

RURAL ENGLAND – ONGOING AND PIPELINE PROJECTS (AS AT OCTOBER 2022)

This note outlines Rural England's ongoing and pipeline (or potential) research projects, as things stand on 4th October 2022. Since the Stakeholder Group last met a project brief has been put together for the main 2022/23 research project on the state of rural town centres, which is now ready to start. The project about the scope for village/community agent schemes to support utility network operators with their Priority Services Register has also been completed. A follow up project to this is being discussed.

Project: Rural Town Centres project (main 2022/23 project)

Client: Rural England CIC

Description: Project options, with this one being recommended, were subject to a discussion at the last Stakeholder Group meeting. The project will gather evidence about the state of rural town centres, including their high streets, not least to understand how well they have withstood the pandemic. Key components of the project include statistical analysis of rural town centres, a survey of rural towns (Principal Authorities and Town/Parish Councils) and around six case studies.

Research by: Rural England CIC (with University of Leicester support)

Status: A project brief has been agreed and research activity is about to commence, with the aim of concluding in February 2023.

Likelihood of proceeding: 10 / 10

Project: Follow Up to Rural Vulnerability Research project

Client: Cadent Gas, Southern Water, Western Power Distribution and Wales & West Utilities

Description: A project is being considered with these funding clients to follow on from those completed about: rural vulnerability and the utilities Priority Services Register (PSR); and the scope to work with village/community agent schemes. The main proposal being considered would focus in detail on the electricity, gas and water experience of rural customers who fall within a few particularly challenging PSR groups e.g. mental health and dementia, blind or partially sighted, dependent on medical equipment.

Research by: likely to be RE oversight, with an associate delivering.

Status: Topic still to be confirmed with commissioning bodies.

Likelihood of proceeding: 9 / 10

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

Client: National Rural Touring Forum

Description: NRTF approached us about researching and developing guidance that rural touring arts schemes could use to measure their impact in terms of loneliness, isolation and wellbeing (including for social prescribing purposes).

Research by: As discussed with NRTF, this would likely need input to deliver from a Rural England associate.

Status: An application was made to Arts Council England, but no funding has yet been forthcoming that would enable NRTF to proceed.

Likelihood of proceeding: 4 / 10