

UK RURAL POLICY AND PRACTITIONERS RESEARCH GROUP (UKRPPRG)

BRIEFING NOTE

Rural England CIC took an initiative in 2016 -2017 to try to establish a UK wide group (the UKRPPRG) where rural academic organisations from England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland could come together with rural practitioners and discuss current issues.

It was felt that with the devolution that has occurred and the establishment of differing systems through different Assemblies and Parliaments, there was a lot that could be learnt by comparing and contrasting on a UK wide basis.

Initially four academic convenors were established from University of Gloucestershire, Queens Belfast, Scotland's Rural College, and Cardiff University Brian Wilson of Rural England CIC was the overall convenor.

In England the group was intended to complement the Rural Coalition, an English group of rural organisations set up by the Commission for Rural Communities, before its closure. Rural England's focus is evidence and not lobbying (though some stakeholders may of course use research findings that way).

In practice the UKRPPG Research Group has not progressed as hoped and no resources had been found to underpin any project work. There are no longer designated convenors in either Wales or Northern Ireland. The UKRPPG is now an annual meeting (although the last was 16th January 2020 due to the Pandemic) between Rural England Directors and Stakeholders and academic institutions across the UK.

Although inevitably limited by available resources, there had, by the end of 2018, been sufficient progress on data collection to illustrate that a very worthwhile project was possible but a bid (by CCRI at Gloucestershire) for Research Council funding for a rural evidence hub had sadly been unsuccessful. Data had been collected relating to demography; health (longevity and GP access); and housing (tenure, tenure of new build, price data for Scotland and Northern Ireland and affordability in England and Wales).

In respect of the last meeting a decision was taken to widen the meetings to involve other HEI academics with a rural interest.

As can be seen from the minutes of that meeting and the meeting that same afternoon with Rural England Stakeholders the meetings attracted a good range of participants, a number of excellent presentations were given and the discussion was lively and interesting. This gave us the hope that such a meeting had value, and should be continued.

The three presentations made to the meeting with stakeholders were on the subjects of:

1. The dynamics of poverty in rural Britain: [Professor Mark Shucksmith - Newcastle University]
2. The LEADER programme in Scotland: [Dr Jayne Glass - Scotland's Royal College]
3. Dependencies and interactions between rural, urban and peri -urban areas :[Dr Daniel Keach - CCRI, university of Gloucestershire.