

## Peers' Panel on Rural Issues Strategy Meeting 03.03.20

**Present:** - Lord Foster (Chair), Baroness Young, Lord Colgrain, Lord Curry, Lord Cameron, Lord Teverson, Earl of Caithness. From RSN Cllr Cecilia Motley (Chair), Graham Biggs (Chief Executive), David Inman (Corporate Director).

**Apologies:** - Bishop of Ely, Bishop of Newcastle, Bishop of St Albans, Baroness Mallalieu, Brian Wilson (RSN Adviser)

The meeting was called how to progress the calls for a Rural Strategy despite the Government's rejection of that recommendation by the Lords Select Committee on the Rural Economy and the RSN's Campaign

The following issues were noted and discussed as appropriate: -

>> **(A) Regional Roadshows** - RSN together with the Rural Coalition, Acre and the Plunket Foundation (with financial support from Calor Ltd) were holding a series of regional roadshows to both raise awareness/support and seek to identify any significant Regional Issue. An overall report on the observations which were being made would be produced. To date they had taken place in the North East (in conjunction with the University of Newcastle), and in the North West. Three were due in the South East, the West Midlands and the South West in March.

### >> **(B) Signatures of Support--Update**

Some 1200 signatures of support had been achieved to date. There had been much local authority and local council support. The call for support had deliberately not been promoted further during the Brexit debate but promotion would now continue during the Spring and Summer.

### >> **(C) Approach to the National Innovation Centre for Rural Enterprise (NICRE)**

Lord Foster circulate an e mail from Newcastle University about the NICRE initiative. Lord Curry circulated a letter he had sent to Lord Gardiner about the work of a Steering Group which he had been chairing in the North East about funding for Rural Design Centre based in the North East which would work with NICRE. Members agreed to liaise with the newly established National Innovation Centre for Rural Enterprise Centre for Rural Enterprise which was being formally launched in June. The centre was being funded by the Research England for an initial 3-year period.

>> (D) Baroness Anne Mallalieu was carrying out investigations into the **possible establishment of a Rural Issues APPG** specific grouping as she felt there was a current void in overall rural consideration. RSN offered to act as the secretariat for it if established. Graham Biggs agreed to contact her to discuss further.

### >> **(E) Exploration of a source of advice to Parliamentarians on rural issues.**

The Lords felt there was no advice/support mechanism for them allowing facilitation of advocacy by them on the overall rural argument and coordination of the Parliamentary Questions system and the putting down of amendments to legislation to promote the Rural Strategy concept. The position was contrasted with that of Environmental Issues where work by Yvette Humphrey - who was funded in a full-time post- was very useful. Whilst funding was always a problem the situation it was

felt did require brainstorming - if something of this nature could be established it would be really valuable.

**>> (F) An attempt to form an informal small Lords Group on rural issues**

As Government had not proceeded with the Select Committees recommendations it was felt there was now scope for this.. It was agreed Lord Foster would pursue this and take appropriate action once it was known if the new procedures in the Liaison Committee would lead to the Government's response to/progress in implementing the Select Committee's recommendations would be used.

>> (G) RSNs intention to put a **revised iteration of the strategy** to the September 2020 National Rural Conference in Cheltenham. There was need to do this to mirror the span of the work of the Select Committee and to catch up with subsequent development areas. The thrust of the new work was to show how rural areas could assist the Government in achieving its objectives and identifying barriers

**>> (H) Approach to the EFRA Select Committee-** Neil Parrish the re-elected Committee Chair had offered preliminary discussions in a couple of weeks' time to which Graham Biggs had been invited.

**>> (I) Categorisation of the Select Committee's recommendations** into Relevant Sections possibly against the 5 Foundation of Productivity Levers Government themselves were employing in the Industrial Strategy and which would be the framework for the RSN's next documentation. It was agreed this would be attempted. (Possible creating a short 'glossy brochure' of the Committee's original report would also be investigated.)