



## **Out of the shadows: growth from non-farm rural enterprises Speakers and presentations**

### **Introduction and context setting (10.00-10.10hrs)**

**Speaker and Chair:** Prof Stephen Roper, Director Enterprise Research Centre (ERC)

Stephen Roper is Professor of Enterprise at Warwick Business School and Director of the Enterprise Research Centre. Stephen joined Warwick in 2008 having previously been Professor of Business Innovation at Aston Business School, Birmingham and Assistant Director of the Northern Ireland Economic Research Centre, Belfast. Stephen's research interests include small business development and policy, innovation and regional development. His recent work focuses on innovation and business performance, contextual influences on innovation and the drivers of growth in mid-market companies. Stephen is an Academician of the Academy of Social Sciences and a Fellow of the RSA.

Stephen will introduce the ERC and this Workshop, their first focused engagement with rural enterprises

### **Rural Enterprise Growth – setting the scene (10.10 -10.30hrs)**

**Speaker:** Roger Turner, Consultant in Rural Economies

Roger Turner is an independent consultant working to improve evidence, insight and action for the UK's rural economies. With nearly 40 years' experience of management, advice, advocacy, analysis, and policy development for Britain's rural areas, Roger has played key roles in improving understanding of rural economies, forestry, and in building relations between policy, business, academic and environmental interests.

Employment with chartered surveyors, NFU, RSPB, Countryside Agency and Commission for Rural Economies, took him from advising private, charitable and public landowners and farmers, to influencing development and delivery of national economic, environment and rural policies. Roger has written, presented and commissioned widely on rural economies and land uses, including the report to the last Prime Minister from the Rural Advocate on releasing potential from England's rural economies. He has worked with government departments, agencies, parliamentarians, business, environmental and academic communities across the UK, as well as international bodies such as the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation

and Forum for Forests, Birdlife International and the European Parliament. Roger is an Honorary Fellow of the Centre for Rural Economy, Newcastle University.

Roger will set a context of perception and reality of rural enterprise and the policy landscape for rural economies.

### **Growth, stability or decline in rural enterprises (10.30 -11.00hrs)**

**Speaker:** Michael Ridge, Director, Frontier Economics

Michael is a Board Director and Chief Operating Office at Frontier Economics and leads its Public Policy Practice. He has over 25 years' experience working for government and business, helping to apply economics rigorously but pragmatically to inform decision-making. Michael has provided advice and guidance to a wide range of government departments, non-government bodies and the private sector in the UK and elsewhere. His expertise is broad; and covers the analysis of the drivers of economic growth and development, the evaluation of education and skills programmes, and labour and product market analysis in a wide range of sectors. Michael is currently overseeing detailed analysis of the impact of the financial crisis on businesses in rural areas.

Earlier in his career, Michael worked for the Institute of Fiscal studies and in academia and, before that, for the Department of the Environment, providing strategic advice on a number of rural issues, including policy developments on the viability and vitality of town centres in rural areas and of the impact of the planning system on economic activity.

#### **Summary of Presentation**

Frontier Economics is completing research on recent changes in rural enterprise for Defra (Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs), from which this presentation will be drawn. The main aim of this study has been to gain a better understanding of the types of rural businesses that have, since the onset of the recession in 2008, been growing, declining, or in a stable condition. The analysis focuses on understanding rural business performance relative to urban business performance. A key feature of the analysis in this study has been our ability to examine firm level data using the Virtual Microdata Laboratory facility at the Office of National Statistics. This has allowed us to carry out a fine-grained analysis of sectors and differentiate performance at a reasonably disaggregated geographic level.

#### **REFRESHMENTS**

**(11.00–11.15hrs)**

### **Advice and Training: Rural access to National employer skills and Government business support programme (11.15-11.45hrs)**

**Speaker:** Jim Hillage, Director of Research, Institute for Employment Studies

Jim is able to draw on over 35 years' experience of researching into labour market and employment issues from an individual and an employer perspective and evaluating the direct and indirect effect and impact of a range of policy interventions on employers, individuals and intermediaries. He has a long track record of research into skill supply

and demand in the UK. Jim made a major input to the evidence report for the UK Commission on Employment and Skills (UKCES) 2010 National Skills Audit, has authored a number of Skills Insight papers for the UK Commission and co-wrote the 2012 National Strategic Skills Audit for Wales. In the 2007 Birthday Honours, Jim was awarded the MBE for services to skills and training.

### **Summary of Presentation**

Jim will draw on IES's 2013 research for Defra which examined the extent to which rural businesses access national employer skills programmes and government business support programmes. The study was based on secondary analyses of major employer surveys, supplemented by interviews with employers and others. It found that variations in the take-up of business support services, access to training and response to skill shortages between rural and urban businesses were largely a result of differences in the sectoral and size profile of rural and urban businesses rather than just location.

### **Business Premises: Honey Pots & Hives- Maximizing the potential of rural enterprise hubs (11.45-12.15hrs)**

**Speaker:** Dr Paul Cowie, Research Associate, Centre for Rural Economy, Newcastle University

After over 12 years working as a lawyer specialising in commercial development, Paul returned to academia to study for a PhD. The PhD investigated entrepreneurs who chose to move to a rural area and start a business in the knowledge economy. The research sought to understand how these entrepreneurs engage in local and extra-local networks. Since completing the PhD, Paul works as a Research Associate in the Centre for Rural Economy, Newcastle University and has continued to research rural economic development. The most recent project was a collaboration with the NE Rural Growth Network (NERGN) investigating the role Enterprise Hubs can play in stimulating the rural economy, from which this presentation will be drawn. The NERGN is one of five DEFRA-funded pilot areas designed to test new ways of stimulating economic growth in rural areas.

### **Summary of Presentation**

Many studies in recent years have profiled the steady decline in traditional rural industry and a growth in new knowledge intensive businesses, and brought attention to similarities between the wider rural economy and the national economy, in terms of employment and output. However there remain some significant differences between businesses in rural areas and in the wider economy, both in profile and in structural issues for rural business to overcome, one major one being lack of suitable business premises.

In the new knowledge economy the flow of knowledge, both tacit and codified, is crucial to business success, yet in rural areas the atomised nature of businesses militate against the regular interactions needed to facilitate this flow of knowledge. To address the twin issues of poor knowledge flow and the availability of suitable premises the North East Rural Growth Network (NERGN) initiated a project to create a network of Rural Enterprise Hubs throughout the rural NE of England. At the outset of the project there was only a sketchy understanding of what a rural growth hub should

look like and more importantly do. This paper will outline how the research developed a typology of rural enterprise hubs and a better understanding of their (potential) role in the rural economy, and offer some ideas for strengthening their development and role in helping rural enterprise growth.

**Discussion Session 1: to encourage questions and commentary on issues emerging from presentations 2-5 (12.15 – 12.45hrs)**

**LUNCH AND NETWORKING (12.45 -13.30hrs)**

**Networks and support for under-represented groups: Successful support of rural businesswomen (13.30-14.00hrs)**

**Speaker:** Polly Gibb, Director of WiRE (Women in Rural Enterprise)

Polly has a Biology degree from Oxford University and an MSc in Land Resource Management from Cranfield. After graduating, she spent several years in Less Developed Countries working in agricultural and rural development, latterly in enabling rural women to generate cash through entrepreneurial activity. Since returning to England Polly worked for environmental charities and ran her own rural business, prior to the inception of WiRE. Women in Rural Enterprise or WiRE was formed in 1996 At Harper Adams University, Shropshire by senior lecturer Izzy Warren-Smith, OBE.

Polly was part of the WiRE team which won the Queen's Anniversary Prize for contribution to enterprise in 2005 and became director of WiRE in 2009. In 2013 Polly was awarded an OBE for services to rural enterprise and was named as one of 10 Heroes of the Countryside by HRH Prince Charles.

#### **Summary of Presentation**

Polly will describe the nature and successes of this dynamic UK-wide networking and business club for rural women, and offer some ideas about how WiRE's approach to supporting businesswomen could bring growth in women's enterprise in other places.

**Community-Led Local Development: LEADER and rural growth (14.00-14.30hrs)**

**Speaker:** Dr Gary Bosworth, Reader of Enterprise and Rural Economies, University of Lincoln

Gary lectures in both economics and entrepreneurship and is an active researcher in the fields of rural and regional development, rural migration, home-based enterprises and diversification in the rural economy. As well as publishing a number of journal articles, he has recently co-edited a book entitled "Interpreting Rurality; Multi-disciplinary Perspectives" exploring the diverse meanings of rurality among different research disciplines. Prior to this he completed a PhD in the Centre for Rural Economy at Newcastle, investigating the economic impact of rural in-migration in the North East of England. He has also worked as a Chartered Surveyor at Carter Jonas and has a degree in Land Economy from Cambridge University.

## **Summary of Presentation**

In 2013 Gary led a team of consultants, commissioned by Defra, to review of the effectiveness and impacts of LEADER in delivering rural development. His presentation will draw on this study. LEADER has provided funding for rural development activities across Europe for over 20 years and is founded on the principles of local, bottom-up approaches. Such approaches should therefore give greater weight to local issues, place greater value upon local resources and engage local people in decision making processes. LEADER's success with this approach has directly led the EU to embed Community- Led Local Development (CLLD) schemes in its Structural and Investment Funds from 2014.

From interviews across 20 of the 64 LAGs in England, it has become clear that during the course of this LEADER programme, many LAGs have been able to apply more flexibility to meet local opportunities and challenges. This local learning is an example of how LEADER can empower local actors to “valorise and exploit local territorial resources” (Ray, 2001). Further interviews with 30 beneficiaries of LEADER funding were also used to investigate the economic impact of LEADER for small businesses and the rural economy. In particular, the analysis focuses on the extent to which LEADER has enabled activity that would otherwise not have been possible and the scale of resultant local multiplier effects. We also consider how the process of promoting, allocating and monitoring grants could be improved for future LEADER programmes in ways that will advance rural entrepreneurship and develop synergies with the current rural growth agenda. This presentation will consider how English experience of the LEADER programme, can help other communities and economic delivery bodies to focus, plan and deliver other CLLDs as a valuable driver of sustainable growth.

## **Discussion Session 2: To encourage questions and commentary on issues raised by the afternoon's presentations (14.30 -15.15hrs)**

At the start of this discussion session, we shall also hear about rural firms' Finance for growth needs, from Tim Powell, Senior Business Executive, University of Warwick's Science Park. Tim has been working with SME's and Access to Finance over the last 25+ years as a Banker, Business Owner, Venture Capital Fund Manager & Investor. Currently he manages the University of Warwick's Science Park's Access to Finance business support service, which includes the Minerva Business Angel Investor Network. In addition, Tim manages the Micro-Enterprise Grant scheme aimed at supporting rural businesses in Coventry and Warwickshire with growth plans, available through the Coventry & Warwickshire Rural Growth Network (RGN), one of five areas in England to test measures by which LEPs and local authorities can support rural businesses to grow and diversify. This Rural Economy Grant (REG) was initiated by Defra as one component of the Government's Rural Growth Review.

## **Conclusions and Where Next Prof Stephen Roper (15.15 -15.30hrs)**