

**Cross Party Group in the Scottish Parliament on Rural Policy**

**February 19<sup>th</sup> 2014**

**5.45 – 7.30pm, Scottish Parliament Committee Room 2**

**Planning and Rural Economic Development**

**Minutes (Approved)**

**Present**

Craig McLaren	Royal Town Planning Institute (Speaker)
Murray Ferguson	Cairngorms National Park Authority (Speaker)
Richard Heggie	Director Urban Animation and Partner Dhu Rural LLP (Speaker)
Claire Baker	MSP (Co-Convenor)
Alex Fergusson	MSP (Co-Convenor)
Jim Hume	MSP (Co-Convenor)
Andrew Wells	The Crown Estate
Artur Steiner	SRUC
Bill Pagan	Built Environment Forum Scotland
Bruce Wilson	Scottish Wildlife Trust
Bryan McGrath	Scottish Borders Council
Clare Slipper	NFUS
Cliff Hague	Built Environment Forum Scotland
David Cameron	Community Land Scotland
David Green	SAC Commercial Board Member
David Wood	Planning Aid Scotland
Davy McCracken	SRUC
Douglas Scott	Scottish Borders Council
Eleanor Mackintosh	Cairngorms National Park Authority
Ellie Brodie	SRUC
Euan Leitch	Built Environment Forum Scotland
Ian Aikman	Scottish Borders Council
Ian Macdonald	Chair of the Borders Foundation for Rural Sustainability
James Ogilvie	Forestry Commission
Jamie Dent	D&G Small Communities Housing Trust
Jane Atterton	SRUC
Jason Rose	Scottish Green Party

John Hutchison	Scottish Rural Action
Jonathan Wordsworth	Archaeology Scotland
Lorna Philip	Aberdeen University
Marion MacAllister	Cambusbarron Community Council
Mike Woolvin	SRUC
Neil Sutherland	MAKAR Ltd
Peter Ross	Dumfries and Galloway LEADER
Ross McLaren	Scottish Churches Rural Group
Sarah Skerratt	SRUC
Sian Ringrose	SRUC
Tom Edwards	SPICE
William Fergusson	Lantra

## **Apologies**

Graeme Dey	MSP (Co-Convenor)
Annabelle Ewing	MSP
Mike MacKenzie	MSP
Jackie Baillie	MSP
Richard Simpson	MSP
Alan Farquhar	SEPA
Alison Elliot	Chair of the Land Reform Review Group
Alistair Stott	SRUC
Andrew Brough	Buccleuch Estates
Andrew Midgley	Scottish Land and Estates
Andrew Prendergast	Plunkett Foundation Scotland
Andrew Stevenson	Scottish Government
Charles Dundas	Woodland Trust Scotland
Christina Noble	Here We Are Project
David Gass	Upper Quartile
David Watts	Aberdeen University
David Whiteford	North Highland Initiative
Emma Sutherland	SRUC
Fiona Mackenzie	UHI
Frank Beattie	Scottish Enterprise
Frank Strang	Scottish Government
Gemma Thomson	NFUS
Iain Bolland	Celtic Capital

Iain Mcfarlane	East Lothian Council
Jamie Carruthers	Dormont Estate
Jan Noble	Lamanca Community Association
John Watt	Scottish Land Fund
Jose Munoz-rojas	James Hutton Institute
Kimberly Thomson	Scottish Enterprise
Madhu Satsangi	University of Stirling
Maggie Gordon	D&G LEADER
Mark Aitken	SEPA
Martin Price	Centre for Mountain Studies University of Highlands & Islands
Norman MacAskill	Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations
Pat Neeson	
Petra Biberbach	Planning Aid Scotland
Pip Tabor	Southern Uplands Partnership
Richard Jennings	East Lothian Council
Sarah-Anne Munoz	Centre for Rural Health, UHI
Sarah Bowyer	Centre for Rural Health, UHI
Stephen Graham	Highland Council
Stephen Pathirana	Scottish Government
Tony Huggins-Haig	Arthouse Galleries
Tony Fitzpatrick	Crichton Institute

## 1. Welcome, introductions and apologies

Sarah Skerratt (SRUC) welcomed everyone to the meeting. She noted that the Group's MSP co-convenors had agreed that she would chair the meeting in their absence. The MSPs would arrive late for the meeting due to ongoing Parliamentary business in the chamber.

Jane Atterton (JA) began the meeting by highlighting a few administrative issues:

- Attendees were advised that an audio recording was being made of the meeting and that photographs would be taken. No one objected to these.
- A sign-in sheet was being passed around the room for everyone to sign so that we have an accurate record of who attended.
- All Group members were asked to inform SRUC in a timely manner if they wish to attend a meeting or send their apologies. SRUC needs to have accurate information on

who is attending in advance of each meeting in order to make arrangements for security access and for catering.

- Apologies received would be noted in the meeting minute which will be circulated soon after the meeting.

## **2. Approval of the minutes from the last meeting (10<sup>th</sup> December 2013, Rural Poverty and Disadvantage)**

JA noted that the unapproved minutes of the last meeting were circulated on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2014 with amendments requested by 31<sup>st</sup> January. No amendments were received so the minutes were accepted as an accurate recording of the December meeting. The approved December meeting minutes will be posted on the CPG website asap.

## **3. Update on use of VC equipment for meetings**

JA reported that, following Alex Fergusson's letter to the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee, the Committee had written to the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body (SPCB) seeking its views on our request to use VC equipment. The Committee has indicated that it is sympathetic to our request, and favours a pilot use of VC equipment for one year, but it is still awaiting a view to be expressed by the SPCB.

**Action: SRUC to liaise with Alex Fergusson MSP to contact the Committee again regarding our request.**

## **4. 10 minute presentations (followed by discussion)**

The key issues raised by the three speakers are:

- **Craig McLaren Director of Scotland and Ireland, Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI): *Rural Economic Development: The Planning System***
  - Recent surveys have indicated that planners entered the profession to bring about positive change and 'make things happen', the planning system has developed a reputation for being 'bureaucratic, reactive, meddling and cumbersome'.
  - Planning is 'more than just a process' – it should be about creating places for people, enhancing places and enabling development in appropriate places; it should be about creating a vision, the delivery of which will be in the hands of many different actors, including the private and public sectors, community groups, etc.

- Local communities must be engaged in developing and delivering the vision; their engagement with the planning system should be far more than just when submitting a planning application; as far as possible, the planning system should provide certainty and predictability for communities.
  - National Planning Framework 3 (NPF3) represents ‘a step forward’ in terms of rural development, but it must be more strongly integrated with the national marine plan. There is also a need for infrastructure (both ‘hard’ and ‘soft’) and development to be more closely linked in the NPF and elsewhere.
  - There is a need to ensure that people recognise the different roles that planning can play to achieve a shared vision, but the system needs to be adequately resourced to make this happen.
- **Murray Ferguson, Head of Planning and Economic Development, Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA): *What difference does a National Park make? A Cairngorms Perspective***
    - Scotland’s National Parks have been established for just over 10 years so it is timely to consider their role.
    - The Cairngorms National Park covers a substantial land area, including parts of five local authorities (there are 34 planning authorities in Scotland, including the 32 local authorities and the two national parks). About 50% of the land area of CNP is designated under the Natura system indicating the exceptional quality of the natural environment.
    - The CNPA takes an holistic place-based approach to planning, with the Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan integrating fully with local community planning.
    - CNPA have built on the brand and reputation of the Park to run Awards which help to raise aspirations for the quality of design within the landscape and provide an opportunity for positive discussion around planning.
    - The National Park provides a ‘focus for collaboration’ for all stakeholders, including the private sector; having the Park helps to form networks (such as the Association of Cairngorms Communities) and to provide a ‘framework to manage debates’ (for example, regarding wind farm developments).
    - The existence of the Park also helps top-down and bottom-up to meet – for example each Community Council and Association within the Park has been encouraged to develop its own Vision and these inform and are informed by Local Development Plans and the Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan.
    - The area around Tomintoul and Glenlivet provides a ‘good practice’ example of the planning process working well – a master-planning process at community level which was useful in itself, and led on to the creation of a development trust, a new mountain biking centre and hostel accommodation (in community ownership), and plans for community broadband rollout.
    - A consultation will commence shortly, led by the Cairngorms Business Partnership, on a proposed Economic Development and Diversification Strategy

for the Park. The Research associated with this work has shown that the area's population has been growing (by 250 per year) as has the number of jobs (by 4.5% per year), and unemployment has fallen. While young people are still leaving in their late teens/early 20s, they are then returning earlier and staying locally for longer than in comparable rural areas. Challenges remain, however, for example in terms of sustaining this growth and ensuring that affordable housing provision is adequate.

- The CNPA is planning for the development of an ambitious new community (An Camus Mor) near Aviemore over a 25 – 30 year period, the scale of which has not been seen in any other National Park. This is one of the Scottish Government's Sustainable Community Initiative projects.

- **Richard Heggie, Director, Urban Animation and Partner, Dhu Rural: *Does Planning Hear the Rural Voice?***

- Rural areas need people in order to thrive; there is broad agreement about a vision for rural Scotland that provides housing, jobs, educational access, encourages in-migrants and tourists, generates responses to rural poverty and other challenges, all whilst maintaining a high quality landscape and environment.
- For this, a positive attitude to rural development is required, but sometimes the planning system is perceived as a barrier preventing development from happening. Planning has come to be seen as providing a strict, defensive regulatory function, with rural areas seen as no-go areas and development driven towards larger settlements. Instead, the planning system should provide a central, positive coordinating and integrating function which sets out what can be done as well as what cannot.
- There is general agreement that NPF3 does provide a more positive stance with respect to rural development (with more appropriate language and support regarding the potential to support rural development, for example), but, while 'top-level' policies are apparently 'heading in the right direction', concerns remain about how the planning system operates at ground level, including through the local development planning system.
- Work currently ongoing in East Lothian provides a 'good practice' example where the private sector is working with East Lothian Council to discuss how to ensure that positive and appropriate development occurs outwith East Lothian's existing urban centres. Learning from the East Lothian project suggests that people do not fear change or development where it is of appropriate pace, scale, design, etc, and that, where the planning process is engaging with local people, it tends to be more successful.
- There is lots more work that can be done to ensure that planning policy nationally (through the NPF) and locally (e.g. through Local Development Plans) takes a much more integrated approach incorporating economic development, community planning, Single Outcome Agreements, tourism, demographic

change, housing, social challenges, opportunities for young people, education provision etc. It is critical that positive change with respect to enabling rural development in the national planning system is paralleled by positive changes locally.

#### **5. Update on the Scottish Rural Parliament from John Hutchison, Chair Scottish Rural Action (Scottish Rural Parliament Management Group)**

John Hutchison provided an update for participants on progress towards the first Scottish Rural Parliament in Oban in November 2014. Key issues raised include:

- The Rural Parliament represents participative rather than elective democracy. The Scottish Rural Parliament Management Group representatives and Chair were nominated and it is their job to take forward the process moving towards the first meeting in November, at which stage the Rural Parliament will develop its own governance arrangements.
- The event will help give shape to Scotland's rural movement and will take place every two years. An 'ideas paper' will be written and a rural manifesto given to Ministers at each event. Recommendations for further work will be provided to be taken to the next Rural Parliament.
- The event will also be a celebration of rural and of good practice projects, initiatives etc.
- Rural has deliberately not been defined to encourage people 'who feel they are rural' be able to opt into the process.
- Attendance at the first Parliament in November is expected to be 75% rural communities and 25% local and national Government representatives, national bodies and NGOs.
- The Rural Parliament is currently working on its engagement strategy (likely to involve some regional events and tapping into existing networks such as churches, national membership organisations, the WI etc) and on setting the agenda for the first Parliament meeting in November.
- The process of setting up the Rural Parliament will be evaluated and success factors will be developed. Key aims of the Rural Parliament include identifying and sharing better ways of doing things in rural areas and working on ways of overcoming the traditional sectoral approach to rural development.
- Ministers will be present at the event to hear the key messages. Scottish Government staff are also participating in the process as observers.
- It is recognised that the Rural Parliament will need to have an appropriate age and gender balance (the Swedish Rural Parliament has a joint male and female Chair for example).

More information about the Scottish Rural Parliament can be found here: [http://www.ruralgateway.org.uk/en/hot\\_topics/rural-parliament](http://www.ruralgateway.org.uk/en/hot_topics/rural-parliament).

#### **4. (Continued) Discussion following on from the three presentations**

Questions and discussion focused on the following key issues:

- The planning system should encourage creativity and should not simply be about ticking boxes. It should provide the 'knitting' to ensure that regional and/or national plans take account of all relevant issues and stakeholders (including education providers, utility companies, local communities etc). However, critical to this process is achieving a shared vision of what we are trying to achieve. This will help to provide clarity to all stakeholders, including communities and developers.
- Taking a regional approach will help to ensure that the differing roles played by different settlements are recognised; smaller settlements both within and outwith city regions have important, complementary roles to play, alongside larger urban centres. The approach developed by working through Scotland's National Parks is regional in scale and promotes new forms of collaboration, including working positively with cities outwith the Parks.
- It is critical that NPF3 is closely aligned with the Land Use Strategy and the Marine Plan – this integration needs to take place across policy frameworks, as well as between the different stakeholders. This will help to ensure that an integrated approach is taken to all land use decisions, including agriculture, forestry, housing, marine issues etc.
- More creative thought is required about the role that rural schools can play in enabling the sustainability of rural communities. A good practice example from Sweden was cited where town-based pupils are transported by buses to rural schools (rather than vice versa). Architecture and Design Scotland are currently doing lots of good work around schools.
- It was suggested that the planning system was devised in the 20<sup>th</sup> century primarily to deal with problems resulting from the expansion of London through protecting designated green belt land, when the rural economy was seen as agriculture and forestry, and before terms such as empowerment and governance were widely used. It would be interesting now to get all stakeholders together to discuss what a 21<sup>st</sup> century development system for rural Scotland would look like, and how/how far the planning system could help to achieve that. At the same time, it was recognised that a one size fits all planning policy will not work; tailored approaches may be required in different parts of Scotland (including at sub-regional level) and that is why it is important to get the balance right between national policy and locally developed Plans.

**Actions: SRUC to provide a minute of the meeting and a summary policy briefing asap. SRUC will liaise with Tom Edwards (SPICE) to ensure that the briefing can be passed to members of the RACCE committee to inform their thinking on NPF3 and rural development.**

**Actions: SRUC to consider the potential to host an event (perhaps in collaboration with the RTPi) to discuss how a '21<sup>st</sup> century planning system for rural Scotland' might look.**



## **6. AOB**

Davy McCracken (SRUC) informed participants that the SRUC-SEPA conference (in association with Forest Research, the James Hutton Institute and Scottish Natural Heritage ) will take place in Edinburgh on 15-16 April 2014 focusing on 'Delivering multiple benefits from our land: Sustainable development in practice'. More information on the conference is available <http://www.sruc.ac.uk/srucsepaconf>.

## **7. Date of next meeting**

The next meeting of the Cross Party Group in the Scottish Parliament on Rural Policy (and final meeting for the 2013-14 year) will take place on Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> May on Coastal Community Regeneration. Further information will follow in due course.