

RURAL BOARD MEETING
Friday 11 December 2009: 11.00 until 14.30
GOSE Offices, Guildford, Surrey

MINUTES

Present:

The Board

Paul Bettison - Chairman
Rupert Ashby – Country Land and Business Association representing Shaun Leavey
Alan Betts – Forestry Commission
Andrew Bowles – Chairman Rural Forum for the South East
Geoff Butler – representing business and CB1
Pam Doodes – Wealden District Council
Ray Ellis – Hampshire County Council
Alan Law – Natural England
Jeremy Leggett – South East Rural Community Councils
Lynette Leeson – representing Chris Corrigan
Keith Mitchell – SEEDA
Andrew Pearson – Environment Agency representing Toby Wilson

Working Group

Hannah Bussey – GOSE
Valerie Carter – SEEDA
Julie Price – GOSE
Oona Muirhead – SEEDA (arrived at 12.30)
Jacinta Thorley – South East Rural Community Councils

Guests

Peter Bunyan - (Rural Research Partnership)
Alison Melvin - (Rural Research Partnership)
Cate Ison – Homes and Communities Agency

Apologies:

Andy Brown
Chris Corrigan
Mike Daly
Shaun Leavey
Toby Wilson (who replaces Harvey as the Board member from the Environment Agency)

Item 1: Welcome; Minutes

- 1.1 The Chairman welcomed the guests attending the Board meeting
- 1.2 The minutes of the previous Board meeting held on 18 September 2009 were agreed as correct.
- 1.3 All matters arising are on the Board agenda

Item 2: Rural Forum

2.1 Andrew Bowles presented his report from the last Rural Forum meeting held on 17 November 2009. The full minutes of this meeting are attached as Annex 1.

2.2 Discussion:

- The Board needs to recognise that all Rural Affairs Forums are about to be reviewed

- The Chairman of the Rural Board has already started discussions with the South East England Councils to discuss the possibility of this Rural Board sitting as part of the new regional architecture
- The Forum is concerned that 'mainstreaming' not really working
- The Forum recognises that GOSE has recently undergone further staff reductions which will take effect in April and have thus ensured continued Forum secretariat support by transferring this role to SERCC. GOSE will continue to support the rural agenda by working with the Forum and Board to push forward the Government's mainstreaming agenda, particularly with internal Government departments and via the CAA and LAA processes

Actions agreed:

- Paul Bettison and Andrew Bowles talk more formally with South East England Councils about the potential role of the Rural Board

Item 3:

Update on discussions with partners and evidence

Jeremy Leggett produced a copy of the latest version of his report (included in Annex 2)

Discussion:

- Jeremy and a GOSE Data analyst met and discussed filling in the gaps in evidence for the Rural Narrative. GOSE have agreed to research data sources and compile a regional data set. This information could be used by the Board to measure progress against agreed priorities.
- There is a very wide difference still between the environmentalists and land managers and this really needs to be resolved
- Food security is becoming more important politically
- Climate change is a huge issue and its impact will demand major changes in food production – we need to work more closely with the Climate Change Partnership
- The Environment Agency clearly needs to lead on water and climate change and should be telling the Board what it can do to help them
- Broadband is not just an economic issue but also social justice, tele medicine etc
- The CLA has been collecting Post Code data on areas where broadband is a problem
- We need to know what the agreed broadband 'tax' of £6 per head per year will be used for
- We are still not really clear about what is meant by 'sustainability'
- There is a clear issue about transport not covered by the current list of priorities. More realistic understanding is needed on transport and choices in rural areas
- The issue of 'disadvantage' is not well understood and there needs to be an exercise to counter current myths – as has been done successfully in Scotland
- The continuing work on data collection might mean to a revision of current priorities

Actions agreed:

- Work to continue to be led by Jeremy Leggett
- Board members to help fill the 'gaps' in data to be completed
- Valerie Carter arrange a date for Jeremy Leggett to meet the SEEDA Research Team

Item 4:

Presentation on the work of the Regional Rural Research Partnership

4.1 In summary the Rural Research Partnership are very keen to work with the Rural Board and understand its role. They offered help to find relevant evidence. They would also like to be kept in touch with the work of the Board and be invited to get involved with emerging ideas.

4.2 They suggested that a workshop be held to discuss the potential of joint working – involving the Rural Forum members as well

Actions agreed:

- A copy of their presentation will be sent out to all members
- Board members should put forward topics for such a workshop and send them through to the Working Group
- The Working Group would then work with Alison Melvin to set up the workshop

Item 5:

(a) Update on Broadband - Andrew Bowles

5.1 Andrew Bowles gave a very short report stating that work was still ongoing and he would make his final report to the February Board meeting

5.2 Tribute was paid to Hannah Bussey for all the work she was doing on Broadband, much of it in her own time

5.3 SEEDA changes (referred to in Item 6) will include work on 'business critical infrastructure' and considerations on broadband will form a vital part of this

5.4 The new regional architecture is getting underway with several working groups supporting the various Boards. Business support and business infrastructure which will support the Economic and Skills Board will want to pick up on broadband issues

Actions agreed:

- Andrew Bowles to give his final report on Broadband to the February meeting
- Andrew Bowles to pick up any ideas being generated by the new Business Support working Group and the work being undertaken by SEEDA

(b) Update on Affordable Housing – Pam Doodles

5.5 Pam Doodles had produced a paper summarising her lead work on this priority which was also distributed to Board members prior to the Board meeting. She had met with CLG and GOSE. She had also invited the HCA (Cate Ison) to attend the Board meeting

5.6 The main points of her presentation were:

- Housing is essential for sustainable communities

- We need to make people understand that these house are needed by ordinary local people – particularly for our children
- We do have some really good examples of schemes of good quality (such as those in Oxfordshire) which should then be used to promote good practice
- The large gap in this South East region between rich and poor means that we have a real struggle with 'affordability'
- Rural schemes are more expensive – yet the HCA does not fund these extra costs
- We must accept that the lead in time to provide affordable housing is very long
- Whilst we have many sites identified we need to work more collectively and need ideas on how to keep the housing affordable
- We must also ensure that any affordable housing remains outside the scope of the 'right to buy'. Many landowners will gift land but not if it then becomes bought on the open market in the future.
- We need to have a network of 'rural champions' to help both with promoting good examples ; understanding the need for extra costs and who cab work with local authorities and the planning system

Actions agreed:

- Board members were asked to feed in ideas to Pam Doodes
- Pam Doodes will report back to the February Board meeting
- Elizabeth Cartright who is the Chair of the Regional Housing Board should be invited to the February meeting

Item 6:

Update on SEEDA changes and resources to support the Rural Board

Valerie Carter summarised the contents of the two papers submitted to the Board with the agenda.

6.1 The first set out the change in direction of SEEDA's work and this was backed up by Keith Mitchell from the SEEDA Board who explained that SEEDA had had its programme and admin budget severely curtailed and we were required now to deliver what the Government asks us it to do. But its primary purpose in future was directed to support business with 6 key sectors identified – those which will have the potential to grow and really help the region get out of recession. Land-base is not one of those six but debates are still ongoing on future possible support (not just through the European RDPE). Although SEEDA will no longer have a major role in regeneration we hope to have some sort of joint venture with the Homes and Communities Agency which will continue to regenerate our own sites. SEEDA will have a prime role in developing the single Integrated Regional Strategy and a Regional Skills Strategy.

6.2 The second paper on the need for resources because of the changes in SEEDA, and gave two options:

(a) the first option asked Board member organisations to see if their own organisation could provide resources for administration. This had already been put to the members of the Working Group and no offer had been made as all the organisations had severe restraints on staff resources, though it needs to be understood that Working Group members have already invested significant resources setting up and running the board and but restraints mean that this could not extend to the full Secretariat of the Board. Not all Board members have

representation on the Working Group and other Board members organisations should examine the possibility for providing staff resources

(b) the second option was that members of the Board be asked to provide financial resources from their own organisation to provide the necessary administration.

6.3 Discussion:

- The Board recognised that SEEDA had been instrumental in helping set up the Board in the first instance and that SEEDA has already put in considerable resources already.
- The Board needs now to be more self sustaining
- The Board must also be body which can challenge the work of its individual members, including SEEDA. Board members felt they had not yet had the chance to challenge SEEDA on its current changes. The Board is concerned that the SEEDA changes go against the main principle of the Haskins Review which gave a prime rural delivery role to the RDA's
- Whilst it recognises the need to mainstream it is not clear that it will really work and 'rural' get forgotten, The Board is concerned that the SEEDA changes go against the main principle of the Haskins Review which gave a prime rural delivery role to the RDA's
- However SEEDA gave a pledge to continue to support the Rural Board. SEEDA will continue to provide a member for the Rural Board and will continue to provide economic intelligence
- Whatever the changes SEEDA will need to provide a single point of contact for the Rural Board
- SEEDA would be make some financial contribution – on top of that already made to support the independent Chairman. However SEEDA would not, however, be able to meet all the costs needed.
- It would make sense to have one body provide the administration for both the Forum (now provided by the South East Rural Community Council Network) and the Rural Board.

Actions agreed:

- The Board needs to reconsider the costs of resourcing again
- The Working Group would revise the original costs for supporting both the Board and the Forum and send them round to Board members and the Board will consider the different options at the February meeting
- Andrew Bowles was looking at a possible third option and will develop this as well for the February meeting
- The Working Group would also need to provide a timetable for any of these changes at the same time

Item 7:

Any Other Business

7.1 It was decided that the original decision to review progress of the Rural Board in December was premature and it should be delayed until the priorities had been finally agreed and work started on taking them forward.

Item 8:**Dates of next Rural Board meeting:**

8.1 The following dates were agreed for Board meetings in 2010. SEEDA would be able to supply its normal support to the Board and Working Group for the first two meetings of the year.

- 19 February 2010
- 21 May 2010
- 24 September 2010
- 9 December 2010

ANNEX 1: Minutes of Rural Forum meeting 17th November 2009



Attendees:-

Cherry Aston – Buckinghamshire Rural Affairs Group
Cllr Andrew Bowles – Chair & representing Swale LSP
John Brownscombe – IoW
Hannah Bussey – GOSE
Valerie Carter – SEEDA
Chris Chaney – Surrey Rural Partnership
Richard Clarke – South East Protected Landscapes
Suki Coe – Audit Commission
Elaine Cooke – West Berkshire LSP
Edward Dawson – Hampshire Rural Forum
Cllr Rosemary Doyle – Canterbury City Council
Cllr Raymond Ellis – Hampshire County Council
Cllr Hugh Fitzwilliams – Bracknell Forest Borough Council
Angela Gilmour – SERCC
Keith Harrison – Action with Communities in Rural Kent
Liz Harrison – Kent Rural Board
Jack Holt – Oxfordshire Social & Community Service
Michael Hunt – Buckinghamshire Community Action/Bucks Strategic Partnership
Simon Kiley – Action in Rural Sussex
Cllr Bryn Morgan – Waverley Strategic Partnership
Tim Parry – Community Council for Berkshire
Roger Paterson – West Sussex Rural Forum
Meryl Smith – Oxfordshire Rural Community Council
Marilyn Smuland – Community Action Hampshire
Glyn Thomas – The SE Rural Community Councils
Jacinta Thorley – SERCC
Stephen Turner – SERCC
Linda Watson – Oxfordshire Rural Forum
Michael Varrow - Oxfordshire Social & Community Service
Andrew Wickham – Kent Rural Board

Minutes

17th November 2009

10.30 – 15.00

At

**The Park and Porchester Rooms, the Thistle Kensington Gardens,
104 Bayswater Road, London W2 3HL**

1. **Apologies** – were sent in by Cllr Ian Leake, Binfield Parish Council, Catherine Smith, Medway Council, John Haggadon, Wokingham Borough LSP, Rosalind Rutt, Hampshire Rural Forum, Cllr Maureen Holding, New Forest District Council, Cllr Christine Bateson, Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead LSP, Jan Phillips, Milton-Keynes Council and Paulina Stockell, Maidstone LSP. The Chair welcomed the new Rural Forum Members to the meeting.
2. **Minutes of last meeting** – were reviewed by the Chair and Members, the corrections were noted and the updated Minutes will be published on the www.rfse.org.uk website.

Action: VC to check the SEEDA link to the RFSE website.

3. **Update on Rural Board activity** –the Chair reported that the September meeting, held at GOSE in Guildford reviewed the evidence produced by RP and the CRC on home based businesses in the SE. An update of the Rural Evidence Base, Engagement with the new Regional Structures, Climate change; rural housing, health and economic disadvantage, rural broadband and technical innovation were the key focus areas for the meeting.

- **Production of Critical Evidence** –Jeremy Leggett the CEO of Action in Rural Sussex www.ruralsussex.org.uk Jeremy.leggett@ruralsussex.org.uk is leading this group and has requested input from Rural Forum SE members for the 1000 word narrative he is producing for the Rural Board meeting on December 11th. RP was disappointed that the narrative did not make more of the large number of business, manufacturing bases and local food production industries located in the rural areas of the SE. JT will feed this back. Jeremy Leggett will be asking partners to test and provide evidence at the local level. The evidence gathered is pointing to different priorities from those originally identified by the Board and this will be discussed at the next Board meeting. GOSE are working with their statistics team to help provide increased evidence for the report. Input of evidence from Rural Forum members would also be much appreciated by the Board. The Chair suggested that representatives from the Commission for Rural Communities should be invited to attend the Rural Board. JT replied that they are always invited to both the Rural Board & Forum, but were not always able to attend.

Action: - JT & HB to ascertain the contributions required by the Rural Board and to feed this back to the RFSE Members.

- **Broadband** – update presentation to be covered at item 6.0
- **Health and economic disadvantage** – this group is still scoping its work.
- **Regional Architecture** – the Board is in discussion with the Regional Partnership as to how it might best articulate the rural contribution to new or revised Regional Strategies.

Action – SERCC to add link from RFSE website to the SE Partnership Board

Future support for the SE Rural Board and Forum – the members asked how the Rural Board and Rural Forum would be supported in the future. VC stated that there have been redundancies at SEEDA, including the post of Rural Director and that the main focus of the Development Agency In future will be business development. The rural implementation strategy will continue and a contact will be identified to deliver rural intelligence to rural proof policy but there will no longer be a dedicated Rural Team. The Rural Forum members suggested that the Secretariat for the Board and Forum could be undertaken by the Rural Community Councils but this support would require funding. The

Chair stated that new arrangements are being implemented for the SE Leader Councils and as a large percentage of the SE is Rural, this should be reflected in the resources allocated. The Chair volunteered to write to the Leader of the SE Council and the Chair/CEO of SEEDA to express the concerns of the Rural Forum members. Members of the National Rural Affairs Forums met with the Minister and the Shadow Minister, to discuss the future development of government support for rural areas.

Action: The Chair to write to the Leader of the SE Councils and the CEO of SEEDA to express the concerns about the future support to the Rural Forum and Rural Board.

4. **The Audit Commission presentation on Rural in Comprehensive Area Assessments** – Suki Coe from the Audit Commission explained that her role was to be the regional lead on rural issues. To work in partnership with key agencies to ascertain how well people are being served by their local public services and what matters nationally and locally and to try to ensure that reports are delivered in simple straightforward language. Big issues that affect quality of life do not fall neatly into one organisation's responsibility, particularly those of the more vulnerable members of society, who rely on public services. The Audit Commission's aim was to stimulate continuous improvement. The process is forward looking and maps out the outcomes of the delivery to date and looks at the prospects for improvement. The themes that run through out are:-
- Sustainability
 - Equality – how the gap can be bridged
 - Organisational Assessment
 - Evidence and Partnership Working

The Audit Commission's report on LA performance will be launched on 10th December on a website called "one place". Comprehensive Area Assessments will continue and the outcomes have been shared with LSPs. Early next year the Audit Commission will map out the commonalities. The goal is to create sustainable vibrant rural communities. Rural issues were not well reflected in LA Strategies. Access issues are the most pressing and rural transport is a big challenge, particularly in the current climate. It has become clear from the work of the Audit Commission that the role of third sector is under valued in rural areas.

Action: Audit Commission Presentation to be added to RFSE website.

5. **Rural Proofing in LAAs and LSPs in West Sussex and embedding rural in their LA Strategies** – Dr Simon Kiley, from Action in Rural Sussex gave a presentation on how rural proofing is happening in the West Sussex Sustainable Community Strategies. The Rural Partnership has a wide-range of stakeholders from the public and private sector and tries to rural proof how rural issues are addressed within the policy processes to give them equity with urban areas. He reviewed how the IMD disadvantages rural as it maps areas rather than communities and does not drill down at a local level to evidence the rural share of deprivation. AiRS met with the LA to review service delivery and found that LAA targets were proving to be a barrier to rural proofing, especially since the introduction of mainstreaming. To motivate rural engagement AiRS organised 3 Seminars for WSCC and the PCT – to ascertain the perception of rural issues and how service delivery could be addressed in rural areas. The networking and pooling of knowledge has brokered a better understanding of the issues and how these can dovetail into the County Rural Strategy and Delivery Plan which has been streamlined to link in all the major policies. The PCT have developed a Fair

Access Strategy and have a unique NI175 to monitor access to Health Services and they have appointed a Community Access Development Manager. AiRS have produced Rural Profile Datasets across the LA's and PCT which has evidenced that "one size does not fit all". It is a learning process for many LA staff and embedding it into the organisations relies on partnership working and a consensus on the importance of rural.

Action: Forum Members were asked to identify contacts within their county with Data Analysis skills and to cajole them to make use of the Oxfordshire Centre for Social Inclusion (OSCI) data to drill down and evidence Rural Deprivation at a local level.

- 6 **Broadband Report** – The Chair & Hannah Bussey, Natural Environment Senior Advisor with Government Office for the South East, have worked in partnership to compile a report on Broadband Coverage in rural areas of the SE. The Chair informed the members that 34% of Households and 32.33% of Businesses in the Rural SE do not have access to the minimum 2Mbps and the feeling was that if the implementation of delivery for this vital service is left to market forces, the situation will not improve, as the project is not economically viable. The CRC and Defra are campaigning to raise awareness of this issue but it is up to the Rural Forum members to lobby to get Rural Broadband on the Agenda of the SE Partnership Board. There are many innovative projects in Kent, Hampshire, West Sussex and Oxfordshire which overcome the barriers of delivery in rural areas. 16.25% of properties in Kent cannot currently access the minimum 2Mbps. KCC have issued grants of £50K to 4 Parish Councils to fund the Broadband suppliers infrastructure costs and provide a wireless solution and as a result of this initiative there are over 200 new Broadband subscribers in the County and 3 further Parish Councils will also receive funding this year. KCC are also in discussion with youth groups as the Government is launching a scheme for children on low incomes to provide a laptop with broadband access. Members suggest that it would be worthwhile to have a dialogue with the leading Breweries as many pubs provide internet access and this service may be able to be extended to the Village Hall. A further suggestion was that Section 106 Agreements should include the provision of broadband access for new builds and that it may also be possible to tap into the Military National Network. The members felt that a review of the delivery of broadband in rural areas of Europe would be a worthwhile exercise. The report is still in development but ;

The key findings of the report so far were

- The lack of regional ownership
- The cost to the local economy was unknown.
- There are no appropriate rural service delivery models
- A poor knowledge of existing service providers

Recommendations

- The production of a list of service providers
- Regional PSN statement
- RDPE funding to be targeted at innovative solutions to the delivery of Broadband in rural areas
- To cascade the RFSE Rural Broadband report into the Network Design & Procurement Company Ltd, who are responsible for the Government project.

ACTION: RFSE members to lobby the SE Partnership Board <http://www.se-partnershipboard.org.uk> to add access to rural broadband to their Agenda.

SERCC to circulate the presentation to RFSE members and add to the website www.rfse.org.uk

7. **Using the Oxfordshire Consultants for Social Inclusion (OCSI) data** – Michael Varrow & Jack Holt from Oxfordshire Social & Community Services of Oxfordshire County Council gave a joint presentation on the use of the OCSI data in their work. In their experience needs assessments and commissioning decisions are often based on geographical levels using tools such as the index of Multiple Deprivation. Oxfordshire RCC suggested that this method does not necessarily reflect the true picture. Oxfordshire is a very rural area and MV & JH wanted to map the areas of hidden deprivation and used the OSCI data to achieve this goal. The mapping revealed that 46% of people over 65 live in rural wards. The mapping of the data also provided the ability to draw out the broader picture of under representation of rural issues. Some of the issues that came to light were that people living in rural areas were demographically older had a higher mortality rate with higher numbers of trauma, falls, cancer, vision problems, arthritis and dementia. OCC are working to address the demographic challenge by providing more services for older people in rural areas. The key contributing factors which need to be addressed are the need for increased affordable housing and the provision of access to transport. The Care Quality Commission and CAA have flagged up that older people are being discriminated against in the provision of care and this is reflected in the provision of services in rural areas. However, the support of communities in rural areas brings additional benefits for older people. The RFSE members suggested that it would be beneficial for the expert data analysts to work in partnership to share data and that they would be contacting the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment team on jsna@oxfordshire.gov.uk.
Action: SERCC to follow up with Michael Varrow & Jack Holt who have offered to identify data analysis experts within the LAs in the SE.

8. **Report on Rural Mainstreaming in the SE** – Jacinta Thorley, the CEO of SERCC, gave a presentation on the findings of the Report on Rural Mainstreaming which was commissioned by the Forum to review how rural issues are being addressed by Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) especially within the delivery of Local Area Agreements (LAAs). A questionnaire was sent to LSPs and Rural Community Councils (RCS). The report evidenced that mainstreaming is extremely varied in its extent & scope and not a priority for those responsible for the delivery of services. The implementation is often devolved to the rural champions such as the NFU, RCCs, and CLA who have neither the resources, the power, nor the mandate, to make it happen. The primary focus of LSPs is to ensure that LAA targets are met and more consideration is given to the process rather than an analysis of how rural needs are being met in relation to urban needs. There is a lack of awareness or understanding of rural needs or issues among those responsible for delivering the LAA which actively prevents them considering their rural communities.

Recommendations:-

- Engrain rural thinking by including it within equality assessments
- Develop local guidance & resources to build on what is already available nationally & regionally

- Restructure data & evidence to produce a geographical analysis of need that shows where need is located to ensure that resources are distributed on a basis proportionate to the need.
- Disaggregation where possible
- Feed back to Government the findings of the report

How are the RFSE members going to take the recommendations forward?

- Feedback to the Rural Minister through the RAF Chairs meeting on 9th December
- Distribute the Report widely
- JT offered to deliver the presentation to LSPs as a critical friend
- Review of rural as an “equalities” issue?
- GOSE will be briefing their Locality Managers on the results of the report and will be inviting the SERCC CEO to give a presentation
- Ask the Rural Board to recognise the implications of the report and discuss how they might support its recommendations possibly through the relationship with SEEC.

Action: RFSE Members to report back at the February Meeting on how they have used the report. Feedback on the report to be given to the Rural Board. SERCC to add the presentation and report to the RFSE website.

- 9. Top 10 SE Facts** – very little input had been received from RFSE members. It was suggested that the CRC data should be reviewed to ascertain if there are any really obvious gaps. SERCC have negotiated with the CRC, who are willing to disaggregate the data where they can, to give figures for the SE. The members felt that the figures should be comparative with the rest of the UK and that 1 in 3 type statistics proved to be more powerful than the actual numbers. This may not actually be possible within the parameters and suggested format of the SE Fact flyer but SERCC will investigate the possibilities.

Action: SERCC to work with the CRC to disaggregated data for the SE.

10. AOB

- **Dates for the Rural Forum SE Meetings in 2010 to be held in central London on:-**

**2nd February 2010
11th May 2010
15th September 2010
23rd November 2010**

Angela Gilmour
SERCC Regional Development Manager
4 December 2009

ANNEX 2: Copy of Jeremy Leggett's paper discussed at the meeting The rural South East – a perspective from SERB

1. Narrative

From the gardens on Dungeness beach to the man-made clouds rising above Didcot's cooling towers, the South East is a most rural place. It is not only England's biggest rural region but also its most economically vibrant, naturally beautiful, diverse and populous. Its towns and villages have an air of prosperity that stems from their rich built heritage and their ease of access to the global economy

It is no coincidence that successful businesses, large and small, want to be located in or near the rural South East. Our farmers and land managers have ensured that it is a rural environment where people want to live, work and visit. **Farming and forestry may be small in terms of direct contribution to GVA and the number of people they employ, but they are substantial in creating an environment for the success of all other sectors.** The challenge is to ensure that this continues whilst also contributing to the wider goals of maintaining biodiversity, protecting the region from the adverse effects of climate change and helping to ensure supplies of clean water are available for all.

Within the homes and converted farm buildings of the countryside there also exists a successful small, home-based and micro-business economy that is diverse and resilient. **The contribution that this sector can make to the future of the national and regional economy is substantial but highly dependent on meeting the challenge of high quality digital connectivity.**

The region's quality of life comes not just from its relative economic prosperity but also from its environment. The legacy of the last millennium has been a stunning and varied pattern of towns, villages and hamlets. The people who live in these places, however, are their lifeblood. **Affordable housing, rural schools and services, economic development, traditional land management/craft skills and retention of local facilities are not ends in themselves. Investment and positive planning, including adaptation to climate change, is a necessary part of a sustainable future for the ###,000 homes and families that already make up this extraordinary inheritance.**

Investment and positive planning are also needed for the management of the region's natural resources, especially water. More than most other parts of the country the South East must plan for hotter summers, wetter winters, challenges from coastal erosion and the prospect of inland flooding. **It will be critical to ensure that all the region's major users of water resources are working to a common agenda and that this is consistent with both the spatial planning of the region and the contribution it must make to the food and energy economies of the country.**

The region's transport infrastructure is dominated by radial routes from London. However travel patterns at the local, rural, level are complex with many journeys starting and finishing in relatively rural areas. Travel to education, work, retail, and leisure are highly complex and conditioned by the choices of those with the means to exercise them. **The challenge is to achieve both social inclusion for those rural people with lesser means and a reduction in carbon footprint from everyone.** It is both the environment and those at risk of isolation who pay the price of this challenge not being met.

Not everyone is able to share in the relative prosperity of the South East's economy. There are, for instance, many more disadvantaged people spread across the rural areas of the region than are to be found in any of the small number of most disadvantaged coastal and urban neighbourhoods. **The challenge is to tackle health inequality and**

economic disadvantage where it is woven into the fabric of otherwise prosperous rural communities. There is a risk of growing isolation amongst an ageing rural population combined with inequality between those people and families who do not share in the more general prosperity and those who do.

In many rural areas public and commercial services have withdrawn to the larger towns on the grounds of economic viability. **The relatively populous rural South East has seen services withdraw even more rapidly from large villages than other regions where they would be the focal point for a dispersed rural area.**

While the rural South East has the largest regional rural population in England its rural areas must also consider the needs of both London and the major towns and cities within the region. Our major urban centres must rely on the rural areas of the South East and East of England to provide them with water, clean air, food, recreation and places to dispose of their waste. The rural areas of the South East depend on the prosperity of the capital to underpin the land based economy and maintain the landscape either through subsidies or more direct investment. **The interests of urban centres and their rural neighbours are, therefore, inextricably intertwined.**

More than anywhere else in England the South East is a place where great natural beauty exists alongside burgeoning economic activity; where some of the nations richest people live closely alongside families living on painfully modest incomes and where 'rural' can all too easily become a shorthand for 'privileged'. **The great challenge for the South East is to protect its natural environment and biodiversity, build a strong economy and harbour carefully its natural resources whilst not letting rural communities become unsustainable preserves of just those who can afford the entry price**

2. So what?

In pulling together the narrative it has become very clear that there are some areas where the South East has particular issues and there is a need for action by partners, in some cases working together. This is an attempt at a summary of these and is drawn from the sections that are emboldened in the narrative.

2.1 We have competing and unresolved views on what is important to the land based economy. There seems to be very little real resolution of competing perspectives between:

- Private sector landowners and managers interests and ability to sustain land management through profit making land based businesses
- The interests of the rest of the rural economy and rural community who are not connected with the land based economy
- The imperative to maintain good quality water supplies for all, at all times of year for domestic, economic and recreational purposes
- National policy to protect key landscapes and improve biodiversity outside of the SSSIs
- An aspiration for, but little prospect of, a national food and energy resilience strategy
- The objectives of interventions with public money that are currently taking place and their contribution to regional strategic objectives

- An implicit assumption that the visitor economy is a silver bullet to solve all problems
- Housing costs vs. workforce incomes in the land based and other local rural economies

Action: Rather than simply allowing these competing perspectives to co-exist the Rural Board could provide a focus both for trying to resolve them regionally and seeking the commitment from partners to carry this into their own strategies and activity. Perhaps this might replace the workstream on sustainable food and health.

2.2 Affordable, high quality ICT connectivity is critical to: economic success, equity in educational attainment, delivery of information about public services, delivery of telemedicine initiatives and equity towards the whole population. Failure to connect rural areas is a fundamental market failure issue. Whatever regional public intervention strategy is developed must, therefore, be properly tested for its impact on rural areas.

Action: The issue for the Rural Board, therefore, is to ensure that the interests of rural areas are fully engaged with those who are best placed to lead on this issue for the South East and to monitor the outcome. The Rural Board has a sub group taking this forward and this must now consolidate its influence with the Regional Leaders Group.

2.3 Sustainability is taken by many partners to mean many different things. For some partners there has been a tendency in policy to assume that only high density urban development can be 'sustainable' and any development in small rural communities is, by definition, not.

Action: The Rural Board would be in a very strong position to oversee a project to explore in detail what we mean by sustainability in the rural context and set some clear and easily explained direction for what would constitute a sustainable rural community and economy. A small number of partners might usefully start the ball rolling on this, perhaps initially lead by the RCCs and the Environment Agency.

2.4 In the context of changes to the climate and development pressure, water is a major issue with ramifications for a wide range of partners. However, the Environment Agency is placed in such a clear lead role that it would be foolish for the Rural Board to take any initiative in this area other than as a consultative reference group for the EA.

Action: EA to lead and engage other partners as needed to achieve objectives beyond those that it can directly influence itself

2.5 At the most crude level there are three reasons for the public sector having to intervene in transport provision:

- **Modal shift** to reduce carbon, recognising that this is to do with behaviour patterns that could take many years to change.
- **Social inclusion** of those potentially isolated, especially due to their physical location and resulting potential isolation.
- **Economic development** – business does need to move goods and workers around!

Responsibility lies clearly with the County Councils both as LTAs but also as the holders of the Local Transport Plans, at a regional level with the Regional Leaders Group and Regional Transport Board and nationally with DoT. However, little can be achieved without behavioural change and good alignment of an economic development strategy for rural areas with realistic aspirations for the transport network. With LTP3 in immediate prospect there must be common issues about rural transport and rural access that could be more efficiently explored across the South East than separately in each county.

Action: The Rural Board could take the initiative to bring together the LTP3 leads in the Counties to identify common rural themes for LTP3. A starting point may be to explore ways in which the connection between GVA growth and growth in car borne traffic can be reduced, thus offsetting one of the frequently cited reasons for not investing in economic development in rural areas.

2.6 The critical feature of disadvantage and health inequality in rural areas is that it is hidden amongst a more general prosperity and therefore frequently ignored at both a policy and a practical level. This effect is exacerbated by the way in which data is collected and aggregated at all levels. An example will illustrate this: if 10% of young people in rural town secondary schools are falling behind, there is no way of knowing if most of this 10% are the ones who travel long distances on school transport and/or have no broadband access at home ie. unidentifiable inequality caused by rurality

Action: Given the perceptions of the prosperity in the rural South East this must be a unifying, regional, issue for the Rural Board. A task group of the Board could take some initial practical steps:

- Provide ongoing leadership over the evidence base used by the Rural Board, especially on rural share of disadvantage
- Research, prepare and publish a 'Myths about disadvantage in rural areas' booklet, similar to one recently published by the Scottish Executive
- Feedback to the Rural Board and the Regional Leadership group lessons learned from the rural proofing review of LAAs and make recommendations for next steps.
- Initiate a dialogue with the Chairs of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committees in the region to share knowledge and good practice about rural health inequalities
- Engage with the regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership over developing the capacity of LSPs and SPs to tackle rural disadvantage and health inequality

3. Justification

The first column below is a repeat of the narrative above. The second column is an indication of the data sets or kind of data sets that could be used as evidence for the point being made in the narrative. A further elucidation of the point being made is in the last column.

1000 words of narrative	Specific evidence and data source	What point are we making?
<p>From the gardens on Dungeness beach to the man-made clouds rising above Didcot's cooling towers, the South East is a most rural place. It is not only England's biggest rural region but also its most economically vibrant, naturally beautiful, diverse and populous. Its towns and villages have an air of prosperity that stems from their rich built heritage and their ease of access to the global economy</p>	<p>Data from: Natural England, Forestry Commission, SEP, English Heritage</p> <p>There are c.76000 listed buildings in the rural SE, 2,500 scheduled monuments and 366 registered parks and gardens. Over 100 of the listed buildings are at risk of serious loss of historic fabric, and 270 of the scheduled monuments are at risk of destruction. [English Heritage]</p> <p>The South East is the most wooded region and also has a particular wealth of Ancient Woodland - 134,000 hectares which is 40% of the total English resource. The South West has 60,000 hectares and most other regions have very little. [Forestry Commission]</p> <p>The South East has thirty three 'rural' Districts/Unitary Authorities (Rural 50) – more than any other region. [GOSE]</p> <p>The population of the South East living in areas as defined by HMG as rural, ###,000 is greater than any other region of England, the next being A region where the equivalent number is ###,000. [GOSE]</p> <p>The proportion of the land area of the South East that is designated as National Park or AONB is ##%, greater than any other region, the next being B region where the proportion is ##%. [Natural England]</p>	<p>The South East is often seen as urban, concreted over and denuded of natural beauty. The point is to refute this. There is also an oblique reference to the cheek by jowl nature of the new and the old, the natural and the man made, the cultural and the economic. It is the combination of natural beauty, built heritage and economic powerhouse that makes the South East unique especially its rural areas.</p>
<p>It is no coincidence that successful businesses, large and small, want to be located in or near the rural South East. Our farmers and land managers have ensured that it is a rural environment where people want to live, work and visit. Farming and forestry may be small in terms of direct contribution to GVA and the number of people they employ, but they are substantial in creating an environment for the success of all other sectors. The challenge is to ensure that this continues whilst also contributing to the wider goals of maintaining biodiversity, protecting the region from the adverse effects of climate change and helping to ensure supplies of clean water are available for all.</p>	<p>Data from: DEFRA, SEEDA, GOSE, Business Link?, IoD?, Tourism South East, Natural England</p> <p>1,195,303ha in the South East is productively farmed and of this 498,000ha are under stewardship arrangements [South East data from the Biodiversity Action Plan]</p> <p><i>##% of company directors state that the quality of the environment was a deciding factor in re-locating or remaining in the South East. [SEEDA]</i></p> <p><i>The rural South East contributes over #% of the "visitor product offer" in the region, itself valued at over £##m per year. [SEEDA/Tourism SE]</i></p> <p><i>Private land managers are custodians of over ###,000 miles of footpath and bridlepath in the South East without which a significant part of the visitor economy would collapse. [GOSE to investigate/ County Councils]</i></p>	<p>Don't judge the contribution of land based business by just their own GVA contribution, they make the rest of the economy possible. By implication they make the same unquantifiable contribution to the London and therefore national economies.</p> <p>We also acknowledge that there are challenges when it comes to farming that is both economically viable and contributing to improving biodiversity.</p>

1000 words of narrative	Specific evidence and data source	What point are we making?
<p>Within the homes and converted farm buildings of the countryside there also exists a successful small, home-based and micro-business economy that is diverse and resilient. The contribution that this sector can make to the future of the national and regional economy is substantial but highly dependent on meeting the challenge of high quality digital connectivity.</p>	<p>Data from: SEEDA</p> <p><i>##% of domestic dwellings in rural areas of the South East have a business registered at them, this compares to ##% in the region as a whole. [Self employed data – need clout to extract from HMRC]</i></p> <p><i>Business Link contract data on homebased new starters [SEEDA SERCO contract monitoring]</i></p> <p><i>Of the microbusinesses based in rural areas of the South East #x more are likely to be in the high growth and high value added sectors than in the region as a whole. [Self employed data – need clout to extract from HMRC- sector data]</i></p> <p><i>Trend in no of conversions from agricultural to 1.domestic and 2.B1 use. [GOSE]</i></p> <p><i>##% of rural telephone lines are capable of carrying more than 2Mbps broadband.[Rural Board Broadband working group]</i></p>	<p>Home based and microbusiness is the future and is also the right pragmatic response to environmental and resource constraint on other forms of economic development. It can contribute a huge amount to the economy but it needs investment in connectivity.</p>
<p>The region's quality of life comes not just from its relative economic prosperity but also from its environment. The legacy of the last millennium has been a stunning and varied pattern of towns, villages and hamlets. The people who live in these places, however, are their lifeblood. Affordable housing, rural schools and services, economic development, traditional land management/craft skills and retention of local facilities are not ends in themselves. Investment and positive planning, including adaptation to climate change, is a necessary part of a sustainable future for the ###,000 homes and families that already make up this extraordinary inheritance.</p>	<p>Data from: Local Government, RCCs,</p> <p><i>Pupil teacher ratio in rural schools compared to urban and standard deviation from the average in rural schools.</i></p> <p><i>Travel to school data as proxy for accessibility from pupil / parent surveys [Review pending discussion with DFCS data within GOSE]</i></p> <p><i>There are ##,000 community owned buildings in the rural South East that, in total, need a capital investment of around £##m to enable them to operate safely. [National Village Halls survey – SERCC]</i></p> <p><i>In many villages service provision for older people that in towns would supported by local government is provided by local community groups.</i></p>	<p>This is the spatial planning argument for a better definition and use of the concept of sustainability. What is needed is policy that does not effectively veto all development in rural areas and as a consequence make the existing rural settlement pattern even more dependent on the private car.</p> <p>The point is to question whether there is an oversimplistic view of sustainability that leads us to fail to meet the community and environmental challenges affecting poor people in rural areas</p>
<p>Investment and positive planning are also needed for the management of the region's natural resources, especially water. More than most other parts of the country the South East must plan for hotter summers, wetter winters, challenges from coastal erosion and the prospect of inland flooding. It will be</p>	<p>Rivers meeting new European standards</p> <p>Pollutants such as phosphate, pesticide, nitrates and sediments from entering the river system</p> <p>Water levels in rivers, groundwaters and wetlands</p> <p>No of rural communities affected by flooding and coastal erosion</p> <p>VFM justification of costly defences.</p> <p>Data/quantification of higher sea levels adding further to the flood and erosion risks around the coast</p>	<p>We need to re-inforce with policy makers that climate change and water quality issues will impact on rural areas, but equally the rural community can have a big influence on the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change on behalf of the whole region. The most key point is the need for strategies to be mutually consistent with land use, economic development and house building.</p>

1000 words of narrative	Specific evidence and data source	What point are we making?
<p>critical to ensure that all the region's major users of water resources are working to a common agenda and that this is consistent with both the spatial planning of the region and the contribution it must make to the food and energy economies of the country.</p>	<p>[Environment Agency]</p>	
<p>The region's transport infrastructure is dominated by radial routes from London. However travel patterns at the local, rural, level are complex with many journeys starting and finishing in relatively rural areas. Travel to education, work, retail, and leisure are highly complex and conditioned by the choices of those with the means to exercise them. The challenge is to achieve both social inclusion for those rural people with lesser means and a reduction in carbon footprint from everyone. It is both the environment and those at risk of isolation who pay the price of this challenge not being met.</p>	<p>Data from: LTPs, GOSE?</p> <p><i>##% of journeys to work for people living in rural areas both start and finish in a rural area. Mapping travel patterns for people in rural areas and small rural towns shows a complex picture in which individuals and families do not align to a single, and often not to the nearest, significant town. [GOSE to explore – census/DoT]</i></p> <p><i>##% of people living in rural areas in the South East recording their place of work as within five miles of their home address.[GOSE to explore – census]</i></p> <p><i>Other carbon emissions data [GOSE to investigate]</i></p> <p><i>Cost of subsidy of rural bus journeys [DoT – GOSE]</i></p>	<p>Important to acknowledge the three reasons for the public sector having to intervene in transport:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Modal shift to reduce carbon, recognising that this is to do with behaviour patterns that could take many years to change. 2. Social inclusion of those potentially isolated. 3. Economic development – business does need to move goods and workers around!
<p>Not everyone is able to share in the relative prosperity of the South East's economy. There are, for instance, many more disadvantaged people spread across the rural areas of the region than are to be found in any of the small number of most disadvantaged coastal and urban neighbourhoods. The challenge is to tackle health inequality and economic disadvantage where it is woven into the fabric of otherwise prosperous rural communities. There is a risk of growing isolation amongst an ageing rural population combined with</p>	<p>Data to come from GOSE and NHS SE</p> <p>Total number of specific disadvantaged categories across the whole of the rural South East compared to places where large scale public intervention has taken place eg Southampton, Hastings, Brighton, Slough [GOSE]</p>	<p>Definition of disadvantage</p> <p>For a number of years disadvantage has been defined in terms of relative concentration in small areas that are subsequently ranked and used for resource allocation. This fundamentally misunderstands the dispersed nature of rural disadvantage and allows the perception of 'no needs in rural areas' to persist.</p>

1000 words of narrative	Specific evidence and data source	What point are we making?
inequality between those people and families who do not share in the more general prosperity and those who do.		
<p>In many rural areas public and commercial services have withdrawn to the larger towns on the grounds of economic viability. The relatively populous rural South East has seen services withdraw even more rapidly from large villages than other regions where they would be the focal point for a dispersed rural area.</p>	<p>Data to come from ?</p> <p><i>Anecdotally this statement appears to be true; the data to support it is hard to come by. This may be an area of comparative study and analysis of cause and effect that SERB could usefully commission. [Co-op, Spar, Post Office may have national data for comparison]</i></p>	<p>If the evidence supports this statement the point to address is that isolation can be just as great in a relatively populous rural area as in a very dispersed one. If you are older or at home with no car and small children a mile is just as much of a barrier as ten miles.</p>
<p>While the rural South East has the largest regional rural population in England its rural areas must also consider the needs of both London and the major towns and cities within the region. Our major urban centres must rely on the rural areas of the South East and East of England to provide them with water, clean air, food, recreation and places to dispose of its waste. Water is a specific concern to rural areas as a difficult compromise must be found between provision of fresh water for all, the needs of food production and the need to minimise river pollution. The rural areas of the South East depend on the prosperity of the capital to underpin the land based economy and maintain the landscape either through subsidies or more direct investment. The interests of urban centres and their rural neighbours are, therefore, inextricably intertwined and will be subject to additional pressure from climate change.</p>	<p>Data to come from DEFRA, NFU, EA, DoT, Local Authorities, CAA, Tourism South East</p> <p>Imports from London to the South East of municipal, commercial and industrial waste are currently estimated to be approximately 2.3 million tonne per year reducing to 0.53 million tonnes by 2025. (Source RSS).</p> <p><i>###,000 trips are from London Boroughs to the South East for recreation are made each year. [SEEDA Tourism South East]</i></p> <p><i>###,000 tonnes of food from the South East in to London to provide the capital with food [DEFRA, NFU]</i></p>	<p>The point here is not to appear to criticise London but to make the case for treating it, and its neighbouring rural areas, as one intertwined system that could achieve sustainability together. However, this means dropping the rhetoric that suggests only high density urban development is sustainable without taking into account the highly energy intensive systems that are needed then to sustain it.</p> <p>[Or, as the economists would have it: fully internalise all the externalities and you will get a true comparison]</p>
<p>More than anywhere else in England the South East is a place where great natural beauty exists alongside burgeoning economic</p>	<p>Data to come from GOSE, PCT Alliance, Public Health Observatory</p> <p>Of the 8 Local Area Agreements that cover a significant rural area (Bucks, Oxon, West Berks, Hants, E & W Sussex, Surrey, Kent) only 4 are considered to have</p>	<p>The policy point is that rurality is as likely to cause inequality in the provision of services as the factors most attended to, and monitored, by government, ie gender, age, ethnicity, sexual preference etc.. The</p>

1000 words of narrative	Specific evidence and data source	What point are we making?
<p>activity; where some of the nations richest people live closely alongside families living on painfully modest incomes and where 'rural' can all too easily become a shorthand for 'privileged'.</p> <p>The great challenge for the South East is to protect its natural environment and biodiversity, build a strong economy and harbour carefully its natural resources whilst not letting rural communities become unsustainable preserves of just those who can afford the entry price</p>	<p>undergone any rigorous 'rural proofing' process.</p> <p>(These figures are from GOSE Locality Managers replies to above question on 'rigorous' rural proofing. All underwent rural proofing.)</p> <p>Homes in predominantly rural areas of the South East cost nearly 14 times local incomes on average compared with 11.5 times incomes in more urban areas.</p> <p><i>Qualitative statement from Audit Commission based on CAA process across the region identifying which areas have specifically identified rural issues in their partnership plans and progress that has been made as a result</i></p>	<p>approaches that are taken in these other 'equity areas' must also apply to rural areas. This means treating them fairly in planning and delivery of services and building their capacity to guide the development of services intended for them.</p>

G:\Director\SERB\1000wordstatement v5.doc

ANNEX 3: Copy of Research Partnership presentation
Sent separately