

Revitalising Rural - Witness Biographies

The rural transport network



John Birtwistle, First Group

John is Head of Policy for FirstGroup plc's UK Bus Division. He leads initiatives on a variety of subjects including domestic and international policy and legislation, local authority partnerships and concessionary travel, and has advised on the implementation of Bus Rapid Transit in the UK and USA. John has represented First, and the UK bus industry, on a number of Governmental and industry committees. He is the current President of the European Passenger Transport Operators association.



Keith Little, Cabinet Member responsible for transport, Cumbria Council

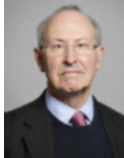
Clr Little is the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport at Cumbria County Council. He is also the Council's representative on Transport for the North.



Bill Freeman, Community Transport Association (CTA)

Bill Freeman has been the Chief Executive of the Community Transport Association (CTA) since 2013. The CTA is a national charity that leads and supports thousands of local charities and community groups across the UK that all provide transport services for a social purpose and community benefit. Bill has spent the last 20 years in senior roles in national membership bodies in the UK's voluntary and community sector across a diverse range of public policy areas including transport, education, youth services and health. Throughout his time at CTA, Bill has been a passionate thought leader and advocate for greater community ownership within transport for the benefit of passengers and their communities, with access and inclusion at the heart of everything.

Building affordable rural housing



Lord Best, Chair of Affordable Housing Commission

Richard Best is an independent "cross-bench" member of the House of Lords and has successfully piloted 5 Private Members Bills through the House.

He has been involved in housing since the 1960's, was chief exec of the National Housing Federation and of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation/Housing Trust, a Rural Development Commissioner, chair of Hanover Housing Association, and President of the Local Government Association.

He chaired the Rural Housing Policy Review and later the Inquiry into Rural Housing for an Ageing Society, both sponsored by Hastoe Housing Association. He now chairs the Affordable Housing Commission.



Monica Burns, National Housing Federation

Board member of English Rural HA and former lead on rural housing for the NHF.

I have worked in rural housing for over 30 years on a national basis. This has included shaping rural policy, working with Housing associations developing rural housing and when working as a rural housing enabler working with local communities on housing projects.

Creating a thriving rural economy



Nigel Wilcock, Executive Director of the Institute of Economic Development (IED)

Nigel is Managing Director of the economic development consultancy Mickledore Ltd. and has 20 years' experience in regeneration and economic development and was previously Regional Development Director for Ernst & Young. Prior to Ernst & Young, Nigel worked for the North West Development Agency and Deloitte. Nigel is a graduate economist and a member of the Chartered Institute of Marketing. His experience is in leading large-scale regeneration and economic development projects and he has done this both nationally and internationally.

In the UK he has worked on assignments across every region as well as advising national government. Nigel has a particular specialism in European State Aid and also advises corporate clients on public sector funding opportunities.



Professor Jeremy Phillipson, NICRE

Jeremy Phillipson is Professor of Rural Development at the Centre for Rural Economy in the School of Natural and Environmental Sciences at Newcastle University. He has research interests on the development needs of rural economies and fishing communities, processes of expertise exchange within rural land management, and on the integration of social and natural sciences in resource management. Jeremy is Director of the National Innovation Centre for Rural Enterprise.



Richard Wainer, Policy and Public Affairs Director, Networks, BT Group

Richard leads BT's public policy work across key issues relating to its investment in and deployment of fixed and wireless networks. He was previously Head of Policy and Public Affairs for EE prior to its acquisition by BT Group in 2016. Earlier in his career, Richard led Nationwide Building Society's policy and public affairs activity, helping the mutual to navigate the aftermath of the financial crisis. He has also worked at the CBI, where he was focused on education and skill policy.



Jessie Hamshar, Strategy & Engagement Service Director at Cornwall Council and Strategic Director at Britain's Leading Edge

Jessie Hamshar is the Strategy & Engagement Service Director at Cornwall Council, the first and only non-metropolitan authority to have a devolution deal. Prior to joining the Council in 2017, Jessie was a senior civil servant, leading projects ranging from reforming the local government funding system with the introduction of business rates retention, through to delivering the manifesto commitment to provide working parents with 30 hours free childcare. Jessie is the strategic director of one of the Britain's Leading Edge authorities who has driven this agenda.