

Notes of Rural England Stakeholder Group Meeting

London, 6 February 2017

Present:

Margaret Clark (Chair and ex CRC); David Inman (RE/RSN); Graham Biggs (RE/RSN); Andy Dean (RE); Brian Wilson (RE); Jane Hart (RE); Janet Dwyer (CCRI); Mark Shucksmith (Newcastle Univ.); Richard Quallington (ACRE); Anna Bradley-Dorman (NFWI); Alice Grimes (Big Lottery Fund); Sarah Palmer (NFYFC); Rebecca Hart (Calor)

Apologies:

Alison McLean (ex CRC); David Webb (FSB); Helen Aldis (Prince's Countryside Fund); Sarah Lee (Countryside Alliance); John Birtwistle (First Group); Richard Powley (Age UK); Suzanne Clear (NFU); James Alcock (Plunkett)

1. Margaret Clark opened the meeting at 1.30 p.m. and welcomed those present. This was followed by brief introductions.

2. (a) **The notes of the previous meeting were agreed.**

(b) **Matters arising from the minutes:**

Margaret Clark mentioned her forthcoming meeting with Lord Gardiner which might provide an opportunity to raise the issue of Defra's requested endorsement of Rural England.

It was confirmed that 'The snapshot of Rural England' has been prepared. A copy is attached to these minutes.

3. Meeting with UKRPPG

The Chair expressed her appreciation of the very interesting presentations. It is pleasing that the group is keen to work together even more.

Janet Dwyer commented that the RDPE evaluation is likely to be published in March.

4. The State of Rural Services (SORS) launch

Brian Wilson reported that the launch at the House of Commons went well with some 50 people attending. Lord Gardiner was present. Media coverage had been extensive, especially by the BBC.

Case studies from stakeholders' organisations would be very welcome. Please could these be sent to info@ruralengland.org Richard Quallington said that ACRE would be happy to discuss case studies they hold.

5. Directors, Stakeholders and Supporters update.

The Directors now include Mike Perry who has recently started work with the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust. Mike previously worked for the Plunkett Foundation and has a wide range of rural interests.

David Inman suggested that Ian Sheriff from Plymouth University (who has specialist expertise on dementia); the Community Transport Association; and the University of Cumbria (which has a rural focus) all be invited to join the stakeholders. There were no objections to these suggestions. As Mark Shucksmith has a forthcoming meeting with the University of Cumbria it was agreed that he would raise the role of Rural England Stakeholders with them.

The importance of cultivating key contacts in the media was emphasised. Andy Dean andy.dean@sparse.gov.uk offered to prepare an agreed statement for stakeholders to use and to act as a point of first contact for any media enquiries.

David Inman reported that, in addition to the main funders, Calor and First Buses, approximately 30 other supporters mainly from the water and energy sectors each contribute £500 p.a. There has been some turnover, with a few leaving since last year and a few joining.

6. CIC budget paper

Graham Biggs introduced the previously circulated budget paper commenting that he had no serious concerns unless there were to be a withdrawal of significant numbers of supporters. It is important to allocate some expenditure in order to attract income.

7. Research on Issues Facing Providers of Social Care to Older Residents in Rural England

Jane Hart updated the group about progress on this research. Cornwall and North Yorkshire Councils are kindly assisting with information but it would be very helpful if stakeholders could advise Jane of any contacts they may have in other Councils' Social Services Departments who might also be willing to participate. Jane can be contacted at: jane.hart@sparse.gov.uk

8. The modern slavery statement.

The paper was discussed and agreed.

9. Big Lottery Approach

David Inman suggested that it would be helpful if a meeting could be arranged with the Big Lottery to try to ensure that the needs of rural areas are not overlooked. It was agreed that this should involve the Chair and one or two Rural England Directors.

10. Rural Vulnerability and 11. Working with Water, Energy and Communications Companies

David Inman introduced the previously circulated paper titled 'A five year scheme to better safeguard and assist people who are, or become vulnerable in rural areas by the

establishment of an essential services rural vulnerable group'. He also referred to the related paper 'Safeguarding. Resolving the Rural Problem'

A number of points were made in discussion including:

- Demographics of ageing are likely to increase incidence of vulnerability in rural areas
- Challenges of targeting vulnerable people, both in respect of vulnerability register and more widely, need to be better understood
- Routes by which people learn about the vulnerability register and/ or obtain local advice.
- Taking a more connected view. Similar issues affect take up of welfare entitlements.
- Questioning how the referral system to the vulnerability register works
- Issues around use of smart meters including unintended outcomes such as vulnerable elderly turning off heating.
- The relative importance of this specific issue (the utilities register) within the wider picture of rural vulnerability.

It was agreed that David Inman continue discussions with Supporters as suggested in the reports.

12. Any other business

Graham Biggs expressed concern that funding for rural post Brexit after 2020 is being ignored as other sectoral interests and regions have strong lobbying voices.

The group was advised that the Rural Coalition is also concerned about rural communities being squeezed. They intend to publish a short document in May/June supported by an event in Westminster.

It was noted that Newcastle University had produced a note raising questions for future (post EU) rural policy and that IPPR North had published a report proposing rural devolution.

Date of next meeting- Monday 5th June 2017