

Rural Economy Sub Group meeting

Date: 24th January 2022

Subject: Rural Economy

Chair: [Cllr Roger Phillips](#), Herefordshire Council¹

Host: Online Event via Zoom

Speakers

Speaker 1: Sarah Welfare, Head of Policy and Research, [Reed in Partnership](#)²

Speaker 2: Brian Wilson, Chair of Directors, [Rural England CIC](#)³

Speaker 3: Kerry Booth, Deputy Chief Executive, **Rural Services Network**

Key Learning Points

Sarah Welfare, Head of Policy and Research, Reed in Partnership Working with Local Authorities to Support Rural Employment

- Reed in Partnership work with local authorities to support their residents into employment, but also offer services in health, rehabilitation, youth services, and business support.
- Transport is found to be a barrier to accessing jobs or applying for jobs for people in rural areas.
- Rural bus timetables do not match current working hours.
- Childcare drop off and pick up to and from work is more difficult in the rural setting.
- Employment services changed over pandemic, there was more remote support, but finding the right balance is essential to meet the needs of those requiring help.
- There is the question of how to assist people back into employment who are not in employment but are not claiming support. Self-referral schemes can help.
- Post pandemic support for those searching for work is available. (Kickstart)
- Jobcentre Plus offices have become more about community support and provision. See more at this link: [Jobcentre Plus - working together with employers](#)
- There is a Restart scheme to support the long term unemployed, and the eligibility criteria is now wider - [list of Restart providers by area](#).³
- JETS service by Reed helps health and wellbeing.
- There is a question whether support in accessing co-worker spaces would assist worker wellbeing.
- Reports on how Reed in Partnership better support residents of rural areas, can be found on their website on this page: [Supporting jobseekers in rural areas | Reed in Partnership](#)
- Coastal and small rural towns in a sparse setting were found to have greater employment service needs.

¹ <https://www.rsonline.org.uk/page/our-executive-board>

² <https://reedinpartnership.co.uk/>

³ <https://ruralengland.org/>

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Rural Services Network

Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon, PL19 0BZ

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- Reed in Partnership joined the Rural Services Partnership in 2021 and it has been beneficial in understanding rural intelligence and bringing together organisations serving similar areas.

Brian Wilson, Chair of Directors, Rural England CIC State of Rural Services Report 2021

- [The State of Rural Services Report 2021](#)⁴ was launched (virtually) on the 12th January 2022. There was one presentation to Parliamentarians, followed by a General Launch.
- Published by Rural England, an independent research, networking and information exchange Community Interest Company, set up to inform the policy agenda.
- The report focusses on the impact of the pandemic and was based on evidence from various sources including analysis of national data sets and 2 surveys. One survey of rural residents in conjunction with the CCRI, the other being a survey of market towns through the RSN Rural Market Town Group.
- Poverty statistics are tending to become worse over time (for example through the increased use of food banks), whereas claimant count is rebounding to pre pandemic levels.
- The pandemic has created a range of winners and losers through the situation. Online retail and services have done well. Entertainment, cultural and social venues have fared poorly.
- Local rural food shops were highly valued during the pandemic and lockdown periods.
- Supermarkets were used less, but it was noted that they benefited from selling a range of goods for which shops that only sold those products were prohibited to open during lockdown.
- Innovation for food shops involved rapid development of online orders and deliveries, as well as tailored services for those who were shielding.
- There was a mixed picture for market towns success during the pandemic. There were not a significant number of shop closures, and some towns had increased footfall. Some towns however saw reduced footfall, with the difference possibly coming from those towns able to benefit from tourism and day trippers.
- The pandemic brought about 9 years of growth in online shopping in a single year, when compared to the rates of increase in online shopping seen previously.
- Pub closures were a significant issue during the pandemic, this is despite survey results showing 25% of those surveyed considering the pub necessary or vital during the pandemic. This was a reflection on the multi-faceted benefit that pubs can deliver socially and through additional services.
- Bus services have seen a slow partial return to normal passenger numbers. Car use dipped but has recovered. Walking and cycling increased during the early days of the pandemic but have since returned to pre-pandemic levels.

⁴ <https://ruralengland.org/state-of-rural-services-report-2021/>

- There is continuing caution among past users of bus services which will naturally impact the return to pre-pandemic levels of service use.
- Overall rural communities have shown themselves to be quite resilient through the pandemic, but the picture is varied.

Kerry Booth, Deputy Chief Executive, Rural Services Network Government Levelling Up Funds and the Application Process for Rural Areas

- The Government has not been precise about what the Levelling Up policy is and how to measure it. This is possibly to allow Government to exercise judgement on where funding is going for political reasons.
- Rural and coastal areas are both specifically mentioned in Conservative Manifesto in relation to Levelling Up. We know that rural areas have higher costs in delivering many services, currently lower government funding, and it costs more to meet their needs.
- There are a number of funds under the banner of Levelling Up for example the Towns Fund, the Community Renewal Fund, and the Levelling Up fund.
- The metrics that will be used to measure the success of levelling up have not been defined.
- Towns Fund prioritised towns greater than 15,000 residents, which excludes many rural towns despite them serving a wide hinterland. Although it was pointed out that ministerial judgement was used in some circumstances to select towns below this threshold.
- The Rural Services Network (RSN) compiled feedback from members who had applied to a Levelling Up fund, suggestions received for an improved application process were:
 - 1) Clear feedback as to the specific areas on which an application is unsuccessful.
 - 2) Simplify the application process to allow a level playing field between small and large authorities. There are capacity issues in many rural authorities.
 - 3) Realistic delivery timescales.
 - 4) Transparency at the beginning of the process regarding which areas would be favoured.
- The RSN represents our members interests on DEFRA's Rural Impact Forum. The RSN will feed on any of our members feedback and experiences from the bidding processes to date to influence future processes.
- Procuring the services of consultants to assist with the bidding process has both advantages and disadvantages. There are costs associated to procuring services (must be competitive). There are costs associated with managing any consultant. Any authority using the services of a consultant must be mindful of potential reputational damage where consultants over promise to secure a successful bid with deliverables that the authority cannot fulfil. Where bids provide funding for consultants to add to authority capacity, the added costs both financial and reputational need to be considered.

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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; one of them looks specifically at Rural Economies and is [available at this link](#).

Who are the Rural Services Network? [Video on YouTube](#)

Analysis and Commentary pieces for Rural Services Network by Jessica Sellick, Researcher at Rose Regeneration, investigates "[Levelling up to create living working rural economies?](#)"

Economy Insights, produced by the RSN, provides important markers as to the state of the economy for our member authorities. It explores a wide range of subjects, setting out data and statistics at Local Authority level allowing comparisons to be made with other rural areas. [Please click here to access Economy Insights](#).

If you are interested in our other future events, please visit the following link to view our 2022 events calendar and book your place:

<https://www.rsonline.org.uk/future-meetings-and-events>

Useful links to share

- The Rural Youth Project - survey work with young people (Scotland)
<https://www.ruralyouthproject.com/>
- Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council developed their own virtual high street to support their market towns and help get their local retailers get online during the pandemic. <https://virtualhighstreet.uk/>
- Derbyshire Dales District Council have introduced an online service for small shops to join. <https://shopappy.com/>
- There is some support available through <https://www.businessgrowthhub.com/digital-boost> for 1 to 1 mentoring
- Allerdale Borough Council shared the following website. <https://visitallerdale.co.uk/shop-local-allerdale/>
- You might be interested in the research paper on the topic of "Coworking in the country: sign of a healthy rural economy?": https://digit-research.org/blog_article/coworking-in-the-country-sign-of-a-healthy-rural-economy/
- You might also be interested in our Economy Insights on Average Hours Worked & Earnings – an analysis covering the period 2011 to 2021, which provides comparison with averages for local authorities of same class and rural classification, as well as the situation for England overall: <https://rsonline.org.uk/average-hours-worked-earnings>
- Town Deals: full list of 101 offers: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/town-deals-full-list-of-101-offers/town-deals-full-list-of-101-offers>
- The MAGIC website provides geographic information about the natural environment from across government: <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/>

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Attendance and Apologies

Attendance

Full Name

Alice Walpole
Amy Beckett
Amy Cobbett
Anna Garner
Antony Baden
Becca Snow
Ben Colson
Brian Wilson
Charlie Thornton
Chris Clark
Cllr Adam Paynter
Cllr Carl Les
Cllr Chloe Turner
Cllr Christine Bayliss
Cllr Duncan Enright
Cllr Frances Beatty
Cllr Garry Purdy
Cllr Harry St John
Cllr Janet Duncton
Cllr Jeremy Savage
Cllr John Redpath
Cllr Loretta Whetlor
Cllr Marion Fitzgerald
Cllr Peter Crozier
Cllr Philip Atkins
Cllr Richard Meredith
Cllr Richard Good
Cllr Richard Sherras
Cllr Roger Phillips
Cllr Sarah Wakefield
Cllr Stephen Clarke
Cllr Stephen Purser
Cllr Steve Waight
Corinne Watson
Daniel Worth
David Rodda
David Inman
Francesca Castelo
Gavin Iredale
Graham Biggs MBE
Hamish MacLeod
Holly Lombardo

Organisation

Cornwall Council
Stroud District Council
NFU
Bath & North East Somerset Council
Rother District Council
Reed in Partnership
Bus Users UK
Rural England CIC
Eden District Council
Royal College of General Practitioners
Cornwall Council
North Yorkshire County Council
Stroud District Council
Rother District Council
Oxfordshire County Council
Stafford Borough Council
Derbyshire Dales District Council
West Oxfordshire District Council
West Sussex County Council
South Norfolk District Council
Guildford Borough Council
Somerset West and Taunton Council
Allerdale Borough Council
West Devon Borough Council
Staffordshire County Council
East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Richmondshire District Council
Ribble Valley Borough Council
Herefordshire Council
Somerset West and Taunton Council
West Northamptonshire Council
Teignbridge District Council
West Sussex County Council
Cumbria County Council
Rural Services Network
Cornwall Council
Rural Services Network
Guildford Borough Council
Reed in Partnership
Rural Services Network
Mobile UK
National Rural Touring Forum

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Ian Cass	The Forum of Private Business
Ian Whittle	Reed in Partnership
Jane Birch	Community Council Somerset
Janice Rose	Northumberland County Council
John Longden	Pub is The Hub
Kate Hampson	West Sussex County Council
Kerry Booth	Rural Services Network
Kieran Grainger	Reed in Partnership
Laura Dixon	Devon Communities Together
Lizzi Hearn	CPRE, the countryside charity
Lois Brentnall	Advance Northumberland
Malcom Rigler	Nailsea Town Council
Mandy Ramm	Lincolnshire County Council
Marina Di Salvatore	West Lindsey District Council
Mark Brownbill	Devon Communities Together
Matt Jones	Suffolk County Council
Nadine Trout	Rural Services Network
Nic Millington	Rural Media
Nicola Radford	Lincolnshire County Council
Nigel Burch	South Holland District Council
Nina Jeffries	Teignbridge District Council
CLlr Patrick Kimber	West Devon Borough Council
Professor Gary Bosworth	Northumbria University
CLlr Richard Keeling	Teignbridge District Council
Samantha Jones	Suffolk County Council
Sarah Kidd	Northumberland County Council
Sarah Welfare	Reed in Partnership
Toby Matthews	Norfolk County Council
Tony Brown	Northumberland County Council
Sarah Cave	Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils
Steve Dowling	Association of Convenience Stores
Abi Culley	Warwickshire County Council
Claire Holt	Durham County Council
Ian Sherriff	University of Plymouth

Apologies

Full Name	Organisation
Mark Alden	South Downs National Park Authority
Katherine Armstrong	Community Council Somerset
Mark Barrow	Shropshire Council
Mandie Berry	North Somerset Council
CLlr Owen Bierley	West Lindsey District Council
Rod Birtles	Devon Communities Together
John Birtwistle	First Bus
David Bolton	Cornwall Rural Housing Association Ltd

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Cllr Lizzy Bowen	West Northamptonshire Council
Cllr Catherine Braun	Stroud District Council
Cllr Norman Cavill	Somerset West and Taunton Council
Cllr Dr Ellie Chowns	Herefordshire Council
Cllr John Clark	South Somerset District Council
Anne Connor	Outside the Box
Cllr Sue Cooper	South Oxfordshire District Council
Louise Cumberland	Devon Communities Together
George Denton	South Norfolk and Broadland District Councils
Cllr James Easter	South Norfolk and Broadland District Councils
Monica Fogarty	Warwickshire County Council
Clive Gibbon	Boston Borough Council
Alan Gray	North Kesteven District Council
Cllr Roger Habgood	Somerset West and Taunton Council
Nik Harwood	Young Somerset
Nicola Healy	Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils
Paul Henry	Suffolk County Council
Cllr Robert Heseltine	North Yorkshire County Council
Michael Hewitt	Cherwell District Council
Lauren Hopson-Haw	Ryedale District Council
Professor Catherine Jackson	University of Central Lancashire
Dan James	Exmoor National Park Authority
Louisa Kiddell	Norfolk County Council
Cllr Phil King	Harborough District Council
Rita Lawson	Tees Valley Rural Action
Cllr Carl Les	North Yorkshire County Council
Cllr Paul Marshall	West Sussex County Council
Claire Maxim	The Arthur Rank Centre
Ruth McArthur	Exmoor National Park Authority
Richard Mckie	Godolphin Cross Community Association
Guy McQueen	Lewes District & Eastbourne Borough Councils
Cllr Meredith	East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Julie Milburn	Sparsholt College Group
Cllr Cecilia Motley	Shropshire Council
Cllr Julie Najuk	Gedling Borough Council
Cllr Roger Paterson	Rural West Sussex Partnership
Simon Pearson	Dorset County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
Kirsty Pitwood	West Suffolk Council
Cllr Pam Posnett	Leicestershire County Council
Gary Powell	Teignbridge District Council
Bobbie Preston	SP Energy Networks
Anna Price	Rural Business Group
Kate Pym	Pym's Consultancy Ltd
Martin Rich	Devon Communities Together
Mark Rogers	Bath & North East Somerset Council

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Amerie Rose	Devon Communities Together
Catherine Sharman	Reed in Partnership
Penny Sharp	Rutland County Council
Cllr Lucy Shires	North Norfolk District Council
Philip Sourbut	Diocese of Exeter
Katherine Stanley	West Northamptonshire Council
Tom Stephenson	North York Moors National Park Authority
Venetia Summers	The Cornwall College Group
Cllr Virginia Taylor	Eden District Council
Melanie Thompson-Glen	Newcastle University/NICRE
Cllr Peter Thornton	South Lakeland District Council
Cllr John Ward	Babergh District Council
Anna Warner	Reed in Partnership
Matthew Warren	Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service
Elizabeth Warwick	Wales & West Utilities
Cllr Norman Webster	Mid Sussex District Council
Cllr Amy Wheelton	South Derbyshire District Council
Cllr David Williams	South Staffordshire Council

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