

WORK PACKAGE 3.4 – COMMUNITIES AND WELLBEING

The aim of Work Package (WP) 3.4 is to improve and enhance the lives of people living in rural communities.

The work within WP 3.4 focuses on the resilience and wellbeing of Scotland's rural communities and provides the context within which work elsewhere in the Strategic Research Programme (on natural assets, land-based industries, and food and health) can be placed.

WP 3.4 is one of three exclusively social science packages in the Strategic Research Programme. It is designed to help people living in and using the rural landscape and uses a wide range of social science approaches including demographic analysis, economic analysis, quantitative and qualitative sociological approaches, environmental psychology, and policy reviews.

This WP is designed to produce policy and practice relevant findings. Demographic, social, economic and environmental change is being experienced from remote through to accessible rural areas in Scotland; from rural towns and their hinterlands, to coastal areas and islands. This WP examines how such changes can be measured and what they mean for the future and for the wellbeing of rural residents. It will identify policies which can enhance community wellbeing and resilience and the role of empowerment, local participation and democracy in this process. It follows that issues of social inclusion and equality are cross-cutting themes for the WP.

WP 3.4 will deliver core policy relevant social research to enhance the lives of people in rural Scotland, in a time of environmental change, on-going land reform and economic uncertainty.

Research is focussed on the following questions:

- How do changes in the population of remote rural areas of Scotland affect the social, economic and ecological resilience of these areas?
- Can place-based policies address differences in economic performance and social outcomes in Scotland's rural areas and small towns?
- What are the links between the environmental and landscape qualities of rural areas and the wellbeing of those that visit or live in these areas?
- What does "success" in rural community resilience look like, and how can methodologies be developed which capture the impact and outcomes of policy and practice interventions?

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