

HINTERLAND rural intelligence from behind the headlines

Weekly summary - 4 February 2011



Ivan is on the road again- this time holidaying in Lanzarote. This week's Hinterland contains a rich mix of environmental, social and economic issues affecting the countryside - from the future of nature reserves to school closures/openings, unemployment and debt.

What emerges here is how rural communities must be given opportunities to shape and take decisions. With the Government setting out some key policy proposals around the road network, public forest estate, fire and rescue and flooding (see 'consultations'), now is an opportune time for RSN Members to ensure that the needs and aspirations of rural dwellers are not overlooked but have made to measure policies.

Ivan returns next week.

Jessica Sellick

jessica.sellick@roseregeneration.co.uk

Wardens plan to rescue 140 nature reserves



(Link: [The Independent, 1 February](#))

Did you know that there are currently 224 National Nature Reserves (NNRs) in England and one Marine Nature Reserve at Lundy covering a total area of 94,400 hectares (or 0.6% of the country's land surface)?

The largest is the Wash NNR (8,800 hectares) and the smallest Horn Park Quarry in Dorset (0.32 hectares). Natural England manages two-thirds of NNRs with one-third managed by other bodies such as the National Trust, the Forestry Commission, RSPB, local authorities and Wildlife Trusts.

This article sets out proposals by the Government for other bodies to take on the running of reserves presently managed by Natural England. However, the charities concerned have indicated that they would not be willing to do so unless their management was fully funded by the Government (estimated at £10 million annually).

In a further development, the 170 Natural England wardens and site managers who look after these reserves are now proposing their own rescue plan by setting up a mutual or social interest company to run the reserves - a proposal backed by Natural England.

This article raises important issues around access, ownership, conservation, public benefits and pressures on land use (see Foresight Landuse Futures by clicking [here](#)). It also resonates with Government plans to 'sell off' publicly owned forests (more on this in 'consultations').

Tiny Yorkshire dales school is saved from closure

About Us:

Hinterland is an exclusive weekly service offering a rural perspective on national news events from the past week.

It is provided by the [Rural Services Network](#) - a national network devoted to safeguarding and improving services in rural communities across England.

We are the only national network focusing specifically on this vital aspect of rural life.

www.rsonline.org.uk

Rural news

- [Cuts threaten rural bus services](#)
- [Rural test bed for Cameron's Big Society?](#)
- [Councils slam funding settlement](#)
- [Rural England has 'significant' role](#)
- [Big Society lacks clarity - report](#)
- [Join Big Society, councils urged](#)
- [Hundreds apply for regional funding](#)
- [Inquiry into rural heating oil](#)
- [Watchdog wants cheaper broadband](#)
- [£560m boost for local](#)



(Link: [The Guardian, 1 February](#))

Kettlewell Primary School in North Yorkshire - which has averaged fewer than 30 pupils in recent years and been rated as 'outstanding' by Ofsted (the schools inspectorate) - has been saved from closure.

This article recounts how the entire local community has campaigned and worked tirelessly to keep the school open. If the closure had been approved, children would have had a 17-mile journey to school.

The article quotes Gervase Phinn, an author and former schools inspector in the Yorkshire dales, as saying: "Rural schools are a precious thing. They don't just provide an education. Often they are the central heartbeat of the village. We have to do everything possible to ensure they continue."

Last year, the Commission for Rural Communities (CRC) published a report on the importance of village schools in providing extended services to families living in rural areas (available [here](#)).

This story highlights the continual battle that rural schools face in balancing competing demands of serving the needs of local children with demonstrating that they are financially viable and providing value-for-money for the taxpayer.

Villages to get protection from satnav mayhem



(Link: [Daily Telegraph, 1 February](#))

Local authorities will be given greater control over how their roads appear on maps and satnav systems, according to the Department for Transport (DfT).

Transport Minister Norman Baker has described how "the current system dates back to the 1960s and is a hangover from the days of Whitehall-knows-best. I believe in giving power to local people. This reform will cut red tape and mean councils can better control traffic in their area".

In practice, the updated information provided by local authorities could be fed to sat nav companies to ensure their maps are current and warn drivers that roads may be unsuitable for certain vehicles. The proposals follow a series of incidents involving lorries and coaches wedging themselves under bridges or down country lanes.

There has been much discussion at my professional body - The Royal Geographical Society - about whether sat nav and other cartographic technologies are leading us to discard atlases and paper maps and lose basic map-reading skills. (For more details about the DfT's proposals and how you can participate see 'consultations').

Debt advice funding axed by government



(Link: [The Guardian, 1 February](#))

Mark Hoban, financial secretary to The Treasury has confirmed that funding for the Financial Inclusion Fund (FIF), a project financing the training and running of 500 specialist debt advisors will end in March.

Charities have warned that the closure means

[transport](#)

- [England's improved rural landscapes](#)

- [Another LEP unveiled for north-east](#)

- [Downturn hits rural housing prospects](#)

- [Boost for rural mobile broadband](#)

- [Rural recycling is among the best](#)

- [Councillors 'free' to back local issues](#)

- [2011: challenging year for rural England](#)

- [New Year Honours 2011 - rural awards](#)

- [Concern voiced over impact of LEPS](#)

- ['Unfair' tax will hurt rural economy](#)

- [Fly-tipping 'costs councils too much'](#)

- [Councils face 4.4% spending cuts](#)

- [Government unveils Localism Bill](#)

- [New compact for voluntary sector](#)

- [Lottery Fund targets communities](#)

- [Rural households left out in the cold](#)

- [Getting broadband to communities](#)

- [Jubilee lottery grants unveiled](#)

- [Network fears for rural bus services](#)

many will be forced to either reduce the number of clients that they take on or close services altogether. Since 2006, the funding has been used to help 379,000 people manage more than £6 billion of debt. Citizens Advice secured funding under FIF to increase the availability of face-to-face debt advice to financially excluded clients, helping 70,000 clients a year. Ely Citizens Advice, for example, used the funding to allow case workers to meet unmet need in rural areas and reduce waiting times for advice.

Confirmation of the FIF funding cuts come at a time when demand for debt advice is increasing - the Money Advice Trust estimates that 2 million people will seek debt advice in 2011 - and when local authorities who also provide funding for debt advice are looking to make 20-40% reductions during the next four years in line with the general spending cuts that they face.

MPs hold crisis talks as Pfizer closes research plant



(Link: [BBC Online, 2 February](#))

Pfizer, a global pharmaceutical company, currently employs over 2,400 people in the discovery, development, manufacture and marketing of human and animal medicines at its main site at Sandwich in Kent. The company provides medicines taken by 2.7 million Britons every day!

Pfizer has hit the headlines this week revealing its intention to close the Kent base as part of a strategy to "create a more focused and sustainable R&D engine for innovation". Over the next 18-24 months many of the staff at the plant will be made redundant and several hundred positions are likely to transfer to other Pfizer sites or to external partners. The decision could also have a knock on effect for 3,000 people who work in support businesses (e.g. catering, cleaning).

Business Secretary Vince Cable has set up a local taskforce to be mitigate the impact of the decision. This will be led by Kent County Council Leader Paul Carter who would like to attract a consortia to set up a science park on the site. Debates as to whether the decision was motivated by Pfizer's global reorganisation or concern about the strength of British science (a claim refuted by the Science Minister David Willetts) have already begun.

Sadly, the decision comes at a time when TV scientist Brian Cox has been promoting science, medicine and engineering careers to children and universities have witnessed a rise in applications, particularly for physics.

Consultations

[Simple financial products - HM Treasury](#)

The government wants views from all interested parties - including the financial services industry and consumers themselves - on how simple products can best be developed and implemented, what the challenges such an initiative would present and how these can be overcome. The intention is to help people to choose the right financial services product for their needs and be able to trust the market to give them a

· [Satellite to bridge rural digital divide](#)

· [Rural life is 20% more expensive - report](#)

· [Worst broadband 'notspot' identified](#)

· [Watchdog: LEPs 'must listen to rural'](#)

· [Rural house prices double in a decade](#)

· [Community cash for new homes](#)

(c)[Ruralcity Media](#)

brought to you by:



[Rose Regeneration](#)

fair deal. *Closes 25 March 2011.*

Draft Sustainable Development Guidance for Local Flood Authorities - Defra

This consultation invites views on our draft sustainable development guidance for Local Flood Authorities. Section 27 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 states that a lead local flood authority, district council, internal drainage board or highways authority must aim to make a contribution towards the achievement of sustainable development when exercising a flood or coastal erosion risk management function. The Act requires the Secretary of State to issue guidance about how authorities are to discharge this duty. This draft guidance has been developed for that purpose. *Closes 16 Feb 2011.*

Road network policy consultation - the Department for Transport

The DFT is proposing to devolve responsibility on the classification of local roads. The Department wants to increase the freedom of local authorities to set road classifications and routes on the primary route network, and to reduce its role in guidance and appeals cases. The consultation outlines existing policy on the strategic road network, data reporting procedures and how satellite navigation technology fits into existing arrangements and includes a set of questions for response. *Closes 1 May 2011.*

Future of the public forest estate

This consultation is about the future ownership and management of the public forest estate in England (NB: land that is currently managed by the Forestry Commission on behalf of the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs). The consultation document sets out a rationale for a move away from the Government owning and managing significant areas of woodlands in England and the principles which will guide the Government in deciding the way forward. Defra is inviting views on its mixed model approach, the safeguards for providing public benefits and alternative approaches.

This consultation has already attracted a great deal of press attention with 300,000 people (and counting) signing an online petition; MPs representing rural constituencies being put under pressure to rebel against the Government's plans; and the Country Land and Business Association (CLA) coming out in favour of the sell-off. There was an interesting cartoon in the Daily Telegraph of Pooh Bear and Piglet standing in front of a sign that read "100 acre wood privatised property". I urge Hinterland readers to read the proposals and contribute to the consultation. *Closes 21 April 2011*

The future of fire and rescue control services in England

Communities and Local Government (CLG) is seeking views on the future arrangements of fire and rescue control services in England following the decision to close down the FiReControl project. The FiRe project was part of the previous Government's Fire and Resilience Programme launched in 2004 to replace standalone fire and rescue service control rooms with nine regional control centres. While there are no

public safety implications emerging from the decision to cancel the project, the Government is seeking views on what lessons can be learnt from FiReControl, the role of central Government in supporting fire and rescue authorities (including service delivery) and setting funding priorities. *Closes 8 April 2011.*

Simple financial products

HM Treasury is aiming to gather views from all interested parties (including the financial services industry and consumers themselves) on how simple products can best be developed and implemented; what the challenges such an initiative would present; and how these challenges can be overcome. The intention is to help people choose the right financial product for their needs and trust the market to give them a fair deal. *Closes 25 March 2011.*

Draft Sustainable Development Guidance for Local Flood Authorities

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is inviting views on its draft sustainable development guidance for Local Flood Authorities. Section 27 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 states that 'a lead local flood authority, district council, internal drainage board or highways authority must aim to make a contribution towards the achievement of sustainable development when exercising a flood or coastal erosion risk management function'. The Act requires the Secretary of State to issue guidance about how authorities are to discharge this duty. This draft guidance has been developed for that purpose. *Closes 16 February 2011.*

An invitation to shape the nature of England (an update)

Last year the Government invited comments and submissions from anyone with an interest in the Natural Environment White Paper. Defra received more than 15,000 responses. A factual summary of these responses is now available online [here](#). The responses will feed into the development of the White Paper which Defra is due to publish this spring. Watch this space.

--

The Rural Services Network - working with Knight Frank



Knight Frank is RSN's property partner and specialises in helping the Public Sector maximise the value of its rural property portfolios. This is particularly important at a time when budgets are under immense pressure.

Because we are the only Office of Government Commerce (OGC) approved rural property consultancy, we can provide immediate strategic advice if needed. Our specialisms include strategic asset reviews, Landlord and Tenant compliance assessments, enhancing capital and revenue positions and full or partial management.

For a no obligation discussion, please contact rsn@knightfrank.com. To find out more about our services, please look at our [website](#).

--

LPGenius from Calor - Our Energy Partner



Calor Gas Ltd is the RSN's energy partner and the UK's leading supplier of bulk and bottled LPG (Liquefied

Petroleum Gas) - a low carbon, low cost energy solution for rural homes and businesses.

Calor LPG plays a vital role in meeting the countryside's diverse energy requirements and is used in thousands of applications across many different sectors. And we don't just supply LPG; we are continually innovating and investing in new technologies to bring the next generation of energy efficient and renewable appliances to the rural market.

Fuelling the British countryside since 1935, we offer unmatched service and customer support. Visit www.calor.co.uk or call 0800 181 4530. Alternatively, email at Holly Sims at hsims@calor.co.uk.

And finally...

The pig that thinks he's a dog earns himself a place in CANINE display team

Daily Mail

A real life adaptation of the film 'Babe' here with Louie-the-pig going for walks on a lead alongside dogs, responding to his name and playing fetch. Louie has now won himself a place in a canine display team.

Apparently Louie loves ginger biscuits and his owner's ultimate ambition is for him to compete in Crufts! As many Hinterland readers are aware I volunteer for a farming charity in County Durham. One of the farmers has a sheep dog named 'Jess' whom I discovered this week has to go to training school because all she does is chase sheep and cause general chaos on the farm.

Let's hope in six-weeks time that Jess earns her place in non-competitive sheep herding trials!

Forward email



This email was sent to wintoncouncil@talktalk.net by newsletters@rsnonline.org.uk | Instant removal with [SafeUnsubscribe™](#) | [Privacy Policy](#).

Ruralcity Media | National Rural Enterprise Centre | Stoneleigh Park | Kenilworth | Warwickshire | CV8 2RR | null