



Rural Programmes and Cross Cutting Themes

Discussion Summary

The following points were raised during the day:

Migration trends and how we can attract people to live and work in rural places

- The outmigration of young people (18+ as they move into further and higher education) and the in migration of older people (early retirees) in rural areas.
- Do other people move into rural areas to replace them or do these young people come back after education?
- A view that many young people have to leave a rural area to get skills, go into Higher Education = what about young people that don't want graduate jobs, that don't want to live the rural place where they've grown up?
- A future tipping point in terms of fewer people of working age (who will be there to care for older people?) The working age population will just be in roles supporting care for older people and there will be too few people to do the other jobs needed to make a community sustainable. In some local authority areas there will be a mismatch with too few people to fill local jobs.
- Setting up university campuses nearer to rural areas - pulling young people from elsewhere as well as keeping young people locally who wouldn't have thought about or would want to go away for Higher Education. What kinds of engagement do rural communities want with universities - making the experience good so young people want to stay after their course finishes? What are the (rural) push-pull factors (e.g. access to high speed broadband, transport)?
- Urban/rural patterns of migration - cities attracting young people and then losing them as they get older to rural areas.
- We need to provide opportunities to attract young people back to rural areas e.g. National parks offering outdoor jobs.
- Co-housing younger and older people (popular in Canada and the United States).
- How can we attract more young people into the care professions?
- Jobs in rural areas are more catered for in the further education sector - how can we build on this? There are closer ties between colleges and universities and of them reaching into schools - a number of new education models are now emerging. And there are opportunities to grow these relationships further - but what is the focus (e.g. getting people into jobs, into Higher Education)?
- Rural areas have to offer the full package if they are to attract working age population.
- Local schools should set up alumina associations as people will keep in touch and want to reestablish and come back to the area - popular approach in North America but could be a UK rural development tool.

Businesses and enterprise in rural areas

- Many businesses in rural areas are smaller than SME so how can we get them to understand the opportunities of working with the college and/or offering an apprenticeship? Colleges and universities need to understand what employers need and want (soft skills as well as technical skills).
- The importance of public sector jobs to rural areas - the public sector working together to understand what the future workforce requirements are (critical mass, pathways).

- How do you get busy people at schools, local authorities, health bodies etc. to work together to realise where the opportunities are? You need to identify people in leadership roles who are interested in thinking about the future workforce and are aspirational and will want to engage and find ways of overcoming the barriers/challenges.
- There are twice as many micro-businesses in rural areas than appears in official business statistics. These businesses overestimate the risk of employing people (e.g. they worry about employment tribunals) - don't have HR skills and are fearful of what could go wrong if they grow. But if they have access to HR expertise they recruit. Examples: Sole Trader initiative in North West Wales where 400 sole traders recruited 500+ people over 3 years. Create and Employ in Highlands, 180 micro enterprises have recruited 300+ people over 2.5 years. Create and Employ has 3 HR specialists supporting micro enterprises = these initiatives are leading to sustainable job creation and helping businesses with their succession planning.
- You need regularity of government policy and funding streams to SMEs and micro enterprises.
- Micro enterprises not going above a certain size because they don't want to be registered. 0-249 employees is a vast range when 97% of businesses have 9 employees or less. In rural areas you need micro enterprises to grow if you want economic growth.
- National programmes are 'one size fits all' and rarely attentive to rural areas. You need to devolve employability to a local level to meet community and business needs. The best people to help local communities with job creation are local communities.
- Community share offers - can grow and create more jobs but needs local leadership and anchorage including early support. Building capacity so people then move onto bigger projects in their community and how this can link with helping young people to stay. Needs to be designed with a long lead in time.
- You need a combination of employability action and business support to grow rural economies.
- Highlands and Islands Enterprise fills the gap in working at a micro level and joining up with other social and economic agencies and to have a social remit. Could the equivalent make a difference in England compared to RDAs, LEPs?
- How can we focus on the most fragile communities not just cities? How can we strengthen leadership, build capacity and get communities to grow and sustain themselves?
- How do LEPs look at rural areas? Is there a rural voice? Does it get muddled with a focus on needing public, private, voluntary and community sector representatives? RDAs had separate rural teams. Some LEPs view is that if you focus investment in an urban area it will filter through to a rural area - does this happen?
- The role of elected mayors and devolution – some are committed to the voluntary sector but where is rural?
- Investment is needed in rural areas and we must make sure we are not forgotten.

Funding and investment

- Some projects need to be worth £5,000 to apply for funding if you're a community group or £20,000 if you're a business - but some people want less so where do they go? Similarly, the funder wants to administer fewer, larger projects. How are we measuring the benefits of community investment? Can we reduce due diligence on small grants? The less centralised you are the more effective you are versus a national inflexible template that funders adhere to.
- The importance of philanthropic investment in rural areas. How can you persuade those with money to invest it in their local community? Philanthropy is not new but how can Government and policy & decision makers work with philanthropists to make a difference?
<http://www.rsnonline.org.uk/analysis/shaking-up-or-short-changing-all-things-rural>
- The importance of volunteers in rural areas. How can we build people's confidence and capacity? Volunteers need recognition.
- The survivability of organisations - chasing funding versus maintaining your mission and objectives? How can we make sure we don't end up delivering something that we're not there for?
- How can Local Authorities maintain core services with less central Government support?
- The relationships between core costs and delivering projects - how can we ensure we have capacity?
- All funding bids include the word innovation - what's wrong with things that are tried and tested and we know work well? We need to be open to innovation and new ways of doing things or presenting what's

always been done to capture the imagination of new funders. Are we being driven by funders and their interpretations of innovation?

- Fewer people in rural areas means lower outputs and outcomes which counts against you with some funders which then focus investment in urban needs.
- You want to deliver services efficiently but can you do that in a huge sparse geography?
- The importance of organisations having a flexible business plan and balancing this with any opportunism that comes along. And being attune and receptive to opportunities.
- The focus on capital (jobs and growth) projects rather than revenue (community) projects.
- The plethora of funds and how to differentiate the offer so applicants can see which one to bid to (or having a no wrong door approach with local authority officers making the customer journey easier by presenting the application to the most appropriate funding stream).
- The competitive nature of funding programmes.
- The stop-start nature of many European and national programmes.
- The importance of doing animation work with applicants but this is not always recognised by those providing the funding.

Rural churches

- ❖ The work of the Arthur Rank Centre / Germinate <http://germinate.net/>
- ❖ The potential closure of churches - change its status rather than close it?
- ❖ The relationship between clergy (community focused) and church property team (commercially focused).
- ❖ A view that the public sector doesn't think enough about working in partnership with the church.
- ❖ The importance of agricultural chaplains and having rural clergy to alert policy and decision makers to rural issues. How can we make more of this?
- ❖ Now is the time to champion rural within the church –a moment for a moral shift and partnership working?

What will rural programmes look like in the future?

- ✚ Single Regeneration Budgets in a rural context would provide a way forward. If you put a label on minimum spend and think creatively about how to spend more than that in rural areas?
- ✚ There needs to be flexibility in programme implementation and some measured risk taking.
- ✚ Mix of revenue and capital projects.
- ✚ What should be preserved from European funding streams? Taking a bottom up approach and not forensically auditing the programme/project.
- ✚ How can we help shape the post Brexit environment?
- ✚ To what extent do we / should we differentiate between urban and rural funding streams - not it's cheaper to deliver and I can create more jobs in urban areas. Rural is on the side lines and seen as too hard. Rural areas need funding streams where the money is pooled and where it doesn't sit in one pot where it loses to urban.
- ✚ We need to move away from the pressure to spend (driven by timescales, targets and outputs).
- ✚ Join together smaller things to give them critical mass (e.g. ACRE's role in representing the views of 38 Rural Community Councils to Defra) - you can achieve a lot at little cost.
- ✚ Making sure there isn't a heap of bureaucracy.
- ✚ Post 2020 we have an opportunity now to shape the architecture of programmes and funding in rural areas.
- ✚ How can we take the learning from existing rural programmes to inform the future?
- ✚ What are/should the rural components of the Government's Industrial Strategy be?