1. GENERAL OVERVIEW

Statement of aims
The Centre for Rural Research (CRR) has five main aims:
- to supply an independent consultancy service for quality rural research;
- to develop national and international research interests whilst maintaining a local focus on Worcestershire and neighbouring counties;
- to disseminate knowledge in an accessible manner to the wider public including policy-makers, countryside managers, those in education, voluntary organisations and people living and working in the countryside;
- to contribute to the development of geography and rural studies;
- to assist in the strategic delivery of the mission of the University of Worcester in the key areas of ‘research’ and ‘contribution to the region’.

Summary of Position
This report covers the activities of the CRR from 1st September 2007 until 31st August 2008. A Senior Fellow [Peter Carruthers (PC)] was appointed on secondment from the Commission for Rural Communities (CRC) in April 2008 and he continues to act as an expert advisor for that organisation. Cheryl Jones rejoined the CRR team following her stint as Director of the Abberley and Malvern Hills Geopark. Two full-time project-based Research Assistants (Elizabeth Connolly and Katie Milburn) left to take up employment elsewhere. The financial resource base of CRR remained healthy at the end of the period. CRR continued to deliver successfully client contract work and completed one major project in the form of ‘Polytunnels and Rural Communities’, completed a rapid overview of ‘Hill Farming Rural Communities’ and made a significant contribution to a project on ‘Rural Identity and Land’ run by the University of Wales, Aberystwyth. All three pieces of work were undertaken for the Commission for Rural Communities (CRC), with whom a good working relationship was established. There were other projects undertaken either as preliminary work to gain future contracts or carrying forward from the previous reporting period. Additionally, some unsuccessful tenders, involving the expenditure of effort not seen on paper, were made within the reporting period. All this activity amounted to a busy year for CRR and its staff.

Work continues to be commissioned by a variety of rural organisations based on CRR’s reputation for quality in research. CRR remains highly active as a University of Worcester research centre, continuing to raise the research profile of the institution. It was identified as a specialist area of research within the Geography Unit of Assessment.
submission to the latest Research Assessment Exercise (one of only two units immediately identified for submission across the entire institution). In total, two new research projects were initiated in the period of the report, a significant original contribution made to another managed from another university, with four others from the previous year also completed.

It is necessary to report upon issues remaining from both the 5-year Research Review event of March 2007 and the 2006/7 Annual Report. Taking the Review first, a synopsis of how the outstanding points have been taken forward is as follows:

1. CRR has revamped its website within the University webpages during summer and autumn 2007.
2. Progress has been made on understanding the process of full economic costing (FEC). A *Heads of Research Centre Working Group*, convened by the Registrar, has been helpful in this respect.
3. Research Students – the Director was successful in bidding for a University Research Studentship on GM in agriculture but it was disappointing that the student decided to withdraw in Summer 2008.
4. Masters courses – are under discussion in the Institute.
5. KTPS and Business Partnerships Office – an unsuccessful bid for funding was made relating to a project on red deer.

As far as the Report on the previous period is concerned, the follow-up actions can be reported as thus.

1. CRR has successfully cemented a fruitful relationship with the Commission for Rural Communities.
2. A new (2007) academic post in Human Geography has the potential to enhance CRR’s activities.
3. New computers for research staff have been secured.
4. Financial procedures continue to be discussed and developed.
5. The website has been updated.

In the coming year, PC will be making an important contribution to CRR. It was pleasing that, after their experience of working with us, our research assistants are highly successful in the employment market. Overall, CRR continues to make very tangible contributions to raising the profile of the University of Worcester in internationally in the world of research and within the regional community of the West Midlands.

2. CURRENT STAFF
CRR had the following staff profile, as at September 2008.

i) Current Academic Staff
Dr. Nick Evans (NE, Director)
Dr. Heather Barrett (HB)
Dr. David Storey (DS)
Dr. Peter Carruthers (PC)
Dr. Cheryl Jones (CJ)
ii) Former Research Staff
Full-time Research Assistant: Miss Elizabeth Connolly (EC) (Sept 2004 – Apr 2008)
Full-time Research Assistant: Miss Katie Milburn (KM) (Feb 2007 – July 2008)

iii) Casual Research Staff
Ms Deborah Collins (DC)

iv) Line Management
Dr. John Fagg (JF), Head of Department of ASGA (until August 2008).

v) Administrative / Support
Mrs Clare Smith (CS), with Miss Laura Starkie (LS), with assistance from Ms Trish Clutterbuck, Mrs Lisa Hopkins and Dr. Anne Sinnott.

vi) Research Associates
Dr. Ian Maddock (IM): river management and conservation research.
Mr David Lovelace (DL): independent consultant, not a member of UoW staff, sub-contracted to assist with specific contract work.
Dr. Richard Yarwood (RY): University of Plymouth (former UCW staff).

3. POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTS
Mrs Jayne Thatcher was engaged on an MPhil/PhD studentship entitled Hybridity and Husbandry: revealing discourses of genetic modification amongst farmers from September 2007 (supervisor NE) but withdrew summer 2008.

4. RECORD OF PUBLICATIONS FOR THE YEAR

i) Publically released (print or e-versions) articles in Refereed International Journals


ii) Contributions to books


iii) Forthcoming Publications Accepted in the Period 2006/7


iv) Refereeing Activity in the Period 2007/8
In addition to publication, NE again acted as a journal referee this year for international academic journals across and beyond the discipline of Geography.
  o Journal of Rural Studies (four times);
  o International Journal of Agricultural Sustainability
  o Geographical Journal
  o Land Use Policy (twice)
  o Children’s Geographies

Similarly, DS acted as a referee for:
  o Journal of Rural Studies,
  o Crime Prevention and Community Safety
  o Children’s Geographies

DS was also an External Reviewer for the Research Fellowship Scheme, Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick, Ireland.

NE refereed a project proposal submitted to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

The growth in this activity is again a mark of the increasing external, and indeed international, esteem in which CRR’s academic staff are held.

v) Book Reviews


DS: Review of S. Gupta and T. Omoniyi (eds) Cultures of Economic Migration: International Perspectives, Gender, Place and Culture (in press).


DS: Review of C. Hartman and G.D. Squires (eds) There is no such thing as a Natural Disaster. Race, Class, and Hurricane Katrina, Geography 93 (2), 2008


### 5. CONFERENCES: ATTENDANCE AND PRESENTATIONS

Storey, D. *Contemporary approaches to rural development: Lauding the local*. Invited participant to *Space to Place: The Next Rural Economies* workshop, University of Northern British Columbia, Prince George, Canada, May 2008.


Evans, N. Address to the Annual General Meeting of Worcestershire CPRE, Worcester, June 2008.


DS participated in a series of seminars organised by the Sport, Heritage and History Research Network (based at De Montfort University) held at De Montfort University, All England Lawn Tennis Club, Wimbledon and Liverpool FC

### 6. LECTURES AND SIMILAR ACTIVITIES

DS attended Worcestershire County Council Rural Action Plan meeting.

NE was invited to become a member of the European Rural Group of the West Midlands Rural Affairs Forum hosted by Advantage West Midlands, attending two meetings in Birmingham.

CRR hosted and sponsored the Worcester Diocese *Rural Children Rural Church* event, University of Worcester, October 2007.
CRR hosts regular meetings of the Chaplaincy for Agricultural and Rural Life (CARL) of Worcester Diocese.

7. DESCRIPTION OF CONSULTANCY UNDERTAKEN
Staff have been engaged on the following funded research projects in the year 2007/8. These are additional to any personal academic research projects undertaken. Full details of these projects are available from the project leaders whose initials appear next to each project. Further, several projects mentioned in last year’s report have been completed to the satisfaction of clients and staff have written up findings for publication in academic journals.

i) Consultancy Projects in 2007/8


A Second Evidence Base for West Midlands Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NE, KM, EC) For the West Midlands AONB consortium.

The National Stepometer Campaign (KM, EC) Department of Sport and Exercise Science, University of Worcester.


Land and identity (DS) Section of wider project Rural People and the Land – the Case for Connections. Commissioned by Commission for Rural Communities (sub-contracted by University of Aberystwyth).

Social and Community Impacts of Changes in the Hill Farming Economy (DS, EC, KM, NE) For the Commission for Rural Communities.

Polytunnels and Rural Communities (NE, KM, EC) For the Commission for Rural Communities.

ii) Consultancy Portfolio
This sub-section provides a comprehensive listing of completed consultancy research projects undertaken by CRR since its formation in 1996 to date (only current staff indicated in brackets).

1996 The Geography of Rare Breeds of Domestic Livestock (NE, RY) Nuffield Foundation.

1997 Environmental Monitoring and Evaluation of the Countryside Stewardship Scheme (NE) Report to Countryside Commission. For CCRU, Cheltenham & Gloucester College of H.E.
1997 *SSSI Owner-Occupier Segmentation Project Phase 1* (NE) Report to English Nature. With CCRU.


1998 *SSSI Owner-Occupier Segmentation Project Phase 2* (NE) Report to English Nature. With CCRU.


1998 *The Rare Breeds Meat Marketing Scheme* (RY, NE) for Rare Breeds Survival Trust.

1998 *Obstacles to Affordable Housing in Rural Areas* (RY) Report to Worcestershire Housing Association and the Housing Corporation.

1998 *SSSI Owner-Occupier Segmentation Project Phase 3* (NE) Report to English Nature. With CCRU.

1999 *Deer and Grazing Management Assessment of Little Doward, Crocker’s Ash, Herefordshire* (NE) Report to the Woodland Trust.

1999 *Urban and Rural Interdependency* (DS, RY) Report to Advantage West Midlands.


2001 *Child Care Provision in Bromyard* (HB, DS, RY) Bromyard HOPE group, LEADER II.


2001 *The Economic Impact of Foot and Mouth Disease in Worcestershire* (HB, NE, DS) Report to Worcestershire County Council.


2002 *Agricultural Biodiversity Resources of Welsh Domestic Livestock* (NE, with RY) Report to Countryside Council for Wales.


2004 The University College Worcester Student Survey (NE) Report to Academic Quality Unit, UCW.


2004 What Kind of and Institution Are We? (NE) Report to Equal Opportunities Department, UCW.


2004 Fish Hill Picnic Place Visitor Survey (EC, NE) Report to the Countryside Service, Worcestershire County Council.


2006 Pershore Bridges Picnic Place Visitor Survey (NE, EC, NG, ME) Report to the Countryside Service, Worcestershire County Council.


2007 Access to Foundation Degrees (EC, NE). For Aimhigher West Midlands.


2007 The State of the Malvern Hills AONB (NE, EC) Report to the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership, £6000

2007 A Second Evidence Base for West Midlands Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. In progress for the West Midlands AONB consortium.(NE, KM, EC)

2007 The National Stepometer Campaign (KM, EC) Data input and analysis for Dr. D. Peters and H. Jarrett, Department of Sport and Exercise Science, University of Worcester.

2007 The Geographical Distribution of Undergraduate Applicants to the University of Worcester (EC) GIS analysis for Registry Services, University of Worcester.


2008 A Second Evidence Base for West Midlands Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NE, KM, EC) For the West Midlands AONB consortium. £15,000
2008 **Land and identity** (DS) Section of wider project *Rural People and the Land – the Case for Connections*. Commissioned by Commission for Rural Communities (sub-contracted by University of Aberystwyth).

2008 **Social and Community Impacts of Changes in the Hill Farming Economy** (DS, EC, KM, NE) For the Commission for Rural Communities.

2008 **Polytunnels and Rural Communities** (NE, KM, EC) For the Commission for Rural Communities.

8. RECORD OF FUNDING APPLICATIONS

*Discussions for project work are currently ongoing with:*

The Rare Breeds Survival Trust on *Developing an Index of Geographical Endemism as an Alternative Indicator of the Risk Factor to British Domestic Livestock.*

*Funding Applications Awaiting Decision:*

*Feasibility Study Of Community Engagement In The Geopark Area*, application to Natural England (CJ)

*CRR’s unsuccessful tenders were:*

*Rural People and the Land – the Case for Connections*. Commission for Rural Communities (another contractor more competitive)

*Service needs and delivery following major life events in rural areas*. Commission for Rural Communities (large number of bids by other contractors)

**Dr. Nick Evans, Director**

**October 2008**