

## A place in the country – the contribution of second homes to North Devon communities

In collaboration with North Devon Council, notably Dr Mike Kelly and the planning team, this research intends to take an objective look into the value of second home tourism to local communities in North Devon. In 2008 the Northern Peninsula Housing Market Assessment highlighted that the Northern Peninsula Region, covering North Devon, had a high proportion of second and holiday homes and that little was known of the impact of second homes on the communities they are located within. This piece of research aims to seek out a greater understanding of the social, cultural and economic impact that second homes have on host communities through selected North Devon communities.

Coppock's (1977) pioneering book "Second Homes: Curse or Blessing" concisely elicits the diverse and emotive feelings towards second homes that remain relevant today. Defining second homes and their impact is complicated by the great variety of characteristics that denote second homes. These considerable differences between property owners and property use already identify the contested nature of the second home. Furthermore, second homes cannot be singled out and assessed exclusive to the effects of other rural housing influences such as social change, retirement, work patterns, housing inequality and so forth. The research is situated within this complex and contested framework exploring the meaning of community and sustainable community, the planning approach to these issues and the influence of second homes within this. The research will examine the discursive ways policy is realised in place through local and micro governance within UK planning's statutory sustainability framework.

The methodological approach to this research utilises the resources available through working in partnership with North Devon Council. Access to data on properties registered for 10% second home reduction, house prices and salaries and subsequent statistical analysis has assessed the relationships between these factors. Focus has been on three specific areas in North Devon: Brendon and Countisbury, Georgeham, and Instow each with a high proportion of second homes (properties registered for 10% council tax reduction) in their parish. The research methodology involves the distribution of a questionnaire to the selected North Devon sites in order to obtain a large quantitative data set profiling households and second home households. The main aim of this is to gain and assess opinion about second homes in the local community from those who live or own a property there. In addition to this a series of in depth interviews are being conducted with members of the communities and also with policy makers to attain greater understanding of these issues from these two perspectives. Currently in the thick of conducting research, some initial results will be presented about the economic impact second homes in addition to a brief overview of selected policy maker interviews.

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