The rural areas of Britain are ‘the lungs of our society’. It is here that people have the opportunity of breathing in fresh air, relaxing in the natural environment, traversing mountains, hills, valleys or coasts, discovering history, archaeology, and geology, visiting iconic communities, and appreciating crafts, skills, traditions, and foodstuffs, often unique to their locations, and certainly produced locally. The increasing custom of the attraction of country pubs at weekends to those living in urban areas makes a significant contribution to the economy of many rural communities and is indicative of the value of the rural to the urban. This strategy must positively promote villages and the countryside as places for re-creation, inspiration, enjoyment, whether for the occasional visitor or those intending to spend a few days or a week away perhaps on a farm. Local Authorities must be persuaded by Central Government to find ways of promoting the natural environment and rural communities within their bounds, both to their local populations and wider afield.

The village church is probably the most visible building in any village community given its size, possibly its location in or near the centre of the village, and in its distinctive design and construction. The village church, together with its churchyard, holds the village’s history. Many are sought out and visited by family history searchers. Its construction and furnishings often contain the work of local craftsmen. Increasingly with the loss of key village facilities and space for the community to come together, village churches are being used as community centres for children and young peoples’ activities, meeting and eating places for the elderly, lonely and disabled, post office and basic commercial provision. Regretably not all village churches are open outside of service times, but where they are resurrecting their significance for whole communities, access is guaranteed.

Village churches are not isolated entities within villages, but along with the village pub, green and pond, part of the core infrastructure of the community. This strategy must encourage Anglican dioceses to support the opening and multi use of church buildings, while Government and other bodies must support the provision of security measures where vulnerability of open church buildings leads to anxieties about vandalism and theft.

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