Building on the New Rural Paradigm – a view from the UK

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2011 RPC Work

Rural Policy Briefing

Rural Policy in Scotland and England: A Comparative Perspective

November 2011

Key Points

- In summer 2011, the Rural Policy Centre (RPC) conducted a review of rural policy in England (DOF 2011) and Scotland (GEC2011). This was in response to the Scottish Government's review of rural policy in Scotland since 1999, and to the Rural White Paper in England. The two reports focus on similar issues but differ in their approach.

- The RPC reviewed the Scottish Government's 'Rural and Small Communities' and 'Scotland's Opportunity to Thrive' reports, which set out the goals for rural Scotland. The reports highlight the importance of rural areas in Scotland and the need for a strong rural policy.

- The Scottish Government's rural policy focuses on improving rural health, education, and the economy. It also acknowledges the challenges of rural depopulation and the need for investment in rural areas.

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Available online at:
http://www.sac.ac.uk/info/120336/thriving_communities/40/2011_rural_policy_in_scotland_and_england
Building on the New Rural Paradigm: A View from the UK

Jane Attenson and Frances Rowe

Introduction.

In Autumn 2011, SAC’s Rural Policy Centre commissioned Frances Rowe to undertake a comparative analysis of the OECO reviews of rural policy in England (2010/11) and Scotland (2007/08), with reference to their implications towards the principles set out in the New Rural Paradigm (NRP). Following on from this, the authors discussed the changing political, economic and social context for the NRP with representatives from the OECO. As a result, the authors were invited to present to one of the pre-conference workshops (Building on the New Rural Paradigm) at the OECO’s 8th Rural Development Policy Conference in October 2011 in Krasnoyarsk, Russia.

This briefing has been written in support of the authors’ presentation at the conference, and is structured into five sections. First, the briefing summarises the key principles of the NRP, before then reporting the key findings of the OECO rural policy reviews in Scotland and England. The briefing then goes on to review what has happened in policy and governance in the two countries since the reviews were undertaken, to see if they are moving closer towards or further away from the NRP.

The fourth section of the briefing discusses the key political, economic and social changes which are shaping the future development trajectories of rural areas in both countries. Finally, the briefing considers how the NRP could be adapted and expanded in response to these processes and states that it remains appropriate and relevant as a means against which OECO countries assess their policy approach to rural areas. It concludes by recommending ways in which the NRP as a framework for rural development could evolve, and practical tools that would support delivery of rural policies more closely related to its principles, thus adding OECO countries in implementing more effective policies for their rural territories.

1 Dr Jane Attenson is a Policy Researcher at the Rural Policy Centre at SAC. Frances Rowe is an independent consultant with a long career in rural policy making both nationally and regionally in England, France and also commissioned by the PDF to undertake a review of rural policy making in England and Scotland in November 2011. (Available online at https://www.ruralpolicycentre.org.uk/research/2011-rural-policy-in-context-and-implications.) This paper for the OECO Conference in Krasnoyarsk in October 2011 has been written as a Rural Policy Centre Policy Briefing and the authors are keen to publish it after the conference, subject to the OECO’s agreement.

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Key findings of the national review of Scotland

- Rural policy retains an agricultural flavour, a sectoral approach and is highly centralised
- SRDP is the delivery plan
- Lack of an overall rural strategy
- Priorities: addressing shortage of land for housing, look beyond agriculture, recognising urban-rural linkages
Key findings of the national review of England

- Policy interventions tilted towards investment rather than subsidy
- Broad-based approach to rural policy beyond farming
- Critical of mainstreaming; lack of recognition of urban-rural interconnectedness
- Priorities: enhancing mainstreaming, improving integration of urban and rural places, recognising role of rural England as engine of growth
What has happened in Scotland since 2007-08?

- NPF
- Continuation of support to key economic sectors
- No rural strategy; no rural economic strategy
- Community ownership and management of assets
- Cities Strategy and National Review of Town Centres
What has happened in England since 2010-11?

- Rural Statement 2012
- Continued commitment to mainstreaming
- Five Rural Growth Networks
- Localism Act and new Planning Policy Framework
Closer to or further away from the NRP?

New Rural Paradigm

Place-based approach?

Community enterprise?

Strengthening key sectors?

Investments or subsidies?

Continued focus on the primary sector?
The changing context for the NRP

• What are the political, economic and social imperatives driving rural policy in England and Scotland?
  – Economic and fiscal crisis
  – Climate change and moves to a low carbon society
  – Reform of the CAP
  – Shrinking public sector
  – Community empowerment and ownership of assets
So what does all of this mean for the NRP?

• Is the changing policy context moving OECD countries closer to the NRP or further away?
• Can the effects and processes of change be accommodated within the NRP? If not, how might the NRP be adapted?
• How resilient are the central principles underpinning the NRP?
• Can the case be made that tailored policies are a necessity not a luxury?
• How can countries be assisted to move towards the NRP?
A possible way forward for the NRP?

- The NRP’s over-arching principles remain a valuable guide; however, supplementary work could be useful to help policy delivery
  - A programme of evaluation?
  - How to achieve sustainable economic growth? Work on MF of agriculture and ecosystem services would be useful
  - A series of thematic evidence reviews with policy recommendations (e.g. on rural innovation, economic sector reviews, demographic ageing, developing the potential of urban-rural linkages, resilience)
For more information on the work of the Rural Policy Centre please email: jane.atterton@sac.ac.uk
or see:
www.sac.ac.uk/ruralpolicycentre

Please also note that SAC will be known as SRUC from 1st October 2012

For more information on Rural Impact please email: fran.rowe@btinternet.com