

# Notes of Rural England Stakeholder group Meeting

## London 6 November 2017

Present: Richard Quallington (ACRE); David Inman (RE/ RSN); Graham Biggs (RE/ RSN); Brian Wilson (RE); Jo Lavis (RE); Andy Dean (RE); Jane Hart (RE); Mike Perry (RE); James Alcock (Plunkett); Alison McLean (ex CRC); Georgina Fung (UK Youth); Trevor Cherrett (TCPA); Sarah Lee (countryside Alliance); Anna Bradley-Dorman (NFWI).

Apologies: Stephen Hoey (Locality); Carole Reilly (Locality); Paul Blacklock (Calor); Mark Shucksmith (ex CRC); Sheena Asthana (Plymouth Uni); Ian Sheriff (Plymouth Uni); John Birtwistle (First Bus); Charles Smith (Farming Community Network); Lord Cameron of Dillington; Jerry Marshall (Germinate); Clare Crookenden (Prince's Countryside Fund); Suzanne Clear (NFU); Alison Marshall (Cumbria Uni); Alice Grimes (Big Lottery Fund); Margaret Clark(ex CRC); Sarah Palmer (NFYFC)

Graham Biggs opened the meeting at 1.30 p.m.

### 1. Election of Chair for the coming year

The group re-elected Margaret Clark as Chair

### 2. Election of Vice Chair

Richard Quallington was re-elected as Vice Chair. Richard then chaired the remainder of the meeting which commenced with brief introductions.

### 3. The notes of the last meeting were agreed.

For clarification, the Big Lottery fund presentation can be found at: <https://ruralengland.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Big-Lottery-Fund-Rural-Stakeholder-Presentation.pdf>

### 4. Outstanding items

#### (a) Defra

David Inman told the group that the requested commendation from Defra was still not forthcoming. It is now intended to approach Lord Gardiner

#### (b) Rural Landowners' Meeting

David Inman advised that Rural England had asked to do a presentation to the Rural Landowners' meeting but to date no response had been received..

### 5. Research

(a) Jane Hart confirmed the near completion of the research she and Jo Lavis had conducted on issues affecting providers of social care at home to older rural residents. She shared some of the key message from that research and confirmed that the official launch would be at the Parliamentary rural vulnerability day on 25 January 2018. Once proof reading has been completed the embargoed document will be available for stakeholders to read on the Rural England website.

(b) Brian Wilson outlined the research that Rural England is undertaking with Scotland Rural College (SRUC), for Amazon, about the digital potential of rural parts of the UK. The fieldwork is complete and some results are to be presented to the rural entrepreneurs' event at the NEC on 8<sup>th</sup> November. A presentation will be circulated at the meeting with UKRPPRG on 4 December. *Update: It is now expected that that Amazon will produce a press release featuring some of the interim research results of this research during the week commencing 13 November.*

(c) Brian introduced a paper that had been circulated in advance of the meeting and which suggested 8 topic areas for the 2018 report. There was general support for the suggested topics with several suggestions for particular areas which it might be interesting to focus on. These included:

- Preventative health measures
- Children's and adolescents mental health provision
- Young people's services
- The modern role of libraries

## **6. Consultation**

### **(a) Rural panel**

David Inman explained that it is important that rural voices are heard but it can be hard to demonstrate objectively what rural residents think. The creation of a Rural Panel is an important first step. A recent consultation exercise carried out by CCRI generated some 2,500 responses about half that number indicating their willingness to be on the panel. Ideally the panel would be fully representative of the rural population, at least in terms of age and gender, but the current sample somewhat underrepresents younger age groups (up to 45 years). David suggested that it would be best to adopt a pragmatic approach with regard to socio-economic groupings. The age profile did however need to be worked upon by encouraging additional younger participants. That approach was agreed.

### **(b) Sounding Board Progress Report.**

David clarified that sounding boards do not need to be fully representative and that it is hoped to establish about 6 eventually, each covering a distinct sector of importance in rural England. Two Boards representing principal and local Councillors had already been established and others specialising, for example, on small businesses, tenant farmers, school governors, and shopkeepers would be sought over time.

### **(c) Virtual Rural Community Parliament and Learning Day**

David confirmed that he is trying to bring together key organisations with a view to taking this concept further.

## **7. Administration**

### **(a) Lottery Enquiry.**

David reported that Rural England had contacted the Big Lottery enquiring about the possibility of a scheme to improve the network. It was hoped that the Big Lottery would be prepared to have discussions about this.

## **(b) Budget Report**

Graham Biggs introduced the budget report and outlined the financial situation relating to the previous year and the current year. There is a small budgeted surplus. Whilst core supporters are strong there is some concern about the current shortfall in the supporters' group income. In the future Rural England will be increasing its research profile and looking for commissioned research opportunities. Accordingly Rural England would appreciate being included on any tender lists for appropriate work.

## **(c) Directors' report**

It was felt that this item had already been covered under earlier headings

## **(d) Meeting with Supporters**

David Inman reported that he had been unsuccessful in trying to arrange the annual meeting in November but he expected it to take place in March 2018.

## **(e) Rural Vulnerability Day 25 January 2018**

David emphasised the importance of this event which is to take place in the Astor Room of Portcullis House. There will be a full programme and exhibition stands from 10a.m.(a full schedule for the day will be circulated in advance) David commented that he would like to see the rural vulnerability day becoming an annual event which would raise the profile of important rural issues and also to see a rural vulnerability group of M.P.s being formed.

Stakeholders and supporters are invited to attend and more exhibitors would be very helpful.

## **8. UKRPPRG presentations to 4<sup>th</sup> December meeting.**

Brian Wilson advised that there would be 3 short presentations and opportunities for questions and answers. One presentation will be about the rural digital potential research carried out for Amazon. CCRI and SRUC will also provide presentations and a full agenda will be circulated as soon as possible.

**9. The suggested meeting dates for 2018 were agreed.** These dates are 5<sup>th</sup> February; 4<sup>th</sup> June; 5<sup>th</sup> November (AGM); and 3 December (UKRPPRG and RE)

## **10. Any Other Business**

The CCRI report on the rural panel survey had been circulated. It identified health as being the highest priority but the primary purpose had been to obtain a list of rural panellists.(see 6(c) above)

The Plunkett Rural Community Co-operative Awards will be presented on 6th December

NFWI has a campaign to alleviate loneliness

ACRE is celebrating 30 years

The meeting ended at 3.17 p.m.