

RURAL BOARD MEETING
Friday 18 September 2009: 11.00 until 14.30
GOSE Offices, Guildford, Surrey

MINUTES

Present:

The Board

Paul Bettison Chairman
Alan Betts – Forestry Commission
Andrew Bowles – Chairman Rural Forum for the South East
Harvey Bradshaw – Environment Agency
Valerie Carter – SEEDA representing Keith Mitchell
Mike Daly – South East National Health Authorities
Pam Doodles – Wealden District Council
Chris Edwards – Natural England representing Alan Law
Ray Ellis – Hampshire County Council
Jeremy Leggett – South East Rural Community Councils
William White – National Farmers Union representing Shaun Leavey

Working Group

Jacinta Thorley – South East Rural Community Councils
Julie Price – GOSE
Hannah Bussey – GOSE
Gill Cameron Waller – Wealden District Council

Observer

Sarah Lawrence – South East Partnership Board

Apologies:

Andy Brown
Geoff Butler
Chris Corrigan
Alan Law
Shaun Leavey
Keith Mitchell
Oona Muirhead

Item 1: Welcome; Introductions; Minutes

Paul welcomed the Board members and Working Group and opened the meeting. He also welcomed Sarah Lawrence from the South East Partnership Board. She has only just started work with the SEPB but is manager of the new Housing and Regeneration Board.

The minutes of the previous Board meeting held on 19 June 2009 were agreed as correct.

Matters arising (not on the agenda)

- The Forum wishes to encourage more representatives from LSP's not just local authority representatives as the current balance of interests is not right

Item 2: Rural Forum

Andrew Bowles presented his report from the last Rural Forum meeting held this week on 14 September 2009.

Notes from Rural Forum - held on Monday Sept 14th.

1. Feedback relating to work being done by various members on rural businesses. Research is indicating that nearly 40% of people in rural areas across the region are working from home and a similar figure relates to home based businesses. In some counties these figures rise to over 50%.

There was concern among members as to the support that was being offered to both home workers and home based businesses in rural areas in terms of training, networking and business support.

These figures also make the Broadband issue particularly relevant and the Forum are keen to explore what action can be taken to

2. Since part of the role of the Rural Forum is to monitor the Mainstreaming of services in rural areas, two Local Authorities, Kent & Hants gave presentations on how they were developing their Rural Strategies. This had been requested by Forum Members as it was generally felt that mainstreaming is failing to happen

The Report that the Forum commissioned on Rural Mainstreaming in LSPs and LAAs in SE England is almost complete, but a scan of the initial findings are giving cause for concern. The Forum will consider how it can make best use of this report with Defra, Ministers and Statutory Organisations in the SE.

3. The Forum had a presentation on the work of the LGA Rural Commission and considered the synergies between the LGA work and that of the Forum.

4. There was a report back from SERCC on some headline findings from the OCSI work. One of the issues with using the OSCI work at a regional level is that it can mask disparity at local level. The Forum feels that further work still needs to be done to make best use of this important research and SERCC will continue to take this forward.

SERCC also demonstrated the Regional Community Led Planning Database which will be launched at the end of next week. This database will provide a valuable evidence base about rural community need. So far it has the Community Led Plans of 876 rural towns and villages entered and information and reports can be drawn off.

5. The Forum looked at the consultation from the RSN on a Rural Manifesto and offered key messages for a response.

Discussion

(a) There were concerns that there was other data / evidence that did not quite match the case being presented

(b) The Board members and Forum members need to promote the same messages in the same language

- (c) There should be more joint working and should connect with other groups such as SPARSE and CRC and LGA
- (d) It should be clear which groups are working on which priority
- (e) Board members should note that the next meeting with the Rural Minister (Andrew Bowles and Paul Bettison) is on 24th September – the national meeting of the Rural Forums

Actions agreed:

The subgroup continue their investigations and talk to Chris Edwards about the comments he raised on data / evidence

Item 3: Priorities 1, 3, 4 and 5

Priority 1:

A paper from Martin Tugwell of the South East Partnership Board and copies of SEPB website (which set out names of Board members for two of the new regional boards) were included in the Board papers, as well as the latest diagram setting out the links between the new structures. We do not yet know names of the Advisory Groups nor the key administrators for the Boards and are not sure how the advisory panels, for instance on planning, will work.

Discussion followed:

(a) We recognise that there is still a lot to 'bed down' but we are beginning to be a bit clearer on what the new bodies will focus on. The first South East Partnership Board meeting has already agreed six hot topics crucial to the successful future for the South East, taking the first step towards a new 20 year regional strategy. They are:

- Climate Change and a low carbon economy
- Demographic change and the ageing population
- Improving housing affordability
- Technological innovation and economic growth
- Dealing with economic disadvantage
- Funding for infrastructure and investment

(b) It is important for the Rural Board to influence their work early on and pinpoint where best to use our key messages. We need an input into their strategic thinking and it is essential that we develop a strong vision which could be useful to them

(c) We must understand that the new structures are 'delivery boards' and are there to decide where the major pots of money coming into the region should go – and that the Rural Board is not a delivery board

(d) One option is that the Rural Board become a formal part of the regional architecture, but it is likely that we would get lost within the structures and also there are worries that we could duplicate work.

(e) It was thought we would be better placed if we were independent in order to have a strong role on influencing.

(f) We could also offer a strong and powerful scrutiny role to the role of the Boards and hold them to account – mainstreaming has often meant that rural is forgotten

(g) We need engagement with Pam Alexander and Paul Carter to help follow these ideas through – though we must be clear which option we follow

(h) In the background of all these discussions we must remember that a general election looms and there are likely to be major changes

Martin's paper made a couple of recommendations:

- i) To note the regional governance arrangements;
- ii) Accept the offer from the Regional Housing and Regeneration Board to consider the potential for regional leadership in encouraging an increase in the number of rural affordable housing schemes being brought forward for funding by the Homes and Communities Agency.

Actions agreed:

- Members to consider and decide on what our potential should be
- We cannot accept Martin's recommendations as they stand.. The Board needs to discuss and agree priorities before we can accept any recommendation
- We can note the arrangements as they stand now and we will establish how we can best influence the individual boards but we reserve our position until we understand more
- Paul Bettison and Valerie Carter send a formal response to Martin Tugwell on his recommendations
- When this has been achieved, arrange for a suitable time to invite Pam Alexander and Paul Carter to the Rural Board

Priority 3:

Andrew Bowles' Interim Report on Broadband is attached to these minutes – Annex 1

Discussion followed:

- (a) RE outlined the Hampshire scheme that put broadband into all schools. A possible future option could encourage parish councils to link into this school network.
- (b) We recognise that there are both urban and rural areas that get either no or very poor broadband (less than 2 mega-bites) but it is expected that the urban areas can be solved through commercial interventions and we know that BT are working hard to try to get the biggest market share in these areas. However we must accept that there is a real market failure in rural areas, and any solution is likely to be dependent on upon public money
- (c) We should also know where good broadband exists in rural areas

Actions agreed:

- A lot more work to be done by the subgroup before they can come up with a formal recommendation to the Rural Board on what should happen and who could make sure that it happens
- The group need to include the opportunities through the RDPE and the extra money through the Economic Recovery Fund from Europe – contact Jacquie Middleton RDPE team at SEEDA
- The group would report back to the December Board meeting

Priority 4:

Discussion on the work that had been done so far

- (a) Mike Daly had met Jeremy Leggett and they had looked at the areas where there were real health inequalities. More data is needed eg. more evidence on life expectancy differences in the region and we should use the Public Health Observatory
- (b) Valerie Carter had also met Mike Daly and had agreed that it would be useful to have a member from the Primary Care Trust to work with us on this priority- preferably someone from the northern part of the region.
- (c) There is a lot still to do on this potential priority and where its strong focus should be. It still seemed confusing to combine health and sustainable consumption. Also, it must not do things that were already being done by existing bodies
- (d) It was decided that sustainable consumption was probably adequately covered by the existing Sustainable Food and Farming Board chaired by Shaun Leavey and the priority work should focus more on health issues. It must be about what will add to the region's thinking and where the work will make a difference. It must also link with the Regional Health Strategy

Actions agreed:

- Further meeting to be held with Mike Daly, Shaun Leavey and Valerie Carter to further develop this priority and bring it back for agreement to the December Board
- Mike Daly would find a member of the Primary Care trust to be co-opted to this group

Priority 5:

Pam Doodes was very happy and enthusiastic to take over the lead on affordable housing and felt it was important that a District should lead on this affordable housing priority as districts are both housing and planning authorities. Her sub group which will look at this will need help from the regional perspective too as well as from other districts. Matthew Taylor had visited Wealden as part of the formal visits for his report and Pam would be reporting back on that. Her findings so far included:

- Most land available for affordable housing has been used up and we are dependent upon developers for their contributions
- 3,000 houses approved in Wealden District at the moment but nothing is being built
- Large areas of the region covered by landscape designations which makes future development proposals difficult
- Planners are insisting on good infrastructure (particularly public transport) before agreeing proposals and this is just not available – we must look at influencing this

She identified some questions that her group would examine, such as

- Do we need to relax the policy of 'only houses for local people'
- How to find away through 'Nimbyism'
- Should we push for more shared ownership

Discussion followed:

- (a) It is still very unclear what 'affordable' really means but it is clearly acknowledged that we need housing to sustain a community and keep village services
- (b) The high price of land is a real problem in this region; how could we get round this; we should look at possibilities through Community Land trusts
- (c) We should make use of our contacts :
- within the LGA on their expertise – such as Councillor Gary Porter of South Holland District
 - with Elizabeth Carter – chair of the Rural Housing Board

- should also use the knowledge of one of the Rural Housing Enablers in the region – offer from Action in Rural Sussex
- and establish links with the HCA

Actions agreed:

- Members of the Board feed ideas to Pam Doodes
- The group prepare a report for the December Board

**Item 4:
Priority 2**

Jeremy Leggett put round a paper during lunch which was a revision of the 1000 word narrative which formed the basis of his discussion (attached to the minutes)

Attached to the revised narrative was a table:

- The first column set out the narrative
- The second column indicates the data sets or kinds of data needed for evidence
- The third column is further elucidation of the point being made

Jeremy outlined the work that had been done prior to the Board meeting He recognised that here is an enormous amount of data, and we must pick out the most essential facts which can be used to develop the strong and focussed evidence base. He recognised that there has been a real problem of resources with many Board partners, but he thanked those that had responded

His paper started with some high level statements about rural economic, social and environment obligations:

- about providing for societies needs
- delivering economic prosperity
- recognising we are a contributor to the Exchequer

Discussion followed on the revised paper

(a) General comment was that the new paper was less confrontational but also lacked the passion of the last version discussed at the last board and it was important to be passionate about what we believe in if we are going to influence anybody

(b) Rural is bound up with everything – it cannot be looked as a silo but mainstreaming has often meant it has been forgotten.

(c) We must influence the major movers and shakers in the region and challenge perceptions. We must be clear and concise with our arguments as well as passionate

(d) The single visionary statement we produce must be very clear that it is about fairness, intrinsic value of the environment (recognising that is brought about by a rich history of land management and influenced by current land management including food production), and the benefits of a healthy rural environment to a wider society. Each strand to be backed up by evidence

(e) We must not forget that prosperity comes from economic activity and that means rural communities too

(f) Some specific threats and facts must be included

- climate change including land sinking; sea rising, weather; getting very much drier
- must recognise the impact of demographic change – getting much older in rural areas
- our rural areas are not only extremely attractive they are also easily accessible too with the potential benefits this brings to wider society

(g) There are still worries over the lack of ‘rural’ in current Local Area Agreements

- (h) The 3rd column of Jeremy's table should be re-labelled 'objectives'
- (i) We need some real rural champions in the region

Paul thanked Jeremy for the amount of work he had done for this Board meeting

Actions agreed:

- The Board accepted Jeremy's report
- Members should now fill in the gaps identified on the Table in Annex 2 and suggest corrections where needed
- Need to produce a refined visionary statement
- In the future identify how we use this to influence shakers and movers who will make key decisions in the region – including the development of specific actions

Item 5:

Any Other Business

Valerie reported on the damaging article in the latest SE Farmer which gave incorrect information – particularly on what was stopping. It referred to things under the European RDPE where nothing at all is stopping. SEEDA had provided a rebuttal to the article to SE Farmer and has asked the NFU and CLA to print this too in their electronic newsletters

Dates of next Rural Board meeting:

11 December 2009 at GOSE Offices; 11am until 2pm

Future Board meeting dates for 2010 will be circulated

ANNEX 1

Access to Broadband in the Rural South East – Interim paper:

1. Introduction

1.1 Broadband access has become a vital tool to modernising public services and helping communities emerge from the recession. Access to the internet is becoming critical to the way the world does business, and is fast becoming seen as an essential service for all sectors. Access will improve community cohesion, help small businesses expand and reduce the need for people to travel to major conurbations to access services, reducing emissions and lowering the ecological footprint of the South East.

Access to good broadband provision will help keep rural communities working, helping people to live, work and play in villages – making villages sustainable.

2. Aim

2.1 This paper outlines the current 'state of play' regarding access to broadband, nationally, regionally and to a degree, locally. The production of this paper has highlighted the significant amount information already in existence, gaps in evidence & data and the need to have a fully evidenced 'situation report' for the South East Region.

2.2 A full report will be submitted to the Rural Board at the November 09 meeting. This will include a more in-depth report on working from home & home based businesses and the potential for Next Generation Broadband in the rural South East.

3. Interim Recommendations

3.1 The Rural Board should note the issues affecting access to broadband in the Rural South East.

3.2 In advance of regional/ national developments the Rural Board should ensure that regional evidence is robust and accurate, ready to inform appropriate consultations. With that in mind, the Rural Board should agree to the continued work of the Broadband Working Group, who aim to produce a final paper in November 2009. Membership of the Broadband Working Group includes Local Authorities, SEEDA, GOSE, Rural Board, Rural Forum & (hopefully the Commission for Rural Communities).

4. Issue

4.1 Approximately 34% of households (1,103,378) and 32.33% of businesses (54,476) in the South East, do not have access to a minimum of 2mbps, which is still a relatively poor provision, the majority of these households and businesses are within rural locations. Many business applications require a significantly faster service and publicised provision of 'up to 2mbps' is a theoretical speed and seldom reached in rural areas (partly due to distance from telephone exchanges). 1.19% of households (38,391) and 1.66% (2,476) of businesses in the SE are totally excluded from accessing broadband.

4.2 The Digital Britain report, published in June 09, has stated that 'the UK is already significantly dependant on the digital sector both economically and socially'. At present

there is no regional strategy/ taskforce to tackle poor access to broadband, in both urban and rural effected areas. Although market forces may tackle urban areas, where there is an obvious return on investment – ROI. Providing access to Broadband/ a faster service to rural and remote locations has not been considered commercially viable for service providers due to the high cost of provision for minimal returns.

4.3 The modernising government agenda has meant that public service providers will need to think more innovatively and drastically change existing delivery models to take account of future inevitable public service cuts. Digital delivery models will soon become common place for Local authorities, PCTs, Housing Associations etc. If rural areas are unable to access these services due to poor broadband access, then they will soon become significantly disadvantaged.

4.4 There are several examples throughout the region where local authorities, both county and district, and small community groups are innovatively tackling the broadband issue. At present there is no forum for sharing this best practice in order to replicate elsewhere.

4.5 The overall impact on the Rural South East due to poor broadband provision is considered vast, but as yet unknown, e.g. costs to the rural economy due to business being stifled, commuter traffic congestion & access to health care options (telecare equipment etc).

5. Background

National

5.1 The Digital Britain Report, published in June 09, is an action plan to secure the UK's place at the forefront of innovation, investment and quality in the digital and communications industries. A summary of the main points of the report relating to broadband are attached at Annex A.

5.2 The Digital Britain Implementation Plan was published in Aug 09. It formally sets out the future governance arrangements and overall programme plan for the delivery of the actions contained in the Final Report. A number of projects have been established to take forward implementation of the numerous actions. Defra and the Commission for Rural Communities (CRC) have a specific interest in the following projects:

a) Project 2 - Digital Inclusion and Participation

Main points:

- The newly appointed Champion for Digital Inclusion, supported by an Expert Task Force to review existing activities to help 6 million socially and digitally excluded people get on-line.
- The Champion to develop and drive a coherent cross Government and cross sector programme of activity to ensure that everyone has the motivation, opportunity, and capability to benefit using the internet. Funding will be made available of up to £12m over 3 years.
- Formation of a Consortium of Stakeholders, led by Ofcom, to drive Digital Participation. Defra is ensuring appropriate rural representation.

Defra and CRC will be meeting with the BIS Digital Inclusion and Participation team on 23 September to discuss rural proofing of this work.

b) Project 3 – Digital skills

Main points:

- A Digital Economy Programme will invest £120m over 3 years in new research and training to prepare the country for the next 20 years of digital evolution.
- BIS, in collaboration with the RDAs, is spending up to £23m over 3 years piloting a range of business support interventions for SMEs to assist them to exploit advanced ICT to transform their business processes.

c) Project 4 - Current and Next Generation Broadband

Main points:

- Establish a delivery body – the Network Design and Procurement Group – at arms length from Government to deliver the Universal Service Commitment. Defra is ensuring appropriate rural representation on the steering group.
- The economics of network deployment, whether fixed or next-generation mobile, mean that true superfast broadband will be concentrated in the first two thirds of the market in the next decade, leaving the ‘final third’ served only with current generation broadband. Establish a Final Third project to deliver at least 90% coverage of Next Generation Broadband for homes and businesses by 2017.
- A small general supplement on all fixed lines from 2010 for a Next generation Fund.
- Consultation on deployment of overhead lines.

Defra and the CRC will be working closely with BIS over development and implementation of these projects.

5.3 Stephen Timms (Minister for Digital Britain at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills) has been appointed to drive forward the Digital Britain implementation plan.

5.4 Lord Carter, Minister for Communications, Technology and Broadcasting, has, in an open letter to Champion and Task Force Members, stated that Rural communities are listed amongst the top 13% which government believes have the most to gain from technology.

5.5 The latest output of the partnership of CBN modelling and Samknows data, and used by the BBC's broadband day reporting, is a league table of the communities with the poorest connectivity in Great Britain:

1. Rural Communities
2. Farming and Forestry
3. Urban Commuter
4. Mature Urban Households
5. Struggling Urban Families

Based on Office of National Statistics classifications, the league table is made up of communities where the expected ADSL broadband speed is 2 Mbps or less and where alternatives such as Virgin cable services are not available. This is from the first wave of analysis being carried out by CBN and Samknows as we model and map broadband Britain.

5.6 Currently, the CRC is working up a proposal to work in partnership with the RDAs to design, deliver and monitor a Community Broadband Support Service to rural communities enabling the development of Community Broadband Initiatives across the country. The detail is still being worked up and discussions are still being undertaken with the RDAs. Working together with the Community Broadband Network, a network of mentors/advisors would be established to deliver the service.

Regional

5.7 Rural access to Broadband is a priority for The South East Rural Board for 09/10.

5.8 Existing good broadband provision has been provided in areas of high population density. Unfortunately, due to the high cost of service provision, rural communities have generally missed out on improvements. Where there have been areas of improvement, this has been mainly due to political pressure, rather than economic development.

5.9 Regionally SEEDA have undertaken research to establish baseline data for existing provision of Broadband access at a postal code level. This data is likely to be a key element in the development of Community Broadband Networks – further research will be needed at a local level to ensure the data is as accurate as possible. SEEDA have no further plans to update this data, e.g. to take account of other service provision, such as mobile (3G), wireless & cable provision).

5.10 An announcement was made on 15 July that funding under the European Economic Recovery Programme (agreed at the European Council in March 2009) is to be split 50:50 between rural broadband and dairy restructuring. For the South East region this means an extra £800,000. Funding will be managed by the SEEDA. In addition, rural broadband has been recognised as an enhanced priority within the Rural Development Programme for England, providing greater flexibility to SEEDA in supporting rural broadband infrastructure needs. SEEDA are currently considering how best to utilise their EERP broadband allocations.

5.11 Generally, data on the impacts on the Rural South East is limited. Further research would be of significant benefit in establishing what needs to be done

Locally

5.12 There are many examples where innovative solutions have been used at a local level to enhance access to broadband. There are good examples in Kent, Hampshire, West Sussex and Oxfordshire.

5.13 Kent Case Study:

Last year Kent made grants of £50,000 each to the Parish Councils in Barham, Sutton-by-Dover, Tilmanstone and Ulcombe. The grants covered the cost of the supplier's infrastructure, with any remaining money being used to subsidise customer installations. An advert was issued, asking for proposals which were passed directly to the Parish Councils to make their decisions. This means they got a solution the residents felt comfortable with. Proposals used a variety of technology: wireless; satellite; broadband over powerline. All four Parishes picked a wireless solution from VFast, a local supplier based in Canterbury. New subscribers as a result of the grants number just over 200 and rising, most of which have had their installation fees paid for them.

This year Kent has offered community broadband grants to Kings Hill, Iwade and Selling, plus advertised on behalf of Womenswold (which will receive a grant if budget allows). Kings Hill is about to make its decision on preferred solution, the others are evaluating proposals. Use of the Kent Public Services Network (KPSN), the network shared by Kent local government organisations, has been offered for carrying Internet traffic. This is possible because the KPSN contract was framed to allow it. KPSN has 1,100 network sites, including schools with fibre circuits in most of the communities affected.

Kent have also identified a further nineteen areas that could be candidates for grants in future years.

Kent see the grants as stop-gaps, providing a service until a fibre-based solution is available. Some of the proposals received have been fibre-based but are expensive. Whilst this future-proofs the service, the cost does not allow a large number of different areas to be addressed. Kent's approach is therefore to make smaller grants in areas with the highest number of residents affected. This also overcomes state aid de minimis restrictions.

ANNEX 2

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 enabling the success of all other sectors. The challenge is to ensure that this continues whilst also contributing to a reversal of declining trends in biodiversity outside protected Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

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 is a necessary part of a sustainable future for the **###,000 homes** and families that already make up this extraordinary inheritance.

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. 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 in coming years.

Above all people living in the rural South East do not always feel that their needs are taken into account when public services are being planned and delivered. This is exacerbated when innovative, and often ICT enabled, means of meeting needs are held back by poor digital connectivity into rural areas. As a result an ever greater reliance is being placed on communities to help themselves. The challenge is to ensure that rural communities are treated fairly and also have the support they need to take the initiative for themselves.

2. 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 ##,000 grade 2 and above listed buildings in the rural South East of which % are on English Heritage's 'At Risk' register.</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.</p> <p>The South East has thirty three 'rural' Districts/Unitary Authorities – more than any other region.</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.</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 ##%.</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 enabling the success of all other sectors. The challenge is to ensure that this continues whilst also contributing to a reversal of declining trends in biodiversity outside protected Sites of Special Scientific Interest.</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</p> <p>South East data from the Biodiversity Action Plan</p> <p>##% of company directors state that the quality of the environment was a deciding factor in re-locating or remaining in the South East.</p> <p>The rural South East contributes over ##% of the "visitor product offer" in the region, itself valued at over £##m per year.</p> <p>Private land managers are custodians of over ###,000 miles of footpath and bridle-path in the South East without which a significant part of the visitor economy would collapse.</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>
<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>##% 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.</p> <p>Of the micro businesses 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.</p> <p>##% of rural telephone lines are capable of carrying more than 1Mbps broadband.</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>

1000 words of narrative	Specific evidence and data source	What point are we making?
<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 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>There are ##,000 settlements of between 500 and 5000 people and of these ##% have a primary school. Of all the primary schools in settlements of this size ##% are operating in overcrowded conditions whilst ##% have significant spare capacity.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>In many villages service provision for older people that in towns would be supported by local government is provided by local community groups.</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 over simplistic view of sustainability that leads us to fail to meet the community and environmental challenges affecting poor people in rural areas</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>##% 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.</p> <p>##% of people living in rural areas in the South East recording their place of work as within five miles of their home address.</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 inequality between those people and families who do not share in the more general prosperity and those who do.</p>	<p>Data to come from GOSE and NHS SE</p> <p>From rural share analysis of disadvantage and health inequality</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</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>
<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>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</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</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</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</p>

1000 words of narrative	Specific evidence and data source	What point are we making?
<p>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>tonne per year reducing to 0.53 million tonnes by 2025. (Source RSS).</p> <p>Some data on what fresh produce is supplied to London and what could be.</p> <p>###,000 trips are from London Boroughs to the South East for recreation are made each year.</p> <p>###,000 lorry journeys are made each year from the South East in to London to provide the capital with food</p> <p>###,000 passenger journeys originating in London pass through Gatwick each year.</p>	<p>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>Above all people living in the rural South East do not always feel that their needs are taken into account when public services are being planned and delivered. This is exacerbated by innovative, and often ICT enabled, means for meeting needs are held back by poor digital connectivity into rural areas. As a result an ever greater reliance is being placed on communities to help themselves. The challenge is to ensure that rural communities are treated fairly and also have the support they need to take the initiative for themselves.</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 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>What other data would support / refute this statement</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 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>

