



The Rt Hon Daniel Zeichner, MP
Minister of State for Food Security and Rural Affairs
Department for Environment , Food and Rural Affairs
Nobel House, 17 Smith Square,
London
SW1P 3JR

Dear Minister,

Support from the Rural Services Network for Rural Housing Enablers

I am writing on behalf of the members of the Rural Services Network [RSN] and, by extension, the rural people, communities, and businesses they serve.

We are the national champion for rural services and a membership body representing over 500 organisations focused on delivering services in rural communities. As you know whilst we campaign for fair funding for rural public services, we also focus on policy that impacts rural communities.

We are concerned about the moment to create a national programme of vital affordable rural housing developments, built up over the last year through the Rural housing Enabler project, is not lost amongst the inevitable budget difficulties that the Government is facing.

Already within a limited time the RHE project has been a great success and achieved value for money, covering as it does almost all rural England by being embedded in the national ACRE network. This network of RHE's has started to have a real impact through its support and inspiration of rural communities to find ways of developing genuinely affordable homes to meet the needs of local communities.

In terms of the Government's Five Missions, we believe this approach of supporting rural communities to assess their own local housing needs, and then find locally appropriate ways of meeting them, has the greatest chance of getting homes built that will '*break down barriers*' and '*kickstart economic growth*' across rural England. Lack of affordable homes for the local workforce is often one of the most limiting factors for the rural economy, stifling opportunity, holding back growth, and giving the impression to young people that there is no future for them living in the countryside.

Delivering more homes of all types, but especially genuinely affordable ones will be fundamental if the Government is to succeed in its plans. The countryside is already

Campaigning for Fairer Funding for Rural Communities

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at a disadvantage with fewer affordable homes and a more extreme affordability problem than urban areas. We call on the Government to continue the financial support that is needed to make the RHE project the longer-term success that we know it can be.

We urge you to consider the modest annual resource expenditure required to continue the Rural Housing Enabler project over the next three years.

The premature ending of the RHE project would set back the work with rural communities and, for many, the break in continuity of support could become very hard to revive.

If we can provide any further information that might help you with this decision we would, of course, be delighted so to do.

Best wishes

Kerry Booth

Chief Executive, Rural Services Network

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