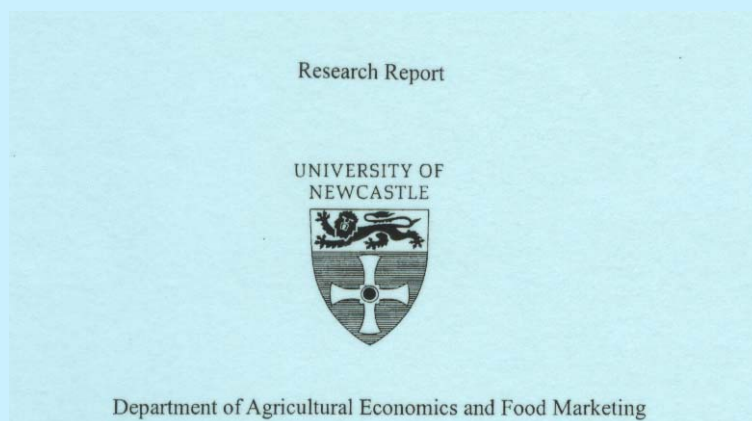




**ROUTES TO INDEPENDENCE: YOUNG PEOPLE VOICING
CONCERNS, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE
NORTHERN FELLS, CUMBRIA**

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Keira Harvey
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**Centre for Rural Economy
Research Report**

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April 2005

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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all those who took part in this research despite their busy schedules. Their names have been changed in this report to protect their identity. We are especially grateful to those who drove people to our meeting places. We would also like to thank the steering group who have supported this project with good humour and advice and we would especially like to mention Zoe Sutton for all her work. Katy would like to thank the B&B owners who made her feel at home whilst she was working in the Northern Fells – they know who they are! Finally, many thanks to the Northern Rock Foundation for funding this project.

1. INTRODUCTION

This project is about young people in the Northern Fells of Cumbria. Being young has never been easy as individuals grapple for independence and a sense of identity, make choices that can have repercussions for the rest of their lives and cope with others' perceptions of them. Today, being young in Britain is no easier. Pick up a newspaper and young people are often described as 'yobs' or 'hooligans' who are to be feared, loathed or dealt with. These references are fuelled by reports of behavioural trends for British teens who 'rank among the worst in the world for obesity, binge drinking, cannabis consumption, sexual health problems and teenage pregnancy rates' (Rice-Knight, 2004: 25). Accounts for such teen behaviour and problems usually focus on family breakdown and women working longer hours away from home. More sophisticated explanations detail not only the limited state support for parents around such issues as the hours they work and childcare (especially when compared with EU countries with much better state support), but also include the pressures on young people to stay at school and to be academic achievers and the lack of specialist provision in everything from health services to prisons.

Young people living in the Northern Fells of Cumbria are not removed from the pressures that affect these trends and the policy changes and failures of the state. In this project when we refer to young people we are writing about 14-24 year olds. Whilst this is a big age range, it encompasses young people in the Northern Fells as they attempt to make the transition from childhood to adulthood and independence. In recent years the route to independence has stretched as young people are often dependent on, say, their parents for longer to provide them with affordable accommodation and to support them through university.

Sometimes achieving independence in the Northern Fells of Cumbria is particularly hard. Mediating the broader pressures that young people face today are concerns specific to the Northern Fells with agricultural restructuring and labour market changes, the escalating cost of houses and the erosion of local services, particularly transport. Changes in the private and state systems affect the choices available to young people with regard to their livelihood strategies and ambitions.

Whilst common themes emerge from our research and will be a platform for taking action, it is important to recognise that young people in the Northern Fells of Cumbria are not a uniform category. Policy changes regarding, for example, education or transport services affect young people in different ways according to, amongst other things, their age, gender, background, interests and networks. It is important to young people, and this project, that their individuality is recognised and valued.

This project emerged from concerns in the Northern Fells about the out-migration of young people and a need to know why young people are leaving the area, especially the extent to which they are being pushed away by the problems they face 'at home'. Sitting at its core from the outset were the livelihood strategies and ambitions of young people and their perceptions of economic and work opportunities. Other issues, such as affordable housing and transport issues, became important to the project as young people introduced them. The project attempted to make no presumptions about the needs of young people.

The objective of this project is two fold. The first phase of this project is research based, working with young people to examine the extent of the pressures and opportunities they face and their perceptions of these. The

second part to the project aims to relieve some of the pressures that young people identify in their lives. In a context where others (especially concerned adults) are in danger of speaking for, and on behalf of, young people, this project is about young people speaking for themselves about their lives, aspirations and concerns. For this reason, the project devised an innovative methodology, employing a young person to help with the research. This means that the findings embrace the wishes, hopes and concerns of young people and not adults.

1.1 Defining youth

Pivotal to the project are young people as they begin to negotiate the transition from childhood to independence through, for example, education, employment and setting up home. The period identified as youth is historically and socially variable and not sharply defined by boundaries that mark the end of childhood and the start of adulthood (Furlong 1997; Valentine 1998). Young people, for example, are allowed to leave school and work full-time at sixteen, but are unable to marry (without parental permission) and vote until they are aged eighteen and are not entitled to full adult social security benefits until they are twenty-five (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997). Clearly, youth, then, is:

“a period of social semi-dependency which forms a bridge between the total dependence of childhood and the independence of adulthood” (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997, 41).

Ni Laoire (2000) writes that:

"Youth (adolescence and young adulthood) can be understood as a process of transition from childhood to adulthood, from school to the labour market, to household and family formation" (1999, 234)

At a general level, this process is happening later in life in comparison to previous generations as young people in rural areas, for example, continue to live with their parents and remain dependent on them for longer as they manage loans for higher education and are confronted with escalating house prices (Shucksmith, 2004). The transition to independence, though, is not a simple process and young people differ in their experiences of it as structures and processes bear upon their lives in different ways (Ni Laoire 2000). Class, educational status, gender and membership of particular networks inter-sect and inter-relate to affect opportunities open to young people.

The age of a young person is important regarding their particular concerns. Although the project worked with 14-24 year olds, patterns emerged relating to the issues they raised depending on whether they were under or over the age of seventeen. According to their age then, two groups of young people form the bedrock of this project. Within those two groups other factors, such as educational attainment, mediate age to influence particular experiences and concerns.

For this project, issues of individualism and social exclusion are important regarding young people's transition to independence. Underpinning these issues are material and cultural processes that mediate the lives of young people to impact upon their out-migration. All

of this means that there are young people who want to (temporarily) leave rural areas and do, whilst others are unable to leave because of a lack of human, social and financial capital. Then there are young people who would prefer to remain in rural areas but are forced to leave because of a lack of local opportunities or they choose to stay despite these problems because of a strong sense of belonging to a community. The next section introduces material processes, followed by a section that explores cultural issues.

1.2 Material realities: Pathways to independence or social exclusion

Dealing with those material processes first, critical research has drawn attention to the material realities of social exclusion which systemically work at many levels to hinder the life chances of some young people and affect their ability to leave or stay in rural places like the Northern Fells. Shucksmith (2004) identifies the following key systems of social exclusion:

Private

State

Voluntary

Family and friend networks.

These mediate one another to make young people a heterogeneous group where experiences and choices differ depending on, for example, their qualifications, skills and family and social networks. Those young people then who are not socially excluded have skills and qualifications or access to good educational opportunities, leading to favourable jobs

facilitated by helpful family and social support along the way. The systems of social exclusion also mean that young people in rural areas become integrated into one of two quite separate labour markets. Those with good qualifications and skills have access to a national (well-paid with career opportunities) labour market enabling them (if they so choose) to be 'committed leavers'¹. Those who fail to do well at school are frequently limited to the local labour market where jobs are relatively poorly paid, insecure, unrewarding and with fewer prospects (Kraack and Kenway 2002; Shucksmith 2004; Rugg and Jones, 2000; Storey and Brannen, 2000; Furlong and Cartmel, 2000; Pavis et al, 2000). These young people are the 'reluctant stayers', who, despite their employment, experience social exclusion in jobs with limited prospects and low pay. Social exclusion is a relative concept with 'reluctant stayers' feeling excluded in comparison to the committed leavers and stayers who are also in paid work but have many more choices open to them (Pavis, Hubbard, and Platt 2001)). Underpinning systems of social exclusion, then, are social class and levels of education that divide young people and mediate the (lack of) opportunities open to them (Jamieson 2000). Gender is also significant, affecting, for example, cultural expectations and the sorts of jobs into which young people are encouraged, with repercussions for their out-migration (Stockdale, 2002; Ni Laoire, 1999).

¹ Whilst young people leave rural areas for various reasons, four different groups of out-migrants have been identified (Stockdale, 2002). 'Committed leavers' are highly educated and leave for employment reasons; 'reluctant stayers' are less educated and constrained by their lack of skills and finance; 'reluctant leavers' migrate because of the lack of local opportunities to achieve independence; and 'committed stayers' have a strong sense of belonging to the home community which outweighs any disadvantage of remaining there.

Research has also shown how systems work to exclude young people from owner occupation with low incomes and the cost of private sector housing excluding some young people from the purchase of affordable accommodation (Pavis et al., 2001). Furthermore, private rental markets are dependent on social networks and local knowledge, with those young people outside of such networks excluded from the best properties rented at affordable prices.

Identifying those who are (not) socially excluded requires difficult value judgements. Young people on relatively low wages, but living with their parents and with adequate disposable income and social life, might feel included for a certain period of their life, but socially excluded once they start considering setting up their own home. Single parents with no paid work might not feel socially excluded in a place where motherhood is valued and jobs are menial and low paid. Clearly attention needs to be paid to both individual resources of young people and their social arenas and, most importantly, their perception of these.

1.3 Cultural processes

This project is not just about structural factors that militate against young people staying in rural areas. It is also about the agency of young people and explores issues of identity, community and senses of belonging to explain the decision-making of young people and why some choose to stay and others leave (Jones 1999). Dynamic globalising processes mediate young people's experiences of living in the Northern Fells. These processes are characterised by flows of information, signs and people across locales, bringing about socio-cultural changes and mediating many of the resources and symbols for identity historically

available in the locality (Kraack and Kenway, 2002). Local cultures are the product of endless interaction as global influences infuse local cultures and young people's experiences of these (Massey 1998). This project explores how young people identify themselves in 'new times' and what this means for their aspirations and intent regarding their livelihood strategies and leaving or staying in the Northern Fells. A key part of these new times is a growing sense of risk and insecurity which has to be managed at an individual level as people rely more upon education and the labour market than traditional institutions such as the family and class affiliation (Furlong 1997). This has given rise to the concept of individualism.

Important to many young people is belonging to a sense of community, the boundaries of which are more symbolic than they are real. Cohen writes:

"Community exists in the minds of its members and should not be confused with geographic or sociographic assertions of 'fact'. By extension, the distinctiveness of communities and thus the reality of their boundaries, similarly lies in the mind, in the meaning that people attach to them, not in their structural forms" Cohen 1985: 98 in Jones

The symbolic boundaries of communities are most evident when they are under threat by, for example, in-comers who challenge the identities of communities with their alternative experiences and knowledges. A sense of community, then, plays a big part in whether or not people feel included or excluded. Closely entwined with a sense of community in rural places is the cultural context of rurality which embraces 'systems of meaning and relations that provide resources, constraints and points of resistance through which young people live out their lives and construct knowledges of rurality, society and space' (McCormack, 2002).

Sometimes young people sit uncomfortably with cultural constructions of rurality, upsetting imaginings of rurality as they behave in ways deemed (culturally) unacceptable that challenge the expectations and rules of 'traditional' community life (Jones, 2002; Kraack and Kenway, 2002). Similarly women can feel uncomfortable in the local pub, a symbol important to rural community life, as their behaviour is subject to surveillance in a way that that of men is not (Kraack and Kenway, 2002). Cultural issues help explain why, on the one hand, young people seek to escape the surveillance and constraints of rural life and why, on the other, communities are anxious about the out-migration of young people.

1.4 Doing the best for young people

The project exposes material processes and structures that lead to the exclusion of young people and hinder their ambitions. It is, though, careful to appreciate cultural processes that identify young people and mediate decisions to leave or stay in the Northern Fells. With dynamic globalising processes fuelling flows of information, signs and people across places, there is much leverage for young people to engage in a free-flowing project of identity construction. Those young people who are keen to disassociate themselves from the rural areas where they have been living, leave for other places that promise alternative lifestyles and consumption practices. These new places free young people from the surveillance of others sometimes keen to enforce their sense of 'traditional' community and rural idyll upon them. Whilst much has been written about identity practices in 'new' times and the ways in which 'new' forms of stratification around consumption are replacing the 'old' associated with social class, the agency of young people continues to be restricted by their qualifications and social class (Furlong and Cartmel,

1997; Jamieson, 2000). Plenty of research on the out-migration of young people details how those with fewer qualifications are less able to move to new places and can end up being one of the 'reluctant stayers' (Jamieson 2000; Pavis, Hubbard, and Platt 2001; Stockdale 2002). There is considerable affiliation between educational attainment and social class (Jamieson 2000).

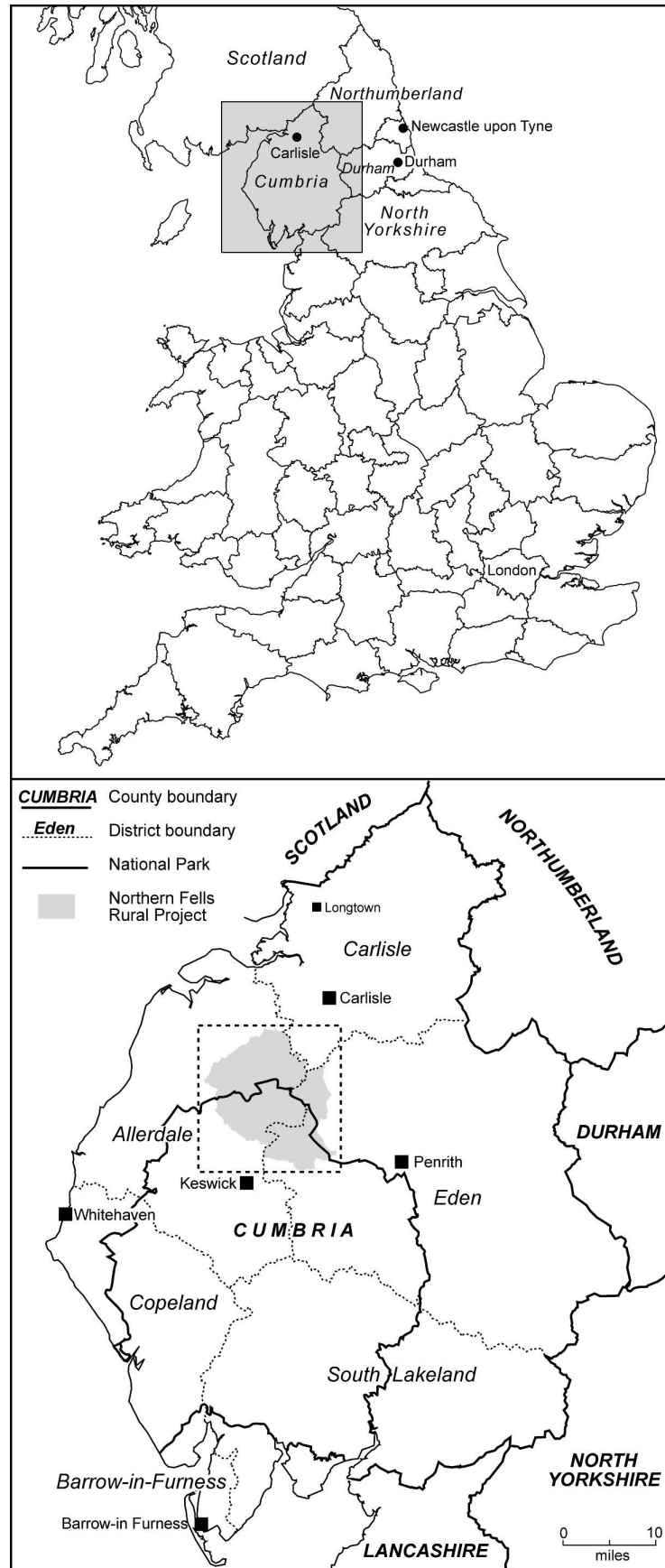
Of course not all young people want to leave rural places and some are keen to return 'home' or at least to a re-consumption of a rural lifestyle and all the cultural practices that imbue a sense of this. Other young people choose not to leave their home area in the first place as they strongly identify themselves with a sense of community shaped by networks of friends and family, cultural practices and symbols that are important to them. These young people consider the positive factors of staying at home to outweigh anything that they might gain from leaving. Failures in the state and private systems that affect such issues as housing and job opportunities can force young people to leave places such as the Northern Fells against their wishes. When this happens, it is time to act.

2. THE NORTHERN FELLS, CUMBRIA

The project is set in the Northern Fells of Cumbria. This area is one of the most remote rural areas of England, lying in the uppermost reaches of the country, south of Carlisle, north of Keswick and the Lake District National Park. It contains 200 square miles and has a population of 3600, making it a relatively sparsely populated area of England with 18 people per square mile compared to the national average of 976 (Census 2001). Small villages, hamlets and isolated farm holdings punctuate the landscape of the Northern Fells.

Made up of seven parishes which include Caldbeck, Castle Sowerby, Ireby with Uldale, Mungrisdale, Boltons, Sebergham and Westward the area lies between the market towns of Keswick, Penrith, Wigton and the city of Carlisle. Although the Northern Fells has a cohesive identity recognised by local residents it is divided into a number of geographical areas by district councils (Allerdale and Eden) and school catchment boundaries (for schools in Wigton, Dalston, Penrith and Keswick). Despite these boundaries that fracture the area, the shared needs of the people of the Northern Fells have been recognized and addressed by local people who started the Northern Fells Group. Initiated in April 1999 as the Northern Fells Rural Project (NFRP) it was one of three pilot projects around the county formed to highlight difficulties in rural areas (see Figure 1). Through the assessment of need and provision of services such as a minibus and benefits awareness scheme, the project has successfully demonstrated levels of deprivation previously not shown by statistics.

Figure 1: Cumbria and the Northern Fells



In the Northern Fells the educational needs of young people are met by five primary schools within the seven parishes in Bolton Low Houses, Caldbeck (Fellview), Rosley, Welton and Ireby. All perform well in league tables (BBC education 2004.) At eleven, young people can in theory attend any of the local secondary schools in the towns and villages that border the fells. Many of these schools score well in county league tables. Most pupils from the Fells area continue their school education until 18 whilst others continue their learning at “Newton Rigg” (University of Central Lancashire) and Carlisle College. At 18 a large proportion of local young people move away to university.

There are a limited number of activities catering for young people in the Northern Fells. There are two Young Farmers Clubs in Ireby and Caldbeck, one youth club in Rosley, one music group in Caldbeck and also in Caldbeck a weekly Rounders game open to all during the summer. Young people are also involved in some of the local activities open to the community as a whole, such as Caldbeck Players (a local drama group) and sports organisations such as football, darts, cricket and rugby. The Northern Fells Group also organises specific events for young people during the school holidays through their youth initiative co-ordinator.

Despite its proximity to several towns, the Northern Fells is poorly provided for by public transport. With regard to rail travel, the nearest station is Wigton or Dalston both of which are on the branch line from Barrow in Furness to Carlisle, where it connects with the West Coast Mainline. At present there are seven bus services that pass through the area. However, only two of these services (the 600 and the X4/X5) operate daily throughout the year. Smaller bus services run by local firms such as Tysons of Caldbeck also exist, such as the 605 to the town of

Wigton every Tuesday, but most of these run on weekdays and are of little use to young people of school attendance age. A key difficulty for young people wishing to use public transport is the cost. If over 16 whether working or in full time education they must pay an adult fare. A voluntary car service and a minibus driven by volunteers co-ordinated by the Northern Fells Group (mentioned above) are also available.

The cost of property in the Northern Fells is relatively high making home ownership for young people difficult. A three bedroom detached property in the village of Rosley was valued at £275,000 (Cumberland News 14th January 2005.) The average price of a detached property in the UK is £173,295. The high cost of property is due to the beauty and consequent desirability of the area and secondly and most contentiously to an increase in the number of buy to let and second homes. In the parish of Ireby and Uldale, for example, 32 of the 231 properties are second residence/ holiday homes (neighbourhood statistics.gov.uk).

Employment patterns in the Northern Fells are similar to those at a national level, but reveal some concerns with respect to the (un)employment of young people. In Warnell ward for example, 15.5% of all persons employed are managers/ senior officials compared to the national average of 14.9%, whilst the percentage of people in elementary employment is 11.4 which is similar to the national average of 11.8% (employment by occupation, 2001 census of population.) Just 0.5% of people in the Northern Fells claim job seekers allowance (JSA) compared to 2.2% nationally. However, 100% of those claiming JSA in Warnell were aged between 18 and 24 (claimant count age and duration November 2004, www.nomisweb.co.uk.) Although statistics paint an

overall picture of community affluence, it must not be assumed that this holds true for subgroups such as young people.

3. METHODOLOGY

Underpinned by concerns regarding the out-migration of young people, the purpose of this research was to explore the employment and economic opportunities for young people in the Northern Fells of Cumbria. The study was broad in its focus, examining issues raised by young people that in anyway impacted upon their livelihood strategies.

Based in the Northern Fells, the study focussed on young people aged between 14-24 years of age. The research divided this age range into two, working with 14-17 year olds and 18-24 year olds. The 14-17 year group mainly incorporated young people in the throes of decision-making as they considered options and opportunities regarding Further/Higher Education and potential careers. Many had experience of local labour markets through jobs. The 16-17 year olds were eligible for the new minimum wage brought into operation in October 2004. Members of the 18-24 age group were either in Further/Higher Education, on a gap year, in an apprenticeship, looking for or in employment.

The core method to this project was focus group work. The study organised twelve focus groups which incorporated a total of forty seven young people. Six of the focus groups were with young people aged 14-17, the other six with those aged 18-24. The focus groups were held in parish halls, village halls and a pub in the Northern Fells. The focus groups were organised by Joyce Woodcock, who lives in the Northern Fells and is the project enabler, and facilitated by Katy Bennett (who

works for Leicester University²) and Keira Harvey (a research assistant on a gap year between School and University who lives locally). All the focus groups were taped and transcribed for analysis. Additional information was collated as young people filled in questionnaires at the end of focus group meetings detailing information regarding their education, training, work, club membership and households.

Other key methods to the project included semi-structured interviews and the collation and basic analysis of statistics, particularly the 2001 Census. 13 semi-structured interviews were conducted with local employers and people with formal responsibilities in the Northern Fells to identify some of the obstacles to/opportunities for employment and livelihood strategies that young people face. Interviewees included not only seven local employers, but also two health professionals, a representative of Connexions, the University of Central Lancashire, and two Housing Associations. Again, all interviews, apart from one, were taped and transcribed.

The research was conducted between October and December 2004. In December, a feedback session was organised, giving young people who had taken part in the project the opportunity to contribute to initial analysis and potential recommendations. The recommendations will form the basis of the second stage of this project, which will put words into action.

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4. CULTURAL PRACTICES: IDENTIFYING YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE NORTHERN FELLS OF CUMBRIA

Identifying young people is a difficult task given their diversity and changing needs as they age. As a health practitioner discussing the challenges of working with young people said:

“it is a moving population, you know, and somebody who’s a young person now isn’t always going to be a young person....Young people grow up...their needs and aspirations change all the time” (health practitioner)

With this key point in mind, this section explores symbolic and cultural processes and issues important to the identification of young people. It looks at how young people identify themselves and their communities, what is important to their sense of belonging and how this affects why they want to stay in or leave the Northern Fells. Young people who had parents who have lived in the Northern Fells for most of their lives demonstrated the strongest affiliation with the area.

4.1 Belonging

Many young people who had lived in the Northern Fells for most of their lives and attended their local primary school demonstrated considerable attachment to the area and a sense of belonging to a community. Nearly all recounted a happy and content childhood and this seemed to be important to feelings of attachment to the Northern Fells. Critical to their childhood was a sense of freedom, space to play, fresh air, less traffic than other places and knowing who lived nearby. Many others echoed the following sentiments:

I absolutely loved my childhood here. There's loads of friends, loads of fun and no worries about going out in the night and stuff if you....You're always free to roam the village....Your parents didn't mind, well my parents didn't mind any way. Didn't really tell me when to be back. They were just perfectly happy with me being out (Thomas, 18-24 year group)

I liked it when I was younger because there was a lot of freedom and we have quite a large back yard and stuff so when you're little it's great because you can just go out and do whatever you want and wander off (Dalle, 14-17 age group).

Shared knowledge of particular places facilitated a sense of belonging. Swineside, a local swimming spot, figured in conversations. In Box A a group of 18-24 year old women talk about it.

Box A: Swineside

J: Oh it's great

E: It's good fun

J: It is

You go swimming in the river?

All: Yeah

J: I mean it's cold

E: But it's like stones that have been there for well years and years and like form a slide. Then you just, you get your bum in this hole and then you slide down there.

J: It doesn't hurt much. You can jump

E: You can land in this big pool

How far is it that you're shooting down?

E: Oh it's not far, it's just like a slant

It's natural is it or is it man-made?

E: Natural. I wouldn't like to say how deep it is

H: There's like a different height where you can jump in from. Because it's like that deep, you can't, you don't touch the bottom, you just got to be careful with it being the stone, it does suddenly, it does come out and you can't see it so you've got to know where you're jumping in to otherwise you'll hit the stone.

Knowing things like how to jump into the river and avoid the stone at Swineside helped feelings of belonging. Little things like this mattered and added up to a sense of attachment to a place as young people loaded spots like Swineside with meaning. Other places, like the pub in Caldbeck called Oddfellows, were similarly important in the lives of young people. Oddfellows was important because as well as providing many local young people with part-time work opportunities it was also an important meeting place, supporting networks of friends and their activities. Talking about the pub, Jim said:

“most people meet up there before, then after doing anything...Like yeah, if there's anything going on like the football and things like that, the training they do at Dalston, they all meet there and come back after and like on Sundays they play football and go there....It's like where everyone meets up. It's just an easy place to meet” (Jim, 18-24 year group).

Taking part in particular activities also helped young people to identify themselves with a place and to feel as though they belonged to a sense of community. Those who took part in such activities tended to be

‘committed stayers’. In the above extract Jim mentioned the local football teams which were important in the lives of men over the age of eighteen. Badminton, cricket, pool, darts and games of rounders during the summer were also highly valued. The Caldbeck Young Farmers Club was particularly important in the lives of young people. Some were core members and regularly attended its meetings and events; others attended particular events having been informed about them through fliers. The annual Christmas party (held on December 10th in 2004) was an event that few young people missed.

Part of the Caldbeck Young Farmers Club’s success was the way in which it meant different things to various young people. For some, especially those who were the grand/sons and grand/daughters of farmers, the connection and success of the club with the ‘more agricultural’ events and activities were important and contributed to a sense of belonging to a successful community of young people. This group of people strongly identified with the agricultural component of the club. For other young people, the club was not just for farmers, but for people who have nothing to do with the industry too as it organised trips to places like Laserquest. Unlike other activities such as darts, pool and football it was also a club that drew in both men and women as it organised, for example, ‘Body Shop’ evenings, which were especially popular with women. Addressing the needs of young women was important because they could feel detached from a place where many activities were aimed at young men (such as all the sports activities) or were organised for either younger or older age groups:

“We’re cut off really you know, you’ve got like brownies and scouts when you’re really young and like there’s

playgroups and stuff. There's a big gap until you're what forty? You know you can join the WI" (Helen, 18-24 age group.)

A sense of belonging to a community was also dependent upon those considered different or outsiders. These others helped to identify a community by not knowing places like Swineside and valuing things and symbols, like rurality, differently. Young people often identified themselves and their sense of community through outsiders who live in cities and towns or have recently moved into the locality. Jill said:

"we're not townie people, we're more country people. We know how we work in the country" (Jill, 18-24 year group)

Similarly Bob said:

"Not to sound horrible but it's a completely different attitude living in the city to.....I know you walk through the countryside and you bump into someone and you'll say 'Hi! How are you? Hello' to them. They'll say 'It's a nice day' and like start a conversation with you. It doesn't happen in the city. You walk down the street, everyone's like this (pulls a face). I don't like that. I just find it funny". (Bob, 14-17 age group).

Young people who have moved into the village initially felt like outsiders and alienated from any sense of community as 'locals' identified themselves as different to them. Gertrude said:

"When I first moved to the village, because the village is like such a community, it's like outsiders aren't welcome really. It's really big on that and em, but like, after ten years, I think we've finally been accepted" (Gertrude, 14- 17 year group)

Similarly, Tim said

“I think people that move here, that come from the outside, I think experience a bit of alienation when they....we did.....because it’s like such a close knit community and it’s people, like tend to grow up here, stay all their lives and their kids grow up here, they’re kind of like, I don’t know, I just found it sort of difficult to settle. ...They’re quite tightly knit communities and they tend to stick together against outsiders” (Tim, 14-17 year group)

Whilst outsiders drew together those young people who strongly associated themselves with a sense of rurality encapsulated by the Northern Fells, they also fragmented young people as a group because of those who considered themselves to be outsiders. Another group of ‘others’ were not only important to the identification of young people but united them as a group. This group were 'old people' and young people tended to disassociate themselves from events, activities and things, like the Northern Fells Community Minibus, for example, that were strongly linked with these ‘others’.

4.2 Individuality and independence

Some young people actively disassociated themselves from any sense of belonging to the Northern Fells. Despite contented childhoods, the perceived slow pace of life in the locality, its sense of tradition and lack of change was a frustration for some young people, especially those unable to drive. Helen, temporarily living at home between University and finding a ‘proper’ job, said:

“I mean that's part of what it is living up here, just tradition. And whether it's, you know families that have lived here for x number of generations, it's just gonna be the same, I think, nothing drastic is gonna happen and the Oddfellows is not gonna turn into a nightclub overnight” (Helen, 18-24 year group)

Important to many young people and their identification was belonging to a particular music scene, following different fashions and pursuing ambitions and careers that have little to do with the Northern Fells. Young people belonged to communities of other young people that stretched across places through the internet, websites and fan clubs. Whilst they might have deliberately alienated themselves from any sense of belonging in the Northern Fells, they were simultaneously hooked into other sub-cultures important to their identification.

This meant that many young people wanted to leave the Northern Fells and did. For some, this had nothing to do with being or feeling socially excluded, and everything to do with wanting to explore new places, do different things, meet new people and escape the surveillance of home. Two men who had recently left University explained why they had no plans of returning home for any length of time:

“I just got bored. You go out and you see the same, no offence to your friends, but you see the same people out every night or whatever and there's not much variation in culture for young people. When you go to Carlisle everybody has to go to the same clubs and pubs and stuff. I found it at times a little bit antagonistic and stuff like that whereas now I live in Birmingham, er, if you like a certain type of music or certain type of atmosphere I mean you can go to a place like that.....I really wanted to get away from home....and not have my Mum saying 'What time are

you getting home tonight' and this sort of thing. So I just wanted to cut loose” (Gerald, 18-24 year group)

“It's a lot easier if you can go and get blind drunk and you know, you just call a taxi and you get home. Whereas (at home) you have to try and face your parents and act sober and it's just, it's a lot easier. I mean the reality of em, just, the suitability of city life. Not really suitability, but ease of it, you know, for transport, you don't have to worry about getting to places” (Jeff, 18-24 year group)

5. MATERIAL REALITIES: MAKING A LIVING

5.1 Education, training and jobs

Most of the 47 young people were going through some form of education or training and had a job in 2004 (see Table 1 and Table 2). Of the 22 young people still at school, nineteen planned to go to university and two more had left school, but were on gap years and preparing to go to university the following year. Ambitions with regard to potential degree programmes were wide ranging. Some were planning to study subjects that had been favourites at school, such as history and geography, whilst others had their sights on a particular career and were planning to read subjects such as physiotherapy, media studies and veterinary science. The three who were not planning to go to university were unsure about their future plans, although one was looking at apprenticeship options and another was considering a career as a game keeper. Of the 22 young people at school, seventeen had a job in 2004. They worked part-time in pubs, restaurants and shops and on farms. The sort of work they did ranged from washing up to making and selling cornish pasties and wages commonly ranged from £3.50-4.00 per hour. Three young people simultaneously had more than one part-time job.

Fourteen young people had left school and were in some form of vocational training whilst simultaneously working. Of these, six were learning and/or training to be farmers (three of whom were simultaneously pursuing formal qualifications in agriculture at the University of Central Lancashire), two were training to be agricultural engineers, one was an apprentice electrician, another an apprentice auctioneer, one working and training to be a builder, another training to

be a nanny whilst working in childcare, one working and training with a bank, and one working and training to be an accounts clerk.

Of the remaining young people, four had recently finished degree programmes in Higher/Further Education and were living with their parents whilst they applied for jobs and placements. A further two had (temporarily) not completed their degree programmes and were working whilst they considered their options and potential career choices. Three were fully trained, but only two were working in the fields in which they had trained, one as a primary school teacher, the other as a nanny. The other young person had trained to be a veterinary nurse but had qualified during the Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak of 2001 when there were no jobs in her field available. Consequently she had found alternative employment working in administration.

Although the overarching picture is one of dynamic and enterprising young people when it comes to education, training and work opportunities, key concerns emerged regarding their training and employment. The following sections deal with these.

5.2 Labour markets and industrial restructuring

Rural Cumbria has experienced an overall employment decline between 1998-2002 (Countryside Agency, 2003). This is a concern given that there have been increases in employment created elsewhere in the North West Region (Countryside Agency, 2003). Some of this employment decline can be explained by waning key sectors in districts such as Allerdale where lost jobs have not been adequately replaced by new work opportunities (Countryside Agency, 2003). There is also concern

regarding the growing number of 25-34 year olds in remote rural areas of the North West who are economically inactive. In 1999 14% of 25-34 year olds were economically inactive rising to 19% in 2001. Younger age groups are not faring any better. In 2004 33% of JSA claimants in Allerdale were in the 18-24 age group. The national percentage of JSA claimants in this age group was 27.7% (Claimant counts rates and proportions [November 2004], www.nomisweb.co.uk). These statistics have prompted concerns about the employment and training opportunities that exist in rural areas of the North West (Countryside Agency Report, 2003).

For young people in the Northern Fells, plunging agricultural incomes since 1995 have changed the nature, and, in many cases, the viability of farming over the last ten years. Agriculture was an industry traditionally important to the Northern Fells and this is reflected in the number of young people training to be farmers and to support the industry as veterinary nurses and agricultural mechanics for example. Declines in farm incomes and changes to the CAP mean that the industry has an uncertain future in the Northern Fells. This was what some of the young people training and working in agriculture had to say about the future of the industry:

What about the farmers amongst you, is farming something that you've always wanted to do?

"I got it out of my own farming roots. They're not having a good time farming. No encouragement at the moment to do it"

“You couldn’t farm if you didn’t have like a farm or anything. You couldn’t just set up a farm just like that. You couldn’t afford to”

But is this something you really wanted to do?

“Just carry o”n.

(A little later)

“Everything’s changing at the moment because there’s a lot more regulations and changing all the schemes at the moment. Single Farm Payment, no-one really knows what’s going on so no-one’s kind of pushing themselves really at the minute”

“A lot more paper work as well”

A lot more?

“Paperwork. So it makes it harder to farm because you’re not allowed to move stock on and off your farm within certain days. It’s got to be like six clear days”.

In addition to the six young people working in agriculture, others had considered it as a career option but had been put off it:

B: “(My Dad) persuaded me not to go into farming”

Has he?

B: “Yeah because there’s no money he says”

(Bobby, 14-17 age group)

Recent changes and crises in agriculture have had repercussions for other trades that support the industry. Jane had just completed her training to be a veterinary nurse when the Foot and Mouth outbreak of 2001 hit the UK:

“Well, I qualified at the height of foot and mouth and I was doing a veterinary nursing course so nobody was taking on vets or veterinary nurses because they were paying them off. So I justwell I stayed at (the place where she had a part-time job) and then I saw (an alternative) job in the paper”
(Jane 18-24 group)

Some of the changes and job losses in traditional trades have been replaced by growth in other sectors. Whilst in Allerdale public administration has been the strongest growth sector for the district, in Eden it is the distribution, hotels and catering sector (Countryside Agency, 2003). For young people in the Northern Fells, the number of service sector jobs available as a result of a growth in tourism was significant. Businesses like the tea shops in Hesket Newmarket and Caldbeck, visitor attractions such as Upfront Gallery and High Head Sculpture Park, and pubs restaurants and accommodation providers in the Northern Fells have set up and expanded to meet a growth in the number of visitors and tourists to the area.

Demand for tourist oriented businesses is seasonal, however, requiring more workers in the busy summer months than at other times of the year. Although the wholesale, retail, hotel and catering sector account for 28% of all jobs in Cumbria, just over half of these are part-time (Bennett et al, 2002). Whilst casual and part-time jobs were ideal for students looking for holiday jobs and part-time hours, they were not suitable for those looking for full-time work and attempting to develop careers in the

Northern Fells. Helen, who has recently completed a degree at university, said:

“I think I've been back now 3-4 months and I'm still working part-time as a waitress. I haven't found any other jobs really so, yeah, I'll have to move away and find a job. It's a shame but it has to be done”. (Helen, 18-24 age group)

Jobs for graduates were felt to be limited in the Northern Fells. An individual who had recently finished a BSc degree and looking for a graduate scheme in the scientific industry said:

“I want to pursue something scientific, but there's nothing round here for that at all. I mean Shell have outfits out here. GlaxoSmithKline are in Sellafield. Yeah, I mean there's not a lot, I mean they have graduate schemes but I mean they're low based and like the Shell one is probably the biggest one round here and that's international so there's not a lot of chance of getting on that. But yeah, I mean there's loads of ...like I've been looking at the last couple of months I've used a lot of internet based recruitment agencies, like Reed. Just whatever tends to come up on Google I tend to like sign on and give them my email address and just sit and hope”.

So it's very much off you own back and your own initiative that you're

“Yeah, I mean I'm sure there's other things you can do but I have not been doing. I've not signed on or anything down at the Job Centre. Er, I use the website of the Job Centre of course, em, but it just totally depends on what you want to do. I don't know what area you can get a lot of jobs up here, farming yeah, but not...em, but basically as far as scientific industry goes there's not a lot up here”. (Jeff, 18-24 age group)

Even when there were job opportunities for graduates in the Northern Fells, competition for those workplaces could be immense. Despite a national shortage of teachers, this was a graduate's experience of getting a job at a primary school in the Northern Fells:

“It was very competitive. The first job that I got they'd been 72 people that had applied for it. One of the interviews that I went to that I didn't get they'd been 102, and the one I got last year at (local school) they'd been 125 applications....Really competitive”. (Joby, 18-24 age group)

5.3 Finding work and training opportunities

Young people in this research were incredibly resourceful when it came to finding work and training opportunities using local newspapers, schools/Connexions, colleges, universities, Job Centres, the internet, and, most importantly, networks of friends and family.

Those at school, college or university had more formal systems of help. Young people at school talked about Connexions, which offers a range of services to 13-19 year olds, including careers advice and personal development activities. Connexions works through schools and its centres and is an initial contact point for young people through which other specialised services can be reached. Young people in this research discussed how Connexions had figured in their lives. For one person it was available as a potential source of support to help with problems at home, for most others it was there for careers advice and to help with the organisation of work experience. There was a mixture of responses regarding the sort of support offered by Connexions and Schools. A group of young women in the 14-17 age group said:

“I’ve never been to the connexions lady or man. I mean we had a lesson last year for a year called ‘Careers’ and that was just a waste of time”.

Why was it a waste of time?

“We just”

“Did nothing”

“Actually, we went on work experience. That was beneficial. That was good, I enjoyed that”.

Another young person (in the 14-17 age group) said:

“You do more in year eleven than year ten. We’ve been in the computer rooms looking up possible universities and possible courses and stuff and then you get even more in sixth form so it is good”

And how’s that organised, is it through a particular teacher, or ...?

“Em, we get careers lessons and my teacher’s Mrs. X so she’s always really good. She has like useful information.....She like organises all the university things and she’s pretty good”.

Yeah, and they really encourage you to go to university.

Those young people planning to go into Higher Education had more positive experiences of support and advice available through schools with regard to potential careers and university courses. In fact, young people

often felt that support was there as long as you were planning to go to university and felt pressured by schools to go into Higher Education. One young woman trying to find a job having recently left university said:

“I think the height of the advice I got from school was ‘Go to university. It’ll work out after you’ve finished” (Helen, 18-24 age group)

Those not planning to go into Higher Education felt they had much less support and advice at school on potential careers and training in comparison to those considering university courses. They felt marginalised and excluded from systems of support. For this reason informal systems of support provided by networks of friends and family were more useful. The following men talked about how they got their apprenticeships and jobs through local contacts and networks:

How did you get into your various jobs, how did you start to get into those particular jobs?

“I got offered my job in the co-op at Dalston. I was queuing up one day and my boss tapped me on the back and asked me if I wanted to do an apprenticeship”

Really?

“Aye”

And he knew you already?

“Aye, he knew me anyhow so, that was it. Never looked back”

And how did you get your training job at the auctioneers then?

“Well I used to go to the auction a lot with my dad, and I knew a lot of the people there and er, I did work experience there as well so when they offered it I already had experience really”.

Similarly, a woman working in childcare said:

“I wanted to go on a two year course but I didn't get the exam results I wanted so I went to college for a year and then when I came out of there I got offered a job which was quite good and then word of mouth's just got me where I am now”. (Emma, 18-24 age group)

The downside of relying on informal networks of friends and family to find training and job opportunities was that not knowing the right people in the best place led to exclusion and inability to find appropriate training and desired jobs:

“Apprenticeships can be a problem an' all, getting an apprenticeship round here....I asked, em, a local welder if he'd take us on as an apprentice but he says he hasn't got the time and it's just so much hassle there. He can't just take someone on, train them up”. (Bob, 14-17 year group)

5.4 Employers' views of young people in the Northern Fells

Overall, business owners' experiences of employing young people were positive. They considered the work ethic of young people in the Northern Fells to be particularly good (especially when they had experiences of running businesses elsewhere). A pub owner said:

“I find that young people round here have a very strong work ethic. They’re reliable, they’re hard workers because generally they come from farming stock so they’re used to work. They’re honest. Very, very honest”. (Owner of hospitality business, Northern Fells).

They were also perceived as having fresh ideas and being innovative and vital to a business:

“I have changed an older person for a young person because the young person, Martin, was still at college when we employed him. He has more ideas.....(Young people) give a vitality to a business. New ideas. Excellent”. (Owner of hospitality business, Northern Fells)

Similarly the owner of a personal services sector business liked the ‘young spirits, young ideas, young thoughts’ that employing a young person brought to her business.

Recruiting individuals through networks of friends, family and existing employees dodged potential problems regarding the employment of young people:

“Well, in the tea room I have.... Rachel, my niece, she’s seventeen and I have my son’s girlfriend, or had, she’s just left. She’s got a full-time job.....The two girls I’ve had have been very reliable but then they are tied. They’ve got a family tie which might make a difference”. (Owner of recreation/culture business, Northern Fells)

“we haven’t had to advertise for any workshop staff for a long time.....we permanently have a notice up in the canteen saying if there’s anybody that wants to come and work tell them to send their CV in and then when a position comes up we’ll contact them”. (Owner of a manufacturing business, Northern Fells)

Some problems relating to the employment of young people were difficult to avoid. Young people were perceived to need greater supervision and more direction than other employees. The owner of a recreation/culture business felt that she was unable to get on with other aspects of her business, such as paperwork and meetings, and had to be fully focussed on the shop floor and young people when they were at work:

“I couldn’t afford to have them (young ones) just standing about whereas the ladies (older ones), if it is quiet, they get on and do a batch of baking and make scones and put cakes in the freezer and things like that”. (Owner of recreation/culture business, Northern Fells)

The schedules of young people were also sometimes difficult for employers to negotiate. Most business owners happily slotted their needs around the education and training activities of young people, recognising the benefits of these to both the individuals they employed and their enterprise. Occasionally, however, young people were perceived to put too many demands upon businesses that employers were unable to accommodate, especially when it came to time off for other activities, including holidays. A business owner in the hospitality sector had to lay off young people when:

“(they) didn’t fit into my busy times. When they want to go on holiday, which are bank holidays, I’m busy”. (Owner of hospitality business, Northern Fells).

The final key difficulty experienced by business owners when it came to the employment of young people was the issue of transport. This was especially the case for isolated enterprises situated away from villages. A recreation/culture business owner said:

“That’s part of the problem with the location that we’ve got. We’re fairly isolated so they really need to have some means of getting here under their own steam because there’s not a minibus or public transport of any sort”. (Owner of recreation/culture business, Northern Fells)

Table 1: Education/Training situation of young people

	Number
At School	22
Between School and University	2
In vocational training	14
Between University and ‘a proper job’	4
(Temporarily) not finished degree	2
Fully trained and working	3
	47

Table 2: Job situation of young people who are:

	F/T job	P/T/casual job	No job	Total
At School	-	17	5	22
Between School and University	-	2	-	2
In vocational training	14	-	-	14
Between University and 'a proper job'	-	2	2	4
(Temporarily) not finished degree	1	1	-	2
Fully trained and working	3	-	-	3
	18	22	7	47

6. MATERIAL REALITIES: HOUSING

Unless young people can afford to live locally, they will be unable to work locally, draining the Northern Fells of those that are young and economically active. It is not until they approach their mid-twenties that young people begin to consider setting up their own home. Of that age group, this research identified seven young people who worked in the area and wanted to set up their own home in the Northern Fells. One individual had been forced to buy a property outside of the Northern Fells despite both she and her partner working in the area. Six others were keen to move out of their parental home but were stuck where they were because of the lack of affordable locally based accommodation. There will be others in a similar situation soon but whilst they are at school, college or in training they are content to live with their parents.

Young people who are forced to continue living with their parents and cannot afford to set up their own home are effectively homeless. The cost of buying a house in the Northern Fells is a big frustration. Over the period of 1996-2002 the average percentage increase in median house price in Eden District was almost 120% and over 80% for Allerdale District (Countryside Agency, 2003).

Young people are beginning to take action themselves. A group of ten young people have approached one of the parish councils in the Northern Fells about the issue of affordable housing. One young person has publicised the problems they face in the Northern Fells through speaking out on Radio Cumbria and Radio 4. There are potential solutions to the lack of affordable housing in the Northern Fells but communities (in partnership with Local Authorities and others) must demonstrate need.

This research contributes to the evidence of need for affordable housing for young people in the Northern Fells.

6.1 Cost of housing

6.1.1. Buying a house

Everyone, including members of the younger age group, was aware of substantial increases in the cost of housing in the Northern Fells. Many young people were resentful of the increases in second residence/holiday accommodation in the Northern Fells which have contributed to local house price increases. In Caldbeck parish 16 out of a total of 333 dwellings are second residence/holiday accommodation³. In Ireby and Uldale parish 32 out of 231 dwellings are second residence/holiday accommodation (neighbourhood statistics.gov.uk).

“We would have stayed in Caldbeck or the surrounding area but the housing prices are ridiculous so we can’t. Nor can any first time buyer unless they won the Lottery”. (Joby, 18-24 age group)

Similarly, a group of young men said:

“There’s no encouragement for us lot to, helping us lot to buy houses round here to stay here”

“It’s just all. Everyone just comes in, like.... buying holiday homes from down south and just like come up for like two or three weeks of the year and then gan back down again and they just sit empty all the time”.

³ There is local concern that statistical evidence does not represent the actual number of dwellings that are second residence/holiday accommodation. Local people estimate the number of dwellings that are second residence/holiday accommodation to be higher than the number recorded here and they question how dwellings are classified during data collection.

So you think there's gonna be a problem when you want to move and get houses round here?

"Yeah"

"Aye there will"

"There's a problem now"

(young men, 18-24 age group)

Again, when asked about the most significant problem they faced a group of young women said:

"Houses. That is the main thing, houses"

"Because people that have lived here have had to move into Carlisle which they don't want to. They've grown up here all their lives and yet they can't afford round here so they've had to move into Carlisle".

"We're gonna be like all bumped out".

(young women, 18-24 age group)

6.1.2. Renting a house

Renting a property in the Northern Fells was not a popular option for most young people. Privately renting lacked any sense of permanency or stability and young people felt that their payments would contribute to someone else's future and not their own:

“The way you can stay here is to rent. So it’s fine if you want to pay somebody else’s mortgage but we didn’t “.
(Joby, 18-24 year group)

Privately renting a house in the Northern Fells was also deemed expensive as result of the tourist trade and competition for properties at peak times of the year:

“(Renting is) even higher...we might as well live at home”.

“Yeah, because they know that people have got to come here for like holidays they can charge excessive amounts so it's not fair on us. Unless we live in a tent – on the village green!”. (Emma and Jane, 17-24 age group)

Renting a property owned by a Housing Association (HA) was similarly neither a popular option nor a realistic one given the scarce number of properties owned by HAs in the Northern Fells. Locating the few dwellings owned by Housing Associations in the Northern Fells was a difficult task given that different HAs own different properties in the area. Home Housing Association and Eden Housing Association are the two key organisations with properties in the area. Home Housing Association operates in Allerdale District, but it owns properties beyond the District Council boundaries. Similarly, the boundaries within which Eden Housing Association operate are also broader than the District Council boundaries. The list of properties owned in the Northern Fells by Home Housing Association include eight properties in Caldbeck (since 1994), eight in Bolton Low Houses (since 1967) and one property in Rosley (since 1944). Eden Housing Association owns three houses and two flats in Hesket Newmarket. Tenants are allowed to remain in a HA owned property for as long as they choose. The property in Rosley, for example, has had the same tenant for the past forty years. This and their scarcity

mean that few HA properties are available for young people. Many young people were aware of properties owned by Housing Associations in the area but recognised their scarcity and perceived their needs to be low priority compared to those of others:

“you've got to have, like, special things and maybes parents with children or on income support or something to live in those houses”. (Emma, 18-24 age group)

In many ways, those young people in the Northern Fells who were employed but on low wage rates, which meant that they could not afford to buy a house in the area, were more excluded from affordable housing than those who were not wage earners.

6.2 Obstacles to affordable accommodation

6.2.1 Planning regulations

Planning regulations were perceived by young people as an obstacle to affordable accommodation:

“You can't get planning permission in and around the village. Just because of the planning regulations in the village and there's a couple in the village who've been trying in the last four years to try and build a house, and their family live here. And the planning board said that they couldn't build it because the retail value was going to be over £70 000. Well, there's not one house in Caldbeck that's less than £70 000. There was a barn in Hesket Newmarket that was for sale to convert into a one bedroom house and that was for sale for over that amount so how on earth a house can be any less. And also the house prices as well, the people that are going to be able to buy them are either retired or they buy it as a holiday home and you just can't compete with that so unless you want to rent there

really is no other way. There's no affordable houses for young people". (Joby, 18-24 age group)

Similarly, Jason said:

"You can't even build them because there's that many like planning regulations and in a National Park. It's just that hard to like get a bit of land and even build one as well". (Jason, 18-24 age group)

6.2.2 Local support

Individuals also perceived local support for affordable accommodation for young people to be lacking:

"There was a house came up in Welton I was going to buy with my brother but it ended up going for such a silly price that it was just not possible to buy. But there was talk of somebody building some low cost houses in Welton or trying to get planning permission but that seemingly hasn't come out because, one, the neighbours didn't approve of it being low cost housing and being like youngsters living in the village: because there's quite a few older people living in the village, they think that we were like invading in their space really.

I think a lot of local people have moved up here, you know, if they've been somewhere else or people have retired; they want the quality of life that comes with living in a small village so they want, you know, nice little quiet walks and..."

"They don't want"

"They don't want young people".

(young women, aged 18-24 age group)

6.3 Consequences of not accommodating young people

Many local people, however, were aware of the consequences of young people not affording to buy local properties:

“When I was 20 I wasn’t really interested in housing, it wasn’t something I thought about or talked about or anything but it is important for the community if young people don’t come back. Assuming that a significant number go away and don’t come back and live here and work here then the knock on effects are going to be huge. There won’t be kids in the schools, there won’t be people buying things from the local shop, you are going to end up with people who can afford the expensive housing which is going to be retired people and holiday homes and dead communities. Well not dead communities but certainly different communities”. (Health practitioner, Northern Fells).

7. MATERIAL REALITIES: TRANSPORT

Once young people could both drive and had access to or owned a car, their experience of life in the Northern Fells improved and they were much happier about living there. All, apart from one, of the 18-24 age group could drive and had access to car. Being able to drive opened up the Northern Fells (and beyond) and widened the potential range of work and training opportunities. Much of the discontentment of the 14-17 year group was rooted in their inability to drive. Whilst public transport services are limited in the Northern Fells (see Section 2), there was considerable confusion over minibus routes and timetables. Where knowledge of these did exist, minibus timetables were deemed infrequent and inappropriate to the needs of young people. To fill the gaps of public transport provision, young people were innovative. Getting to places for work, education or social activities required elaborate planning and help from family (usually parents) and friends with travel arrangements. Some also required the help of schemes organised by the Northern Fells Group. These include the Northern Fells Community Minibus and the Voluntary Car Scheme. Most young people were aware of the community minibus service. Whilst some had used it and found it very helpful, many associated it with ‘old people’, which deterred them from using the service. Few young people were aware of the voluntary car service, but those who had used it highly valued it.

7.1 14-17 and unable to drive

The 14-17 age group was marked by discontent mainly because they aspired to greater independence but were simultaneously dependent on others to travel anywhere. In the following discussion a group of young

women (14-17 age group) talked about the difficulties of being their particular age:

“Once you can drive I think everything's done and sorted really. You can go anywhere you want, whenever you want. It's kind of just our way, just kind of like”.

“In limbo”.

“Yeah kind of like from year five until you can drive you're kind of stuck. But before then you don't really mind, but after you can drive it doesn't matter” (Frankie and Gertrude, 14-17 age group)

Public transport services failed to ease the discontent of this age group. This was either because there was little knowledge of the times and routes of services or minibus timetables and routes were deemed inappropriate. The following comments were common:

“I'm sure there is a minibus but I wouldn't know when it was or I don't think it would be a good time”.

“The minibus that goes past my house is at like 8 o'clock in the morning but I've never caught I”.t

“Yeah, it's always a ridiculous time”. (Jeff and Dalle, 14-17 age group)

7.2 Alternatives to public transport

To fill the gaps of public transport provision, young people had two routes of action open to them. The first was family and friends. The second was services/facilities that the Northern Fells Group has developed.

7.2.1 Friends and family

Not being able to drive required detailed planning and help from others to get to work and social activities. Most young people needed transport to somewhere every day and their jobs and social lives meant multiple journeys each day. When asked about her movements and need for lifts during her half-term week, this is what one young woman said:

“Saturday I had to get a lift into Caldbeck and Sunday morning I had to get a lift back”.

What, what were you doing in Caldbeck?

“I was just staying with friends. Sunday as well I would have had to get a lift to work and a lift back but I didn’t go in because the oven broke. Monday I had to get a lift to work and a lift back. Tuesday a lift into Carlisle, a lift back. Wednesday stayed at home. Thursday, today, had to get a lift to work and a lift back and then a lift here. Tomorrow I’m going to Carlisle so I’ll have to get a lift. Wigton and em, a lift to Caldbeck and then on Saturday morning a lift back here and then to work. A lift there and back. On Sunday. Work. A lift there and back. So pretty much every day I have to get lifts”. (Connie, 14-17 age group)

Many young people were quite clever at devising strategies to ease the car-driving load of their parents or to get to places when their parents were unable to give them a lift. One way in which they did this was to work out who travelled to particular places on a routine basis and to devise their needs around them. Another common strategy was to get a lift to a mid-way point, like Dalston or Wigton, and then go by public transport for the remainder of their route:

“(A)lot of people do work at Carlisle so there’s always someone going back and forth. I usually get a lift with my Dad or something like that or just like other people’s Dads and Mums. Like I’ve got friends whose Mums are nurses and they’ll be going to the hospital. And I’ve got a friend whose Dad’s a solicitor and he goes back and forth to his office every day so, and I’ve got friends that work, car salesman for instance” (Charlie, 14-17 age group)

“You can get to Dalston and then there’s minibuses there like every hour or every half hour or something”.

Right, so Dalston’s the sort of centre of the network? You get there and if...

“Yeah, if you want to get to Carlisle it’s easier to get to Dalston and then get the minibus or the train or something”.
(Dalle, 14-17 age group)

“My Mum usually doesn’t take me all the way to Carlisle. She’ll take me to Wigton; I’ll get the train or something from there or, yeah, stay back at a friend’s house and then my Mum will pick me up in the morning or something”.
(Connie, 14-17 age group)

7.2.2 The Northern Fells Community Minibus/Cumbria County Council Voluntary Car Service

The alternative to asking friends and family for lifts is the Northern Fells Community Minibus or the Cumbria County Council Voluntary Car Service. These schemes are potentially useful to all young people unable to drive or without access to a car in the Northern Fells, but are/could be especially helpful to those who have recently moved into the Northern Fells or feel excluded from particular networks of friends and family. Most young people knew about the Northern Fells Community Minibus,

fewer people knew about the Voluntary Car Service. Many of those who had used the voluntary car service and community minibus valued it because it helped them to get to places when their parents were busy and it was cheap to use:

“Well, it does Saturday trips and if you book it in time you can say, arrange it to go whenever you want with as many people as you want and they just charge you. They make about a £1 or something. It's really good. But you've got to cope with the embarrassment of sitting in the ambulance going into town”. (Adrian, 14-17 year age group)

“My Mum and I regularly used that (voluntary car service) because we only used to have one car and Dad was often (at work).....We always used to love the voluntary car service because it was so, like cheap and it just, it was a superb service.....And I used to use it on my own if my Mum and Dad weren't able to give me a lift for whatever reason if I was out and going to a party or things like that” (Adrian, 14-17 age group)

Young people, however, often strongly associated the community minibus with ‘old people’. Some young people thought it was only available to older age groups:

“It generally is a hospital minibus because it takes old people to hospital” (Gertrude, 14-17 age group).

“I didn't realise it was actually for young people. I thought it was for old people. Not in a nasty way, I just did”. (Urban Angel, 14-17 age group)

“I suppose you just imagine it being for the older generation people. Not for the younger ones”. (Emma, 18-24 age group)

Others associated it with old people because they perceived older people's needs to be prioritised over their own:

“It's awkward because if you go to town, but then if you say right can you pick me up at five o'clock, yeah, it's all good and then some old lady falls down the stairs and puts her hip out, it's like can you get your own transport back? Yeah, I'll start walking. That's what they do, they prioritise the route which is fair enough like but I mean it's not really a solution is it to a young person's problem because you're....like I say, if you're in town and then something happens and you've got to use it for something else then you're stuck.” (Jim, 18-24 year group)

Finally, in addition to its association with 'old people', the appearance of the minibus and its slow pace was something with which few identified:

“It's got this huge roof and it like chugs up the hills and like it does like go at like ten miles an hour”. (Gertrude, 14-17 age group)

8. SOCIAL/HEALTH

For the most part young people felt that their social and health needs were well catered for in the Northern Fells.

8.1 Social needs

Given that a high percentage of young people are employed in some sort of job and/or in education or training for work, they have little in the way of spare time. Any spare time that young people have is spent with friends either going into Carlisle for various entertainments or going to events, meetings, matches, pubs and friends' houses in the Northern Fells. Few young people felt that additional activities or spaces needed to be laid on for them. The following comments by a group of young people were common:

“There’s quite a lot goes on in the village”.

“There’s always like dos up in the Hall or down at the Club or if someone’s birthday so you all go out or something. Around Christmas time there’s just different dos on, fund raising dos and all that kind of stuff”.

So you’re pretty sorted then locally?

“Aye, I never, I never seem to get a day to just stay at home and just watch telly or sommat”.

“There’s hardly a night you’re just at home. You’re always out doing something”.

(Young men, 18-24 age group)

Not everyone was completely happy with his or her social life in the Northern Fells. It tended to be individual young women who pointed out those facilities and activities aimed at everyone else, especially tourists, children or older generations, except themselves:

“You know you've got Brownies and Scouts when you're really young and like there's playgroups and stuff. There's a big gap until you're what? Forty? You know you can join the W.I. or (laughter). Nothing in between”.

“Yeah, like go bowling or, don't know, like you say there's a cut off point”.

(Helen and Catherine, 18-24 age group)

It was unsurprising that it was individual women who pointed out the lack of locally organised social activities for young people. This was because many of the local activities, including darts, pool, football and cricket, were attractive to young men and not themselves. There were few alternatives for women. Furthermore, it was young women who pointed out that the hub of social activities was Caldbeck. Those who lived in places on the outskirts of the Northern Fells felt marginalized from networks of information about forthcoming events and activities. They also felt insecure about taking part in what they perceived to be Caldbeck activities, such as the Caldbeck Players, given that they were ‘not a Caldbeck person’.

8.2 Health needs

Few young people raised concerns with regard to unmet health needs or problems accessing services. Local GPs were well aware of problems and issues pertinent to young people seeking health care and advice in rural areas. A local GP neatly captured the hurdles to local health care that young people potentially face:

“Uncle Bob might come in and then, Uncle Bob says “I saw your young daughter, blablabla”. You know, “ohhh, what was she doing at the practice” and there goes confidentiality. Also, and the receptionists are very local, so a young person probably knows them or they’re the mother of their best friend whatever. These are big issues in a rural practice. We, as a practice, are totally confidential can’t do anything about uncle Bob coming in and going oh I saw your young daughter at the practice. But our staff has a duty to confidentiality. So none of our staff would go out and say such and such was at the practice. They are bound by confidential agreement but young people, although that is a fact, I don’t think young people will trust it, or do we tell them that enough? So in their heads, they probably think “oh my god it’s Aunty Sally behind the desk, blablabla...”. But they probably don’t realize that Aunty Sally is bound by a confidentiality code and she promises she won’t say anything to anybody. So, we need to really push that out there”. (Health practitioner)

Only one young person was unhappy with service provision with regard to the particular case of mental health care:

“There’s absolutely nowhere for young people to go. Like I think there’s the Fairfield Centre for really young children and then there’s the Garlands for people who are adults.....”

Fairfield, what sort of place is that?

“It’s psychiatry. It’s a psychiatrists but it’s mostly for like bed wetting children or people who are five and have just lost their grandparents”.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

Although many young people leave the Northern Fells for new experiences, travel and to access higher education, a significant number feel that factors such as prohibitive house prices, inadequate transport services and a scarcity of career opportunities impact upon their choices and options. This section details points of action that could support young people with the choices they make, wherever these might take them. It also works towards helping those who want to live and work in the area to do so.

9.1 Community and Communications

There is a need for better lines of communications between service providers and young people especially those in the 14-17 years age range. There is also a need for information to be made available to all young people, including those who do not live in Caldbeck or who are not part of networks of information because they have recently moved into the area. The sort of information that young people want is wide ranging and includes details of social events happening in the Northern Fells and advice/information/experience sharing regarding coping with the move to University and city life.

Action points:

- *a dedicated youth web-site* This will be set up to provide information on:
- **Transport** Links to information on local minibus and train services and timetables will be posted on the website. Information regarding the Northern Fells Community Minibus and the Voluntary Car Service will also be available.

- **Goin• Entertainment.** Information on local clubs, societies, events and activities will be posted on the website.
- **Jobs and training.** There will be space on the website for the advertisement of job vacancies and opportunities. Links to websites advertising jobs. Further space for training providers such as Connexions to promote their activities. One off events such as careers talks from local people will be advertised here.
- **Accommodation.** This will provide information on Housing Associations who work and let properties in the Northern Fells. It will also provide space for private landlords to advertise properties to let. There will be further space for the campaign for affordable accommodation and updates on progress regarding this matter. There will be links to other campaigns on affordable accommodation, such as the High Bickington Project 2000.
- **Healthy Living** Information on local healthcare services; dietary and fitness concerns; drugs awareness; sexual health; local sports clubs/facilities. Details/links will be provided concerning where to go/who to speak to when individuals are coping with bereavement/upset/loneliness/depression/stress/bullying. Mental healthcare services information will be provided.
- **Going to University?** Advice on moving to cities and coping with university and urban life. Space for sharing information and experiences. Things to know such as *How to survive on a small budget; Which University is best for you?; Cooking for One; Staying safe in the city.*
- **Discussion Board.** This will provide space for young people to air their views, concerns and to share information.

- Up to date information will also be sent by **email or texting**

9.2 Employment and Training

Although most of the young people were in some form of education, training or job, some key concerns were raised. Regarding employment, rural Cumbria has experienced an overall employment decline between 1998-2002 (Countryside Agency). Jobs lost in traditional trades such as agriculture have been replaced by jobs that are often part-time or seasonal in the wholesale, retail, hotel and catering sector. Whilst seasonal work suits the needs of students it is inadequate for young people developing careers and seeking full-time employment. For the six young people training to be farmers, frustration was expressed regarding declining farm incomes and insecurity that surrounded their future. This has knock-on effects for those training to be agricultural mechanics and veterinary nurses. Experiences of graduate work opportunities were few. Where these did exist, competition for the job was immense. There were two young people considering self-employment at some stage.

Young people felt that both they and schools were under pressure to focus on pathways to University. Those not set for Higher Education felt they had much less support when considering future career and training options. There was a tendency to find work and apprenticeship opportunities through known contacts and not formal help. Those who did not know the right people faced difficulties finding appropriate work and apprenticeship opportunities.

Action points:

- Work with Connexions to develop more **work experience opportunities** in the Northern Fells. Many young people were frustrated by the scope of these. There is potential for a work experience network to be developed in the Northern Fells. There is also a need to work with partners to develop **more careers/training advice and support** for young people not intending to go into Higher Education.
- Provide information and links to support vocational routes to high-level skills and qualifications. More information and help needs to be made available for those considering and seeking **apprenticeship training schemes**. There is potential for this to be developed through the youth website.
- The **youth website** could also be a useful point to access links to job opportunities/internet based recruitment agencies/job centres.
- There is potential to harness the expertise of those who live and work locally. **Northern Fells Careers Day or sessions** could provide young people with the opportunity to see the range and depth of careers that are possible in the Northern Fells and nearby.
- Although only two individuals mentioned the possibility of **self-employment**, there is potential to harness the entrepreneurial spirit of young people in the Northern Fells. There is potential to work with partners (including the Small Business Service,

WIRE/Cumbria Rural Women's Network/The Prince's Trust) to support young people considering self-employment/business ideas.

- Investigate the possibility of setting up a **co-operative business** employing young people which would raise money for the project and provide valuable business experience for young people.

9.3 Affordable accommodation

Young people approaching their mid-twenties are clearly concerned about the lack of affordable accommodation in the Northern Fells. Those still living with their parents, working locally and unable to set up their own homes are effectively homeless. This study identified seven young people in their early twenties keen to purchase their own property in the Northern Fells and unable to do so. Young people are beginning to take action themselves regarding affordable accommodation. They have set up meetings with parish councils and aired their concerns through the media. Young people seek local support regarding the issue of affordable accommodation. They are particularly concerned about the growth in the number of holiday/second homes in the Northern Fells.

Most young people are keen to develop schemes whereby they can purchase (at least a proportion of) their own property. Renting accommodation is less popular because it is perceived as an expensive option (given that rents are high because of competition with tourists for privately owned properties) that provides no security for the future. Young people had some knowledge of Housing Association rental

properties in the Northern Fells. More information is needed on the Housing Associations with properties in the area.

Action points include:

- **Exposing need.** There are young people who want to live and work in the Northern Fells and are unable to do so. Caldbeck Parish Council has recently undertaken a housing survey which has similarly identified a clear need for affordable accommodation. Other parishes could follow suit to further demonstrate the need for affordable accommodation. The youth website could be another useful tool for demonstrating need, providing a place for individuals to share their concerns and emphasise need.
- **Developing community support.** This is needed for young people to develop their agenda regarding affordable accommodation. Parish councils need to assist with this.
- **Partnership working.** The Northern Fells Group and Parish Councils need to work with district and county councils to demonstrate need that will be recognised by Housing Associations.
- **Exploring options.** The issue of affordable accommodation is a national concern. Many rural communities across the UK are working to develop affordable accommodation initiatives. The High Bickington Project 2000, for example, has formed a Community Land Trust developing farmland (previously owned by Devon County Council) and old buildings into houses and workshops. ‘Capturing Value for Rural Communities’ published

by the Countryside Agency in 2005 provides information on other projects dealing with affordable accommodation issues.

9.4 Transport

This section is particularly appropriate for the 14-17 age group. Young people need access to co-ordinated information regarding existing public service delivery. There is potential for the Northern Fells Minibus/CCC Voluntary Car Service to be better targeted at young people. Some individuals thought that these services were only available to 'old people'. There is scope for a car share scheme to be set up to help young people to access work opportunities in towns/cities during the vacations and at weekends (especially Saturdays). 77% of people still at school reported that they had a job.

Action points:

- Put pressure on **bus** companies regarding **fares and routes**.
- Facilitate better use of the **Northern Fells Community MiniBus** and **the Cumbria County Council Voluntary Car Service**. Introduction to/information on services to be posted on dedicated youth website. Establish monthly Saturday shopping trips for 14-17 year olds using the Northern Fells Community Minibus with a pick-up/drop off point in Caldbeck (and other villages too).
- Investigate **Car Share schemes**. This is particularly relevant for young people accessing work opportunities in Carlisle during the vacations.

- Set up a **Wheels to Work** programme.
- **Information on public transport services** to be posted on dedicated youth website.
- Getting around safely by bike is difficult. The road between Caldbeck and Hesket Newmarket is a particular concern. There is some interest in pushing ahead with previous plans to develop an **off road bike path** between these two villages.

9.5 Social Life

Overall there was general satisfaction with clubs, societies, events and activities locally provided. There is, however, a clear need for information regarding clubs/activities happening in the Northern Fells to be made available to everyone. To access information or hear about forthcoming events individuals have to be in the loop of information sharing. Some, especially those who have recently moved into the area, miss out on this information. Furthermore, Caldbeck is considered to be at the hub of social life in the Northern Fells and those who live outside of the village and do not consider themselves 'Caldbeck people' feel shy about getting involved.

There are fewer events and activities organised for women in comparison to those laid on for men. Young women are not involved in local football, cricket or darts teams. Many like to go into Carlisle to window/shop on Saturdays but are sometimes unable to do this because their parents are busy/at work. There is potential for the monthly

organisation of Saturday trips into Carlisle for young women. There is also a need for occasional and special events to be laid on in the summer holidays. This might include mountain bike riding, water sports in the lakes etc.

Action points:

- **Provide information** regarding clubs/societies/forthcoming events and activities on a dedicated youth website. Make sure that individuals are aware that clubs such as ‘Caldbeck Players’ are open to young people who live in other parts of the Northern Fells. Young Farmers meetings/events especially need to be advertised on this website.
- Work closely with the Northern Fells Youth Initiative Coordinator/young people to develop **activities and events for school holidays**. Mountain biking events and water sports in the lakes were two ideas raised by individuals.
- Work closely with the Northern Fells Youth Initiative Coordinator/young people to develop **activities for young women**. There is potential for occasional/monthly Saturday trips into Carlisle to be organised.
- Support the work of the **Young Farmers Clubs** which are key to the social life of many young people in the Northern Fells. It is important that everyone knows that the organisation is not just for farmers.

10. FINDING OUT, MOVING ON

Summary of Research Findings

Underpinned by concerns regarding the out-migration of young people, the purpose of this research was to explore the employment and economic opportunities for young people in the Northern Fells of Cumbria. Commissioned by the Northern Fells Group*, this research was directed by Dr. Katy Bennett, from the University of Leicester, with the assistance of Joyce Woodcock (local enabler) and Keira May Harvey (research assistant). 47 local young people were involved. The following gives a brief summary of the research findings and the steps we are taking to address some of the issues raised.

10.1 Belonging

Many of the young people interviewed showed considerable attachment to the area and a sense of belonging to the community. This was particularly apparent amongst those who had spent their childhood in the area:

“I loved my childhood here. There’s loads of friends, loads of fun and no worries about going out at night and stuff”

The Oddfellows featured a number of times as a good place to catch up with the “crack” and to find a part time job. Swineside, a natural swimming pool, was also mentioned as a good place to meet up in the summer months and knowledge of it helped individuals to feel part of the place.

Taking part in activities also helped young people to feel a sense of community. The Caldbeck Young Farmers Club was particularly important and the “Caldbeck Social” is an event that few young people miss. The success of the Young Farmers Club was due to its ability to cater for the needs of a variety of young people. The children of farmers valued the club’s success in the “more agricultural” activities whilst others preferred the trips organised by the club to places like Laserquest. The club also organised events for women such as a “Body Shop” evening. This was one of the few clubs that adequately catered for the social lives of young women. Some young women with no interest in football, cricket, darts or pool felt that there were insufficient activities provided for them.

Moving On: The Northern Fells Group has already begun to develop activities through the Youth Initiative such as baby-sitting courses, mountain biking, a music group and multi-sports days. We aim to increase awareness of these through the Northern Fells Group website, texting and email. We are exploring opportunities to develop further activities including practical life-skills, arts and culture such as cookery classes, drama groups, and film-making.

10.2 Education, Training and Jobs

Most of the young people interviewed were going through education or training and had a job in 2004. Of those at school 77% had jobs. They worked part time in pubs, restaurants, shops and on farms. The growth in tourist-orientated businesses meant that it was relatively easy for young people to find casual or part time work. Whilst such jobs were ideal for students, they were less suitable for those looking for full time jobs or a

career in the Northern Fells. One young woman who had recently completed her degree said:

“I think I’ve been back now 3- 4 months and I’m still working part time as a waitress. I haven’t found any other jobs really so yeah, I’ll have to move away to find a job. It’s a shame but it has to be done.”

Even when job opportunities for graduates were available in the Northern Fells, competition for them was immense. One graduate applying for a job in the Northern Fells noted:

“It was very competitive. The first job that I got, there had been 72 people that had applied for it.”

Young people felt that both they and schools were under pressure to focus on pathways to University. Those not set for Higher Education felt they had much less support when considering future career and training options. There was a tendency to find work and apprenticeship opportunities through known contacts and not formal help. Those who did not know the right people faced difficulties finding appropriate work and apprenticeship opportunities.

Moving on. There will be online access to jobs, training opportunities & apprenticeships via the Northern Fells Group website. We aim to set up a local work experience network and to work with partners to develop more careers/training advice and support. We are exploring ways of harnessing the expertise of those living and working locally through mentoring and shadowing schemes and by holding careers days. This could provide young people with the opportunity to see the

range and depth of careers that are possible in the Northern Fells and nearby and could encourage entrepreneurship and small business start-up.

10.3 Housing

Affordable accommodation for young people in the Northern Fells becomes an issue in their mid twenties. This research identified six young people who worked in the Northern Fells and wished to move out of their parents' home but were stuck where they were because of a lack of affordable accommodation. A seventh interviewee had only been able to afford a house in a nearby town but commuted back into the Northern Fells for her job. There was common interest amongst young people in schemes that lead to some form of ownership and almost no interest in renting properties. As one woman said:

“The way you can stay here is rent. So it's fine if you want to pay somebody else's mortgage but we didn't”

Many young people were resentful of the rise in the number of local dwellings that were second residence/holiday accommodation and had contributed to big increases in local house prices.

Moving on: In order to influence policy makers we need to demonstrate the need for affordable housing, develop community support and work with councils and housing associations to explore options and initiatives.

10.4 Transport

Once young people can drive their feelings about living in the area improved and they were much happier. Much of the discontent in the 14 - 17 age group was rooted in their inability to drive. As one participant stated:

“Once you can drive I think everything’s done and sorted really. You can go anywhere you want, whenever you want.”

Public transport networks were deemed insufficient and inappropriate to young people’s needs. To fill the gaps of public provision young people were innovative. Although many relied solely on their parents for lifts, a significant number compromised by getting lifts to midway points such as Wigton and Dalston (where they caught a bus or train) or organising shared lifts.

Most young people were aware of the community bus service. Whilst those who had used it found it very helpful, many associated it with old people, which deterred them from using the service. One research participant commented:

“I didn’t realise it was actually for young people. I thought it was for old people. Not in a nasty way. I just did.”

**Moving On: Raise awareness of minibus and voluntary car scheme.
Lobby for reduced fares and better public transport services.
Promote Wheels2Work scheme now operating in this area.**

If you would like to find out more about the work of the Northern Fells Group please visit our website. www.northernfellsgroup.org

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