



## Rural Places, Rural Challenges

### Discussion Summary

The following points were raised during the day:

#### Housing

- The rural housing '5-star plan' developed by the Rural Housing Alliance/National Housing Federation to increase the delivery of rural housing and contribute to a living and working countryside (<http://www.housing.org.uk/topics/investing-in-communities/rural-housing/rural-housing-5-star-plan/>)
- Whether the 'voluntary right to buy' will ever happen and what it might mean for rural areas if it is implemented - the pilots have been extended (<https://righttobuy.gov.uk/am-i-eligible/housing-association-tenants/>)
- How housing associations are using data from neighbourhood planning (e.g. Housing need/desire, affordability and different tenures).
- The methodology for calculating housing need at district and parish levels, and how this fits with neighbourhood planning.
- Examples of how/where small rural housing associations have been working with local people to allay fears before they snowball.
- The disconnect between what rural housing associations would like to do and Local Authority officers who are trying to support a large number of people in housing need, many of whom are not in rural areas.
- Taking the local community with you in any housing scheme – ensuring resident input into the allocations policy (consulting parish councils), rural proofing, talking to tenants who have benefitted from a rural affordable housing scheme (this is who I am and this is what the housing association did for me). This also means that housing associations need to operate openly and transparently e.g. Village Information and Consultation Events (VICE) to get information out to the local community about who they are as a landlord, what they want to do and what it means for the local community.
- Housing affordability, in market towns as well as rural areas. How will this be addressed in current welfare reform? £2 billion is being invested in social housing rents.
- The viability of housing schemes in rural areas – how some housing associations ask Local Authorities for contributions to reduce rents and achieve sustainability. But not all Local Authorities have the money to invest in rural schemes.
- More money is needed from government for social rented housing.
- The sacrifices people make to live in rural areas (e.g. lower incomes, higher living costs, declining services).
- The diversity of the rural economy (food, farming, manufacturing, transport, services). How to get over this complexity to Local Authorities and Government so we have an integrated rural economy for the 21st century.

- The relationship and traction housing providers have with land owners.
- The centralisation of public services and lack of infrastructure in rural areas - demonstrating the benefits of housing in rural areas in addressing some of these issues (i.e., build the houses and the services may survive or infrastructure provided). If you lose services will they come back even if you subsequently provide housing?
- The importance of family and support networks in rural areas.
- The role of digital technology and automation in improving people's quality of life in rural areas (e.g. driverless cars, prescriptions delivered by drone).
- The importance of partnership working in bringing forward schemes in rural areas – with housing associations working with community land trusts and other grassroots organisations (e.g. NALC and parish councils).
- How to promote IN-BYISM; with examples of housing projects being led by and driven by local communities provided.
- The importance of local leadership in a rural setting in bringing forward housing.
- The type of tenure needed in rural areas and the evidence needed to support that.
- The value of the voluntary sector in working with housing associations - community reach (staff, volunteers and getting local people on board).

## **Broadband**

- Reaching the final few percent is much more complicated than it appears!
- When will the final 5% be connected? How are we going to measure this?
- We can reach and connect everyone in rural areas but the challenge is cost.
- What counts as superfast?
- How to make broadband 'affordable' for people in rural areas – and the role of Local Authorities in delivering this.
- The Scottish Government's commitment or ambition to reach 100% by 2020 - the Reaching 100% Programme ("R100") R100 programme – <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/07/4529>
- Should we solve the most remote and challenging rural areas first - providing fixed wireless and/or fibre to the property and make available vouchers for people to connect and/or provide more support for communities who want to deliver their own solutions?
- Delivering broadband in new housing schemes - you should not be building properties anywhere if you cannot get broadband and will be digitally excluded.
- Who should be responsible for resolving rural broadband challenges?
- Using electricity pylons to carry fibre?
- Relationship between broadband and low carbon budgets (resilience and sustainability) – what is the carbon footprint of using broadband? I.e., in parts of Scotland getting power to the broadband system is a problem, with solutions such as wind and other renewables being used.
- BT is not using fixed wireless solutions because the equipment needs to be Ofcom approved.
- Choice and how in many rural areas BT is the only choice – but sometimes this opens up other service providers (Sky, Talk Talk). Not being able to connect to a superfast network prevents you having this choice of providers.
- Access to the BT / open reach system, where is the competition in the market and when/why don't other providers engage?
- The clawback / underspend from BT could be important for rural areas in bringing other technological solutions.
- Fast Fibre Connector Kits (black box technology) faster speeds but over shorter distances or travel further at slower speeds?
- Why hasn't there been more focus on fixed wireless solutions in rural areas?
- People in rural (and urban) areas are not getting the speeds promised by BT.

- Aggregation - there isn't enough engineering capacity in the UK to build a new access network to reach the last 5% so how can we create a collaborative environment and have a patchwork that reaches and works for the final 5%?

## Rail

- Increasing rural train services – existing franchise agreements, new/forthcoming franchise agreements and what is considered value for money.
- How a community station cafe sits alongside other local businesses (i.e., the need to avoid replication and competition).
- Selling local produce in station buildings.
- ACORP 'innovative community uses for railway stations and land' (<https://acorp.uk.com/research-projects/communitystationsreport/>)
- Station buildings as a hub for local young people - opening up in the evenings, needing the requisite insurance?

## Health

- Local Government Association/Public Health England 'health and wellbeing in rural areas' report (available online at: <https://www.local.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing-rural-areas>)
- The importance of the emerging National Centre for Rural Health and Care working with other rural health centres across the UK.
- The scale of rurality may be different but the health and wellbeing issues are often the same.
- Digital health interventions – delivering health care closer/in people's homes.
- On average, people living in rural settings are healthier than those in urban areas but that's not true for everyone as there are pockets of deprivation and official statistics don't always provide the whole picture.
- Looking at the individual domains within the Index of Multiple Deprivation rather than the composite score can draw out the inequalities in rural areas.
- The health outcomes for a rural resident diagnosed with a chronic illness is worse than a resident in an urban area as rural dwellers don't have the same access to health care.
- The linkages between health, food poverty and fuel poverty.
- It is becoming increasingly difficult to live in a rural community post 85 years.
- Access to GPs, dentists and hospitals is poorer in rural areas compared to urban areas.
- There are issues around the recruitment and retention of health and care workers in rural areas (medical schools and teaching hospitals are based in urban areas).
- Upskilling existing health professionals (e.g. community pharmacists, physician associates, nurse prescribers) or is this leading to fewer people doing more things?
- Nuffield blog 'making rural hospitals sustainable' (<https://www.nuffieldtrust.org.uk/news-item/making-rural-hospitals-sustainable>).
- Are we talking about a medical secondary acute prevention model rather than a community/population quality of life model for health care?