

**Cross Party Group in the Scottish Parliament on Rural Policy 2016-17**

**Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> June 2017 5.45-7.30pm, Committee Room 4**

**Successful policy and delivery for rural Scotland: Learning from elsewhere**

**Minutes (approved)**

**Attendees:**

Prof John Bryden	Norwegian Institute for Bioeconomy Research
Prof Sally Shortall	Newcastle University
Dr Ryan Gibson	University of Guelph
Bill Beaumont MSP	Scottish Parliament
Alex Burnett MSP	Scottish Parliament
Finlay Carson MSP	Scottish Parliament
Peter Chapman MSP	Scottish Parliament
Mark Ruskell MSP	Scottish Parliament
John Scott MSP	Scottish Parliament
Sarah Allison	SAYFC
Jane Atterton	SRUC
Claudia Beamish MSP	Scottish Parliament
Joshua Bird	SRUC
Jackie Brierton	GrowBiz
Liz Brooks	Crichton Carbon Centre
Stuart Brooks	National Trust for Scotland
Andrew Brough	Buccleuch Group
Helen Chambers	Inspiring Scotland
Linsay Chalmers	Community Land Scotland
Emma Cooper	Scottish Rural Parliament
Rea Cris	RSPB
Ian Davidson	Scottish Government
Diane Duncan	Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Anne Gray	Scottish Land and Estates
Mark Grindle	UHI
Richard Haw	Scottish Government
Liz Hawkins	Scottish Government
Andrew Heald	Confederation of Forest Industries
Oliver Hickman	Wemyss Renewables
Jim Hume	National Rural Mental Health Forum

Jacq Kelly  
David Kennett  
Ian Macdonald  
Michele Macdonald  
Dugald MacGilp  
Catriona Maclean  
Anne MacSween  
Ryan McFadden  
Bryan McGrath  
Annie McKee  
Ross McLaren  
Rob McMorran  
David Miller  
Stuart Monro  
Scott Murray  
Christina Noble  
Ann Packard  
Chloe Purves  
Derek Rankine  
Graeme Reid  
Deb Roberts  
Eric Samuel  
Douglas Scott  
Sarah Skerratt  
Clare Slipper  
Alistair Stott  
Ninian Stuart  
Clare Sturla  
Sally Thomas  
Mike Wijnberg  
Mike Wilson

Registers of Scotland  
  
Keep Scotland Beautiful  
Scottish Government  
Historic Environment Scotland  
Registers of Scotland  
Scottish Borders Council  
James Hutton Institute  
Scottish Churches Rural Group  
SRUC  
James Hutton Institute  
  
SRUC  
Here We Are  
  
Scottish Enterprise  
Scotland's Regeneration Forum  
Anderson Strathern  
James Hutton Institute  
Big Lottery Fund  
Scottish Borders Council  
SRUC  
NFUS  
SRUC  
Centre for Stewardship  
SAYFC  
Scottish Government  
SAC Consulting  
Stirling University

**Apologies:**

Graeme Dey MSP  
Kate Forbes MSP  
Colin Smyth MSP  
Di Alexander

Scottish Parliament  
Scottish Parliament  
Scottish Parliament

Stuart Ashworth	QMS
Rebecca Audsley	SRUC
Frank Beattie	Scottish Enterprise
Michael Bonaventura	
Margaret Brown	NHS Highland
David Cameron	Community Land Scotland
Nina Clancy	RSABI
Nick Cooke	Scottish Pilgrim Routes Forum
Andrew Copus	James Hutton Institute
Arlene Cullum	Argyll and Bute Council
Mags Currie	JHI
Anna Davies	Scene and Herd PR
Karen Dobbie	SEPA
Harriet Donald	Loch Lomond and the Trossachs Nat'l Park
John Farrington	Aberdeen University
David Gass	Upper Quartile
Jayne Glass	UHI
Priscilla Gordon-Duff	Drummuir Estate
Stephen Graham	Highland Council
Mags Granger	RSPB
Wayne Grills	BALI
Alistair Hamilton	SRUC
Gil Hartley	SASA
David Henderson-Howat	
Nicola Hill	Dumfries and Galloway LEADER
Tony Huggins-Haig	
John Hutchison	Scottish Rural Parliament
Mary Laidlaw	Crossroads Community Hub
Barbara Love	SCVO
Angus MacDonald MSP	Scottish Parliament
Davy McCracken	SRUC
Martin Meteyard	
John Mitchell	Andersen Strathern
Duncan Morrison	
Sarah-Anne Munoz	UHI
Lorna Murray	

Gillian Newman	Highland Children's Forum
Duncan Nisbet	Scottish Government
Jan Noble	
James Ogilvie	Forestry Commission
Emma Patterson Taylor	SAOS Ltd.
Lorna Philip	University of Aberdeen
Martin Price	UHI
Alistair Prior	Scottish Government
Peter Ross	Dumfries and Galloway LEADER
Claudia Rowse	SNH
Madhu Satsangi	Stirling University
Geoff Simm	University of Edinburgh
Frances Simpson	Support in Mind Scotland
Vicki Swales	RSPB
Pip Tabor	Scottish Uplands Partnerships
Daphne Vlastari	RSPB
David Walls	Lothian Broadband
John Watt	
Brian Williams	SRUC
Bruce Wilson	Scottish Wildlife Trust

### **1. Welcome, introduction, and apologies**

John Scott MSP (chair) welcomed everyone to the meeting. Submitted apologies are recorded above, including from Graeme Dey MSP, Colin Smyth MSP and Kate Forbes MSP. It was noted that Alex Burnett, Bill Beaumont, Peter Chapman Mark Ruskell and Finlay Carson were the other MSPs in attendance.

### **2. Approval of the minutes of the previous meetings (mental health and rural Scotland, held on Tuesday 7 March 2017)**

The unapproved minutes of the previous meeting on rural mental health were circulated by SRUC on 7 April. No comments/edits were submitted. The minutes were accepted as a true record of the meeting, and they can be found [here](#).

### **3. Presentations (circa 10 minutes each)**

Each of the presenters gave a brief introduction to their topic. Their presentations are available to download via the web page for this CPG meeting [here](#) but short summaries of their presentations are provided below:

- [Professor John Bryden](#) Emeritus Professor, University of Aberdeen and Norwegian Institute for Bioeconomy Research: “[Rural Development Policies and Results, Norway](#)”
  - Professor Bryden began by outlining the key aspects of Norway’s territorial policies, including the decentralised framework (with 430 municipalities), the presence of central Government through County Governors’ offices with ministry representation, the strong universal welfare state, and the existence of both broad and narrow territorial/regional (rather than rural) policies. Norwegians typically have strong rural connections, which offers an important political voice to the periphery.
  - The goal of regional policy is balance through economic growth, good living conditions and sustainable regions. A larger budget (40bn NOK/year) is spent on broader measures including regionally differentiated labour tax, extra financing for municipalities and regions, agriculturally less favoured areas and communications infrastructure. Narrow policy measures (amounting to 1.7bn NOK/year) include local development, innovation measures and investment grants to companies. John described the 2017 White Paper “Sustainable cities and strong districts”. He noted the population growth almost everywhere in Norway from 2010-14 emphasising how migration is important to rural areas. There is diversity across Norway, however, in terms of population change and in terms of the employment performance of the private sector.
  - John closed his presentation by discussing future challenges for Norway, including the difficulties of late in the oil and gas sector, population ageing and associated dependency rates, an increase in the number of refugees, structural changes the need for innovation and possible political changes as a result of the 2017 election. However, there are many current and future opportunities, including through the clustering of (rural) companies. Three case study examples were cited, including a biomarine cluster, a wood cluster, and ‘The Cube Network’, a partnership of private, public and research organisations focusing on research and innovation for the ageing population.
  
- [Professor Sally Shortall](#) Duke of Northumberland Professor Rural Economy, Newcastle University: “[Framework for Rural Proofing related to the Rural Needs Act](#)”
  - Sally started off by describing the important elements of the political context in Northern Ireland (NI), including its small size (1.8 million people), its history as a contested and divided region, and its lack of remote rural areas, with population growth being experienced across rural NI. The EU Rural Development Programme has been the main rural policy in NI.
  - NI has always had a strong community and voluntary sector (amounting to 18% of employment at one point), and when responsibility for rural development passed to the Department of Agriculture in NI in the early 1990s, they engaged with the Rural Development Council and Rural Community Network, both funded mainly to address issues around rural poverty and deprivation. Their interests were reflected strongly in the direction of travel for rural policy in NI. The spread of Departmental responsibilities across the different parties in NI (dependent on the size of the parties) also creates challenges in terms of the need to get approval from different ministries, and therefore parties, to move policies forward, which can be cumbersome.
  - The Rural Needs Act (RNA) was introduced in 2016 but Sally noted the lack of discussion and clarity around the problem that the RNA is trying to fix. The same question can be raised for rural proofing more generally. It has come to be about

training, monitoring, form filling and ticking boxes, leading to considerable frustration amongst those who have to implement it. There is also the lack of a reliable evidence base to inform and monitor rural proofing activities. In reality, NI should be an exemplar region in terms of rural-urban interrelationships due to its geography, high level of commuting, etc.

- One example of particular rural initiative in NI was a rural childcare programme. Lobby groups had raised the importance of this issue emphasising how poor childcare was holding women back from working but there was a lack of independent evidence to support this. As a result £1.5 million was spent on providers and places but it was not possible to fill the childcare places. Sally cited another example of £15 million being spent on rural poverty in addition to a regional anti-poverty strategy which had already been rural proofed. A more successful example was a particular activity by the Rural Women's Network (RWN) in Fermanagh. Enniskillen College set up a course targeted at older women who were not PC literate. However, the course was not attracting the target audience effectively so the Fermanagh RWN bought 12 laptops and ran training programmes for women in basic computer skills in local halls. They also rented the laptops to other RWNs.
  - Sally finished by noting that there were clear lessons to be learned from NI. First, better understanding amongst decision-makers of the potential fiscal and resource redistribution implications of rural proofing would be helpful. Second, rural proofing, and rural need, have not been properly defined. We must be clear about the question or issue that we are trying to fix for the process to be successful. It might be helpful to define outcomes that are desirable and essential (e.g. closing a school might actually be the right decision leaving pupils to travel to a better school). The evidence base must always be clear and robust, including in relation to roles and responsibilities.
- [Dr Ryan Gibson](#) Libro Professor of Regional Economic Development, University of Guelph: ["Canadian Experiences in Rural Policy"](#)
    - The political context is vital to understanding rural policy in Canada too. Although many different definitions of urban and rural are used in Canada, leading to confusion for rural communities, approx. 17% of the population (c. 6 million people) lives in rural areas and small towns (of less than 10,000), often in very small, dispersed and distant communities.
    - Distance and density are fundamental challenges in Canada. However, nationally, Canada has 1.8 people per km<sup>2</sup>. Most rural communities are growing and the rural population is a relatively stable proportion of the national population. Rural areas have been attractive for new immigrants moving into small communities. But this situation is not homogenous across Canada. Rural policy is a joint responsibility between federal and provincial government.
    - In 1996, the federal government set up the Rural Secretariat within the Department of Agriculture. It was effectively created to be the Government's (which was predominantly urban-based at the time) eyes and ears on what was happening across rural Canada. Up until 2004, the Secretariat had no budget – it had staff but no spending or programme so Secretariat staff needed to partner with others in order to undertake activities to influence policies and programming. Secretariat activities included dialogue sessions and workshops to understand key priorities, pilot projects, and the Rural Lens, through which all policy had to go before it was adopted. The Secretariat closed in 2013 to much disappointment and a feeling that the Government was 'retreating' from rural and abandoning

rural people. The government also closed down the agency responsible for rural data and evidence leaving communities having to pay for (potentially costly) data if they required it.

- The Rural Lens essentially operated as a guideline. Many departments didn't use it and if they did, any credit for making a positive rural change went to the department rather than to the Lens itself. Staff in other departments tended to dislike having to rural proof their policies through the Lens as it slowed progress.
- Since 2013, Canada has had no ministry or minister responsible for rural issues and no rural policy. There are economic policies in rural spaces but not rural policies themselves. Often as a result of this, rural policy has emerged at provincial level, with Quebec being a good example of a province with an explicit rural policy

### **Key issues raised in discussion**

- *Governance effects are dramatic:* and this was a theme found across all three countries. Northern Ireland and Norway are both comparatively quite small, but the former is relatively centralised whilst the latter has a more decentralised governance structure and has largely embraced place-based policy interventions (meaning, for example, that places have the flexibility to build their comparative advantage on their strengths). However, the withdrawal of central government in Canada has effectively meant it has become more decentralised with more involvement of provincial governments in legislation (with power sharing between the federal and provincial governments creating some interesting challenges). Scale fundamentally matters, as does the capacity of local government and local communities to engage. Different governance approaches have implications for rural policy.
- *Agriculture is not the only driver of rural economies, but it is an important one:* although in Norway and Canada fishing and forestry are important industries. All three countries have different support systems for their agricultural sectors. There are important links between agriculture and agricultural policies and food prices, supranational and trading arrangements (including the EU and NAFTA), environmental measures, and the availability of funding for R&D, innovation etc.
- *The pros and cons of rural proofing:* it was noted that the Scottish Parliament Committees have a remit to look at the implications of policies for climate change, but there is no parallel requirement regarding rural. However, the concept of rural proofing is tricky. It may be one that applies to the rural situation in England reasonably well (where there are only very limited remote areas, there is general affluence, etc.), but applies less well to Scotland and elsewhere. The main difficulty is that if a department is asked what problem they are trying to fix through rural proofing, they usually can't answer the question. Rural proofing has come to be too strongly associated with training and box ticking. More clarity is needed on what the problem is and how rural proofing will achieve change that is positive and useful.
- *The need for a rural vision:* There needs to be a compelling vision for rural, and subsequently a determination of relevant outcomes. Given that, there needs to be discussion amongst agencies about how to work together to reach the outcomes/vision. Crucially, the starting position should not be that rural implies need (i.e. a deficiency

approach), but something much more positive about what rural areas have to offer. Enterprise, entrepreneurship and innovation are critical. We also need to recognise key differences between urban and rural areas, and across rural areas themselves. In Norway, the importance of having broad policies was noted but as many policies are handled and have a presence at county level it is perhaps easier to work across boundaries (or 'silos'). In Canada, the local level tends not to engage effectively with the national level (often due to a lack of local capacity).

- *Brexit presents both challenges and opportunities:* It provides an opportunity to 're-draw the future', re-shape the vision, step out of a rigid policy regime and create something more fit-for-purpose, reconfigure national alliances around new areas of cooperation, etc. There are some fears, however, about the future of funding for rural areas. Plus, all actors – public, private, voluntary sector, local and regional scale, etc. need to have the capacity to engage in these processes of creating new futures.
- *There is a dearth of young people involved in rural policy development.* Younger people in Norway are generally more involved in politics (albeit not as much as they used to be), than in the UK and Canada, and national political parties are typically good at engaging with young people. In Canada there is an overall sense of frustration among young people (and others) with the current political structures and the perceived lack of meaningful change and outcomes. This underscores the need for investment in different communication and engagement mechanisms.

John Scott MSP concluded the discussion by thanking all of the presenters for their excellent presentations and all contributors from the floor.

#### **4. Next meeting: October**

The AGM and next meeting (subject and date to be confirmed) will take place in the autumn. SRUC will circulate more information as soon as it is available