

# **Rural England CIC and the Rural Services Network (RSN)**

## **Rural England**

The following is an extract from the Rural England CIC Business Plan:

“Rural England CIC was established in 2014. As a CIC it is a not for dividend organisation with any surpluses re-invested in meeting the Company’s Objectives. It is registered with Companies House and is VAT Registered.

“Our mission is to build the strength and resilience of rural England by helping to inform and engender better rural policy making. We will do this by encouraging informed debate, providing independent research and evidence, supporting informed information exchange and building a network that draws together all those who seek to improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of rural England.

“The prime focus of the company is on research to further the understanding of issues affecting people, businesses and communities in rural areas of England that will provide objective evidence to influence policy and policymakers.

“Our key target audiences include government departments, MPs, the Rural Coalition and the extensive networks of our stakeholders including the private and voluntary sectors.”

## **RSN**

The Rural Services Network seeks to provide a voice for rural communities by representing rural services, networking between rural service organisations and establishing and broadcasting best practice in rural service provision. RSN has a membership of over 150 local authorities, around 100 non-local authority service providers and over 10,000 community organisations including parish councils.

The Rural England CIC was established with initial financial sponsorship from RSN and following discussions initiated by RSN with a range of stakeholders over the lack of rurally focussed objective research available since the demise of the Commission for Rural Communities.

Since its inception, the objective has been for the Rural England CIC to stand-alone as a financially viable and sustainable organisation.

## **Relationship between Rural England and RSN**

### ***Governance***

The two organisations are separate and have completely separate governance arrangements set out on their own Memorandums and Articles.

One of the CIC Directors is also a Director of the Rural Services Partnership (RSP) Ltd which forms part of RSN. A further three of the CIC Directors also carry out work for RSN. In addition, the CIC Company Secretary (who is not remunerated for the role) is also a Director and the Chief Executive of RSN/RSP.

As required by company law, all directors and the secretary act in the primary interests of the CIC at all times when on CIC business.

The remaining three Directors do not carry out work for RSN and are not directly related to it in any way.

### ***Administration***

RSN provides administrative support to Rural England (for which is paid a token amount) including organisation of meetings, preparation of agendas and minutes.

If the RSN's extensive network is to be used on an ongoing basis for a project (e.g. Sounding Boards or as a call for evidence to support a research project) an agreed basis of recompense to the RSN by Rural England will be determined. At maximum this will be on a full cost recovery basis.

### ***Stakeholder Group***

RSN is a member of the Rural England Stakeholder Group. All Stakeholder Group members are encouraged to make good use of Rural England's research output. For some, RSN included, this will involve their policy influencing work. The Stakeholder Group is also expected to use its extensive networks to help disseminate Rural England research to local organisations and policy delivery bodies. RSN's extensive membership network is thus utilised to disseminate Rural England reports and other information as it is produced, in the same way as other Stakeholder Group representative bodies.

### ***Finance***

Rural England manages its own budget through the Company Secretary, reporting to the Board of Directors and Stakeholder Group as appropriate.

Individual Directors are tasked by the Board to promote Rural England to potential new financial supporters and seek to maintain existing support. This role falls primarily to David Inman, in his capacity as a Director of Rural England.

### **Work programme**

Three of the CIC Directors receive some measure of remuneration from the CIC for work previously undertaken on behalf of RSN but subsequently transferred to Rural England. Andy Dean is paid a small retainer for Professional/Technical support. Jane Hart is retained as an in-house researcher and Brian Wilson is retained to produce (every 2 years) the State of the Rural Services (SORS) Report.

*[The SORS has for a number of years been a more limited product of the RSN produced by Brian Wilson. It was accepted as a CIC product in 2015 and to ensure continuity it was agreed (including by the Stakeholder Group) that Brian would be commissioned to carry out the work on behalf of the CIC].*

The Board of Directors commission's items agreed within the work programme as approved by the Directors. That which is within available capacity will be carried out by Jane Hart. Work to be commissioned externally will be subject to an agreed procurement process commensurate with its value. Directors with an interest in submitting a proposal will declare an interest and take no part in the appointment process.