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## RURAL SERVICES SUB GROUP WORKPLAN

**Objective 1: Establishment of a wide network of concerned individuals, groups and organisations either electronically and physically (Objective 2:) building on a foundation of alliances and links with other service groups and providers such as ViRSA, the Rural Shops Alliance and the Federation of Sub-Postmasters**

<b>1.1: Advisory Group.</b>		
<i>Task</i>	<i>Progress</i>	<i>Completion</i>
Set up Rural Services advisory group to oversee work of project	Members: SDC, FODDC, CDC, TBC, County Council, ViRSA, RSA, Rural Renaissance, Taste of the West/Gloucestershire Food Vision, Federation of Small Businesses, Federation of Post Masters, Cooperative Futures, Gloucestershire First, Post Office Ltd, MAIDeN, GRCC.  Elected Chair – Kate Forest, Gloucestershire First  Meetings held: 30.04.07 23.08.07 11.10.07 07.12.07 07.02.08 07.03.08 09.05.08 05.06.08 10.07.08	

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Clarify terms of reference and scope of work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Terms of reference drawn up</li> <li>• Work plan revised (ongoing)</li> <li>• Scope of work is to focus on Rural Shops and Post Offices, although work will link with issues concerning other rural services</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>1.2: Wider Gloucestershire community</b></li> </ul>		
Raise awareness of the work of the RSSG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings held with agencies / individuals to ascertain level of interest and support. <i>See Appendix section 1.2a.</i></li> </ul>	
Marketing and promotion of the RSSG	<p>Agenda item 5 for meeting 11.10.07.</p> <p><b>Communications meeting held 15.11.07</b> present CC, K For and Beth Whitaker (viva communications). Draft communication strategy circulated to RSSG members.</p> <p>See Appendix for RSSG involvement in Post Office Network Change Programme</p>	26.11.07

**Objective 3: Facilitate the development of sector specific networks both virtual and physical for service deliverers e.g. community shops, for mutual benefit and support**

This will involve researching current networks in existence, linking with existent networks and making approaches to develop networks (dependent on level of support/ interest and on advice from RSSG partners)

**3.1: Community owned shops**

Research community shops in Gloucestershire and any networks in place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No current Gloucestershire network.</li> <li>• 11 Community shops in Gloucestershire</li> <li>• 2/3 Communities interested in starting a community shop</li> </ul> <p><i>See Appendix section 3.1a for list of existing community shops and communities considering setting up community shop.</i></p>	
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Research community shop networks elsewhere to identify good practice	Best practice advice from Oxfordshire RCC. <i>See Appendix section 3.1b.</i>	09/07 – ongoing.
Investigate potential for setting up a network in Gloucestershire and if demand, ascertain role, scope and format of the network, support required and to gather information for case studies. Communicate findings.	Community Shops networking supper 4 <sup>th</sup> October 2007, at GRCC hosted by David Drew MP. <i>See Appendix section 3.1c.</i>  Newsletter with outcomes from the event sent to community shop network and RSSG members.	
(If demand) continue to facilitate the instigation a Community shops network	Community Shops Newsletter: Issue 1 – Report of Community Shops Network Supper Issue 2 – How the network will run. Useful information section. Introducing the RSSG, REG.  Article for Rural Regeneration about Community Shops in Gloucestershire. 3 cases studies, and advice on how to establish a community owned shop.	10.10.07 06.03.08  01.12.07
Investigate practical solutions to maintain a sustainable network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Community shops specific section on the GRCC website.</li> <li>▪ Creating a contact list of community shops, to be circulated amongst the Community Shop Network.</li> <li>▪ Create a Rural Services web forum.</li> <li>▪ Case studies of community shops placed on GRCC website.</li> </ul>	
<b>3.2: Privately owned shops</b>		
Research current mechanisms in place to support village shops in general, including privately owned shops and national / regional	<i>See Appendix section 3.2a for:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publications available,</li> <li>• Internet resources.</li> <li>• Internet support forums trailed.</li> </ul>	

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mechanisms	Rural Enterprise Gateway – Training workshops for shops in Gloucestershire.	
Act on results of research and add to workplan, on advice of RSSG	CC to mail out RSA Rural Retailer magazine to all rural shops in Gloucestershire using the Store is the Core database. Also include an introductory letter to RSSG and also introducing CC as a contact.	
<b>3.3: Rural Post Offices</b>		
<p>2 areas of focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• post office owners</li> <li>• post office users / parishes</li> </ul> <p>Research Urban Closure network programme.</p>	<p>Focus regarding the Network Change Programme agreed by RSSG (Aug 07). 3 areas to work towards agreed by RSSG:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for alternative ways to provide post office services. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Businesslink</li> <li>○ RSSG to advise as group</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Support to motivate and advise where loss of PO in combined amenity will impact the viability of the business. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Advice sought on when this process should begin?</li> <li>○ Approach LAs for any possible funding.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Facilitation of agencies and communities working together to support and find replacement facilities where shop is closed because of loss of the PO. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Link with ViRSA.</li> <li>○ Expansion of Community Shops Network to include rural commercial enterprises. For advisory and information sharing purposes.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><i>See Appendix section 3.3a.</i></p>	
Article for Cotswold Life	Article about Post Office Network Change Programme for February's publication. This publication will be available in the shops late January.	10.12.07

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Letter of Response from RSSG to Post Office Ltd with regards to Network Change Programme	Letter put forth to the group at meeting on 07.03.08. 2 <sup>nd</sup> draft distributed by e-mail to RSSG partners for comment 14.03.08. Final letter sent 15.03.08 and e-mail version sent on 17.03.08 – receipt of delivery recieved.	
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<b>Objective 4: Keep abreast of developments concerning rural post offices and disseminate information</b>		
<p>Research timeframe and format of post office consultation through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>government information readily available</li> <li>Links with other RCCs</li> <li>Attending early consultations in other parts of the country to gain first hand awareness of the process</li> <li>Making contact directly with the bodies organising the consultations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public consultation timeframe researched and results made available to:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RSSG members</li> <li>All who attended post office consultation event</li> <li>Through the wider GRCC email alert system.</li> </ol> </li> <li>Dedicated space on GRCC website. With the opportunity provided for members of the RSSG to have links to or from the GRCC from their own websites.</li> <li>Set up an inter-RCC network to gain knowledge of the format of post office consultations from those counties involved in earlier consultations. Updates to be added to website, and sent out in e-mail alerts. <i>See Appendix section 4a.</i></li> <li>CC attended SWAN meeting 31.10.07 to ascertain what other rcc's in south west are doing.</li> </ul>	09/07 - ongoing
<p>Disseminate information to interested bodies through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reports to RSSG</li> <li>GRCC website post offices section with links (if requested) to RSSG partners</li> <li>Correspondence with post office network set up through consultation event (Feb 07)</li> </ul>	<p>Post Office report sent to RSSG members on 01/10/07 for any amendments to be placed on GRCC website and other websites of RSSG partners by 03/10/07.</p> <p>Transport accessibility maps in relation to PO in Gloucestershire created by MAIDeN and distributed amongst RSSG.</p>	03/10/07  09/07

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correspondence direct with post offices</li> <li>• Wider interested parties – through GRGCC email alert system</li> </ul>		
<p align="center"><b>KEY DATES</b></p>	<p>5<sup>th</sup> February 2008 – Area Plan Proposal is released.            5<sup>th</sup> Februarys – 17<sup>th</sup> March 2008 – 6 week public consultation.  <b>6<sup>th</sup> May 2008 – FINAL ANNOUNCEMENTS</b>            1 to 3 months of this date = physical closures.</p>	
<p><b>Local Government Authority Event            RE: Post Offices: The next steps            for LA's. 14.05.08</b></p>	<p>CC attended meeting            CC provided summary document to all members of the RSSG</p>	<p>14/05/08            23/05/08</p>

**Objective 5: Drawing together of a Gloucestershire rural services database and (Objective 7:) Audit the retail service sector to identify the future general viability of establishments and the social economic contribution they make to community life.**

**Once information is gathered how widely available should it be made?**

<p>Gather existent databases on rural services within Gloucestershire.</p>	<p>Information from MAIDEN and VIRSA received on location of rural shops and community shops.</p> <p>'Useful Contacts' (a brief description, website address and general contact details for partners of RSSG) document placed on RSSG page of GRCC website.</p>	
<p>Store is the Core</p>	<p>Database of all rural service providers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Database to be updated regularly.</li> </ul>	<p>10.07 –            ongoing</p>



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	<p><u>Store is the Core update</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community owned Start-Up Programme:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Bledington – No 1<sup>st</sup> meeting date agreed yet, Bledington at very early stage of investigating Comm Shop.</li> <li>2. Leonard Stanley – 1<sup>st</sup> meeting with CC and Mally Findlater, Gloucestershire Enterprises (02.05.08)</li> </ol> </li>   <li>• Village Shop Programme             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Avening – 1<sup>st</sup> meeting with CC and K Parsons, RSA (23.04.08)  <i>Advice given that they apply from a grant from Core Programme, K Parsons to continue support.</i>                  The Corner Shop, Avening applied for further advice and support from SiTC programme 31.05.08</li> <li>2. Siddington – 1<sup>st</sup> meeting with CC and Rob Thomas, Consultancy UK (12.05.08)                  Siddington Stores applied for further advice and support from SiTC programme 31.05.08</li> <li>3. Redbrook – 3 dates proposed for first meeting with CC and M Findlater, nothing confirmed yet.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	
<p>Check and adjust information to ensure information is accurate and up to date</p> <p>Community shops database. Include shops in process of being set-up.</p>	<p>GRCC staff, Village agents and partners of RSSG approached as appropriate to check current held information.</p>	
<p>Update rural shops database.</p>	<p>Work in partnership with MAIDeN to update existing information.</p>	

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Objective 6: Identify key issues facing rural services		
	<p>VIRSA and RSA willing to join with this activity</p> <p>CC to provide summary of key points raised at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PO event in March</li> <li>• Community Shops Network Supper</li> </ul> <p>Partners of RSSG to provide issues raised at LSP meetings.</p>	

Objective 8: Identify possible alternative ways of delivering services and publicising best practice models, (Objective 10:) Promote possible innovative, alternative, practical solutions which could maintain rural services and increase or maintain economic activity in Gloucestershire's communities and (Objective 11:) Encourage development and investment in long term projects by promoting best practice and quality of services		
<p>Produce case studies and practical guides on:</p> <p>Setting up a community shop.</p> <p>Post office alternatives – research and outreach</p>	<p>Working with ACRE, ViRSA to identify case studies.</p> <p>CC to communicate with Oxfordshire RCC, Kent RCC and Devon RCC.</p>	

Objective 9: Investigate sources of funding and other support to enable sustainable solutions to be established		
<p>Identify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current sources of funding available</li> <li>• Forthcoming funding opportunities</li> </ul>	<p><u>Is it RSSG role to gather evidence to influence funding? – What evidence would be needed?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Signposting role for potential groups.</li> <li>• <b>ACTION</b> of meeting 07.03.08 – RSSG partners to provide CC with support available from their org/council for the purpose of</li> </ul>	

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	compiling a directory of support.	
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**APPENDIX.**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Relevant Information</b>
1.2a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Community Transport in the Cotswold</li> <li>▪ Representatives from village shops</li> <li>▪ PCT</li> <li>▪ Yorkshire Building Society</li> <li>▪ D Drew MP</li> <li>▪ G Clifton Brown MP</li> <li>▪ (Other rural MPs informed)</li> <li>▪ Donna Smith, Gill Withers ViRSA.</li> <li>▪</li> </ul>
1.2b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ BBC Radio Gloucestershire interviews               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 05.02.08</li> <li>▪ 11.02.08</li> <li>▪ 03.03.08</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Meetings attended               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Longborough PO meeting 11.02.08</li> <li>▪ Rencomb PO meeting 18.02.08</li> <li>▪ FODDC task force meeting 19.02.08, 29.02.08, 07.03.08</li> <li>▪ Stratton PO meeting 21.02.08</li> <li>▪ Stroud district PO meeting 27.02.08</li> <li>▪ FOD CAB PO meeting 03.03.08</li> <li>▪ Mitton PO meeting 13.03.08</li> <li>▪ Twyning PO meeting 13.03.08</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Cotswold Life March 2008 – CC quoted as part of RSSG with regards to “get the facts...”</li> <li>▪ Website               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Post Office specific page created and updated</li> <li>▪ Advice sheet available on Website</li> <li>▪ Useful documents, like RSA spreadsheet</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Letter to PO Ltd               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Open letter from RSSG with regards to how the Network Change Programme has run in Gloucestershire, highlighting points of concern.</li> <li>▪ Letter from GRCC with regards to frustrations felt at a community level.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
3.1a	<p>Community shops in Gloucestershire.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Brockweir and Hewelsfield</li> <li>2. Blockley</li> <li>3. Chalford</li> <li>4. Coaley</li> <li>5. Down Ampney</li> <li>6. Dumbleton</li> <li>7. Longborough and Sezincote (Community owned but not community run)</li> <li>8. North Nibley</li> <li>9. Ruscombe and Whiteshill</li> <li>10. Southrop</li> </ol>

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	<p>11. Temple Guiting 12. Tytherington 13. Oakridge</p> <p>Communities interested in starting a community shop.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Leonard Stanley</li> <li>2. Gretton</li> </ol>
3.1b	<p>Jane Barker, Shops and Post Office contact at Oxfordshire RCC.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Let the shops meet each other informally.</li> <li>• Let shops say what they want to gain from a network.</li> </ul>
3.1c	<p>Attending:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brockweir and Hewelsfield</li> <li>• Coaley</li> <li>• North Nibley</li> </ul> <p>2 communities from South Gloucestershire showed interest.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Almondsbury</li> <li>• Cromhall</li> </ul>
3.2a	<p><b>Current publications available:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independent retail news.</li> <li>• Village retailer (an RSA publication).</li> <li>• First stop local shop.</li> <li>• Forest Retail.</li> <li>• Convenience Store</li> <li>• The Grocer</li> <li>• Rural Retailer (RSA)</li> </ul> <p><b>Current websites:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.virsa.org">www.virsa.org</a> (Village Retail Support Association)</li> <li>• <a href="http://www.rural-shops-alliance.co.uk">www.rural-shops-alliance.co.uk</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.tasteofthewest.co.uk">www.tasteofthewest.co.uk</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.gloucestershirefoodvision.co.uk">www.gloucestershirefoodvision.co.uk</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.cotswold.gov.uk">www.cotswold.gov.uk</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.stroud.gov.uk">www.stroud.gov.uk</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.fdean.gov.uk">www.fdean.gov.uk</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.tewkesbury.gov.uk">www.tewkesbury.gov.uk</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk">www.gloucestershire.gov.uk</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.grcc.org.uk">www.grcc.org.uk</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.glos.businesslink.co.uk">www.glos.businesslink.co.uk</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.co-operativefutures.coop">www.co-operativefutures.coop</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.glosfirst.co.uk">www.glosfirst.co.uk</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Support networks:</b></p> <p>Limited success for previously trialled internet support networks for rural shops (e.g. North East 2006.)</p> <p>RSA experience suggests face to face meetings are the most effective way to help support shops,</p>
3.3a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alternative ways to provide PO services. Outreach services will be used in parts of the country, but there is</li> </ul>



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	no evidence as to how successful they have been. E-mail has been sent to PO asking for results, awaiting reply. Further information from SWAN meeting, to be attended by PO Ltd/Postwatch on 31.10.07
4a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>RCCs involved include Kent (September 07, Gloucestershire (Feb consultation 08), and Oxfordshire (Feb 08 consultation), Wiltshire (December07), Cambridgeshire (June 08), Essex (May 08).</li></ul>

**Other issues arising:**

<p><b>Questions received from Communities in relation to information sent on behalf of RSSG?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>During the pre consultation phases for the post office network change programme, who do the assessors consult with? (Question from Longborough PO)</li></ul>
<p><b>What is the political position of the RSSG when responding to any enquiries from communities? A-POLITICAL AT ALL TIMES.</b></p>

