

Rural Policy and Local Assets: speaker biographies



Sir Don Curry

Sir Donald Curry chaired the Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food which reported to Government in January 2002. The report "Farming and Food, a sustainable future" was widely endorsed by both Government and stakeholders and is regarded as providing an important new vision for the farming and food industry. Government policy is now based on the reports recommendations and he is currently Chairing a Delivery Group with responsibility for driving forward the Government's Sustainable Farming and Food Strategy.

Sir Don is Chairman of the NFU Mutual Insurance Company and a former Crown Estate Commissioner from 2000 to 2007. He was first appointed an MLC Commissioner in October 1986 and Chaired the Commission from September 1993 until April 2001. He was a founder, and is Chair of 'At Home in the Community', a charity providing care in the North East for people with learning disabilities. He was awarded a CBE for his services to Agriculture in the 1997 and a Knighthood in 2001. Sir Don is currently Chair of the Countryside and Community Research Institute (CCRI) Board of Directors. He also farms 440 acres in Northumberland comprising arable and lowland grass.



Damian Maye

A Senior Research Fellow in the CCRI, Dr Damian Maye is a rural geographer with research interests in agricultural restructuring, food supply chains and rural development. He is particularly interested in the growth of alternative and local food networks, CAP reform, farm tenancy, farm diversification, and plant disease management and biopolitics. He also has an on-going research interest in the geography of micro-brewing and the real ale economy.

James Kirwan

Dr James Kirwan is a Senior Research Fellow in the CCRI whose main research interests are concerned with the socio-economic impacts of the agro-food system, particularly the relationship between the production and consumption of food and any resultant impacts on sustainable rural development. He is currently involved in a European project that is examining the design, implementation and impacts of European rural development policy.



Chris Short



Chris Short is a Senior Research Fellow in the CCRI with considerable expertise in issues relating to collective action and shared resources, notably common land and town and village greens within England and Wales. Chris's main research interests lie in the relationship between different land uses for agriculture, forestry, nature conservation, equine businesses and recreation. He also has particular interests in the development and implementation of integrated rural development and agri-environment policy.

Julie Ingram

A Research Fellow in the CCRI, Dr Julie Ingram's main research interests are concerned with the socio-economic aspects of agriculture in relation to policy, practice, management and the environment. She is particularly interested in knowledge exchange within the agricultural community.



Malcolm Moseley

As Professor of Rural Community Development in the CCRI, Malcolm's expertise spans three main areas: rural governance, rural community development and the efficient and equitable delivery of rural services. From 2005 -07 he was a member of the Carnegie Commission for Rural Community Development – which culminated in a 'Charter for Rural Communities' focussing on 'rural assets' Malcolm has recently written a book 'Glimpses of Rural England' which revisits nine of his recent research projects looking for an underlying 'big picture'.

Peter Gaskell

Dr Peter Gaskell is a specialist in studies of the historic environment, landscape change and agri-environmental policy. He has particular expertise in the design and evaluation of research methodologies. A Senior Research Fellow, Peter heads up the Heritage and Landscape research cluster in the CCRI.



Jane Mills



Jane Mills is a Senior Research Fellow in the CCRI whose main research interests focus on socio-economic aspects of agri-environmental policy, agricultural change and environmental management. She is particularly interested in the collective management of the natural environment at a landscape-scale for biodiversity and natural resource protection objectives.

Nigel Curry

Nigel Curry is Professor of Countryside Planning and Director of the CCRI. Nigel's research interests cohere around the notion of equity. In this context he has undertaken over 30 years of research into aspects of the rural economy, the planning process and communities in rural areas. Nigel also has undertaken work on land rights and access to land. His current research includes a large-scale evaluation of the contribution that older people make to rural civic society.



Rhiannon Fisher

Rhiannon Fisher is currently working as a research assistant on the CCRI's 'Grey and Pleasant Land' project that examines the contribution of older people to rural civic society. Her main research interest is in social capital and its impact on rural communities. Rhiannon is also undertaking a part time PhD which focuses on the impact of social capital on increasing the resilience of farmers.

Graham Garbutt

Graham Garbutt retired from his role as Chief Executive of the Commission for Rural Communities in March 2009. Graham was appointed as the first chief executive of the Commission in 2006 and shaped its work with a strong focus on economic and social disadvantage in rural England. The Commission's successful policy interventions on issues such as dispersed poverty, affordable housing, rural planning, access to healthcare and devolved decision-making flowing directly from this. He gave particular priority to understanding and supporting rural economies through the new challenges they face. He was also the Commission's accounting officer, responsible to Parliament for its efficiency and effectiveness.

Previously Graham was chief executive of the Countryside Agency and before that was Regional Director at the Government Office for the West Midlands. This followed a number of senior posts in local government including chief executive of Gloucester city council. Graham's work nationally, regionally and locally has provided a broad base of experience and he has also maintained a strong interest in European networks, having managed major regeneration programmes. He has been president of the European-wide association of government regional heads, and worked with the OECD on rural and regional issues.

Janet Dwyer

Dr Janet Dwyer is a Reader in Rural Studies in the CCRI. Janet's research interests include European and UK policy for sustainable agriculture and rural development. Her recent work has included investigating the environmental and socio-cultural implications of EU and UK agricultural policy reforms, rural policy review work for OECD, and evaluating the design and delivery of EU rural development policy under the CAP. Methodological influences include socio-political and institutional economics, qualitative systems analysis and ecology.



Chris Gaskell

Professor Chris Gaskell is Principal of The Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester, a position he took up in August 2007; he was previously Pro-Vice-Chancellor at the University of Liverpool. A graduate of veterinary science from the University of Bristol in 1971, he worked in Philadelphia for a year and then at Bristol where he obtained his PhD and held the post of Lecturer from 1976. In 1982 he was appointed Professor in the Faculty of Veterinary Science at Liverpool; he was Dean of the Faculty from 1995-2001, and appointed as PVC in 2003. His professorial interests are small animal clinical medicine and infectious diseases. He was a member of the Council of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons from 1995 until 2007.

Professor Gaskell is currently Chairman of the Chief Scientific Adviser's Science Advisory Council for the Government Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), and has been involved in reports to the CSA on science and policy and on social research in the Department. He chaired the Science Audit of the Veterinary Laboratories Agency (VLA) in 2001/02 and is a member of Defra's VLA Owner's Advisory Board. He is also Chairman of the Biotechnology and Biological Science Research Council's (BBSRC) Sustainable Agriculture Strategy Panel, a Board Member of the Countryside and Community Research Institute (CCRI), and is a member of the Board of the Animal Health Trust (AHT).

Ian Baker

Ian Baker is Head of Economy and Research at Defra where he leads the team which manages Defra's rural policy research programme and is responsible for rural economic policy. Previously Ian was Head of Policy at Advantage West Midlands, where his portfolio included establishment of the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) for the West Midlands, rural policy and practice, corporate management and development activity. Prior to that Ian held senior posts at the Countryside Commission and National Trust, where he developed integrated environmental and economic management plans for National Trust properties in the Lake District, England.

Ian is an experienced professional in rural economic and environmental development in England and Wales. He has also developed expertise of wider European circumstances through the PURPLE regions network (14 regions in 10 countries primarily in North west Europe) and more recently as a consultant in Bosnia.