

Rural Services APPG

Notes of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Rural Services

Tuesday 16th October 2012, 8:30am-10:00am
Dining Room B – HoC

In attendance:

Members:

Graham Stuart MP - Chairman
Dan Rogerson MP

Others:

Hannah Daniel - Parliamentary Assistant for Mark Simmons
Jonathan Carroll - Research Assistant to Graham Stuart MP

Rural Services Network (RSN) (Secretariat):

David Inman - Director
Ivan Annibal - Economic Director
Jane Hart - Planning Consultant

Speakers:

Federation of Small Businesses:

Mike Cherry, National Policy Chairman
Ulrika Diallo, Policy Adviser

1. Notes of the Previous Meeting – 26th June 2012

Agreed with no matters arising.

2. Introduction

The Chairman, Graham Stuart MP, welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the speaker for his attendance.

3. Federation of Small Businesses

Mike Cherry, National Policy Chairman presented the Federation's recently published report "The Missing Links - Revitalising our Rural Economy".

It was noted that across Britain small firms made up 99.3% of all businesses, contributing 51% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employed 58% of the private sector workforce. Rural businesses faced challenges not encountered by their urban counterparts, including poor communications, unreliable broadband services and patchy transport services. Market towns and village centres had declined with the closure of anchor

businesses such as village pubs and post offices. Despite these factors entrepreneurial spirit was still alive in rural communities.

The report set out a comprehensive approach to restore and sustain the vitality of the rural economy, including encouraging more tourists to the countryside.

A concerted shared effort is needed from national and local government and local communities. The range of measures suggested would help improve the conditions in which rural businesses could survive, thrive and create jobs. Specific requirements included higher speed broadband, a simplified planning system, consideration of business rates levels and the encouragement of tourism from abroad.

The Federation urged the Government at all levels to act on the recommendations as laid out in the report to ensure rural businesses had every opportunity to prosper and grow.

Subsequent discussion focussed particularly on the importance of securing high speed broadband for rural areas. Ulrika Diallo and David Inman undertook to produce a formal request for the group to take forward and Dan Rogerson MP agreed to bring the discussion to the attention of the appropriate Select Committee.

5. Next Meeting

20th November 2012 at 8.30am - HoC, room to be confirmed

6. Any Other Business