A New Deal for the north: A briefing paper for the British Academy[1]

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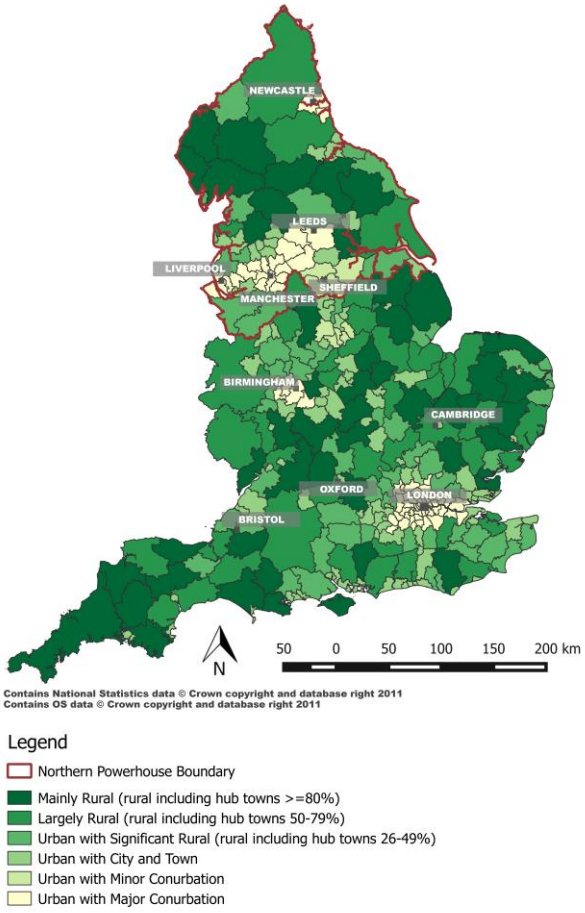
Purpose

The aim of this paper is to present a case for a balanced and spatially inclusive vision for the Northern Powerhouse, which acknowledges and supports the economic, social and environmental contributions of its non-metropolitan (small towns and rural communities) areas. The Northern Powerhouse – a vision of recent UK Governments[3] - aims to create "a vibrant and growing economy, a flourishing private sector and a highly skilled population able to make the most of the great opportunities that the north has to offer."[4] Yet, to date, its extensive rural areas have been presented more as a footnote, and their



[1] **Views expressed are those of the author(s) and are not necessarily endorsed by the British Academy but are commended as contribution to public debate. This paper has been peer reviewed.**

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[3] An area covering North East, North West and Yorkshire and Humber Regions as shown in the map (based on the 2011 Rural-Urban Classification for Local Authorities in England), and home to a population of about 15 million people

[4] Philip Hammond's foreword to the *Northern Powerhouse Strategy*, November 2016, HM Treasury, p.3

diverse economic, natural and social qualities are neither recognised nor embedded in this vision which concentrates on the potential for large towns and cities to deliver improved economic performance, with the rural areas that lie between them portrayed more as a barrier to greater connectivity, rather than as a substantive asset. The paper aims to redress the balance by presenting evidence of the contribution and qualities of the north of England's non-metropolitan areas, and by providing recommendations for ways in which they can be harnessed, strengthened and embedded across the north. In this way, the paper challenges the argument that the only viable approach to raising productivity is to focus on the agglomeration effects of concentrating economic activity in the centre of a few large urban areas.

Introduction

To date, the objectives, narratives and negotiations of the Northern Powerhouse (NPH) have overwhelmingly focused on driving economic growth and productivity through improved connectivity between the core cities, and devolving resources and powers to them. Rural areas and small towns have, for the most part, been absent from the debate. In the HM Treasury's 2016 *Northern Powerhouse Strategy,* the term 'rural' is mentioned only once and that is in relation to natural qualities. Yet rural areas make up the vast majority of the land area of the north of England and, according to Defra[5], such areas made a substantial contribution to the national economy, contributing nearly a sixth of England's Gross Value Added in 2015. Where rural has been referred to, it either appears as a passing reference without elaboration, "from cities, towns and rural communities", or is linked to its environmental qualities alone: "…also blessed with beautiful countryside…"[6]; "the north's natural capital assets and iconic landscape make it one of the most beautiful places in the country for tourists and residents"[7]. Or, "towns and rural areas must also be considered (not least because they 'add value' to cities)"[8].

This is too narrow a profile to encompass the complex and varied contributions offered by these non-metropolitan areas (hereafter referred to as the rural north) to northern and national economies as well as environmental, social and cultural capitals. The Government's stated aim is "to ensure that people in every part of the north – from large cities to small rural communities – enjoy greater

[5] Statistical Digest of Rural England March 2017 Edition, Government Statistical Service
[6] Speech by Communities Secretary Greg Clark to the ResPublica "Finding True North" conference at the Lowry Theatre in Salford, 8 July 2016; https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/devolution-and-the-northern-powerhouse
[7] *Northern Powerhouse Strategy*, November 2016, HM Treasury, p.15
[8] RTPI/IPPR North *Blueprint for a Great North Plan*, 2016

control over their lives and stronger, more sustainable economic growth" and that "every area benefits from a growing economy"[9]. Similarly, the current Chancellor of the Exchequer's vision is to "continue to work with the region to create growth and improve life chances for residents across the whole area, ensuring we have the right conditions for rural communities and businesses to thrive".[10] However, such intended inclusiveness will only be achieved if a more holistic and supportive portrait is painted of the rural north. Without this vision, the current sense of detachment and marginalisation from national and metropolitan political and economic leadership will continue.

This paper aims to fill that gap and highlight the contributions of the rural north in relation to: population profile; economic activity; physical connectivity; natural and environmental assets; cultural heritage and knowledge contribution; and institutional partnerships. For each category, a brief overview is presented followed by key contributions, challenges and opportunities. Where appropriate, illustrative examples of current activities are provided. The paper concludes by proposing a number of recommendations about how the contributions of the rural north can be both better recognised and enhanced.

Population profile

At the time of the 2011 Census more than 2.1 million people in the north lived in communities officially classified as 'rural', accounting for 14% of the total population. More lived in its small towns (10,000 – 30,000 populations) of which some act as important service towns for rural areas and have been recently identified as market towns or rural hub towns[11]. Examples of such towns in the north include Penrith, Hexham, Clitheroe and Northwich. The scale, spatial diversity and composition of this rural population vary widely across the NPH area. For example, in the Greater Manchester Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) area only 1% of residents lived in rural communities in 2011, compared with more than 53% of Cumbria's population. There are three characteristics that are particularly important in helping to explain the wider economic, social and environmental health

[9] Northern Powerhouse minister Andrew Percy and Lord O'Neill reaffirm the government's commitment to building a Northern Powerhouse, 27 July 2016; https://www.gov.uk/government/news/northern-powerhouse-minister-begins-first-tour-since-appointment

[10] *Northern Powerhouse Strategy*, November 2016, HM Treasury, p.15

[11] Defra identify such towns as Hub towns which affect the classification of local authorities, sic "However, the Local Authority Classification also considers some urban areas as Hub Towns (with populations of between 10,000 and 30,000). These Hub Towns have met statistical criteria to be considered hubs for services and businesses for a wider rural hinterland and their populations are therefore classified as effectively rural for the purposes of the Local Authority Classification" Defra 2015 Digest of Rural England 2015, p. 6

of the rural north: high levels of economic activity, sparsely populated areas, and the movement of people between urban and rural areas. We elaborate on these below.

Employment and economic activity rates in rural areas outstrip the levels observed in most urban areas in England, and rural areas have a long record of higher employment rates and lower rates of formal unemployment than their urban counterparts. The 2012 data on such measures for the northern LEPs suggest no significant variation from this wider trend. In 2015, the highest levels of economic inactivity were observed in England's urban areas and its sparsely populated rural areas. However, economic inactivity[12] was lower in rural than urban areas. Data presented by Defra and the ONS, analysed by rural and urban output areas for all LEPs, suggest that this broad profile also holds true for the north, though economic inactivity levels were marginally higher in rural areas of the Cumbria, Cheshire and Warrington, and York and North Yorkshire LEPs, than in their urban areas. Thus, official measures of employment and 'worklessness' confirm that more working-age rural residents are contributing to the north's economic and social health through paid work or self-employment than those living in cities and towns. However, sparsity can overturn or distort this profile, as discussed below. It is also important to stress the economic and social significance and value of volunteering in rural areas. For example, the National Trust relies heavily on the time and contributions of volunteers for the maintenance and operation of its rural properties in the north.

Northern England contains some of the most remote and sparsely populated areas in England including England's lowest residential densities in the Northumberland National Park, parts of North Yorkshire, Cumbria and the Ribble Valley. In 2008 over 305,000 people lived in areas officially categorised as 'Sparsely Populated' across the three northern regions. Although this amounted to only 2.1% of the northern population[13], these 'Sparsely Populated' areas cover close to a third of the northern land area. Residents of these areas and their small towns include higher proportions of households with incomes below the government's poverty level[14] than households in less sparse districts in the north, and the rest of England[15] [16]. They are more likely to live in fuel poverty, earn lower wages, and travel further to essential services.

[12] I.e. Percentage of working-age population unavailable for work or not seeking work which includes students, retirees and those unable to work due to sickness or disability

[13] CRC 2010. *State of the countryside update: Sparsely populated areas*. Commission for Rural Communities, November 2010

[14] Below 60% of median English household income

[15] CRC 2010. *ibid*

[16] OECD 2011. *OECD Rural Policy Reviews: England, United Kingdom,* 2011

Rural-to-urban commuting is noteworthy as it suggests that rural areas can make a significant contribution to the workforce of metropolitan areas in the north and therefore could be regarded as supporting a policy emphasis on cities as drivers of the economy. However, such a conclusion would be misleading, as it ignores both the levels of economic activity in rural areas and the impacts of urban-rural migration. Net migration into 'predominantly rural areas'[17] from 'predominantly urban areas' influences levels of employment, worklessness, access to services and business formation. These in turn have an impact on the scale and nature of the contribution of rural communities to the urban north. While at this stage we cannot profile migration movements into or out of the rural north, analysis of flows across England in 2016 shows that rates of net migration to local authorities classified as predominantly rural areas have increased since 2008/09. In 2014-15 such areas, which define much of the rural north, received a net internal inwards migration of 64,900 people. Most of this (54,200) came from predominantly urban areas, from adults aged between 30 and 45 years, and children below 15 years of age. Important changes to service demand and provision can result from inward (or outward) migration of younger families, especially in areas of sparse or declining population.

Diversity in age, gender, ethnicity and previous residential and economic background has wider impacts on communities' social and cultural sustainability and resilience. Diverse origins and exposure to wider societies and cultures have often shaped political, spiritual, cultural and business trends. Evidence from young people's expectations and work trajectories in the rural West Midlands, and studies of young entrepreneurs in northern England[18], record that young incomers to rural areas are more likely than young people of long term residence to seek or create jobs and enterprises in non-traditional rural business activities, thereby adding to the diversity and stock of rural economies. Young people and families' in- and out-migration, encouraged and carefully supported, can be an important force for resilience and diversity in rural communities and enterprise. Migration and commuting are conduits that link and strengthen the rural and urban north. The rural north has long accommodated and valued openness in engaging with national and global regions, cultures and movements, as discussed in the Cultural Heritage section below.

[17] This term derives from the UK Government's Rural-Urban classification of local authorities and includes two categories of LA districts that have more than 50% population in rural output areas, R50 and R80

[18] ECOTEC Research and Consulting, 2006. *Aspirations of Young People in the rural West Midlands*. Report to Commission for Rural Communities, March; and Aitken, K. 2006, 'Young Entrepreneurs in Northumberland and County Durham', Centre for Rural Economy Research Reports

Economic Contributions

The contribution of agriculture to the regional economy and workforce varies across the NPH. In 2014, it accounted for 0.59% of the GVA and 0.89% of the workforce in the North East[19]; 0.54% of the GVA and 0.94% of the workforce in the North West[20]; and, 0.95% of the GVA and 1.22% of the workforce in the Yorkshire & the Humber[21], compared with 0.57% of the GVA and 1.07% of the workforce in England.

In 2011-12 there were more than 121,000 businesses operating[22] from the rural north. This represented almost one in four of the north's enterprises (23%). The overall profile of rural businesses has several distinct characteristics that help to define rural areas' current and future economic contributions of which two are of broader relevance: the greater importance of self-employment, sole traders and home-based businesses (HBBs) to the economies of the rural, rather than the urban north; and, the smaller numbers of larger employers in the rural north. Though fewer in number, larger firms are key employers in several market towns, and are important contributors to regional economies. Support strategies and programmes need to recognise and build on these features.

Sole traders, HBBs (including farms and tourism enterprises) and micro-businesses are the backbone of the economy of the rural north. In 2011-12, for example, 22% of businesses in rural areas had no employees, a level that is more than double the rate in the urban north (9.8%). Some, like electricians, plumbers, and engineers for agricultural machinery are highly mobile, while others such as village shops, GPs, home helps and care workers serve very local markets. These businesses rarely feature in economic development plans or business support programmes, often being treated more as 'services' rather than as businesses that can be nurtured and grown. Nevertheless, in many rural communities they may provide more jobs than any single medium-sized employer. These enterprises engage in a wide variety of business activities and sectors, and face multiple challenges

19 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/583673/regionalstatistics_northeast_17Jan17.pdf

20 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/583672/regionalstatistics_northwest_17Jan17.pdf

21 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/583679/regionalstatistics_yorkshumber_17Jan17.pdf

22 Local Business Units are used here rather than the narrower record of Registered Enterprises

including reliance on part time or seasonal workers, poor transport links, and the lack of dedicated business premises.

Many of these enterprises can be helped to grow and reach a wider customer base (if they wish) through programmes enabling the creation and networking of small rural business parks or estates, as shown in the example below.

North East Rural Growth Network and Enterprise Hubs

The rural economy is dominated by micro-businesses, many employing just one person. This raises issues of isolation and peripherality that hampers their growth. In 2012, Defra initiated a pilot programme of support to stimulate economic growth in rural England. The North East was accepted as one of five Rural Growth Networks (RGN) pilots. With support from the North East LEP and the Centre for Rural Economy at Newcastle University, the project connected small rural business centres and created new flexible business spaces in rural areas, as Enterprise Hubs. Borrowing ideas from urban incubator spaces, the aim was to provide office space that supported SMEs both physically and through knowledge transfer. The programme has been a success with the initial 6 spaces supported by the NE RGN, now joined by a further 30 to form a network of rural enterprise hubs across the rural North East. Rural Connect acts to support the sustainability and development of these existing and new hubs across the rural North East, as well as developing and sharing good practice to improve the effectiveness of hubs elsewhere. (see: http://ruralconnect.biz/)

Many rural areas have inherited small workshops, office and retail outlets created by the Council for Small Rural Industries (CoSiRA) or its successor bodies, the Rural Development Commission (RDC) and the former Regional Development Agencies (RDAs). More recently a new generation of private landowners has created networks of such enterprise hubs, often in converted, redundant estate buildings. Some have received help through local LEADER rural development programmes[23]. Award-winning examples of private sector-led rural enterprise hubs include Broughton Park Estate near Skipton; the Zetland Estate, Aske, near Richmond, and Hathersage Hall Business Park in the Peak District. Moreover, as demonstrated by the Alderley Park Life Sciences Enterprise Zone in rural Cheshire, with the right planning and support, some rural business hubs can develop into larger or

[23] LEADER is part of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. It is a French acronym (Liaison Entre Actions de Dévelopement de l'Économie Rurale) which roughly translates as 'Liaison among Actors in Rural Economic Development'

sector-focused rural incubators, innovation or enterprise zones which are appropriate in a rural setting and do not lead to the 'urbanisation' of the rural landscape.

At the other end of the size spectrum, there are fewer large firms (employing more than 250 people) in the rural than the urban north (295 compared with 2400+). Yet these, and growing medium sized firms, represent a diverse, quality portfolio of companies and activities with national and international reach, such as those listed below:

- **Sci-tech Daresbury**, Cheshire: a world-leading multi-disciplinary research and development centre, active in accelerator science, bio-medicine, computational science and data analytics.
- **BAE systems,** Salmesbury, Lancashire and Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria: developing and producing advanced military aircraft, submarines, surface naval ships and components.
- **GSK (Glaxo Smith Kline**) and **Johnson & Johnson:** Pharmaceutical product development and manufacture in Barnard Castle (Co. Durham) and Gargrave (North Yorkshire) respectively.
- **Alderley Park:** Bioscience campus and Life Science Enterprise Zone, rural Cheshire accessible to Manchester Airport and City Centre, now home to 3000 employees and 150 companies.
- **Sellafield Ltd,** Cumbria: focused on decommissioning, reprocessing and managing nuclear waste at this former nuclear power plant, with allied design and management offices in Cumbria and Cheshire.
- **IHC**, Stocksfield and Blyth, Northumberland: designers, makers and installers of sub-sea cabling and exploration equipment, created by British agricultural engineers adapting their skills to the marine environment and global communication infrastructure.
- **Wyndham Vacation Rentals**, Earby, Lancashire: marketing agent for owners of holiday accommodation including brands such as Hoseasons, English Country Cottages, Northumberland Cottages.
- **Silver Cross,** Broughton, North Yorkshire: international designers, maker and retailer of prams, pushchairs and other child equipment sold to more than 70 countries worldwide.
- **Lakeland**, Windermere: a home shopping pioneer selling creative kitchenware, practical ideas and gifts for home, with stores across the UK and overseas partners, started by an agricultural salesman.
- **New Balance**, Flimby Cumbria: designers and manufacturers of sports shoes and clothing, exporting around 80% of their production to Europe, the Far East and US.

As well as having national and international reach, larger employers are fundamental to the economic and social health of their neighbouring communities. For example, Cumbria LEP and County Council are jointly preparing for a boom as they anticipate an unprecedented £25 billion in investments and growth over the next 15 years, largely funded by the private sector and with a particular focus on nuclear energy. Investments like these will have a significant impact on small towns like Ulverston which is also expected to benefit from a £350 million investment from pharmaceuticals giant GSK[24].

The histories of the firms listed above demonstrate the importance of having space for growth, a key asset across the rural north, if it is supported by local communities, economic and planning officials and elected representatives. Once established, these companies can demonstrate the value of a rural location. However, perceptions of what is an appropriate business activity and scale in rural locations differ and can affect their formation and development. Whereas some smaller rural businesses are seen as service providers, rarely featuring in economic development plans and business support initiatives, successful larger employers, including many of those listed above, are rarely perceived or profiled as 'rural' businesses. Some have even been argued to be inappropriate for rural locations and excluded from rural development plans and programmes on the basis that they are insufficiently rural, due to their size or sector. Such perceptions may limit the pool of rural business role-models for owners and officials and diminish the recognition of the rural contribution to wider economic initiatives, including the NPH.

Dozens of firms across the rural north are demonstrating vision, ambition and the ability to grow in scale, diversity and reach to complement the region's larger employers. Successful examples include: Tebay (Penrith and Gloucester), family-owned motorway service stations; Rheged Discovery Centre near Penrith in Cumbria; Dipstick Research Group at Hexham; *The City Secret* in Richmond (North Yorkshire and Birmingham), providers of financial software and management for global banks and finance companies; Inov-8 in Staveley (Cumbria), designers, manufacturers and retailers of all-terrain footwear, apparel and equipment; and MJ Associates in East Yorkshire, designers and suppliers of protective equipment and clothing to world's police and emergency services. Many of these businesses have started or grown in vacant, converted or redundant farm, estate and village buildings, or from land-dependent activities in a sympathetic and supportive environment which could help them to achieve further growth. Others are harnessing hitherto neglected attributes of the rural environment, as illustrated by Crystal Scientific, a small firm with an international reach

[24] *North-West Evening Mail*, Plans announced for Ulverston bypass to prepare for economic boom, 10 June 2016

which designs and manufactures precision x-ray optics for major scientific projects across the world, from a vibration and pollution–free, secure countryside environment.

Crystal Scientific, Northumberland: harnessing less visible qualities of rural environments

Crystal Scientific, founded in the mid-1990s by Dr Simon Cockerton, makes and supplies diffraction crystals for government-backed research facilities. It is a world-leading producer of scientific and industrial mirrors particularly used in the world's Synchrotrons, such as the Diamond Light Source, Harwell, Oxfordshire. Initially operating from a rural business park, near Alnwick, Northumberland, growth required new premises. In 2008, the firm relocated to a purpose-designed isolated building in countryside close to the Northumberland National Park. This provides a secure and secluded environment suitable for the firm's advanced machinery, computers and high-value products. Their rural location minimises vibration, which is a key requirement for their high precision work. The careful design of the workshop, with super insulation and north-facing windows also minimise temperature fluctuations, which is most important in this technology. Five people are employed at the company, including its founder, who extols the benefits of access to research communities in Newcastle and Durham, "each well known for their universities and with strong links to x-ray applications and the synchrotron community." (see http://crystal-scientific.com/)

Connectivity

The rural north makes a substantial and often overlooked contribution to the northern economy and quality of life by providing land for transport connections and supporting an extensive and diverse network of 'green' and 'blue' routes[25], and open access land. These attract millions of residents, visitors and tourists, and facilitates their enjoyment of northern England.

These distinctive assets and features of connectivity provided by communities in the rural north rarely feature in plans or debates about northern rebalancing of England's economy which is almost entirely focused on the improvement of large scale, hard infrastructure. The contribution of rural connectivity would be strengthened by tackling deficits faced by many smaller communities and

[25] National trails, regional and local, coastal and countryside public footpaths, bridleways, byways, beaches, rivers, canals, lakes

businesses, including lack of public transport, affordable housing and business premises, viable shops, pubs and community facilities, and limited mobile phone and broadband infrastructure.

Widespread demand and inspiring initiatives by rural residents and businesses to restore, create, and manage key buildings and sites have led to a number of successfully funded schemes including: the Big Lottery Fund's Village SOS programme (2010-13) which distributed over £6 million to more than 250 UK villages to develop community enterprises; Defra's £700,000 Rural Community Buildings Loan Fund (2014-15); community-led LEADER Rural development programme; and small grants schemes run by some local authorities and third sector organisations. Yet the scale, reach and future prospects of such funds and support stand in marked contrast to the substantial capital funds being made available to local authorities and transport agencies to connect northern cities, for example through the Northern Powerhouse, City Deals and Growth Deals. Some of these improvements will strengthen business, educational, recreational and cultural links between some rural and urban consumers but the rural north needs more targeted attention.

An extensive network of green and blue routes brings visitors and tourists to the rural north to enjoy a wide range of outdoor activities. Green routes include National Trails such as the Hadrian's Wall Path, the Pennine Way, the Pennine Bridleway and the Yorkshire Wolds Way. Blue routes are formed by navigable rivers, canals and other waterways. Levels of use of the north's trails and paths are difficult to assess. However, a study by Natural England estimated that over a quarter of a million people (on foot, cycles and horses) used five National Trails in the north of England in 2013-14[26].

Well-known northern waterways such as the Leeds and Liverpool Canal and the Rivers Ouse and Derwent in Yorkshire are complemented by thousands of miles of other rivers, canals and waterways that attract millions of users every year. For example, the Canal and River Trust report an estimated 65 million visits a year being made to north western waterways alone. National Trails, footpaths, cycleways, bridleways and waterways are used by a wide variety of residents and visitors for leisure and commercial activities. The upkeep and use of these corridors support large numbers of jobs and a variety of businesses. As a long-term asset, they deserve wider recognition for their contribution to northern economic, social, environmental and physical wellbeing.

Digital (and mobile) communication is another critical form of connectivity for most rural communities. Whilst the National Infrastructure Commission has acknowledged the weaknesses

[26] Natural England/ NERC *National Trails People Counters Report*. By Natalia Garcia Martin, August 2015 provided to the writer by the National Trails team at Natural England

and required improvements in current 4G mobile connectivity, "The existing system does not provide the level of coverage we will need in our connected future. We need a new universal service obligation which ensures that the mobile essentials –text, talk and data – are available to us wherever we need them".[27] This weakness in fixed line and mobile communication, has not yet, however, attracted north-wide strategic attention or funds from central and local government. Many firms in smaller settlements and sparse rural areas depend on their ability to operate online for marketing and other purposes. Visitors, customers and suppliers expect to be able to book, order, and purchase remotely. Businesses and knowledge-driven professionals are expected to transfer plans, quotes, bids, invoices, bank and other documents rapidly and securely. All rural firms and public employers depend on their owners and staff being able to access them regularly and with reasonable comfort, and sometimes at 'unsocial' hours. Firms in hospitality, retail, and the care sectors, and in land-dependent industries have regularly reported difficulties in recruiting or retaining staff due, partly, to limited availability of public transport and local buses. This mirrors the results of employer surveys conducted for the UK Commission for Employment and Skills and analysed by rural and urban responses, showing that rural firms find it difficult to attract and retain skilled workers due to poor transport unaffordable housing and remote locations.

Natural / Environmental Assets

The environment of the rural north is remarkably diverse, ranging from Scafell Pike, England's highest mountain, to the Humber estuary, from Northumberland's islands to community woodland close to one of the UK's largest cities, Manchester. The landscape varies from intensively-managed fields in Lancashire's 'Fens', to Europe's largest human-made forest at Kielder and the extensive Pennine moorlands, from deserted villages, drove roads and abandoned canals to vibrant market towns and expanding villages.

The farmed landscape of northern regions[28] in 2013 covered approximately 2,588,000 hectares (about 28% of England's farmed area). Registered agricultural holdings in northern England supported around 40% of the nation's livestock (predominantly cattle, sheep, and pigs). The total value of crops and livestock produced on these farms was close to 25% of the value of England's farm output, or £4,902 million at Market Value (2014). In 2015, when variable and fixed costs of production are

[27] NIC 2016. *Connected Future.* December 2016
[28] I.e. former NE, NW and Y&H Government Office Regions

deducted from the value of outputs, they yielded a Total Farm Income of £739 million.[29] This sector yields considerable upstream and downstream value chains – including producers who supply the farming industry, and firms that use farming products as feedstock for food and drink manufacturing, and for retailing and tourism-related activities. Other landscapes are dominated by commercial forests. Northern forests are a key driver of Britain's timber and wood-using industries and an important employer in remote areas of Northumberland, Cumbria and North Pennines.

At the heart of much land and water stewardship in the north are extensive, often unenclosed uplands. These considerable tracts of open moorland, extensive peatlands and other 'wild' habitats serve as water gathering grounds, recreational areas for visitors and residents, and country sports, including managed shoots. Moreover, these extensive uplands, along with northern forests and woodlands, are a critical asset in mitigating climate change, and providing an extensive, multi-generational carbon capture and storage reservoir.

Large areas are also actively managed for biodiversity conservation, amenity, heritage and recreation. These include five out of ten National Parks in England covering close to 8,500 sq. km., and seven Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). Within these nationally important landscapes, a wide variety of scarce or endangered habitats, species and sites are protected and managed to deliver a range of public access, amenity and commercial benefits. Key habitats in the rural north include: the North York Moors, the largest continuous expanse of heather moorland in England and Wales; limestone pavements; raised bogs; and oak woodlands. The North Pennines AONB alone includes 40% of the UK's upland hay meadows, 30% of England's upland heathland, and 27% of its blanket bog.

These rural environments deliver significant ecosystem services and the necessities of life – food and water - to northern and UK consumers, but also attract millions of day and overnight visitors each year. Visit Britain report that 326 million tourism day visits were made in the three northern regions (159 million in the North West, 120 million in Yorkshire & the Humber and 57 million in the North East) of which one third of all visits in the North West & North East regions and 28% in Yorkshire & the Humber were made to countryside/village locations. This share exceeds the national average where just under a quarter (24%) of such visits were made to countryside villages. In addition, 18-24% of northern tourism day visits were made to its small towns. Chester Zoo in Upton-by-Chester,

[29] Calculated from Defra, 2016, Agricultural Accounts Regional Datasets June 2016

Cheshire (ranked 5th) and Windermere Lake Cruises in Bowness, Cumbria (ranked 6th) were the leading paid-for visitor attractions outside of London with over 2.7 million visits.

Such areas also act as test beds for techniques and programmes through which the nation can tackle global challenges and deliver its obligations under international treaties, conventions and directives. The Lake District National Park's 'Low-Carbon Lake District' initiative included the first UK area to measure local carbon emissions and work with local businesses, agencies and communities to reduce greenhouse gases. Similarly, management of flood risks to built-up areas through controlled flooding on farmland[30] or re-wilding upland catchments, for instance, benefit from decades of practical examples in the area. Indeed, one of the earliest agreements in the UK for lowland controlled flooding was implemented in the Bollin Valley in Cheshire in the 1970s.

Several designated areas (such as National Parks, AONBs and Sites of Special Scientific Interest) in the rural north practice Catchment Sensitive Farming or similar management programmes that aim to restore water quality in large catchments and meet obligations under the EU Water Directive. Many of the north's major rivers rise in these designated areas (e.g. Ribble, Lune, Tees, Derwent, Ure and Ouse) so sensitive management and restoration of upland habitats will benefit the quality and flow of such waterways. This will improve outputs for consumers and conditions for development in dozens of northern towns and cities. Upland catchments are major water gathering grounds for three large water companies (Northumbria Water, Yorkshire Water and United Utilities) that supply northern residential and industrial consumers in both the urban and the rural north. United Utilities, for example, has 57,000 hectares of water gathering ground in the North Pennines and Lake District. Yorkshire Water has 210 reservoirs to supply its customers and Northumbrian Water manages the Kielder Water, the UK's largest artificial lake.

However, centuries of inappropriate use have left a legacy of degraded natural resources including soils, air, water and surface habitats leading to costly consequences such as flooding, collapsed mine workings, local wildlife extinctions, and chemical contamination. To redress these requires investment in interpreting, creating and maintaining sustainable relationships between humans and natural resources. In some areas, this will be managed through statutory protection, while in others it will be achieved through local designations, investment programmes, and management or ownership by public and third sector bodies, such as the Forestry Commission, the National Trust, Royal Society for Protection of Birds and Wildlife Trusts. Alternatively, LEADER local action projects, land management schemes (such as Countryside Stewardship), or Community Asset

[30] As recently called for by the UK Parliament's DEFRA Select Committee enquiry into Flood Management (2016)

Transfers, can signpost the need for management and sensitive development. However, many valued environmental assets in rural areas lie beyond the reach of existing designations and investments.

These rural environments provide business and employment opportunities ranging from conservation and land management, to research and interpretation, marketing of local food, drink, art and crafts, and most obviously in recreational and tourism-related activities. Other enterprises are, however, increasingly harnessing other qualities of the north's rural environments. Two such businesses in Northumberland illustrate the widening spectrum. Crystal Scientific has been described above, while another example, Kielder Observatory, is attracting thousands of general and specialist visitors to view Northumberland's dark skies. In 2008 the Kielder local community and public partnership capitalised on the remoteness of their village from urban areas to attract and excite new generations of star-gazers to a new astronomical observatory and 'star camps'.[31]

The Kielder Observatory in Northumberland's Dark Sky Park

In 2013, the dark skies over Kielder Forest and Water and the surrounding Northumberland National Park were awarded Sky Park Status, and became the largest protected dark sky area in Europe, at more than 580 square miles. The zone is the first in England and has been assessed as the nation's largest area free from evening light pollution. One development that benefits from such protection, and that helped to secure the Dark Sky Park recognition, was The Kielder Observatory, opened in 2008 as a community-led investment. The design of the Observatory was chosen by open competition amongst the world's architects and built to be in keeping with its site, with local timber being used in its construction and wind and solar power as its source of energy. This public outreach facility is staffed by a team of full-time staff and volunteers from the Kielder Observatory Astronomical Society. It houses an array of telescopes, some of which are computer–controlled. Since it was opened by the Astronomer Royal in 2008 the Observatory, which is owned by the Forestry Commission, has been visited or used by nearly 70,000 people. It hosts around 40 events each year including the twice-yearly Kielder Forest Star Camp which draws hundreds of observers from across the UK for five nights of stargazing across the area and filling the Kielder campsite and other accommodation in the surrounding expanse.

[31] http://www.kielderobservatory.org/ and http://www.visitkielder.com/play/discover/dark-skies

Natural and environmental assets across the rural north are critical to Britain's future sustainability, prosperity and wellbeing. Public, commercial and community organisations at the national, local, city and countryside level have a shared responsibility for their management, restoration and use. All public bodies involved in developing, leading or implementing programmes to strengthen the northern economies must work to understand and address the impacts of their investments, programmes and decisions - both negative and positive - on these assets, and demonstrate their support for shared working. To date there have been no shared and spatially inclusive Strategic Environmental Assessments for the transport infrastructure, economic development and city deals that form key features of the NPH initiative. Given the growing portfolio of examples and evidence of effective natural mitigation measures against the harmful consequences from developments, such assessments should be a top priority.

Natural features and assets can also be used creatively to foster a sense of community and to link urban and rural identities across the NPH area. An example of this is the work of the Northern Powerhouse movement[32] which, following on from successful projects delivering areas of wildflowers in prominent locations across Liverpool and Manchester, seeks to create a wildflower corridor connecting Merseyside to Greater Manchester, eventually extending up to Newcastle and across to Hull.

A positive outcome of the Northern Powerhouse vision would be to showcase the idea that northern England's natural and environmental qualities are a shared asset. As such they provide daily essentials for life, and affect our living and working conditions and personal and societal wellbeing. They link field and fork, leisure and work, air and earth, urban drain with distant lake, city with mountain, and rural with urban more intimately than any other asset. Their protection, upkeep, restoration, enhancement and use is therefore a shared responsibility.

Cultural heritage and knowledge contributions

The culture of northern England springs from the origins, development and diversity of its population, economy, history, politics and territories. Extensive evidence of this legacy is visible across northern countryside and small towns both physically and in their cultural heritage:

[32] https://wherewelivenow.com/2017/03/14/northern-flowerhouse-the-seed-of-a-new-idea/

- *In stone:* Hadrian's Wall and Roman forts and settlements; preaching crosses, churches and monasteries including the Bewcastle Cross in Cumbria, the two Saxon crosses in Sandbach, Cheshire, Fountains Abbey in North Yorkshire, Cartmel Priory in Cumbria and Ripon Cathedral; great houses and gardens from Castle Howard, North Yorkshire to Tatton Park Gardens, Knutsford, Cheshire.
- *In manuscripts and books*: from Vindolanda's tablets and the Lindisfarne Gospels, from Bede's early English history; to writers and poets drawing on their regions' identity from Wordsworth and the Bronte sisters, to authors supported by New Writing North, the UK's first Regional Writing Development Agency.
- *In artwork*: from iron age rock art of Ilkley Moor and Northumberland, paintings of L. S. Lowry, Norman Cornish ('the pitman painter') to David Hockney, engravings of rural scenes by Thomas Bewick; outdoor sculpture trails in Grizedale Forest, (Cumbria) to the renowned Yorkshire Sculpture Park, near Wakefield.
- *In museums*: Past lives are presented and re-created in such museums as Ryedale Folk Museum, North Yorkshire, Northern Lead Mining Museum, Killhope and Beamish Open Air Museum, Co. Durham, Stott Park Bobbin Mill, near Windermere, and Dales Countryside Museum, Hawes.

These treasures generate visible economic benefits to rural and northern economies, from tourists, students, film locations, and private and public investments. In addition to these tangible assets, activities affirming the cultural identity and social distinctiveness of the rural north are performed, practiced and rooted in people's everyday lives. Indeed, the rural north lives through its language, dialects, place names, stories, songs and oral history. Melvyn Bragg's radio series, *The Matter of the North*, and TV drama series, *Jericho*, inspired by townships that sprung up to build the Ribblehead Viaduct on the Settle to Carlisle Railway, are illustrations of northern oral histories with national appeal. In popular culture, long-running television series such as *Heartbeat, All Creatures Great and Small* and *Last of the Summer Wine*[33] all draw heavily on their northern rural settings and characters. At more local scales, oral recording of traditional farming can assist conservation of special habitats and re-creation of closed workplaces.

Between 2006 and 2012, the North Pennines AONB Hay Time Project set out to enhance and restore its upland hay meadows. Protection and management of upland hay meadows is governed by the EU Habitats Directive and is a UK priority habitat for biodiversity. Most of these rare habitats lie

[33] Hibberd, L.A. and Tew-Thompson, Z. (in press) *Constructing Memories of Holmfirth through 'Last of the Summer Wine'*

within upland valleys in the North Pennines and North Yorkshire. Amongst the community projects associated with this initiative, volunteers conducted and wrote up 20 oral histories with retired farmers, enabling their experience of past management practices to be available to the current managers of this important habitat.

City street names can provide a map of urban development and activities. The northern countryside and settlements are an etymologist's dream. Hundreds of place names record Old Norse (ON) and Old English words such as *thwaite* (ON enclosure from waste or moorland); *croft; gat* or *gate* (ON road); *biggin* (West Saxon for building). The many '*Kirkby*' place names of Cumbria and neighbouring areas are a legacy of England's Scandinavian past that is almost uniquely northern. These 'church places' or 'church-towns' arise from the Norse *kirkja-by*[34]. They stand as a record of the role of the early church in place-formation and administration in northern territories beyond the reach of England's government.

Terms in common use in northern livestock communities, such as *gimmer, stirk and heft* are living examples of former languages. Farmers may be the conservators of the Brythonic language of the north's earliest people. First recorded in 19th century Borrowdale, Cumbria, farmers counted sheep - *yan, tan, tethera* (one, two, three, etc.) - said to reflect numbers in the ancient Brythonic language spoken in the areas' Kingdoms of Rheged and Strathclyde.

Folk musicians are another important force for keeping alive northern languages, legends, and stories of life, work, land, and communities' misfortunes and triumphs. Over decades these have been captured and updated by singers and instrumentalists who introduce new audiences to their heritage by live performances and recordings. Northumbrian folk music is noted for a distinctive style which includes a tradition of border ballads, (shared with southern Scotland), the Northumbrian smallpipe (a unique form of bagpipe) and a strong fiddle tradition. While people in northern cities keep alive historic terms or phrases that are often reflective of past industries and lifestyles, the slowly-changing characters of many northern rural communities, like the maps that record their landscapes and place names, provide a stable and deep source of the north's linguistic heritage. They are an irreplaceable asset.

Northern identity, knowledge and values have similarly been shaped by centuries of incomers, and flows of communities, from which have sprung individuals who have contributed their skills, aspirations and values to the nation and the world. Its small towns and rural areas have fostered

[34] A Jones (2000) *A Thousand Years of The English Parish*. Windrush Press

generations of inventors and innovators, manufacturers, explorers, philanthropists, political and religious leaders. These include: the Venerable Bede, England's first historian (Monkwearmouth-Jarrow); Captain James Cook, navigator of the world's oceans and cartographer of continents (Staithes, North Yorkshire); William Wilberforce, leader of the anti-slavery movement (Kingston-upon-Hull); George Fox, founder of the Quakers (driven by his vision on Pendle Hill, Lancashire) together with his wife Margaret Fell, (Kirkby-in-Furness, Lancashire/Cumbria); William Wordsworth (Hawkshead and Grasmere, Cumbria); the Brontë sisters, poets and novelists (Haworth, West Yorkshire); Elizabeth Barrett Browning, poet (County Durham); Josephine Butler, a Victorian social reformer and campaigner for socially-deprived women (Millfield, Northumberland); and George and Robert Stephenson, father and son railway and civil engineers (Wylam, Northumberland). The tradition of northern industrialists and philanthropists who created or regenerated rural settlements such as 1st Viscount Leverhulme (forming model villages in Thornton Hough and Port Sunlight, Wirral) and Sir Titus Salt (Saltaire near Bradford) is continued in contemporary examples such as Jonathan Ruffer, 2016 Philanthropist of the Year,[35] who is investing ideas and funds to revitalise Bishop Auckland, Co. Durham.

In addition to these individuals' contributions, the rural north has made important institutional contributions to scientific advancements through early examples of Mechanics Institutes, such as the one in Marsden, West Yorkshire, which provided technical education to working men, through post-war investment by the University of Manchester and Sir Bernard Lovell in radio telemetry at Jodrell Bank in rural Cheshire, to modern examples such as Durham University's planned Centre for Photonics which will be located in the North East Technology Park, just north of Sedgefield in Co. Durham.

Collaboration between northern Universities (for example the N8) has extended these knowledge and scientific competencies to the rural north's activities. Many universities and colleges have increased access to Higher Education in rural areas through dispersed campuses and innovation centres, such as the University of Central Lancashire, and the Lancashire and Cumbrian campuses of the University of Cumbria. There has also been investment in business, scientific research and educational activities and facilities in the rural north that harnessed, created and built upon intellectual capital, knowledge dependant business activities and skilled employees.

[35] https://elevenarches.org/kynren/news/Jonathan-Ruffer-wins-Philanthropist-of-the-Year-Award and http://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/features/14874584.An_award_for_philanthropy/

Institutional partnerships

The formal institutional framework and landscape of the north have changed in recent years and will no doubt change in the future. This has been triggered by the devolution and localism agendas, and the NPH agenda has been presented as a process of devolution to northern authorities. In parallel with the NPH initiative, other public sector institutional changes have been driven by successive UK governments and local authorities. Recent changes in the north include: the replacement of RDAs by LEPs that are based on 'functional economic areas' and responsible for the allocation of European Structural and Investment Funds; devolved budgets and powers offered to city councils through City Deals and Growth Deals (subject to local institutional restructuring such as the creation of combined authorities); elected mayors; participatory budgeting and locality budgets to be distributed by councillors to their wards; and opportunities for local councils to retain business rates from new or expanded firms. Some of the authorities with devolved powers and budgets, such as Lancashire, Durham and Northumberland, encompass large rural areas.

Yet, many of the devolutionary changes fail to offer equity for rural communities and places[36]. This is despite the substantial contributions to northern and national governance by the rural north which also include a myriad of local, self-organised community organisations. For example, over many centuries small towns and rural communities across the north have played a pivotal role in national defence and remain at the heart of cross-border relations within the UK. These are also in the spotlight for imminent change. Border communities that are overwhelmingly rural are connectors of England, Wales and Scotland and have been facilitators of free trade and movement across countries. This is increasingly challenged by differences in policies and resources created by Scottish, Welsh and UK governments. Devolution of powers to the Welsh Assembly and Scottish Parliament has led to different governance structures, priorities, policies, programmes and resources within the United Kingdom. Borderland communities are among the first areas to experience their effects. Such differences may be exacerbated in future years by the UK's planned withdrawal from the EU.

Early examples of practical impacts were flows of English residents across Welsh borders to avail themselves of free prescriptions. On the England/Scotland border Scotland's healthcare contracts are challenging the practices of Northumberland GPs who can no longer refer patients to nearer consultants and hospitals in Scottish Borders, and have to refer them to facilities that are more

[36] One exception is the proposed North of the Tyne Combined Authority which seeks to fully integrate urban and rural development issues

distant but in their country. Another example are the divergent decisions on trunking/de-trunking/dualling of major cross-border roads that have led to different levels of road signage, marking and maintenance on some of these routes. Differences in businesses' access to support and resources on either side of the border have affected business locational decisions. Users of education and training, of healthcare and emergency services, of road and public transport services will be affected by differences in priorities and programmes between the UK, Welsh and Scottish Governments. New powers of taxation now available to devolved administrations may further impact on commuting, migration, residency and business environments.

Border residents live predominantly in rural areas and small towns, but commute across borders to work. Border businesses draw customers across borders, and their customers and staff may use bus routes that start in one country and end in another. These communities, and organisations who manage cross-border natural and economic assets such as the River Tweed, or the Solway estuary, are among those most affected by UK devolution. In future years, cross-border differences may be exacerbated as a result of the UK's withdrawal from the EU which may lead to some powers formerly rested with the EU being transferred to the devolved governments, for example in relation to agriculture and fisheries policies and programmes. The differences may also arise if Scotland, which voted to remain in the EU, seeks a different governance relationship both with the UK and the EU. Hence, minimising the adverse border impacts of the decisions should be a priority. This echoes the UK Parliament's Scottish Affairs Committee inquiry in 2014-15, *Our Borderlands: Our Future,* which suggests that, "the UK Government and Scottish Governments need to find new ways of working together, and with local government, to deliver for the people of the south of Scotland".

In recent years, a few cross-border partnerships have formed to enable coordination, exchange knowledge and seek shared opportunities for their areas. These include:

- The Solway Firth Partnership focused on promoting and managing the Solway estuary and its coastal lands in Cumbria, and Dumfries and Galloway. Contributing members include Natural England, Scottish Natural Heritage, Cumbria, Carlisle City, Dumfries and Galloway Councils, Marine Scotland, the Crown Estate, the Robertson Trust, and E-on.
- In 2014, three local authorities from Northern England (Cumbria, Carlisle City and Northumberland Councils) plus two from southern Scotland (Scottish Borders, and Dumfries and Galloway Councils) held a summit to discuss Scotland/England border co-operation, especially to boost economic opportunities. They initiated the Borderlands

Initiative, though few details have been made public from subsequent meetings about agreed priorities and actions.

- Cooperative agreements and partnerships are emerging on the borders of north Wales and Cheshire. These include the West Cheshire and North Wales Chamber of Commerce which represent the business community across the whole of West Cheshire and North Wales, and a Collaboration Agreement between the Cheshire constabulary and the North Wales Police to provide and deploy Firearm Officers.

New forms of devolution must resist the comfort of devolving power and resources only to established, higher tiers of administration and governance. New powers for Parish and Town Councils to undertake neighbourhood planning, and have their processes and proposals acknowledged by statutory planning authorities, are one form of 'double devolution'. Participatory budgeting, in which residents and others can contribute ideas to inform local authority budgets, and funds distributed by local councillors to their own constituent communities, offer another approach. Nevertheless, these initiatives need to be accompanied by governance structures and responsibilities that avoid higher-tier authorities adopting a tokenistic approach to their local communities, or allocating resources only to the scale of their communities' income-generating base which would continue the inequitable governance of the rural north.

National Defence institutions: long dependence on the rural north

The nation's armed forces are an institution with a long presence in northern small towns and wild spaces. State and private investment in defence has left an extensive northern heritage including Hadrian's Wall, Berwick-upon-Tweed's Elizabethan fortifications, and a myriad of camps, castles and fortifications. Many are now notable visitor attractions in their own right, whilst others encourage the use of connecting trails, tracks or waterways. Some continue their roles as garrison towns, airfields and communication centres, as at Catterick (North Yorkshire) now planned for expansion to a super garrison, RAF airfields in the Vale of York, and surveillance and electronic intelligence stations at Harrogate, Scarborough and Alnmouth (Northumberland). These remain key assets for UK and NATO military services. Extensive open moorland managed by the Defence Training Estate provide vital training and firing ranges for armies and aircraft, and include 24,000 hectares at Otterburn, Northumberland and 9,700 hectares near Appleby, Cumbria. Northern skies over sparsely-settled areas are routinely used for military aircraft training and exercises, whilst defence hardware is in continuous production at BAE facilities in Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria, and Salmesbury and Warton in Lancashire.

Summary

Northern England's small towns and rural areas present a diverse, extensive and complex pattern of communities in which economic, social and environmental assets intertwine to define their relationships with northern cities, the rest of the UK and globally. This paper has briefly described these core assets and relationships and provided evidence and examples of the substantial contribution they make to the economic, social, cultural and environmental wellbeing of the north. It presents profiles of the north's population, economy, natural and cultural environment, institutions and sources of knowledge. Some of the characteristics, activities and outputs profiled in these sections arise uniquely or predominantly from the north's countryside and small towns. Without them the nation's economy and society would be considerably poorer. Yet rural areas are rarely one dimensional and the preceding discussion has described multiple users, sources of governance, forms of connectivity, past lives and current opportunities, through which the many assets and qualities of the rural north are linked.

This paper has examined the rural communities and businesses that provide the workforce, products and services required by many of those living beyond their boundaries; the conservation and management of natural and cultural assets; and the remote areas that deliver multiple benefits to society, while their resident communities face a variety of challenges resulting from the very qualities that appeal most to visitors. The paper has also highlighted a working countryside that yields multiple and seemingly contradictory outputs – water, timber and food for northern and national consumers; quiet paths, tracks and waterways for enjoyment by tourists and leisure users; rich biodiversity and endangered habitats in protected areas; vibration-free environments for world-leading manufacturing activities, whilst also hosting military training for warfare and defence; as well as releasing land for building major roads and urban development.

Against this backdrop of complex interactions, we make several recommendations that acknowledge that these rural qualities and assets are valued and shared. Their protection, development and future use require strategic and specific support to be planned, developed and resourced by partnerships of national, northern, city and rural representatives and organisations. Current arrangements or plans for northern governance, for devolution of powers and resources, for stimulating northern economic development, are often inappropriate, inequitable and ill-devised for the many assets and challenges faced by small towns and rural areas. They need to be improved in conjunction with local people (both communities of place and interest).

Many such improvements can arise from a greater understanding and acknowledgement, by city and national leaders, of the many and varied contributions of rural areas and small towns to the north, and of the challenges that they face. Some of these, such as creating choice in local jobs and utilities, delivering consistent and useable mobile and broadband connections, of daily working across two UK countries with increasingly divergent economic and social policies and priorities, are rarely encountered in northern cities. Yet they remain important factors in constraining the ability of small towns and rural areas to make a stronger contribution to the northern economy and society. Northern England will achieve more from a deal with the UK government in which the qualities, roles and aspirations of all its residents, from those in remote rural areas to city communities, are equally recognised, understood and supported, than it could from a narrower focus addressing only the economic needs of its cities and large towns. We hope that this paper helps to bring about this more holistic and equitable approach and strengthen "the momentum behind the Northern Powerhouse to really close the North-South gap."[37]

Recommendations

The Northern Powerhouse project should adopt a broader scope, a longer-term horizon, and an inclusive approach. This requires:

- An explicit appreciation of the qualities and contributions of the whole of the area, not just its cities.
- An emphasis on longer term sustainability, prosperity and liveability of the area, rather than on short term economic growth.
- A concerted effort to protect, restore and enhance the natural and cultural (material and non-material) assets of the rural north.
- The incorporation of the natural capital of the area[38] into the objectives of the Northern Powerhouse.

More specifically, there is a need to:

- Support rural commuting and in-migration to make rural communities more sustainable and resilient, especially in sparsely-populated areas.

[37] George Osborne, 3 February 2017, launching the Northern Powerhouse Partnership first report; http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-38854271

[38] Which can now be measured in monetary terms by using tools such as Natural Capital Accounts

- Promote new and diverse business activities and structures in the rural north by looking beyond traditional rural economies and old models of rural business development.
- Elevate and integrate the upkeep, improvement and extension of green and blue routes in northern England (that are currently undertaken in partnership with Natural England, the Canal and River Trust and other organisations) into strategic planning and funding in the north.
- Invest in physical connectivity, digital infrastructure (mobile reception and high-speed broadband), and local public transport across the rural north (particularly in remote rural areas) to improve residents' access to learning, health, and community services and enable firms and employees to create economic opportunities.
- Develop strategic and shared programmes of support for the north's farmed and natural environmental assets and reframe the case for public payments to land and water managers for public goods, following the UK's withdrawal from the European Union
- Adopt a nature-based approach for mitigating negative environmental impacts. For example, flood management through catchment management programmes, and noise and air pollution reduction through woodland planting and peatland restoration.
- Provide affordable housing and services for rural communities, and enable new business formation and expansion in ways that are place-sensitive and enhance local characteristics.
- Develop strategic and shared programmes of support, with adequate and equitable resources, to protect and enhance the cultural assets of the rural north including the non-material cultural heritage.
- Support the collaborative structures and efforts of northern universities to enable more communities to access and harness intellectual, scientific and academic competencies and facilities.
- Create meaningful alternative economic and social opportunities for the assets and communities that have supported the defence activities and establishment after the planned closures of such activities.
- Embrace a call for collaboration, and new and productive ways of working across all borderlands of England, Wales and Scotland.

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