

Rural Housing Advisory Group

Minutes of the RHAG Meeting held on 1 October 2014 in Country Land and Business Association.

Members Present	
Professor Peter Roberts	Independent Chair
Arlene Kersley	Community Council Berkshire
Danielle Troop	Country Land and Business Association
Fiona Forgham	Defra
Neil Sinden	CPRE
Nigel Stone	Association of National Parks
Andrew Dack	DCLG (by telephone)
Sue Chalkley	Hastoe Housing
Jake Berriman	Shropshire Housing
Jim Harker	LGA
Nick Chase	ACRE
Colin Molton	HCA
Jake Berriman	Shropshire Housing Group
Keith House	HCA Board
Monica Burns	NHF

Apologies	
Matthew Dodd	HCA
Caryn Innes	4 Homes

In attendance	
Martin Collett	English Rural Housing Association
Abdul Ravat	HCA
Georges Droogmans	HCA
Helen Fielding	HCA
Steve Modric	HCA
Cherida Warner	HCA

Item	Discussion	Action
1. Welcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peter Roberts (PR) opened the meeting. Introductions were made and apologies were given. 	
2. Minutes of the previous meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2014 were agreed as an accurate record. 	
3. Matters arising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Representation on DCLG Sounding Board – Jake Berriman is the RHAG representative with Sue Chalkley as his deputy. Local Lettings Policies – Martin Collett reported that he will be meeting the NHF shortly about a campaign to provide guidance to local authorities based on good practice. Nigel Stone (NSt) asked whether anyone is 	

	<p>campaigning about affordable rent which is very difficult in rural areas where stock is limited and it is limited further by affordable rent. Arlene Kersley commented that a clear definition of 'affordable rent' is required. It was NOTED that Hastoe sets rents at or below the local housing allowance.</p>	
<p>4. RHAG paper to the HCA Board</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Colin Molton stated that he has been asked to provide a paper for the HCA Board detailing the work of RHAG. A draft paper had been circulated and members commented as follows: The draft report is descriptive and it needs to look at the impact of what RHAG Actions have achieved and what it wants to achieve. Consider broadening the membership of RHAG to include national private institutions. There is a good case for looking at a membership that reflects the current programme streams e.g. investment based/private sector. It would be helpful to outline how the rural economy works. The new Minister is very keen on small sites. This could enable a higher profile for rural delivery. The Board is concerned about the small number of volume builders & the need to grow Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and get them delivering. Neil Sinden AGREED to send his paper on SME builders. It was NOTED that rural SME builders had been more resilient during the recession – volume builders were more exposed. Show how supply is segmented; making sure that rural providers are involved will help develop a local supply chain. Leadership and capacity is now required from Local Authorities (LAs) to deliver homes. Local leadership means LAs must understand that housing and the housing market matters and not just bow to 'Nimby's'. The role of LAs is to carve out land & procure / commission housing – public sector must take a key role. Include economic and rural profiles in the paper. Include facts showing what percentage is urban versus rural. Currently 100,000 homes are being delivered per annum. The Government wants to increase this to 150 – 200,000 pa. This will require more rural homes to be built in market towns and the hinterlands not just where the population is below 3000. A small number of houses at this level does not have much impact on the increase in housing. It is however important not to forget smaller 	<p>NS</p>

	<p>settlements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some LAs are not producing a Local Plan, they are waiting for the next election which means that rural communities cannot build. • The Formula Grant is manipulated by LAs in lots of different ways. If LAs are compelled to have a local plan they will be signed up to housing plans. • Peter Roberts (PR) reported that Jim Harker's view is that the Duty to Co-operate is not working and he asks whether we need an administrative level between local and national. • LAs at County & Parish level do not have planning responsibility so some are holding land back. PR stated that in Wales the equivalent of Parishes do have a role in planning and he suggested that RHAG should look at the evidence and differences across the border and at District and Unitary levels. • The report should show the actual investment in rural housing. <p>Other comments included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Care Act (Social, health and housing coming together) is forcing conversations about housing • There is good representation from Defra on RHAG but it is disappointing that DCLG do not seem to be giving it a high priority. • The build out rate is low on brownfield sites. • Discussions about targets; creating planning & site conditions and investment models tailored to rural areas. • It is important to emphasise the potential to grow rural communities. 	
5. Monitoring and Challenging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The statistics were circulated and members asked that Matthew Dodd should provide some clarification on the actual performance at the next meeting as it seemed that the figures and the graph were not consistent. 	MD
6. Addington Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ian Bell outlined the role and scale of the Addington Fund which had grown out of the Foot and Mouth Crisis. Addington is not a Housing Association or a Registered Provider, although it is providing housing for some tenant farmers who lose their homes and have nowhere to live. • Some property has been donated by, for example, Cornwall Council and Addington has rebuilt and converted some derelict farm houses and barns into 5 dwellings which are let on the open market. • Addington charges 4.3% less than the market rent and it has also completed some new build in Cumbria and small workshops for people with business skills. • Addington always uses the local supply chain. It was AGREED to circulate the slides. 	CW

7. RHAG Learning Event	Cherida Warner (CW) reported that the learning event was being held 21 st October 2014 in Kettering and the final arrangements were being made. Around 100 attendees are expected, including RHAG members and speakers. PR thanked Jim Harker for his help in arranging the venue. Neil Sinden suggested that the focus of the event needed to be made clearer on the programme and it was AGREED that a short session should be added to the end of the day for a review and next steps sessions.	CW
8. Rural Housing Policy Review	RHAG members had previously been asked to either contact the Lord Best Review directly or through Professor Roberts who was meeting the Review Group after the meeting. Points to be raised include SME House builders and the risk of being exposed to a small group of volume builders and Arlene Kersley's paper on Rural Housing Enablers.	
9. Notice Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sue Chalkley (SC) said that the Housing Alliance Guide for Parish Councils is being updated. • The Rural Services Network have requested issues for an All Party Parliamentary Group being held in November. • SC attended a recent DCLG Sounding Board meeting and it was AGREED that a report from this meeting should be added to the regular RHAG agenda. • SC said there had been a good discussion on the Private Rented Sector which does not really exist in rural areas as houses are taken up by 2nd home buyers. It was AGREED to circulate the slides so that a discussion can be held at the next meeting 	CW CW.
10. Date of next meeting	Dates of Next Meetings To be confirmed.	CW