Defra's Rural Policy Function

Sarah McAdam

Head of the Rural Communities Policy Unit

Proposed Workshop Structure

- Establishing the RCPU
- Emerging plans and priorities – Rural Statement
- Rural Economy Growth Review

Some facts about rural England

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- 86% of landmass inhabited by just under 20% of the population.
- Average educational attainment levels higher in rural than urban areas, crime rates lower and health outcomes more positive.
- Approx 1 in 3 rural households off the national mains gas network.
- People who work in rural England have lower average earnings than people who live there.
- 30% of those employed by rural enterprises are working for micro-enterprises (fewer than 10 staff).
- Rural communities are, on average, older than those in urban areas, and the average age is increasing at a faster rate.

Why do we need a rural policy function?

Real risk that decision–makers will overlook/ misunderstand the rural context:

- Failing to realise economic and other potential to be found in rural areas
- Failing to recognise and address the needs of vulnerable groups living in rural areas
- Prompting criticism on equity grounds

RCPU Challenges/Objectives

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- **Work more effectively across Government to achieve fair, positive, practical impacts and outcomes for rural communities**
- **Develop a much more open, collaborative approach to gathering evidence, insights and information**

Supporting/understanding local delivery

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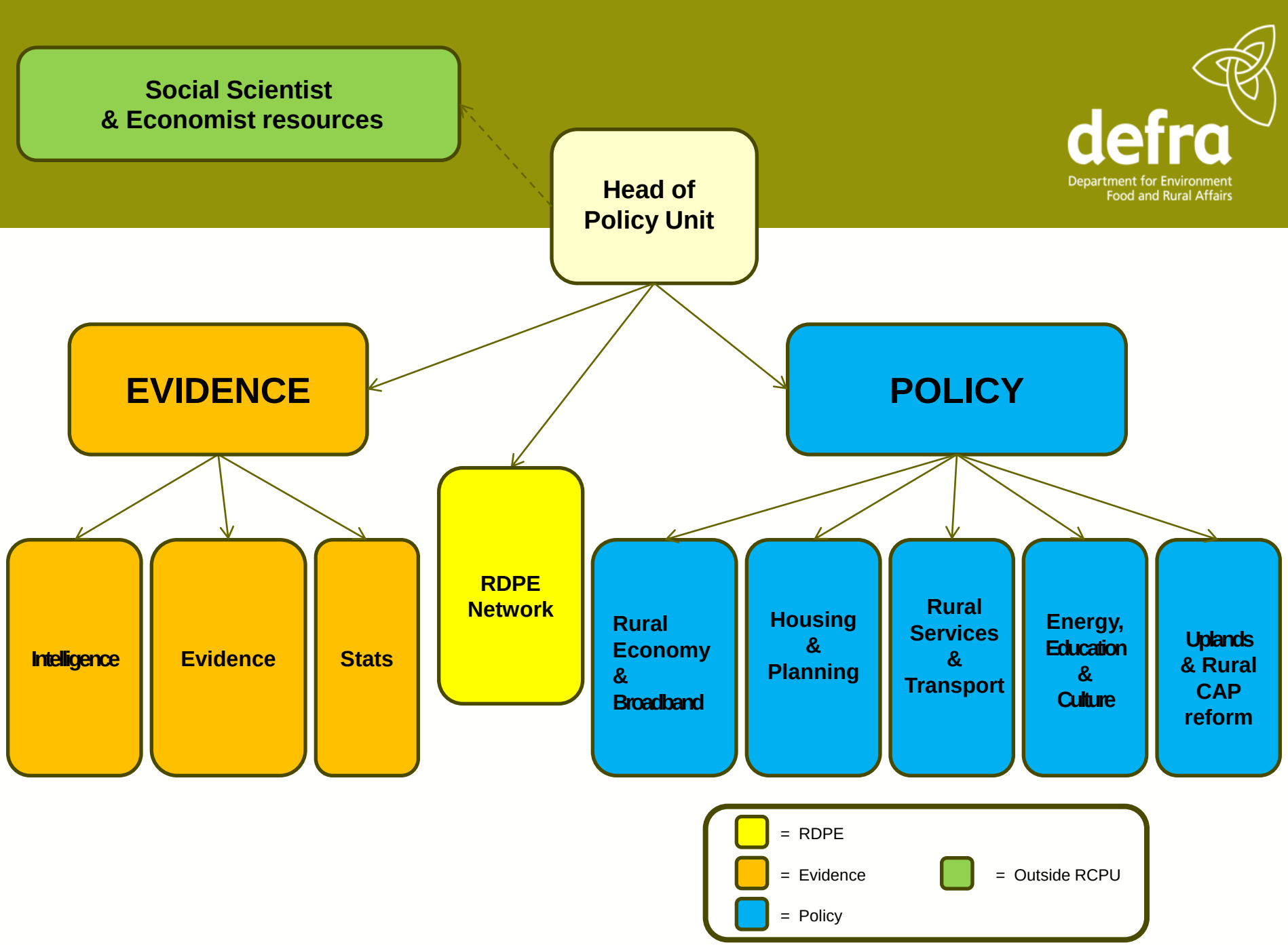
RCPU building relationships with diverse range of organisations that represent & support rural people/businesses:

- Rural & Farming Network
- Partnership with Action for Communities in Rural England
- RDPE Network
- Local Enterprise Partnerships rural roundtable
- Rural Coalition
- Rural Business Finance Forum
- Eden Valley Big Society Vanguard


Social Scientist
& Economist resources
Head of
Policy Unit
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POLICY
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Broadband
Housing
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Planning
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Services
&
Transport
Energy,
Education
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Culture
Uplands
& Rural
CAP
reform
= RDPE
= Evidence
= Policy
= Outside RCPU

What should we be focusing on?

- Emerging priority policy areas:

  Rural Economies (Growth Review and LEPs); **Broadband; Fuel poverty; Uplands; Planning/supporting rural implementation of localism Bill; Housing; Transport; Services** (Open Public Services White Paper, Community Budgets); **Health & Ageing**.

- Plus 'watching brief' and responsibility for guiding and supporting better rural proofing across and beyond Central Government

- Integrating RCPU work programme with other Defra programmes/priorities

Rural Economy Growth Review

Rural England Is significant

- 19.6% of the population living on 86% of the land mass
- Rural Areas contribute an estimated 19% of national GVA

No distinct, homogenous Rural Economy

- Economy in rural areas broadly similar to urban economy
- Close links and interdependencies between the two

BUT

Some differences between rural and urban economies

- Some sectors (e.g. Agri-food) and SMEs more prevalent
- Workplace earnings lower, slightly weaker productivity growth

Remoteness a Significant factor

- 2/3 rural people live <10km from town of 30k – peri-urban
- 1/3 more peripheral – 38% of most rural districts in bottom quartile of GVA per work force job

Rural Economy Growth Review - Aim

"... To identify the actions that Government can take to enable sustainable, diversified economies in rural areas which are innovative and dynamic, able to contribute to Green Growth and to rebalance the national economy."

Other Strands of Phase 2 of the Growth Review

- Infrastructure
- Logistics
- Education and Skills
- Mid-sized companies
- Open data

Vision for the Next Decade and Beyond

A Rural Economy which:

- Is diverse, resilient and an exemplar of the potential of Green Growth
- Realises a much higher return on the value of the significant reserves of natural capital which rural areas contain
- Is well connected internally and to wider national and international markets
- Has a growing number of high-tech, creative and knowledge based enterprises
- Attracts and retains more highly skilled workers

Scope of the Review

Two Themes	Eight Lines of Enquiry
1.Enabling rural businesses to innovate and thrive	Broadband & Mobile
	Efficient Use of Land & Buildings
	Addressing Skills Needs
	Access to Finance
	Access to Business Support
2. Realising the value of natural capital	Tourism
	Renewable Energy
	Agri-food

Potential policy measures (I)

Broadband demand stimulation pilot
Enabling more flexible changes of use for agriculture buildings??
Use new RDPE delivery mechanisms to actively promote growth agenda in rural areas, including through Rural Community Broadband Fund, renewables, tourism and meeting skills needs.

Potential Policy Measures (II)

Convene Agri-food Summit with the Technology Strategy Board
AONBs to develop a compelling tourism offer, nationally co-ordinated and locally tailored, promoting AONB environmental, economic, and social sustainability
Supporting increased community “ownership” (in every sense) of renewable energy
Rural Growth Zones??

Questions for Discussion (II)

- Are these the most useful policy measures that Government can take to meet the aims of the Review?

- Are there any others that you recommend for active consideration and if so, why?