
Minutes Rural Assembly meeting

Hosted: Online via Zoom
Date: Monday, 4th April 2022
Time: 11:00am – 1:00pm
Chair: [Graham Biggs MBE](#), Chief Executive, RSN

- Attendance & Apologies.** ([Appendix A](#))
Graham Biggs MBE, Chief Executive of the RSN welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologised for the Chair Cllr Motley and Vice Chair Cllr Phillips both being unable to attend the meeting. Apologies were taken as read.
- [Notes from the previous RSN AGM & Rural Assembly meeting.](#)**
The record of the meeting held on 15th November 2021 was noted.
- Notes from the previous RSN Executive meetings.**
The record of the following two meetings of the RSN Executive were noted.
 - [RSN Executive meeting 10th January 2022](#)
 - [RSN Executive meeting 21st March 2022](#)
- Guest Speaker from Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
Discussing the Levelling Up White Paper.**
[Owen Little](#), Senior Policy Advisor, **Levelling Up Unit at Cabinet Office.**
Owen delivered a presentation to attendees on the Levelling Up White Paper. He highlighted the four pillars and twelve missions of the White Paper. This policy is not about a one size fits all approach but tackling inequality and looking at where outcomes and opportunities are weaker and how public sector, private sector, voluntary sector agencies can all work together to start to change that.
He mentioned how the approach is about using the information that the Government has, to look at systems change and rewiring how decisions are made and properly understanding the impacts of policies on different areas of the country.
It was discussed how the Levelling Up White Paper does not address increased costs of delivery, particularly in rural areas and we need to think about how that could look in practice and how we achieve it.
[Click here to view presentation from Owen Little, Levelling Up Unit at Cabinet Office.](#)

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The following two links were also provided to delegates from the RSN:

[Rural Lens Review: Levelling Up White Paper](#)

[Critique: Overarching rural issues, plus actions proposed by the RSN](#)

5. [RSN Achievements 2021.](#)

Kerry Booth, Deputy Chief Executive of the RSN, highlighted last year's RSN achievements and explained the wide range of activities that the RSN does on behalf of its membership.

6. **National Rural Conference 2022.**

Kerry Booth gave an update on preparations for the National Rural Conference 2022, outlined the programme of potential conference sessions and informed that bookings are now open. Further details on the speakers and sessions will be announced in the coming months.

[Click here to view and book your place at the National Rural Conference 2022.](#)

7. **Guest Speaker Presentations with Short Q&A's.**

- [Steve Dowling](#), Public Affairs Manager, **The Association of Convenience Stores**

Steve Dowling gave a presentation which highlighted key points from the Rural Shop Report 2022 and the vital role that local shops play for our rural communities. 79% of rural convenience stores are independently owned and almost 50% of customers know the people running and working in their shop quite well or very well. In addition, 49% are isolated store, with no other retail or service business nearby. These statistics help to shape the key role that the shops play, and the ways in which they need to be supported. The Association of Convenience Stores have a number of asks of Government including:

- Prioritise Levelling UP Fund applications which improve access to local services.
- Ensure LEPs reflect rural business at board level.
- Rural proof all government legislation, including the Levelling Up Bill.

[Click here to view presentation Steve Dowling, The Association of Convenience Stores.](#)

- [Georgina Edwards](#), Policy & Research Manager, **Plunkett Foundation**

Georgina Edwards' presentation discussed the role of Community Businesses and Keep It in the Community (KIITC), an online register of Assets of Community Value (ACVs). Plunkett has taken over this database, relaunching it and refreshing the data

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included. [Click here to access the database](#). The database will support members of the public to access information about ACVs in a consistent approach across an area or locate other similar successful projects. It can also be used by Local Authorities as an easy way to publish information about ACV in the public domain and create a consistent joined up approach across the country.

Attendees may be interested **Protecting your pub – a guide prepared by CAMRA & The Forum of Private Business** [can be accessed here](#).

[Click here to view presentation Georgina Edwards, Plunkett Foundation](#).

8. **Ukraine Refugee Situation.**

What steps are organisations taking to support the settlement of Ukraine's refugees and are there any particular barriers and challenges that need to be addressed in rural communities.

The following issues were discussed:

- Difficulties in matching offers of accommodation with Ukraine refugees at the moment if you don't have local contacts.
- Impact on rural agriculture – supply chain length.

9. **Any Other Business.**

There was some discussion amongst delegates of the issues surrounding **AirBNB and second homes** in rural areas and the negative impact on the rental accommodation market.

NICRE are currently collaborating with Building Digital UK (BDUK), part of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to **seek businesses' views on rural broadband connection**. SMEs in rural areas are being invited to share their experiences of broadband connection and the effect this has on their business by completing a short survey. [Click here to access the survey](#).

The **next joint RSN AGM & Rural Assembly meeting** is scheduled for Monday, 14th November 2022. [Please click here to book your place in advance](#).

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Attendance and Apologies

Attendance

Full Name	Organisation
Vinia Abesamis	Herefordshire Council
Lydia Allen	National Youth Agency
Helen Belenger	Chichester District Council
Mandie Berry	North Somerset Council
Graham Biggs MBE	Rural Services Network
Kerry Booth	Rural Services Network
Steve Brain	Worcestershire County Council
Cllr Andrew Brown	North Norfolk Council
Ruth Buckley-Salmon	National Federation of Sub Postmasters
Lillian Burns	National Association of Local Councils (NALC)
Matthew Byrne	The Community Council for Somerset
Ian Cass	The Forum of Private Business
Matthew China	Wealden District Council
Cllr Stephen Clarke	West Northamptonshire Council
Amy Cobbett	NFU
Ross Cook	Herefordshire Council
Jaclyn Curry	National Innovation Centre for Rural Enterprise (NICRE) & Newcastle University
Lois Dale	Shropshire Council
Kate de Vries	Norfolk County Council
Steve Dowling	Association of Convenience Stores
Cllr Janet Dunton	West Sussex County Council
Georgina Edwards	Plunkett Foundation
Cllr Marion Fitzgerald	Allerdale Borough Council
Louise Flavell	Braintree District Council
Clare Free	Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils
Rachael Fullwood	Lincolnshire Rural Housing Association
Tim Goodship	Defra
Cllr William Gray	East Lindsey District Council
Ged Greaves	Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk
Cath Gristy	University of Plymouth
Leani Haim	ONeill Homer Ltd
Kate Hampson	West Sussex County Council
Nik Harwood	Young Somerset
Nicola Healy	Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils
Paul Henry	Suffolk County Council
Cllr David Hitchiner	Herefordshire County Council
David Inman	Rural Services Network
Matt Jones	Suffolk County Council

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Cllr Patrick Kimber
Ian Knowles
Karen Lawrenson
Sarah Lee
Marie Lehane
Owen Little
Holly Lombardo
Emily MacDowell
Jo Martin
Toby Matthews
Cllr Julie Najuk
Cllr Iona Parker
Cllr Iona Parker
Cllr Adam Paynter
Jenny Pitcher
Tony Price
Nicola Radford
Mandy Ramm
Julia Raven
Cllr Helen Reeve
David Rogers
Cherie Root
Janice Rose
Cllr Jeremy Savage
Cllr Margaret Squires
Cllr Virginia Taylor
Nadine Trout
Michelle Turner
Alice Walpole
Cllr John Ward
Cllr Amy Wheelton
Cllr Mark Whittington
Peter Wills

West Devon Borough Council
West Lindsey District Council
Lancashire County Council
Countryside Alliance
Health Education England
Cabinet Office
National Rural Touring Forum
Harrogate Borough Council
Rural Business Network
Norfolk County Council
Gedling Borough Council
Braintree District Council
Braintree District Council
Cornwall Council
Mendip District Council
Trent & Dove Housing
Lincolnshire County Council
Lincolnshire County Council
West Northamptonshire Council
South Hams District Council
OALC
Braintree District Council
Northumberland County Council
South Norfolk District Council
Mid Devon District Council
Eden District Council
Rural Services Network
Lincolnshire Rural Housing Association
Cornwall Council
Babergh District Council
South Derbyshire District Council
Lincolnshire County Council
Cornwall Council

Apologies

Full Name

Cllr Philip Atkins
Amy Beckett
Cllr Owen Bierley
John Birtwistle
Cllr Elizabeth Bowen
Lee Carvell
Cllr Sue Cooper
Nora Corkery

Organisation

Staffordshire County Council
Stroud District Council
West Lindsey District Council
First Bus
West Northamptonshire Council
Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils
South Oxfordshire District Council
Devon Communities Together

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Michael Crawshaw	The Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust
Cllr Donald Davies	North Somerset Council
Fatima De Abreu	Local Government Association
Marina Di Salvatore	West Lindsey District Council
Laura Dixon	Devon Communities Together
Cllr John Evans	Uttlesford District Council
Ian Gillespie	English Rural Housing Association
Alan Gray	North Kesteven District Council
Ailish Henehan	Richmondshire District Council
Cllr Rita Heseltine	South Staffordshire Council
Inge Hill	Royal Agricultural University
Sarah Hulme	Arthur Rank Centre
Gavin Iredale	Reed in Partnership
Neil Irving	North Yorkshire County Council
Cllr Ken James	Torridge Borough Council
Cllr Val Keitch	South Somerset District Council
Mannie Ketley	Rugby Borough Council
Cllr Cecilia Motley	Shropshire Council
Cllr Jonathan Noble	Boston Borough Council
Cllr Elizabeth Nockolds	Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk
Gary Powell	Teignbridge District Council
Emily Preston	Hampshire County Council
Cllr John Redpath	Guildford Borough Council
David Rodda	Cornwall Council
Keeley Rudd	Community Council for Somerset
Joanne Scott	Sunderland City Council
Cllr Richard Sherras	Ribble Valley Borough Council
Niz Smith	Linkage Community Trust
Charlie Thornton	Eden District Council
Mark Trafford	Airband
Cllr Sarah Wakefield	Somerset West and Taunton Council

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