

# **Recognising rural: West Sussex**

**Dr Simon Kiley**

**Research & Policy Officer**

## Session Overview

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- **Background – Setting the Scene**
- **Identifying the significance of ‘rural’**
- **Incorporating ‘rural’ into policy and strategy**
- **Progress to Date/Outputs**
- **Summary**
- **Any Questions?**

## Background

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- **Over the past couple of years, West Sussex like many counties has undertaken a range of policy activity.**
  - ✱ LAA refresh
  - ✱ Fit for the Future Process
  - ✱ Sustainable Community Strategies/LDFs
- **These processes have involved gathering evidence.**
- **This has created opportunities to examine how policies identify and incorporate the needs of rural areas and people.**
- **In West Sussex, the Rural Partnership has become a key arena in which these tasks can be undertaken.**
- **An emphasis is placed on achieving equity for rural people.**

## Background

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- **West Sussex currently has 3 boards that operate below the Public Service Board, each of which represents a geographical portion of the county:**
  - ✦ Rural Partnership
  - ✦ Coastal Partnership
  - ✦ Gatwick Diamond Partnership
- **West Sussex Rural Partnership is responsible for representing rural needs – social, economic and environmental.**
- **The Rural Partnership consists of a wide-range of stakeholders from the public, private and voluntary sectors.**
- **Rural Proofing is a key element in its terms of reference.**

## Interrogating Policy/Targets

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- The Rural Partnership review s how equitably 'rural' is treated within policy processes and deliver y mechanisms.
- Informed through a critique of traditional methods such as the IMD and the prioritisation of areas in need over people in need.
- Evidence such as the Rural Share of Deprivation concept (OCSI) allowed the argument to be made that existing public policy is not always equitable.
- Initial data and evidence suggested rural needs w ere not being adequatel y assessed or acknow ledged, consequentl y they were also not being responded to.
- The process of accuratel y determining rural need w as identified as key in working towards equity.
  - ★ %/hat gets measured gets responded to ÷ +

## Interrogating Policy/Targets

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- A pilot programme was established to review how effectively rural needs were being considered – LAA Core Group.
- Rural Partnership & Forum identified NI with rural impacts.
- LAA Indicators and Delivery Plans
  - ✳ Individual delivery plans were evaluated by Rural Partnership members with lead officers using a standard set of questions.
- This identified that:
  - ✳ Rural was largely disadvantaged (neglected) by both needs assessments and delivery mechanisms - unintentionally.
  - ✳ Methods and protocols for rural proofing were largely retrospective and inadequate . not pro-active.
  - ✳ Mainstreaming had led to rural becoming overlooked . assumption that it was being dealt with equally.

## Interrogating Policy/Targets

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- **The pilot was deemed too time consuming and dependent on volunteer provision to be expanded.**
  - ✱ Danger of reliance on Rural Partnership for rural proofing . contradicts mainstreaming.
- **It was clear that LAA targets themselves represent a significant barrier to rural proofing and mainstreaming.**
- **However, this should not prevent work being undertaken on rural data, information and awareness raising.**
- **Imperative to encourage people to think 'rural' in order to undertake what can be done within the existing framework – wider than LAA process.**
- **Responding to 'rural' may improve progress towards LAA targets – not always acknowledged.**
  - ✱ Has anyone analysed this?

## Engagement on rural issues

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- **Raising levels of awareness on these issues amongst stakeholders was viewed as one way of resolving these issues – need to ‘think rural’.**
- **Important to gather and share evidence and information on rural areas for mutual benefit.**
- **Highlighted issues with data and information, delivery mechanisms and monitoring.**
- **Series of 3 rural seminars – Joint WSCC & WS PCT**
  1. Focused on identifying and understanding rural needs
  2. Emphasis on methods of service delivery
  3. Outlined approaches to rural proofing and policy creation (joint commissioning).

## An Integrated Approach

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- **There was a recognition in West Sussex that in order to be effective, stakeholders must pool knowledge and understanding.**
- **By sharing information and expertise, organisations have managed to refine and enhance their own knowledge of rural issues in a way applicable to them.**
- **Establish their own tailored methods of rural proofing.**
- **Also encouraged new links, bringing together LAA lead officers for National Indicators that possess overlaps.**
- **An emphasis has been placed on all stakeholders recognising the value of responding to the issue of 'rural'.**

## Outputs/Outcomes

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- **West Sussex Rural Strategy Action Plan**
  - ✱ Delivery Plan which links all of the major policies and strategy documents to resources and outputs.
- **West Sussex PCT is producing a Fair Access Strategy**
  - ✱ Unique NI175 . Access to Health Services
- **Appointment of Community Access Development Manager (West Sussex PCT)**
- **AirS produced a revised set of rural proofing questions for policy-makers, now used internally by WSCC and WS PCT for raising staff awareness.**
- **Annual Rural Profile Datasets (WSCC/WS PCT) – shared information based on rural share concept.**

## Outputs/Outcomes

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- Rural/Urban data breakdown is increasingly used across the county.
- Improved consideration of rural in policies and strategies beyond the LAA – more widely understood.
- WSCC is currently considering making ‘rural’ part of its equal opportunities assessment for all policies and projects.
- Rural representative on LAA Core Group (AirS) as Rural Champion.
- Rural Partnership representative on Economy, Skills and Enterprise Board.

## Barriers & Limitations

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- Many centrally developed policy targets serve as disincentives to rural proof & restrict flexibility.
- Lack of obligation to determine the effectiveness of rural proofing i.e. process not outcomes.
- LAA targets may be achieved without improving services to rural areas and people.
- Shortage of rural proofing toolkits/guidance suitable for all stakeholders
  - \* Much of the rural proofing guidance is very generic and is not sufficiently tailored.
  - \* This returns the emphasis to rural specialists who may not have the resources to undertake these tasks.

## Summary

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- **There is no one -size-fits-all approach to rural proofing and mainstreaming which works for all organisations.**
  - ✱ Understanding, flexibility and commitment are key.
  - ✱ General concepts must translate to tangible outcomes.
- **It is a learning process for many and embedding it so that people ‘think rural’ at all times requires time and effort.**
- **Prioritise the means through which needs are identified and delivery mechanisms developed – must match up.**
- **Progress in West Sussex is attributable to partnership working and a consensus on the importance of ‘rural’.**
- **Still a lot that can be improved!**

## **Any Questions?**

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**Any Questions?**

**Feedback?**

**Contact:**

**Simon Kiley**

**(01273) 405451**

**[simon.kiley@ruralsussex.org.uk](mailto:simon.kiley@ruralsussex.org.uk)**

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