

Cross Party Group in the Scottish Parliament on Rural Policy

Tuesday 7th October 2014, 5.45 – 7.30pm, Committee Room 3

Young People and Rural Scotland

Minutes (Approved)

Present

Rebecca Marek	Scottish Youth Parliament (Speaker)
Paul McIlvenny	Youth Scotland (Speaker)
Scott Somerville	Young Farmers (Speaker)
Jim Hume	MSP, Chair and Co-convenor
Alex Fergusson	MSP, Co-convenor
Graeme Dey	MSP, Co-convenor
Nigel Don	MSP
Jamie McGrigor	MSP
Christian Allard	MSP
Alan Laidlaw	The Crown Estate
Ann MacSween	Historic Scotland
Artur Steiner	SRUC
Bridie Ashrowan	Youth Borders
Charlie Shentall	Scottish Countryside Alliance
Chloe Purves	Scottish Enterprise
Christopher Bathgate	Scottish Government
Claire Slipper	NFUS
Derek Logie	Rural Housing Service
Douglas Scott	Scottish Borders Council
Dugald MacGilp	Keep Scotland Beautiful
Ellie Brodie	SRUC
Emma Patterson Taylor	SAOS
Eric Samuel	Big Lottery
Eva Milroy	Crichton Institute
Frank Beattie	Scottish Enterprise
Fiona Mackenzie	UHI
Gary White	Peebles CAN
Gillian Newman	Independent Participation Professional
Helen Allan	PAS
Ian Macdonald	Borders Foundation for Rural Sustainability
Jamie Dent	Dumfries and Galloway Small Communities Housing Trust
Jodi MacLeod	Rural Housing Scotland
Julian Pace	Scottish Enterprise
Karen Murray	Skills Development Scotland
Kirsten Leask	Soil Association Scotland
Lorna Philip	Aberdeen University
Martin Simmons	Horticultural Trades Association

Neil Cummings	Horticultural Trades Association
Nicola Hill	Dumfries and Galloway LEADER
Pam Rodway	Crofting Connections
Peter Ross	Dumfries and Galloway LEADER
Rebecca Campbell	University of Stirling
Robin Haig	observer
Robin Parker	Barnados Scotland
Roger Turner	Rural Economies Consultant
Ross McLaren	Scottish Churches Rural Group
Roy McLachlan	Scottish Government Rural Inspections and Payments Directorate
Sally Thomas	Scottish Government
Sarah Skerratt	SRUC
Siân Ringrose	SRUC
Stan Green	Growforth Limited
Stephen Young	SAOS
Tom Campbell	The North Highland Initiative
Tony Huggins-Haig	Arthouse Galleries
Wendy Kenyon	SPICe

Apologies

Claire Baker	MSP (Co-convenor)
Annabell Ewing	MSP
Andrew Prendergast	Plunkett Foundation Scotland
Andrew Stevenson	Scottish Government
Daniel Gotts	SNH
David Cameron	Community Land Scotland
David Gass	Upper Quartile
David Rennie	Scottish Enterprise
David Watts	University of Aberdeen
Davy McCracken	SRUC
Deborah Mays	DCM Heritage
Dion Alexander	Rural and Islands Housing Associations Forum
Eve Keepax	Keep Scotland Beautiful
Gemma Hopkinson	The Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT)
Gemma Thomson	NFUS
Heather Sim	Space Unlimited
Iain Bolland	Highlands and Islands Enterprise
James Ogilvie	Forestry Commission Scotland
Jamie Stewart	Scottish Countryside Alliance
Jane Smernicki	SRUC
Jayne Glass	Perth College, UHI
John Lord	yellow book ltd
John Watt	Scottish Land Fund
Jonathan Wordsworth	Archaeology Scotland
Karen Dobbie	SEPA
Madhu Satsangi	University of Stirling
Mark Aitken	SEPA
Nat Dixon	SRUC
Nina Clancy	RSABI

Patrick Hughes
Stephen Graham
Stuart Clement
Sue Hudson
Tanya Castell
Eilidh MacDonald

SAC Consulting
Highland Council
Dumfries and Galloway Childrens Panel
Sue Hudson Planning Ltd.
Siorbheas Ltd.
Citizens Advice Scotland

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies

Jim Hume MSP (Chair) apologised for the slightly late start to the meeting. This was due to the 6pm voting time in the main Chamber.

No participants objected to an audio recording of the meeting being taken. It was noted that several people were tweeting from the meeting.

The high turnout meant that it was not possible for everyone in the room to introduce themselves, but Jim Hume MSP noted that everyone should sign the sign-in sheet which was being passed around. Anyone wishing to ask a question should introduce themselves and note the organisation that they represent at the start of the question.

The apologies received would be noted in the meeting minute. Claire Baker MSP (co-convenor) had submitted her apologies the meeting.

2. Annual General Meeting – Re-registration and election of office-bearers for the Group

Jim Hume MSP (chair and co-convenor) passed over to Jane Atterton (SRUC) to chair this part of the meeting. All four of the Group's MSP co-convenors confirmed they were pleased to continue in their role for another year. The four co-convenors were proposed on block by Tony Huggins-Haig with Rebecca Marek and Jamie McGrigor MSP seconding this proposal. The four convenors were therefore re-elected to continue.

Jim Hume MSP resumed chairing duties and proposed that SRUC continue as Secretariat for the Group in 2014-15. This was seconded by Alex Fergusson MSP. SRUC will continue as Secretariat in 2014-15.

Thanks were noted to Gillian Gillies (in Alex Fergusson MSP's office) who helps support the Group in terms of booking rooms and catering and escorting attendees to the meeting room.

3. Approval of the minutes from the last meeting (21st May – Coastal Community Regeneration)

Jane Atterton noted that the unapproved minutes from the May meeting were circulated to all attendees on 4th June 2014 and no edits were received. They were circulated again to all members with the confirmation email relating to this meeting. Jim Hume MSP proposed the minutes as a true record of the meeting and this was seconded by Alan Laidlaw. The minutes were accepted as a true record of the meeting. SRUC will post the approved minutes to the [webpage for the May meeting](#) asap after this meeting.

Jane Atterton noted that no further evidence had been received relating to the Group's use of VC (see action point from the May meeting minutes) so no further action will be taken on this matter. However, it was noted that the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee is exploring the use of Skype by CPGs. SRUC will monitor this and take action as appropriate if this becomes available.

Jane Atterton noted one further action from the last meeting, that Alistair Prior (Scottish Government), Alan Laidlaw (The Crown Estate) and other relevant individuals should continue a dialogue to link coastal and LEADER schemes, interests etc. to maintain the positive discussions from the May meeting. Alan Laidlaw noted that he has been asked to be on the panel assessing LEADER applications so this will ensure links are continued.

4. 8-10 Minute Presentations (followed by discussion):

a. Rebecca Marek, Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) “Rural Policy: A Young Person’s Perspective”. The video can be accessed [here](#).

Rebecca noted that there are 150 elected Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament representing every constituency in Scotland. At their national sitting just prior to the CPG meeting, members of the Transport, Environment and Rural Affairs (TERA) Committee put together a video discussing their priorities for improving rural Scotland for young people. The production of the video was led by Nairn McDonald who is the convenor of the TERA Committee.

The key issue noted by the majority of the Committee members was transport, including poor public transport services (expensive, poor frequency and not available at the right times e.g. in the evening) and the high cost of obtaining a licence and buying, insuring and maintaining private cars. Other issues mentioned included the poor access to education and employment opportunities, the generally high costs of living, and the difficulties of maintaining social networks in remote rural locations like the Highlands.

Rebecca noted at the end of the video that the next SYP national campaign will focus on child poverty, including in rural Scotland.

b. Paul McIlvenny, Youth Scotland “Youth Scotland – Young People Taking the Lead”. The presentation can be accessed [here](#).

Paul noted that Youth Scotland had consulted with over 150 young people from across Scotland to gather their thoughts on the key issues facing rural Scotland for this presentation.

Again transport was revealed as a very important issue, including the cost of (essential) ferry travel and the high costs of accessing adequate and varied education and employment opportunities.

Young people also mentioned the difficulties of accessing youth services in the evenings when public transport services tend to stop at 5pm. The importance of local FE, HE and apprenticeships provision was mentioned to enable more young people to stay in their local area, as well as the importance of making funding available for trying out new ideas and growing and developing community assets, where they can have a role.

The importance of groups working together was also mentioned, including Youth Scotland’s links with the SYP and LGBT groups. It was emphasised that young people often have creative ideas which can be harnessed, e.g. allowing young people to take up the empty spaces on bus services which otherwise would lie empty.

Paul outlined some of Youth Scotland’s work, including activities that encourage young people to take the lead and that take national programmes and training out to young people across Scotland, thereby empowering them and giving them opportunities to identify challenges locally by giving them the tools to fix them. This may entail working with other partners, such as local authorities, but the critical thing is to empower and support young people engaging in these activities so that ultimately they can lead them.

Paul reported how Youth Scotland are using technology in creative ways to connect young people through Facebook, Google conferencing, Skype etc. Through the use of technology they can bring young people from remote locations together to enable them to connect and share their ideas and visions. He noted how Youth Scotland is looking to work with other local partners to empower young people in their local communities.

In terms of national support, Youth Scotland provides opportunities for young people to connect with one another, funding support, training courses and capacity building etc. all of which is young people led. There is an annual national conference which is delivered by young people for young people.

Young people being empowered and taking the lead is an ethos not a programme, and there should be a lasting legacy. Young people are the here and now, as well as the future generation.

c. **Scott Somerville, Young Farmers: “A Young Farmers Scotland by 2020”**. The presentation can be accessed [here](#).

The Scottish Association of Young Farmers is a social network for rural youth in Scotland (aged 14-30) with over 3,200 members. Agri and Rural Affairs is a sub-group of the SAYFC with a committee of 20 representing all districts, and the association acts as a voice for members living and working across rural Scotland.

The SAYFC vision is of its members leading the way in the industry, including in terms of technology, e.g. to reduce the unit costs of production, improve the targeting of inputs to reduce carbon emissions, etc. – thus producing benefits for wider society. There are, however, barriers to the liberal adoption of technology, including the rising age profile of farmers and the need for additional capital investment in technology. There is also the opportunity next year to start a national dialogue on the use of GM crops.

Young people are being stopped from entering farming due to their inability to secure land, or a lack of long-term land tenure security which discourages capital investment. We need some innovative thinking – and young people are well placed to provide this - on how to tackle these issues. It is timely to look at these issues as food security issues come increasingly to the fore, issues of land ownership are being debated, there is a review of the tenancy sector ongoing, co-operation is being explored, Scottish food and drink products are positively regarded, etc.

What is required to make this happen? Funding, especially to assist the adoption of new technology, good internet access for running a business, change to policy (such as those advocated by the NFUS new generation group) and give farmers the tools to make changes, including through a national dialogue on GM.

These three presentations were followed by a short video featuring **students from SRUC** talking about their vision for rural Scotland and what needs to change. Issues covered included the need for more native woodland planting, changing land ownership to enable more communities to own and manage land, providing equal opportunities for urban and rural young people, improving access to public transport, services and amenities for those living in rural areas, and maintaining the beauty of much of Scotland’s countryside.

Eva Milroy (Crichton Institute Development Officer) reported the key messages from a **Crichton Institute (CI) event held in Dumfries and Galloway (D&G)** on 17th September to discuss young peoples’ vision for the region. She noted that these local ‘pre-CPG’ events will be organised by the CI on an ongoing basis in order to feed information from D&G into each CPG meeting. The D&G event covered a range of issues, including: the importance of providing affordable, low carbon housing for young people (to ensure purchase and running costs are as reasonable as possible); encouraging entrepreneurship and small business formation amongst young people; improving public transport and making services appropriate for young people and their needs (e.g. to access college classes at 9am or to attend evening youth services); understanding the factors that encourage young people to return to rural areas once they have

accessed education elsewhere; overcoming negative perceptions and stereotypes is important as is giving young people a voice and an opportunity to engage in debates, events, etc.; providing opportunities for inter-generational learning and information sharing; and ensuring access to a good broadband service.

Key issues raised in the discussion included:

- **Thinking creatively about policies and programmes:** Travelling to work placements, apprenticeships, jobs etc. is often difficult for young people as public transport services are expensive and do not run at appropriate times. Support programmes need to demonstrate flexibility and creativeness to tailor to the needs of, and challenges facing, rural young people. All local people need to have a say in how local services are set up and delivered. Creative thinking is required, for example, to encourage more younger people into the farming sector by removing some of the barriers they face (e.g. to obtaining land) or to enable young people to travel on free bus passes to work or training.
- **Partnership working and network building:** Many organisations are working with and for young people but we need to develop better links between them; existing networks, institutions and organisations can be used to offer more opportunities for young people to engage, including through schools and youth groups.
- **Policy-making is too urban-centric:** There has been too much urban-centric policy-making, with not enough rural awareness and knowledge demonstrated by policy-makers. Participants also argued that the mainstream media in Scotland is too urban-focused. We need to be more positive about 'selling the good aspects' of rural Scotland.
- **Increasing the engagement of young people:** Local 'governance' structures such as Community Councils are often dominated by older people, meaning that young people do not have a voice at local level and decisions are often made without their input and are therefore to their disadvantage (e.g. to stop bus services in the evening). National, regional and local level consultations are often inaccessible to young people. Rebecca Marek indicated that the SYP would be happy to assist with getting young people more engaged in consultations and with promoting other ways of engaging; young people are the best at consulting young people. Organisations should think creatively about how to engage young people: Twitter, Facebook, Skype, text messages, video conferencing, etc. can be successful (Youth Scotland have good experience of using these methods with their 1500 member groups across Scotland). Take opportunities for engagement to young people, rather than expecting them to always come to you, and encourage trust, interest and participation amongst young people when they are at school. This is often best done in relation to locally important issues, and will give young people a stake in their local community and a reason for living there. The LEADER Local Development Strategy in Dumfries and Galloway, for example, has built in a youth local action group to take decisions on funding applications for youth-related projects. The Crichton Institute's Dumfries and Galloway 'pre-CPG meetings' were commended as a means of engaging young people locally and taking their views to the Scottish Parliament. Using

the National Standards for Community Engagement should ensure that engagement is 'done' well, equally and in good faith. PAS (formerly Planning Aid for Scotland) is doing work on Community Councils and how they can better engage young people.

- ***Inter-generational thinking and actions required:*** There is increasing policy and practice attention focused on services for older people as the (rural) population ages, but at a time of scarce resources, we need to ensure that young people do not fall off the radar otherwise the demographic imbalance in some parts of rural Scotland will only worsen. Intergenerational activities may be a creative way forward.
- ***Raising awareness about the breadth of rural employment options:*** We need to work to ensure that young people in rural areas are aware of and have adequate information about the breadth of opportunities open to them outwith agriculture. This awareness-raising can start at primary school, for example, through practical sessions to 'showcase' the jobs that are available in rural Scotland. Employers need to be involved in this information provision; there are some good examples of such initiatives in existence (such as the Queensberry Initiative in Dumfries and Galloway).
- ***Devolving decision-making:*** More autonomy is needed at the local level to decentralise power from Edinburgh to local areas. More dialogue at local level will help to ensure more people have a voice. However, this must be accompanied by 'rural proofing' to ensure that all decisions are assessed for their appropriateness for rural Scotland. The removal of the Rural Housing Ownership Grants (from non-crofting areas) and their replacement with Open Market Shared Equity schemes was mentioned as an example of an instance where rural proofing was not effectively carried out (only 6% of these schemes are in rural Scotland).
- ***Be innovative and ambitious about rural and youth issues:*** Starting at the local level young people should be supported to fully participate and engage and, ideally, take the lead. We need to consider different ways of delivering services and engaging young people which do not rely on poor transport or broadband for connectivity. Young people are often not bound by the fears and inhibitions of adults and if they are empowered they will often come up with innovative solutions. Rural areas are seen as important by politicians in Scotland so 'the door is open' for dialogue. *"Shoot for the moon and even if you don't get there, you will land amongst the stars."*

Action: Organisations/individuals to contact Scottish Youth Parliament or Youth Scotland for advice on, and assistance with, engaging young people.

Contact details: Rebecca Marek, Scottish Youth Parliament (Rebecca.M@syp.org.uk) and Paul McIlvenny (Paul.McIlvenny@youthscotland.org.uk).

Action: SRUC RPC staff to speak to SRUC Communications staff about inviting a national and/or local journalist along to a subsequent meeting to raise the profile of rural issues in the mainstream media and 'showcase' some successful projects.

Action: SRUC to ensure that youth groups are represented on the mailing list for future CPG meetings.

5. AOB

No items of AOB were discussed.

6. Date of next meeting (Wednesday 3rd December 2014: Employment, employability and skills in rural Scotland – is provision fit-for-purpose?)

The next meeting will be held as above and further information will be available in due course.