



PRESS RELEASE

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Parliament view 21st century village challenge

THE impact of rising oil prices and climate change on rural communities is the message Voluntary Action Cumbria's Chief Executive Roger Roberts will be taking to members of the House of Lords and MPs this week.

Mr Roberts has been invited to report to Parliamentary members on "The 21st Century Village", an initiative carried out in Cumbria which looks at how rural communities may have to adapt to the changing world.

As well as looking at carbon reduction, recycling opportunities, water and wind power, the project also investigated the opportunities for farmers to produce crops for bio fuel.

The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors event has been organised by Action with Communities in Rural England.

Mr Roberts said: "Our view of the future comes from an important conference hosted by Cumbria Rural Forum, working with VAC in July this year. The conference explored the potential impact upon rural life of two emerging challenges – climate change and peak oil prices.

"The event left us with a clear view of what lies ahead and of the wide range of advice, support and encouragement that communities will need."

The conference brought together experts in climate change from the University of Central Lancashire, Sustainable Brampton, Ashton Hayes Going Carbon Neutral and Eden LA21.

On the day of the conference oil prices were \$75 per barrel, but they have since climbed to around \$100 and experts estimate that by 2010 the price will have risen to \$300 and by 2015 it will be \$500. These soaring prices will have a profound impact on rural life.

One of the projects showcased reveals that bio fuels are a potential source for farming profit and sustainability in the future, when combined with local food production.

Information shared through the Cumbrian initiative includes that growing crops for bio fuel produces less nitrogen than does grazing, the crop does not need rotating and the cost of growing oil seed to produce 300 litres of bio fuel is £180 per tonne.

In their findings VAC and Cumbria Rural Forum found there were more benefits for local producers in using the fuel they produced to reduce costs of local food producing, than in the sale of it.

The findings will be presented in London on Wednesday, December 5 when Mr Roberts will join Jonathan Shaw MP, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Rural Affairs in DEFRA at the Action with Communities in Rural England meeting.

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Photo:

Chief Executive of VAC, Roger Roberts.

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