

RSN Seminar Ambleside – 22 February 2012

Seminar Theme – Uplands

Dr Lois Mansfield - What's Going Down in the Uplands – key points from the discussion:

It is important to recognise that the Uplands is directly affected by global economic forces.

There is a need for recognition that the Uplands, in view of the broader public good they deliver, will always need some element of ongoing public subsidy.

Eco-systems services and the idea of applying a value to landscape and environment is really important.

The uplands provides a nationally relevant example, in terms of people's innovative approach to both farming and sustaining a livelihood in challenging economic circumstances, of sustainable living.

The inter-connectivity between places needs to be better understood and the potential of investment in terms for example of water catchment planning, in upland areas to generate lowland cash savings is important.

The distinctive nature of the upland environment is not properly understood by policy makers

The Localism agenda in upland environments has the real potential to seriously divide communities between the land management aspirations of those who work there and "incomers" who have arrived for "aesthetic" reasons.

Is there enough debate about the implications of the proposed post 2013 changes to EU policy on the Uplands – there probably is nowhere near the level of overall understanding required within the general populace of the implications.

Will Rawlings – Cumbria Farmers Network

Key challenges around skills and replacement demand in terms of farm labour are issues in the Uplands.

Farmers need significant support in the context of the administrative burdens of accessing their entitlements.

Mixed tenure arrangements bring different challenges in the Uplands – not just between owners and tenants but in terms of the nature of the tenancies and the nature of landlords with estates being a distinctive component in the overall mix. The increasing introduction of Business Farm Tenancies is changing the nature of farming and succession issues for farms.

The changing structure of agriculture and the very specific, often livestock, context for Upland farming is not widely understood. Those in local authorities responsible for economic development and planning could benefit from a greater understanding of the issues facing upland farmers.

Cumbria Farmers network has had a significant impact in generating new and powerful approaches towards collaboration amongst farmers who are not naturally inclined to that level of interaction. It has also successfully developed and brokered relationships with adjoining (geographically) farmers and their activities in the Yorkshire Dales.

Barry Forde - The Challenge of Rural Broadband - The B4RN perspective

“Backhaul” is the biggest challenge faced by those seeking to make community broadband initiatives like this work – how does B4RN deal with it? – through its proximity to media city in Manchester.

How challenging is the issue of “legals” over wayleaves etc where fibre is being routed through people’s fields? – working on trust is the best approach – heavy and complex legals should not be seen as a barrier in this context – if a permissive right is removed by a landowner – this hasn’t happened yet in the context of B4RN then another way will be found.

How extensive will the “offer” be to communities where B4RN is providing a service? – it is a key principle that every house in a given community will be enabled to achieve access.

The biggest problem in relation to the effective development of a “wired” community is the aggregation of a commonly understood and engaged approach from all those concerned to the opportunities offered by a facility such as B4RN – the process can be a bit like “herding cats.”

Community broadband delivered in this context can also make a major contribution to the business and overall social viability of upland environments supporting homeworking and access to services.

INCA – The Independent Networks Cooperative is a really good overall source of information in relation to community broadband initiatives