

INTRODUCTION

Rural Futures: Dreams, Dilemmas and Dangers

I have great pleasure in welcoming you to the University of Plymouth and the South West of England for this conference, organised by the Rural Futures Unit. With your participation, it will be an event of major significance for rural areas in the UK and beyond, not just in the papers presented and material displayed, but in the interaction between rural dwellers, professionals and academics; between difference disciplines and philosophies; and between people of different nationalities. A prime aim of the Rural Futures Unit is to break down boundaries, to open up the compartments which inevitably develop when so many interest are focussed on so complex a system as rural society. The conference is an expression of that aim; an attempt to make a difference, however small, in the way in which we collectively work and interact.

We have the prospect of a wonderful three days ahead of us, not only in the opportunity to learn from an excellent selection of speakers and workshops, but also in the chance to mix with people with similar interests from across Europe and beyond, to make new contacts, perhaps to make new friends. I hope and trust that you thoroughly enjoy the experience

This conference is made possible by the generous support and participation of the Commission for Rural Communities and the South West of England Regional Development Agency, and we all owe them a debt of gratitude. I would also like to acknowledge the support of the Devon Rural Network and the Association of European Life Science Universities (ICA). It is particularly satisfying that the conference marks the emergence into the public arena of the Peninsula Partnership for the Rural Environment - four leading institutions combining forces in the interests of research, knowledge exchange and curriculum development in the rural arena - and I am grateful for the Partnership's support for the opening reception of the conference.

Martyn Warren
Director of the Rural Futures Unit
Conference Chair