

TAYSIDE AND CENTRAL SCOTLAND TRANSPORT PARTNERSHIP**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE****4 JULY 2018****NATIONAL COUNCIL OF RURAL ADVISERS 'A RURAL CONVERSATION:
TOGETHER WE CAN, TOGETHER WE WILL' CONSULTATION RESPONSE****REPORT BY SENIOR STRATEGY OFFICER**

This report seeks the Executive Committee approval of a proposed response to the National Council of Rural Advisers consultation 'A Rural Conversation: Together We Can, Together We Will' on the future of the rural economy in Scotland

1 RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 That the Executive Committee considers and approves the proposed response to the National Council of Rural Advisers consultation 'A Rural Conversation: Together We Can, Together We Will' on the future of the rural economy in Scotland, as shown in Appendix A.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The National Council of Rural Advisers (NCRA) published a consultation document ['A Rural Conversation: Together We Can, Together We Will'](#) on the future of the rural economy in Scotland on 12 June 2018, asking for responses to be submitted by 24 July 2018.
- 2.2 At its meeting of 26 June 2018, the Partnership delegated authority to the Executive Committee to consider and approve a response to the NCRA consultation (report RTP/18/25 refers).

3 DISCUSSION

- 3.1 The National Council of Rural Advisers (NCRA) is an independent body, established and tasked by the Scottish Government to provide advice and recommendations on rural policy to Scottish Government.
- 3.2 The NCRA has a vision for a vibrant, sustainable and inclusive rural economy, which offers potential for growth and the creation of new opportunities. The NCRA is consulting in order to explore the opportunities Scotland's rural economy presents and to submit potential recommendations on this to the Scottish Government.
- 3.3 A document titled 'A Rural Conversation: Together We Can, Together We Will' has been issued for consultation. The consultation focuses on three key areas – vision, people and infrastructure – and comprises ten questions on various issues, including how best to create valuable employment

opportunities; how to effectively represent the contribution and value of rural Scotland; what skills are needed to encourage entrepreneurship; and how to ensure that infrastructure is fit for purpose.

3.4 The key themes contained in the proposed response include:

- Against the backdrop of declining rural public transport, and the reduction of local services, approximately 17% of rural households do not have access to a car (Scottish Household Survey). For any rural economic (and social) objectives to be maximised, it is important that everyone is able to access jobs, services and opportunities.
- Rural economic policies should consider whether:
 - all in society can access the jobs, services or opportunities being created (i.e. is the location accessible or is it able to be made more accessible by the introduction of transport services?)
 - the policy reduces peoples' ability to access jobs, services and opportunities (i.e. removes jobs, services or opportunities or relocates them to less accessible locations)
 - the policy increases the demand for transport for which mitigation measures may be required (e.g. the policy increases traffic on rural roads which are not designed for such volumes, and may create road safety issues)

3.5 The Executive Committee is asked to consider and approve the proposed response as shown in Appendix A.

4 CONSULTATIONS

4.1 The relevant officers from constituent Councils have been consulted in preparation of this report.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1 This report has no direct resource implications.

6 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

6.1 This report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Equality Impact Assessment and no material issues have been identified.

Jonathan Padmore
Senior Strategy Officer

Report prepared by Jonathan Padmore. For further information e-mail jonathanpadmore@tactran.gov.uk or tel. 01738 475774

NOTE

The following background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (and not containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above Report:

Report to Partnership RTP/18/25, General Consultations, 26 June 2018

'A Rural Conversation: Together We Can, Together We Will', National Council of Rural Advisers, June 2018

A Rural Conversation: Together We Can, Together We Will

The Future of the Rural Economy in Scotland

Consultation questions

CONTEXT

The Tactran area (Tayside and Central Scotland) is geographically diverse with 62% of the population living in areas defined as Large or Other Urban and 26% of the population living in areas defined as Accessible or Remote Rural. This includes such diversity as 99.5% of the Dundee population living within Large Urban areas and 46% of the Perth & Kinross population living in Accessible or Remote Rural areas.

The rural economy is a key component supporting the prosperity of the area and as outlined in the recent 'Understanding the Scottish Economy' report by Rural & Environment Science & Analytical Services (RESAS) on behalf of the Scottish Government¹, there are leading sectors such as Agriculture, Fish & Forestry in Angus and Finance and Distribution in Perth & Kinross.

VISION

1. The development of relevant Scottish Government mainstream policies should consider the effect upon the Rural Economic Strategy and its consequent policies

How should policy makers in Government make sure that the economic needs of rural Scotland are taken into account?

There is a need to engage with key stakeholders, businesses and community organisations in rural areas to understand the needs of businesses and communities. In addition, Scottish Government needs to align across all their agencies to ensure good collaboration and consistent actions that will assist in meeting the objectives of the Rural Economic Strategy.

As outlined in the RESAS report the strongest economic growth has been recorded in Mainly Rural Scotland over the recent period. Therefore, policy makers need to acknowledge the contribution of the rural economy to national prosperity and to the national economic development strategy.

Where agencies are not regularly engaged in the rural economy, as a mitigation measure, a rural proofing process, taking into account economic needs, based on the objectives of the Rural Economic Strategy and perhaps taking account of other rural issues, could help ensure that the economic needs of rural Scotland are taken into account by policy makers. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural

¹ Understanding the Scottish Rural Economy, Rural & Environment Science & Analytical Services, Scottish Government, February 2018

Affairs [‘Rural Proofing: Practical guidance to assess impacts of policies on rural areas’](#) provides an example of this type of process.

In terms of transport there is currently an ongoing review of the National Transport Strategy (NTS) and the Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR) and it is expected that this will seek views from a range of organisations, stakeholders and the public. This provides the opportunity to ensure the rural economy and its requirements are properly considered and integrated into the NTS and STPR.

With respect to transport and accessibility, and their relationship with the rural economy, policy making should take into account whether:

- all in rural society can access the jobs, services or opportunities being created. In particular, can all in rural communities, regardless of age, sex, physical ability or any protected characteristic (as defined in the Equalities Act), access any new facility?
- the policy reduces peoples’ ability to access jobs, services and opportunities (i.e. removes jobs, services or opportunities or relocates them to less accessible locations)
- the policy increases the demand for transport for which mitigation measures may be required.

Whilst car ownership in rural areas is higher than in urban areas, it is not universal. Figures from the Scottish Household Survey indicate that approximately 17% of rural households do not have access to a car or van. Therefore, significant numbers of people in rural areas, in particular the young and the most vulnerable, may not have access to a car and may struggle to access jobs, services and opportunities. The continued decline in traditional rural public transport services compounds this problem. As these trends continue, then alternatives to fixed route local bus services need to be identified and supported.

Should there be an ability to call to account Scottish Government and their Agencies to ensure collaboration and actions to meet the objectives of the Rural Economic Strategy?

Yes, there needs to be a procedure set in place to ensure policies and initiatives across Government and their Agencies are aimed at meeting the objectives of the Rural Economic Strategy. This will be critically important as agencies seek to adapt their response to change in a post-Brexit scenario.

2. Create quality job opportunities (that are well paid, flexible, and purposeful) to promote skills and opportunities, but also deal with inequalities in the rural labour market (such as the gender pay gap)

What employment opportunities do we need to meet the current and future needs of our changing rural economy? Where should these be? (either by location and/or sector)

The jobs of the future will be located in rural as well as urban areas. The importance of innovation in supporting economic growth is equally important in the rural setting.

There is a growing application of digital technologies to the rural setting whether through the use of satellite navigation for crop management and harvesting, the use of drones for asset survey and management and new packaging techniques that enhance the life of products. Access to the skills development required for these job opportunities will be critical to the future success of the rural economy.

The location of employment opportunities should take into account:

- the ability of everyone in society to access them, and/or the ability to provide transport to ensure access by all. Within rural areas, in addition to access by motor vehicles, this principally means considering whether the location is or can be served by some form of public or community or demand responsive transport service. Access by pedestrians and cyclists should also be considered, although this is likely to be subject to the distance of the employment opportunity from any nearby settlements
- whether the employment opportunity places demands on the existing transport network(s) which can reasonably be mitigated against. For example would the employment opportunity generate a volume of traffic which could cause road safety issues.

How do we tackle the inequalities we face in rural Scotland? i.e. challenges faced due to age, gender, socio-economic, educational and ethnic background.

As outlined in the consultation document the percentage of older people living in rural areas is between 23% and 25% of the population, in comparison to 20% in urban areas. The higher level of older people living in rural areas should be considered and mechanisms put in place to ensure adequate public and/or community transport services are provided to mitigate the issues associated with lack of access to services.

Similarly, adequate transport solutions need to be found for young people who may struggle to afford a car and are either to access further education or retail, catering, hospitality and agricultural employment .

Part-time employment is also common in rural areas and can cause difficulties in providing traditional public transport solutions. More effective demand responsive, community transport and innovative technology solutions, such as car clubs, lift sharing, Mobility as a Service should be explored building on rural social networks to improve accessibility to employment. These solutions also require better digital connectivity in rural areas to maximise their use and benefit.

As highlighted above, access to educational and skills development opportunities either through the promotion of distance learning by colleges and universities or concessionary travel schemes for young people in education and training will be needed to overcome rural isolation and disadvantage.

Ongoing reductions to the supported local bus network could have a disproportionate impact on the accessibility to employment and training opportunities to certain groups of people. For example, currently, the national concessionary travel scheme

for people who are over 60 or disabled is not valid for use on most community transport services which disproportionately affects people living in rural areas. Tactran, as part of its Buses and Community Transport strategy, advocates Scottish Government to include non-registered Community Transport services in the free bus travel scheme.

3. Build on existing work to gather evidence and data to measure the true value of the rural economy and monitor its growth

Going beyond the economic contribution of rural businesses, what positive examples of social (i.e. community cohesion), cultural (i.e. protection of heritage and traditions) and environmental (i.e. carbon reducing) impacts of rural businesses can you think of?

Infrastructure to support walking and/or cycling tourism would also assist local communities lead more active lifestyles, and/or improve access to local services in nearby communities.

What specific outcomes of rural businesses should be measured and why?

As the majority of rural businesses are small businesses and many people in rural areas have 'portfolio careers' a method of aggregating the economic impact of businesses in a place and/or by sector would be helpful in addressing business support, training and distribution needs.

PEOPLE

4. Encourage future entrepreneurship by ensuring the Scottish Government's rural skills action plan meets the needs of the Rural Economic Strategy

What skills are required to have a vibrant rural economy?

As highlighted above the jobs of the future will be located in rural as well as urban areas and the development of digital literacy in particular will be important in driving innovation and economic growth in rural areas.

How do we best ensure that people of all ages, genders, areas, socioeconomic, educational and ethnic backgrounds receive appropriate support?

As outlined in response given to Q2, the ability of people, particularly those without access to a car, to access training and support can be limited. Accordingly the provision of support and training needs to take into account their ability to be accessed, particularly by those who are likely to need it the most.

5. Develop opportunities for the businesses of urban and rural Scotland to share ideas and work together

How do you think we could do this? (for example through schools or membership organisation groups)

The LGA (Local Government Association) has previously undertaken work on an Urban/Rural Compact, the most striking success from this has been the regular appearance of Farmers Markets in towns and cities across Scotland. COSLA along with SCDI and the Scottish Chambers of Commerce take this work forward in the context of resilience for rural produce and urban services and how these could be mutually supportive in a post-Brexit scenario.

Facilitating learning/sharing between urban and rural areas to improve and have a better understanding of the opportunities that are available would be new for Scotland. What would interest you in this approach? Are there any benefits/drawbacks?

From a transport perspective the areas of interest would be travel demand, whether commuting into urban areas or for tourist routes into rural areas, the freight logistics between urban/rural areas and how to make access to our gateway ports more resilient to support trade and how the opportunities for investment in programmes such as the City Deals could facilitate connectivity, for example through active travel.

6. Create communities of interest (digital, physical) where businesses and people can come together to solve problems, share ideas and understand opportunities

Is there any place that you can think of in your community where people already do this? Can you please tell us about it?

Many rural communities have developed their own solutions to accessibility issues such as community transport schemes and shared mobility/car clubs. Events sharing such examples of best practice in addressing rural transport issues outside the major cities are rare. There may be some opportunity to develop an on-line community of practice with occasional events. As outlined in response to Q2 building on existing local social groups to maximise ease of travel will also require better digital connectivity in rural areas to maximise their use and benefit.

What might be the benefits of this approach?

Community developed schemes are more likely to reflect local needs, have a greater degree of local ownership and therefore likely to be more sustainable. Where there are developed community transport schemes and other schemes, such as car clubs, these could be expanded and/or made more effective by providing better digital connectivity in rural areas, as outlined in response to Q2.

What things would your local community need to help people in your local area come together?

Local communities would require support through the Community Planning Partnerships and the Local Area Partnerships supporting locality working and funding for projects that encourage self-sufficiency.

INFRASTRUCTURE

7. Help ensure there are the same opportunities and access to services between urban and rural areas

For people living and working in rural areas there are often big differences compared to urban areas in what services might be available (things like broadband, childcare, transport, community development etc.) What do you need to enable you to choose to live and work in rural Scotland?

Whilst rural areas do not offer the same range of jobs, services and opportunities as urban areas, the ability to access a reasonable range of jobs, services and opportunities is a key element to encouraging people to live, work and visit rural Scotland.

The trunk road network (and to a certain extent the rail network) provides a spine for easy and efficient access to many rural areas in Scotland. However, away from this spine, the overall transport infrastructure can be limited and lead to long journey times by private car and either lengthy or non-existent public transport.

There is no one solution to this, people's travel demands can be complex, particularly for people with multiple part-time jobs, which is more prevalent in rural areas. A package of solutions needs to be considered, with some solutions potentially packaged within Mobility as a Service (MaaS) framework, including:

- public and demand responsive transport
- community transport schemes
- shared mobility schemes (car and lift sharing; car clubs; electric bikes etc.)
- easy access to travel information which identifies the travel opportunities available
- provision of services and opportunities via digital platforms

In order to facilitate these services it is clear that improved digital connectivity is required.

Employee Travel Plans which set out how employees travel to and from work and for business travel should be a requirement for new businesses with existing businesses encouraged to develop a Travel Plan for its staff. While these traditionally have been used for large organisations, there is no reason why smaller businesses cannot benefit from developing a Travel Plan. These would set out how employees can access the business in the most sustainable manner. TravelKnowHow Scotland website has information and a Travel Plan toolkit to assist businesses and organisations. Tactran also has a small Sustainable Transport Grant Scheme that can be accessed by businesses and organisations in the region to help develop and/or promote Travel Plans.

Another aspect which has effect on rural areas is the ease of delivery of goods, which can increase the cost of living. Again the trunk road network plays a significant part in the distribution of goods and good maintenance of the road network is

required. Next day and on-time deliveries are taken for granted in urban areas, however the cost of this in rural areas often places people at a disadvantage. More consideration could be given to communal rural collection and distribution centres.

The need for good transport and digital infrastructure is also essential for the rural tourist/visitor economy, with the accessibility, or perceived accessibility, possibly making the difference between a tourist attraction succeeding and failing. More could also be done for 'green' tourism with good walking and cycling facilities provided.

To support accessibility in rural areas Tactran has a CT/DRT strategy (Community Transport/Demand Responsive Transport) that seeks to complement scheduled service provision. With the advent of digital platforms for travel planning it is now perfectly possible for applications targeted at urban areas to now be available in rural areas. This would allow a greater use of shared assets, the development of community businesses and social enterprises and bespoke travel plans to access jobs, education or services through an enhanced DRT system.

8. Make sure Government policies, regulations, planning and support mechanisms help local businesses

What types of policies, regulations, planning and business support need to be strengthened or removed to help a wide variety of small and micro businesses in rural areas?

Transport and connectivity are crucial for many businesses and should be considered as part of any business development and promotion to ensure sustainable economic growth.

National, regional and local transport strategies will continue to support economic objectives. Likewise, land use planning policies will continue to encourage development to be located in settlements where there is more likely to be a potential to provide transport services. Nonetheless, a requirement to undertake 'rural proofing' during the production of these strategies will help ensure that rural economic issues are considered. There is an opportunity for Scottish Government to consider this at present with both the Transport and Planning Bills currently going through parliamentary process.

Can you think of any problems in transport, housing, social care and digital infrastructure that prevent economic growth for your industry sector, business or community?

The lack of public transport opportunities for those without access to a car does restrict the ability of all to participate in, maximise and benefit from the rural economy.

The fewer roads available in rural areas mean that travel arrangements in rural areas are disproportionately affected by maintenance, accidents, landslips, snow and flooding or other events which may close routes. This has effect not only on people but services and goods provided.

9. Make sure that community resources that contribute to our economy (like tourist attractions) also deliver benefits to their communities.

Can you think of any examples of resources in your community e.g. that attract visitors and make money but do not benefit the community?

There are opportunities, such as the opening of the V&A in Dundee, House of Bruar, Blair Drummond Safari Park, major golf events at Carnoustie and Gleneagles, to ensure that major destinations and visitor attractions are accessible in terms of both job opportunities and exhibitions. The development of Travel Plans for such attractions that link into the equality obligations may be a mechanism to ensure that the investment and resources can be shared across the wider urban and rural geographical area.

Are there examples of attractions in your community that you would like to promote? What could help you do this?

We would like to promote the concept of Travel Plans across all major visitor attractions in the Tactran area and will progress this approach in partnership with our Local Planning Authorities.

10. Please tell us below if there are any key issues you believe we may have missed

It would be useful to take this work forward as part of a scenario planning approach to the future of the Scottish Rural Economy.