

Rural Economy Sub Group meeting

Date: 21st June 2021

Subject: Rural Economy

Chair: Graham Biggs MBE, Chief Executive, Rural Services Network

Host: Online Event via Zoom

Learning Outcomes Key Issues Highlighted by Speakers

Mark Pragnell, Pragmatix Advisory – Towards the UK Shared Prosperity Fund

[The final report is available at this link.](#)¹

- The RSN has already produced a Rural Lens review of Government place-based funds [available at this link.](#)²
- ‘Pragmatix Advisory – Towards the UK Shared Prosperity Fund’ report follows on from this work and looks across the various funds.
- The UK Community Renewal Fund is intended to “support local areas to pilot imaginative new approaches and programmes that unleash their potential, instil pride, and prepare them to take full advantage of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund when it launches in 2022.” “This Fund will also provide capacity funding to help places prepare for the introduction of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.” (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-community-renewal-fund-prospectus/uk-community-renewal-fund-prospectus-2021-22>)
- The timetable for the UK Community Renewal Fund does not, in the RSN’s opinion, provide the time necessary for lessons to be learnt and taken into the development of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, hence the requirement for a report examining methodologies for assessing where funds will be delivered from a rural perspective.
- Government’s funding priorities post-Brexit have been place-based funds aimed at ‘levelling up’ the country. These funds have used prioritisation methods that are all slightly different in metrics and weighting, but each has placed rural areas at a disadvantage and given higher priority to urban areas.
- ‘Towards the UK Shared Prosperity Fund’ makes the point that earned incomes are lower in rural areas, yet household expenditure is greater. This single truth provides a clear and coherent prioritisation methodology that the report recommends as the basis for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
- In using a simple methodology that focusses on the outcomes of inequality that matter, that uses ONS data as a trusted source across government departments; it lets local authorities consider and address the causes as only local understanding can do.

¹ <https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/publications/towards-the-uk-shared-prosperity-fund.pdf>

² <https://www.rsnonline.org.uk/rural-view-on-governments-new-funds>

- It is recommended that political judgement is accepted, but at the margin for hard cases and with clear and transparent rationale.
- The Pragmatix Advisory report was commissioned as a piece of economic appraisal, not rural policy, work specifically aimed at influencing the Treasury.

Questions and discussion resulting from the presentation included:

- Should recommendations for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund include the need for a per capita allocation based on need, not a flat rate?
- Has the Vibrant Economy Index produced by Grant Thornton been considered in the preparation of this report?
- The 3 place-based funds are financed by different government departments and have slightly different aims, and so the different prioritisation methodologies and weightings can be understood through this perspective.
- Government now accepts that sparsity increases economic vulnerability.
- Policy in respect of town centres needs to accept the reality of the changing community relationship with town centres.
- Decade long campaigning for better broadband, affordable housing and accessible transport for rural areas has not eradicated the unmet need.
- Covid has, and will continue to, alter the way communities and economies work.
- The weighting used for the Indices of Multiple Deprivation is not appropriate, and this results in funding and policy not being directed equitably.
- Investment in metropolitan authorities and urban combined authorities does not result in a sufficient trickle down of benefit to neighbouring rural authorities.
- Where government funds are awarded through competitive processes, several factors work against rural local authorities being successful:
 - Metropolitan Districts and Combined Authorities have the scale to make multiple bids (large labour and effort required for each bid)
 - Smaller authorities have a lack of capacity to deliver if a bid is successful as well as to pitch and bid.
 - Public sector bidding is an inefficient use of public funds.
- The next steps will be to issue the report and raise the issues politically and through the press.

Graham Biggs MBE – Rural Lens Review – The Queen’s Speech

- ‘At the State Opening of Parliament on Tuesday 11 May 2021, the Government, through the Queen’s Speech, set out its priorities and programme for the coming session including the legislation it intends to pass. The Queen’s Speech states the programme it sets out will deliver a pandemic recovery that makes the UK stronger, healthier and more prosperous.’
- The Queens Speech sets out the legislative programme of the Government for the next period. It focussed on Covid recovery.
- It is high level and leads to more questions than it gives answers.

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

Rural Services Network

Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon, PL19 0BZ

Tel: 01822 851370

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- The legislative programme was linked to Revitalising Rural 'Asks' by the RSN, and key facts were presented that demonstrated the importance to rural areas. [The Revitalising Rural Campaign can be accessed at this link.](#)³
- The Rural Services Network (RSN) will examine legislation as it is released, looking at the detail, make comment, and represent the rural position consulting with the membership as it does so.

Attendance and Apologies

Attendance

Full Name	Organisation
Vinia Abesamis	Herefordshire Council
Cllr Giles Archibald	South Lakeland District Council
Cllr Edward Baines	Rutland County Council
Cllr Robin Bennett	South Oxfordshire District Council
Graham Biggs MBE	Rural Services Network
Kerry Booth	Rural Services Network
Stephen Brain	Worcestershire County Council
Lois Brentnall	Advance Northumberland
Chris Brook	South Hams District Council West Devon Borough Council
Tony Brown	Northumberland County Council
Nigel Burch	South Holland District Council
Lois Dale	Shropshire Council
Giles Dann	Derbyshire Dales District Council
Richard Dowson	Raising Aspirations Empowering Change Ltd
Sarah Gibson	South Hams District Council
Tim Gladman	Bassetlaw District Council
Kinga Grabarczyk	Sedgemoor District Council
Alan Gray	North Kesteven District Council
Paul Hatch	Lancaster City Council
Lizzi Hearn	CPRE, the countryside charity
Michael Hewitt	Cherwell District Council
Lauren Hopson-Haw	Ryedale District Council
David Inman	Rural Services Network
Paul James	Cotswold District Council
Matt Jones	Suffolk County Council
Nicola Kemp	Somerset West and Taunton Council
Tom Lawrence	TRL Insight
Jeremy Leggett MBE	ACRE
John Longden	Pub is The Hub
Toby Matthews	Norfolk County Council
Amy McCall	SP Energy Networks
Sean Mcgrath	Lancashire County Council
Rebecca Munro	Pragmatix Advisory Limited

³ <http://www.rsonline.org.uk/revitalising-rural>

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Robert Murray
Sarah Payne
Cllr Yvonne Peacock
Cllr Roger Phillips
Mark Pragnell
Emily Preston
Nicola Radford
Mohammed Rahman
Cllr John Redpath
David Rodda MBE
Cllr Jeremy Savage
Melanie Sealey
Kay Sentence
Cllr Richard Sherras
Ian Sherriff
Paul Shevlin
Melanie Smans
Cllr Margaret Squires
Cllr Peter Thornton
Nadine Trout
Cllr Sue Tucker
Stephen Walford
Rachel Whaley
Daniel Worth

East Devon District Council
Newark and Sherwood District Council
Richmondshire District Council
Herefordshire Council
Pragmatix Advisory Limited
Hampshire County Council
Lincolnshire County Council
North Yorkshire County Council
Guildford Borough Council
Cornwall Council
South Norfolk District Council
Devon County Council
Thame CLT
Ribble Valley Borough Council
University of Plymouth
Craven District Council
South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils
Mid Devon District Council
Cumbria County Council/ South Lakeland District Council
Rural Services Network
Scarborough Borough Council
Mid Devon District Council
Cumbria County Council
Rural Services Network

Apologies

Full Name

Cllr Stephen Arnold
Cllr Philip Atkins
Caroline Bagnall
Amy Beckett
Mandie Berry
Cllr Owen Bierley
Cllr Sarah Butikofer
Ken Christy
Cllr John Clark
Cllr Peter Crozier
Abi Culley
David Ford
Helen Harris
Cllr Michael Harris
Nik Harwood
Dr Bryonny Goodwin-Hawkins
Cllr Linda Haysey
Nicola Healy

Organisation

Ryedale District Council
Staffordshire County Council
Shropshire Council
Stroud District Council
North Somerset Council
West Lindsey District Council
North Norfolk District Council
Ken Christy Rural Support/ACRE
South Somerset District Council
West Devon Borough Council
Warwickshire County Council
Tandridge District Council
Leicestershire County Council
New Forest District Council
Young Somerset
Countryside and Community Research Institute (CCRI)
East Herts District Council
Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Councils

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Cllr Robert Heseltine	North Yorkshire County Council
Inge Hill	NICRE/Royal Agricultural University
Claire Holt	Durham County Council
Cllr Harry St John	West Oxfordshire District Council
Cllr Phil King	Harborough District Council
Jackie King	Tandridge District Council
Revd Richard Kirlew	Agricultural Chaplains Association
Cllr James MacCleary	Lewes District Council
Martyne Manning	Stafford Borough Council
Jo Martin	Rural Business Network
Elaine Maylin	Northumberland County Council
Abi McCartney	Rugby Borough Council
Pam Posnett	Leicestershire County Council
Gary Powell	Teignbridge District Council
Maria Ramshaw	Melton Borough Council
Julia Raven	West Northamptonshire Council
Clair Raybould	NHS Lincolnshire CCG
Cllr Helen Reeve	South Hams District Council
Cllr Aidy Riggott	Lancashire County Council
Emma Sheridan	Mid Sussex District Council
Liz Small	North Yorkshire County Council
Cllr Derrick Spear	North Devon Council
Cllr Peter Stevens	West Suffolk Council
James Tennant	North Northants Council
Cllr Brenda Weston	Somerset West and Taunton Council
Helen Wright	East Riding of Yorkshire Council

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