

West Rhyl Communities First

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Leighton Andrews, Deputy Minister for Regeneration

There are two Communities First areas in Denbighshire – the electoral divisions of West Rhyl and South West Rhyl which were ranked 1 and 49 respectively in the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) 2000. Both areas appear at or near the top of the recently published WIMD 2008.

Communities First has experienced organisational problems in Rhyl from the start of the Programme. The initial Partnership arrangements covered both West and South West Rhyl but there was little discernible progress in the early years with evident instability in the Partnership and disengagement among key local partners. Welsh Assembly Government officials undertook a comprehensive review and proposed a range of remedial measures, including setting up separate Partnerships for West Rhyl and for South West Rhyl.

New Grant Recipient Body (GRB) and Host Employment arrangements were put in place from April 2006, with the Co-operative Group taking on the GRB and Host Employer roles for the Programme in South West Rhyl and North Wales Police (NWP) taking on the roles for West Rhyl.

South West Rhyl has made reasonable progress since the new arrangements were put in place, with a stable Partnership Board overseeing a range of projects and activities identified by the local community. The GRB / Host Employer arrangements with the Co-op Group also work well, with both parties keen for this to continue for the next phase of the Programme. We propose that the Programme should continue in its existing format in South West Rhyl.

Despite the best efforts of organisations like North Wales Police, West Rhyl, however, has made little progress since the new arrangements were put in place. The local community is no more engaged with the Communities First process than it was before the review and key local service provider organisations remain disengaged.

The long-running situation in West Rhyl bears little resemblance to practice anywhere else in the Programme and does not accord with the principles set out in the Communities First Guidance or in the consultation document on the future of the Programme issued by the Assembly Government in January this year.

I have therefore decided that the existing arrangements in West Rhyl should be ended from 31 March 2009. The Communities First programme will therefore cease to operate in West Rhyl. Instead we will put in place other arrangements to support community regeneration in this area from 1 April 2009. Discussions have started across the Welsh Assembly Government to consider how community regeneration in this area can be incorporated in a wider programme of economic and social regeneration in Rhyl. I expect to be able to make a further announcement on this in the Autumn.