



MEETING OF RURAL ENGLAND CIC

STAKEHOLDER GROUP AGM On-line via Zoom

Monday 10th July 2023, 11am – 12:30pm

MINUTES

Present:

Graham Biggs (Company Secretary) (GB)
John Birtwistle (First Group) (JB)
Lord Ewen Cameron (EC)
Margaret Clark CBE (Chair) (MC)
Professor Janet Dwyer OBE (RE Director & CCRI) (JD)
Derek Egan (DEFRA) (DE)
Polly Gibb (WiRE), (PG)
Rev. Sarah Hulme (Arthur Rank Centre) (SH)
Katherine Lewis (Royal Agricultural University) (KL)
Professor Martin Phillips (RE Research Director & University of Leicester) (MP)
Suzanne Plamping (NFWI) (SP)
Richard Quallington (ACRE) (RQ)
Professor Mark Shucksmith (University of Newcastle) (MS)
Brian Wilson (RE Director) (BW)

Guest Speakers:

Professor Carly Foster, University of Derby
Dr Susan Kirk, Newcastle University Business School
Pip Kyle, Newcastle University Business School

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and offered her congratulations, on behalf of the Stakeholder Group, to JD on her recent OBE for services to rural research.

1. Apologies for Absence

Bethan Aldridge (minute-taker), Trevor Cherrett (Town & Country Planning Association), Georgina Edwards (Plunkett), Pippa Fry (Prince's Countryside Fund), Rebecca Hyslova (Fed. of Small Businesses), Holly Lombardo (National Rural Touring Forum), Jane Mordue (CA – Rural Issues), Sarah Palmer (National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs), Ian Sherriff (University of Plymouth), Brad Taylor (CPRE)

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting 19.01.23 ([See Link to Attachment 1](#))

Minutes of the previous meeting 19.01.23 were accepted as a true record.

3. Matters Arising

6) Rural Cost of Living Survey 2023 (GB)

The survey has now closed, and the analysis completed with the report having been

previously circulated. Please see [link here to the Final Report](#)

4. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair ([Description of Roles -see link to Attachment 2](#))

GB noted that both MC and RQ had confirmed that they would step down from the roles of Chair and Vice-Chair this year. GB thanked both MC and RQ for their sterling work in these roles over a number of years.

GB had not received any formal nominations and asked all those present if anyone wished to put themselves forward. There were no nominations.

GB informed the meeting that under the Memorandum of Articles of Association, there is no absolute requirement to have a Stakeholder Group, so therefore no absolute requirement to have a Chair or Vice-Chair. Until someone comes forward to take on these roles, it has been agreed, by the Directors, that they will take it in turns to attend the Stakeholder meetings to act in the role of Chair.

MC commented that neither role was onerous, GB and his team provide all the support, and it's 3 meetings a year. MC did think the idea of an "independent" Chair a good one.

Action: To keep this as a regular Agenda item until the roles are filled.

5. RE Budget with actual to 26th June 2023 (GB) ([See Link to Attachment 3](#))

GB noted that the income and expenditure account details the actual position for the last financial year and produces a budget for the current financial year. The balance carried over from 2022/23 was £42K as there were items for expenditure that had not been met in that financial year and carried over into the current financial year. In 2023/24, the estimated balance at the end of the year is £20.6K and provides for some contingency against "small shocks" etc. The budget is pretty stable.

6. Update on On-going and Pipeline Projects

(a) Rural Towns Project (MP)

MP noted that the project has now moved into the phase whereby the on-line questionnaire has been sent to Economic Development Officers (EDOs) and a separate survey sent to members of the Rural Services Network's Rural /Market Towns Group. Although there have only been a few responses from the EDOs, of those, they have been very detailed. They have also provided localised studies which will help to establish case studies. Planning to finish the project by end of September.

(b) Work for Utility Companies on the Priority Services Register (GB)

GB explained that this work has been commissioned from the CCRI and funded by the Utility Research Panel. The work involves three groups of customers on the Priority Services Register who have particularly severe needs; mental health, reliance on medical equipment and the blind and partially sighted and the impact for them of living in a rural area when issues arise with water, gas, and electricity supply. There are GDPR requirements to consider but the CCRI have noted that there are some promising comments from frontline workers and also quantitative data. The project deadline has been extended until the end of September.

(c) Decarbonising Rural Properties (GB)

The report is funded by Calor and has now been completed and will be signed off at the next Directors' meeting. Once this has been done and agreed on how to publish the

findings, GB will issue the report to the Stakeholders' Group.

Future projects (GB): may be further work on rural towns depending on the results of Martin's project, and/or bringing forward work on the State of Rural Services (SORS) Report to the end of this year plus further work for the utility companies, and another research project with Calor funding. MC commented that bringing forward work on the next SORS report would, in her opinion, be appropriate in the context of the timing of the next General Election

7. Research Presentation: Exploring sense of belonging, identity and place within the Derbyshire Peak District by Dr Susan Kirk, Professor Carley Foster & Pip Kyle (Newcastle University Business School) Research funded by NICRE

[Please see link to presentation.](#)

The project was looking at how people identify with where they work and live in rural communities within the Derbyshire Peak District and had Covid enhanced this sense of belonging or were people actually leaving; and also if there was an impact from Brexit.

There has been a slight increase in population since 2019. This population is increasingly dependent i.e. over the age of 65 but also there is a decline in younger people under the age of 24 years. There are areas of deprivation and areas of relevant affluence with worst areas of deprivation in the northeast in former coal fields. These areas are linked to poorer health, higher levels of crime and antisocial behaviour.

Younger people often left the area for education, jobs and careers but came back to the Dales to have their own families etc. Covid had shown that community and green spaces were a priority for many and the role of "natural Capital" was deemed very important as well as the impact of sustainability/environmental/economic factors whilst balanced with practical infrastructure demands.

Brexit had an impact on the farming sector with lack of workers. It also had an impact on "estrangement", so if you did not have that sense of belonging to the Dales then you were more likely to move away.

NICRE has agreed to fund Stage Two of the data collection and the next focus is on staffing issues and the impact of both Covid and Brexit. The aim is to look at employer and employee experiences.

8. Roundtable session

National Centre for Rural Health & Care – GB, with his NCRHC Director's hat on, commented that with the recent publication of the NHS Workforce Strategy, the Centre will be "rural proofing" the Strategy. Also, looking at wider determinants of recruitment/retention and causes of ill health. This work will be completed end of September/early October.

DEFRA – DE reported on current Defra funded research – the review of the Index of Multiple Deprivation between Defra and DLUHC. Defra's role is to enable a rural perspective in this and for a better understanding of the nature of rural deprivation. The second aspect is understanding how government should intervene. Reporting on this is due late 2025 and a new government will be tasked with taking the recommendations

forward.

Second piece of work that is being commissioned is an ambitious review of the grant that ACRE receives from Defra to assess the social value of that grant. It will explore from the moment the ACRE network receives the grant, the place where it is spent, the value generated from the grant, how it grows community activism and does that address issues and in turn generate value.

Third piece of work being developed is to assess the impact of the Rural England Prosperity Fund and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in rural areas. There is some evidence that suggests that mainstream European funding did not get into rural areas, therefore want to ensure that the UKSPF is working for rural areas as much as urban ones. Defra is currently advocating for a more place-based approach and JD has been part of these discussions with DLUHC on the impact of these interventions.

NICRE – KL introduced herself. She is based at the Royal Agricultural University but currently working on a project for NICRE on the language/terminology used to frame rural issues and what connects with people. It will also look at what language has the biggest impact and then advise policy makers on what to use. The project should be ready to share at the end of 2023.

JD reported the second State of Rural Enterprise Survey is currently underway and hoping to share the results in the Autumn. The survey is a large-scale piece and focus is on the cost of “doing business” over the past 12-18 months.

NICRE will also be organising events to showcase its broader work e.g., the Open Core Work. The National event will be in November, with regional events based in the South West, Midlands and North East during the early part of 2024. More information to follow.

First Buses: JB updated the group on a call for evidence issued by the DofT to review accessibility regulations for buses which closes on 4th September. The Bus industry is working with the DofT reviewing various elements of concessionary travel which will be concluded by the end of 2023. The Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport is working with the Rural Services Partnership looking at new models of delivery of public transport in rural areas.

Also, the Confederation of Passenger Transport, the trade association for the UK bus industry, is working on 2 projects. First project is a working group looking at the challenges of decarbonising rural services. Then, later this year, there will be a working group looking at how to provide bus services in hard to reach areas.

Newcastle University – MS reported that he has 2 new publications out. One looks at the differences in poverty rates across the 3 three broad types of classification areas and if it can be explained in terms of socio-demographic variables, government policies etc. One major analysis showed that that the proportion of people with low income in rural areas, living in private rented housing, has increased dramatically since 2010 and therefore facing higher rents and cuts in local housing allowances. There’s been little change in the proportion in urban areas. The outcome is that to tackle rural poverty, it is about tackling the housing problem. Open access article: <https://rgs-ibq.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/geoj.12524> Article published in 3 weeks’ time.

Arthur Rank Centre – SH explained that her role is to network with faith communities, nationally and regionally responding to all the issues discussed in the meeting. SH would be interested in the Derbyshire Research and if anything emerges as part of community in place and identity. SH also networks regional faith leaders with rural responsibility, e.g. agricultural chaplains, those that have a rural brief with their denominations, and supporting them with training etc.

9. Any Other Business

Meeting closed at 12:35pm.

Date of Next Meeting:

Monday 9th October 2023 at 11am – 12:30pm
(Round table session) and on-line via Zoom

To book your place at the October meeting, please click on the Eventbrite link [here](#):