

The Churches Regional Commission for Yorkshire and the Humber submission to the Yorkshire and Humber Strategy Evidence Gathering

The Churches Regional Commission for Yorkshire and the Humber

The CRC has three aims: to represent the churches to regional bodies, to raise the profile of faiths, and to be partners in regeneration.

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Workstream 6 Quality of Life

QLE1.

Contributors to Q of L

Y and H is fortunate to have a vibrancy of different cultures and faiths, and this should be valued and celebrated. The values, buildings and activities of faith communities, contribute to well-being, a sense of community, supporting learning and skills, promoting cohesion, and generating prosperity. Faith communities also support those who are most vulnerable with their many projects and services which they provide for local communities. (research has shown that every faith community runs around two - three projects to serve their community – see Angels and Advocates, Church Social action in Yorkshire and the Humber, Churches Regional Commission for Yorkshire and the Humber 2002, p. 15 and Economic Impact Assessment of Faith communities in Yorkshire and Humber, Yorkshire Futures and the Yorkshire and Humber Faiths Forum, 2009. P. 10)

A thriving third sector is vital for the quality of life in our region. The creation of social capital which many organisations in the third sector can do almost incidentally has a huge impact on the quality of life. So therefore it is not just narrow economic contributions, but also the activities, the values, the networks of trust and hope built up which form a backdrop to the economy and have an indirect economic contribution, and an impact on the social issues which affect people.

Sport, leisure, culture, the arts, heritage, green spaces, historic buildings, are also vital for our region. With the demise of Yorkshire Culture a new regional approach, wider than a quangos meeting, is needed to make the most of opportunities in Yorkshire and Humber.

QLE3 and QLE4

Changing demographics and Social challenges.

The ageing population will put enormous strain on services for older people, while at the same time providing new groups of active retired people who can contribute to our region's economy and to a thriving third sector through their volunteering work.

Changing rural demographics suggests less young people and growing numbers of older people. There will be a growing number of older people in rural areas - The number of pensioners living in rural England will increase by nearly one million over the 10 years, forecasts the **National Housing Federation**. (1st Feb 2010) The federation predicts the number of over 65s living in rural England will hit 3.23m by 2020 – a rise of 907,900 (39%) from 2008. But communities would struggle to support the ageing population boom unless more affordable homes are built for families and younger people, it said. <http://www.rsnonline.org.uk/communities/big-rise-forecast-in-rural-elderly.html>

The growing number of elderly people will put pressure on services and involves equalities issues e.g. mental health issues and disability which affect many older people, as the population has a higher proportion of elderly people.

Meanwhile there is a growing exodus of young people from rural areas. Rural areas are being threatened by the flight from the countryside, warns a report by the **Commission for Rural Communities**. The document, *Rural Advocate report 2010*, was published on 4 March 2010. See report [here](#) (1.6mb pdf). The long-term future of the countryside is in jeopardy because so many young people are being forced out of rural areas, it says. Commission chairman Stuart Burgess gathered evidence about the fears, aspirations, challenges and needs of young rural people. "Challenges with housing, work, transport, training and social exclusion are preventing young people from living in the countryside," he said. "Without young people to provide a work force, rural economies are unable to fulfil their full potential and rural communities can go into a decline." On top of this, lack of broadband and mobile phone coverage in many rural areas was hitting young people and businesses alike, said Dr Burgess. The report calls on policymakers to demonstrate a better understanding of the challenges facing rural young people

It calls for:

- flexible planning to create more affordable rural housing;

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- new ways to meet rural employment and training needs
- greater efforts by schools and universities to raise young people's aspirations;
- a renewed focus on providing integrated public transport
- a push to improve rural mobile phone coverage and broadband

Rural areas lacked the connectivity driving urban youth culture, making it difficult to join social networks and getting internet help with homework, said Dr Burgess. "Challenges for rural young people need addressing positively and urgently and that failure to act will put the future viability of our rural communities at risk. "It is essential to break the cycle of low aspirations and, instead, inspire young people to fulfil their potential and play an active role in our society."

Continuing migration into the region means growing diversity of ethnicity and language.

The challenges we face from this include: the integration of refugees, and asylum seekers; destitution amongst asylum seekers; growing appeal of extremist parties eg the BNP; mistrust between different communities; the effects of poverty and deprivation upon life chances and opportunities.

QLE5

Key health issues

The Marmot review - commissioned by the Dept of Health (2010) argues that “Health inequalities result from social inequalities.” “Economic growth is not the most important measure of success. The fair distribution of health, well-being and sustainability are important social goals. Tackling social inequalities in health and tackling climate change must go together”. The solutions they suggest include “Create fair employment and good work for all. Create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities”. This means promote parks, healthy eating preventative strategies, tackling inequality, better childcare provision etc.

A growing ageing population means added pressure on services, as above in QLE4.

Also, health inequalities affect communities disproportionately – so for example mental health issues fall unequally e.g African Caribbean communities are more affected, older people are more affected, those in poor housing, the unemployed etc. have higher instances of poor mental health. Again this is evidenced by the Marmot review. There are also challenges in terms of geography – the poor health of particular estates, poor health in cities like Hull where obesity, and smoking, are more evident.

Also, those who are homeless have poor health, and those who are ex-offenders and their families. Research shows that despite high levels of health risks among all homeless and marginally housed people, the levels among homeless former prisoners were even higher. Efforts to eradicate homelessness also must include the unmet needs of inmates who are released from prison, and the health issues that affect them. See the Revolving Doors research -

<http://www.cababstractsplus.org/abstracts/Abstract.aspx?AcNo=20053207610>

Participation in cultural activities, and belonging to faith communities, are a powerful determinant of health and wellbeing; therefore all that promotes social capital must be invested in (see Robert Putnam, Bowling Alone, and the New Economics Foundation work on well-being.)

QLE6

What areas should be priorities for regeneration action and investment?

Focus should be on struggling places like Hull, North and North-east Lincolnshire, Barnsley, Rotherham and Doncaster, as well as rural communities where poverty is hidden and access to services is poor, such as remote rural communities.

QLE8

Maximising the contribution of heritage and sport

We endorse the contribution of the evidence from Yorkshire Cultural Agencies Partnership, with the addition that places of worship are an important part of the regions' historic buildings and cultural assets. For example - York Minster, Selby Abbey, Bolton Priory, Beverley Minster, Epworth Rectory (home of John and Charles Wesley, the founders of the Methodist church).

QLE9

What distinctive contributions can different sectors make to sustainable economic growth – including the voluntary, community and faith sectors?

The VCF sector makes a huge economic contribution – see below. But first it is important to say that the third sector makes an enormous contribution to the region in terms of social capital, community capacity building, leadership training, skills building, community cohesion, through, for example, volunteering opportunities. These are hard to measure in economic terms but are vital for healthy communities, and providing a context for sustainable economic growth. However, we also contend that measures of well-being are also important – economic growth is not the be-all and end-all since relative wealth can increase while satisfaction trends or well-being levels stagnate – see work on well-being by the New Economics Foundation.

[Well-being | the new economics foundation](#) They argue that well-being is one of most important aspect of our lives, as individuals and as societies. But despite unprecedented economic prosperity in the last 35 years we do not necessarily feel better individually or as communities. Data shows that whilst economic output in the UK has nearly doubled since 1973, levels of happiness have remained flat. Beyond a certain level of income and material stability, more money has a negligible and even negative impact on the quality of our lives. The centre for well-being at nef seeks to understand, measure and influence well-being. In particular they ask the question ‘what would policymaking and the economy look like if their main aim were to promote well-being?’ They have found that it is this kind of social capital, volunteering, culture and leisure opportunities, belonging to faith communities and so on which increases well being.

Further, faith communities bring important values which underpin sustainable economic growth and healthy communities – values such as hope, vision, justice, hope, care for the poor; buildings which are not just historic but community hubs, places to celebrate and places to mourn, places to be sustained; and huge resources in terms of goodwill, staff, volunteers and money who can flexibly respond to need without complicated structures or government funding.

However, in terms of pure economics, the above cited [Angels and Advocates, Church Social action in Yorkshire and the Humber](#), Churches Regional Commission for Yorkshire and the Humber 2002, and [Economic Impact Assessment of Faith communities in Yorkshire and Humber](#), Yorkshire Futures and the Yorkshire and Humber Faiths Forum, 2009, have both found that the economic impact of faith communities is highly

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significant. Faith communities employ staff, have volunteers, run buildings which provide services for others and space for others. They are tourist attractions and places where money is donated, and projects are funded.

The YHFF survey, which is the most recent, comes up with the figure of £300 million per annum.

It also worth saying that the total number of volunteers is estimated at around 60-70,000 in the region in both reports (A and A p. 76, Economic Impact p. 26). If this is calculated at the minimum wage, £5.73 at 2 hours a week per volunteer, this is £36 million pounds of volunteer time. Many people argue that in this kind of calculation about volunteer time, four hours a week at £12.55 is a better measure – see Volunteering England on this -

<http://www.volunteering.org.uk/WhatWeDo/Projects+and+initiatives/Employer+Supported+Volunteering/Brokers/A+toolkit+for+Volunteer+Centres/ESV+value.htm>

If the sum was 60,000 times 4 hours a week times £12.55 the total would be £156 million pounds of volunteer time.