

Defra Monitoring: RCAN Contract

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Background

- **The Rural Community Action Network (RCAN) is made up of Rural Community Councils across England (37).**
- **The RCAN network has recently been contracted by Defra to be its ‘grassroots’ eyes and ears.**
- **This represents a shift away from ‘advocacy’ on rural issues in favour of direct evidence and information gathering.**
- **Local-level data and evidence is being sought by Defra to inform their understanding and activities.**
- **This information is being fed into the new Rural Policy Unit at Defra – fulfilling CRC role.**

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Reporting

- **4 main themes have been identified as priorities:**
 - ✱ Housing
 - ✱ Transport and Services
 - ✱ Broadband
 - ✱ Fuel Poverty & Energy generation
- **2 additional themes are also of relevance: Community-led Planning & Community-owned Assets.**
- **Each RCAN member is required to provide information on a quarterly basis.**
- **The reporting focuses on AirS strategic involvement on the theme and its activities with communities.**
- **A key element, however, is other organisations activity on the issue.**

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Information we require

- **We are seeking input from stakeholders and partners to ensure activity in the county is accurately reflected.**
- **Information provided should be:**
 - ✦ A basic overview of ‘activity’ under each of the 4 key themes – as applicable.
 - ✦ A short summary or update is all that is required.
 - ✦ What has taken place, where, with whom and what outcomes have resulted?
 - ✦ It should not be too long or place too much emphasis on data or justifying actions.

Proposal

- Tie in evidence gathering on the 4 key RCAN themes as part of the Rural Partnership function.
- This represents an opportunity to ensure that key issues are relayed to central government - both problems and successes.
- This could form a standing item on the agenda.
- This would ensure that these key issues are discussed and key evidence gathered and shared.
- *“The quality of the intelligence-gathering mechanisms will be crucial to identification and sharing of good practice across the country and the ability to highlight where national policy interventions may be needed.”*

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Proposal

- **Currently Rural Partnership meetings occur a calendar month before the quarterly reports are due.**
- **The first quarterly report will be submitted in early July.**
- **Information and evidence regarding organisational activities in relation to these issues would be useful.**
- **This can relate to any public, private and voluntary sector activity. Community-led schemes will be of particular interest.**
- **All information and updates gratefully received – an information template will be distributed to members.**

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