

Councils' role in the future of rural land management

Purpose of report

For discussion.

Summary

Members will receive a presentation from Savills Rural Research on the work they have undertaken so far to explore councils' role in the future of rural land management. In support of this presentation, this paper sets out the agreed areas of focus for this research, as agreed at the last Board.

Recommendation

Members of the People and Places Board are asked to:

1. **Provide** a steer to the suppliers on their work to date, and their proposed next steps.

Action

Officers to use members' comments to inform discussions with the research provider.

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Background

1. Following the result of the EU referendum and the UK's impending withdrawal from the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the policy framework which determines the way farmers, land owners and land managers are incentivised to maintain rural land is set to change.
2. The CAP has contributed a significant amount of funding to non-metropolitan areas through its two pillars:
 - 2.1. Pillar I: direct payments to farmers and landowners including the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS); and
 - 2.2. Pillar II: capturing the EU's [rural development policy](#).
3. The Government has committed to continue the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) following the UK's departure from the EU and will operate a transitional arrangement until 2024.
4. After this period, the recently announced [Agriculture Bill](#) will introduce a new system of agricultural and environmental policy based on the concept of "public money for public goods." This new system will seek to fund farmers and other stakeholders based on the delivery of a refreshed range of outcomes such as environmental protection, public access to the countryside and measures to reduce flooding. The Environment Secretary Michael Gove has also suggested future funding could look to promote growth-based outcomes such as scientific innovation, technology transfer, skills and infrastructure including broadband.¹
5. Local government has a long history of working with local partners in non-metropolitan areas to deliver "public goods" for their communities and economies, whether through partnering with landowners and the Environment Agency to mitigate the risks of flooding, engaging farming communities on issues such as animal welfare, running municipal farms to skill-up farmers of the future, or working with Government and communication providers to roll out superfast broadband.
6. With this in mind, members asked officers to commission research to explore the role of local government in the reformed rural land management policy framework including the delivery of the successor arrangements of Pillar I of CAP. Members were particularly keen to explore whether this wider reform could offer an opportunity to:
 - 6.1. Consider how local government can help link measures to support farmers or maintain the natural environment to successfully growing the rural economy and improving the lives of local communities.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/farming-for-the-next-generation>



- 6.2. Embed a stronger place-based approach to delivering transitional arrangements and post-2024 successor arrangements to Pillar I of CAP (the Basic Payment Scheme) including the role councils might play.
- 6.3. Help decide the priorities and strategic direction on which future funding will be spent.
- 6.4. Ensure future spend complements the aims of Local Industrial Strategies and builds on local funding committed through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
- 6.5. Examine the future role local government could play, including the potential benefits and risks of such involvement, in helping steward the delivery of the public goods that new arrangements will seek to incentivise.

Phased Research Approach

7. After a competitive bidding process, [Savills Rural Research](#) have been commissioned to conduct this piece of research. They will pursue a three-phase research approach agreed by the Members at the last Board.
 - 7.1. Conduct a strategic review of the role councils play in the current land management policy framework, largely derived from the CAP.
 - 7.2. Explore the role councils could play in a reformed land management policy framework following the UK's divergence from the CAP and especially in light of the Secretary of State's suggestion that future payments could be linked to 'public goods' and more growth based outcomes.
 - 7.3. Explore the interplay between rural land management and the future growth funding landscape in non-metropolitan areas given the development of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Local Industrial Strategies.
8. The suppliers will present to Members on their initial findings to date and seek members steer on their proposed next steps.
9. The research, which was commissioned and will report on a confidential basis, will be completed by the end of March 2019. It will inform the Post-Brexit England Commission's final report and provide a foundation for the Board to shape government thinking in this area going forward. It will identify the opportunities for local government to play an enhanced role in the reformed land management policy framework, and transitional and post-2024 successor arrangements to Pillar I of the CAP.

Next steps

10. Following the presentation from Savills Rural Research, members are asked to:
 - 10.1. **Provide** steer to the suppliers on their proposed approach and next steps.