

Bespoke Mentoring for Rural Authorities

This case study was presented at the LGA Rural Commission and Conference in September 2005, by Ivan Annibal (Lincolnshire Development), Cllr John Blackie (Leader of Richmondshire District Council) and Rob Poole (Penwith District Council).

It documented the experiences of councils involved as mentors and mentees within the rural mentoring pilot programme, called Bespoke Excellence which ran in 2004.

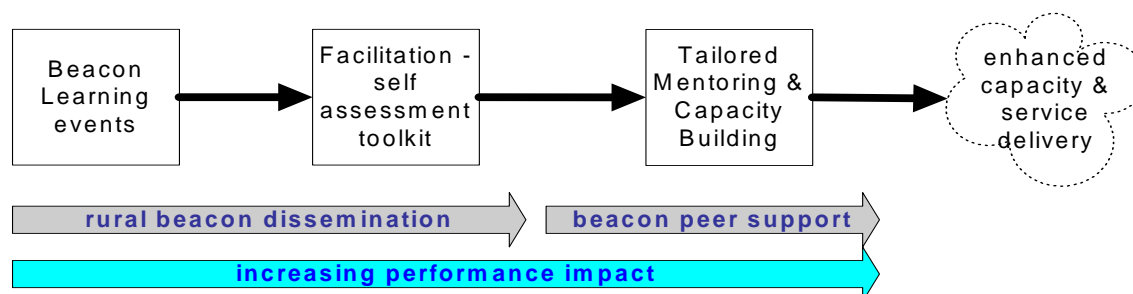
The Journey to increasing capacity

The eight Supporting the Rural Economy Beacon Councils :
Caradon, East Riding of Yorkshire, Lancashire, Lincolnshire, Richmondshire, South Holland, Tynedale, Waverley

submitted a successful bid to ODPM for £200k to support the pilot mentoring programme. The bid was put together by Ivan Annibal at Lincolnshire with support from the IDeA. A key feature was active learning by mentors and mentees who visited each others authorities and also visited other councils known to have good practice to share.

Bespoke Excellence

Rural Beacon Learning Activities



The diagram shows the progression of beacon learning activities in the Supporting the Rural Economy theme, starting with learning events, moving onto specific products such as the facilitation toolkit, also produced by the SRE beacons and moving onto tailored mentoring and capacity building, working on a one-to-one basis between beacon councils and other rural councils and between beacon council staff and members and their peers.

Mentoring Pilot Programme Evaluation

The programme was evaluated by the Centre for the Rural Economy at Newcastle University. They concluded that:

- There was a two-way learning process – mentors learned as much as mentees
- Harder to make an impact with poor / weak authorities
- Mentored authority needs to really up for it

Meet the mentor: Cllr John Blackie, Richmondshire District Council:

Cllr Blackie presented some key features of Richmondshire DC:

- Large - 509 square miles
- Sparsely populated - 36 people per sq km; Largest army base in Europe
- Two thirds in Yorkshire Dales National Park
- Limited Budget

Low skill low pay economy

- Tourism
- Agriculture
- Public Services (MoD)

Fragile/Vulnerable Economy

- Foot and Mouth

Recognised as in Need

- European Structural Funds
- Countryside Agency
- Yorkshire Forward / IDP

Support Framework for Support to Economy

- Parish Forums
- Community Investment Prospectus (CIP)
- LSP/Community Strategy

Why take part?

- Natural progression from Beacon dissemination
- Personal development
- Working alongside officers / members of high calibre - team spirit
- Desire to see/share/learn about innovative solutions
- Desire to share best practice
- See the way others do it

What I personally and we as an authority got out of it?

- A truly two-way learning process
- Real benefits for mentor and mentored
- Projects bought back and implemented locally
- monitoring of workshop evaluation
- maximising local distinctiveness through food
- planning policy and affordable homes
- Healthy box scheme / Seafood park
- Engaging members - enthusiasm for economic development and regeneration

Meet the mentee: Penwith District Council

Rob Poole then presented the programme from the viewpoint of a mentee council (Penwith DC). He has since been recruited to the follow-on Rural Excellence programme as a team leader.

Located in the far South West, Penwith has a deep and narrow rural economy. Two bridges and a ferry link us with England. The main economic drivers are tourism, farming and fishing:

- Tourism: £230 Million turnover and responsible for 34% of employment
- Farming and Fishing £90 million turnover and responsible for 30% employment

Why did we get involved?

We had a vision...



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A National Strategy, County Strategy and District Strategy were all in place but do we understand our Rural Economy?

Penwith's rural vision "For a thriving, vibrant and empowered rural community, where people can achieve their aspirations by sharing a common goal for improved public services, a strong community and voluntary sector, healthier economic well-being, and an enhanced and attractive landscape and environment."

Engaging Members

- The programme successfully engaged with members and provided a real opportunity to find out face to face that issues are the same wherever you are.
- Others have the same problems.

We now know we don't understand the rural economy!

Penwith now plan to:

- Build on successful partnerships
- Countryside Capital is an asset for heritage, tourism, culture
- Countryside Capital contains the physical infrastructure for rural life, villages, shops, post offices, churches, schools, banks and community facilities
- Reduce leakages of consumer and business expenditure especially food and drink
- Need to find ways of turning local purchases into value to rural environment

Direct Benefits of the programme have been:

- Development of a deliverable action plan
- Full balance sheet underway
- Seafood Park underway
- Linking LSP to Rural Action Zone
- Driving USP and local food
- Farmers Toolkit
- Full Rural Advisory Service
- PARTNERSHIPS!

The learning goes on

A new rural mentoring programme funded by Defra and ODPM has just started.

The Councils to be mentored under Rural Excellence

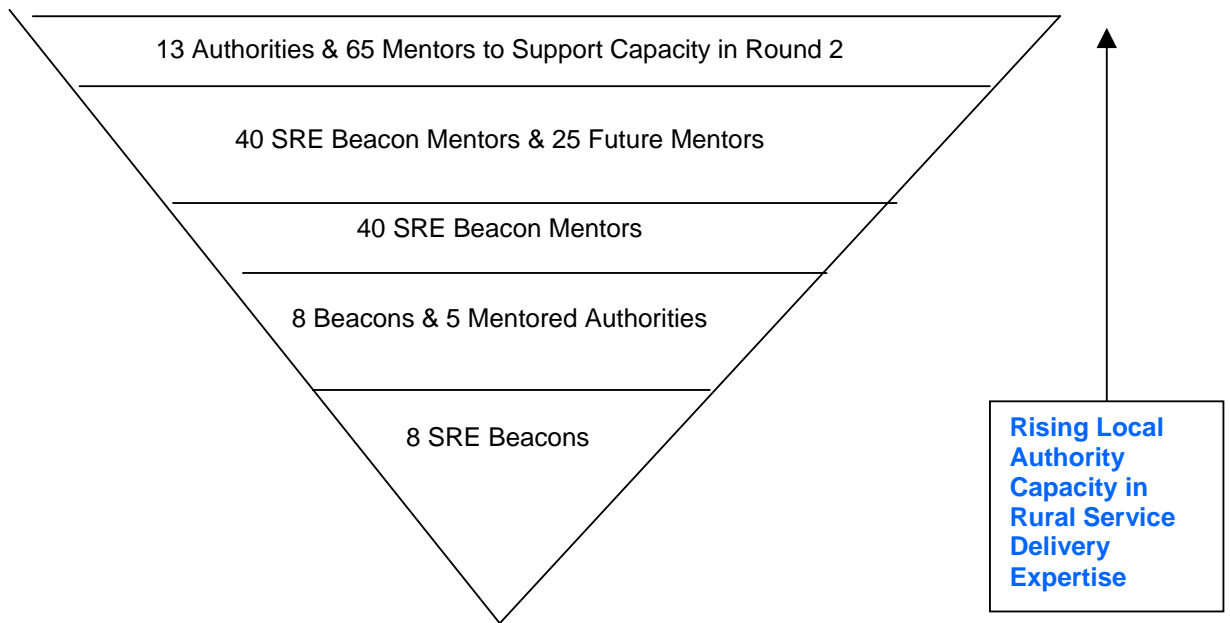
Norfolk, Wakefield, Herefordshire, Somerset, Teesdale, Allerdale, Bassetlaw, Test Valley, Kerrier, East Cambs, East Staffs, Bridgnorth

Team Leaders under Rural Excellence

Bradford, South Holland, Lincolnshire, Penwith Lancashire, Tynedale, Shropshire, Hambledon

The Biggest Benefit of the Programme: The Pyramid of Excellence:

The biggest benefit of the Rural Excellence Programme is the expanding learning network of member and officers working in rural authorities or responsible for rural parts of urban authorities.



For further information on the Rural Excellence Mentoring Programme, please contact: Fiona Salih on Fiona.salih@idea.gov.uk