

Coast to Capital Board Meeting No. 31 22 September 2016	Ref No.
22 September 2016	31.12
Report Title: Rural Economy Committee Progress Report	
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Recommendation

The Board is asked to **note** the contents of this paper

Background

- 1. The Rural Economy Committee aims to provide increased focus on the economic development of Coast to Capital's extensive rural area and to identify the opportunities for expansion in the rural economy. Given the size and nature of the rural economy, this will be essential, if we are to meet our aims for increased growth in productivity and jobs. As well as comprising the majority of the land, the rural area contains over a fifth of the businesses and 15% of residents in Coast to Capital. It is responsible for 27% of Coast to Capital's output.
- 2. The Rural Economy Committee meets quarterly and has twenty members, drawn from a wide range of organisations including businesses.

 Representatives from the Environment Agency and Natural England provide expert input on technical areas such as climate change.

Rural Economy Committee: progress

- 3. Following the successful launch of the Coast to Capital Rural Statement in July 2016, work has now begun on the action plan to deliver the priorities under the three areas of:
 - The rural economy
 - Rural people and communities
 - Rural environment and sustainable development.
- 4. The draft action plan will be presented to the next meeting of the Rural Economy Committee in October. Some revision of the priorities may be required to take account of recent developments such as the results of the EU Referendum and its impact on rural policy as well as the expected announcement on airport expansion.

Summary of priorities

Rural Economy

CHALLENGES

- Variable rates of start-up and growth
- Distance from suppliers and markets
 Weaker agglomeration effects leading to lower
- knowledge transfer and innovation
 Constraints on business growth including:
 Skills, premises, planning, ICT etc, services, networking, knowledge transfer.

PRIORITIES

- 1. Growing the rural business population and supporting entrepreneurship
- 2. Meeting businesses' skills needs
- 3. Supporting priority business sectors
- 4. Improving infrastructure including ICT & transport
- 5. Finding more employment sites and premises

Rural People and Communities

CHALLLENGES

- High cost of housing and the wage gap
 Travel to work and learn, loss of local jobs
 - Ageing population
- Hidden deprivation and fuel poverty
- Access to services
- Community assets under threat
- Some market towns in decline or under threat of decline/ becoming dormitory towns

PRIORITIES

- 1. Promoting access to work, learning opportunities, skills and services for all
- 2. Building community cohesion and protecting community assets in our towns, villages and dispersed communities
- 3. Supporting our market towns and helping them to repurpose their high streets, extend their service offer & improve their appeal to all age groups

Rural Environment

CHALLENGES

- Climate change including flooding
 Balancing ecology and biodiversity with growth
- Addressing water stress increased demand
- > Loss of landscape value e.g. lowland heath
- > Damage to water resources e.g. nitrates
- Lack of affordable housing
- Poor rail and road links

PRIORITIES - Environment

- 1. Protecting and enhancing biodiversity
- 2. Mitigating the impact of, and adapting to, climate change.
- 3. Understanding the benefits of ecosystem services

PRIORITIES - Sustainable development

- 1. Developing sustainable solutions and finding affordable housing & employment sites
- 2. Supporting sustainable improvements to transport infrastructure & extending access