

Summary of informal EPDG Workshops held in October and November 2021 and January 2022

Date	Subject matter / Expert	MDDC intervention	Actions undertaken	Completion date
28 th October 2021	Phil Adams, DCC Senior Manager	<p>Main topics of discussion were: Broadband – CDS rollout.</p> <p>Skills outreach & hardest to reach into employment</p>	<p>By Chance Scrutiny committee met on 8th Nov with a presentation by the CDS team in DCC. A working party was formed to engage cllrs directly with CDS – See appendix one below</p> <p>Engaged with Petroc College. see below 20th Jan</p>	End of March 2022

25 th Nov 2021	Andrew Butler NFU County Advisor	<p>Andrew provided a comprehensive breakdown of the interventions that LA's could undertake to support the NFUs three Net Zero Pillars:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing Emissions through Productivity • Carbon Storage • Renewables and the Bio Economy 	Working with our climate change officer, development team and forward planning to see what interventions/ changes we can make to support the NFUs net zero interventions- See appendix two below	ongoing
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20 th Jan 2022	Sean Mackney CEO Petroc College	<p>Sean gave a summary of the Economic and labour needs for the future:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over the next 10 years the HoSW predicts the health and care sector will produce more jobs than any other sector due to an aging population • Integrated care systems • Massive home building • Green technologies 	<p>The college also centred on visibility and outreach within Tiverton town centre</p> <p>Currently awaiting proposals from Petroc College on how we can achieve this.</p> <p>Timelines are dictated by the college and their strategic board.</p>	More to follow – estimate late April
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data science <p>New approaches created by AI and automation replace low skill roles and create high skilled ones</p>		
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Appendix One:

Project Outline for Scrutiny Reviews:

Review Title	Broadband in the 'very hard to reach' areas of the District.
Members	Cllr Mrs Colthorpe; Cllr R Radford
Officer Support	Clare Robathan, Scrutiny Officer Jason Berry, Project Manager, Economic Recovery
<p><u>Rationale:</u></p> <p>Why is the review important?</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified by Members as a key issue for the public? • Poor performing service? • Service considered important by the community? • Public interest covered in local media? 	<p>At the November meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, Members heard from Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS) that there are some 1,700 premises across the district that fall into the 'very hard to reach' category. Consequently, these areas of the district could find themselves without access to broadband, or without a clear understanding of the options available to them.</p> <p>In Mid Devon, a considerable number of residents live in the 'very hard to reach' places. CDS, however, continues to accept that a percentage of our residents will not be supplied with decent broadband unless they pay for it themselves.</p> <p>It is in the interests of the whole district's economy, particularly in the wake of the pandemic, that everyone should be able to access high quality broadband. Whilst the offer from CDS to assist Newbrooke and Halberton wards in accessing the 'granular data' of the missing premises, is of course helpful, this information should be available to all of Mid Devon's wards. It will in fact be the Members, and the Members of Parish Councils, who will have the detailed information on the premises in their wards that are currently not scheduled for rollout.</p>
<p><u>Review aims, objectives</u></p> <p>What does the review hope to achieve? Identify what will be included and what is achievable.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify what is being done and what the 	<p>Understanding where the hard to reach premises are, and engaging with them, will be important, so that residents can be made aware of their options at an early stage. Doing this work now will help ensure that those very small communities and individuals can make their voices heard at the right moment, and early enough to be factored into surveying or scheduling, if possible.</p> <p>MDDC will work directly with the provider, Airband. In March,</p>

<p>potential barriers are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore existing initiatives and determine if they are appropriately joined up • Review performance indicators • Compare our policies with those of a neighbouring authority • Assess the environmental /social impacts 	<p>Airband was selected by CDS to expand its full fibre coverage into rural areas of Somerset West and Taunton, parts of Sedgemoor, East Devon, as well as Mid Devon, South Hams and Teignbridge.</p> <p>Airband will work directly with Members to understand where the hard to reach areas are in the District. This will involve working closely with all Members and Parish Councils to understand where the ‘not spots’ are in the District. Working Directly with Airband will ensure that this work is actioned immediately, and can be factored into their future surveying work.</p> <p>Airband will hold all Member briefings in January to talk about the challenges currently in the District, before aiming to speak to every Member of the Council about their ward to understand where all the hard to reach areas/properties are.</p> <p>This kind of information gathering exercise would be very beneficial, for both the district and Airband, as Airband could then look to schedule these areas into their plans.</p> <p>Progress and outcomes will be fed back to the Scrutiny Committee .</p>
<p><u>Desired Outcomes</u></p>	<p>The understanding and identification of all premises in the ‘very hard to reach’ areas of the District. Options for rollout and connection are then presented to these residents.</p>
<p><u>Methodology / Approach</u> What type of enquiry will be used to gather evidence? For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk based review of papers • Site visits / observations • Comparisons with other authorities • Process mapping • Public meetings • Interviewing officers • Calling witnesses/experts to give evidence 	<p>This will be an ongoing project, overseen by Scrutiny.</p>
<p><u>Witness / Experts</u></p> <p>An important part of the scoping process includes deciding what people should be asked for interview.</p>	<p>This work will take place by Airband, who will work closely with Members of MDDC and Parish and Town Councils.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive Members and officers are required by the Constitution to attend to explain decisions. Other people may be invited to discuss issues of local concern and / or answer questions but are not required to attend. It may be more beneficial to visit people for an informal chat. 	
<u>Timescales</u> What will be done and by when. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start date Meeting frequency Draft report deadline Projected completion date 	The All Member Briefing will take place in January, and meetings with Airband will then take place in February and March.
<u>Target Body for Findings / Recommendations</u>	Scrutiny Committee

Work plan

January

Terms of reference and work plan drafted and discussed with Cllr Colthorpe and Cllr Radford (zoom).
All Member email to Members with information on the project.
Article in WIS.
Article in Town and Parish Newsletter and further promotion of All Member briefing.

February

All Member briefing with Airband by zoom on Thursday 3 February. Airband will give an overview of the current situation in the District, and present the aims of the project to Members.

February/March

Members will be asked to attend individual slots with Airband, possibly with Parish Council representatives, to discuss their Ward in detail. These will be coordinated by Member Services.

April

Progress reported to Scrutiny.

APPENDIX 2:

Net Zero and Agriculture – NFU working together with MDDC to achieve Net Zero

Farmers and growers are central to a zero carbon economy.

We ask that local authorities work with farmers and growers, to include the measures outlined here in their Climate Change Emergency plans, local plans, economic development strategies, own procurement strategies and how they develop funding bids with LEPs.

National predictions are for the low carbon economy to grow four times faster than the rest of the economy. Farmers and the land they manage can play a part in this clean growth through decarbonising agricultural production, as well as delivering products and services which replace fossil fuels and remove or store carbon.

The NFU is committed to achieving net zero agriculture by 2040. The UK can enhance its status as a world leader in climate-friendly food production, ensuring a sustainable food supply within the UK, and at the same time strengthening the economy. To do this agriculture needs the support of all policymakers to provide an enabling environment in which farms can provide GHG mitigation and other services.

Our aim is for a productive, profitable and sustainable agriculture sector, with skilled, capable and innovative farmers accelerating our national transition to a net zero economy.

Part of the solution

Agriculture is uniquely placed as both the source of 10% of UK emissions as well as a sink. Farming captures carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the air and turns it into a wide range of foods, fibres, and fuels. By capturing and storing carbon, we can generate negative emissions – actively removing CO₂ from the atmosphere to balance the CH₄ and N₂O emissions from food production. Farmers also manage substantial carbon reserves already present in soils and vegetation.

Local authorities

Local authorities have an essential role in supporting agriculture with strategic policies for clean growth in the rural economy. An agile planning approach linked to funding opportunities will help farmers and growers plan, innovate and deliver a net zero future.

The NFU's net zero aspiration in three pillars:

Pillar one: Boosting productivity to reduce emissions

Improving farming's productive efficiency will enable farmers to produce the same quantity of food, or more, with less inputs, in smarter ways. This in turn will reduce greenhouse gas emissions

Ways that local authorities can help reduce emissions in the food chain include the following:

1. Reduce emissions in the food chain
2. Increase efficiency with farm building modernisation
3. Digitisation
4. Transport Infrastructure
5. Invest in technologies and best practice
6. Research and development

1. Reduce Emissions in the food chain

Promoting a fair price for quality, locally produced food, encouraging a healthy and balanced diet. Supporting public procurement of local produce; simplifying the process and improving practice would help more local and regional producers supporting climate-friendly food chains, such as more localised processing, packing, distribution and marketing, reduced consumer travel and handling food waste at a district and county level. Continuing involvement in regional and national frameworks and groups such as LEPs, flooding and coastal committees, local food groups and local nature partnerships.

2. Farm building modernisation

Replacement and modernisation of farm buildings can improve thermal and energy efficiency. As the climate changes, keeping livestock and high-value crops in optimum condition could become more important for health and welfare. All farms will benefit from flexible planning approaches to modernise buildings.

3. Digitalisation

The rollout of high-speed broadband and mobile is desperately needed to enable farmers to adopt more efficient technology. According to the [NFU's Digital Technology Survey](#), carried out last autumn, farmers with superfast broadband are more likely to invest and expand their farm businesses and take advantage of wider business opportunities. But the necessary digital infrastructure requires greater planning and investment in rural areas by central government and local authorities. *Note: there is a clear link here to the work of CDS and the other workstream related to rural broadband connectivity.*

4. Transport and infrastructure

In rural England, 'the choices and opportunities available to a community are limited by a lack of public transport', according to the [Transport deserts report](#) published by charity CPRE last year.

Rural drivers travel, on average, more than 50% further than their urban counterparts, and this increased reliance on cars leaves rural areas vulnerable as petrol and diesel cars are phased out over the coming decade. Government support for electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure needs specifically to be targeted at rural economies to sustain businesses and support tourism. But farmers can provide opportunities to host infrastructure at farm shops or on the edge of villages.

5. Invest in technologies and best practice

Fuel use accounts for around 11% of total agricultural greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, according to DEFRA statistics from 2019. In the longer term, electrification of agricultural machinery will reduce emissions; but in the meantime there is a continued role for biofuel blends such as E10 ethanol and B20 biodiesel.

If farmers are to support this endeavour, they will need help from local authorities with capital investment in technology and infrastructure. Local industrial strategies administered through LEPs must be appropriate for rural areas, giving small and micro businesses access to investment in new technology and new facilities for herd health monitoring, slurry management and nutrient management, as well as mid-career business training.

6. Research and development

Local authorities can also enable the development of science parks, research centres and other knowledge-based jobs in the rural economy. Emerging technology developed through such initiatives could significantly reduce emissions, as well as create jobs. For example, agricultural robots powered by on-site clean energy generation, farm machinery that reduces diesel use, and feed additives that lower methane emissions are all being trialled.

Pillar two: Storing of carbon in farmland,

By conserving what's already there and changing land management and use we can capture more carbon – in soils, bigger hedgerows and trees.

1. Managing and planting trees and hedgerows
2. Carbon trading

1. Managing and planting trees and hedgerows

There are 565,000ha of tree cover in England outside woodlands, and its value is often overlooked in policy. Trees and hedgerows contribute significantly to carbon sequestration, biodiversity and landscape character, and farmers can plant and manage trees in ways which work for their existing business.

Around 40% of existing woodland is not actively managed at present, so this should be encouraged as a priority by making funding more accessible.

Planting needs specialist advice, though, because the right tree in the right place can benefit water quantity and quality, biodiversity, productivity and carbon storage. Domestic production can be encouraged by sourcing British-grown saplings, while new markets can also be promoted for local timber and wood fuel.

But conversion to woods is currently treated as irreversible land-use change, which presents challenges for farmers in terms of contracts, payments and taxation. It may also be difficult for tenant farmers to make long-term changes, or for others who are unable to tie up their assets when the future is so uncertain.

2. Carbon trading and offset

Rural businesses could provide carbon offsetting services through a competitive tender process and companies could purchase offsets by funding green projects on farms for example:

- Farms could also set aside and manage less productive areas of land for carbon storage.

- Enable new tourism, business and residential development to cross subsidise woodland creation, peat restoration and other forms of carbon

Pillar three: Renewables and the bio-economy

To displace greenhouse gas emissions from the fossil fuels and to create GHG removal through photosynthesis and carbon capture

1. Clean energy
2. Bio-based products
3. District heating

1. Clean energy:

Decarbonisation of energy production is crucial in reaching net zero, with the UK needing to triple its solar power generation alone by 2030. A return to low-cost onshore wind power is also expected. Farmers and growers are particularly well placed to help, given they have the land to host or generate renewable energy. About 40% of farmers already have some form of renewable energy production on site, and it is estimated that they own or host more than half the UK's solar power and anaerobic digestion, which generates biofuel or biogas from farm waste and bioenergy crops, as well as most onshore wind power. There's clearly an appetite among farmers to diversify into new income streams from solar and wind, heat and electricity from biomass, anaerobic digestion, and bioenergy crops.

Local authorities can support farms by putting in place policy to promote the necessary infrastructure: planning can be challenging for those wanting to install renewables on their farms, and a transparent system must be accessible to all farmers and growers. Authorities can also help to fast-track grid connection capacity by funding the necessary reinforcement of existing power networks, and supporting knowledge exchange.

2. Production of bio-products

Another way that local authorities can help is to promote the market for bio-based products; it is growing, but there needs to be significant scale-up to encourage new supply chains and give farmers the confidence to invest. These products – which include hemp fibre, miscanthus, and wood chip and wool for housing insulation and carpet manufacture – can lock up carbon in long-term stores and contribute to the circular economy.

3. District heating

More could also be made of the potential for farms to contribute to district heating network systems for new residential and business developments in rural areas, as in EU countries such as Austria. Local authorities should offer farmers and landowners opportunities to provide heat network services or fuel feedstocks as a planning condition for new housing development.

In addition:

Skills and training

In its 2019 report Achieving Net Zero: Farming's 2040 Goal, the NFU estimated that to reduce agricultural emissions by around 25% farmers need new skills and technology. However, farmers are already busy and may find it difficult to access training and business

change advice; some colleges provide relevant training, but it can be expensive and hard to reach from remote rural locations.

Most farmers tend to develop an understanding of new ideas from their friends, family, peers, trusted advisers and any clusters or groups with which they are involved. They also attend agricultural events to learn about new technology and new opportunities. Some of the ways that local authorities can help them, therefore, include holding and supporting farmer-focused events where they can share knowledge and gain local support for new technologies and ways of working, as well as funding and promoting local demonstration sites and initiatives.

Stuart Roberts says: 'Local authorities and farmers have a shared goal – to tackle climate change. By working together, we can continue to build a more productive, profitable and sustainable agriculture sector and in turn accelerate our national transition to a net-zero economy.'

Local authorities can:

1. Support net zero champions in your local area – farmers and advisors – who can build consensus around low carbon and net zero approaches
2. Work in partnership with existing training providers to create training and educational opportunities for existing rural businesses
3. Hold and support farmer focussed events to share knowledge, understanding and local buy-in for new technologies and new ways of working
4. Fund and promote demonstration sites and initiatives throughout your local authority area