



Delivering for All Research Project

Rural Villages Services Group

October 2025

We have launched a survey to gather rural voices



We Want To Hear From You!

If you live in rural England, that means:

- Small towns, villages, hamlets, or isolated rural areas.
- Outside major cities and large urban areas.



Take Part In Our Research and join our rural voice!

- **Time:** 8-10 minutes
- **Format:** Online survey
- **Confidential:** Anonymous responses



Your voice will directly inform policy discussions with Government Departments, MPs, and decision-makers.

A tilted image of a survey form titled "Delivering for All". The form is titled "Section 1: Household Information" and asks respondents to provide information about their household and location. It includes two questions with radio button options and a dropdown menu.

Delivering for All

Section 1: Household Information

Firstly, please tell us about your household and where you live.

* 1. What type of area best describes your household's location?

- ☐ A city or metropolitan area
- ☐ A large (urban) town
- ☐ A small (rural) town
- ☐ A village
- ☐ A hamlet or an isolated village

* 2. Which region of England do you live in?

Methodology & Approach



Longitudinal Design:

Building upon previous RSN and Citizens Advice rural research to track changes and developments over time.

Mixed Methods Approach:

Quantitative Component

Comprehensive online questionnaire.

Target: Rural residents across England

Topics: Housing, healthcare, transport, digital connectivity, planning, demographics

Qualitative Component

In-depth interviews with rural residents.

Focus groups with community representatives.

Case studies from diverse rural communities.

Data Collection Timeline

Survey deployment:

September 2025

Interviews/focus groups:

October 2025

Delivering for All

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* 1. What type of area best describes your household's location?

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- ☐ A large (urban) town
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- ☐ A village
- ☐ A hamlet or an isolated village

* 2. Which region of England do you live in?

Please share with your communities



Please share with your communities, groups and local residents in rural England

We are looking for respondents from

- Small towns, villages, hamlets, or isolated rural areas.
- Outside major cities and large urban areas.



**You can share the QR code or weblink:
<https://www.rsnonline.org.uk/national-rural-conference-launches-major-new-survey-to-champion-rural-voices>**



Your voice will directly inform policy discussions with Government Departments, MPs, and decision-makers.



Got 5 minutes?
Help us to gather rural voices
and influence government
policy.

A short survey, a big impact.

www.rsnonline.org

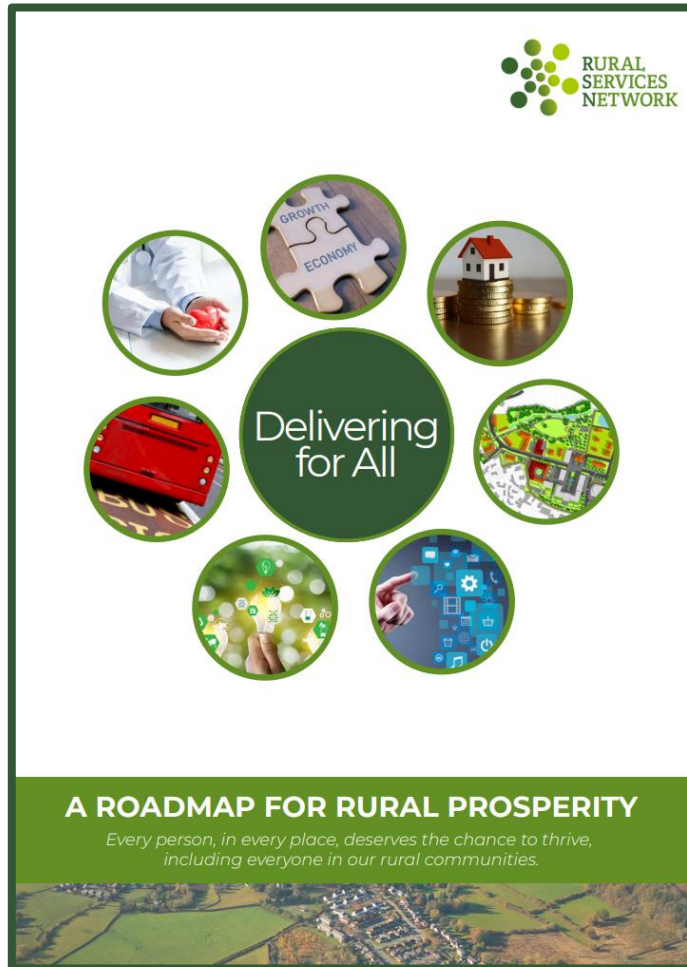


Delivering for All

Rural Villages Services Group

October 2025

Delivering for all campaign



Delivering for all
campaign sets out our
roadmap for rural
prosperity

Every person, in every
place, deserves the
chance to thrive
including everyone in our
rural communities.

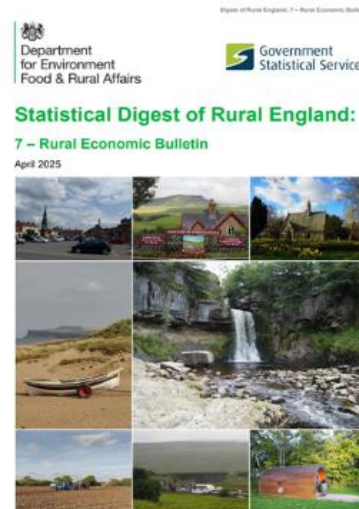
Delivering for all campaign



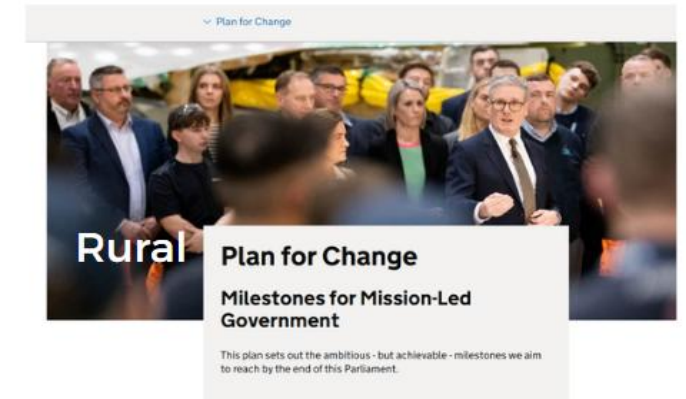
**Fairly Fund
Rural Public Services**



**Use right measures and
metrics to understand
rural challenges**



Rural specific plan



40% More



**Government Funded
Spending Power in urban
Councils is **40% MORE**
per head than in
predominantly Rural
Councils for 25-26**



Rural Residents
pay **20% more**
in Council tax
per head
compared to
Urban Residents

The Rural Housing Crisis



Rural house prices: 8.8 times earnings vs 7.6 times urban



Rural housing waiting lists: 20% increase since 2020



House prices increased 57% since 2013 while earnings rose just 28%



Rural homelessness increased 73% since 2018 and yet homelessness is often a hidden problem in rural areas

The Rural Housing Crisis

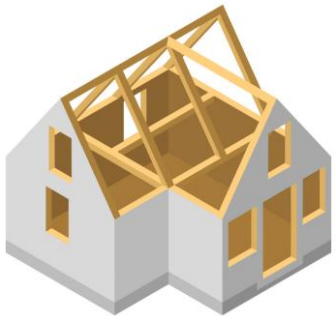


Only **2,831** social homes built in rural areas in 2024

In Rural areas
1 in 4
Properties are off
the gas grid

Just over half of the
second homes in
England are in
Predominantly
Rural areas

It would take 82
years
to house the
300,000 people on
rural waiting lists

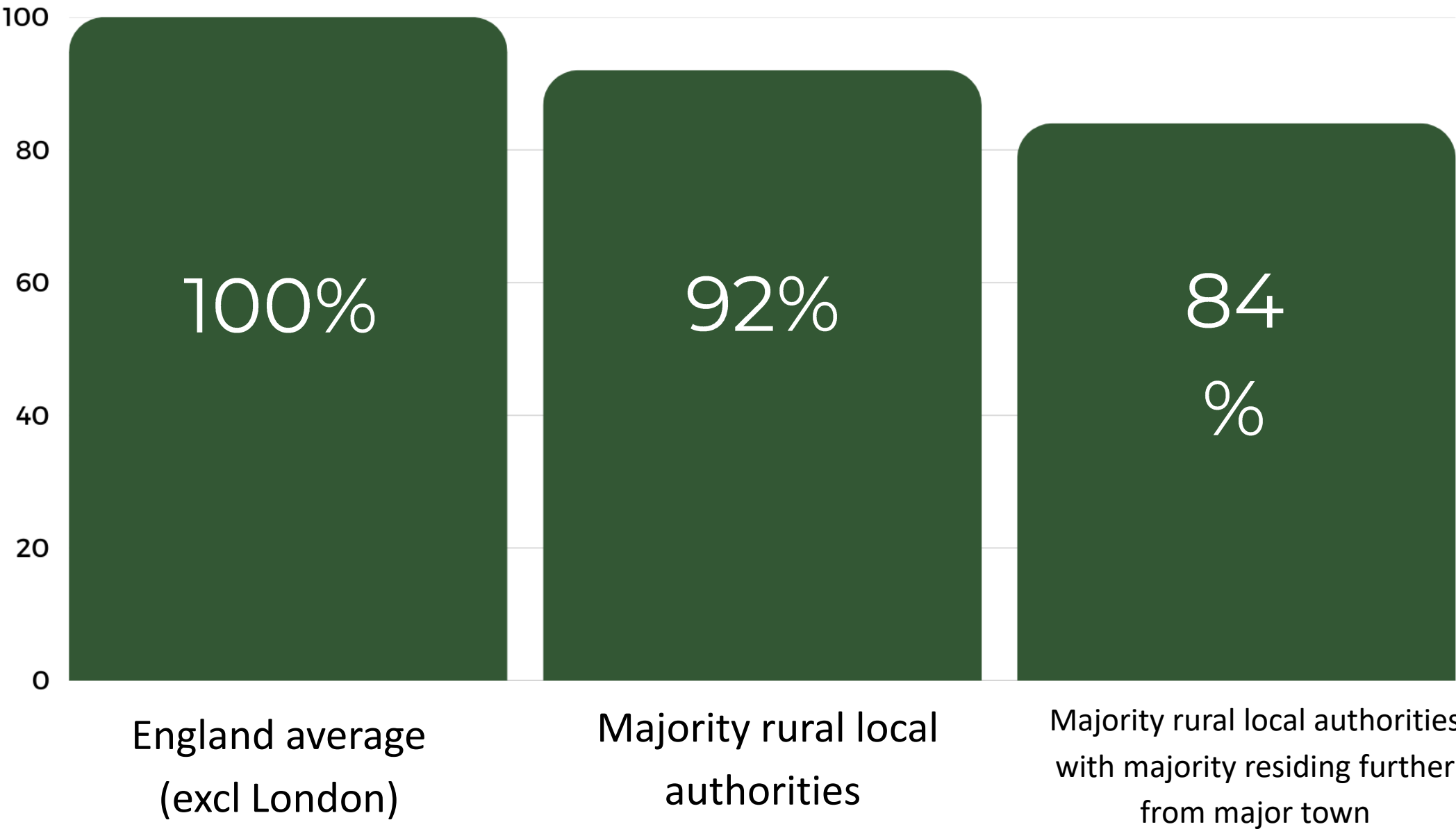


Challenges for the rural economy



Challenges for the Workforce	Challenges for the employers / businesses
Lack of affordable housing options	Lack of broadband / mobile signal for businesses to increase productivity/markets
Lack of Public Transport to access skills/training/education/employment	Suitably qualified workforce
Lack of Broadband / mobile connectivity to access skills/training/education	Lack of Infrastructure
Seasonal nature of tourist industry	Less ability to work within economies of scale

Productivity Levels measured by GVA



Rural Potential



The report Reigniting Rural Futures shows that with the right policy framework, the rural economy could increase productivity significantly, leading to an additional £9 billion to £19 billion per year in tax revenues.

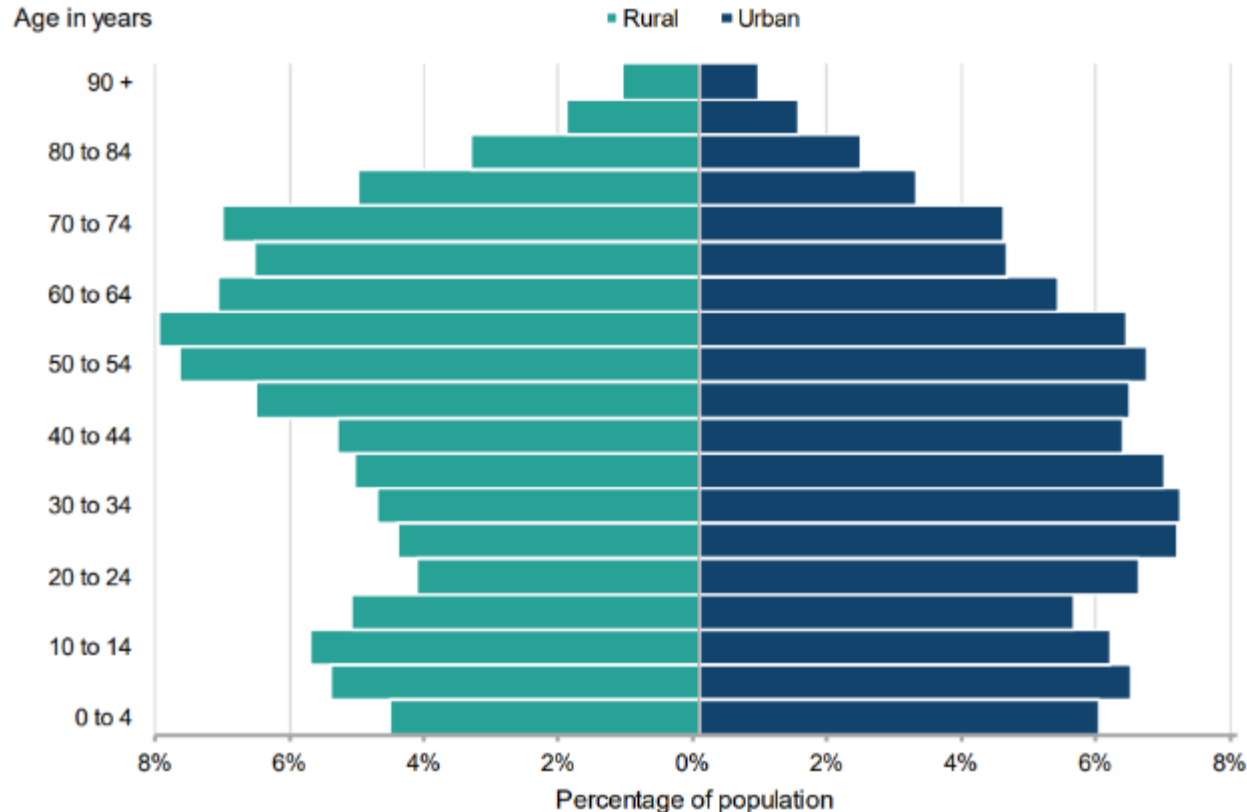
This growth would not only support rural communities but also have far-reaching benefits for the national economy, helping to fund essential public services and drive broader economic initiatives.

The Treasury stands to gain substantially from an invigorated rural economy, making this an opportunity too significant to ignore.

Access to Rural Health and Care Services

Figure B-1: Percentage of population within age bands of 5-year intervals from 0 to 90+, by Rural-Urban Classification in England based on LSOA level data, 2020

The legend is presented in the same order and orientation as the stacks in the bars



Rural areas have an ageing population which places additional demands on services

Isolation and lack of public transport - leading to mental health concerns; distance from services; the nature and quality of the housing stock.

Urban areas receive 16% MORE in social care grant than rural areas

Residential Superfast Coverage

	Total	Urban	Rural
England	98%	99%	90%

Residential Gigabit Capable Coverage

“The coverage of gigabit-capable broadband networks – which includes hybrid fibre coaxial (HFC) cable in addition to full fibre – has grown to reach 83% or 25 million residential premises in the UK by July 2024. This suggests the Government’s target of 85% coverage by 2025 is likely to be reached.” Connected Nations 2024

	Total	Urban	Rural
England	84%	88%	54%

Rural Net Zero



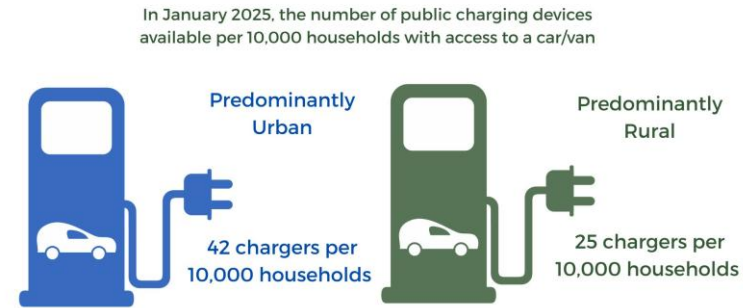
In Rural areas

1 in 4

Properties are off the
gas grid

Average fuel poverty

gap in rural areas almost
double that of urban
areas



In 2023 there were 10 times **fewer** electric buses/coaches in rural areas per head of population than in urban areas.

Source: RSN analysis of Western Power Distribution, 2023



Rural transport



Reliance on private vehicle

- 93% of households in most rural areas had at least 1 vehicle
- 44% of households in most urban areas had at least 1 vehicle

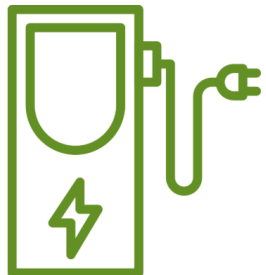


20 % reduction in rural bus service provision from 2011-2023



£20.5 million cut from local authority bus budgets in latest year

Cuts to England's bus network cost economy £2.6 billion annually



67% of rural areas lack adequate EV charging



Rural Economies

Rural areas hold immense untapped economic potential—a sleeping giant worth £19 billion, as identified by the Rural Coalition. Yet, this potential is often overlooked due to metrics and policies designed for urban contexts.

Rural enterprises, from small businesses and sole traders to larger ground breaking engineering and aerospace businesses, drive innovation, create jobs, and foster vibrant communities.

Unlocking this potential requires tailored support, infrastructure investment, and policies that reflect the realities of rural economies, ensuring they contribute fully to the nation's prosperity.

£19B

With the right investment, rural areas could add **£19 Billion annually** to the national economy.

↓

Wages earned in the rural economy are **lower** than the national average.

Key Asks

1. **Fair Funding**

Ensure that rural areas receive their fair share of support to grow the economy and create a system where decision making and resources are devolved to local areas as far as possible, creating the flexibility for tailored solutions to prioritise and meet local needs and opportunities.

2. **Metrics and Measures**

Protect rural communities by ensuring that the metrics used to devise strategies or programmes for growth (including skills) are not based on 'one-size-fits-all' thinking but reflect the disadvantage in rural economies within regions.

3. **Rural Policy**

Deliver a support programme for SMEs and community entrepreneurs in rural areas, especially start-ups and those seeking to grow.

Ensure policy and strategy is Rural Proofed in a way that is meaningful and demonstrable and also includes outcome monitoring. There is now a real case for placing Rural Proofing on a stronger legal footing, in the way that it has been in Northern Ireland.

Provide opportunities for the growth of the green economy and supporting infrastructure, namely the national grid and digital and mobile connectivity.



Everyone deserves the right to contribute to a thriving economy which is critical for national growth. SMEs, community enterprises, and green industries must be supported to unlock rural potential and drive innovation and employment.



Access to Rural Health and Care Services

Access to high-quality health and care services is a cornerstone of thriving communities, yet rural areas often face challenges such as workforce shortages, longer travel times, and higher service delivery costs.

Residents in rural communities deserve equitable access to healthcare, tailored to their unique needs and circumstances. Investing in rural health and care is essential for reducing disparities, supporting wellbeing, and ensuring sustainable, inclusive communities.

1 in 4

Rural areas will see fastest growth in 65+ population over next 20 years. Currently on average, **1 in 4** people are aged over 65 in rural areas.

29%

29% of rural residents couldn't get NHS dental appointments in 2023/24.

Key Asks

1. **Fair Funding**

Ensure strategy is Rural Proofed, especially proposals designed to tackle the core drivers of disparities in health outcomes including quality of housing, and access to good quality jobs and training.

This must also take into account the whole range of extra costs of delivering services in rural areas and ensure that they are accurately reflected in funding formulae.

2. **Metrics and Measures**

Address the lack of understanding of the distinctive health and care needs of rural areas by ensuring measures are collected at the right level to deliver services that are suited to the specific needs of rural places. Develop integrated services that provide holistic person-centred care.

3. **Rural Policy**

Deliver a rural work force strategy to aid training and recruitment across all health and care services including dentistry.

Protect rural communities by ensuring that they have access to mental health services that meet their needs.

Create a culture which ensures the Third Sector is included as a partner in the integrated planning system and resourced accordingly, where it is cost effective to do so and in the community's interests.

The contribution of community and voluntary organisations must not be underestimated, not least with respect to prevention and wellbeing.



Everyone deserves the right to access quality health and care services. Rural residents can face unique challenges—from workforce shortages to geographic isolation—that demand tailored policies to ensure their wellbeing.



Rural Transport

Rural transport systems are vital for ensuring that all residents have access to essential services, employment, and community interaction, yet they often lack the necessary investment and infrastructure.

The absence of adequate transport options in rural areas can lead to social isolation, limit job opportunities, and increase dependence on private vehicles, which can lead to high transport costs.

Enhancing rural transport is essential for economic development, social equity, and environmental sustainability.

3.6 X

Urban authorities budgeted to spend over **3.6 times more** per head on subsidised bus routes than rural authorities in 2024/25.

56%

56% of small rural towns have become transport deserts or are at risk of becoming one across northeast and southwest England.

Key Asks

1. **Fair Funding**

Ensure that rural transport receives it's fair share of funding to enable rural residents to access employment, services and access to health and care services, including funding for councils to provide socially necessary rural buses.

Ensure local authorities are fairly funded to maintain vital rural road infrastructure.

Protect Community transport by creating a larger funding pot which is sustained over a longer period. It should promote the use of community transport schemes which serve outlying settlements and feed into bus or rail routes.

2. **Metrics and Measures**

Ensure that rural communities are not disadvantaged by measures which only focus on passenger levels, and don't recognise the inherent social value of transport options to enable providers to have the evidence to make the case for investment into rural transport.

3. **Rural Policy**

Recognise the key role that transport plays in enabling a community to access employment, training and services and ensure that the Integrated National Transport Strategy sets out an effective approach for rural mobility and transport solutions.

Create a greener future by undertaking a comprehensive review of the electric grid and, where appropriate, hydrogen supply, to address the risk that the high costs of introducing electric or hydrogen buses and their fuelling facilities could prove problematic in rural areas.



Everyone deserves access to a transport system that meets their needs and enables them to access employment, training, public services, and social interaction.



Rural Affordable Housing

Rural affordable housing is critical for enabling vibrant, sustainable communities where people can live, work, and thrive. Yet, many rural and outlying areas face a shortage of affordable and quality homes, which limits opportunities for young people, essential workers, and families to stay and contribute to their communities.

Ensuring access to affordable rural housing is vital for community resilience, economic stability, and social wellbeing.

8.8x

Rural residents need **8.8 times** their annual salary to buy a home, compared to **7.6 times** in urban areas (2024).

20%

Between 2020 and 2023, waiting lists in rural areas increased by **20%**, compared to 14% in urban areas.

Key Asks

1. **Fair Funding**

Introduce and fund an ambitious annual target for genuinely affordable quality rural homes and deliver this through a dedicated rural affordable housing funding programme to reflect local needs and policies.

2. **Metrics and Measures**

Ensure that the definition of 'affordable housing' is sensitive to local market conditions and wages and takes into account local circumstances.

3. **Rural Policy**

Deliver a rural housing strategy stating how new housing will be delivered to meet rural communities

Protect rural tenants by ensuring that local authorities can register and manage the short and long term rental market to meet local need, thus avoiding oversupply of holiday lets. In addition, Government should ensure that policies on Energy Performance Certificates do not result in a reduction of long term rental properties.

Ensure that a national homelessness strategy includes investing in solutions in rural areas, taking into account the distinct challenges of rural communities.

Address the lack of affordable homes in the countryside by Rural Proofing any planning policy changes which may be introduced. This will ensure that all planning policies have an aim of increasing the proportion of affordable quality homes built and that no policies have an unintended consequence negatively impacting on opportunities for affordable housing in rural areas.

Develop a policy to exclude rural areas from any proposals to extend the Right to Buy to Housing Association properties. Create a programme of at least 5 years of support for a national network of Rural Housing Enablers covering each rural housing authority.



Everyone deserves access to a warm, safe, affordable home. Rural areas face a critical shortage of genuinely affordable homes and targeted solutions are vital to ensure the sustainability of rural communities.



Rural Planning

Planning plays a vital role in creating sustainable, thriving communities. By ensuring that new homes are supported by essential infrastructure—such as transport, digital connectivity, healthcare, and education—planning can unlock opportunities for growth and wellbeing. Locally informed policies and community engagement are key to shaping development that meets the diverse needs of rural areas, while preserving the unique character and natural environment of the countryside.

With the right approach, planning can enable vibrant rural communities where residents have access to good jobs, services, and quality homes—places where everyone has the opportunity to prosper.

x2

Rural areas have **twice** the proportion of second homes compared to urban areas.



Protecting rural banks, post offices and libraries helps communities stay vibrant, sustainable and connected.

Key Asks

1. **Fair Funding**

Ensure that rural councils have the funding and resources to effectively manage their planning departments to ensure that they can deliver the support required to enable the increase in both planning responsibilities and applications to meet the new homes target of the Government.

2. **Metrics and Measures**

Housing need and deprivation can be hidden when statistics are collected at a large geographical area therefore measures should be collected at the most appropriate geographical level.

3. **Rural Policy**

Deliver an effective approach to Neighbourhood Plans into which rural communities have spent a huge amount of time and effort so that they can influence the future of their local area.

Protect rural voices in community engagement around planning. Whilst digital might always be the preferred choice, poor connectivity in rural areas means many voices are being lost.

Develop Rural Proofed planning policy which gives autonomy to Local Authorities and the communities they serve and ensure that the needs of rural communities are not overlooked in future changes to national planning policy guidance.

Create thriving rural areas by building the right homes, in the right places offering a range of tenures for all stages of life from the working young to retirees.



Everyone deserves to live in a community that has effective infrastructure and appropriate access to services. Effective planning ensures rural communities can shape their future to avoid inappropriate development, and missed opportunities for sustainable growth.



Rural Digital Connectivity

Rural connectivity is the backbone of modern life, underpinning access to education, healthcare, employment, and community engagement. Yet, many rural areas still face unreliable internet and patchy mobile coverage, leaving residents digitally excluded and businesses at a disadvantage.

Investing in robust, future-ready connectivity is essential for unlocking economic potential, improving quality of life, and ensuring no community is left behind in the digital age.

54%

Only **54%** of rural premises have access to gigabit-capable broadband, compared to **85%** nationally (2024).

10%

10% of rural areas still lack access to superfast broadband, compared to just 7% of urban areas.

Key Asks

1. **Fair Funding**

Deliver improved rural connectivity through the effective delivery of Project Gigabit; and creating a clear road map and government funding for connecting very hard to reach premises as soon as possible.

Protect rural residents from digital exclusion by delivering the Shared Rural Network; ensuring 5G regional innovation funding is focused on rural areas and use cases.

2. **Metrics and Measures**

Digital Connectivity related measures and targets should disaggregate data by rural and urban levels to ensure an accurate representation of coverage disparities.

3. **Rural Policy**

Ensure high quality coverage and delivery of TV and radio, supporting the viewing requirements of rural consumers.

Ensure that the Digital Inclusion Action Plan includes specific actions for rural areas to ensure that it can create a digitally savvy innovative rural workforce and community, by providing accessible training, appropriately funded.



Everyone deserves access to Digital and Mobile connectivity. This may mean targeted solutions to ensure that rural communities are not left behind and to ensure access to education, business, healthcare, and social interaction.



Rural Net Zero

Our rural and outlying areas have a critical role to play in the UK's journey to Net Zero, with natural resources, space for renewable energy infrastructure, and opportunities for innovation.

However, they face unique challenges, including limited access to grid capacity and funding support.

Accelerating the transition to Net Zero in rural areas is essential for environmental sustainability, economic resilience, and national energy security.

2.6x

The rural fuel poverty gap in villages and hamlets is **2.6 times** higher than in urban areas (2022).

25%

In rural areas, **25%** of homes are off the gas grid, this equates to **1.4 Million** properties (2025).

Key Asks

1. **Fair Funding**

Ensure that all economic growth programmes include explicit objectives to support low carbon and Net Zero growth.

Specialist advice and related grant funding should be made available for existing rural businesses to help them reduce their carbon footprint and the UK meet its 2050 targets.

2. **Metrics and Measures**

Recognise the unique challenges and opportunities that exist in rural areas by collecting measures and targets at a granular level to ensure that rural communities can support the journey to net zero.

3. **Rural Policy**

Deliver a 'fabric first' Energy Strategy which address rural needs. This means, ensuring rural is ready to embrace the move to a technology neutral approach to Net Zero so that individuals can choose the most appropriate solutions to heat their homes.

Address the gaps in the network of public charging points across rural Britain. As many rural areas are tourist hotspots, increasing this network will boost the economy in rural areas.

Create a Net Zero Rural Britain by working with the energy industry to ensure that the electricity distribution network is resilient, reliable and fit-for-purpose across all rural Britain before additional demands are put upon it.



Everyone deserves to be part of the decarbonisation journey, those in rural areas need tailored support to ensure they can play their part, as Rural Britain has immense potential to lead the transition to Net Zero.



Rural Public Sector Fair Funding

Successive governments have underfunded rural councils, leaving rural residents at a disadvantage. Urban residents receive in 25-26, 40% more in Government Funded Spending Power per head compared to rural residents. Rural voters also pay, on average, 20% more per head in Council Tax because their local council gets less government grant.

Adding to the challenge, council services cost more to deliver in rural areas, where residents are spread across wide areas but still depend on vital services. Communities in these areas deserve their fair share of funding to ensure they remain functional and sustainable—especially in the face of the cost of living crisis, which hits them hardest.

40%

Government funded spending power in Urban Councils is **40% MORE** per head than in predominantly Rural Councils in 2025/26.

20%

Rural residents continue to pay **20% MORE** in Council Tax compared to their urban counterparts in 2025/26.

Key Asks

1. **Fair Funding**

Create Public funding formulae which ensure the unique service needs, delivery constraints and the whole range of extra costs of delivering services in rural areas (and not just travel costs) are properly reflected.

Ensure funding for the Social Care Reform proposals uses a formula which recognises the whole range of costs faced by rural councils and care providers. This includes financially addressing the current backlog in assessments etc.

2. **Metrics and Measures**

The Government should monitor the impact of funding formulae on all areas across the country, including those in rural and urban areas to ensure that residents in our market towns and villages are not paying more for their services compared to those in more urban areas.

3. **Rural Policy**

Protect rural council taxpayers by fairly funding public services to ensure they are not asked to pay more to fund local bodies than their urban counterparts.

Public sector bodies should have the resources they require to meet the needs of their community and deliver services effectively. Residents should not be disadvantaged due to living in a more rural community.



Every Council should have the resources it requires to meet the different needs of their community. This includes Councils serving our market towns and villages as well as those in our cities.