Long Distance Paths as Catalysts for Local Development: The Role of Parish Councils


Abstract

Long distance paths are local resources, but previous research by the author suggested that they are not fully exploited by many rural communities. The continuing debate on rural governance following the publication of the Rural White Paper in November 2000, together with a curiosity as to the potential development role of parish councils resulted in the current research. This had three clear objectives.  • What socio-cultural, environmental and economic benefits could be derived for local people from the presence of a long distance path?  • Do parish councils assist in unlocking this potential, and if so, how?  • Could this process be improved if parish councils acted differently? A two-phase research approach was adopted. Initially telephone interviews were used to conduct a broad based seeping study. This identified many relevant issues and provided introductions that led to the second phase when three case study locations were explored in greater depth. Here data was collected primarily through face-to-face semi structured interviews supplemented with documentary evidence. It was confirmed that there were minimal disbenefits but that the benefits were potentially considerable. At least half of the parish councils contributing to the research were found to participate in relevant local development to greater or lesser degrees. However it appears that not all parish councils are willing or able to accept responsibility for local development initiatives related to long distance paths. Some thought that local businesses or other agencies should promote and lead projects, whilst others were too busy dealing with routine matters. In addition parish councils were not always receptive to suggestions for collaborative working with other organisations. In all instances it was found that this local resource was not fully exploited by parish councils. Local authorities have more recently acknowledged the potential benefits brought by long distance paths. Thus during the last ten years new routes have been devised and it was found that parish councils were always consulted during the development phases, whilst historically the reason for, and the method of development of long distance routes was completely divorced from parish councils. In these latter instances parish councils needed to adopt a proactive approach to harness maximum community benefits. Generally however their activities were inhibited by several identified constraints. These were concerned with a lack of representation, skills and positive attitude towards local development initiatives. Examples of successful local development were identified that maximised endogenous resources and one of these is local people. It is suggested that if parish councils are to be successful the Government should first allocate sufficient resources for the capacity building of councillors and clerks which would enable them to take a more positive role in local development initiatives.

Item Type:  Thesis (Masters)

Thesis Advisors:  Moseley, Malcolm  UNSPECIFIED  UNSPECIFIED  Skinner, Elisabeth  eskinner1@glos.ac.uk  UNSPECIFIED

Additional Information:  Masters by Research

Uncontrolled  Long distance paths; role of parish councils; Gloucestershire, England

Keywords:

Subjects:  G Geography. Anthropology. Recreation > GV Recreation Leisure

Divisions:  Schools and Research Institutes > Countryside and Community Research Institute

Depositing User:  Susan Turner

Date Deposited:  25 Mar 2015 11:45

Last Modified:  23 Feb 2017 15:41

URL:  http://eprints.glos.ac.uk/id/eprint/2070
The Role of Local Government in Local and Regional Economic Development. Page 1 of 36. Councils that tend to view economic development as an attitude, typically seek to perform an integrated economic development role – mainstreaming rather than compartmentalisation. Regardless of the size, shape or budget of a local government area – all councils can perform a role in local and regional economic development. There exists a long history spanning several decades of Commonwealth governments establishing bespoke regional structures with a broad focus on economic development (ACELG, 2012), including Area Consultative Committees, Regional Development Organisations and their successors, such as Regional Development Australia Committees.