

Planning for Rural Development – A new Emphasis

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Historical context – Rural Development in Northern Ireland

- Four factors influence emergence of rural development policy – Maher Report, Rural Action Project, IFI and the EC.
- 1990 -1993 1st Rural Development Programme £6.5 million
- 1994 – 1999 2nd Rural Development Programme £55 million
- 2000 – 2006 3rd Rural Development Programme £80 million

Time for reflection: What has been achieved/lessons learnt so far?

- Greater stakeholder empowerment/capacity in rural areas
- High levels of customer satisfaction
- Harnessing experience at local level
- A crowded market place, confusion
- Too many delivery groups?
- Risk of “funding led” delivery
- Volunteer fatigue
- Good instrument for job creation/economic development in rural areas.
- Coherent approach to rural development – is it enough?
- Is the balance correct? Does it provide value for money?
- Does it meet rural dwellers needs?
- Is there anything else that can be done?

DARD commission PwC - A Study on Rural Policy 2005

Terms of reference:

- Study of policy in relation to DARD rural development
- Development of proposals for policy change
- Opportunity for overarching rural development strategy

Some key findings:

- Broad consensus that NI has not had a rural policy *per se* rather there is a policy of delivery within the bounds of the Rural Development Programme (pg 50)
- Prevailing view that there has been no “evidence based research”
- Absence of agreed definition of “rural”
- Activity is too “EU” led
- Lack of strategic integration across government with respect to rural development policy issues
- Inability to effectively engage farming community in rural development issues
- Need for a broader approach to rural development a priority
- Need linkage and synergies between rural and regional policies
- Disappointment with application of rural proofing

Recommendations on way forward from PWC report

Range of suggestions and options including

- Single integrated rural policy including land, rural regeneration and access to services
- Multi sectoral, joined up approach
- Separation of policy and delivery on rural development
- Better use of partnerships and influencing
- Evidence based policy making
- Consideration of RPA changes

Rural people have continually made the point that the needs of rural communities are not understood, known or addressed by government.

Government has not acted in a proactive way to address rural concerns.

Research by DARD and other stakeholder identified a need for

- *A joined up approach by all government departments to rural issues.*
- *Better links and communication between government departments and between government and rural people.*
- *Better evidence to make decisions.*

So what did we do?

- Rural Policy Branch formed 2006
- DARD Rural Strategy 2007 -2013 objective: to define the Rural Champion function. This includes;
 - A joined up approach to rural policy across government.
 - Robust application of rural proofing and championing of rural issues.
 - Equitable access to public services and programmes by rural communities.
 - The development of a robust evidence base that identifies the particular social, economic and environmental needs of rural areas

Devolution May 2007 and the Programme for Government

Renewed emphasis on rural – local government, pro rural development Minister hence:

- PSA 17 Rural Infrastructure Objective 2 – Adopt the role of Rural Champion. This objective has two actions namely;
- Define the role of Rural Champion and enhance the Rural Proofing process by end 2008.
- Develop proposals for a Rural White Paper by end 2008.

These actions were formally endorsed by the Executive in April 2008

Rural Champion

In the broadest terms we proposed:

- Mechanisms to improve communication between departments
 - Mechanisms to ensure communication between government and rural people
 - Gathering and sharing of more relevant evidence (Dr S Shortall)
 - Improved rural proofing process
 - (support for) New rural initiatives and ideas
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- There are 6 roles which provide functions that we think are necessary: Advocate, Watchdog, Listener, Advisor (using robust evidence base), Initiator, Exemplar.

Rural White Paper

This is an Executive Rural White Paper with five themes:

Vision- set objective of RWP, define the contribution of rural, future scenarios

Places – protection of environment, approaches to renewables, regeneration needs of rural settlements

People – needs of most vulnerable, sustainability of rural communities

Governance – opportunities from RPA, community planning, rural proofing

Services – access to services and barriers to provision of, affordable housing

Progress to date:

- Rural Champion consultation closed, final proposals with Minister – implementation 2009/2010
- Rural Evidence Base – Dr Sally Shortall to report September 2009.
- Rural White Paper:
 - interdepartmental committee on rural policy established (chaired by DARD Minister and attended by senior policy officials from all Depts)
 - Rural Stakeholder group established to drive RWP
 - RWP consultation 2010 to meet Comprehensive Spending review 2011.

Many thanks for listening and welcome any comments on our way forward!

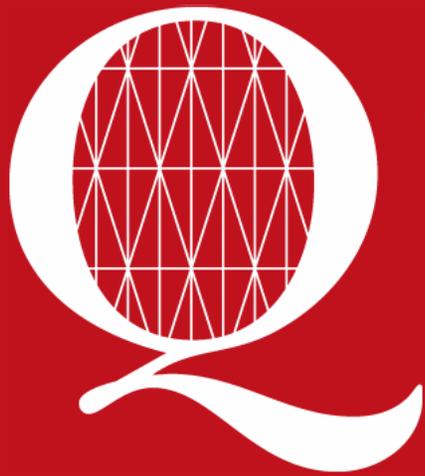
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Planning for rural development: a
new emphasis

DARD evidence-based policy
project: An overview and some
reflections

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The development of proposals for a robust rural evidence base to underpin rural policy making in Northern Ireland

OBJECTIVES:

- To examine the existing rural evidence base of economic and social studies used to underpin rural policymaking in Northern Ireland and identify evidence/ research gaps.
- To identify the priority themes and indicators for future research to address these gaps in the evidence base.
- To develop models for the most efficient and effective methods of collecting, using and disseminating rural evidence and research.

Rural Development in Northern Ireland

- The Department of Agriculture Northern Ireland (DANI) given responsibility for EU rural development activities (LEADER Programmes; Pillar II of the CAP)
- In 1999 DANI becomes DARD; Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Rural Development in Northern Ireland

- DANI had an established scientific basis for forestry, fisheries, food and agriculture
- Regular farm-based surveys
- Long established economics and statistics division in DANI/ DARD
- EU demanded monitoring returns on the RDP and body of evidence exists for this
- Rural Policy Team established in 2006, and Rural Policy Division in 2009
- A realisation of the increased need for social scientific evidence to underpin rural policy

The Rural Policy Division

- This evidence-based research is closely knitted into the Rural Policy Division's priorities:
- Rural proofing
- Rural Champion
- Rural Poverty and Inclusion
- The Rural White Paper

- Key to these priorities is working with other Government Departments

The drive for social science evidence

- Need to establish what evidence already exists
- Inter-Departmental Urban-Rural Definition Group 2005
- Sophisticated classifications of rural/ urban, with a default definition of rural as 4,500 or less
- NISRA: urban/ rural definitions and urban/ rural tracking

The drive for evidence in Britain and Ireland:

- Identifying models and best practice from elsewhere
- Scotland: SAC Rural Policy Centre
- Defra's Rural Evidence Research Centre
- The Wales Rural Observatory
- Teagasc's Rural Economic Research Centre
- Defra's Science Advisory Council
- Scottish Committee of Inquiry on Crofting

Reflections on evidence:

- Democratic consent is the basis of policy, not evidence
- Endless amounts of evidence. The key is to develop expertise in order to know what evidence will work in what context
- Difficulties of independent advice
- Different types of evidence needed; strategic, problem related and 'rapid response'

Reflections on evidence::

- Department of Rural Development or Rural Affairs? These demand different types of evidence.
- Who decides what evidence is needed or generated?
- Different types of evidence will be needed for different questions
- CRC report on Rural Proofing: 'In most countries interest groups are more significant than formal policy processes'.
- What is the balance between evidence, power of interest groups, political priorities, budgetary constraints etc?
- Little evidence on how to improve evidence use in policy making process!

Reflections on evidence:

- RERC: cannot assume that if we put 'rural' in front of something it is different
- Difficulties about being funded to produce evidence for a government department for public sector targets relating to different government departments (Wales Rural Observatory and WAG team)
- Danger that rural is seen as separate or 'done', and reduced sense of commitment across other government departments