

Discussion Paper - The National Council of Rural Advisors (NCRA): *'Changing the Rules of the Game'*

Host: Mr. Ewing, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy

Facilitators: Alison Milne, Co-chair of the NCRA; Sarah Simpson, NCRA member

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BACKGROUND

The National Council of Rural Advisers (NCRA) was established in June 2017 to provide evidence based advice to Scottish Ministers. It is led by co chairs Alison Milne and Lorne Crerar with an additional 12 members drawn from a variety of backgrounds.

The groups remit is to explore the implications of Scotland leaving the EU for the rural economy and to provide recommendations for a sustainable and inclusive rural economy. The Council published its report into the implications for rural Scotland of the UK leaving the EU in November 2017 and will publish a discussion document on its work in June 2018. This will be followed by an informal consultation with a final report in September.

The NCRA's work provides a unique opportunity for businesses and organisations to shape the future of the rural economy and is eager to learn from those with expertise gained from working and living in rural areas.

NCRA Co Chair, Alison Milne, has chaired 11 regional 'Rural thinks' workshops throughout 2018 across Scotland with representatives from many sectors across small and medium enterprises, social enterprises, non-governmental organisations and many more. Themes have included infrastructure, vision and people.

The National Economic Forum provides an opportunity to contribute to that process.

VISION AND PRIORITIES

Scotland's rural economy is diverse, rich in both natural and human capital, capable of delivering significant benefit to Scotland as a whole. With rural businesses making up 30% of Scotland's businesses and generating over £37.6 billion annually. Now is the time to embrace a diverse rural agenda, capitalise on the opportunities afforded by innovation and the 'can do' approach of rural communities.

To realise this vision, we must think creatively to redefine traditional ideas of 'growth', envisaging the rural economy more aptly as a system where industry sectors are interconnected and success built on collaborative working and shared strategic aims.

The NCRA's work provides a unique opportunity to capture the contribution of the rural economic system to measure the environmental and social impacts of rural business, work towards designing a joined up policy infrastructure that drives sustainable growth to release the truly vast potential of the rural economy.

WORKSHOP QUESTIONS

This workshop presents an opportunity to

1. Capture your views on the emerging vision for a vibrant, sustainable and productive rural economy
2. Think creatively about how we think and act differently to breed success
3. Discuss how we overcome barriers when seeking to achieve our aims to;
 - Invest in people through skills development and the provision of meaningful job and career opportunities for people in rural areas
 - Ensure that we have the right public services in place to grow local populations
 - Ensure that we have good digital, transport connectivity to sustain the flow of people, goods and services
 - Tailor opportunities for stimulating innovation, investment and growth in our local economies
 - Overcoming regulatory burdens to grasp the opportunities afforded by innovation
 - Empower communities, strengthen social networks and encourage community based ownership