

Attachment C

Notes of Rural England Meeting, London 3 November 2014

Present:

David Inman; Andy Dean; Jane Hart; Margaret Clarke; Janice Banks, Alison McLean (Chair); Jerry Marshall; Will Banks; Mary Roberts; Holly Sims.

Apologies

Sheena Asthana; Janet Dwyer; Mark Shucksmith; Howard Petch; Rachel Barber; Michael Winter.

The meeting commenced at 1.30 p.m.

1. Last meeting

The notes of the last meeting were agreed as a correct record. Mary was welcomed to the WI's first meeting.

2. Preliminary discussion

David Inman introduced the agenda commenting that he hoped three key issues would be decided at the meeting, namely:

1. How to achieve funding (estimated £125,000 to the package of measures the group had identified)
2. Identifying first priorities
3. The future composition of the Steering Group

3. Results from Survey Money exercise

The results of the survey had been circulated before the meeting and those were fully noted.

Items 4 and 5 on the agenda were then taken in reverse order.

4. The wall of support and other funding issues

David Inman confirmed that Calor had agreed to be the commercial lead. The group were grateful to them. David suggested that finding the whole £125,000 would be very difficult and that the only approach had to be taking a tranche by tranche approach over, say, 5 tranches. Therefore in the first instance a limited number of projects needed to be identified for Tranche 1. Discussions with Calor had indicated that asking more individual companies for £500 might be a better approach than always hoping to target potential sponsors for higher sums. Following discussion about other options including grant funding the suggested approach was agreed as the main area of work to be undertaken.

It was also decided that these contributing companies should be encouraged to use our systems to spell out their own best practice initiatives in rural areas. Jane would seek to provide a definition of what is considered to be acceptable best practice and design a

template for their use. It would be agreed by the group at their next meeting or through e mail consultation.

However it was also agreed that if the opportunity arose we would also negotiate with key sponsors for larger amounts (and for greater publicity). The group also agreed to continue with making grant applications where there was a good chance of success and to continue with discussions with major funders (e.g. Big Lottery).

5. Identifying priorities

This item had to be undertaken on the assumption that a first tranche appeal for funding would produce private sector involvement above £25,000.

David Inman briefly summarised the current work areas which was followed by debate about what should be included in the first tranche. There was general consensus that producing a biennial "State of Rural Services" report was the top priority.

It was suggested that it would be helpful for the service to (a) supplement the "State of Rural Services" report with a subject area report in the alternate year when the "State of Rural Services" is not published. After debate about potential topics it was agreed that (b) "Rural Vulnerability as Affecting Older People" would be highly relevant to a wide range of businesses and service providers and it would be the first of these reports to be produced.

It was also agreed to (c) explore whether a small business sounding board (hopefully of at least 100 proprietors of small businesses) could be established to be used for consultation purposes. Areas where the Group and the FSB could work together would also be sought. It was felt important to establish a rural business lens. (Total required would be c32k)

The other option actively discussed but not finally supported for inclusion in this first tranche was the library of good rural practice. It was considered that linking best practice areas by some form of bibliography might be of greatest importance as many libraries existed across many web sites. Margaret Clarke said the CRC had found this a difficult project but it was agreed Jane would have a look at the feasibility of this and report back to a future meeting.

6. Heart of the village

Jane Hart outlined current work in this area which includes: the compilation of a list of relevant publications; research on village shops (which is somewhat hindered by the lack of available data); and the investigation of good practice examples of housing provision for older people. She indicated an intention to prepare two or three real place examples to illustrate the compound effects of service cuts on specific communities.

7. Group composition

David Inman circulated a list of 25 groups that it was felt might contribute positively to Rural England CIC if they could be enjoined. It was agreed the following should be approached.

Age UK, Association of National Parks, the Association of AONBs, British Youth Council, the CLA, Countryside Alliance, CPRE, Forestry Commission, Locality, LGMB, NALC, NAVCA, NHF, Open University, Pensioners Parliament, RICS, The Tenant Farmers Association, the University of the Third Age, UK Youth, WIRE, Woodland Trust.

8. English Devolution.

There was brief discussion but the item was deferred to the next meeting when Jerry Marshall will lead the discussion.

9. RSN

The new constitution of RSN following the closure of the LGA's Rural Commission was detailed. A new Rural Assembly was being constituted by RSN allowing all authorities across England who had rural areas to be involved

10. The Rural Manifesto.

This item was presented for information only. If any members had any points they were asked to write in to RSN.

11. Other matters

It was requested that the CIC terms of reference be circulated prior to the next meeting. An item re their compliance will be on the next agenda.

12. Commending the Initiative

Gloucestershire University had agreed to say they were supportive of the wall of support initiative. It was hoped the National Trust would also be able to commend it. John Craven had been contacted. It was suggested Exeter and Newcastle Universities be similarly approached.

13. Election of Chair

Alison Mclean was re-elected as Chair of the Group for 2015.

14. Meeting Dates

Meeting dates would be the 16th February 2015, 8th June 2015 and the 2nd of November 2015. Venue(s) to be announced.