



**NOTES OF THE RURAL ENGLAND CIC STAKEHOLDERS' GOUP WITH
RURAL HEI SECTOR/UK RPPRG
On-line via Zoom**

Tuesday, 5th March 2024, 1pm - 4pm

Present:

Graham Biggs, (Chair of Directors, Rural England CIC)
Professor Janet Dwyer OBE (CCRI & RE Director)
Professor Martin Philips (University of Leicester & RE Director)
Dr Jane Atterton, (SRUC)
Professor Michael Woods (University of Aberystwyth)
Dr Paul Caskie, Agri-Food & Biosciences Institute (Belfast)
Artemis Pana, (Scottish Rural Action)
Brian Wilson, (RE Director)
David Inman, (RE Director)
Kate Clifford, (NI Rural Community Network)
Kerry Booth, (Rural Services Network)
Kevin Mole, (Warwick Business School)
Polly Gibb OBE, (WiRE & RE Director)
Dr Rebecca Wheeler, (University of Exeter)
Dr Steve Emery, (University of Exeter & RE Director)
Tom Jones, (European Rural Community Alliance (ERCA) & Arsyllfa Rural Observatory)
Vanessa Halhead, (Scottish Rural Action)
Amy Cobbett, (National Farmers' Union & RE Stakeholder)
Andrew Dubock, (Plunkett & RE Stakeholder)
Carley Foster, (University of Derby)
Chris Cowcher, (Plunkett & RE Stakeholder)
Dr Ian Vickers, (Middlesex University)
Prof James Cunningham, (University of Newcastle)
Jane Deville, (University of Lincoln)
Professor Jeremy Phillipson, (University of Newcastle & RE Stakeholder)
Margaret Clark CBE, (Rural Coalition & RE Stakeholder)
Moon Soo Jung, (Visiting Researcher, Scottish Rural College)
Nigel Curry, (University of Lincoln)
Rebecca Hyslova, (Federation of Small Businesses & RE Stakeholder)
Sarah Palmer, (National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs & RE Stakeholder)
Jeremy Leggett, (ACRE & RE Stakeholder)
Bethan Aldridge, (Minute Taker, Rural England CIC)

1. Chair's Welcome & Introductions

Graham Biggs welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Notes of the last meeting held on 16th January 2020 ([see link](#))

Notes of the previous meeting 16.01.2020 were accepted as a true record.

2. Apologies for Absence

Professor Ruth McAreavey (University of Newcastle)
Dr Jayne Glass (Scotland's Rural College)
Dr Daniel Keech (CCRI)
Duncan Carter (Calor & RE Director)
Aidan Cambell (NI Rural Community Network)
Meilyr Ceredig (Arsyllfa Rural Observatory)
Professor Gary Bosworth (University of Newcastle)
Professor Mark Shucksmith (University of Newcastle)
Professor Stephen Roper, (Warwick Business School)
John Birtwistle (First Bus & RE Stakeholder)
Jon Eastwood (Big Lottery Fund & RE Stakeholder)
Tim Jones (South West LEP & RE Stakeholder)
Lord Ewen Cameron (RE Stakeholder)
Derek Egan (Defra & RE Stakeholder|)
Prof Simon Pemberton (Keele University)
Suzanne Plamping (National Federation of Women's Institutes & RE Stakeholder)

3. Feedback by Professor Janet Dwyer, OBE from earlier meeting of UK RPPRG / HEI sector

A very good meeting was held with engaged and enthusiastic discussion from across the UK & HEI Sector, working on various rural issues. We will look at how to map who is active in rural research across the UK and try to keep it up-to-date.

The conclusion of the meeting was that we would like to continue with the forum, think about how to strengthen it, and to thank Rural England CIC for its offer to convene the UK RPPRG which will be discussed further at its next Directors' meeting.

4. [Research presentation 1](#): Professor Martin Phillips, Research Director, Rural England CIC *The State of the Town Centres in English Small Rural Towns: Interim Findings*

Key points:

- * A number of challenges exacerbated by Covid and recovery has been slow.
- * SPF/Levelling Up funding went to higher tier local authorities in the main
- * Town Centres impacted by shop vacancies and disrepair, dilapidated public buildings, declining public service provision and public transport

Useful Links shared/discussed in this section:

[Build Back Better High Streets](#)

[The High Street Report](#)

[Long Term Plans for Towns](#)

[Keep it in the Community - Plunkett](#)

5. [Research presentation 2](#): Dr Jane Atterton, SRUC – Scotland's Rural College

Rural and Island Issues and Policies in Scotland

Key points:

- * Theme E: Rural Futures aims to deliver an evidence base to examine challenges/opportunities to understand and thereby support economies, communities and land reform in these regions
- *Rural and Islands Report 2023 covers key areas: Policy, People, Transport, Affordable Housing, Workforce/Earnings, Economy, Business & Covid
- *Rural Delivery Plan: A Ministerial Working Group set up to oversee it's development. Lost a lot of learning/background knowledge due to turnover of ministers and key personnel.
- * Rural Lens approach rather than Rural Proofing

Useful Links shared/discussed in this section:

[Scottish Government: Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture 2022-2027 Strategic Research Programme](#)

[NISRIE - Novel Insights on Scotland's Rural & Island Economies](#)

[Reimagined Policy Futures: Shaping sustainable, inclusive and just rural and island communities in Scotland \(ReRIC\)](#)

[Rural and Islands Report 2023](#)

[Rural and Island Housing Action Plan](#)

6. [Research presentation 3: Professor Mike Woods](#), Aberystwyth University

The Rural Wales Local Policy and Innovation Partnership

Key points:

- * Four Local Policy and Innovation Partnerships across the UK (LPIP) funded to Dec 2026
- * Supporting and developing a wellbeing economy in Rural Wales
- * Themes x 4 are supported by researchers, stakeholders and community representatives
- * Data Synergy, Analysis & Mapping – creation of a Hub for policy makers & Practitioners
- * Integration of existing data resources in public domain

Useful Links shared/discussed in this section:

[UK Research and Innovation](#)

[Local Policy Innovation Partnership Hub](#)

[Cymru Wledig LPIP Rural Wales](#)

[Marches Partnership](#)

[Cumbria pilot study funded by UKRI to set up a Community Research Network](#)

[Land Use for Net Zero Hub](#) (University of Leicester et al)

7. [Research presentation 4: Dr Paul Caskie](#), Head of Economics Research, Agri-Food & Biosciences Institute, Belfast

AD|ARC work to estimate off-farm incomes & household dependence on agricultural income in Wales

Key points:

- * Link farm business data with personal data for farmers and households
- * Create independent, research ready datasets for the four UK nations or for across the UK
- * Anonymised data and linking existing government datasets
- * Will be updating datasets to include 2021 Census information
- * Training provided for researchers to use the datasets and prevent unintended disclosures
- * Looking for potential research collaborations using the datasets

Useful Links shared/discussed in this section:

[Administrative Data Research UK](#)

[Administrative Data | Agricultural Research Collection](#): Enhancing the prosperity of wellbeing of farm households

[Data Insight: Are farm households different? Some evidence from Wales](#)

[Agricultural Economics Society](#) – Symposium on project at Annual Conference on 18th-20th March

8. Updates from Partners:

Plunkett: New report published on “[Community Ownership : A Way Forward for Wales](#)” Also considers legislation in Scotland and England for supporting community ownership in different places.

NICRE: State of rural enterprise reports - now out on Knowledge and skills; Innovation and opportunities; Rural SMEs and environment; with the farm business report still to publish later this month. See www.nicre.co.uk/publications

National Federation of Young Farmers’ Clubs: AGRI Ambition paper highlighting topics of importance for young rural people. [Future opportunities for rural next generation](#)

9. Brief General Discussion:

Jeremy Phillipson wondered if the Group could pull together a very short statement of vital issues arising from the research/evidence base - coming from across the UK network.

Discussion took place and Jeremy Leggett also noted that is doing something along these lines from a rural civil society perspective separating out reserved and devolved matters which he will send to Jeremy P for comment.

10. Any other business and close

Meeting closed at 15:45