived quartile.

With regard to obesity, the weighing and measuring of children in reception class and Year 6 has shown that 23% of reception class children and 31% of year 6 children, are either overweight or obese. Whilst these are slightly below the figures for the West Midlands and England as a whole, it is a matter of considerable concern and must be addressed to control the future pressures on the health services and to enable today's young people to reach their full potential. There are links between obesity and social deprivation, and these can be shown locally as well as at national level.

³⁸ Life expectancy at birth, 2003-05 average, Office for National Statistics (ONS)

³⁹ Health Deprivation & Disability Domain, Indices of Deprivation 2007, ODPM (now DCLG)

⁴⁰ Public Health Department, Herefordshire Primary Care Trust

⁴¹ Director of Public Health Annual Report 2007, Herefordshire PCT

⁴² 2005 Regional Lifestyle Survey

⁴³ 2007 Teenage Lifestyle Survey

In Herefordshire, 19% of children from the most deprived 18 Super Output Areas were obese, compared with 12% in the areas outside this group⁴⁴.

The health, well-being and independence of older people is a key priority for Herefordshire, which will only be achieved through robust multi agency-working, including an enhanced role for the third sector. The vision promoted through the Growing Older in Herefordshire Strategy is that older people will remain independent and active, continuing to live in, and contribute to, strong local communities and be included in decisions regarding the future services and activities that they want and need.

The above average mortality from stroke, especially among women, has persisted; tackling it is a priority. The county has a very high rate of hip fracture: in 2005/6 there were 355 hospital admissions for hip fractures for those over 65 years, which is a rate of 780 per 100,000 people, compared with the regional and England averages of 565. More needs to be done to prevent falls, which will be a significant factor in helping older people to live independently at home.

Housing and Affordability

Average (mean) house prices in Herefordshire are high (£215,208) compared with the region as a whole (£172,152) and England and Wales (£207,573)⁴⁵. Lower quartile prices (i.e. the price that is exceeded by 75% of properties) represent the lower end of the housing market. Three-quarters of properties sold in Herefordshire are more expensive than £135,000, whereas the regional and national figures are markedly lower: £109,950 and £119,950 respectively⁴⁶.

Low average levels of earnings, coupled with the relatively high house prices, mean that housing affordability is a major issue in the county. The preferred measure for house price affordability is the ratio of lower quartile house price to lower quartile earnings. For 2006, the ratio for Herefordshire was 8.6 (ie house prices are 8.6 times the average earnings which makes it difficult when mortgage companies typically offer 4 times earnings). Amongst the 14 West Midlands authorities, ratios range from 4.5 (Stoke on Trent) to 8.8 (Solihull & Shropshire) with Herefordshire in 3rd place for the worst affordability ratio.⁴⁷

The mix of properties affects affordability, with Herefordshire having a much higher proportion of detached properties (43.0%) than regionally (23.8%) or nationally (22.8%)⁴⁸. A key priority for the county is to increase the availability of appropriate, decent and affordable housing for the community, particularly for disadvantaged groups and first-time buyers.

The county has a different profile of housing tenure than both the region and England & Wales overall: a higher proportion of households are owner-occupied without a mortgage (35.8% compared with 30.3% regionally and 29.5% nationally), and a slightly lower proportion of households live in socially rented accommodation (15.2% compared with 20.6% regionally and 19.2% nationally)²³.

The county has a commitment to reduce the number of people living in residential homes, which presents a particular challenge in terms of supporting people to live safely and independently in their own homes. To fulfil this commitment requires a robust multi-agency approach, with carers and the voluntary and community sector having a key role to play alongside statutory agencies.

⁴⁴ Director of Public Health Annual Report 2007, Herefordshire PCT

⁴⁵ 4th quarter of 2006, HM Land Registry

⁴⁶ 2nd quarter of 2006, Department for Communities & Local Government (DCLG)

⁴⁷ HM Land Registry and Annual Survey of Hours & Earnings, ONS

⁴⁸ 2001 Census, Office for National Statistics

Safer Communities

Crime Levels

Herefordshire has relatively low levels of crime. It compares favourably with similar areas for some key crime categories, such as vehicle crime and domestic burglary; conversely anti-social behaviour, criminal damage and common assault are slightly higher. Marked decreases in recorded crime have generally been seen over the past four years, for example house burglaries have reduced by 66% from 965 recorded in 2002-03 to just 324 in 2006-07. Vehicle crime has reduced by 34%, with 1371 recorded in 2002-03 but just 901 in 2006-07.

Perceptions of crime often do not reflect the levels of recorded crime and can have a disproportionate impact on whether people feel their community is a good place to live. So while the overall level of crime in Herefordshire has decreased over the last four years, the fall in resident's fear of crime has not reduced to the same extent. House burglaries are an illustrative example of this; as highlighted above the numbers have fallen over four years, yet worry about it having fallen from 50% of people in 2005 to 30% in 2006, it then remained at a similar level in 2007 despite further reductions in the level of crime. It is therefore considered to be a priority for the Local Area Agreement not only to decrease the already low level of crime overall but also to address the disproportionate fear of crime felt amongst some members of the community.

Anti-social behaviour remains a focus in Herefordshire, with annual residents surveys measuring the proportion of residents who have a high perception of anti-social behaviour. In 2006 27% of the people surveyed perceived a high level of anti social behaviour in their area with this figure not reducing in the 2007 survey.

One way of tackling crime levels is to focus on those who are prolific and priority offenders (PPOs) as statistics show that 20% of offenders commit 80% of the crime. Further reducing their offending should have a noticeable impact on crime rates (indeed, this has been shown already to be the case in the county). The Herefordshire Community Safety and Drugs Partnership (HCSDP) has a target to reduce the proportion of prolific and other priority offenders who re-offend by tracking the conviction history of an identified cohort of PPO's. A similar measure has been introduced with the Youth Offending Team to monitor the re-offending rates of young offenders. Both the PPO and youth offending issues remain a local priority.

Following a lengthy public consultation, the HCSDP Strategic Group has identified alcohol and drugs harm reduction as a priority. Herefordshire has a proportionally high number of injecting opiate users and this represents a significant health and community safety issue to be tackled in partnership by a number of agencies.

Likewise it is important to tackle issues such as arson, which is of particular concern to the Fire and Rescue Service. Arson is seen as a 'gateway' crime which needs to be addressed through education and prevention work, in order to prevent escalation into further anti-social behaviour and potentially more serious crime. The statistics for Herefordshire over the last two years show that the number of deliberate fires has risen as a proportion of all fires, representing some 43% of all fires in 2007 (38% in 2006), and that deliberate fires now represent almost 3 out of 5 fires to derelict buildings or outdoors, and 2 in 5 of all vehicle fires.⁴⁹ One other area where anti-social behaviour has an impact on the Fire and Rescue Service, and the community, is the number of

⁴⁹ Source: H&W Fire and Rescue Service

hoax calls which are not only a considerable cost to the service but take resources away from real emergencies, potentially putting lives at risk. (74 hoax calls in 2007)

In addition to the need to address crime and the fear of crime, there are other issues affecting community safety and personal well-being. These include the impact of road traffic collisions, the well-being and safety of older and vulnerable people, and the impact of events such as fires and flooding, which are emergency planning issues. Partners recognise the interdependence of many of these issues and will work together to address them through a range of community safety, education and prevention initiatives.

Road Safety

Rural roads, sometimes poorly maintained, are Britain's biggest killers, accounting for two-thirds of deaths across England, with a third of these involving young drivers. Herefordshire has some of the highest risk roads in the country in terms of road death statistics. 2006 saw a significant decrease in the numbers killed or seriously injured on the roads (119 in 2006 against 147 in 2005) but these figures have risen over the past few months, with an increase to 133 people killed or seriously injured on Herefordshire roads in 2007. Reducing road traffic collisions therefore remains a priority for the county.

Environmental Issues

Road Maintenance

Road condition for principal roads and non-principal roads was in the lower quartile in 2006-07 (the last year for which comparative data exists). Although there has been improvement this year, improving road condition remained a high priority for Herefordshire residents in the most recent survey.

Waste and Recycling

Nationally the issue of waste and recycling is a high priority and in Herefordshire this is no different. The county does not perform well in terms of either reducing the amount of household waste collected or the amount going to landfill: approximately 521kg of waste was collected per person per year in 2005-06, compared to the worst 25% of all other English Authorities who collected on average 479kg. In 2005-06, Herefordshire land filled 76% of all household waste; this was an improvement on previous years but still worse than the 70% national average.

Waste and recycling facilities have been highlighted as important issues throughout Herefordshire, with many Parish Plans mentioning the need for better recycling facilities, especially in the rural areas where there is no kerbside recycling collection.

Response to flooding, disease and other potentially damaging issues

Over recent years the Herefordshire community and the rural economy has been severely affected by issues such as Foot and Mouth Disease and flooding. In the July 2007 floods, Herefordshire was severely affected, causing an estimated £3.6 million of damage, over and above the costs to individuals and businesses, and putting significant pressure on local service providers.

There is a need to enhance and co-ordinate the local partnership approach to dealing with emergency issues in order to hasten the recovery from events that could have long-term effects on the local community and economy.

Links to Local and Regional Strategies

West Midlands Economic Strategy

The West Midlands Economic Strategy (WMES) and the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) both support the achievement of smart growth, that is where sustainable prosperity and skills development can be achieved. Both strategies place highest importance on preserving the quality of life, which means balancing economic prosperity with social and environmental impacts.

Critical to maintaining the West Midlands as a desirable place to live, work and do business is the provision of infrastructure and critical rural services.

The Herefordshire Local Area Agreement puts forward priorities that are designed to increase economic activity and workplace skills across the county. In particular, it proposes to prioritise, the reduction of worklessness by improving training and development opportunities for disadvantaged groups.

Key areas of the strategic objectives of the WMES that link strongly with Herefordshire's Local Area Agreement are summarised below:

Harnessing knowledge

The UK and West Midlands economies need to maximise their use of knowledge and creativity in order to compete in new global markets. The region must harness and grow our diverse knowledge assets and the competitive advantage tied up in the skills and attitudes of our people.

Improving infrastructure

Competitive regional economies require a comprehensive portfolio of infrastructure to support economic growth, which must be invested in and continuously improved to maintain competitiveness. Provision of transport, housing, land and property, and encouraging the use of technology, must be aligned with the economic needs of the region while recognising the need to meet the growing environmental challenge. More effective management and use of our infrastructure, including both transport and ICT, as well as more efficient use of resources including our natural environment, water and energy, is therefore key to ensuring that the region remains a competitive place to visit, live, work and do business.

Sustainable communities

Successful, thriving and growing economies require a network of high-quality sustainable urban and rural communities which attract and retain a diverse and thriving workforce, encourage enterprise, provide access to services and are designed to the highest quality.

Sustainable living

Long-term shifts in the region's environmental impact must be driven by changes in underlying patterns of consumption and demand. Changes in patterns of travel, waste production, energy use and overall consumption will encourage businesses to adapt their methods and stimulate the supply of lower-impact goods and services.

Raising ambitions and aspirations

To become a higher value added, more inclusive, region we need to create a more positive attitude to work and a stronger culture of life-long learning and continuous development among all the people of the West Midlands. This involves raising the aspirations of people at all skill levels, in and out of work from cradle to grave. This change has to be driven by inspirational leaders, and by the

removal of barriers to investment in skills, employment and continuous development leading to a general rise in aspirations and ambitions.

Achieving full potential and opportunities for all

Raise the skill levels of all to increase employment opportunities and to meet demand for higher-level skills in the workplace, by providing better information and intelligence about the current and future skills needs of employers, and better access to appropriate training at work and in local communities.

West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) Phase 2

The priorities in the Herefordshire Local Area Agreement align with the RSS's focus on the major issues of housing, employment land, transport and waste.

RSS key considerations:

- Housing levels, type and distribution of housing in the Region, the role of the Sub-regional foci and whether these towns are capable of accommodating increased levels of growth; and the issue of increasing the provision of affordable housing across the region.
- Employment with Hereford identified as a strategic centre in the current RSS, with the role and scale of housing development needing to be reflected in terms of related retail and leisure provision.
- Each waste planning authority to identify sites to manage all the waste in its area and that only the residues from any waste treatment processes should be landfilled. In addition, a variety of new facilities will need to be built, ranging from small composting sites to larger recycling and recovery plants.
- Transport covering a range of issues, including strategic park and ride, car parking standards, road-user charging and the role of airports in the region. Options for car parking standards focus on what needs to be done to ensure appropriate levels of parking supply and availability in everything from rural market towns to larger centres like Hereford.

The Children and Young People's Plan

The vision for the Children's Trust is for "every child to grow to reach their full potential within a happy, healthy and secure environment both at home and during their learning". Particular priorities in the new Children and Young People's Plan 2008-2011, are:

- To increase the participation of children and young people in shaping strategies and services that affect their lives
- To reduce offending, anti-social behaviour and bullying by children and young people
- To increase access to positive activities for all children and young people, including targeted activities for vulnerable groups.

The Local Area Agreement, therefore, places particular emphasis on encouraging and enabling children and young people to achieve their potential and participate in positive activities, thus deflecting young people from engaging in anti-social behaviour and involvement in crime.

Consultation with the Shadow Children's Trust Board, a representative group of children and young people of all ages and vulnerable groups, throughout 2007, together with a major consultation event in October 2007, has highlighted that children and young people in the county want more involvement and participation in decision-making, more and better information, more sport and recreational facilities, improved transport and action to stop bullying. The Tellus2 survey

undertaken in the summer of 2007 highlighted that the main reason for the lack of involvement in sport, cultural and recreational pursuits was the proximity of facilities to young people's homes and the lack of transport. 31% of young people in the 2007 Youth Survey felt that the Council gave them enough opportunity to influence important decisions about local services, a significant improvement on the 2005 baseline of 19.2%. Analysis of Parish Plans confirms that these matters are of concern to communities across Herefordshire.

Chamber of Commerce Manifesto

The following are excerpts from the Chamber of Commerce Herefordshire Manifesto

Skills and Education

Herefordshire Businesses have difficulty in filling skilled manual and technical positions and some managerial and professional roles. It is the Chamber's belief that young people are not being given the skills for the world of work. Some lack basic skills, but also the soft skills of communication, teamwork and punctuality. Others do not have the higher level vocational skills required from the local businesses. The Chamber therefore is concerned that the poor attitude to work and skills shortages are holding back the productivity and competitiveness of the county's businesses."

Transport

Herefordshire road network to the rest of the country is split between excellent in the south, which is served by the M50, compared to poor in the City and north as the trunk roads of the A49/ A44 are often congested and overloaded with traffic. Poor transport infrastructure and traffic congestion on roads in the area are imposing damaging restraints on the local economy. This often causes delays in delivery of goods and services to customers or from suppliers. The rural nature of the county means that poor quality local public transport provision has put more cars onto our already congested roads. Regional competition has seen the rural areas such as Herefordshire lose out in the West Midlands transport funding. This is a major setback and ways must be found to make up lost ground.

Further evidence

More comprehensive data showing comparisons and trends are in the *State of Herefordshire Report* www.herefordshirepartnership.co.uk

Our Priorities and the Local Area Agreement

Overall, Herefordshire presents an exceptional dichotomy. The rural nature of the County offers a unique, beautiful and healthy environment in which to live and work, but that same environment brings with it challenges in relation to economic development, employment, housing, access to services, transportation and quality of life.

Herefordshire is a unitary authority, which has a strong, well-established Local Strategic Partnership, with a wide range of partners across all sectors working together to make things better. The Herefordshire Sustainable Community Strategy, produced following extensive public involvement and consultation, sets out the vision for Herefordshire to 2020. It is, therefore, the basis for the proposed priorities for the new Local Area Agreement. These have been extensively debated with the community as a whole, with partners and by elected members.

The *Herefordshire Partnership* is in no doubt that the vigorous pursuit of these priorities, rooted in evidence set out in this *Story of Place*, will make a major and lasting difference to the quality of life of people in the county. In particular, they are designed to have a major impact on reducing inequalities, so that currently disadvantaged groups enjoy significantly better life-chances.

Priorities for Herefordshire

The following criteria have been used to identify the priorities for the Local Area Agreement:

- Is this going to make a significant difference to Herefordshire?
- In particular, will it help to reduce inequalities by improving the life-chances of disadvantaged groups?
- Is this a priority for the local community?
- Is this something that can be achieved through partnership or multi-agency working?

Applying these criteria in the light of the foregoing factual analysis, the following priorities are proposed:

Local Area Agreement Priorities for Herefordshire
--

Economic Development and Enterprise
--

Increase the economic potential of the county, with particular regard to higher skilled and better paid jobs
--

Increase access to learning and development at all levels, and increase participation, in order to raise achievement, address worklessness and improve workforce skills.
--

Improve access to integrated public and community transport, reduce traffic congestion and encourage alternatives to car use
--

Children and Young People

Improve participation in, and achievement for, young people in education, employment and training post 14

Encourage and enable children and young people in Herefordshire to achieve their potential and participate in positive activities

Stronger Communities

Increase the availability of appropriate, decent and affordable housing

Improve the availability of sustainable services and facilities and access to them
--

Encourage thriving communities where people are able to influence change and take action to improve their area, regardless of their background
--

Health and Well-Being

Encourage and promote a healthy lifestyle, with particular attention to reducing smoking, levels of obesity and excessive consumption of alcohol
--

Help vulnerable people to live safely and independently in their own homes
--

Safer Communities

Further reduce the already low levels of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour in the county and to reduce disproportionate fear of such
--

Increase safety for road users in the county
--

Environment

Minimise domestic and commercial waste, and increase recycling
--

Lead a local contribution to climate change reduction

Strengthen resilience to and recovery from civil emergencies, which may have a long term impact on Herefordshire communities, through effective partnership planning and co-ordination
--

Cross Cutting Themes

Volunteering; Culture, Leisure and Sport; Environment

Indicators which support these priorities are shown within Appendix 1 - Presenting the LAA Improvement targets
