

# rural issues in South Pembrokeshire

South Pembrokeshire, Wales, is a largely rural area which hosts many small villages. These can often be quite remote; from one another, from cities, and from significant transport links. Many villages are suffering from decay, out-migration due to a variety of push factors creating a cycle of decline. The ideal is to create sustainable solutions which allow these villages to keep their serene, rustic identities but also allows them to function healthily: economically, environmentally and socially.

## Issues

### Transport

Transport provision in South Pembrokeshire is a key issue. Public transport is scarce, the low population density meaning that bus companies struggle to make a profit and as a result provide a very poor level of service, buses running very infrequently, causing people to turn to cars. This is especially damaging as the demographic profile of the villages is often elderly, rendering car transport impractical. Similarly, people under 18 are unable to move around independently, creating a significant push factor. Those services that are provided often cater exclusively to tourists, making them too expensive or inefficient for the use of locals.

### Second homes

Second homes can often be a point of conflict between residents and tourists, and are something of a double edge sword; whilst they provide economic input for the area, it is often extremely seasonal, and house prices are pushed up, often beyond the budget of local first time buyers. This causes further out migration, and a decrease in the number of permanent residents. An example of this is Lydstep, where the village is almost entirely constituted of caravans, which leads to a ghost town in the winter months. Nearly all service provision close down in these periods, and there is 0 community spirit. This makes it an extremely unattractive place to move into, discouraging prospective permanent residents, and also prevents small businesses being viable.

### Population structure

The economically active portion of the population, the young, are pushed away from the area due to poor employment opportunities and a dull existence. The main residents are the retired, elderly population, who are attracted by the dull existence. This leaves the village economically crippled as there aren't enough young, driven individuals to sustain and develop services. This is demonstrated in Bosherton, where a 35 % retired population leaves the village without a workforce.

## Solutions

### Transport

- Council provides subsidies to bus services to allow more frequent and complete service, increasing bus use & income.
- Post bus scheme transports both mail and post, increasing efficiency and decreasing cost.

### Second homes

- Special subsidies to local, permanent residents making the area cheaper & increasing no. of permanent residents, in turn decreasing seasonality and supplying a threshold population for services.
- The provision of 'social rented housing' to meet the needs of those financially unable to buy houses. Owned by the local council who would also be in charge of new developments. This would allow new buyers to get on the housing ladder.

### Population structure

There are no obvious solutions to population imbalance, which is a symptom of the above issues. By reducing push factors, young people would be encouraged to stay or to move into the area.



### Services & Amenities

The standard of services in SP can be very limited, and often entirely seasonal (as in Lydstep). This is due to the fact that the population is too small to satisfy the threshold population for many comparison and convenience goods stores, and in some cases only in tourist season can these shops be viable. This lack of provision causes people to drive elsewhere to shop, directing economic activity away from the area and causing further decline.

This also affects the tourist industry, causing people to visit other, better serviced towns or villages despite the natural resources the smaller villages are rich in. Since many of the villages rely heavily upon the custom of tourists a lack of tourists creates a further negative multiplier effect, thrusting the area into a spiral of decline and more shops are forced to close.

### Employment opportunities

In the past, rural areas thrived on primary industry such as mining and farming. In the present day, mining has diminished due to exhaustion of accessible resources and the number of people employed in farming has decreased hugely due to mechanization and increased competition from abroad. In SP, the two main and almost only employers are the oil refinery at Milford Haven, and in the tourist business, which is massively seasonal and doesn't present a viable means to support a family all year around. This leads to commuters, forced to travel daily to nearby hubs to find jobs, who will spend most of their money in their place of employment, and may decide to move away. In Manobier employment is extremely seasonal, and so people are forced to commute to the larger towns of Pembroke and Tenby, leaving their home town with very low service provision and very little economic activity.

### Services & Amenities

- Grants for newly established businesses
- Increased emphasis on local sourcing and the reduction of food miles keeping economic activity local
- Grants to farmers to create farm shops, providing fresh, local produce to locals and encouraging people to visit the area.
- Home delivery service provided by supermarkets for the convenience of customers, especially the elderly. However this damages local businesses and creates congestion. **All of these would create a positive multiplier effect, more businesses providing more services, attracting more customers.**

### Employment opportunities

- Teleworking. This cuts out commuting and creates a sustainable, local economy.
- The increase of service provision would also create jobs, contributing to the spiral of growth as the area becomes more attractive to younger people.

**All the problems are interconnected. By starting to solve one, a spiral of growth could be created whereby the others were also reduced, increasing quality of life in these areas all year around.**