

# Rural Services APPG

**All-Party Parliamentary Group on Rural Services**  
**22<sup>nd</sup> September 2020 at 11.00am**  
**On-line via Zoom**

## **COMPREHENSIVE SPENDING REVIEW**

The purpose of the meeting is to agree issues to raise with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, The Rt Hon Stephen Barclay MP at a meeting on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> October 2020.

### **PRESENT**

Peter Aldous MP (Waveney)

Rt Hon Philip Dunne MP (Ludlow) CHAIR

Richard Holden MP (North West Durham)

Jerome Mayhew MP (Broadland)

Greg Smith MP (Buckingham)

Baroness Redfern

Lord Ewen Cameron of Dillington

Antony Bennett (Senior Parliamentary Researcher Jo Churchill MP)

Eleanor Goldberg (Office of Anne Marie Morris MP)

Jonny Haseldine (Parliamentary Assistant Anne Marie Morris MP)

Arthur Virgo (Office of Rt Hon Philip Dunne MP)

Tim Bonner (Chief Executive, Countryside Alliance)

Duncan Carter (Corporate Affairs Manager, Calor Gas Ltd)

Dr Andrew Francis (Chief Economic Advisor, National Farmers' Union)

Martin Gorringe (Rural Communities Policy Unit, Defra)

Chris Hinchliff (Rural Economy & Communities Policy & Campaigns Officer, CPRE)

Mark Holmes (External Affairs Manager, National Farmers' Union)

Rohit Kaushish (Chief Economic Advisor, National Farmers' Union)

Sarah Lee (Head of Policy, Countryside Alliance)

Jeremy Leggett (Policy Advisor, ACRE)

### **In attendance from Secretariat**

Graham Biggs MBE (RSN)

Bethan Aldridge – Minute taker (RSN)

## **1. Apologies for Absence**

Ruth Edwards MP (Rushcliffe)

Chris Loder MP (West Dorset)

Julie Marson MP (Hertford and Stortford)

Anne-Marie Morris MP (Newton Abbot)

Rt Hon David Mundell MP (Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale)

Rt Hon Owen Paterson MP (North Shropshire)

Baroness Watkins

Bishop Alan (St Albans)

Bishop Christine (Newcastle)

Lord Curry of Kirkharle

Lord Robin Teverson

Steve Dowling (Public Affairs Manager, Association of Convenience Stores)

Tim Goodship (Defra)

Andy Parker (Head of Corporate Affairs, Calor Gas Ltd)

Ishita Pawar-Kumar (Defra)

David Inman (Secretariat, RSN)

## **2. Notes of Previous Meeting**

Minutes of the meeting held on 14.07.20 were accepted with no matters arising.

## **3. Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) 2020**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked that they consider the key issues/"top asks" to submit to the CSR. Four submissions had been received and sent out with the agenda and these were from the Countryside Alliance, the CPRE, the National Farmers' Union and the Rural Services Network. Two further submissions had now been received from ACRE and Calor Gas Ltd and would be distributed after the meeting with the minutes.

Once the main priorities are agreed these would then be discussed with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury (The Rt Hon Stephen Barclay MP) at a meeting arranged for Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> October 2020 at 3:30pm.

A discussion took place between the MPs and House of Lords' members present and a number of similar issues were raised by the group and these included:

- Increased access to affordable, high speed Broadband
- Increased mobile phone coverage particularly in "not-spots" and that of 5G
- Continue (or make permanent) the current reducing of VAT to 5% on Rural tourism/hospitality to support the sectors
- The need for Affordable Rural Housing
- Increased funding for Rural Health to support the needs of a larger proportion of older people than in urban areas

Lord Cameron reminded everyone that at the original CSR meeting with the Rt Hon Liz Truss MP in 2019 she had requested that there not be too big an agenda and to consider only two or three key “asks”.

Jeremy Leggett (ACRE) suggested a broader solution by looking at the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the Housing Budgets. Thereby requesting a higher level ask of either ring-fenced monies or a fair share of these budgets. The Chair agreed that this step could cover the areas of Health, Housing and public services funding formulae.

Rohit Kaushish (NFU) noted that a recent annual survey by the NFU had highlighted access to sufficient broadband and mobile phone coverage was still a big issue and that asking for ring-fencing within the UK Shared Prosperity Fund would help to alleviate issues when competing against urban projects. The Chair agreed that this picks up on the point of rural fairness as allocation tends to be looked at through the prism of urban administration. Lord Cameron agreed that targeting the UK Shared Prosperity Fund was vital but that amounts from ring-fencing alone may result in small allocations and that it would be better to focus on themes.

Sarah Lee (Countryside Alliance) commented that as well as more funding being welcome that changes to regulatory policy was also required to achieve broadband and mobile phone connectivity.

Duncan Carter (Calor Gas Ltd) referred to their submission ask that focuses on the removal of gas boilers in rural areas before those in urban areas but no alternatives have been looked into yet. Calor’s ask is to evaluate options and give support for green gas and tax incentives. The Chair agreed that if a property is off-grid there are few choices other than heating oil/LPG and that renewable energy needs to be affordable for all.

Further discussion took place and Graham Biggs and the Chair summarised the asks into the following points:

1. Connectivity – covering Broadband and Mobile
2. Fair Share of resources
3. Net Zero

**Actions:**

Graham Biggs to put together a document covering the “big asks” and a very short policy rationale which would be circulated before the meeting on the 13<sup>th</sup> October.

Rohit Kaushish to provide Graham with the results of the annual survey discussed.

A separate APPG meeting would be held to look at the issue of Affordable Housing and the proposals in the Planning White Paper (current consultation closes 29<sup>th</sup> October, 2020).

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and contributing to this useful discussion and providing enough material to put in a submission.

## **5. Date(s) of Next Meeting**

Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> October 2020 at 3:30pm – 4:15pm with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury  
(The Rt Hon Stephen Barclay MP)

Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> October 2020 at 10am-11am

Topic: How to level-up digital connectivity to rural communities

Speakers: Matt Warman MP (Minister for Digital Infrastructure) and Gareth Elliott (Head of Policy and Communications, Mobile UK)

Meeting finished at 11:45am.