

Notes of Rural England Stakeholder Group Meeting

London, 5 June 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); Richard Quallington (ACRE); Anna Bradley-Dorman (NFWI); Alice Grimes (Big Lottery Fund); Sarah Palmer (NFYFC); Alison McLean (ex CRC); Fiona Davies (WIRE); Gerry Marshall (Arthur Rank); Helen Aldis (PCF); Alison Marshall (Uni of Cumbria); John Birtwistle (First Group); Georgina Fung (UK Youth)

Apologies:

JO Lavis (RE); Ian Sheriff (Uni of Plymouth); Michael Winter (Uni of Exeter); Suzanne Clear (NFU); Belinda Gordon (CPRE); Tony Armstrong (Locality); Carole Reilly (Locality); Trevor Cherett (TCPA); James Alcock (Plunkett); Janet Dwyer (CCRI); Polly Gibb (WIRE); Maddy Fitzgerald (PCF)

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 planned meeting with Lord Gardiner had not taken place yet but she hoped to try for it after the Election depending on Ministerial reappointments.

The CCRI's RDPE evaluation is still being worked on.

A 2 page briefing statement about Rural England is attached to these minutes.

3. Stakeholder Updates.

The Chair explained that before the election was called the Rural Coalition had prepared a 4 page statement on issues related to Brexit. Previous statements are now being revised and a longer paper is being prepared with the intention of it being published on 6 July at the House of Lords.

NFWI have held a weekend of action on supermarket food waste and one of their topic at their forthcoming AGM is alleviating loneliness

Young Farmers have been focusing on ideas for domestic agricultural policy and on bringing communities together.

Princes Countryside Fund are carrying out research into public attitudes to farming including food production, landscape management and next generation farming. They expect to finish this by the end of July.

ACRE have published 'asks' of Government following consultation with their members.

Arthur Rank have been looking at rural access to fair finance. There is lots of information, including about credit, which can be viewed at <http://germinate.net/>

Andy Dean advised that a group of organisation including the LGA and ACRE and facilitated by Mark Shucksmith have been meeting to try to agree some core ambitions for rural

The Big Lottery has established country teams for Northern Ireland, Wales and England. They are examining what has worked well and what has not. They will establish a community of practice group.

The chair said that Plunkett will be publishing a 'Better Business Report', including research on health and wealth of community shops and co-operative pubs, on 5th July. They will shortly be launching a report on the role of rural faith based buildings used for social enterprises. In addition they have commissioned research on practical aspects of woodland social enterprise.

4. Annual report- Social Care

Jane Hart advised that she and Jo Lavis have been looking at the issues facing four contrasting rural areas (Cornwall; Shropshire; North Yorkshire and Lincolnshire). Some common issues appear to be emerging regarding increased costs of rural provision and the difficulty of serving very rural clients. Other factors appear to have more localised dimensions such as recruitment challenges, the size and geographical context of care provider firms, and co-ordination between health and care sectors.

5. The State of Rural Services

Brian Wilson commented that he is planning to start the next SORS research next January. He suggested that the mix of services might include some from the last report and some new ones. Public transport, access to cash and community assets were specifically mentioned. In discussion comments included:

- Looking at core services even if not fast-moving
- Difficulties in surveying community facilities
- Budget switches e.g. from younger adult social care to services for the elderly

6. Research for Amazon

Brian Wilson outlined the research on unlocking the digital potential of rural UK which is just starting. Working with Scotland's Rural College the research will focus on rural businesses' take up of digital opportunities and the barriers they experience. It will generate a modest payment to Rural England.

7. Young Farmers

Sarah Palmer told the group about a proposed survey of their members concerning the availability and accessibility of services and opportunities to socialise. The results will feed in to National Young Farmers week and inform a September campaign following which she hoped there might be a brief for Rural England to do some research .

8. Research Presentation. "To briefly overview the major church involvement in rural health, isolation and enterprise development"

Jerry Marshall introduced his presentation by saying that the church is well embedded in rural communities and that its roles are much broader than meeting the spiritual needs of those who attend.

The presentation included social action projects' Linking Lives' action for the homeless; 'The Link' visiting scheme; Parish nursing and 'Germinate Enterprise'.

The Parish nursing scheme provides whole person health care and supplements rather than duplicated NHS provision and helps clients who may be anxious or "in a muddle". Some 80 churches are involved.

Germinate enterprise <http://germinate.net/> helps aspiring entrepreneurs to evaluate and develop their ideas. Run over 6 sessions, it starts by looking at the individual's skills and interests, develops ideas and then progresses to evaluate potential viability. 'Beer mat mentoring' is an associated initiative which helps deal with the isolation rural entrepreneurs often experience.

9. The Big Lottery

David Inman expressed the view that a special meeting would be of value and advised that arrangements had been made for this to take place on 11 July at the Soroptomists Club. The brief agreed with the Big Lottery had been circulated. A loose structure agenda for that meeting would be helpful.

Alice Grimes commented that the Big Lottery's new priorities are sufficiently broad that rural really shouldn't she hoped be disadvantaged. She would see if however here were any statistics on the point.

It was agreed that a meeting would be helpful to enable attendees to better understand the Big Lottery's priorities and relevant application processes and also in the hope that RE could in some way help the Big Lottery Officers.. Before the meeting it would be helpful to have an agenda with grouped questions and a list of those intending to attend. **To help facilitate the preparation of that agenda please could you advise David Inman david.inman@sparse.gov.uk whether you will be at that meeting, and also inform David of any question that you may wish to ask, no later than 20th June.**

10. Budget

Graham Biggs presented the budget for the last financial year which is still positive although the surplus reduced.

Looking ahead, with the Amazon input, there is now an anticipated surplus to the end of 2018/19.

Graham clarified issues around Corporation Tax.

11. Directors, Stakeholders and Supporters

David Inman reported that there had been no change to the Directors. There is a need to chase-up Stakeholder non-attenders. Supporter recruitment had been a bit slow but hopefully increased output from Rural England would be helpful in building up momentum.

12. Rural England Vulnerability

David Inman commented that the situation for rural England was getting ever more difficult with rural communities losing services, other services (e.g. Job Centres and hospitals) moving further away, and accessibility issues worsening. These factors combined with an ageing demographic emphasise the importance of mapping the situation.

13. Working with Water, Energy and Communication Companies

David Inman told the group that he felt there is potential for Rural England to help these companies to encourage eligible rural residents to join the Priority Services Register which provides increased notification of disruption of service and also tariff and monitoring services. There had been varying responses to this suggestion but North West Electricity has agreed to pay £3,500 p.a. for 3 years for an initiative in Lancashire and Cumbria to engage with (i) Parishes (ii)shops and pubs and (iii) churches and community groups and to monitor the effectiveness of those actions.

Date of next meeting- Tuesday 11th July 2017 at the Soroptomists Club commencing at 1.30 p.m.