

Revitalising Rural

Realising the Vision

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Vulnerability Group Meeting

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RURAL
SERVICES
NETWORK

Revitalising Rural

- Extensive consultation throughout 2020 with membership
- Response to Government's indication:
“Over the coming months, the government will expand on its strategic vision and set out how, working across departments and working with stakeholders, it is putting in place a range of measures to ensure that rural areas continue to thrive.”

(Government response in 2019 to the House of Lords Select Committee on the Rural Economy)



16 Chapters of Revitalising Rural



Revitalising Rural



Sustainable Farming and Land Management



Further Education, Training & Apprenticeships



Rural Town Centres & High Streets



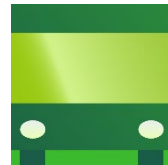
Availability of Affordable Housing



Managing an older population



Business Advice & Guidance



Transport & Access to Jobs & Opportunities



Accessible Health & Care Services



LEPs & LIS



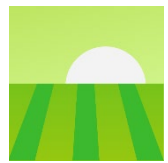
Decarbonising Rural Communities



UK Shared Prosperity Fund



Fair Funding



Land Use Planning System



Digital Connectivity



Village Schools & Local Assets



Parish Councils & Community Action

SOME OF THE KEY ASKS



Public Sector Funding: public services should be fairly funded to ensure that additional costs of delivering rural services are recognised and adequately funded.

Recognising rural need: Government should take full account of the needs of rural areas, their economies, and their communities and that the impacts of any measures flowing from it are both proportionate to rural areas and properly rural proofed.



Public and mental health services: Government should give more prominence to public health and mental health services. Both need better resourcing to become more accessible in rural areas. Historic funding allocations for public health cannot be justified and need urgent overhaul. Large disparities in numbers of mental health professionals working in rural and urban areas need resolving.

Improve health and care visits: travel down community health and care staff visiting outlying rural areas should be taken fully into account and should not mean shorter visits.



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DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY



- **Broadband USO:** upgrade the broadband Universal Service Obligation. Costs passed on to consumers seeking a USO connection must be reasonable. .
- **Full fibre connectivity:** Given the pace of technological change, the timescale for the Government goal for universal full fibre networks should formally be brought forward to 2025, with public investment plans to match.



- **Digital skills and inclusion:** Government should announce a fully funded Digital Inclusion Programme, so no citizens (rural or otherwise) are left behind due to their lack of online skills or their inability to pay for basic equipment and connection charges



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TRANSPORT & ACCESS TO SERVICES

- **Bus route provision:** Government must ensure that its planned National Bus Strategy has objectives for rural provision, with ambitions to better serve rural communities and their economic needs on a sustainable basis. A fair share of the extra resources now starting to flow must reach rural areas, to improve existing routes, restore valued lost routes and establish new routes where clear gaps exist. This must be backed up by ensuring predominantly rural local authorities regain their ability to offer necessary revenue support.
- **Access and travel to hospitals:** local health partnerships and trusts should take better account of accessibility and transport availability when drawing up plans to reconfigure acute and emergency services at their main hospital sites
- **Electric vehicle charging:** a funded strategy is needed to expand considerably the number of electric vehicle public charging points on rural roads.



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ECONOMIC GROWTH AND RECOVERY



- **Local Industrial Strategies:** need some repurposing so that a key element becomes supporting the economic recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and restrictions. Every LEP whose area includes rural places should demonstrate that it has rural proofed its LIS document to take proper account of rural needs and to allocate a fair share of resources. Those LIS strategies must look to support smaller-scale projects, suited to rural areas, and must not simply focus on large infrastructure projects in or around big urban centres.
- **Growth and Diversification:** LEPs should consider creating small-scale Local Growth Hubs at a market town level where their economic needs are more acute. More generally, LEPs should support the diversification of rural economies, especially into growth sectors such as creative, digital and green energy. This would tap into their growth potential and create good quality jobs.
- **Covid-19 support:** The Government Plan for 2021-25 will welcome measures to help businesses survive and grow, though some of its measures could be more targeted.



EDUCATION, TRAINING & ADVICE



- **Further Education:** for rural young people three linked issues need addressing – travel options to access FE, the cost of that travel and the choice of institutions/courses available. Students aged 17 or 18 should be entitled to statutory free travel to FE colleges or schools, matching the existing scheme for those aged up to 16.
- **Careers advice:** young people in rural areas need better local access to impartial and high-quality careers information and guidance.
- **Access to training:** training providers should consider how they can make courses more accessible to rural based businesses and their staff.



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HOUSING



- **Build Suitable Housing:** Government should ensure new housing suits the needs of an ageing population by strengthening national planning guidance or allowing local planning authorities more leeway to set standards. This should take proper account of the Lifetime Homes Standard - including through Building Regulations



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Next Steps...



- Preparing for Launch
- Engaging with Member organisations to share message of Revitalising Rural
- Engaging with the decision makers in Parliament