

RSN Seminar: Enabling Rural Business

Date: 28th July 2021

Subject: Enabling Rural Business

Chair: [Kerry Booth](#)¹, Assistant Chief Executive, Rural Services Network

Host: Online Event via Zoom

Speakers

Speaker 1: John Longden OBE, Chief Executive, Pub is the Hub

Speaker 2: Linda Emmett, Project Advisor, The Diverse Regeneration Company CIC

Speaker 3: Mark O'Mahoney, Senior Communications Manager, Be the Business

Learning Outcomes

Examples of Good Practice/Reports/Information

- Rural England CIC report on [unlocking the digital potential of rural areas across the UK](#)² commissioned by Amazon.
- [Talk Community Hubs](#)³ – Herefordshire based.
- [British Business Bank](#)⁴ – Government owned business development bank.

Key Learning Points

The social value of pubs and publicans as small businesses providing new services and amenities in their communities

- [Pub is the Hub](#)⁵ is an independent organisation which relies totally on donations and the voluntary help of [12 Expert Advisors](#)⁶.
- **In the UK approx. 48K pubs.** In England, there are approx. 13K rural pubs of which 5,400 are free houses and 6K are business tenancies.
- **Approx. 86% of rural pubs are run as small businesses** and are not part of the larger corporate sector.
- **143K licensed premises in the UK** – biggest threat to pubs is from change in hospitality business e.g. craft beer cafes, restaurants, hotels etc.
- **Social Value Report published in May 2021.** For a copy of the report please email Nicky on support@pubisthehub.org.uk Encouraged to follow Treasury's Green Book on appraisal and valuation to see if it could be used to quantify pubs.

¹ <https://www.rsnonline.org.uk/page/our-team/kerry-booth/>

² <https://ruralengland.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Unlocking-digital-potential-website-version-final.pdf>

³ <https://www.talkcommunity.org/>

⁴ <https://www.british-business-bank.co.uk/>

⁵ <https://www.pubisthehub.org.uk/>

⁶ <https://www.pubisthehub.org.uk/about/>

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- **Covid had an impact on collecting data** and hope to complete data collection on those pubs missed out on. Focused on social value delivered through the Community Services Fund.
- **Key findings:** for every £1 invested in a project approx. £9 additional social value was created from a huge range of services.
- **36 different types of services** – ranging from village stores, community cafes, libraries, hubs, garden areas, allotments, children’s playgrounds or whatever the pub landlord felt the community needed.
- **Report will be used in the future to** demonstrate that projects are creating a social value. BEIS recommends the hospitality industry use the report to identify the social value they are creating.
- **[Community Services Fund](https://www.pubisthehub.org.uk/community-services-fund/)⁷ launched in 2013**– maximum grant awarded is £3K but could potentially create £27K in social value to the local area. To date helped over 700 pubs diversify. Pub landlords act as the connectors with a local area.
- **Lessons learnt from the pandemic** is how small investments have created real, social, economic, and sustainable value for these small businesses.
- **[Join Inn-Last Orders for Loneliness programme](https://www.pubisthehub.org.uk/join-inn-last-orders-for-loneliness/)⁸** – link in with regional advisors to offer ideas and support to local publicans on how to combat loneliness in their area. Produced helpful guides and case studies.
- **Have used venues for** IT Training hubs, community training, health surgeries, police surgeries, local vicar, community libraries etc
- **Need champions in local areas** e.g., Cllrs of rural Local Authorities. Can donate to the Community Services Fund with the condition that it can only be used for projects in your area.

Proposals, Projects, and Programmes

- **[The Diverse Regeneration Company CIC](https://www.drcompany.co.uk/)⁹** is a social enterprise to enable businesses and other organisations to achieve their potential through the delivery of grant programmes such as Leader, Greater Dartmoor LEAF, farm resilience programmes etc. to support the rural economy.
- **Need a Project and a basic, written proposal** covering areas such as what do you want to do? How are you going to do it? How else could you do it? Why do you want to do it? Is it straightforward? Are there risks? What will change as a result? How much will it cost? How will you tell people about it? What else is out there? Who else does it? Who can help me? Do I need to bring in any other experts? What makes me and what am I doing different?
- **Might also need:** customer feedback, a customer survey, start recording enquiries for products, or any evidence to make your proposal work and then summarise them.
- So, you’ve had thoughts, put them together, summarised them and **now you need funding**. In 2020, 75% of businesses were looking for funding for

⁷ <https://www.pubisthehub.org.uk/community-services-fund/>

⁸ <https://www.pubisthehub.org.uk/join-inn-last-orders-for-loneliness/>

⁹ <https://www.drcompany.co.uk/>

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working capital, cash flow or day-to-day expenses mainly due to Covid-19 pressures as currently in a different economic landscape; pre-Covid this was 53%.

- **Various avenues of funding and if able to access grant funding**, it can show others that your business is worth investing in, and other investors may come on and support you as well. You retain control of your company and don't have to pay the grant back.
- **Downside of grant funding is** lots of applicants, investment of time in the application process, won't fund everything, outcomes important and someone will check that you have achieved what you set out to do.
- **Check the guidance**, focus on the areas that are important to the funders and do they match yours. Speak to advisors, can you adjust/compromise and is it right for you. Refresh proposal if necessary, considering all costs.
- **Application form** – Answer all the questions and keep copies of everything. Set aside plenty of time to complete. If asked something that you haven't thought about, set aside time, and add it to your proposal.
- **So why are applications unsuccessful?** Primarily the project did not fit with the funder's priorities, the project was unclear, evidence was not good enough, not value for money etc.
- **For those who design schemes for funding** - make them user friendly, only ask for what you need, be logical and be consistent in what you ask for. Is the application form the only way? Could you have a film show, a presentation, a business plan.
- **Sources of information:** [Government finance and support for your business](#)¹⁰ (171 schemes), Local Authority economic development unit, LEAs, Business Advice organisations etc. [Grant Finder](#)¹¹, [Grants Online](#)¹².

It's the Small Things...

- [Be the Business](#)¹³ is a charity established in 2017 to improve UK business productivity which is part funded by the Government and leading UK firms.
- The rationale is that **productivity improvement across the UK economy will benefit every firm** from the small businesses to large companies.
- Evidence based, so **focused on delivering a small number of programmes** that they know make a difference, using industry best practice and large corporate expertise and panels of small business leaders.
- **Focus is on leadership and management, and tech adoption** such as CRM, e-commerce, digital accounting etc.
- **Mentoring** helps small business leaders improve their personal skills and provides them with a "sounding board", confidence and external impartial advice.

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/business-finance-support>

¹¹ <https://www.grantfinder.co.uk/>

¹² <https://www.grantsonline.org.uk/>

¹³ <https://www.bethebusiness.com/>

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- **Programmes independently evaluated.** Success helped to inform the Government's 12-week [“Help to Grow: Management”](#)¹⁴ scheme which is accredited by the Small Business Charter.
- **12-month programme** is for more established businesses looking to grow.
- **Be the Business Digital** programme looks at the challenges around digital adoption across the UK and specifically rural areas. Pandemic has driven a massive wave of tech adoption as businesses had to go digital to keep going.
- **Small businesses struggle** on how to choose and how to use technology. Use of case studies to show how businesses effectively used new technology and for those that it was not a good experience.
- **Employee engagement key to success with technology adoption.**
- **Sign up to a programme**, benchmark productivity and performance, devise own business improvement plan to follow at own pace and remotely.
- **Open to collaborations.** Important to work with trusted businesses who are like yours but doing things better.

Any Other Key Outcomes from the Seminar

- Around **500,000 small businesses and sole traders registered in rural areas.**
- Potential to **add £12 - £26 billion pounds a year** to the UK economy if we had greater digital adoption in rural areas (see Rural England CIC report for Amazon).
- Urban areas have **£107 pound per head more** in Council settlement funding assessment grant than rural areas do from government.
- **UK Shared Prosperity Fund** is replacing the European funding.
- Some RSN asks around **dedicated rural funding and support.**

RSN's Revitalising Rural Campaign Specific Policy Asks of the Government is for fairer distribution of national resources to rural areas and more nuanced national policies. There are 14 Chapters in the campaign; and one looks at [Rural Economies](#)¹⁵ another at [Rural Digital Connectivity](#)¹⁶ and also at [Rural Town Centres and High Streets](#)¹⁷.

As new Government strategies are announced, RSN puts them through a “[Rural Lens Review](#)¹⁸” which adds depth and texture to the Policy Asks. A fresh crosscut of the Revitalising document being worked on will look in more depth at younger and older people, working age families and businesses (includes agri.). It will also look at the impact of various issues on these groups of people and develop case studies

¹⁴ <https://helptogrow.campaign.gov.uk/>

¹⁵ <https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/revitalising-rural/rural-economies.pdf>

¹⁶ <https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/revitalising-rural/rural-connectivity.pdf>

¹⁷ <https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/revitalising-rural/rural-town-centres.pdf>

¹⁸ <https://www.rsnonline.org.uk/tag/rural-lens>

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(personal experiences) rather than dry policy discussions. One of these reviews looks at [Government Place Based Funds](#)¹⁹.

[RSN report with Pragmatix Advisory](#)²⁰ on how there is bias in the metrics used towards northern, urban red-wall areas in the allocation criteria of the Levelling Up and other Funds.

Analysis and Commentary pieces for Rural Services Network by Jessica Sellick, Researcher at Rose Regeneration: [From Survival to Revival: How can we Regenerate our High Streets?](#)²¹

RSN Member Insights produced by Dan Worth, Research & Performance Analyst, RSN. Please click on the link to access the [Economy Insights](#)²².

Attendance and Apologies

Attendance

Full Name	Organisation
Bethan Aldridge	Rural Services Network
Cllr Paul Anstey	Fordingbridge Town Council
Cllr Jenny Bartlett	Leominster Town Council
Will Barton	West Oxfordshire District Council
Cllr Belinda Bawden	Lyme Regis Town Council
Jane Berni	YMCA Lincolnshire
Graham Biggs MBE	Rural Services Network
Cllr Jake Bishop	Amphill Town Council
Kerry Booth	Rural Services Network
Steve Broome	East Sussex County Council
Tony Brown	Northumberland County Council
Cllr Alan Burgis	Camelford Town Council
Cllr Stephen Clarke	West Northamptonshire Council
Liz Clerke	Nottinghamshire County Council
Cllr Cheryl Creaser	Rye Town Council
Lois Dale	Shropshire Council
Liz Davy	South Cambridgeshire District Council
Andrea Durn	Wotton Under Edge Town Council
Susan Eldred	Flitwick Town Council
Linda Emmett	The Diverse Regeneration Company CIC

¹⁹ <https://www.rsnonline.org.uk/rural-view-on-governments-new-funds>

²⁰ <https://www.rsnonline.org.uk/images/publications/towards-the-uk-shared-prosperity-fund.pdf>

²¹ <https://www.rsnonline.org.uk/from-survival-to-revival-how-can-we-regenerate-our-high-streets>

²² <https://www.rsnonline.org.uk/tag/economy-insights>

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Eve Farley	YMCA
Brendan Flanagan	Cheshire East Council
Cllr Kim Fletcher	Cranbrook and Sissinghurst Parish Council
Gerry Gilmurray	SP Energy Networks
Cllr Jan Goffey	Okehampton Town Council
Carol Grey	Penrith Town Council
Cllr Mark Hale	Hullbridge Parish Council
Kate Hampson	West Sussex County Council
Helen Harris	Leicestershire County Council
Cllr Lee Hatcher	Cranbrook & Sissinghurst Parish Council
Nicola Healy	Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Councils
Lizzi Hearn	CPRE, the countryside charity
Michael Hewitt	Cherwell District Council
Ivan Hewitt	Northumberland County Council
Chris Hill	Shopshire Council
Julie Holden	East Grinstead Town Council
Ulrike Hotopp	LIVE Economics Ltd
Matt Jones	Suffolk County Council
Nick King	South Oxfordshire District Council
Louise Kite	Lancashire County Council
Andrew Lay	Maldon Town Council
John Longden	Pub is the Hub
Toby Matthews	Norfolk County Council
Sean McGrath	Lancashire County Council
Conrad Moore	Stroud District Council
Angie Morrissey	Cornwall Rural Housing Association Limited
Dr Robert Murray	East Devon District Council
Cllr Julie Najuk	Gedling Borough Council
Mark O'Mahoney	Be the Business
Hilary Porter	Nottinghamshire County Council
Mandy Ramm	Lincolnshire County Council
Cllr Jeremy Savage	South Norfolk District Council
Robert Stepniewski	Worcestershire County Council
Judith Sturley	Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council
James Tennant	North Northamptonshire Council
Cllr Michael Thompson	St Austell Town Council
Karen Tolley	South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Council
John Tonge	Stratford-on-Avon District Council
Martin Tucker	Wotton Under Edge Town Council
Rupert Waters	Mid Sussex District Council
Mark Wathen	Somerset West and Taunton Council
Cllr Liz Withington	North Norfolk District Council

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Apologies

Full Name	Organisation
Cllr Giles Archibald	South Lakeland Council
Cllr Philip Atkins OBE	Staffordshire County Council
Cllr Angela Baker	Edenbridge Town Council
David Barnes	Belper Town Council
Mandie Berry	North Somerset Council
Steve Brain	Worcestershire County Council
Ken Christy	Northants Acre Trustee
Abi Culley	Warwickshire County Council
Sharon Cullingford	Gillingham Town Council
Caroline Duffy	Mid Sussex District Council
Dominie Dunbrook	North Devon Council
Cllr Janet Duncton	West Sussex County Council
Alan Dunn	Keswick Town Council
Cllr Diana Eastman	Saxmundham Town Council
Georgina Edwards	Plunkett Foundation
Cllr Jan Goffey	Okehampton Town Council
Alan Gray	North Kesteven District Council
Elizabeth Hanger	Lincolnshire County Council
Nik Harwood	Young Somerset
Alice Hendy	Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Councils
Cllr Robert Heseltine	North Yorkshire County Council
Cllr Anthony Hirons	Lutterworth Town Council
Cllr Harry St John	West Oxfordshire District Council
Valerie Johnston	Tees Valley Rural Action
Cllr Phil King	Harborough District Council
Cllr Conrad Lynch	Kirkby Stephen Town Council
Keli Nolan-Lyons	Tenterden Town Council
Ursula Mann	Tavistock Town Council
Jo Martin	Rural Business Network
Jo Osgood	CSW Group
Cllr Michael Pearlman	Maldon Town Council
Victoria Pickles	Airedale NHS Foundation Trust
Stuart Quick	North Norfolk District Council
Nicola Radford	Lincolnshire County Council
Julia Raven	South Northamptonshire Council
Cllr Ian Razzell	Rutland County Council
Cllr Helen Reeve	South Hams District Council
Tim Russell	Clun Town Council
Michael Sharman	CSW Group
Cllr Richard Sherras	Ribble Valley Borough Council

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Emma Smith	Shropshire Council
Cllr Roger Sterry	Cinderford Town Council
Nicola Stevens	Nottinghamshire County Council
Carol Taylor	Mendip District Council
Carol Taylor	Mendip District Council
Sasha Taylor	Worcestershire County Council
Nadine Trout	Rural Services Network
Kate de Vries	Norfolk County Council
Clare Wilkins	Peak District National Park
Cllr Paul Williamson	Tavistock Town Council
Cllr David Worden	North Devon Council

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