

A photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, there is a lush green field. In the middle ground, there are trees and a fence. In the background, a village is visible on a hill, featuring a prominent church with a tall tower. The sky is overcast and grey.

Rural Services in Mid Devon 2014

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Introduction

- 1.1 Mid Devon is a sparsely populated rural district with only three sizeable market towns and a large number of small villages and hamlets. The 2011 Census ranks Mid Devon the 44th most sparsely populated area out of 406 council areas in the United Kingdom. It is one of the core principles of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) that planning should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and support thriving rural communities within it.
- 1.2 The sparse population experiences poor access to services. In the 2010 Indices of Deprivation Mid Devon had the second highest number of areas in Devon that fell into the most deprived decile for the barriers to Housing and Services category.
- 1.3 The NPPF requires local plans to promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship. To do this, it is important to have up-to-date information about what rural services are currently in place. The Council reviews the availability of local services and facilities on an annual basis, as far as resources permit.

Method

- 2.1 The Core Strategy (adopted 2007) designated 21 villages with some local facilities as being acceptable locations for minor development. All other rural settlements were not designated, based on the low level of services/facilities available. For the purposes of this Rural Services Survey, these are referred to as 'designated' villages and 'non-designated' villages.
- 2.2 In total 47 settlements were selected. In previous years 55 settlements were selected. From this year Brushford, Cadbury, Clayhanger, Loxbeare, Stockleigh English, Upton Hellions, Washford Pyne and Woolfardisworthy are no longer monitored due to the lack of services within them.

21 designated villages:

Bow, Bradninch, Burlescombe (including Westleigh), Chawleigh, Cheriton Bishop, Cheriton Fitzpaine, Copplestone, Culmstock, Halberton, Hemyock, Kentisbeare, Lapford, Morchard Bishop, Newton St Cyres, Sampford Peverell, Sandford, Silverton, Thorverton, Uffculme, Willand and Yeoford

26 non-designated villages/hamlets:

Bickleigh, Butterleigh, Cadeleigh, Clayhidon, Coldridge, Colebrooke, Cruwys Morchard, Down St Mary, Hittisleigh, Hockworthy, Holcombe Rogus, Huntsham, Kennerleigh, Morebath, Nymet Rowland, Oakford, Poughill, Puddington, Shobrooke, Stockleigh Pomeroy, Stoodleigh, Templeton, Uplowman, Washfield, Wembworthy, Zeal Monachorum.

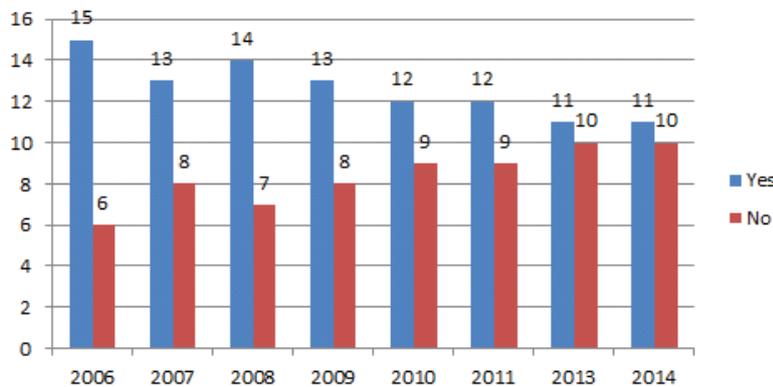
- 2.3 A range of services and facilities was drawn up to check the level of provision of all settlements above. These included Doctor, library, school, pre-schools and nurseries, shop, pub, hall, Post Office and bus service. Previously petrol stations were checked but as there are so few these are no longer monitored. From this year Pre-schools and nurseries are now being monitored.
- 2.4 The results were achieved through a combination of site inspections and of desk-based assessment of official websites e.g. Devon County Council, NHS, Post Office.
- 2.5 Each service or facility was analysed pictorially as a whole for all settlements. Any changes have been noted otherwise services or facilities remain the same as the previous year.

Doctor

3.1 The NHS was set up to provide healthcare for all citizens, based on need. It can be seen below that many communities in rural areas do not have comprehensive provision.



Doctor in designated villages



3.2 Eleven of the 21 designated villages have access to a doctor within the village. Four of the eleven villages that had a doctor had a “branch surgery”, offering limited surgery times and services. A branch surgery is very often a subsidiary service to a main surgery, based in a particular location e.g. village hall or a mobile service. Since 2011 Halberton has lost its surgery. None of the non-designated settlements have a doctors’ surgery.

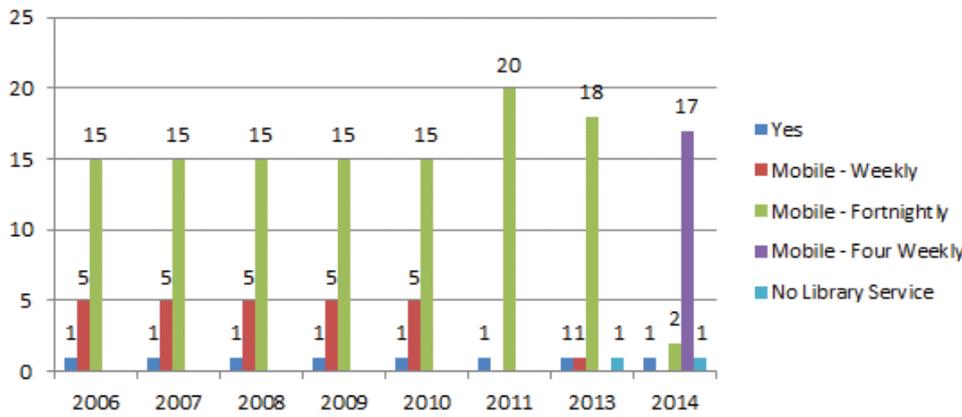
3.3 Over time the strain on NHS budgets has resulted in reduced provision of healthcare services to small communities. It means that certain groups within rural communities e.g. the elderly or young people can find it difficult to access the healthcare that they need. When looking at rural healthcare provision it needs to be remembered that there are differences from healthcare in more urban areas. For example a doctor in a rural area will often need a larger range of clinical skills and may experience difficulties associated with distance and travel.

Library

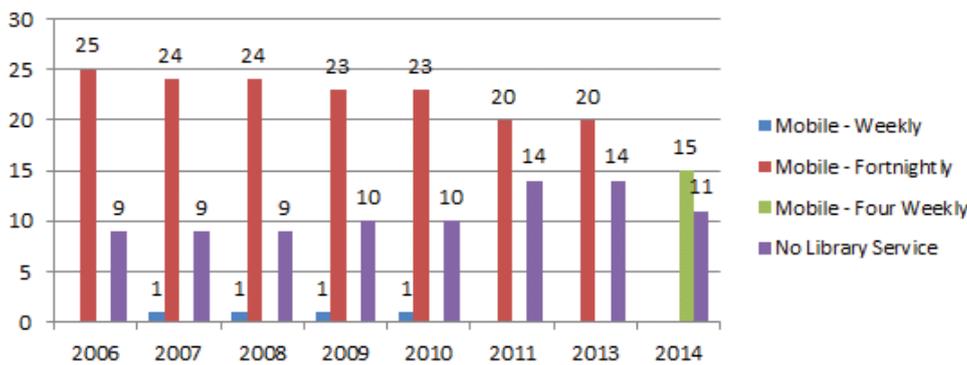
4.1 The public library is a unique institution, which aims to meet the information needs of the public, stimulate and enrich people’s experience of imaginative and creative work and support people’s formal and informal educational requirements.

4.2 A mobile library service brings a town service to isolated rural settlements and communities and very often the library van visits hard to reach places, where there is not even a bus service e.g. Butterleigh and Clayhidon. In many places the mobile library visit is the only remaining public service and in being so it is able to enrich rural life and help to overcome isolation by providing library and information services in new and imaginative ways.

Library service in designated villages



Library service in non-designated villages/hamlets



4.3 Uffculme is the only one of the settlements selected to have a permanent library, while most of the other settlements are served by some sort of mobile library service. 12 settlements have no service at all. Following a revamp of the library service effective from April 2014 Bow which previously had no library service, now has a four weekly service. However, Culmstock, Poughill and Shobrooke no longer have a service. All services previously fortnightly are now four weekly except Bradninch and Hemyock which remain fortnightly.

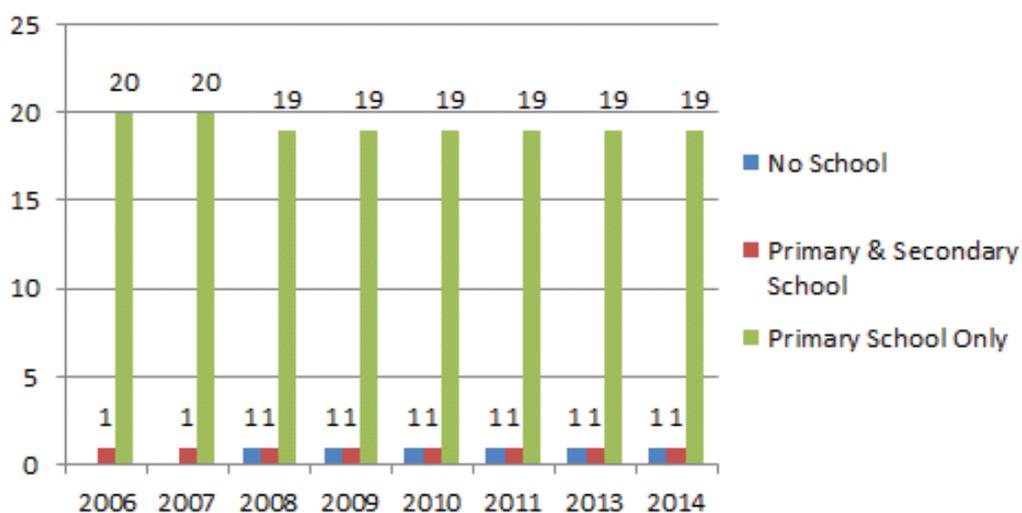
Educational facilities



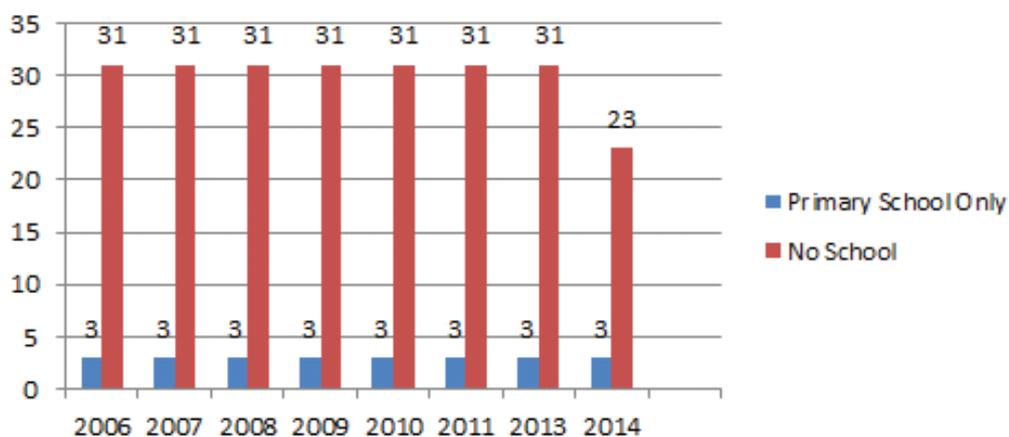
5.1 Educational facilities include schools, pre-schools and nurseries. From this year, pre-schools and nurseries are also checked in addition to schools.

5.2 A school can be an important element of a thriving village.

School in designated villages



School in non-designated villages/hamlets



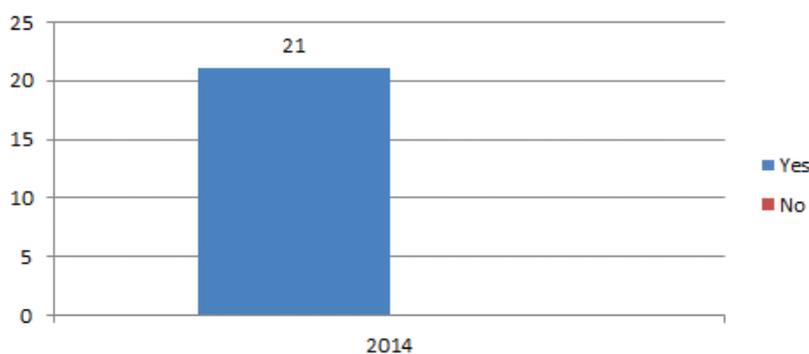
5.3 Unfortunately schools in rural areas are increasingly coming under more pressure because of falling pupil numbers. Within Mid Devon Chawleigh school officially closed at the end of August 2007, as the number of pupils had declined. Other village schools in Mid Devon may come under threat of closure if their number of pupils declines.

5.4 The above graph shows all of the designated villages had a primary school until Chawleigh school closed. Of the non-designated settlements only 3 have schools (Bickleigh, Holcombe Rogus and Uplowman). In addition, planning permission was granted in 2014 for the expansion and relocation of the primary school in Newton St Cyres, which allows the school to move to a more suitable site with modern facilities.

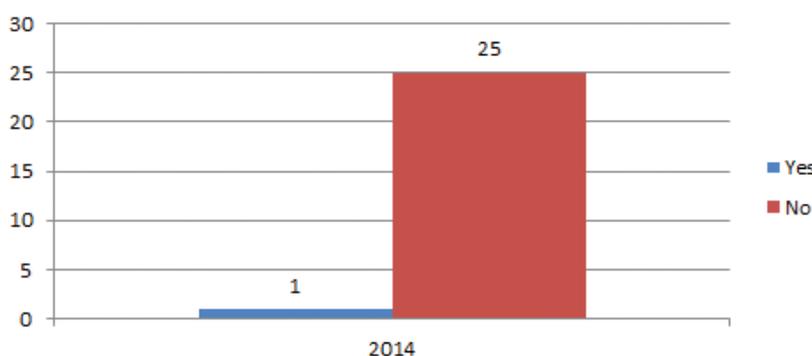
5.5 There are many benefits of rural schools. Children are educated closer to home and the curriculum can be directly related to the local environment. There is easy accessibility for parents and teachers alike. The rural village primary school may also play a key role in the social, as well as educational life of the community and it may provide a rich cultural resource for the village and be a focus for a range of activities. A balance has to be struck between the difficulties and increased costs of maintaining a very small school and the consequences of its closure for young children, particularly in terms of travelling times.

5.6 From this year pre-schools and nurseries are now being checked. All of the 21 designated villages have a pre-school/nursery within them. Of the 26 non-designated settlements only Bickleigh has one.

Pre-school/nursery in designated villages



Pre-school/nursery in non-designated villages

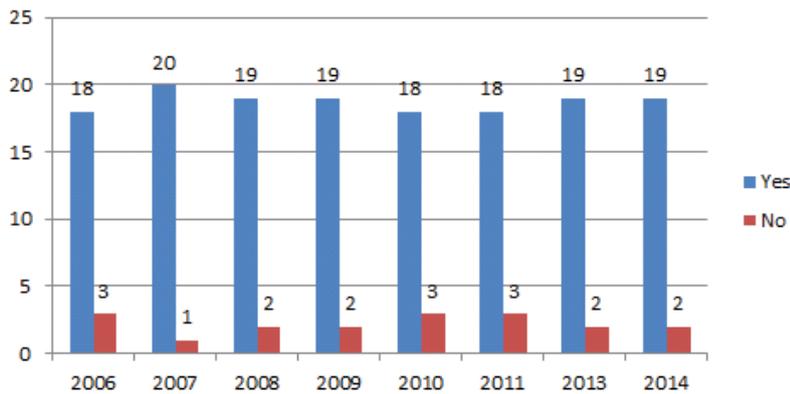


Shop

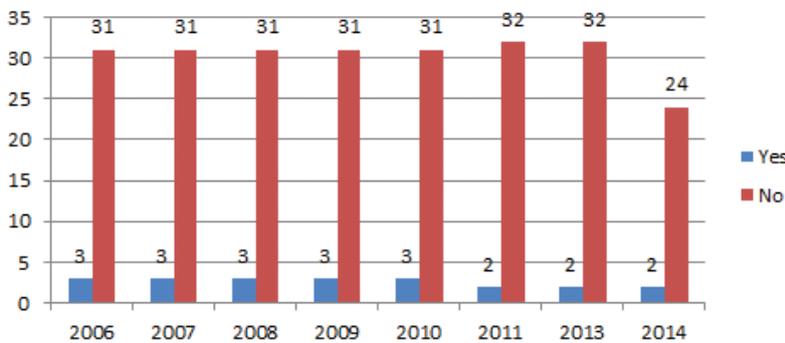
6.1 Village shops play a vital role in community social cohesion and as a local information centre.



Shop in designated villages



Shop in non-designated villages/hamlets



6.2 As can be seen above the majority of the designated villages have a shop and a lot of them are also combined with the Post Office. The majority of the non-designated settlements do not have one. Chawleigh had no Post Office or shop since 2009, but a new purpose-built shop has now opened.

6.3 It has been increasingly difficult for rural settlements to maintain their local shop services in the face of increasing trading pressures from larger supermarket chains and from the adverse impacts of wide ranging changes in the patterns of demographics, transport and lifestyles in rural communities. However, local planning policy prevents the change of community facilities to other uses where this would damage the settlement's ability to meet its own day-to-day needs or result in the total loss of such services to the community.

Pub

7.1 The pub is often the main or only focus of community life in rural areas. It has been given royal approval as the heart of village life (see below).

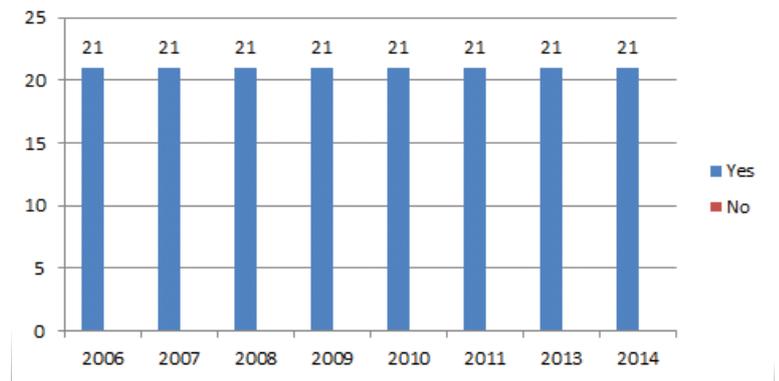
7.2 “Rural communities, and this country’s way of life, are facing unprecedented challenges the country pub, which has been at the heart of village life for centuries, is disappearing in many areas. By providing new services from the pub, such as a post office or a shop, not only keeps an essential service in the village or brings one in, but increases the income of the pub itself, giving it a more secure future.” HRH Prince Charles.

7.3 Even the smallest places can have a pub, such as Butterleigh which has an estimated population of 130 people (source: Devon County Council, 2012 estimates). Some villages have more than one pub, such as Chawleigh and Silverton. Since the last survey Oakford’s pub has reopened and Stoodleigh now has a pub.

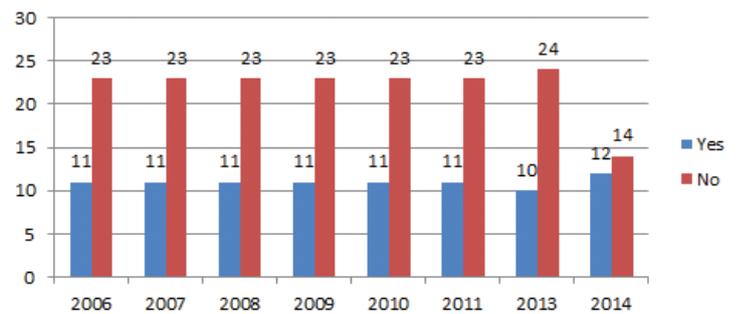
7.4 Over recent years many pubs have had to diversify, so they remain a viable and vital part of their rural communities. Post offices, grocery counters, pharmacy collection points, dry cleaners, delicatessens and internet cafes are some of the examples of businesses that have been introduced into pubs across Britain to help them remain at the hub of their community.



Pub in designated villages



Pub in non-designated villages/hamlets



Hall

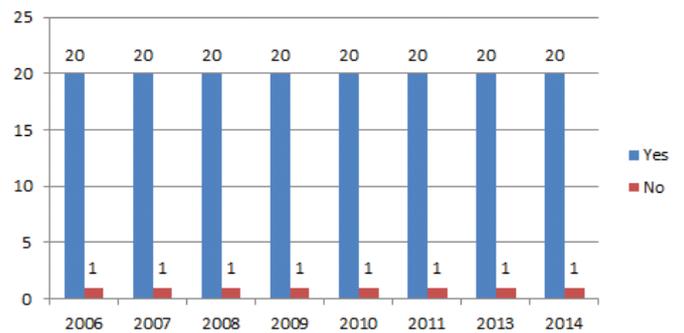
8.1 Village halls and other community buildings are the focus for people who live in rural communities and provide a vital local resource for the villages and parishes they serve.

8.2 Halls come in many different forms including memorial halls and halls belonging to churches. Only 1 out of the 47 surveyed settlements does not have a hall, which indicates the importance of them within the rural community. Village halls are no longer just a place to meet for social occasions such as parties, wedding receptions, guides and scouts clubs but often provide a venue for a range of other activities such as local health facilities, farmers' markets, lunch clubs for older people and IT facilities.

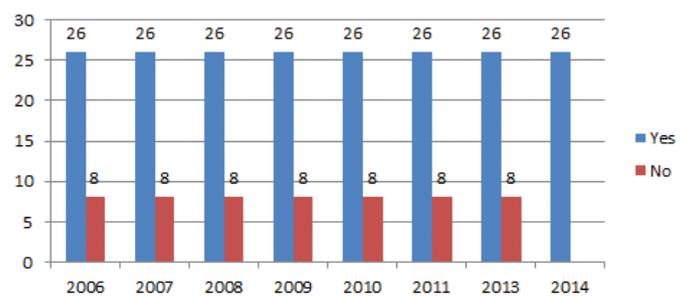
8.3 Many settlements have energetic and committed village hall committees, and many projects have stemmed from involving the community, tapping into their talents, time and skills.



Hall in designated villages



Hall in non-designated villages/hamlets



Post Office

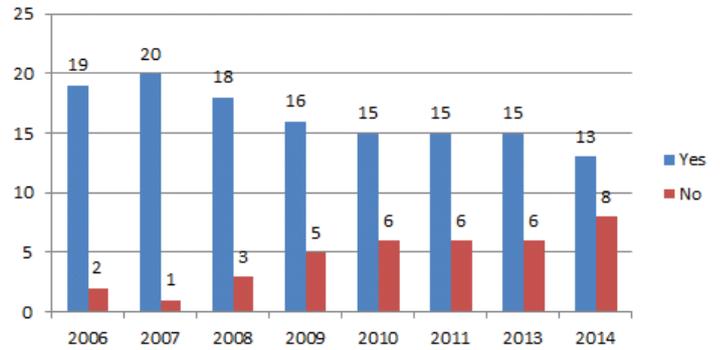
9.1 Post Offices are central to a vibrant and focused local community.

9.2 According to the Post Office almost all rural branches are loss-making, and this could be one of the reasons for not only the decline but the fact that a lot of Post Offices are now provided as part of a larger franchised business such as SPAR or Londis. Many rural Post Offices are linked to village stores. There seems to be no correlation between village/settlement size and whether there is a Post Office. For instance, Kennerleigh parish has a total population of 76 (Devon County Council 2012 estimate) yet it has a thriving Post Office, while the village of Shobrooke with a parish population of 542 does not have a Post Office.

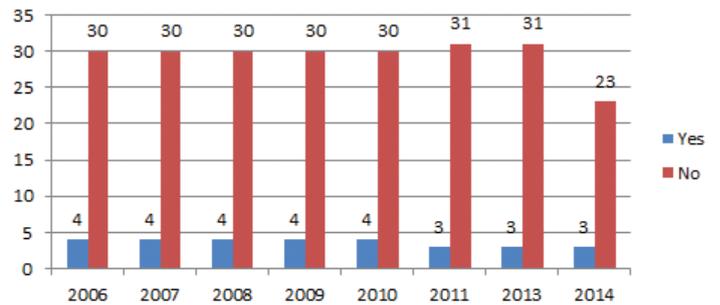
9.3 According to the Post Office, “94 percent of people live within a mile of a Post Office™ branch.” However, for the smaller settlements surveyed that do not have a Post Office most will fall within the 6% of the population that do not live within a mile, due to the rural nature of the district.

9.4 The Post Office has tried to address the issue of rural postal services and rural isolation by creating the “Postbus”. Postbuses pick up passengers as well as post, twice a day, so people in even the remotest towns and villages can get around and keep in touch. Unfortunately there is no such service in the South West.

Post Office in designated villages



Post Office in non-designated villages/hamlets



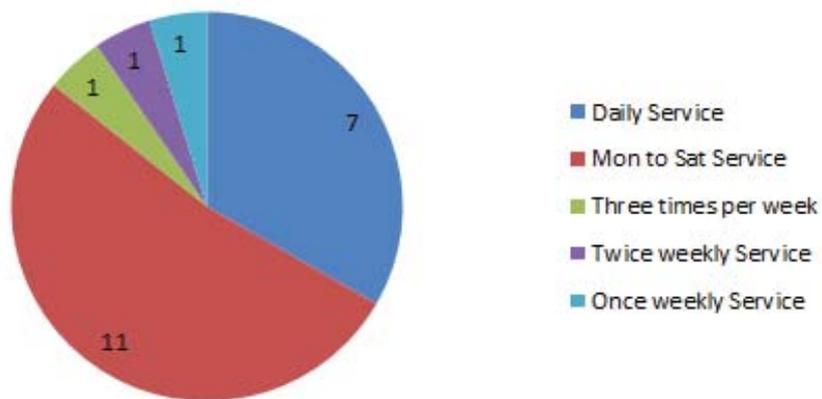
9.5 In recent years, Post Offices have closed at Crediton (Exeter Road), Bow, Chawleigh, Halberton, Lapford, Morchard Bishop and Yeoford.

Bus Service

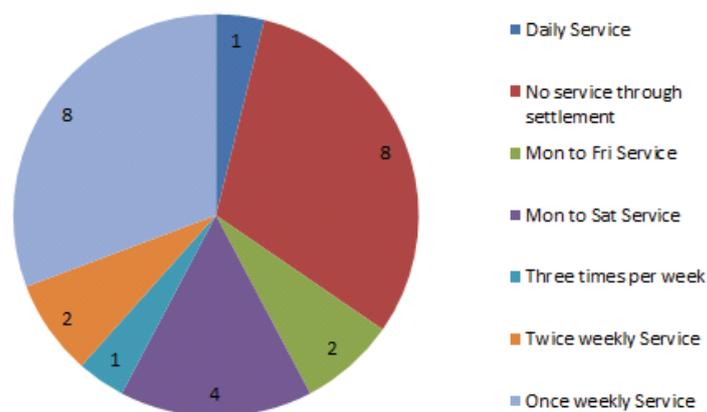
10.1 Having a bus service gives people in rural areas improved access to work, education, healthcare, shopping and recreational activities and by so doing assists in reducing their social isolation. It can also help rural economies provide access to jobs.



Bus service from designated villages to market town or bigger settlement



Bus service from non-designated villages/hamlets to market town or bigger settlement



10.2 In surveying service provision it was looked to see if there was a bus to one of the market towns (Tiverton, Cullompton or Crediton) or one of the larger settlements e.g. Exeter, Taunton and the frequency of any such service.

10.3 What can often happen is that even if there is a bus service, it is not used to its full potential, and this inevitably leads to its eventual decline.

10.4 There have been several initiatives within Devon as a whole to try and combat the issue of rural public transport.

10.5 The Devon Rural Transport Partnership (DRTP) was launched in 1999 to investigate and address rural transport issues in Devon. The Partnership is made up of over 30 voluntary, community and statutory agencies that all have an interest in improving access to services within the county.

10.6 A Community Bus Scheme involves the operation of a small bus by a community-based organisation, utilising volunteer drivers to provide regular, scheduled local bus services planned in response to local needs on a non-profit making basis. They have proved to be an invaluable asset to the more remote and isolated communities where conventional Public Transport cannot meet the identified need in a cost effective manner. There is such a scheme in Mid Devon – the Exe Valley Market Bus – which operates North of Tiverton.

10.7 Ring & Ride Schemes also operate within a number of towns and rural locations throughout Devon. They are the main initiative in the provision of public transport for disabled and frail elderly people and provide a local service into local towns to allow potentially house bound people the opportunity to shop and use local amenities.

10.8 Three of the designated villages (Lapford, Copplestone and Yeoford) are also served by a rail link to either Crediton or Exeter, Monday to Sunday.

10.9 Since the last survey Cruwys Morchard now has a Monday to Saturday bus service (previously a Monday to Friday service). Also Oakford now has a twice weekly service (Exe Valley Market & Community Bus).

Summary

People living in the countryside do so for a number of reasons including the fresh air, wide-open spaces and slower pace of life. However, isolation can often come at a cost when it comes to access to services that can be taken for granted in towns and cities. Those that are likely to be disadvantaged are the less affluent, the elderly, those with young children and teenagers who are often at a disadvantage when it comes to something basic like getting to the shops or travelling to work. Demographic changes such as the outward migration of young people and the inward migration of older retired populations to rural settlements often increases the need for access to services in the places when provision is limited.

Service decline may not affect everyone within Mid Devon. However, in a district as sparsely populated as Mid Devon, a high proportion of residents live outside of the main towns and require adequate access to services and facilities to reduce the need for car travel and maintain a sense of community.

Within Mid Devon, the report highlights the limited range of facilities and services in many of the rural settlements. There have been some changes since 2012/13 both positive and negative. Post Office closures and reduced mobile library services reflect a longer term trend when such facilities are no longer financially viable to run. However, bus provision has increased, and two public houses have re-opened in the last year demonstrating that the overall trend is not exclusively one of decline.

Contacts

If you have any questions about this survey please contact:

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Annex – Data used in survey

All information was gathered through a combination of desk based investigation and site visits. Below are the 21 designated villages in alphabetical order followed by the remaining non-designated settlements showing services and facilities within them.

Designated Villages

Bow – Doctor, Mobile Library, Primary School, Pre-School/Nursery, Shop (Co-Op at Burston), Pub, Hall, and a Monday to Saturday Bus Service.

Bradninch – Branch Doctors Surgery, Mobile Library, Primary School, Pre-School/Nursery, Shop, Pub, Hall, Post Office (Within Spar shop), and a daily Bus Service.

Burlescombe (Includes Westleigh) – Mobile Library, Primary School, Pre-School/Nursery, Pub, Hall, Bus Service three times a week.

Chawleigh – Mobile Library, Pre-School/Nursery, Shop, Pub, Hall and a Monday to Saturday bus service.

Cheriton Bishop – Doctor, Mobile Library, Primary School, Pre-School/Nursery, Shop, Pub, Hall, Post Office (Within Mace store), and a once weekly Bus Service.

Cheriton Fitzpaine – Doctor, Mobile Library, Primary School, Pre-School/Nursery, Shop (Within Post Office), Pub, Hall, Post Office, and a Monday to Saturday Bus Service.

Copplestone – Mobile Library, Primary School, Pre-School/Nursery, Shop, also a Farm Shop, Pub, Post Office (Within Nisa Local), a Monday to Saturday Bus Service.

Culmstock – Primary School, Pre-School/Nursery, Shop, Pub, Hall, Monday to Saturday Bus Service.

Halberton – Mobile Library, Primary School, Pre-School/Nursery, Farm shop, Pub, Hall, and a Daily Bus Service.

Hemyock – Doctor, Mobile Library, Primary School, Pre-School/Nursery, Shop (Spar), Pub, Hall, Post Office, a Monday To Saturday Bus Service.

Kentisbeare – Mobile Library, Primary School, Pre-School/Nursery, Shop and Post Office combined, Pub, Hall, and a Monday to Saturday Bus Service.

Lapford – Mobile Library, Primary School, Pre-School/Nursery, Shop within garage, Pub, Hall and a Monday to Saturday Bus Service.

Morchurch Bishop – Branch Doctors Surgery, Mobile Library, Primary School, Pre-School/Nursery, Shop, Pub, Hall and a Monday to Saturday Bus Service.

Newton St Cyres – Mobile Library, Primary School, Pre-School/Nursery, Shop and Post Office combined, also a Farm Shop, Pub, Hall, and a Daily Bus Service.

Sampford Peverell – Doctor, Mobile Library, Primary School, Pre-School/Nursery, Shop, also a Farm Shop, Post Office (within Spar), Pub, Hall, and a Daily Bus Service.

Sandford – Mobile Library, Primary School, Pre-School/Nursery, Shop and Post Office combined, Pub, Hall, and a Monday to Saturday Bus Service.

Silverton – Doctor, Mobile Library, Primary School, Pre-School/Nursery, Shop, Pub, Hall, Post Office (within Spar) and a Daily Bus Service.

Thorverton – Branch Doctors Surgery, Mobile Library, Primary School, Pre-School/Nursery, Shop (Bus in Car Park), also a Farm Shop, Pub, Hall, Post Office (mobile unit in car park), and a Monday to Saturday Bus Service.

Uffculme – Doctor, Library, Primary and Secondary Schools, Pre-School/Nursery, Shop, Pub, Hall, Post Office (Within Premier Osmond stores), and a Daily Bus Service.

Willand – Branch Doctors Surgery, Mobile Library, Primary School, Pre-School/Nursery, Shop, Pub, Hall, Post Office and a Daily Bus Service.

Yeoford – Mobile Library, Primary School, Pre-School/Nursery, Pub, Hall, and a twice weekly Bus Service.

Non-designated villages/hamlets

Bickleigh – Primary School, Pre-School/Nursery, Pub, Hall, and a Daily Bus Service.

Butterleigh – Mobile Library, Pub, and Hall.

Cadeleigh – Pub, Hall, and a once weekly Bus Service.

Clayhidon – Mobile Library, Pub and a Hall.

Coldridge – Mobile Library, Hall, and a once weekly Bus Service.

Colebrooke – Mobile Library, Hall, and a twice weekly Bus Service.

Cruwys Morchard – Pub (in Pennymoor which is within Cruwys Morchard parish), Hall, and a Monday to Saturday Bus Service.

Down St Mary – Mobile Library, Hall, and a once weekly Bus Service.

Hittisleigh – Hall.

Hockworthy – Hall, and a once weekly Bus Service.

Holcombe Rogus – Mobile Library, School, Shop and Post Office combined (Within garage), Pub, Hall and a Three times a week Bus Service.

Huntsham – Mobile Library, Hall, and a once weekly Bus Service.

Kennerleigh – Mobile Library, Shop and Post Office combined, Hall, and a once weekly Bus Service.

Morebath – Hall, and a Monday to Saturday Bus Service.

Nymet Rowland – Mobile Library, Hall.

Oakford – Mobile Library, Pub, Hall and a twice weekly Bus Service.

Poughill – Hall, and a Monday to Friday Bus Service.

Puddington – Mobile Library, Hall, and a Monday to Friday Bus Service.

Shobrooke – Pub, Hall, and a Monday to Saturday Bus Service.

Stockleigh Pomeroy – Hall, and a Monday to Saturday Bus Service.

Stoodleigh – Mobile Library, Pub and a Hall.

Templeton – Hall.

Uplowman – School, Pub, Hall, Post Office, and a once weekly Bus Service.

Washfield – Mobile Library and a Hall.

Wembworthy – Mobile Library, Pub, and a Hall.

Zeal Monachorum – Mobile Library, Pub, Hall, and a once weekly Bus Service.

The above information are the findings as at 31st March 2014. Services are changing all the time. If they have changed please contact Janet Crook on the above contact details and future surveys will reflect the most up-to-date position.

