

RURAL ENGLAND: SUMMARY OF ONGOING AND PIPELINE RESEARCH PROJECTS

Paper for the Rural England Stakeholder Group

This note – which is primarily circulated for information – lists research projects which, for Rural England, are ongoing or in the pipeline. Most would be research commissions, though some are being undertaken using RE's own income from its supporter base. It should be stressed that some of those in the pipeline are quite speculative and it is unlikely that all will proceed. Moreover, the situation is an evolving one as discussions take place with the potential commissioners.

Project: Vulnerable Rural Customers and Energy Efficiency Survey

Client: Electricity North West Ltd

Description: Questions were added onto an existing ENWL customer survey, in order to carry out an analysis of energy efficiency measures, advice and views from some of its vulnerable rural customers.

Research by: RE (a small project)

Status: Project report written and with ENWL for comment.

Project: Rural Proofing for Health Toolkit

Client: National Centre for Rural Health & Care and Rural England CIC

Description: To produce an up-to-date online toolkit which local health and social care commissioners and delivery partnerships can use to take better account of rural needs and circumstances in their strategies, plans and projects.

Research by: RE led, with support from the Nuffield Trust and Sonja Rewhorn.

Status: Ongoing. Slightly delayed by Covid-19 restrictions, but still hope to have completed for an Autumn 2020 launch.

Project: Rural Net Zero Inquiry

Client: Calor as main funder plus English Rural Housing Association and National Housing Federation

Description: To explore the implications for rural communities and businesses arising from policy and practice to move the country towards its statutory target of becoming net zero by 2050. This considers both opportunities and concerns. The project is focussing on reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transport, housing and energy generation/distribution.

Research by: RE oversight, with research delivered by RE associates Nigel Wilcock and Tim Rose of Mickledore Consultants

Status: Project proceeding according to revised plan and aiming to test draft findings at some (online) workshops before finalising the report.

Project: Rural Vulnerability Research project

Client: Utilities on the Rural Vulnerability Research Panel established by RE

Description: To explore rural issues or the rural dimension to issues for vulnerable customers served by utility companies (gas, electricity and water). In particular, this should gather first-hand experience and stories from vulnerable customers and some carers of such customers. It may cover one or two upcoming policy developments e.g. SMART metering.

Research by: RE oversight, but CCRI have agreed in principle to deliver it
Status: Project was discussed with Panel and a costed outline plan produced. Further progress has been stalled by Covid-19 restrictions, but the hope is to commence in early autumn.

Project: Access to Cash in Rural Areas

Client: Note Machine

Description: To understand the impacts for rural residents, businesses and their host communities where access to cash has become harder as a result of the loss of local bank branches and ATM machines.

Research by: RE led, but with some extra input from research associate David Atkinson if there is also an urban dimension

Status: Costed and revised project plan was produced earlier in the year. Currently chasing to see if the project is still one the client wants to proceed.

Project: Review of Future Role of SRCC

Client: Shropshire Rural Community Council

Description: The client organisation (a member of the ACRE Network) wishes to commission a short independent review, to outline local community needs, which could inform its decisions about future community support.

Research by: RE (with some RSN data analyst input)

Status: A proposal was sent to SRCC and a meeting with them took place with them. It is not yet clear whether the project will proceed.

Project: Impact of Rural Touring Arts on Loneliness, Isolation and Wellbeing

Client: National Rural Touring Forum

Description: An earlier research project for NRTF (by Coventry University) explored benefits derived from the activities of rural touring arts schemes. NRTF approached us about a follow up project, to explore benefits specifically in terms of loneliness, isolation and wellbeing (including a link with social prescribing). It may now have a Covid-19 dimension.

Research by: to be decided

Status: A revised project plan may be produced soon, subject to further discussion with the NRTF.

BW, 29th June 2020