



'Shaping the Future of the Rural & Wider Economy'

Rural Policy Group
2020: Fresh Thinking

HEALTH

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2. Review of RPG Engagement 16th April 2020 to 4th July 2020
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PROFESSIONAL PARTNERS:





'Shaping the Future of the Rural & Wider Economy'

1. Rural Policy Group Rationale & Leadership

Purpose & Outcome

The Rural Policy Group (RPG) was originally created as an independent action 'Think Tank' acting as the advocate for rural policy and thought leadership. The initial focus has been the county of Kent with a widening remit to include the South East of England and the UK as a whole. Its aim is to provide a representative voice for Rural in the United Kingdom & Wider Internationally.

With the international pandemic, an opportunity to engage and support business was created through Rural Economic Development (RED) Talks. This was to be innovative and different.

The Rural Policy Group purpose is outlined as:

- I. To provide a focal point for the effective debate and promotion of rural business (& wider initiatives) and the socio-economic importance to the United Kingdom and its value proposition (To government and stakeholders).
- II. To deliver key projects that meet the objective of supporting rural business (& wider sectors) need and matching their short- and medium-term requirements
- III. To leverage the highest level of investment and return in the rural sector utilising all available tax efficient processes and grant opportunities.
- IV. To publish the Rural Policy Group outcomes on an annual basis supported by a rural conference & AGM.

The group is defined as an action 'Think Tank' rather than yet another pointless talking shop or meeting with no discernible outcomes. This collectively wastes valuable commercial time and provides blockage rather than engagement. Its role is to meet its purpose and add value to the rural sector. Rural Issues for this purpose are defined from the perspective of Food & Farming, however not limited to baseline issues for Farmers. Preventative Health, Skills & Technology all feature within the scope of the RPG. Public Relations & Press are agreed by the group at the appropriate times.

The group is also 'safe environment' for discourse, debate and action for all participants who engage. The first major project has been the creation and engagement of the Rural Economic Engagement (RED) talks.



'Shaping the Future of the Rural & Wider Economy'

1. Rural Policy Group Rationale & Leadership

Council

The Group is overseen by a voluntary Advisory Council representing the highest level of expertise in their relevant sectors. The group is not led by a single individual, rather a collective of people that share their knowledge, leadership and expertise at the highest level

The Council has been created following the successful work conducted by a number of groups of individuals on the business potential of rural companies, their value (both financially and economically), through to skills and career development. A series of papers on rural policy have also been published with a substantial amount of work ongoing responding to these unprecedented times. This group is an independent action 'Think Tank' acting as the advocate for rural policy and the needs of rural businesses. The focus is in the county of Kent with a widening remit to include the South East of England. Its aim would be to eventually provide a representative voice for Rural in the United Kingdom.

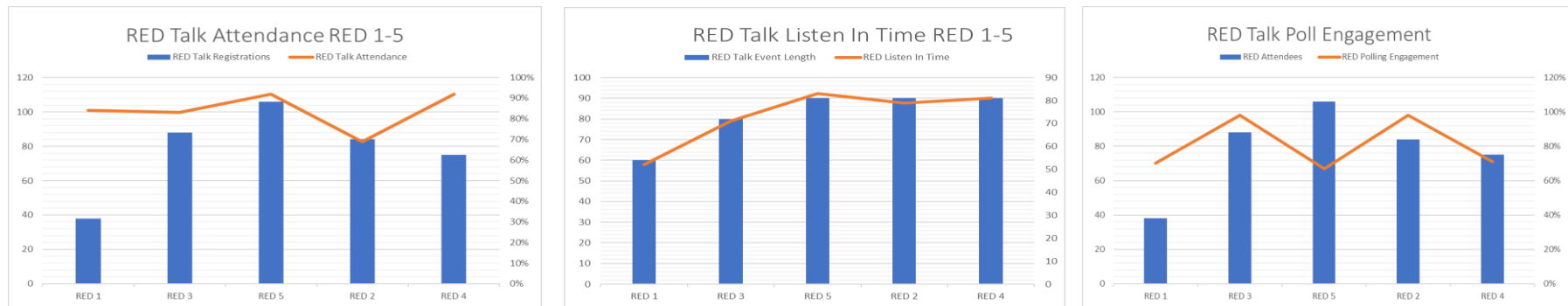
The group is reaffirmed as an action 'Think Tank' rather than a series of meetings with no discernible outcomes. Its role is to meet its purpose and add value to the rural sector as well as now wider areas such as Healthcare and digital. Rural Issues are defined from the perspective of Food & Farming, however not limited to baseline issues for Farmers. Preventative Health, Skills & Technology all feature within the scope of the RPG.

Public Relations & Press are agreed by the group at the appropriate times. The leadership of RPG in term of council will be shared as part of the communications strategy of the group. With what has happened in the recent pandemic situation, bringing together voices for business in a logical and professional way is more important than ever.

The Council is wholly passionate about the rural agenda, and the wider economic and social priorities. By creating original thought, debate and meaningful recommendations that can be used by agencies and business, the group is making a difference. This first original thought document reflects the review of the 3 month activity during the pandemic. There will be further engagements and announcements from council In due course.

2. Review of RPG Engagement 16th April 2020 to 4th July 2020

The Rural Policy Group (RPG), within 3 months has reached many thousands of business across the range of sectors that were covered within the first 5 events. Its statistics are shown:



The events have reached over 450 businesses across the rural, healthcare and digital sectors. The engagement level of the business across all of the talks has been high, reflecting the content and quality of both the speakers and the debate. In particular the diverse nature of the polling and interaction reflects how attendees wish to 'be seen' during such events.

RED 1,3,5: Rural
RED 2 & 4: Healthcare

In future reviews, further detail of the talk statistics will be presented.

2. Review of RPG Engagement 16th April 2020 to 4th July 2020

Geographically, the engagement and reach of the events can be shown as:






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2. Review of RPG Engagement 16th April 2020 to 4th July 2020

Our speakers & Spotlights:

Rural Policy Professional Partners:  **mha**
MACINTYRE HUDSON

 **bakertilly**
INTERNATIONAL

Whitehead
Monckton
the Kent law firm



'Shaping the Future of the Rural & Wider Economy'



Phil Acock
Managing Director
Fourayes



Nigel Baker
Chief Executive Officer
Pet Industry Federation



Sarah Calcutt
Founding Partner
Partners in Produce



Duncan Cochrane-Dyett
National Lead of Healthcare, Partner
MHA MacIntyre Hudson



Dr Philip Hopley MRCPsych
Consultant Psychiatrist & Managing Director
Cognacity London



Christopher Longden
Head of Dispute Resolution
Whitehead Monckton



Mark Lumsdon-Taylor
Corporate Financier
Rural Policy Group



Justin Moss
Partner
MHA MacIntyre Hudson



Alison Conley
Head of Retail & Consumer Tax, Partner
MHA MacIntyre Hudson



Sarah Dodds
Head of Agriculture, Partner
MHA MacIntyre Hudson



Jonathan Geldart
Director General
The Institute of Directors



Bethan Gylls
Editor
New Food



Neil Parish MP
Member of Parliament for Tiverton and
Honiton



Sara Pearson
Founder and CEO
Spider



Peter Roy
Business Development Director
Natures Menu



Jonathan Shaw
Chief Executive
Policy Connect



Robert James
Technical Director & Board Member of AHDB,
Thanet Earth



Jeremy Kerswell
Principal
Plumpton College



Sir Norman Lamb
Founder of the Sir Norman Lamb
Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund



James Lawson
Partner
MHA MacIntyre Hudson



Rosemary Shrager
Chef, Author and TV Personality



Jack Tindale
Policy Manager, Design & Innovation
Policy Connect



Teresa Wickham
Non-Executive Director
Covent Garden Market Authority



David Zeichner MP
Shadow Minister for Environment, Food
and Rural Affairs

2. Fresh Thinking' - Health

The Rural Policy Group has been supported by a range of partners and stakeholders throughout the period under assessment, including:



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These businesses and corporate entities have engaged at lead speaking level as well as question time panellists. **WE NEED TO SPLIT THIS BETWEEN RURAL AND HEALTH - MS**

3. 'Fresh Thinking' - Health

The Health Work [Red 2 & 4]

Frame of Reference

RPG delivered 3 rural focused digital RED Talks. The principles for business that were launched at this event were defined through **"The Role of Effective Commercial Support (ECS)"** which requires business or Individual to think *'Outside of the box'*. In terms of principles:

1. Understanding your communications
2. Use and assess Information wisely
3. Resolve financial crisis and risk
4. Get the business scenarios planned
5. The basics – cash is king

These principles formed the base reference for each of the events held for Rural Business. They apply to business in any sector, and if correctly administered can transform an organisation – as tested by partners on numerous occasions. As shown in the statistics, the level of corporate business interest for the right discussion and the right debate is high. The frame of reference considered the role of 'Cash' (particularly at the start of lock down), the Future of Food (considering the pandemic & consumer purchasing) & finally the role of technology and farming. The frame always returned to Cash, Positioning in the political landscape & People.

Insights:

- Technological innovation is one of the biggest levers the food and farming industry can pull to become more competitive in the fight to fend off imports.
- Industry and education must work together to deliver technologies, a relevantly skilled workforce and an appetite for change.
- Consumer education and public awareness of food production, food standards and cooking are essential to building demand for British grown and British made products.
- There cannot be a technological revolution in agriculture without government funding to support it. There are simply not enough private grants and investors to do the job.
- Growers are concerned that if the current, minimal, level of returns continue development and investment will stall, hence the need for central support to ensure continued development, improved efficiencies and greater self sufficiency
- Issues of food insecurity highlighted by COVID-19 are helping government to give greater priority to the UK food and farming industry, food standards and food security for all.
- Food and farming businesses are sceptical about whether the Agriculture Trade Commission will deliver on support for food standards and British farming.
- Calls for self-sufficiency continue. 8 out of 10 businesses felt that the national diet should become more home grown-centric in support of our national food security.
- 60% of those in the industries think food businesses & farmers need a unified and coordinated lobby to engage with government and press the need for financial support for agritech and the associated reskilling. Neil Parish also urged the industry to lobby harder on a range of issues.

3. 'Fresh Thinking' - Health

The Health Work [Red 2 & 4]

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These principles formed the base reference for each of the events held for Rural Business. They apply to business in any sector, and if correctly administered can transform an organisation – as tested by partners on numerous occasions. As shown in the statistics, the level of corporate business interest for the right discussion and the right debate is high. The frame of reference in this sector of talks considered the value of 'Pharma & Healthcare' (particularly at the start of lock down), the impact of mental health on business (considering the pandemic & consumer purchasing) & finally the role of salutogenesis in the workplace. The frame always appeared to return to Finance & Value, People & their Mental stability (including diet) & Preventative Health for Business. There is clear cross over between the rural program and the Healthcare program with mental health, people & of course financial value.

As outlined in the events, mental ill health has a significant impact on society and the economy; its cost has been calculated to be over £100 billion per year. The loss of economic productivity from absenteeism due to mental ill health and presenteeism when employees are not particularly effective is a major contributor to that figure. This impacts business significantly and is often the undetected financial deficit creator. It was commented on the talks that Mental ill health and muscular-skeletal problems account for 80% of total sickness absence. Clearly, mental ill health is a significant challenge for business – hence the third frame of reference.

Business is focused upon profitability and its stakeholders, therefore It is enlightened self-interest that directs business to engage with such problems rather than allowing (mental) ill health to worsen within the workplace. The recommendations from these events will outline aspects of that.

3. 'Fresh Thinking' - Health

The Health Work [Red 2 & 4]

Insights:

- Mental ill health costs the economy over £100 billion per year and poses a significant financial challenge to business.
- Interventions to improve corporate culture do not need to cost the Earth but they do need to have buy-in from the leadership.
- Business leaders recognise the scale of the work-related mental health problem and are overwhelmingly in support of change. The status quo is no longer acceptable.
- The Salutogenic Model is concerned with the relationship between our health, stress and coping. Ultimately, coronavirus is helping us see an opportunity for a paradigm change. Most people think of healthcare as a reaction to a health problem. We need to reframe healthcare and understand that healthcare happens at home and in the workplace.
- Initiatives such as the 'Wellbeing Premium' that has been trialled in the West Midlands are concepts of worth. A discount is applied to rates or taxes to help businesses apply evidence-based methods of improving mental health in the workplace. It is a win-win solution and could be considered a pathfinder.
- Nine out of 10 business leaders are ready to invest in prevention and mental healthcare, including making changes to their corporate culture.
- We need a healthcare system which creates good health. The current model of waiting until disease manifests itself is not sustainable; chronic disease combined with an aging population will bankrupt healthcare systems in their current form.

- Access to healthcare is changing; people are more comfortable receiving healthcare online. Digitisation within the industry can help improve efficiency and extend the reach of healthcare provisions and speed up diagnosis and treatment.
- Social care has long been undervalued within society and underrepresented at government level. Coronavirus is helping us understand the importance of high-quality social care, and job losses in other parts of the economy will help plug the skills gaps.
- A national healthcare strategy which integrates farming, environmental health, food and nutrition is needed. A sustainable pro-active healthcare system is inextricably linked to our methods of food production. As we leave the EU and find new trading partners, we need to trade with those countries whose food standards mirror our own.
- The legislation is in place to plan for future health disasters although emergency planning also needs to encompass a better understanding of immune competence, the role of climate change in the spread of disease and a review of regional governance structures to ensure policy is delivered quickly and effectively across the country.
- Pet ownership is good for our mental and physiological health helping to reduce the burden on the NHS. Pensioners with pets make 21% less visits to their doctor than their peers without pets.
- Working from home may increase feelings of isolation and loneliness. It is important that employers address the issue of staff morale to maintain productivity.
- Coronavirus has sped up the rate of progress within the healthcare industry, provided an opportunity to review how healthcare is delivered and highlighted that the current system of disease management is not optimal or sustainable. A population more engaged with their health will help carry this revolution in healthcare forward.

3. 'Fresh Thinking' - Health

The Health Work [Red 2 & 4]

Point of Difference

The point of difference here is the evaluation and reality recommendations that arise from these debates. For example, the debate around the value of preventative health in the workplace has a background discussion for many years, and remains a 'lets discuss it when we have sorted out the cash & the profitability', In many ways the perfect contradiction. Business solutions are quite simple: A clear investment by a selection of pathfinding business into the 'prevention health' workplace model that impacts their bottom line (1), the subsequent transparency of such a program to government In rolling out subsidy to support such action (2) and finally, continued professional services support to business in the pharmaceutical and healthcare industries that adds value and bottom line returns (3).

Prevention Health Model (Salutogenesis)

Assessment Recommendation	SMART Action
Engage a group of proactive Businesses to Trial the Prevention health agenda with clear SMART financial and operational targets to quantify return	1. To gauge interest from business corporate, SME & Micro growers to trial the health prevention agenda within their businesses under a structured plan, supported where possible with financial grant incentives from government. (SMART 'outcome driven' framework.)
To create a cohesive communications platform that considers the alternatives to standard 'staff wellbeing and support', to the wider industry audience (including Rural)	2. To develop a 'new' digital dynamic focal point providing Business Support, (Self Help where appropriate) to access alternative support and exploit linked opportunities for SME/Microbusiness. A SMART accessible digital footprint, using existing resources where possible.

3. 'Fresh Thinking' - Health

The Health Work [Red 2 & 4]

Communications & Government Action

Assessment Recommendation	SMART Action
A Costed and 'tested' recommendation proposal to influential stakeholders on the value of a 'financial subsidy' to business to implement 'prevention health' in business.	3. Coming from the SMART Action 1. , A business driven proposal into government to recommend a subsidy that 'pays for itself' in reduction in costs to business, therefore improving financial receipts to treasury in the long run.
A no nonsense. B2B Document surrounding greater regulation and disease control, including a thought piece on the whether we have the people in medical roles and also self-care strategies such as nutrition and exercise in place.	4. Secure independent funding, with partners to implement a 'thought leadership' project for collateral as part of the submission under SMART Action 3.

Positive Professional Services & Understanding

Assessment Recommendation	SMART Action
Utilise the contact networks of engaged participants for a networking event (screened virtually) to discuss business professional requirements from advisory and partners.	5. Building within the REDXtra Debate specifically around the business requirement for companies to engage with specialists that can help transform their business under the 'financial health' context or other. SMART action driven – with the financial backing to achieve it.
A proactive quantifiable piece regarding the impact advisory has upon the sector in terms of performance improvement and outputs.	6. To be SMART Action on the completion of Actions 1-5.

4. Do it

Assessment Recommendation	SMART Action
Engage a group of proactive Businesses to Trial the Prevention health agenda with clear SMART financial and operational targets to quantify return	1. To gauge interest from business corporate, SME & Micro growers to trial the health prevention agenda within their businesses under a structured plan, supported where possible with financial grant incentives from government. (SMART 'outcome driven' framework.)
To create a cohesive communications platform that considers the alternatives to standard 'staff wellbeing and support', to the wider industry audience (including Rural)	2. To develop a 'new' digital dynamic focal point providing Business Support, (Self Help where appropriate) to access alternative support and exploit linked opportunities for SME/Microbusiness. A SMART accessible digital footprint, using existing resources where possible.
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Utilise the contact networks of engaged participants for a networking event (screened virtually) to discuss business professional requirements from advisory and partners.	5. Building within the REDXtra Debate specifically around the business requirement for companies to engage with specialists that can help transform their business under the 'financial health' context or other. SMART action driven – with the financial backing to achieve it.
A proactive quantifiable piece regarding the impact advisory has upon the sector in terms of performance improvement and outputs.	6. To be SMART Action on the completion of Actions 1-5.

The actions below will be coordinated by the Rural Policy Group Council and implemented with a timeframe to be published with partner agreement. All of the work and associated policy can be published through RPG professional partners and associated agreements with stakeholders.

5. Information



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Takeaway Quotes (Health)

RED 4 TALKS

Sir Norman Lamb

"The truth is that it is in their self-interest for companies to focus on the health and wellbeing of their workforce. If we improve workplace practices, we can have a positive impact on employees' well-being, but we can also reduce sickness absence and reduce the problem of presenteeism thereby increasing productivity. It's a win-win for everyone. So, my message is act now. Don't delay."

Mark Lumsdon-Taylor

"There are two things that matter in business. Money and people. Leaders must realise that mental health has real implications for individuals and their performance at work. It is down to those at the top of their organisation to address mental wellness in their people positively and proactively. It is time we broke down the stigma and changed corporate culture. Mental illness is not a weakness and it is not an indicator of ability".

Duncan Cochrane-Dyet

"Mental Health awareness and concern should not be another corporate initiative; it should be part of the culture of the organisation. "Know your colleague" is as important to success as "know your customer".

Dr Rob Verkerk

"Sitting down for eight to 10 hours a day is the new smoking. We need to build more physical activity into offices".

Dr Phil Hopley

"Let's not waste this opportunity. We are spending more time with family and less time community. Let's use this time to adapt so we prioritise mental wellbeing".

Christopher Longdon

"Seize this opportunity to re-think how you run your business to create the right culture".

Rural Policy Professional Partners:



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