



People & Places Board

Agenda

Tuesday, 14 March 2023
10.30 am

Hybrid Meeting - 18 Smith Square and
Online

People & Places Board
Tuesday, 14 March 2023

There will be a meeting of the People & Places Board at **10.30 am on Tuesday, 14 March 2023**
Hybrid Meeting - 18 Smith Square and Online.

LGA Hybrid Meetings

All of our meetings are available to join in person at [18 Smith Square](#) or remotely via videoconference as part of our hybrid approach. We will ask you to confirm in advance if you will be joining each meeting in person or remotely so we can plan accordingly, if you wish to attend the meeting in person, please also remember to confirm whether you have any dietary/accessibility requirements. 18 Smith Square is a Covid-19 secure venue and measures are in place to keep you safe when you attend a meeting or visit the building in person.

[Please see guidance for Members and Visitors to 18 Smith Square here](#)

Catering and Refreshments:

If the meeting is scheduled to take place at lunchtime, a sandwich lunch will be available.

Political Group meetings and pre-meetings for Lead Members:

Please contact your political group as outlined below for further details.

Apologies:

Please notify your political group office (see contact telephone numbers below) if you are unable to attend this meeting.

Conservative:	Group Office: 020 7664 3223	email: lgaconservatives@local.gov.uk
Labour:	Group Office: 020 7664 3263	email: labgp@lga.gov.uk
Independent:	Group Office: 020 7664 3224	email: independent.group@lga.local.gov.uk
Liberal Democrat:	Group Office: 020 7664 3235	email: libdem@local.gov.uk

Attendance:

Your attendance, whether it be in person or virtual, will be noted by the clerk at the meeting.

LGA Contact:

Alexander Reid
alexander.reid@local.gov.uk

Carers' Allowance

As part of the LGA Members' Allowances Scheme a Carer's Allowance of £9.00 per hour or £10.55 if receiving London living wage is available to cover the cost of dependants (i.e. children, elderly people or people with disabilities) incurred as a result of attending this meeting.

18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ www.local.gov.uk **Telephone** 020 7664 3000 **Email** info@local.gov.uk
Local Government Association company number 11177145

Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government company number 0367557

Chairman: Councillor James Jamieson OBE **Chief Executive:** Mark Lloyd CBE **President:** Baroness Grey-Thompson

People & Places Board – Membership

[Click here for accessible information on membership](#)

Councillor	Authority
Conservative (12)	
Cllr Kevin Bentley (Chair)	Essex County Council
Cllr Morris Bright MBE (Vice Chairman)	Hertsmere Borough Council
Cllr Lynne Doherty	West Berkshire Council
Cllr Marc Bayliss	Worcester City Council
Cllr Peter Butlin	Warwickshire County Council
Cllr Hilary Carrick	Cumbria County Council
Cllr Sam Chapman-Allen	Breckland Council
Cllr Jordan Meade	Gravesham Borough Council
Cllr Eddie Reeves	Oxfordshire County Council
Cllr Martin Tett	Buckinghamshire Council
Cllr Phillipa Williamson	Lancashire County Council
Cllr Barry Wood	Cherwell District Council
Substitutes	
Cllr Colin Kemp	Woking Borough Council
Cllr Shaun Gunner	Arun District Council
Cllr Jane Evison	East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Labour (4)	
Cllr Amanda Serjeant (Deputy Chair)	Chesterfield Borough Council
Cllr Simon Henig CBE	Durham County Council
Cllr Erica Lewis	Lancaster City Council
Cllr Damien Greenhalgh	High Peak Borough Council and Derbyshire County Council
Substitutes	
Cllr Alan Waters	Norwich City Council
Cllr Steve Norman	Lichfield District Council
Liberal Democrat (3)	
Cllr Emily Smith (Vice-Chair)	Vale of White Horse District Council
Cllr Caroline Leaver	Devon County Council
Cllr Stan Collins	Cumbria County Council
Substitutes	
Cllr Michael Mullaney	Leicestershire County Council
Independent (3)	
Cllr Emily O'Brien (Deputy Chair)	Lewes District Council
Cllr Kevin Etheridge	Caerphilly County Borough Council
Cllr Dr Sue Roberts	South Oxfordshire District Council
Substitutes	
Cllr Georgina Hill	Northumberland County Council

Cllr Julian Dean	Shropshire Council
Cllr Caroline Topping	Suffolk County Council

Agenda

People & Places Board

Tuesday, 14 March 2023

10.30 am

Hybrid Meeting - 18 Smith Square and Online

Item	Page
1. Welcome, Apologies and Substitutes, Declarations of Interest	
2. Minutes of the last meeting	1 - 6
3. Second homes	7 - 12
4. Rural levelling up	13 - 24
5. People and Places forward plan	25 - 28
6. Green Jobs and Skills Update	29 - 32
7. The role of councils in supporting economic inclusion: Unlocking talent to level-up	33 - 56
a). The role of councils in supporting economic inclusion: Unlocking talent to level-up	
b). Appendix 1 - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Focus Group – thematic summary	
8. Levelling Up Fund	57 - 62

Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday, 6 June 2023, 10.30 am, Hybrid Meeting - 18 Smith Square and Online

Minutes of last People & Places Board meeting

People & Places Board

Tuesday, 10 January 2023

Hybrid Meeting - 18 Smith Square and Online

Attendance

An attendance list is attached as **Appendix A**

Item	Decisions and actions
------	-----------------------

1	Welcome, Apologies and Substitutes, Declarations of Interest
----------	---

The Chair welcomed Members, officers and guests to the meeting.

Apologies were received by Cllr Eddie Reeves and Cllr Kevin Etheridge. Cllr Georgina Hill and Cllr Colin Kemp served as substitutes.

No declarations of interest had been made.

2	A minute's silence to remember Cllr Judi Billing MBE and former Deputy Board Chair John Pollard
----------	--

There was a minute's silence followed by shared recollections for the late Cllr Judi Billing MBE and John Pollard, a former Board Deputy Chairman.

3	Digital Connectivity Update
----------	------------------------------------

Cllr Mark Hawthorne, LGA Digital Champion, introduced the report and invited David Mack-Smith of DMS Research & Consulting to provide an overview of recent policy and public affairs work relating to digital connectivity and inclusion as well as the role of local authorities in tackling digital exclusion.

Key points included:

- Barriers to digital inclusion include access, abilities to connect to the Internet and use online services in addition to other factors such as confidence and lack of trust.
- Rural areas have done relatively well in getting full fibre coverage so far, but lag in terms of gigabit coverage
- It was noted that local authorities have various responsibilities, relationships and assets which position them to play a key role in tackling digital exclusion, given their democratic mandate.
- It was recommended that there should be clarification of the ministerial and executive leadership on digital inclusion.

Members made the following comments:

- The Chair asked if there was knowledge of areas with little to no broadband rollout. Officers replied that the Ofcom Connected Nations Report contained the latest figures and the House of Commons Library provided an accessible map of the key statistics.
- Cllr Hawthorne said that there are effective examples of existing work in district councils and county councils and going forward there would be continued efforts to ensure central government recognises the need for funding for local government to support the broadband agenda.
- Members gave examples of broadband provision in their council areas, highlighting productivity and budgetary challenges.
- A Member queried paragraph 6 within the covering report, which concerns telecare, which he believed might be out of date and would like more information. Cllr Hawthorne replied that he believed adult social care as an industry is fully aware of this issue, but that there was already ongoing work to combat the challenges going forward.
- Attitudes to technology and the internet, especially among older residents, were discussed.
- A Member said he would like to see campaigning to ensure that that resilience is built into broadband strategies. He also asked if the social services were aware of the challenges regarding monitoring, the adult monitoring and PSTN.
- A Member reflected on the importance of inclusivity as well as economic growth, adding that councils need to recognise the gigabyte spine and where it reaches across authority borders.
- There should be greater promotion of the fact there are cheaper tariffs for people with lower incomes.
- There should be further work on digital inclusion and efforts to make sure there is an up-to-date policy in central government.

Decision:

- That Members **noted** the report;
- that there should be **further work** on digital inclusion and efforts to make sure there is an up-to-date policy in central government, reporting back to a future board meeting.

Action/s:

Noting comments from Members from the discussion with DMS Research & Consulting and Cllr Mark Hawthorne, officers will publish the commissioned work exploring the role of local authorities in tackling digital exclusion and create a more detailed plan to take the recommendations forward and land them with central government.

4 People and Places Forward Plan

Members discussed the paper which set out future Board dates with

proposals for discussion topics.

Key points included the following:

- A Member asked if alternative farming voices (such as the Nature Friendly Farming Network) could be invited to future meetings.
- Regarding planning reform for rural areas, a Member queried if the board could comment or be involved in the LGA response. The Chair said there could be a discussion in Lead Member meetings about those who can be invited to board meetings.
- A Member queried if second homes and holiday homes could be discussed at a future board meeting. Rebecca Cox, Principal Policy Adviser, replied that in the rural recognition, recovery, resilience and revitalisation paper that the board commissioned, there was a homes and built environment section that could be used as a template to review how some of those issues have developed over time. The Chair said the matter would be reviewed, including checking with the EEHT Board, and would go to a future meeting.

Decision:

- That Members **agreed** the forward plan.

5 Levelling Up update and inquiry recommendations

Eleanor Law, Adviser, introduced the final draft report of the Levelling Up Locally Inquiry, giving an overview of the arrangements for the report's launch in March.

Members made the following comments:

- It was noted that UKRI is currently funding research around a project called Local Policy Innovation Partnerships (LPIP), and that the work of universities is relevant to issues raised in the report.
- There was discussion about the structure and focus of the report. A Member said that there should be more work to reduce the number of priorities for levelling up while others believed that more work on the report was required, particularly on clarifying what the top recommendations are from the report and how these will be effectively communicated with Government.
- Members discussed how the report was bringing together a large number of themes and that there needed to be a single thread weaving these together.
- The Chair agreed that Lead Members could discuss the top priorities for inclusion in the final version of the report levelling up.

Decision:

- That Members **agreed** for a revised copy of the report to be discussed and signed off at a Lead Members meeting if Lead Members were content with it.

Action/s

Officers will incorporate any comments from members into the final draft of the report and the plan for its publication. A copy of the final report and the launch plans will also be brought to the City Regions Board for their consideration and agreement. Once agreed, officers will press ahead with publication and a launch event in March.

6 Work Local - next steps activity

Jasbir Jhas, Senior Adviser, introduced the report.

Members made the following points:

- A Member questioned section 5 in the report regarding value for money and costs and the effectiveness of the spending decision making. Jasbir Jhas replied that this work was based on existing funds as well as examples of outcomes-based work from local authorities and combined authorities.
- Regarding redundancies and business closures, there should be a change in attitudes (for example, looking at people who are made redundant as an opportunity instead of a problem).
- Central government should provide funding to insulate homes rewild and make farming regenerative.
- In the Levelling Up paper, a Member noted that there is a reference to community wealth building and queried whether something like that needs to be included in the Work Local programme.
- A Member recommended that an infographic be included in the report for further clarity.

Cllr Emily O'Brien updated on the Green Jobs Delivery Group meeting with three ministers. There was agreement to the LGA's request to offer a wider stakeholder group. Some councillors have submitted good practice and local challenges in developing the green jobs and skills needed to achieve net zero. Members wishing to do the same were told to submit them to Paul Green, Adviser. The Chair thanked Cllr O'Brien for her work.

Decision:

- Members **noted** the report.

Action

To take forward the steer provided by the Board.

7 Supporting Economic Growth and Prosperity

Jasbir Jhas introduced the report, inviting Ben Lee and Lisa McCance from Shared Intelligence to discuss the findings.

Members made the following comments:

- The Chair noted that he didn't see education mentioned and reiterated his belief that there is no 'one size fits all' approach to devolution. He believed the role of local government is a convening role and education and businesses need to be considered together to work out what skills are then required.
- A Member referred to section 18.2, believing it would be helpful for creative industries, food, farming and nature sectors to be added to future gap analysis.
- A Member suggested that there needs to be a change in the basis of funding for economic growth, with competition and more longer-term vision.
- A Member believed there was a democratic deficit in general regeneration activity.
- The Chair said there needed to be clarification from central government regarding the plans for LEPs.
- Regarding engagement with councils, the Chair questioned if unitary authorities had been consulted and queried when the research project would be completed. Jasbir confirmed that there would be engagement with unitary councils and that the research would conclude in March. The Chair recommended that Jasbir consult with Councillor Martin Tett of Buckinghamshire County Council and Cllr Lynne Doherty of West Berkshire Council.

Decision:

That the Members **noted** the two pieces of commissioned work: the future skills needs of councils' economic development teams (paragraphs 2-11); and the integration of LEPs (paragraphs 12-17).

Action/s

LGA officers and Shared Intelligence will incorporate Members' perspectives into the two projects.

8 Councils' Future Role in Driving Growth and Prosperity

Due to time constraints, the Chair briefly addressed this work and asked if Members had any concerns with the report. There were no objections.

Decision:

That the Members **noted** the decision to commission a piece of research into councils' future role in driving growth and prosperity. Following a successful process of procurement, the chosen supplier is expected to attend the Board meeting and take a steer from members.

9 Minutes of last People & Places Board meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.

Appendix A - Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Kevin Bentley	Essex County Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Morris Bright MBE	Hertsmere Borough Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Emily Smith	Vale of White Horse District Council
	Cllr Emily O'Brien	Lewes District Council
	Cllr Amanda Serjeant	Chesterfield Borough Council
Members	Cllr Lynne Doherty	West Berkshire Council
	Cllr Marc Bayliss	Worcester City Council
	Cllr Hilary Carrick	Cumbria County Council
	Cllr Sam Chapman-Allen	Breckland Council
	Cllr Martin Tett	Buckinghamshire Council
	Cllr Barry Wood	Cherwell District Council
	Cllr Simon Henig CBE	Durham County Council
	Cllr Damien Greenhalgh	High Peak Borough Council and Derbyshire County Council
	Cllr Caroline Leaver	Devon County Council
Cllr Sue Roberts	South Oxfordshire District Council	
Apologies	Cllr Eddie Reeves	Oxfordshire County Council
	Cllr Kevin Etheridge	Caerphilly County Borough Council
In Attendance	Cllr Colin Kemp	Woking Borough Council
	Cllr Georgina Hill	Northumberland County Council
LGA Officers		

Meeting: People and Places Board

Date: 14 March 2023



Second homes

Purpose of report

For direction

Summary

Members have expressed an interest in understanding the LGA's activity around second homes. This paper sets out some of the issues; updates the Board on current work; and suggests some options for additional work.

Is this report confidential? No

Recommendation/s

That Board Members comment on the LGA's policy work to date; share their views on second homes data, and agree to fund Localis' Community Land Trust proposal.

Contact details

Contact officer: Rebecca Cox

Position: Principal Policy Adviser

Phone no: 07921 604 237

Email: rebecca.cox@local.gov.uk

Second homes



Background

1. Members have expressed an interest in understanding the LGA's activity around second homes. This paper sets out some of the issues; updates Lead Members on current work; and suggests some options for additional work.
2. In the 2019 Board-commissioned report '[Rural recognition, recovery, resilience, and revitalisation](#)' found that "the lack of good quality, affordable housing has long been an issue for rural and coastal authorities. Whilst the increase in remote working and outward migration from cities offers the opportunity to build more sustainable communities, it will also heap pressure onto an already squeezed housing market."
3. In 2020, the English Housing Survey published a [special factsheet on second homes](#). It found that in 2018/19:
 - Three per cent (2.4 million) of households report having a second home – note that this includes homes outside the UK. This proportion was unchanged since 2008/09, although the total number of second-home households increased from 572,000 to 772,000.
 - Thirty-nine per cent of households stated their reason for a second home as being holiday home or weekend cottage, and 35 per cent stated it was for long-term investment or income.
 - Half of all second homes in England are located in the South West (27 per cent), South East (14 per cent) and London (12 per cent), with the remainder spread relatively evenly across the rest of the country.
4. Some data on second home ownership is available through council tax records. In September 2021, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) [found that second home ownership is concentrated on 'tourist hotspots.'](#)
5. Data on trends in short-term lets, which may also be second homes, and their impact on local housing markets is patchy. Data from Sykes Holiday Cottages' annual [Staycation Index in 2021](#) (cited in a [House of Commons library report](#)) showed the pandemic resulted in a significant increase in interest from second homeowners looking to list their properties as short-term holiday lets, with new owner enquiries up 91 per cent ahead of domestic travel reopening in April 2021. The 2022 Index doesn't show comparable data, but points to a growing interest in staycations with bookings up 30 per cent compared to 2021 and up 53 per cent from 2019.
6. Landlords and lettings organisations such as the National Residential Landlords' Association and ARLA Propertymark point to [changes in taxation](#) and [greater potential profits](#) as reasons for landlords moving from longer-term to short-term lets. As well as

housing pressures, issues raised in relation to the rise of short-term lets include noise and nuisance, fire safety, and the impact on the traditional accommodation providers.

7. The issue of second homes has been raised by EEHT Board members in discussion about the wide-ranging pressures on local housing markets. The two current areas of the LGA's policy work concerning second homes and holiday lets are the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's consultation on developing a registration scheme for short-term lets and influencing provisions in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill.

Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill

8. The LGA is supporting clauses 75 and 76 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, which give councils more power to charge premium council tax for long term empty and second homes as we consider that this will give councils more power to influence local housing markets. Our most recent briefing on the Bill can be found [here](#).
9. We are also supporting two amendments that have been tabled by Peers for Committee stage in the Lords which is currently underway. This would create a new use class for second homes and a new use class for holiday rentals. Again, we are supporting these measures because as well as giving local authorities greater powers to shape local housing markets, they will also strengthen local oversight of changes in accommodation in an area.
10. We also supported amendments tabled in the Commons stage which would raise the maximum level at which local authorities can set council tax on dwellings occupied periodically (second homes) from 100 per cent to 300 per cent, but unfortunately this did not make it through into the Bill. We will continue to lobby for increased council discretionary powers on second homes. We also supported another amendment in the Commons that would reduce the notice period to implement the new rate for council tax for second homes from one year to six months, as councils had said they would like a lower period of notice, but unfortunately this also did not make it through into the Bill.
11. We are also briefing on amendments being put forward on Clause 76 in the Lords Committee stage, including one to drop the one year lead in for the implementation of a new rate for council tax for second homes.

Short term lets consultation

12. Led by the Culture, Tourism and Sport Board the LGA has engaged in DCMS's consultation on the regulation of short term lets, which was published in summer 2022. While not all short term lets are second homes and accurate data on this sector is difficult to obtain, the [Government's background to the consultation](#) confirms that the expansion of short term and holiday letting has had "[n]egative housing ... impacts, such as the impact on housing supply...and that [i]t is possible ... that housing supply is more adversely affected in tourist 'honeypots' in rural or coastal areas." For this reason it has been included alongside the wider issue of second homes for this paper.
13. [The LGA's response to the consultation](#) highlighted the following issues:

- Local government has been raising concerns about the impact of unregulated growth in this sector for some time. We welcome Government's exploration of the issue and urge Government to take meaningful action to rebalance the impacts of this growth industry.
 - It is a national issue, with the impacts of short-term letting found across the country. However, it is not an issue in every council area, with some councils seeing little growth and others reporting growth of between 30-52 per cent in short-term lets. Our members report particular challenges in visitor 'honeypots' destinations such as coastal areas, particularly in the South West and East of England, as well as in core and key cities.
 - We believe this indicates the need for regulation that allows local discretion and implementation, ensuring that the response is proportionate for those places without significant challenges while also enabling those places with significant impact on their communities to take action.
 - Members have also indicated that it is important to not discourage those lets which provide flexibility to people who only occasionally let a spare room. This suggests a tiered approach based on risk and impact of the short-term let, avoiding the need for excessive bureaucracy or red tape that will unfairly hold back smaller businesses.
 - The response concluded by recommending that a universal registration scheme (Option 4) should be implemented, with local councils having the discretion to introduce a licensing scheme (Option 5). This will have the maximum benefit for communities and allow councils to unlock the growth potential of the whole visitor economy in a sustainable way.
14. Following the most recent reshuffle, DCMS has now confirmed Julia Lopez MP will take on responsibility for tourism at DCMS. LGA officers have been invited to a roundtable on the short term lets consultation and will feed back to the Board on the discussion. The LGA will also be sending an introductory letter to the Minister, including our lines on short term lets.

Proposal for next steps

15. The EEHT, finance, and public affairs teams will continue to support elements of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill that will strengthen local authorities' ability to shape local housing markets. In due course the CTS team will consider Government's findings from its short term lets consultation and respond appropriately. Comments from Board members to inform this work would be very welcome.
16. Board members may wish to consider whether they consider sufficient data on second homes to be available, and whether the LGA should press for an updated report from the English Housing Survey to give a better national picture. Taken together with the policy work outlined above, this would give the LGA some clear proposals for greater powers and flexibilities to respond to local housing need, without the need for significant extra policy resource.

17. The LGA has also been approached by the local government think tank, Localis, with a proposal for a project on Community Land Trusts (CLTs). The proposal, which is appended to this paper, explores the opportunities provided by CLTs as one way of addressing the pressures on housing markets in rural tourist hot spots:
- Community Land Trusts (CLTs) are emerging in many tourist hot spots in an attempt to deliver more homes of social rent and have proved a popular way of building homes in sensitive areas of natural beauty. Many have been developed in association with housing associations. Typically, the CLT discovers the site, conducts feasibility studies and gains community consent while the housing association finances, builds and manages the homes. However, the land is owned by the CLT in perpetuity and in many cases the assets and ground rents are used to fund social infrastructure projects on behalf of the community.
 - **Brightness on the Edge of Town** will be an original research project, aimed at developing a policy narrative to outline the place of Community Land Trusts in the current political debate, elucidate the parameters for action and highlight possible pathways to overcoming the barriers listed above. The final output will be a report and other published materials aiming to bring attention to housing issues in tourist hotspots and provide a persuasive political case for CLTs as a means of addressing them, alongside a succinct analysis of possible policy pathways.
18. The LGA has a positive view of CLTs and features [a number of case studies](#) on its website, but to date has not published much detail or advice for councils interested in this approach. EEHT officers are supportive of the Board undertaking work in this area, should Lead Members agree. The proposal included with this paper is a first draft and we would want to shape it in line with members' views to ensure the focus, scope, and future use of the work are the best fit with the Boards' priorities.

Implications for Wales

19. Second homes are also an important issue in Wales, with a [number of new measures](#) introduced jointly by the First Minister and the Leader Plaid Cymru. These include the introduction of new use classes to better differentiate between primary and secondary homes and short-term lets; plans to develop a new statutory licensing scheme for all visitor accommodation and to allow councils greater powers over tax rates and second home numbers.
20. The Welsh Government also announced new legislative measures in March 2022, focusing on tax. From April 2023, local councils will be able to raise the maximum council tax premium on second homes to 300 per cent (up from the 100 per cent limit set in 2017). In addition, new regulations have been set in place to increase the number of days that self-catering accommodation must be let to qualify for business rates.
21. Should we proceed with work on Community Land Trusts we will share our findings with the WLGA.

Financial Implications

22. The proposed work could be undertaken from the Board's policy budget.

Equalities implications

23. Clear data on equalities implications arising as a result of second homes are limited and this should form part of any work undertaken on behalf of the Board.

Next steps

24. Officers to work with Localis in line with members' views and undertake any further work as needed.

Meeting: People and Places Board

Date: 14 March 2023



Rural levelling up

Purpose of report

For information

Summary

This paper provides background relating to levelling up rural areas ahead of a conversation at the Board with Tim Goodship, Head of Rural Policy at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and Minette Batters, President of the National Farmers' Union (NFU). The discussion will be used to inform the Board's asks of all political parties.

Is this report confidential? No

Recommendation/s

Members are invited to:

- Note background, context and data analysis which informs this workstream.
- Have a wider conversation with key stakeholders from DEFRA and the NFU to inform the development of the Board's key asks of the rural sector.

Action/s

Following the discussions officers will take away the emerging themes and bring back the key messages for a wider debate with Board members to test and ensure they align with other organisations. The key asks and offers from the rural sector will then be passed on to the next Board and a wider discussion will take place in the new cycle around their dissemination under new Board leadership.

Contact details

Contact officer: Esther Barrott

Position: Adviser

Phone no: 07464652906

Email: esther.barrott@local.gov.uk



Rural levelling up

Background

1. The context within which the People and Places Board operates has significantly shifted over the past year with the [Levelling Up White Paper](#) extending devolution beyond metropolitan areas for the first time to allow local leaders in rural areas to adapt policy and trial new ideas most suited to their areas' needs, coupled with new resources and legislation.
2. More recently the Government has signalled its intention to create a new Office for Local Government (Oflog) which will have the primary purpose of providing a transparent and authoritative source of information about the performance of local government. This marks an opportunity for the Board to engage with Government as it continues progressing devolution deals and explores how the data body might be co-produced with the sector to better strengthen rural areas.
3. At the same time Government has set out guiding visions for more integrated, better aligned and empowered local institutions and places with tools they need to unlock economic growth. As part of this and following a year-long review of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), Government is integrating the functions and roles of LEPs with local governance structures. 42 Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) were also established across England on a statutory basis in July 2022.
4. More widely, the prospect of a 2024/25 General Election provides a renewed opportunity for the People and Places Board to connect with all political parties and influence the future policy direction of the UK, with rural challenges notably absent from current policy pronouncements.
5. Over the past year the People and Places and City Regions Boards have run a [Levelling Up Locally Inquiry](#) into how the levelling up agenda might further strengthen local communities. The inquiry built on the [Levelling Up White Paper](#) to investigate the role of local leadership in shaping a recovery that works for all. It has explored four themes: funding and alignment; leadership; productivity and

prosperity; and place and identity to shape the recommendations for the future direction of levelling up policy.

6. The inquiry roundtables were attended by People and Places Board members and rural organisations such as Britain's Leading Edge, Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) and The Countryside Charity to ensure rural perspectives fed into the recommendations. While rural challenges were evidenced within the inquiry report, the final set of recommendations apply to both urban and rural localities and can be used for lobbying by both Boards.
7. At the same time, the City Regions Board has overseen an Urban Summit and [Future of Cities](#) project capturing the views, experiences and aspirations of urban residents, city leaders, urban planners, think tanks, academics and urban artists and writers. The project will be used to lobby government about the key asks and offers from the urban sector.
8. In this context, it is suggested the People and Places Board undertakes a separate piece of work to develop policy lines relating to levelling up rural areas which can be used to crystallise its asks of all political parties. The recommendations will influence the development of manifestos to ensure the rural proofing of levelling up is considered within future policy creation.

Context

9. The Board's successful lobbying has seen several new Government interventions for rural areas including a significant reform of agricultural policy and spending in England moving from the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to Environmental Land Management Schemes. The £110 million Rural England Prosperity Fund was also announced in September 2022 as a top-up to the UKSPF giving local leaders a greater say in investment they previously had under EU schemes.
10. Following earlier reports such as the 2015 [Devolution to Non-Metropolitan England](#) (PDF) and 2019 [Future of Non-Metropolitan England](#) reports, in 2021 the Board commissioned Pragmatix to undertake a piece of work exploring the

challenges facing rural and coastal areas. The research had a particular focus on deprivation to outline what steps Government could take to strengthen the recovery and resilience of these communities within the context of recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic.

11. The report, [Rural Recognition, Recovery, Resilience and Revitalisation](#) highlighted the way in which the pandemic stimulated new ways of thinking including the rise of 'staycations' to support domestic tourism and the leisure sector, a revisiting of where and how people carry out 'office' work, and a reinforcement of the importance of England's natural assets. It made the case for a shift in the way rural and coastal policy is viewed, to not be seen purely through the lens of redistribution to reduce inequality and deprivation, but instead investing in the rural economy can deliver sustainable returns to the national economy. The report estimated the three trends could contribute £51 billion per annum to the rural economy by 2030. In 2018 GVA from tourism in predominantly rural areas alone was worth an estimated £11.5 billion.

12. However, a lot has changed since the time of writing with a cost-of-living crisis, rising inflation all while the country continues to feel the impact of the pandemic and struggle with low levels of labour productivity. The Pragmatix report found that rural economies can be disproportionately impacted by macroeconomic downturns, as experienced in the last recession, and both rural and coastal areas can be slow to recover. [Rural productivity levels have decreased](#) between 2001 and 2020, from 89 per cent of England's average to 81 per cent. 21 per cent of the population of England lives in predominantly rural authorities but these areas only contribute 15 per cent of England's Gross Value Added and median workplace-based earnings are lower in rural areas than in urban areas.

Data analysis

13. The need to better understand challenges facing rural areas has therefore never been more important. The [2021 census data](#) has now been published and begins to provide further insight. High-level analysis has been undertaken comparing all 'predominantly rural' authorities with 'predominantly urban' authorities across a range of different themes including the economy, housing, demography, and

health. Several census datasets did not provide granular data on a local authority level and therefore these have not been included in the analysis.

Economy

14. Rural areas have seen the biggest decrease in their economically active population over a 10-year period. However, the rural economy is dominated by entrepreneurs, self-employed workers, home businesses and small and micro enterprises presenting huge opportunities in creating and sustaining employment and safeguarding the future of rural communities.

- a. **Rural areas had a lower number of people working from home compared with urban areas in 2021.** The average percentage of residents aged 16 years and over in employment working from or at home in 2021 in areas with a rural classification across England and Wales was 30.3 per cent. This was less than in urban areas (31.4 per cent).
- b. **The number of economically active residents aged 16 and over decreased by over twice as much in rural areas** (3 per cent decrease) compared with urban areas (1.2 per cent decrease) between 2011 and 2021.
- c. Rural areas have a **lower percentage of the working age population who are unemployed** (2.2 per cent) compared with urban areas which have 3.7 per cent of their economically active population unemployed.

Housing

15. Rural residents are less likely to have a second home in the UK. However, according to [wider research](#), rural areas have higher rates of second homes (2.4 per cent) compared with urban areas (1 per cent). There is also an increased risk of social isolation in rural areas as they have higher proportions of one person households with residents aged 66 and over.

- a. **In 2021, residents in rural areas were less likely to have a second address in the UK** (3.7 per cent) compared with residents in urban areas (4.1 per cent).
- b. **Rural areas have a higher number of one person households with a resident aged 66 and over compared with urban areas.** In 2021 15 per cent of rural households were one person households with a resident aged

66 and over compared with 12.2 per cent of urban households.

Demography

16. There are significant numbers of residents in rural areas with protected characteristics, with similar numbers of people whose sexual orientation isn't heterosexual/straight and whose gender identity is no longer the same as their sex at birth as in urban areas. A greater understanding of the demographics of rural areas can be used to help inform future service provision.

- a. **97 per cent of people living in rural areas spoke English as their main language in 2021**, much higher than the 89.4 per cent of people in urban areas speaking English as their main language.
- b. There was a **higher number of people whose sexual orientation was straight/heterosexual in rural areas (90.9 per cent)** compared with 89 per cent in urban areas.
- c. There are **more people classified as disabled under the Equality Act in urban areas compared with rural areas**. 83 per cent of those in rural areas were classed as not disabled under the Equality Act in 2021, compared with 81.9 per cent of those in urban areas.
- d. **In rural areas 94.5 per cent of the population's gender identity was the same as their sex at birth in 2021**, compared with 93.3 per cent in urban areas.

Health

17. Rural and coastal populations provide unpaid care to family and other members of their local communities meaning volunteers in rural areas are undertaking jobs that would be paid for elsewhere.

- a. **The proportion of people in very bad health was lower in rural areas compared with urban areas**. In 2021, 0.95 per cent of the population had very bad health in rural areas, compared with 1.3 in urban areas.
- b. In 2021 there was **the same proportion of unpaid carers in rural areas as in urban areas** at 9 per cent.

18. The challenges facing rural communities are further compounded by intersectional disadvantage. For example, a person who is blind and over the age

of 66 and will face worsened outcomes and provision living in a rural area.

19. The geographic dispersion of the population means they would need to travel further to access services, shops and healthcare, and poor transport links and staff retention means service providers are challenged by their ability to bring services to the individual. The person would have more limited access to support of both formal services and from family members and a move for services to become 'digital by default' means they are at heightened risk of exclusion.

Relevant publications

20. The Board has a strong record of engaging with key rural stakeholders. The following section summarises relevant publications from a selection of rural organisations including the NFU and DEFRA who will be talking to the Board in more detail.
21. **National Farmers Union (NFU)** The NFU attended a People and Places Board meeting in the 2021/22 cycle and had a wider discussion with members. At the time of the publication of the Levelling Up White Paper the NFU published a [blueprint for the future of British farming](#) to create a more resilient, sustainable and productive agricultural sector. The report highlights the need for the production of sustainable, climate-friendly British food and the utilisation of new technologies that will enable farmers to produce this food.
22. **The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)** DEFRA have published two papers on 'rural proofing' England. The first was titled '[Rural Proofing in England 2020](#)' and outlined government's plans to meet the needs of rural areas, focussing on four themes: strengthening the rural economy, developing rural infrastructure, delivering rural services, and managing the natural environment. The [second](#) was published in September 2022 and sets out how rural interests will be systematically integrated across Government's approach to levelling up.
23. **Rural services Network (RSN)** The RSN is a Special Interest Group of the LGA which works on behalf of members as the national champion for rural services. Over the last two years the group has focussed on two campaigns – '[Fairer](#)

[Funding for Rural Areas](#)' which calls for fairer distribution of the funds Government allocates to support local government services. The campaign calls for public services to be fairly funded to ensure additional costs of delivering rural services are recognised and adequately funded. Rurality costs are about more than 'travel related costs' and rural needs should be recognised in future funding decisions. The second, [Revitalising Rural: Realising the Vision](#) looks to challenge Government on several policy areas that affect rural areas.

24. **Britain's Leading Edge** Britain's Leading Edge attended a People and Places Board meeting earlier in the cycle to talk to their recently published report in collaboration with the University of Exeter: '[Levelling up the leading edge](#)'. The report highlights the place-specific opportunities Britain's Leading Edge areas have to offer to the UK's carbon zero economy. The group published a [manifesto](#) in February 2023 outlining six commitments to improve the quality of life for the 6 million people living in peripheral regions which include continuing to advocate for moving focus and investment beyond the policy corridor and championing Government recognition for the extra costs involved in providing reliable, high quality public services in peripheral areas.
25. **Action with communities in rural England (ACRE)** In March 2022, ACRE [responded](#) to the Levelling Up White Paper exploring whether levelling up will genuinely reach out to rural areas. The report outlined the disappointing way in which there is no obvious, measurable objective to meet the country's net-zero targets or to re-invigorate the country's rural economy.
26. **Fabians Society** The Fabians Society '[Green and Pleasant: Rebuilding Rural Britain](#)' publication was published in late 2022 and seeks to explore how the 'peripheral' geography of rural and coastal areas shapes the challenges they face and lays the groundworks for a Labour offer to voters living in rural Britain.
27. With the above in mind, the question is raised around the extent to which rural areas and stakeholder organisations were consulted with when the Levelling Up White Paper missions were developed.

Policy provocations

28. Drawing on the Census data analysis, Pragmatix report findings, and the work of external stakeholder organisations, the following four themes have been chosen for further discussion with Minette Batters and Tim Goodship at the Board Meeting: strengthening the rural economy; developing rural infrastructure; delivering rural services; and rural-proofing policy.

29. Strengthening the rural economy

Background

Local government are place leaders for their local communities and economies. Funding streams such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the Rural England Prosperity Fund, Environmental Land Management Schemes, and changes to economic development teams provides local authorities the opportunities to address and develop their local rural economies that achieve both net zero and levelling up ambitions.

Questions

- A) What should be done differently to enable local authorities to achieve wider levelling up aspirations, while also achieving net zero ambitions in areas such as land management, sustainable tourism, supply chains, food production, farming, and nature preservation/enhancement?
- B) Where are the current gaps in policy between current intervention and community need?
- C) What opportunities and challenges exist to develop the skills and jobs needed to deliver these ambitions in the following areas?
 - a. Farming, food production, forestry, and land management
 - b. Nature preservation and enhancement
 - c. Rural economies such as sustainable tourism.

30. Developing rural infrastructure

Background

There are significant spatial disparities in the quality of broadband and mobile networks, with rural areas likely to experience worse connectivity than urban areas. Despite the fact improving rural connectivity was a fundamental part of the

Government's levelling up agenda, recent analysis by DMS Consulting for the LGA found rural areas continue to lag in terms of gigabit coverage (47 per cent compared with 79 per cent in urban areas). Poor infrastructure has far-reaching consequences from constraining business growth (discouraging businesses from locating in rural areas and impacting ability to work from home), impacting the visitor experience in rural and coastal communities and worsening health inequalities through the differences in care people receive and their opportunities to lead healthy lives.

Questions

- A) Has home working opened up rural England for business, following the pandemic, as was suggested in the Pragmatix report?
- B) The Pragmatix report suggested mobile connectivity is key for businesses in remote communities. Is this still the case? What new technologies might transform rural economies?
- C) What does the future of rural areas look like? What infrastructure is required to realise the vision?

31. Delivering rural services

Background

Sparsity and remoteness mean rural and coastal populations often must travel further to access services which makes service delivery challenging and costly. In many cases volunteering supplements or even replaces public services and high numbers of unpaid carers provide support to family and other members of the community.

Questions

- A) What adjustments need to be made relating to rurality and remoteness that ensure more sparsely populated areas are not left without vital services?
- B) Which demographic groups are most adversely affected by accessibility challenges in rural services? How can we build more inclusive rural communities?

32. Rural-proofing policy

Background

The Pragmatix Rural Resilience report highlighted that council averages often mask significant localised differences within council areas and the choice of metrics used in the Index of Multiple Deprivation sometimes fails to reflect the nature of rural and coastal disadvantage. As is evident in the technical annex to the Levelling Up White Paper, data is not often available at the right geographical level to allow local comparisons or the assessment of differences within regions. This is challenging as deprivation is harder to identify in rural areas as it is often more dispersed.

Questions

- A) How does data-driven policy work when there is a lack of readily available spatial data to inform rural policy development and progress the levelling up missions?
- B) How can the Office for Local Government and Spatial Data Unit help overcome the gap in data availability?
- C) Does Whitehall recognise and respond to the specific challenges of varied communities? Are current policy interventions tackling the real challenges?

Next steps

33. Following the discussions with Minette Batters and Tim Goodship, officers will take away the emerging themes and bring back the key messages for a wider debate with Board members to test and ensure they align with other organisations. The key asks and offers from the rural sector will then be passed on to the next Board and a wider discussion will take place in the new cycle around their dissemination under new Board leadership.

Implications for Wales

34. Officers will look for opportunities to ensure alignment of recommendations and messaging with the Welsh Local Government Association.

Financial Implications

35. The Board's activities in this area will be supported by budgets for policy development.

Meeting: People and Places Board

Date: 14 March 2023



People and Places forward plan

Purpose of report

For direction

Summary

This short paper sets out future Board dates with proposals for discussion topics.

Is this report confidential? No

Recommendation/s

That the Board agree the forward plan.

Contact details

Contact officer: Rebecca Cox

Position: Principal Policy Adviser

Phone no: 07921 604 237

Email: rebecca.cox@local.gov.uk

People and Places forward plan



Background

1. The Board will meet five times over the course of the Board cycle. The following table sets out an initial forward plan for lead members' comment. The plan will be updated and further content added throughout the cycle in response to current events and Board priorities.
2. The work programme agreed by the Board at the beginning of the Board cycle is attached for reference, and for any reflections from members as we shape the remaining meetings of the Board cycle.

Date	Papers	Guest speaker(s)
<i>23 September 2022</i>	<i>Terms of reference Work programme Levelling Up Green jobs and retrofit EDI skills and employment Digital inclusion Growth funding</i>	<i>Cllr Mark Hawthorne</i>
<i>8 November 2022</i>	<i>Final terms of reference LGA Plan and reflections on new Government Britain's Leading Edge Green jobs, including new BEIS project Place pilots research Levelling Up Locally inquiry</i>	<i>Cllr Linda Taylor Sarah Longlands, CLES</i>
<i>10 January 2023</i>	<i>Levelling Up Locally next steps</i>	<i>Shared Intelligence</i>

	<p><i>Economic development and LEP projects</i> <i>Growth project scoping</i> <i>Work Local next steps, including project updates on EDI skills and inclusion and green jobs</i> <i>Digital inclusion project findings</i></p>	<p><i>Growth project suppliers</i></p> <p><i>DMS Consulting; Cllr Mark Hawthorne</i></p>
<p><i>14 March 2023</i></p>	<p><i>Second homes</i> <i>Levelling up rural areas</i> <i>Levelling up funding</i> <i>Green jobs update</i> <i>EDI skills and improvement findings</i></p>	<p><i>Localis</i></p> <p><i>Minette Batters, NFU President; Tim Goodship, Defra</i></p>
<p>17 March 2023</p>	<p>Joint lead member meeting (with City Regions) on skills needs of economic development teams</p>	<p>Shared Intelligence</p>
<p>Mid-April 2023 (date tbc)</p>	<p>Joint lead member meeting (with City Regions and Community Wellbeing) on economic inactivity</p>	<p>Centre for Economic and Business Research and Shared Intelligence</p>
<p>06 June 2023</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devolution and levelling up update, including growth funding • Second homes (if agreed) • Britain’s Leading Edge • Digital connectivity update • Employment and skills update, including green jobs • Board’s annual report 	<p>Cllr Linda Taylor</p> <p>Cllr Mark Hawthorne</p>

Document is Restricted

Document is Restricted

Document is Restricted

Document is Restricted

