

**Environment and Rural Affairs Roundtable
People and Communities Working Group**

**2nd Meeting: 31 August 2017 10.30 – 16.00
Cribyn Room, Welsh Government Offices,
Merthyr Tydfil CF48 1UZ**

Key Points and Actions

Group Members in attendance

Farmers Union of Wales
Wales Council for Voluntary Action
Welsh Local Government Association
Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations
National Farmers Union
Severn Wye Energy
Growing Mid Wales Partnership
Independent 1
Llais y Goedwig
Independent 2
CLA
Cardiff University
Natural Resources Wales
The Federation of Small Businesses

Welsh Government officials in attendance

Welsh Government Official 1
Welsh Government Official 2 (Chair)
Welsh Government Official 3
Welsh Government Official 6
Welsh Government Official 7
Welsh Government Official 8

Apologies

Terri Thomas – Deputy Director of Rural Development
WEFO

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair, welcomed members to the second meeting and thanked new members for accepting the invitation to join the group. Those present introduced themselves.

[The Chair] provided a brief overview of the purpose of the group for the benefit of new members. The Chair informed the group that the Cabinet Secretary for

Environment and Rural Affairs set up a Roundtable group as well as the seven sub groups that sit beneath the Roundtable and the People and Communities Working Group was one of these sub groups. It was explained that the main task of the group was to look at the impact of the work of the other sub groups and how this might affect communities and individuals on a daily basis. Assessing the impacts at an early stage would enable the other sub groups to consider key points raised by this group. [The Chair] explained that the workshop in the afternoon would provide an opportunity for members to put their views across on “What makes a sustainable rural community”.

Members were encouraged to share information outside of the group at their discretion and were told that in future The Welsh Government would produce a library of reports that members could access.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

[The Chair] asked members whether they had any amendments to the minutes and no amendments were put forward and the minutes were agreed by the group. An update on the action points of the last meeting was also given.

3. Agree Terms of Reference

The draft terms of reference (TOR) were circulated in advance of the second meeting of the group and [The Chair] asked members for their comments and amendments to the TOR. [Cardiff University] questioned the language used and advised that the TOR should focus more on learning, investment and information rather than a continuation of what is currently taking place. It was also advised that we should not be too prescriptive in the forward work programme of the group and to be flexible in our approach. A suggestion was made to add another bullet point under key tasks to provide an opportunity for the group to discuss other issues should they wish to do so.

Welsh Government - Official 1] explained that the other sub groups do not have a shelf life but a periodic review of their continuation will take place and that the key tasks of groups will be reviewed regularly. [The Chair] informed members that the Welsh Government will keep in view the scope and objectives of the TOR going forward.

Under the key tasks [Independent 2] advised not all community groups and organisations want to become social enterprises and there was a need for support structures in place to support these social enterprises. There was also a need to rural and community proof the work of other groups as there was a danger that this could become a tick box exercise. It was suggested that [Independent 2] may revisit her work on rural proofing that she undertook previously for the Welsh Government.

Members advised that the secretariat would need to balance the work that is being undertaken in the other sub groups and the need to engage as early as possible to enable the group to input and feed their comments through and this could sometimes lead us to ask challenging questions.

[Cardiff University] advised that there could valuably be a town and community council representative on the group, such as One Voice Wales. [Independent 2] also suggested that Mentrau Iaith be represented on the group.

[Welsh Government - Official 3] explained that all suggested additional members had been invited to become members of the group but there were some organisations/individuals that failed to respond to our invitation so far or had not yet nominated their representative; the Secretariat would pursue these. Independent 1 advised that we need to be more pro-active and innovative in our approach if we are to get the right people to engage. For example it was agreed the presence of young farmers/young people on the group would be beneficial and their input is required at future meetings to enable their needs to be represented. If suggested organisations are unable to attend future meetings then Welsh Government may consider meeting individuals/groups around the country or establish other ways of working to ensure people's needs are represented.

ACTION: edit the TOR to cover the issues raised above.

ACTION: The secretariat to invite One Voice Wales and a Mentrau Iaith representative to become members of the group.

4. Update on the progress of the Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs' Roundtable and other Working Groups

[Welsh Government Official 3] provided an update on the work of the other sub groups. Members were informed that the next meeting of the Roundtable was still scheduled to take place in September and that broadband was one of the agenda items for discussion at the October Roundtable.

It was suggested that this group could cover the topic of rural broadband at the 10 October meeting but discussion confirmed that most members were agreed on the issues, did not feel that further discussion was warranted, and there were more pressing issues to consider. Members were informed that there were funds available under Measure 7 of the Rural Community Development Fund to address rural broadband issues but that take up of funds had been very low to date. A targeted EOI round specifically focusing on broadband and energy efficiency is due to take place in April 2018 to encourage applicants to use the funds available.

It was agreed that this group should put forward its views on rural broadband to the Roundtable. It was suggested that [CLA] as a member of the Roundtable could put forward any questions from this group. [WLGA] agreed to draft a short paper on rural broadband, drawing together the key points from existent studies, for the group to consider and put forward to the Roundtable.

A brief discussion was also held on the issue of rurality and what makes rural areas distinctive; factors such as accessibility, distance, digital barriers and access to natural resources were put forward.

ACTION: [WLGA] to produce a short paper on rural broadband for group members to consider and discuss.

5. Evidence and Scenarios Working Group

[Welsh Government Official 1] on behalf of the Evidence and Scenarios Working Group gave a presentation on scenarios 3 and 5 of the EU exit scenarios planning proposals and a question and answer session followed. It was suggested that the assumptions paper that was provided to members previously be recirculated to those who have not seen the paper and members requested a copy of the presentation slides.

Members were also informed that a summary document outlining the key messages would be presented to the September Roundtable meeting and the next phase of work by the Evidence and Scenarios working group would be to explore the geographical impact of changes.

[Welsh Government Official 3] explained there was still an opportunity to commission work to be undertaken by the Evidence and Scenarios working group in future.

ACTION: Assumptions paper to be circulated to Members as well as a copy of the presentation slides.

6. Workshop

Members were divided into two groups and were asked to consider the following question: What makes a sustainable rural community?

The aim was for the group to develop a vision, identify key principles for future support and consider what further supporting evidence is required. This would be put forward to the Roundtable and the other sub groups to inform their work. It was agreed that it would probably be useful to include a small number of key points that would be easy for other groups to bear in mind.

ACTION: [Welsh Government – Official 3] to draft a short paper on the feedback provided by the group to circulate to members for comment.

7. Next Steps

[The Chair] provided a brief overview of next steps and informed members of the following papers that are due to be published in future, although timings were uncertain:

- Prosperity for all
- Brexit White papers:

- Migration paper
- Regional economic development paper

Members were informed that [WEFO] would provide a presentation at a future meeting to discuss the scenarios being developed for regional development. {FSB} also offered to present at the next meeting the FSB's paper on Brexit. [Cardiff University] informed members that Cardiff University is also due to publish papers on the 18 October and these will be shared with the group.

ACTION: [FSB] to present the FSB's paper on Brexit to the group

Members also suggested the need to invite individual members to future meetings and the group were asked to consider who they would like to invite.

[The Chair] informed the group that he would produce a short paper outlining a potential future work programme and circulate to members for comments.

ACTION: [The Chair] to produce a draft work programme and circulate to Members for comments