

RES-224-25-0076, Dr M Phillips, University of Leicester

13 Dec 04 – 12 Dec 05

Gentrifying Rural Natures: An Investigation of the Enrolment and Modification of Nature within a Gentrifying Village

This research highlighted the significance of flora and fauna within the boundaries of villages, and to the residents of these villages. Using a complex suite of natural and social science research methods, the project has shown that high levels of biodiversity exist within the fabric of the rural built environment, a feature that has hitherto been poorly recognised both within research and policy contexts. Many rural residents greatly value contacts with nature and this forms a key component in attracting many rural in-migrants. The research demonstrated that nature in village space is not a static entity but is being continually reworked through complex socio-nature processes. Of clear importance in many rural areas are processes associated with rural gentrification. While this term is often associated with transformations in buildings and the social composition of villages, this research demonstrates clearly how, in many instances, it also involves considerable transformation in the flora, fauna and physical landscapes of villages. The research also reveals the value of multi-method interdisciplinary research, drawing together social and ecological survey methods which range in form and scale of analysis.

The development of this scoping study greatly benefited from the involvement of Infoterra, a leading provider of geo-information products and services, including high resolution aerial photography, and also by permission from the Ordnance Survey to make use of MasterMap data and software. In November 2005 a workshop was organised to inform stakeholder groups and other academics about the focus of the project and some of its principal themes. Representatives from organisations such as English Nature, the Environmental Agency, the Countryside Agency, the Countryside Council for Wales, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Scottish Executive have all expressed interest in the project and its research methods.