



PRESS RELEASE

ALL CHANGE FOR THE QUANGO

The government's bonfire of the quangos will inevitably impact on rural businesses, including shops. The widely-trailed abolition of the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) will see their roles passing to new Local Enterprise Partnerships, with a white paper due later this year on how these will operate. Ken Parsons, Chief Executive of the RSA, said, "The RSA is not a great fan of most of the RDAs. With a couple of honourable exceptions, their priorities seem to revolve around large schemes in towns rather than small businesses in rural areas, but nevertheless several months uncertainty about what will replace them is not helpful in today's economic climate. We would urge the Government to make sure that the decisions surrounding the setting up of Local Enterprise Partnerships are addressed as soon as is practical".

The second announcement to affect RSA members is the proposed abolition of the Commission for Rural Communities. Set up in 2005, the Commission and its chairman, Dr Stuart Burgess, have been effective advocates. They have ensured that government policy takes into account the needs of rural communities, for example, by establishing ground rules by which new legislation can be "rural proofed" to ensure that it does not have unintended consequences in rural areas.

Ken Parsons said, *"The disappearance of the Commission for Rural Communities will mean that organisations like the RSA will need to redouble our efforts to ensure that the rural dimension does continue to inform government thinking. The RSA has recently written to all English MPs with rural constituents alerting them to some of the issues affecting rural shops and we will continue to help fill the gap left by the demise of the old Countryside Agency and its short-lived successor"*.

Notes for editors:

The Rural Shops Alliance (RSA) was formed in April 2001 and now represents over 7,200 independent retail members, employing some 40,700 staff. The RSA – a trade association with a difference – exists to be the campaigning voice of the independent rural retailer and the source for practical support particularly in terms of retail best practice. Many 'blue chip' and 'retail service' suppliers sponsor and partner the work of the RSA and help the organisation with category management and best retail.

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