

Chair – THE RURAL COALITION

1 Role Description

To set the scene

The coming years will bring both new opportunities and challenges for the Rural Coalition and represent a chance for the new Chair to bring fresh perspectives and ideas. We need to have a keen eye on opportunities to inform and influence policy makers, in relation to the rural perspective on subjects across the entire range of economic, social and environmental policy development. These opportunities and challenges may also involve the Coalition reviewing its core objectives and how it operates.

Objective

The Chair will lead the Rural Coalition, chair its meetings and be the Coalition's principal spokesperson – including with Government ministers, officials and the media.

Decisions of the Coalition are by consensus amongst its members, but the Chair plays a leading role in guiding the Coalition in the development of its policy positions.

Principal responsibilities

Strategic leadership

- Provide leadership and act as the public face and leading voice of the Coalition, ensuring that the Coalition has maximum impact in respect of its vision and policy position.

Governance

- Ensure that the governance arrangements are working in the most effective way for the Coalition
- Encourage positive change and where appropriate address and resolve any conflicts within the Coalition's membership
- Work with Coalition members to develop and deliver a plan of action, with member support, to deliver agreed objectives
- Work within any agreed policies/plans of action adopted by the Coalition

External Relations

- Act as an ambassador for the Coalition, its vision and objectives.
- Maintain close relationships with key members of the Government and with key influencers.
- Represent the Coalition at external functions, meetings, and events as appropriate.

Efficiency and effectiveness

- Chair meetings of the Coalition effectively and efficiently, bringing impartiality and objectivity to the decision-making process
- Ensure that the representatives of the Coalitions membership are fully engaged and that decisions are taken.
- Work closely with the Secretariat to give direction to Coalition policymaking and to ensure that meetings are well planned, meaningful, and focussed.
- Ensure that decisions taken at meetings are implemented.

Additional information

There is currently no Vice-Chair. ACRE, one of the members, provides the Secretariat. The current Chair has, from time-to time, worked with a small number of Coalition Member representatives on specific pieces of work.

The Coalition is not an organisation as such and has no directly paid staff. Members pay an annual subscription of £500 a year (giving an annual income of £5,500) to support the Secretariat function, provided by ACRE, in lieu of a membership fee. Occasionally Coalition members will contribute additional finance in respect of a particular piece of work/activity or provide help in kind.

The above list is indicative only and not exhaustive. The Chair will be expected to perform all such additional duties as are reasonably commensurate with the role.

The current Chair has provided the following is a list of the more significant meetings/engagements she had over the past year/18 months:

- 1:1 meetings with the Rural Affairs Ministers. Not frequent but used to be several during the year. However, have tailed off recently, although these may be reintroduced.
- Ministerial/Departmental roundtables, as applicable. This happened more often in the past with previous Rural Affairs Ministers and senior Civil Servants and may occur a bit more frequently in future.
- Catch-up meetings (usually online) with Defra Officials and usually a pre-Coalition meeting with them.
- Member of Rural Housing Enabler (RHE) Advisory Group. There as Rural Coalition but linked to the current chair's rural housing/RHE background.
- Occasional meetings with other Political Parties (e.g. LibDems in run-up to General Election) and MPs/Lords. As and when. Have previously held events at the House of Lords (HoL), hosted by the Coalition's President but not done so for a couple of years.
- A member of Rural England CIC Stakeholder Group and of other relevant groups eg more recently around land use.
- Attendance at events e.g. Ministerial receptions, launches, openings and speaking at members' and other meetings, as and when (e.g. the forthcoming Anthropy 2025 in March).
- Media work where relevant e.g. in connection with Pragmatix report, letters to The Times, Farming Today and speaking to NALC National Assembly.

2 Person Specification

Personal Qualities

- Demonstrate a strong and visible passion and commitment to the Coalition, its strategic objectives and cause. Whilst the successful candidate may not necessarily be from a rural background or have worked for or with a national rural organisation, they will need to be able to demonstrate understanding of, and empathy with, the issues faced by rural communities across England.
- Personal gravitas to lead a significant national partnership.
- Exhibit strong inter-personal and relationship building abilities and be comfortable in an ambassadorial role
- Demonstrate tact and diplomacy, with the ability to listen and engage effectively with a range of differing viewpoints, in particular across political groupings and parties.
- Strong networking capabilities that can be utilised for the benefit of the Coalition
- Ability to commit time to conduct the role well, including travel and attending events out of office hours

Experience

- Experience of operating at a senior strategic leadership level within an organisation
- Experience of working in a political environment and influencing role
- Successful track record of achievement through their career
- Experience of external representation, delivering presentations and managing stakeholders
- Considerable experience of chairing meetings and events

Knowledge and skills

- Broad knowledge and understanding of the rural policy arena and current issues affecting it
- Strong leadership skills, ability to motivate staff and volunteers and bring people together.

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