
Minutes RSN Executive Meeting

Venue: English Rural Housing Association,
7A Strutton Ground, Westminster, London, SW1P 2HY
Date: Monday, 13th of January 2020
Time: 11.15 am – 2.30 pm

[Please follow this link for the map of the venue.](#)

1. Attendance & Apologies

Attendance

Cllr Cecilia Motley	RSN & Shropshire Council
Cllr Peter Stevens	West Suffolk Council
Cllr Roger Phillips	Herefordshire Council
John Birtwistle	First Group
Martin Collett	English Rural Housing Association
Cllr Robert Heseltine	North Yorkshire County Council
David Inman	RSN
Graham Biggs	RSN
Cllr Jeremy Savage	South Norfolk District Council
Cllr Peter Thornton	South Lakeland District Council
Cllr Sue Sanderson	Cumbria County Council
Cllr Mary Robinson	Eden District Council

Apologies

Nik Harwood	Young Somerset
Cllr Rob Waltham MBE	North Lincolnshire Council

2. Minutes of the last RSN Executive meeting that took place on the 30th of September 2019. (Attachment 1)

Agreed as a correct record.

Arising out of Minute 11 (Benefits of SPARSE Membership) the Chief Executive that this would be reported to the next meeting as the work had been unable to be finished in time for this one

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

Arising out on Minute No 12 (Fairer Funding Review “Measuring Success” the Chief Executive said that all SPARSE members which responded were supportive.

3. Minutes of the last Rural Social Care & Health Sub-Group meeting that took place on the 2nd of December 2019. (Attachment 2)

Agreed as a correct record.

4. Minutes of the last RSN AGM & Rural Assembly meetings that took place on the 2nd of December 2019. (Attachment 3 & 4)

Agreed as a correct record.

5. RSN Budget Report. (Attachment 5)

Provided all outstanding subscriptions were received (£16K was still outstanding although several payments were being processed) there would be a balance of circa £12k to carry forward and there would be a balance of circa £13k at the end of 20/21.

Members considered the report from the Chief Executive. Position agreed.

6. Settlement proposals

Information from Pixel was still awaited on identification of the gap between rural and urban (in terms of Government Funded Spending Power and Council Tax per head) based on this Provisional Settlement. If the gap was closing it would be for technical reasons associated with population data and structural changes as opposed to beneficial changes government policy, which was obviously continuing previous patterns. The position with the explanation would be outlined to the main SPARSE meeting in two weeks' time.

7. Fair Funding Review Update. (Attachment 6)

The current situation was discussed. It was expected that MHCLG would issue exemplified consultation papers in the spring or early summer, with a view that the usual “Settlement” consultation proposals at the end of 2020 will be based on the new needs formula and 75% retention of Business Rates. Now that a new Government has been elected, it is vital that the MP Rural Fair Share Group was reconvened. The position would be discussed with the APPG and the Fair Share Chairs later that week.

8. To discuss the survey report on “Impact of National Policy for Affordable Housing Thresholds on the Delivery of Rural Affordable Housing”. (Attachment 7)

The following points were made by members:

- Frozen villages resulting from planning policies were not desirable. Some planned growth was necessary to allow settlements to remain sustainable.

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

David Inman, Director

Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ

Tel: 01822 813693

www.rsnonline.org.uk email: admin@sparse.gov.uk twitter: @rsnonline

- The historic reasons against growth were gradually crumbling. The old arguments around fuel use, accidents, lack of facilities, were gradually changing as technologies change.
- A different world is emerging, and this needed to be reflected in communities no longer being forbidden any growth at all by planning regulations and Local Plans.

Report accepted.

9. Rural Strategy Campaign - report from the Chief Executive. (Attachment 8 + A)

The Executive felt that any new Secretary of State should be re-approached on the stance taken by the Government until now. If the Government position failed to change, the following was recommended and approved. These new steps would be themed “Reinvigorating Rural: Realising the Vision”.

10. 2019 General Election. (Attachment 9 + A, A1, B, C, D)

The tabled report was noted.

11. National Rural Conference 2020.

Report from Kerry Booth was considered. (Attachment 10)

After further discussion it was agreed to change the dates for this event to Tuesday 8th and Wednesday 9th of September 2020 at Gloucestershire University, to avoid conflict with the August Bank Holiday.

12. Update on the Rural Market/Towns Campaign. (Attachment 11)

The Corporate Director, David Inman outlined the position reached. At the time of the meeting – 56 local councils had agreed to join. He hoped the final figure from the 200 invites might achieve 80 authorities of those initially asked to join. He hoped a figure in excess of 100 council's might be achieved by the end of 2020.

13. Utilities Against Scams.

David Inman gave a verbal report. The Utility Companies had come together to form a Campaign against this growing problem. There was a Supporters Group for non-Utility Companies. It was suggested RSN join this Supporters Group, which was agreed.

14. Update on the Membership Development and Support Officer role.

Nadine Trout, a current employee of South Hams and West Devon Councils, had been appointed to the role. She will commence work with RSN at the start of February 2020.

15. Rural Fire Group meeting.

LGA Annual Fire Conference and Exhibition is taking place in Blackpool on the 10 & 11 of March 2020.

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

David Inman, Director

Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ

Tel: 01822 813693

www.rsonline.org.uk email: admin@rsn.gov.uk twitter: @rsnonline

It was agreed that the Rural Fire Group meeting will be held on the 11th of March, after the LGA Fire Conference at Blackpool. The Executive appointed Councillor Roger Phillips as the Chair of the Fire Group for the 20/21 year.

16. Proposal for change of dates for the RSP meetings.

Changes to RSP meeting dates below has been agreed.

Event	Current Date	Agreed Change of Date
Rural Services Vulnerability Group meeting	07.04.2020	20.04.2020
Rural Services Partner Group meeting	07.04.2020	20.04.2020
RSP Ltd meeting	16.11.2020	23.11.2020
Rural Services Vulnerability Group meeting	17.11.2020	23.11.2020
Rural Services Partner Group meeting	17.11.2020	23.11.2020

17. Regional Seminars 2020 update.

Date	Region	Venue	Topic
15.01.2020	Yorkshire & the Humber * Event from 2019, postponed due to the General Election	North Yorkshire County Council	Barriers to Access – Connectivity & Rural Transport
24.02.2020	West Midlands	Stafford Borough Council	Rural Health & Wellbeing
09.03.2020	South East	Chichester District Council	Rural Economy
23.03.2020	South West	To be confirmed	Time for a Rural Strategy
11.05.2020	North East	Durham County Council	Barriers to Access – Connectivity & Rural Transport
27.07.2020	East Midlands	East Suffolk Council	Rural Skills & Education
05.10.2020	North West	Chorley Council	Rural Vulnerability
02.11.2020	Yorkshire & the Humber	To be confirmed	Rural Housing

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

David Inman, Director

Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ

Tel: 01822 813693

www.rsnonline.org.uk email: admin@sparse.gov.uk twitter: @rsnonline

18. Any Other Business.

There was no other business.

The next RSN Executive meeting is scheduled for the 16th of March 2020.

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

David Inman, Director

Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ

Tel: 01822 813693

www.rsonline.org.uk email: admin@sparse.gov.uk twitter: @rsnonline

**MINUTES FOR RURAL SERVICES NETWORK
EXECUTIVE AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Venue: No 63 Bayswater Road, London W2 3PH

Date: Monday 30th of September 2019

Time: 11.15am to 2.30pm

Attendance & Apologies for Absence

Attending:

Cllr Cecilia Motley, Chair – RSN, Shropshire Council

Graham Biggs MBE, CX – RSN

David Inman, Director – RSN

Cllr Robert Heseltine, First Vice Chair (Yorkshire) – North Yorkshire County Council

Cllr Roger Phillips, Vice Chair (West Midlands) – Herefordshire Council

John Birtwistle – First Group, Buses

Martin Collett – English Rural Housing Association

Mary Robinson, Vice Chair (North) – Eden District Council

Apologies:

Cllr Sue Sanderson – Vice chair (Without Portfolio)

Cllr Adam Paynter – Vice Chair (South West)

Anna Price – RSP Director - Small businesses

Cllr Mark Whittington – Vice Chair (Without Portfolio)

Cllr Gill Heath – Vice Chair (County 2)

Jeremy Savage – Vice Chair (Without Portfolio)

Peter Thornton – Vice Chair (Without Portfolio)

Cllr Peter Stevens – Vice Chair (East)

Richard Kirlew – RSP Chair – Community

Stewart Horne – Business Information Point (BIP)

1. Notes from the 2018 AGM.

Held on 12th November 2018 – were agreed as an accurate minute.

2. RSN Constitution.

The RSN Constitution presented on the 12th November 2018 AGM had been circulated to all RSN members as required by the present constitution. Only one council had made representations/comment. These had been dealt with in the new revised Constitution draft circulated to this meeting.

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

David Inman, Director Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ

Tel: 01822 813693

www.rsnonline.org.uk email: admin@sparse.gov.uk twitter: @rsnonline

Attachment 1

The Executive agreed this revised draft will now go forward to the AGM on the 2nd of December 2019. Electronic decision making by the Executive may be referenced in any future changes.

3. Notes from the previous RSN Executive meeting.

Held on 20th May 2019 – were agreed as an accurate minute with no matters arising.

4. Notes from the SPARSE Rural Special Interest Group meeting.

Held on the 24th of June 2019 – were agreed as an accurate minute with no matters arising.

5. Notes from the Rural Economy Group meeting.

Held on the 24th of June 2019 – were agreed as an accurate minute.

LEPs item – it was agreed that EDO's in member areas would be asked to let RSN know when their LEP had produced a (draft or final) Local Industrial Strategy and if they had comments as to the extent they considered it "fair, evidence based and fit for purpose" as far as their rural areas were concerned.

The RSN would produce a report on the extent to which the Local Industrial Strategies were sensitive and responsive to rural needs.

6. Associate Group.

A report from the Corporate Director was received suggesting that those who had rural local connections could form an Associate Group – on the basis set out in the report - for those local authorities who did not wish to be members of the RSN SIG. The report was agreed.

7. A Rural/Market Towns Group.

Over two hundred invitations have been sent out to a group of towns and large parishes across England. Details would be sent out to Executive of the towns/parishes approached to date.

8. The National Rural Conference 2019.

Held on the 3rd and 4th of September, Cheltenham.

The CEO reported that attendance and income had been at a record high this year. This was however due to wider interest particularly from RSP members, while Local Authority attendance had fallen compared to previous years.

Individual feedback from those attending was good. A survey will be taking place asking local authorities why they are not sending a representative to the annual conference and what their authorities might find of value in 2020.

CCRI were thanked for their assistance which was of particular value.

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

David Inman, Director Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ

Tel: 01822 813693

www.rsnonline.org.uk email: admin@sparse.gov.uk twitter: @rsnonline

Attachment 1

Members agreed that if possible, Cheltenham would continue as the venue for the conference in future years.

A fuller report would be presented to the next Executive as information comes to hand.

9. AGM, Assembly, Rural Social Care & Health Group.

Meeting will be held on the 2nd of December 2019.

(a) It was agreed that the rise in subscription levels be held at 2% for inflation.

10. Schedule of dates for RSN and Executive meetings in 2020.

The schedule of dates circulated appeared to be acceptable to the Executive members, but they would come back in the week if there were any concerns.

11. RSN Budget, 2019/20 and First Estimate 2020/21.

Whilst subs were coming in as slowly as in previous years, the present situation as known about at the time seemed to be on budget.

Members did feel that in addition to the current flow diagrams (available on the website to all members), a third 'short, sharp' diagram (varying between authorities) showing the calculated benefit for SPARSE rural authorities, might be of real value if this was possible. Officers agreed to look at this and report back to the next meeting.

12. Fairer Funding Review: Draft Paper from Pixel on "measuring success".

Graham Biggs detailed the position in relation to this work on which member consultation would be necessary. However, the Executive themselves were happy how Pixel had approached the situation to date and the work so far undertaken. A report would be presented back to the Executive after consultation had taken place and members observations had been received.

13. Spending Review Discussions about Finance based Aspirations with the Chief Secretary Treasury and with other Rural Groups.

The Executive heard that Rishi Sunak had moved into this position, in place of Elizabeth Truss. It was appreciated that current times were very difficult but felt it would clearly be desirable for work to continue around Housing and Transport that had started under the previous administrative team at the Treasury.

It was decided that discussion would take place with Phillip Dunne MP about how and when this could be pursued. Some members felt that these discussions might be held in conjunction with North Yorkshire County Council given that Rishi Sunak was one of their Constituency MPs.

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

David Inman, Director Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ

Tel: 01822 813693

www.rsnonline.org.uk email: admin@sparse.gov.uk twitter: @rsnonline

Attachment 1

John Birtwistle felt that although Electronic Buses may not directly benefit rural areas at this stage the technology should still be encouraged. He agreed to undertake to write and present a two-page document on busses for rural areas which RSN should be concentrating on in the short term.

14. Post of Policy Director.

Members received a report from the Chief Executive and the Corporate Director as the current postholder had secured alternative employment. It was suggested the post would have somewhat varied emphasis – with slightly less emphasis on direct recruitment and slightly greater emphasis on retention working. Sponsorship and attraction of exhibitors for the Annual Conference was also very important.

It was decided to trial the situation by advertisement. The job would continue to be foreseen as being based in the South West. However, the Executive considered there ought to be an opportunity to discuss with applicants a working pattern of 3 or 4 days a week, advertising on hours per week rather than days a week. It was felt this might present a more flexible package for would-be applicants.

15. Rural Strategy Campaign.

- (a) The Government response to main points in the Lords Select Committee Report on the Rural Economy was circulated together with a draft RSN Commentary on each of the issues. Although the Executive had received this close to the meeting it was on first reading to be a good document. Nevertheless, Executive Members will look at it in more detail over the next week and come back with any further comments before the document goes out to the RSN membership for comment. This would also give the opportunity for those who were unable to attend this meeting to comment.

The Government's response was felt to be very disappointing. It demonstrated the considerable amount of work that would need to be undertaken.

- (b) Proposed Rural Strategy Regional Roadshows.

Calor had agreed to sponsor these.

Having had a successful Roadshow in the North East, the next one will be held in Kendal on 17th October for the North West. Others were planned for the East and West Midlands and South East. There was a possibility of an additional one in the South West if the money stretches that far.

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

David Inman, Director Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ

Tel: 01822 813693

www.rsnonline.org.uk email: admin@sparse.gov.uk twitter: @rsnonline

Attachment 1

The main points from the North East Roadshow were comments on Climate Change, De-Carbonisation and Rural Crime, which were not referred to in the RSN Template Strategy. No specific Regional “differences” had been highlighted.

(c) Engaging with RSN/RSP Members.

An email had gone out to all Leaders asking for their authority to become involved by signing up to the Campaign and encouraging their networks to do so. The Executive would be kept updated in relation to the response.

16. Report on the Priorities of the Rural Services Network.

The Executive received the new document which they felt was excellent and they would like it to be used extensively. The Chief Executive was asked to congratulate Richard Inman and Kerry Booth. The meeting agreed to the RSN Priorities being re-expressed (and the website amended accordingly) to accord with the Template Rural Strategy. The RSN Priorities therefore being:

- A thriving rural economy;
- An affordable place to live;
- A digitally connected countryside;
- A place everyone can get around;
- A place to learn and grow;
- A rural proofed policy framework;
- A fair deal on health and social care;
- Fairer funding to address the rural penalty.

17. Regional Meetings 2019 update.

The situation was noted.

Date	Region	Town	Primary Topic being considered
28.06.19	North East	Durham County Council	Sustainable Communities
31.07.19	East Midlands/East Anglia	West Suffolk Council	Rural Health and Wellbeing
07.10.19	North West	Lancashire County Council	Delivering Local Services
09.12.19	Yorkshire & the Humber	Hambleton District Council	Barriers to Access – Connectivity and Rural Transport

18. Election Questions to Candidates at a General Election.

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

David Inman, Director Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ

Tel: 01822 813693

www.rsnonline.org.uk email: admin@sparse.gov.uk twitter: @rsnonline

Attachment 1

The Chair referred to discussions between herself, Peter Thornton and the Chief Executive at the Annual Conference around this issue.

It was agreed that draft questions need to be sent to all members of the Executive for input. These would, once an election had been called, be issued to members (including the Community Group) through the Weekly Bulletin. And by direct email with the suggestion that they be put to candidates at hustings and on the doorstep. They would also be sent to all the main parties Party Headquarters (including minority parties fielding significant numbers of candidates) to enable them to brief their candidates if they chose to do so.

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

David Inman, Director Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ

Tel: 01822 813693

www.rsonline.org.uk email: admin@sparse.gov.uk twitter: @rsonline



Minutes

Rural Social Care & Health Sub-Group

Incorporating SPARSE Rural Members, Rural Assembly and Rural Services Partnership Members. All nominated members & officers of RSN can attend these meetings.

Venue: [The LGA](#), 18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ
Date: Monday, 2nd of December 2019
Time: 11.00 am – 12.30 pm

[Please follow this link for the map of the venue.](#)

1. Attendance & Apologies

Attendance

Cecilia Motley	RSN
Cllr Daniel Cribbin	Daventry District Council
Cllr Malcolm Leeding	Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils
Cllr Mark Whittington	Lincolnshire County Council
Cllr Owen Bierley	West Lindsey District Council
Cllr Robert Heseltine	North Yorkshire County Council
Cllr Roger Phillips	Herefordshire Council
Cllr Sue Tucker	Scarborough Borough Council
Cllr Trevor Thorne	Northumberland County Council
Colin Baldwin	Suffolk County Council
David Inman	RSN
Graham Biggs	RSN
Gwilym Butler	Shropshire Council
Marina Di Salvatore	West Lindsey District Council
Revd Richard Kirlew	Sherborne Deanery Rural Chaplaincy

Apologies

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

David Inman, Director
Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ
Tel: 01822 813693
www.rsnonline.org.uk email: admin@sparse.gov.uk twitter: @rsnonline



Brian Pickles	East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Chris Stanton	Guildford Borough Council
Claire Maxim	Germinate
Cllr Andrew Proctor	Norfolk County Council
Cllr Lawrie Stratford	Oxfordshire County Council
Cllr Lee Chapman	Shropshire Council
Cllr Martin Gannon	Gateshead Council
Cllr Peter Tattersley	Braintree District Council
Cllr Sarah Butikofer	North Norfolk District Council
Emma Keating Clark	Stroud District Council
Gary Powell	Teignbridge District Council
Glen Garrod	Lincolnshire County Council
Janet Smith	East Riding of Yorkshire Council
John Longden	Pub is the Hub
Kate Kennally	Cornwall Council
Laure Fergusson	East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Liz Morgan	Northumberland County Council
Monica Fogarty	Warwickshire County Council
Pam Howard	English Rural Housing Association
Peter Thornton	South Lakeland District Council
Richard Webb	North Yorkshire County Council
Sue Cooper	South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse District Councils
Sue Sanderson	Cumbria County Council
Timothy Williams	East Riding of Yorkshire Council

2. **The Minutes of the last Rural Social Care & Health Group meeting that took place on the 8th of April 2019 were agreed as a correct record.** (Attachment 1)
3. **The Rural Strategy Campaign and the Rural Social Care & Health (Including Mental Health and Loneliness) Issues. Also report presented by Chief Executive Graham Biggs from the recent Lord's debate.** (Attachment 2)
 - 3.1. Graham Biggs introduced the item. He emphasised the template document produced so far by the RSN was not in itself any form of strategy. Each of the service topics that had been mentioned required far more depth and texture. A series of meetings were now taking place. Many of the meetings were seeking to unearth that depth and texture.

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

David Inman, Director
 Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ
 Tel: 01822 813693
www.rsonline.org.uk email: admin@rsn.gov.uk twitter: @rsnonline



- 3.2. On the 8th of October the Lords had debated the government response to the Lords Select Committee proposals. 90%+ of the Lords who had spoken were in favour of the Government being persuaded to prepare a cross-departmental and funded bespoke Rural Strategy with local delivery at its heart. Many of the remarks made which had been catalogued by RSN officers as well as all the evidence collected by the Select Committee assisted in adding much of the depth sought.
- 3.3. Work was also taking place cataloguing the views expressed in past debates by existing MPs who were likely to be returned. As new MPs emerged from the 12th of December poll the cataloguing would be extended to what those individuals had referred to as their particular interests. The work was building up the operation.
- 3.4. The big question that eventually needed answering was – should RSN itself be attempting to build up an illustrative Rural Strategy of its own or should it instead be producing a really widened version of the template document?
- 3.5. As Parliament settled after the Election it was intended to have a meeting with the Lords involved in the Select Committee to agree the tactics going forward so as to ensure that government is constantly made aware that the issues had ‘not gone away’.
- 3.6. The following was considered:
- 3.6.1. Were there any significant Rural Social Care, Health and Loneliness issues not yet referred to?
 The meeting asked that reference be made to:
 (a) the degree of rural suicide, particularly in farming areas;
 (b) the county lines and drugs issue and how this was playing out as a police issue as well as being a health and wellbeing issue.
- 3.6.2. Do we need to highlight Public Health Issues more (funding allocations and generally)?
 The meeting considered this was very necessary.
- 3.6.3. How do we link our issues on Social Care and Public Health to the NHS 10-year plan?

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

David Inman, Director
 Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ
 Tel: 01822 813693
www.rsnonline.org.uk email: admin@sparse.gov.uk twitter: @rsnonline



It was felt there was no choice but to do this as it was considered that the Government would fail to pick up on, and respond to, the specific rural issues involved. This should be work carried out in tandem with the National Centre for Rural Health and Care.

3.6.4. Are there any particular rural issues relating to specific medical conditions and issues affecting carers which need to be reviewed?

It was felt the RSN should ask for evidence from the organisations who were members of the RSP to assist in this area.

3.6.5. Which areas of this subject should the RSN prioritise and what further “evidence” is available or should be sought to support the case?

The meeting felt the following points should be made:

- (a) The volunteer capacity was undoubtedly thinning, and presumptions should not be made about its continued sustainability.
- (b) The RSN, working with RSP member the Institute for Economic Development, was intending to review (rural proof) each of the relevant Local Industrial Strategies in order to consider if the evidence base and follow up funding programmes etc. were proportionate for their rural areas.
- (c) Government should be encouraging housing providers and developers to be looking to provide homes for life – adaptable properties, retirement bungalows.

3.7. The preventative work undertaken by firefighters should become more strategic and that extended work should be supported by wider funding. Members asked that Fire Chiefs should present to an APPG meeting on this topic in the new Parliament.

3.8. Climate change considerations should start to progress, and more strategic thinking should be taking place as to the role rural areas should be supported to play in relation to this issue.

3.9. Members wished to emphasise that as an essential part of the Rural Strategy consideration of a more level playing field in respect of grant settlement was necessary. The two things were totally interlinked.

3.10. Arising from this, officers were asked to establish:
 (a) Throughout the term of the Parliament, how much of the extra billion pounds per year for social care costs, proposed by Conservatives, would

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

David Inman, Director

Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ

Tel: 01822 813693

www.rsnonline.org.uk email: admin@sparse.gov.uk twitter: @rsnonline



go in 'pounds per head' terms to rural and urban areas? And what impact would it have on Council Tax?

- (b) Should Pixel be asked to provide an analysis of the January Provisional Settlement? Is the gap between urban and rural support actually widening yet further?
- (c) There was concern that data at the necessary local level was not available in many cases - making rural proofing impossible in practice.
- (d) It was felt that RSN should, if possible, review the Social Care Green Paper when it was published. There was concern that extra costs (and policy issues more generally) from proposals for rural areas should be properly identified;
- (e) It was also felt that, if available, any detail on the way local authorities were being forced to slim down the length of care visits should be collated. Comparison between the average lengths of visits in rural areas against the average in urban areas might demonstrate the rural problem.

4. Any other business.

There was no other business.

The next meeting of this group is scheduled for the 6th April 2020.

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

David Inman, Director

Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ

Tel: 01822 813693

www.rsnonline.org.uk email: admin@sparse.gov.uk twitter: @rsnonline

Attachment 3

Notes of last RSN AGM & Rural Assembly meetings

Title:	Rural Services Network Special Interest Group – AGM Meeting & Rural Assembly
Date:	Monday, 2 nd December 2019.
Venue:	Local Government Association, 18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

PART 1: RSN AGM SPECIFIC ISSUES

Item	Decisions and Actions
-------------	------------------------------

1	Attendance & Apologies for absence.
----------	--

The group noted apologies for the meeting. A list of attendees/apologies can be found in **Appendix A**.

2	Consider the Minutes of the last RSN AGM meeting. (Attachment 1)
----------	---

Members accepted the minutes of the last RSN AGM (12.11.2018) as a true account of the meeting.

3	Appointment of Chairman for the ensuing year (to also be the Chair of the SPARSE Rural SubSIG).
----------	--

Cllr Robert Heseltine proposed that Cllr Celia Motley continue in her current position as an excellent chairman. The proposal was seconded and agreed by the group. No further nominations were received.

Cllr Motley thanked colleagues for their support and acknowledged the good work of staff at RSN who she said invariably respond to changes in a professional and constant manner. Members were thanked for their continued support and their attendance at meetings.

4	To approve the revised Constitution. (Attachment 2)
----------	--

Mr Inman outlined details of the amended Constitution which now includes a new Clause 1.4.

It states:

The focus of the Group is for the betterment of the rural areas of England and the people who live and work in these areas. The Group cannot and does not deal with any matters relating to disputes or potential disputes between the various tiers of local government serving these rural areas.

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

David Inman, Director
Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ
Tel: 01822 813693

www.rsnonline.org.uk email: admin@sparse.gov.uk twitter: @rsnonline

Attachment 3

Members agreed the Constitution as proposed and to include the additional clause.

5 Appointment of Vice Chairmen for the ensuing year (to also be the Vice-Chairman of the SPARSE Rural SubSIG).

The nomination of Cllr Heseltine as First Vice-Chairman by Cllr Motley was agreed by members.

The list of other nominations proposed was noted and agreed en-bloc. Representatives from the South East were invited to put their names forward if they had an interest in filling the vacant post.

Members agreed that Executive could fill that position without the need for further consultation.

6 Any other Business.

There was no other business.

The next RSN AGM meeting will be held on 16th November 2020.

PART 2: RURAL ASSEMBLY SUB-SIG ISSUES

7 Consider the Minutes of the last Rural Assembly meeting. (Attachment 3)

Members accepted the minutes of the last Rural Assembly meeting (08.04.2019) as a true account of the meeting.

8 Consider the Minutes of the last RSN Executive meeting. (Attachment 4)

The minutes of the last RSN Executive meeting (30.09.2019) were agreed as a true record of the meeting. A few points from the last RSN Executive meeting were discussed:

1. Mr Biggs asked the group to note that it has been agreed that work will be taken forward with the Institute of Economic Development around “rural proofing” of Local Industrial Strategies. Further information on this will be provided at a future meeting.
2. David Inman then updated members on work around the Rural Market Towns Group. More than 200 invitations have been sent out to town and parish councils all over England. 48 towns and large parishes have responded with an interest in joining the group. Ideally, it would include a market town / parish from each of the areas of member authorities. Members noted that the exercise is currently under way and the group will proceed further to the next RSN Executive meeting in

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

David Inman, Director
Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ
Tel: 01822 813693

www.rsnonline.org.uk email: admin@sparse.gov.uk twitter: @rsnonline

Attachment 3

January 2020. Members asked for clarification on the actual market towns which have already signed up and were [referred to the website for more details](#).¹

3. Members were asked to note two points within the minutes:
Paragraph 9a: Increase to the subscription by 2% above the staffed increases already approved.
Paragraph 16: Rural vulnerability will continue as a cross-cutting priority.

9 Membership (Constitutional Requirement).

Mr Inman outlined ongoing difficulties around recruiting new members and spoke about the loss of several members over time due to austerity issues. He acknowledged that establishing and addressing the different needs of members and potential members is difficult given the restraints of the group, but that RSN are working hard to reach consensus on most issues.

10 Member Contributions.

Members formally approved for 2020/21 the proposed 2% raise in subscription beyond the staged increases previously approved.

11 Budget 2019/20 and Estimates 2020/21 (Constitutional requirement). (Attachment 5)

Members were informed of a shortfall of £27k in membership payments received to date. Mr Inman stated that chasing these payments was a priority but, besides that, the budget is as anticipated and there should be a positive balance. Mr Biggs indicated that members would be contacted to see if they can push their own authorities for payment of owed subscriptions.

Decision: The budget was approved.

12 National Rural Conference 2019.

Cllr Motley invited Kerry Booth (Assistant Chief Executive, RSN) to provide a summarised report on the National Rural Conference. There had been 86 delegates at the conference and close to 120 people in attendance, including speakers and the exhibitors etc. Feedback had been very positive, and the overall feeling was good. Some had asked for networking opportunities to be increased next year.

Members were pleased with the successful outcome of the conference.

13 Meeting Dates for 2020. (Attachment 6)

¹ <https://www.rsnonline.org.uk/page/ruralmarket-towns-group>

Attachment 3

Members noted a slight variation to the dates proposed for the regional meetings and these were subsequently agreed.

Members noted the importance of ensuring that they sign in their attendance at meetings, both for feedback to the authorities and to ensure accuracy of the minutes.

14 Speaker Presentations.

Cllr Motley welcomed speakers.

Speaker 1

**Andrew Lee, South Downs National Park
Our Work Supporting the Economy in the National Park Area**

The Chair welcomed Mr Lee, Director of Countryside Policy & Management South Downs National Parks. Members received a presentation which outlined work currently underway to support the economy in the National Park area.

Mr Lee outlined some of the challenges involved and the key messages around the mechanisms needed in order to allow rural areas to be more ambitious. National Parks are keen to work with other rural services to enable a better understanding of issues in common. Members noted the kinds of problems which limit rural areas in thriving.

The speaker provided economic insights into the South Downs National Park work programme and members noted their policy framework aimed at distributing development to include affordable housing, supporting digital and other relevant benefits to rural areas. Rural economy and tourism are key. Members noted current projects which provide opportunities for employment, increased tourism and effective land use which include an expansion of industries such as vineyards, development and support of neighbourhood plans, affordable housing. Members heard about farming and work around sustainability and were referred to work on Whole Estate plans in order to inform and act as a tool in planning and preparation.

The Chairman thanked Mr Lee for an interesting and informative presentation.

The following points were raised:

- What are thoughts on the Glover review on proposals new governance models in National Parks? – It was thought that interesting but watch this space.
- What are the views on climate change thrust in planting more trees? Surely pasture is higher priority. – Mr Lee informed members that 20% of their landscape is already woodland – livestock farmers must not be neglected, and a

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

David Inman, Director
Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ
Tel: 01822 813693

www.rsonline.org.uk email: admin@sparse.gov.uk twitter: @rsonline

Attachment 3

balance needs to be met. More research needs to be done on benefits.

- How can you avoid pressure and imposition from Central Government on the local plan assessment of local housing needs? – Mr Lee said that National Parks are not required to provide this.

He spoke about the importance of the National Parks brand.

The presentation can be found [here](#).²

Speaker 2

Alison Farmer, Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning Developments in Protected Landscapes

The Chairman welcomed Ms Farmer from Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning. The group received a presentation on developments around landscape architecture and environmental planning. Members noted some of the factors which contribute to national beauty and consideration of different aspects which make areas so distinctive.

The group noted definitions of valued landscapes and policies around local plans. Ms Farmer identified some of the values which identify and inform land management guidance and assessment of particular areas in order to form an evidence base to take needs forward. These values provide a guide so that judgements can be made as to where the limits should be set.

Members noted information which provide an indication of how different elements affect capacity to enable new development and establish what matters and why. This provides information in considering how to conserve and enhance natural beauty of these landscapes. Ms Farmer outlined how this evidence determines decisions on good design and fit as well as relationships to existing settlements and the importance of mass, colour and materials. She stated the importance of many considerations in thinking about conserving and enhancing protective landscapes and making a positive contribution.

The Chairman thanked Ms Farmer and asked about the willingness of developers to work with this subtle model and whether there is resistance because they are afraid that it may lead to uniformity of areas? Ms Farmer responded by informing the group that on the whole, developers are on board, but there are still issues around the processes and keeping everyone happy. However, dialogue is taking place and will continue and hopefully improve.

² https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/meetings/sparse-sub-sig-and-rural-assembly/Assembly-AGM-02-12-19/Andrew_Lee_Presentation.pdf

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

David Inman, Director
Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ
Tel: 01822 813693

www.rsnonline.org.uk email: admin@sparse.gov.uk twitter: @rsnonline

Attachment 3

Members raised the following concerns:

- Surface water must be considered.
- Neighbourhood plans credibility decreases over time and it is difficult to keep motivation going to use them to inform future planning.
- Looking at the wider landscape, these principles should also be considered and not just for protected landscapes. Members felt that in the rush to build, these considerations are not properly considered.

The Chairman thanked the speaker for an interesting and informative presentation.

The presentation can be found [here](#).³

15 Time for a Rural Strategy Campaign. (Attachment 7)

Mr Biggs (Chief Executive, RSN) outlined the latest position and the suggested a way forward in lobbying government for a rural strategy campaign and invited Kerry Booth (Assistant Chief Executive, RSN) to speak. In the first instance, she asked all members to sign up to support for the campaign and agreed to provide them with a link to the relevant site.

Members went on to receive a [presentation](#) on the issues faced by rural areas and the need for a cross governmental department and properly funded rural strategy to ensure that these are recognised, and work can co-ordinated be done to try and address them.⁴ The main priorities were set out in the RSN's "It is Time for A Rural Strategy" document.

Mrs Booth outlined details of various solutions which would help rural areas to thrive - including a fair deal for local government (and other public services') funding and access to affordable or social housing. Service delivery on health and social care is funded less favourably in rural areas despite a higher proportion of people needing it. At times extra provision is needed in rural areas just to allow them to have the same benefits as others, such as access to hospitals, transport, etc.

Mrs Booth discussed issues around education and how important focus on rural recruitment is. Members noted the higher costs in council tax in rural areas, despite receiving less services. They agreed that they should also not be penalised for dealing with adverse weather which is more extensive in these areas. Government should have a duty to provide a more transparent rural proofing process and a proper legal basis for rural proofing.

³ https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/meetings/sparse-sub-sig-and-rural-assembly/Assembly-AGM-02-12-19/Alison_Farmer.pdf

⁴ https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/meetings/sparse-sub-sig-and-rural-assembly/Assembly-AGM-02-12-19/Kerry_Booth_Rural_Strategy.pdf

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

David Inman, Director
Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ
Tel: 01822 813693

www.rsnonline.org.uk email: admin@sparse.gov.uk twitter: @rsnonline

Attachment 3

Mr Biggs re-addressed the background around the need for the campaign and reminded members of the House of Lords Select Committee which had been set up to look at the same issues. He outlined the recommendations and the Government's response to these together with SPARSE's commentary. Members noted that the Government had since rejected the request for the actual Rural Strategy - although they have outlined that they would develop a strategic vision.

Mr Biggs reminded the group that no further information has come through since June 2019 and given the current political situation and the upcoming general election, it would be important to engage again as soon as possible in order to obtain better clarity on the way forward. Work continues via the regional roadshows and with other organisations and dates will be provided for any outstanding. Mr Biggs acknowledged that the template needs more work to include some more important national issues such as Climate Change/Zero Carbon.

It was felt that it would be important to engage with government in acknowledging the positivity of investing in rural areas and this work will be taken forward. Evidence would be necessary to ensure interest. Members noted that the Chair of the Select Committee has agreed to lend his name to a discussion on tactics in keeping this debate live and this was positive in being able to use parliamentary processes to take the right steps forward.

Members noted the involvement of the former Rural Services APPG in a type of scrutiny role. Anticipated changes to the fairer funding formula will inform how things move forward and it would be important to articulate in detail the reason why fairer funding is so important to rural areas.

Members noted the number of responses from the recently circulated consultation and raised one objection referring to recommendation in the Lords Report and our response on good practice. Members noted the objection to RSN's response and the definition of sustainability. Mr Biggs informed members that he will be meeting the member body them to discuss but the initial inclination is not to change it.

Mr Biggs referred to the Manifestos of the different political parties and the upcoming General Election. He reiterated the importance of including fairer funding for rural areas whoever wins.

Members noted that a revised document as to the Commentary including changes following the recent consultation will be circulated to members.

Cllr Motley thanked Mrs Booth and the Mr Biggs for the update.

16 Any other Business.

There was no other business and the meeting was closed.

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

David Inman, Director
Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ
Tel: 01822 813693

www.rsonline.org.uk email: admin@sparse.gov.uk twitter: @rsonline

Attachment 3

The next Rural Assembly Meeting will be held on 6th of April 2020.

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

David Inman, Director
Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ
Tel: 01822 813693
www.rsnonline.org.uk email: admin@sparse.gov.uk twitter: @rsnonline

Attachment 3

Appendix A

Attendance

Alison Farmer	Landscape, Architecture and Environmental Planning
Andrew Lee	South Downs National Park
Ben Colson	Bus Users UK
Cecilia Motley	RSN
Cllr Daniel Cribbin	Daventry District Council
Cllr Malcolm Brown	Cornwall Council
Cllr Malcolm Leeding	Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils
Cllr Mary Robinson	Eden District Council
Cllr Oliver Hemsley	Rutland County Council
Cllr Owen Bierley	West Lindsey District Council
Cllr Peter Stevens	West Suffolk Council
Cllr Robert Heseltine	North Yorkshire County Council
Cllr Roger Phillips	Herefordshire Council
Cllr Sue Tucker	Scarborough Borough Council
Cllr Trevor Thorne	Northumberland County Council
Cllr Victoria Wilson	Staffordshire County Council
David Inman	RSN
Fatima De Abreu	LGA
Gavin Jones	Hastoe Group
Graham Biggs	RSN
Gwilym Butler	Shropshire Council
Jeremy Savage	South Norfolk Council
John Wynn-Jones	Centre for Health and Care
Kerry Booth	RSN
Lillian Burns	National Association of Local Councils
Marina Di Salvatore	West Lindsey District Council
Martin Collett	English Rural Housing Association
Nik Harwood	Young Somerset
Peter Garrett	Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils
Revd Richard Kirlew	Sherborne Deanery Rural Chaplaincy

Apologies

Andrew Potter	Hastoe Housing Association
Andrew Proctor	Norfolk County Council
Chris Mapey	East Suffolk Council
Chris Stanton	Guildford Borough Council

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

David Inman, Director
Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ
Tel: 01822 813693

www.rsnonline.org.uk email: admin@sparse.gov.uk twitter: @rsnonline

Attachment 3

Cllr Adam Paynter	Cornwall Council
Cllr Jan Goodeve	East Hertfordshire Council
Cllr John Ward	Babergh District Council
Cllr Julian German	Cornwall Council
Cllr Ken Pollock	Worcestershire County Council
Cllr Peter Schwier	Braintree District Council
Cllr Peter Tattersley	Braintree District Council
Cllr Peter Thornton	South Lakeland District Council
Cllr Rob Waltham MBE	North Lincolnshire Council
Cllr Sue Sanderson	Cumbria County Council
Cllr Yvonne Peacock	Richmondshire District Council
Digby Chacksfield	Easton and Otley College
Dr Adrian Tams	NHS Health Education England (Midlands)
Gary Powell	Teignbridge District Council
Ian Cass	Forum of Private Business
John Birtwistle	UK Bus - First Group
John Longden	Pub is the Hub
Kerry Bolister	Housing Plus Group
Louise Aynsley	Suffolk County Council
Peter McNamara	Note Machine Group
Richard Flinton	North Yorkshire County Council
Richard Wyles	South Kesteven District Council
Rita Lawson	Tees Valley Rural Action
Sue Cooper	South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse District Councils

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

David Inman, Director
Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ
Tel: 01822 813693

www.rsnonline.org.uk email: admin@sparse.gov.uk twitter: @rsnonline



NHS Long Term Plan (January 2019)¹²

Q1 What are the stated high-level policy aims or objectives? If relevant, what problems is it trying to fix?

Online intro: “As medicine advances, health needs change and society develops, so the NHS has to continually move forward so that in 10 years’ time we have a service fit for the future.

“..... Drawn up by those who know the NHS best – frontline health and care staff, patients and their families and other experts – the Long Term Plan is ambitious but realistic. It will give everyone the best start in life, deliver world-class care for major health problems, such as cancer and heart disease, and help people age well.”

Q2 What are the main changes to service design or delivery that are intended to flow from these? Name any key target dates.

- Emphasis on care outside of hospital. Primary and community care funding to increase by £4.5 bn + 2019/20 to 2023/4.
- Primary Care Networks i.e. groups of GP practices to serve populations of 30,000-50,000. To identify targets for proactive support. Funding incentivised from A&E and hospital admission reductions.
- Digital services a priority. All patients to be able to receive phone/ online consultation within 5 years – averting up to 33% of face-to-face consultations and saving £1.1bn p.a. All secondary care providers to become fully digitised by 2024.
- Shift towards integrated care and place-based systems. Aim for Integrated Care Systems to cover all areas of England by 2021.
- Cultural change, increasing support for people to manage their own health.
- Mental health: ring fenced funding to outstrip NHS funding growth – up £2.3bn from 2019/20 to 2023/24. Adults: need for 24/7 responsiveness and suitable therapeutic environments for inpatients (capital costs). Children: services to grow faster than that for adults and for NHS generally. Aiming for a comprehensive offer for 0-25-year olds and to re-design of community mental health.

Q3 What are the service areas most likely to be affected by the intended changes? [Acute/emergency primary care, social services, public health, mental health, ambulance/paramedic, workforce/recruitment, digital adoption.]

¹ NHS Long Term Plan, The NHS England website, [<https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-term-plan/>].

² The NHS Long Term Plan, The Long Term Plan website, [<https://www.longtermplan.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/nhs-long-term-plan-version-1.2.pdf>].



Covers whole spectrum of NHS in England, but not other allied services such as social care or third sector, except in general sense of joined up working through ICSs, etc.

A strong emphasis on out of hospital care, mental health and digital options.

Q4 Who are the main organisations or sectors (within the NHS LAs or elsewhere) responsible for implementing the intended policy changes e.g. CCGs Primary Care Networks VCS bodies?

All NHS sectors responsible.

Q5 Is there any obvious rural recognition within the document and/or any policy adjustment intended to benefit rural communities?

Basically 'no'.

Just a single reference to rural' on p23 in connection with "developing a standard model of delivery in smaller acute hospitals who (*sic*) serve rural populations". References to workforce challenges and policies not tailored to their needs. Will work with Trusts to develop a new operating model, working more effectively with other parts of the health care system.

No search results for "remote"; "distance/distant"; "urban". Other search results:

"Travel" – in relation to some GPs offering quick phone or online consultations; avoiding unnecessary appointments.

"Isolated/ isolate/isolation" – only in context of carers' social isolation and frontline staff stress and isolation.

"Access/ accessibility" – 160+ references e.g. accessing services around work times, an NHS App, but none of them relate to physical access of patients to services and none make the link with rural. Useful access information re digital (see below).

"Location/ locate/ located/local" – 9 references, but none relate to location of patients.

"Transport" - p91 reference in relation to volunteers, but nothing specific to rural.

"Travel" – no rural reference. The emphasis on digital to reduce travel needs.

"Paramedics" – says they are in short supply (p20) and provide "timely responses so patients can be treated by skilled paramedics at home or in a more appropriate setting outside of hospital."

"Ambulance" – cites the new standard with quickest response for most dangerous cases. No mention of rural.

"Older" – no mention of rural in relation to.

"Centralised" – reference in connection with the provision of stroke services (not rural specific).



Rural related, if peripherally:

P12 Recognition of individuals having different preferences for type and location of care. With reference to: boosting out of hospital care; NHS redesign; more personalised care; digitally enabled primary and outpatient care; focus on population health.

P19 and p110 Urgent treatment centres cited, where staff work alongside each other e.g. primary care, pharmacists, ambulance and community-based services, to provide locally accessible and convenient alternative to A&E for patients not needing care in a main hospital.

P23 Needs of patients accessing A&E. New ECDS (Emergency Care Data Set) enabling better understanding to be embedded into UTCs (Urgent Treatment Centres) and SDEC (same day emergency care) from 2020. Will develop equivalent ambulance data set “in order to follow and understand patient journeys from the ambulance service into other urgent and emergency healthcare settings.” However, no indication of what, beyond understanding and aspiration to “maximise care for all patients”, they intend to do.

P24 Person centred care “ensuring choice and sharing control.”

P63 Location of emergency equipment –for cardiac arrests.

P75 Reference to A&E locals.

Chapter 4 - Incentives to encourage shortage specialists and hard to reach geographies (*not specified*).

P78 4.4 Trend towards more specialised hospital-based care.

P79 4.9 Reducing geographical and speciality imbalances and ensure sufficient supply of nurses.

P82 4.21 Greater use of community pharmacists’ skills and opportunities to engage patients.

P85 4.35 Work to ensure speciality choices made by doctors are better aligned to geographical shortages.

Associated Documents

The NHS Long Term Plan Explained ³

Anna Charles | Leo Ewbank | Helen McKenna | Lillie Wenzel
(January 2019)

³ The NHS long-term plan explained, by Anna Charles, Leo Ewbank, Helen McKenna and Lillie Wenzel, January 2019, [<https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/nhs-long-term-plan-explained>].



In itself quite a long and complex document, but an easier read than 'the Plan' itself.

“Perhaps the most striking commitments in the plan relate to a group of clinical priorities, chosen for their impact on the population’s health and where outcomes often lag behind those of other similar advanced health systems. These priorities include cancer, cardiovascular disease, maternity and neonatal health, mental health (see separate section below), stroke, diabetes and respiratory care. There is also a strong focus on children and young people’s health.”

“While the plan includes several commitments aimed at involving people in their own care, it says disappointingly little about patient and public engagement in shaping health services or the role of communities in health. “

Other key points and statistics:

- NHS overspend 2017/18 was £960m.
- 100,000 FTE workforce shortages in hospitals (including 40,000 nurses). Aim to reduce nursing vacancy rate (11.6%) to 5% by 2028.
- 3.4% average increase in NHS England funding per annum.

NHS long term plan: Five things you need to know ⁴ **Blog by Richard Murray 8 Jan 2019**

Quoted in full below, with my highlighting.

Primary and community services get a major boost as part of a drive towards integrated care and population health

The plan confirms a £4.5 billion uplift to primary medical and community health services, trying to make good on the oft-repeated objective to improve out-of-hospital care (but this time without booking any over optimistic efficiency savings). In addition, all of England will be covered by integrated care systems (ICSs) by April 2021 and key responsibilities placed on primary care networks (PCNs) (these are formed of GP practices typically covering 30-50,000 patients, signing an additional contract as an extension to their current contracts). Funding flows and performance frameworks will be reformed to support both ICSs and PCNs.

While this does not add up to greater local freedoms, at least initially, as ICSs will work on an earned autonomy basis and, for example, their contribution to critical national programmes will be on a 'comply or explain' basis, NHS leaders have avoided the temptation to be overly

⁴The NHS long-term plan: five things you need to know, Blog by Richard Murray, 8 Jan 2019, The King’s Fund website, [<https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/blog/2019/01/nhs-long-term-plan>].



prescriptive about the size and structure of ICSs. Taken together, this all reinforces the strategic **direction toward place-based** population health.

Detailed proposals on a set of clinical priorities

There is a major push on a range of clinical priorities. These priority areas include children and young people (itself made up of five further sub-areas), cancer, cardiovascular disease, stroke, diabetes, respiratory disease and mental health. In most cases the commitments are sufficiently plentiful to warrant their own individual summaries of milestones for delivery.

The commitments themselves are a mix of high-level indicators, e.g. by 2028, the NHS will diagnose 75 per cent of cancers at stage 1 or 2, with the very detailed, e.g. in 2019 the NHS will roll out the Saving Babies' Lives Care Bundle to every maternity unit. Judged on their merits, each of these commitments looks worthy. Taken together, they are a daunting delivery challenge.

Workforce is the key risk

Like many others, we have been deeply concerned about the state of the NHS workforce and its ability to deliver existing commitments, let alone any new ones. We came together with the Health Foundation and Nuffield Trust to [set out five tests for the long-term plan on workforce](#).⁵ The plan does not so much fail these tests, as decide not to take the exam just yet. This is partly (but not solely) because the workforce training and continuing professional development budget (CPD) will only be settled in the 2019 Spending Review.

The real meat on staffing will now come in a new Workforce Implementation Plan, supported by a new national workforce group drawing the various stakeholders together (including The King's Fund). So while the critical importance of the workforce is recognised, the jury is out on whether we can find a way out of the current crisis.

Digital in the spotlight

Most eye catching are commitments on primary care and outpatients. On the former, over the next five years every patient will get the right to telephone or online consultations, usually with their own practice, with the emphasis on digital access. For outpatients, technology will be used to redesign services to avoid up to a third of outpatient visits – that's 30 million visits a year.

With many other commitments, digital also gets its own set of milestones up to 2024. This is an ambitious agenda in an area where the NHS has struggled before.

⁵ *The health care workforce in England: make or break?*, The King's Fund website, [<https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/health-care-workforce-england>].



And there's still a lot more to come

As they were tasked, NHS leaders have written an NHS plan within the boundaries of their budgets and responsibilities. Hence the plan commits the NHS to a greater focus on prevention and on health inequalities but quite rightly recognises that even at its best, the NHS is only part of the answer to better, fairer health. As the plan says, we cannot 'treat our way out of health inequalities' – national and local government and other partners are fundamental to making broader progress.

To understand the wider direction of health and care we'll need to wait for the much-delayed Green Paper on Social Care and the promised Green Paper on Prevention. The Spending Review this year will also set out the answer on NHS capital funding, the training and CPD budget, social care and public health funding.

But the plan also notes a long list of other reviews either underway or to be soon. I've already mentioned the Workforce Implementation Plan. We also have reviews on waiting times targets (as part of the Clinical Review of Standards), the Better Care Fund, the commissioning of sexual health services, health visitors and school nurses (currently with local authorities) and a review of the capital funding regime and many more. From the imminent 2019/20 planning guidance and National Implementation Framework we'll also get more detail on how the NHS is to transition through this year, financial architecture and possibly on how the centre means to assure itself of delivery across all these commitments.

There is a clear thread leading from the [NHS five year forward view](#) toward more integrated, place-based care; a recognition of the challenges facing the NHS workforce and a plan for a plan to alleviate them; and often great detail on what will happen next in specific areas that underlines deep engagement with the experts.⁶ It's ambitious but also often reveals a clear pragmatism. Even so this will still require considerable leadership capabilities and capacity to deliver. While many of the remaining uncertainties (the Spending Review, Brexit, social care) are beyond the remit of NHS leaders, it is perhaps the sheer length and detail of this plan that may prove a hostage to fortune in the coming months and years.

⁶ *The NHS five year forward view*, The King's Fund website, [<https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/blog/2019/01/nhs-long-term-plan>].

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1										Attachment 5
2		RSN (INCOME & EXPENDITURE) 2019/20 AND								
3		ACTUAL TO END DECEMBER 2019								
4		ESTIMATE 2020/21								
5		INCLUDES 2018/19 ACTUAL AND REVISED ESTIMATE								
6							ACTUAL TO	ESTIMATE	ACTUAL	ESTIMATE
7							END MARCH 19	2019/20	TO END DECEMBER	2020/21
8		INCOME					£	£	£	£
9										
10		DEBTORS FROM PREVIOUS YEAR (NET OF VAT)								
11		SPARSE/Rural Assembly held by NKDC at year end					3000	3450	3450	
12		RHA - Website Contribs.					300			
13		RSP Subscriptions						990	990	
14		Coastal Communities Alliance (Gross)						1090	1090	
15		CCN re Bexit Roundtable					381			
16		SPARSE Rural/Rural Assembly					300636	306950	281366	301627
17		Ditto Held by WDBC at Month End							10882	
18		RSN Extra £350Levy					35350			
19		RSP Existing Member Fees (NET RHCA)					14195	19125	19125	20728
20		RSP Assumed New Member Fees						0		
21		Commercial Partner First Group Buses					10000	10000	10000	10000
22		Income from Rural Housing Group					7417	7540	7035	7691
23		Income from Fire & Rescue Group					4260	3839	3839	3918
24		Income from RSP Rural Towns Group (Net)								7000
25		FIRE GROUP LEVY RE SPARSITY EVIDENCE					6000			
26		OTHER INCOME								
27		Rural Conference Income					14918		21315	

[illegible]

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
55							ACTUAL TO	EST	ACTUAL	ESTIMATE
56							END MARCH 19	2019/20	END DECEMBER 19	2020/21
57		EXPENDITURE					£	£	£	£
58		General Provision for Inflation (Non Salary)								2000
59		VAT Paid on Goods & Services					17293		14835	
60		VAT Paid to HMRC					160		5193	
61		NET WAGES & GENERAL CONTRACTS (NET)						212396	184680	214000
62		Corporate Management				DI,GB,AD, 1 JT, 100% KB 80%	132470			
63		Finance/Performance and Data Analysis				, DW, 100%,	23844			
64		Financial Support - Consultants & Expenses						20000	2891	15000
65		Communications - Lexington & Rose R				RoseR,RCM	35371	26091	17127	26091
66		Administrative and Technical Support				AD3, RI, WI,WC,BA, MB 100%	43123			
67		Research and Monitoring				BW, 100%	7025	8000	2625	10000
68		Economic Development Service				AD5 100%	5202			
69		Coastal Communities Contract					3696	3700	1871	3700
70		Rural Communities Housing Group				AD2 100%	6763			
71		Employee Deductions - Tax/NIC					27723	27938	18951	29022
72		Employee Deductions - Pensions						6083	3915	6199
73		Provision for Annual Pay award								3384
74		PAYE - Employers NIC (11 mths)					10374	10906	7215	11251
75		PENSIONS Employer contrib					2362	4591	2945	5000
76		OTHER EXPENDITURE								
77		RSN/CCN Joint Needs Group Project						17000		

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
78		Rural Strategy Campaign					775	13000	10622	10000
79		Rural Strategy Roadshows						12000	3475	
80		Rural Strategy Videos								1500
81		General Election - Lexington						1500		
82		Conferences/Seminars								
83		Rural Conference					7209		8550	
84		Rural Conference Drinks Reception					962	1100	1058	1200
85		Rural Conference 2019 - IN ADVANCE					250			
86		Regional Meetings/Seminars					1946	2200	1573	2200
87		RSP Meetings						717	717	1200
88		Service Level Agreements								
89		Rural Housing Group (RHG)					782	800	593	1000
90		RHG Website Maint					1224			
91		RE Website Maint					2040			
92		Rural Inland CIC transfer of part of First Group Support					7000	7000	7000	7000
93		Parliamentary Groups					905	1000	416	1500
94		RHCA Direct Set Up Costs					4530			
95		Fire Group Expenses					562			
96		Business Expenses								
97		Website Upgrade					650	500	500	
98		Travel and Subsistence					23685	20000	13150	21000
99		Print, Stat,e mail, phone & Broadband@					4037	4500	3559	4500
100		Meeting Room Hire					1972	1500	1211	1500
101		Website and Data Base software etc					4965	4700	3860	4700
102		Rent of Office & Associated Costs					4827	6955	4088	9800
103		Accountancy Fees						1507	1604	1507
104		Companies House Fees					13	13	13	13
105		Bank Charges					92	90	59	90
106		IT Support					280	700	165	700
107		Insurance					744	800		800

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
108		Corporation Tax						0		300
109		Membership of Rural Coalition					250	250		250
110		Corp Man General							253	200
111		CAPITAL 3x Laptops					876			
112		CONTRAS								
113		Rural England @							1910	
114		RHCA Subs Refund@							188	
115		Debit Card Fraud							84	
116		Travel Refunds@							133	
117		ARREARS - PREVIOUS FINANCIAL YEAR				£24,769				
118		Employee Deductions						2393	2393	
119		Employer NIC						1024	1024	
120		Employers Pension Contrib								
121		Regional Meetings/Seminars					450	240	240	
122		Contact for Service Corporate Management						1917	1917	
123		Contract for Service (ADMIN)					1660	409	409	
124		Communications					500			
125		Extra Media by RCM					963			
126		Rose Regeneration					2000	1750	1750	
127		Lexington Communications Contract						3482	3482	
128		PIXELL					21958	10692	10692	
129		Research Costs					11420	2100	2100	
130		RSN Online arrears					4523			
131		RHA website Maint					300			
132		Travel and Subsistence arrears					823	609	609	
133		Printing, Phone and Stationery (arrears)					9	153	153	
134		Office Costs					286	0		
135		Data base etc (arrears)					433			
136		TOTAL EXPENDITURE					431307	442306	351798	396607

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
137										
138		TOTAL INCOME					448213	429799		398279
139		LESS TOTAL EXP					-440818	-442306		-396607
140		DIFFERENCE BETWEEN IN YEAR INC & EXP					7395	-12507		1672
141		ADD GEN BALANCE BROUGHT FORWARD					25875	24768		12261
142		BALANCE CARRIED FORWARD					33270	12261		13933
143		Less RHCA Balance					-8502			

[illegible]

Fair Funding Review: implications for rural authorities (Attachment 6)

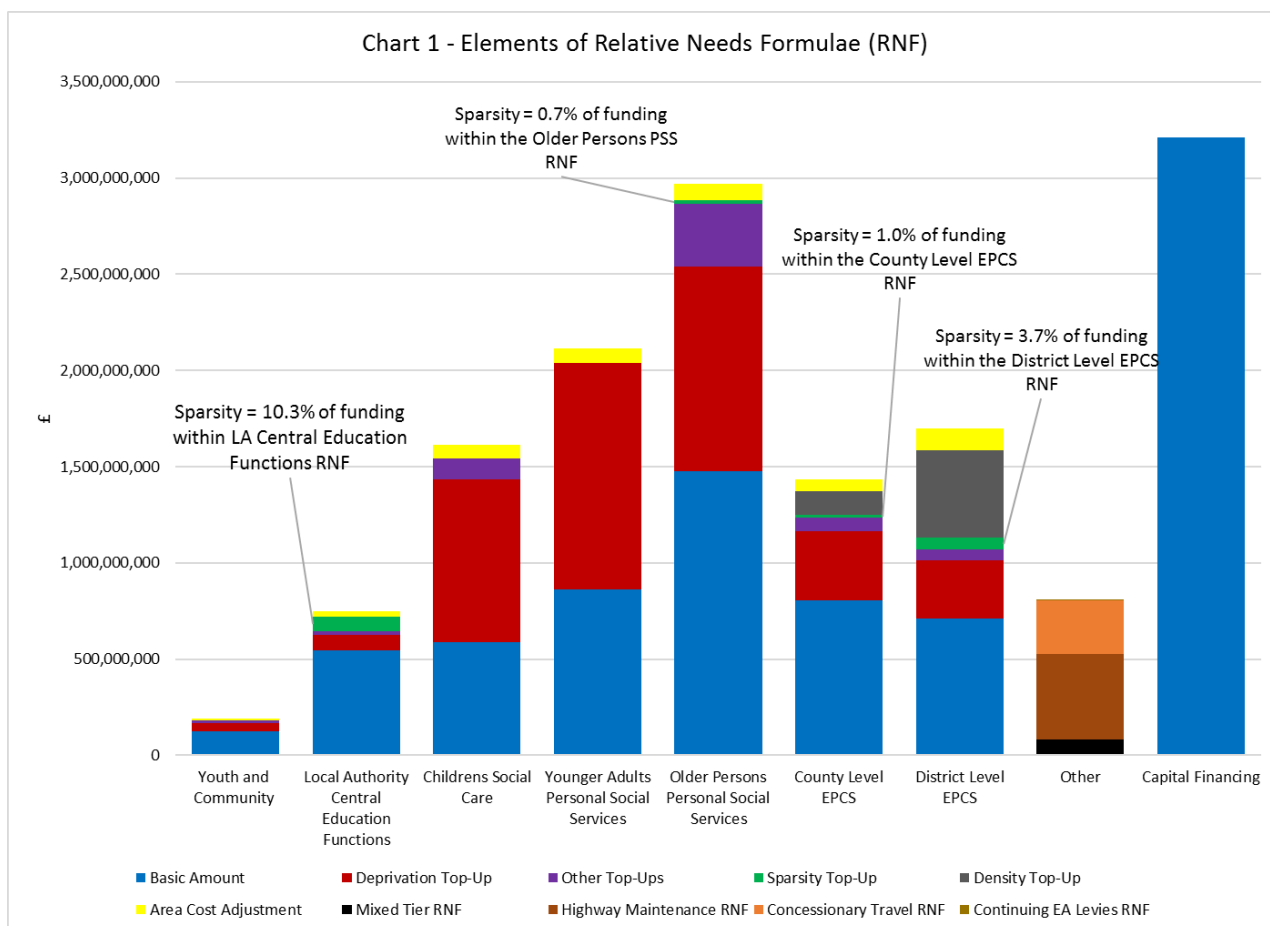
1. The next 12 months will be crucial for the funding of rural authorities. The funding gap between rural and urban authorities persists and has widened in recent years. Relatively small amounts of funding for rural authorities – such as the Rural Services Delivery Grant (RSDG) (£80m) – have been overwhelmed by the way that other much larger funding streams are skewed towards more urban authorities.
2. Generally, feedback from the government has been positive for rural authorities. Rurality (and sparsity) have had a high profile in both the consultation papers published by MHCLG over the past two years. Most rural authorities would benefit from the proposed flatter distribution of funding (which reduces the current higher level of funding per head received in urban (more deprived) authorities).
3. But the replacement of the current sparsity indicator with new elements within the Area Cost Adjustment (ACA) threatens to reduce the share of funding received by rural authorities.

Funding rurality through the ACA

4. A large proportion of services in the new funding formula will be funded through the Foundation Formula (broadly the block funding all local government services except social care, highways, capital financing and some education services). The Foundation Formula will include waste collection/ disposal, street cleansing, libraries, protective and cultural services.¹
5. Initially, the Foundation Formula was to be distributed using only population, deprivation, rurality and an area cost adjustment. However, in the consultation paper in December 2018, the government proposed making the Foundation Formula even simpler by using only population and ACA. In theory, this was a good move for rural authorities: the controversial sparsity indicators that are currently used for the “rurality” indicator would be replaced by travel-time and remoteness indicators within the ACA, which the government themselves have developed.
6. The proposed ACA factors were published in mid-2019 and, for the first time, we have been able to model the possible impact of replacing the sparsity indicators with the new travel time element in the ACA. There are three new elements within the ACA that will reflect some of the additional costs in rural authorities:

¹ The Foundation Formula is very similar to the Environmental, Protective and Cultural Services (EPCS) block, although it is likely to include a wider range of services.

- **Traversal.** Adjusts for the cost of higher travel times between households when delivering services (e.g. waste collection). MHCLG has commissioned its own data (from the Department for Transport's travel time dataset) to show the journey times between Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs). The centre of each LSOA is determined by ONS population weights.
 - **Dispersal.** Adjusts for the cost of higher travel times to reach households to provide services (e.g. homecare, child protection visits). Again, DFT data has been used to estimate the travel times between Output Areas (average 129 people) and "hub towns" (>100,000 people).
 - **Remoteness.** Adjusts for the higher unit costs in authorities that are furthest away from larger service markets. "Economic theory" suggests that markets in more-remote areas will be able to sustain fewer providers, and will therefore be weaker (i.e. higher cost). Examples are social care beds but could also include any type of external provider (e.g. waste collection). Again "remoteness" is measured using journey times, this time between Output Areas and Major Towns or Cities (the latter are based on ONS urban/ rural definitions and have more than 75,000 residents).
7. Superficially, the new ACA indicators looked good for rural authorities: they indicated a general shift in funding away from London, which benefits non-London authorities generally.
 8. But, as a consequence of confining funding for rurality to the ACA, there would be very limited use of the sparsity indicator. On current plans, there would be no sparsity indicator in the future Foundation Formula (there had been a sparsity indicator in the county-level and district-level EPCS), and the sparsity indicators in other blocks are under review. The largest sparsity indicator (which is in the Central LA Functions block) will also disappear because the service to which it relates (home-to-school transport) is likely to transfer to the Foundation Formula. The sparsity indicator in the older people's PSS block will be reviewed as part of the detailed review of social care formulae.
 9. Chart 1 shows the amount that is distributed by sparsity in the current "needs" formula. In overall terms, sparsity distributes 1.2% of total "needs". We can see that sparsity was a particularly strong indicator in both the LA Central Functions block (10.3%) and the District Level EPCS block (3.7%).



10. For the first time, we have now been able to model the potential impact of the new proposals for the Foundation Formula together with the new ACA factors. The impact of these proposals – particularly on rural district councils – is now starting to become apparent.
11. Overall, the impact on rural authorities appears to be positive. Table 1 shows that, based on our modelling, Predominantly Rural (PR) authorities would have a large (11.8%) increase in underlying SFA (i.e. excluding the effect of 2013-14 damping and “negative RSG”). And once the effects of unwinding the existing “damping” within the SFA is taken into account, PR authorities would have an increase of 15.6%. Both Significant Rural (SR) and Predominantly Urban (PU) authorities would have reductions in both underlying and “raw” SFA.

Table 1 – Pixel modelling of changes to SFA for Rural/ Urban Classifications

	Settlement Funding Assessment (2020-21)	Underlying SFA 2020-21 (2021-22 SFA	Underlying Change in SFA	Raw Change in SFA
Significant Rural	2,325.3	2,311.2	2,281.9	-1.3%	-1.9%
Predominantly Rural	2,041.4	2,111.0	2,360.3	11.8%	15.6%
Predominantly Urban	9,820.8	9,626.1	9,512.0	-1.2%	-3.1%
Fire	558.6	575.8	626.3	8.8%	12.1%
TOTAL	14,746.1	14,624.1	14,780.6	1.1%	0.2%

12. However, our analysis indicates that not all rural authorities will benefit from the proposed changes in Fair Funding. Rural districts will potentially suffer very significant losses in SFA. Table 2 shows the PR authorities who lose the most from the proposed changes: all are shire district councils. These reductions are very significant indeed. We had thought that losses in SFA would have been mitigated by the unwinding of the existing damping (which was largely introduced in 2013-14 to damp-away the increased sparsity weighting) but this has not been the case.

13. SFA losses for these councils cannot be explained by the effects of council tax equalisation either. Our analysis shows that they are performing much less well than other authorities with a similar ratio of “needs” to “resources”.

Table 2 – Pixel modelling of changes to SFA for individual PR authorities

Local authority	Class	Rural/ urban classification	Underlying Change (%)	Raw Change (%)
South Hams	SD	Predominantly Rural	-79%	-82%
Hambleton	SD	Predominantly Rural	-63%	-57%
West Oxfordshire	SD	Predominantly Rural	-60%	-56%
Ryedale	SD	Predominantly Rural	-52%	-45%
East Devon	SD	Predominantly Rural	-51%	-57%
Great Yarmouth	SD	Predominantly Rural	-42%	-43%
Craven	SD	Predominantly Rural	-39%	-32%
Torridge	SD	Predominantly Rural	-39%	-36%
Mid Devon	SD	Predominantly Rural	-37%	-28%
North Norfolk	SD	Predominantly Rural	-36%	-28%
West Devon	SD	Predominantly Rural	-35%	-30%

14. Upper tier rural authorities appear to be doing much better than rural districts. Our modelling indicates that only 6 out of 26 PR authorities will have a reduction in SFA, and most would have large increases in SFA. There are some outliers already emerging amongst upper tier authorities, such as Cornwall, Devon and the Isle of Wight. Our

initial thoughts are the these authorities do particularly well because of the effect of remoteness within new ACA.

15. At the moment, the negative impact is only evident on district councils because it is those authorities whose sparsity funding has been totally removed – and where sparsity funding represented such a large share of funding (3.7% of District Level EPCS). In contrast, the effects of the proposals on upper tier authorities appear to be much more favourable. Partly this is because upper-tier authorities currently receive a much lower proportion of their funding from sparsity. We await to see new social care formulae to see how well they deal with rural “needs”.
16. **General conclusion:** the travel time indicator is welcome but there is evidence that it is not replacing the sparsity indicator for rural authorities in terms of funding, particularly district councils. Of course, other changes in the funding formula might give rural authorities a higher share of funding in future than they currently receive – but that is for the future.
17. These changes will be compounded by likelihood that the deprivation indicator will return to the Foundation Formula, whilst the additional funding for sparsity or rurality will remain confined to the ACA.
18. RSN has always had concerns about MHCLG’s proposal to replace the sparsity indicators with travel-time and remoteness indicators in the ACA. In its initial response to MHCLG, RSN rejected this proposal because it would prove difficult to influence and would become part of a very technical methodology concerning unit costs.
19. **Recommendation:** continue with the travel time methodology in the ACA but also pursue an additional indicator within the Foundation Formula for sparsity (for both upper and lower tier services). RSN’s argument is that costs of rurality are about more than just measurable higher unit costs associated with travel times. Further evidence will need to be collected for rural districts.
20. From a rural point of view, it is not reasonable to transfer **home-to-school transport** into the Foundation Formula without proper distribution of funding. It is clearly a service that is far more expensive in rural areas, and 10.2% of funding within its funding block is based on sparsity.

Measuring gain from FFR for rural councils

21. We have identified two ways of measuring whether rural authorities have gained from the Fair Funding Review: (i) on specific measures (sparsity, travel time, transferred grants); and (ii) closing the funding gap between rural and urban authorities.
22. Our modelling suggests that PR authorities as a whole will gain from the Fair Funding Review. If SFA is distributed in the way that our modelling shows, then the rural/ urban

funding gap will be much smaller than it is currently. But this is largely driven by increases in funding for upper tier rural authorities.

23. We have not been able to calculate the value of specific sparsity or rurality-based funding within the SFA or whether it is increasing or decreasing. For district councils, the value of sparsity or rurality-based funding streams within SFA is definitely reducing, and the effect on district councils is clear. The effect on upper tier councils is much more difficult to calculate because we are unable to disaggregate the travel-time and remoteness indicators within the ACA. Given the increase in SFA for upper tier authorities in our modelling, it is very possible that the value of sparsity or rurality-based funding has actually increased.
24. We have assumed that Rural Services Delivery Grant (RSDG) will be rolled into SFA in 2021-22 with no change. There is real concern that the funding associated with these grants will disappear over time if the new funding formula is deficient in suitable indicators for sparsity or rurality.

Further action

- Increase weighting for “travel times” within the ACA. Verify assumptions and calculations that have been made by MHCLG. Look for proof that the travel times indicator is delivering the kind of uplift that has been identified in previous research (e.g. 13-18% uplift).
- Reinstate of sparsity indicators – or similar – within the Foundation Formula. This was the position that RSN presented to the Technical Working Group (TWG) in September 2017.
- Identify specific services that have additional costs of rurality and sparsity. For instance, waste collection, regulatory services, , planning, and building control. With the funding for higher unit costs being met through the ACA, then these examples will have to be where rural authorities have higher demand as a result of rurality, or unmet need that ought to be funded.
- Commitment from government that they will close or reduce the funding gap between rural and urban authorities.

Adrian Jenkins

Pixel Financial Management

January 2020

adrian@pixelfinancial.co.uk



IMPACT OF NATIONAL POLICY FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING THRESHOLDS ON THE DELIVERY OF RURAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING: REPORT OF RURAL SERVICES NETWORK SURVEY

Executive Summary

The lack of affordable housing in rural areas is well evidenced and the need to increase its supply is well rehearsed. However, the ability to address this challenge was restricted in 2014 when the Government raised the site thresholds from which an affordable housing contribution could be taken to 10 dwellings, except in a limited number of designated rural areas where on sites of 6-9 dwellings a contribution could be taken, but only as a financial sum. This approach has now been incorporated into the NPPF, with a slight but ambiguous change that allows a contribution to be taken from sites of 5 dwellings or fewer in designated rural areas.

From the start rural interests raised concerns and provided evidence to demonstrate the negative impact this would have on the supply of new rural affordable housing. It is a case that has continued to be made, including through the consultation on the revisions to the NPPF. Last year it was again highlighted by the House of Lords Select Committee report into the Rural Economy. It recommended, 'Government should provide a full and comprehensive exemption for all rural areas from the policy to limit affordable housing contributions on small sites. Local authorities should be free to work with developers to seek the necessary level of affordable housing contributions on all new housing sites to help meet the fullest range of rural housing needs.'¹

Prompted by further discussions with government to promote this recommendation the Rural Services Network, in collaboration with Rural Housing Solutions, decided to update the evidence on the impacts of the policy. A questionnaire was circulated to RSN's local authority members in September 2019. Sixty-one local authorities responded to the survey and a further two provided detailed responses by e-mail. The key findings are:

- 66% of respondents reported that since adopting a threshold in line with national policy the delivery of rural affordable housing had been reduced.
- Thirty-one of those authorities were able to quantify how many affordable homes had been foregone. Sixteen stated that over the last two years 11-25 new rural affordable homes had not been delivered as a consequence of the higher thresholds. This translates to 275 - 350 dwellings across 16 local authority areas. A further 5 local authorities reported they had lost more than 60 new rural affordable homes since adopting the new rural threshold policy.
- 31% of respondents reported that they usually were able to use financial contributions in the community where they were raised, but 26% had not been able to spend the money. For 51% of respondents it is the lack of sites that limits their ability to use these monies in the communities where they have been raised.
- 61% of respondents reported that primarily higher value properties have replaced the affordable dwellings that they would have secured under their earlier lower threshold policies.

¹ House of Lords Select Committee on the Rural Economy - publ. April 2019 paragraph 341



- 94% would like to be able to take an affordable housing contribution from sites of less than 10 dwellings, with 62% of them wanting the option to be able to take the contributions as a mix of on-site and/or commuted sums.

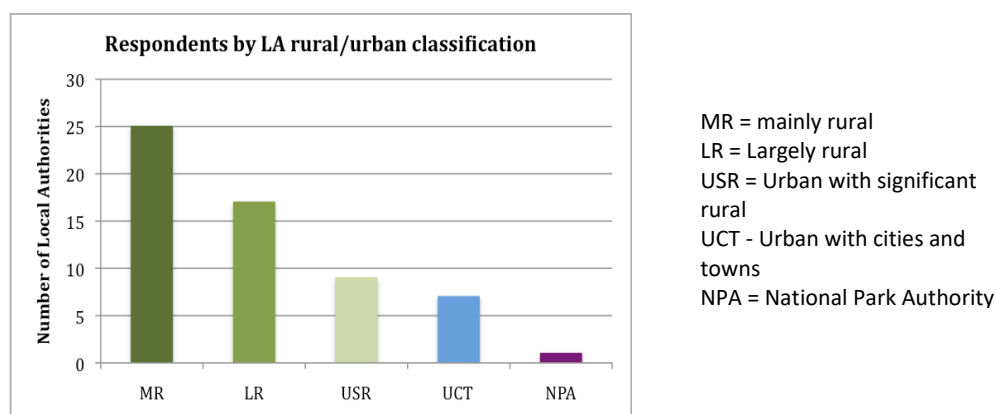
Detailed findings

The Survey and response rate

In September 2019 a questionnaire, using Survey Monkey, was sent to planning and housing enabling officers in local authorities who are members of RSN. A copy of the survey is attached at Annex A.

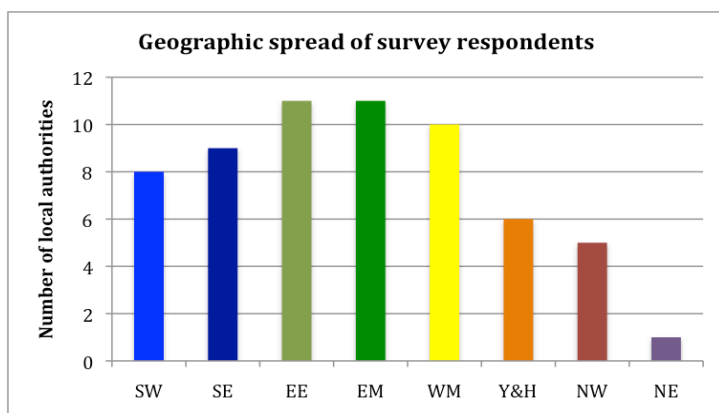
Sixty-one local authorities responded with the highest number of respondents from councils classified as Mainly Rural, followed by Largely Rural. This represents 55% of all Mainly Rural authorities and 41% of all Largely Rural authorities.

Diagram One: Respondents by LA rural/urban classification



As diagram two illustrates there was a reasonable balance of responses from across England, with the distribution to a large part reflecting the rurality of the regions, although in this respect the South West is slightly under-represented.

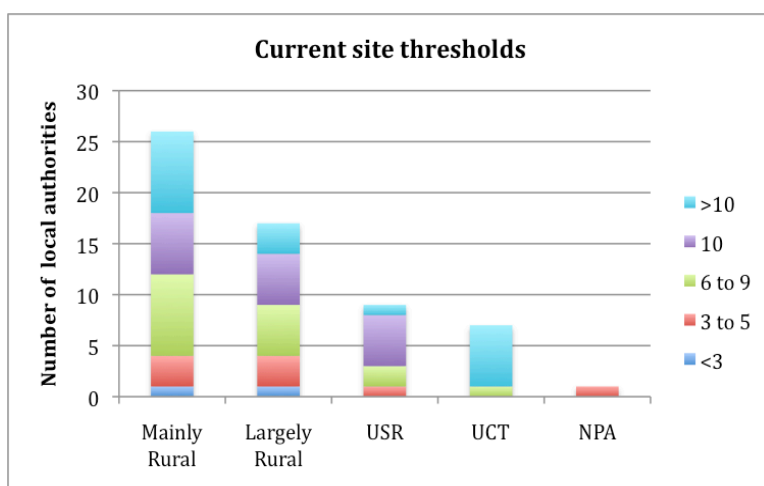
Diagram Two: Geographic spread of survey respondents



Current and changes to site thresholds

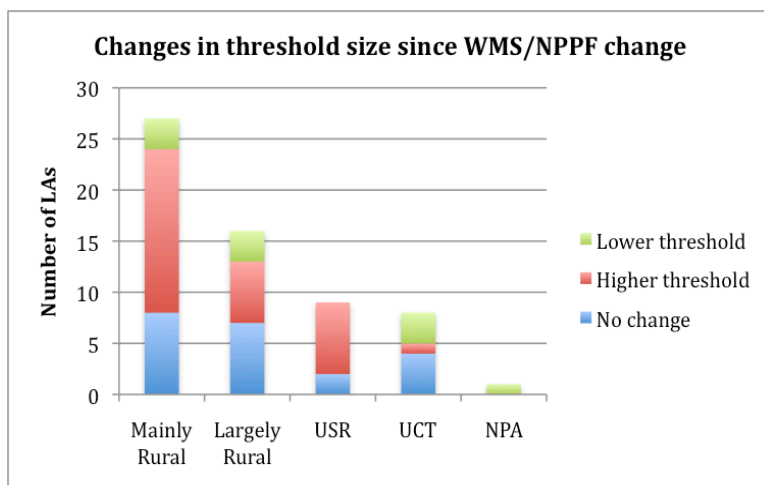
In total 83% of respondents currently have a site size threshold that is in line with national policy, with 56% having a threshold of 10 or more dwellings and 26% 6 - 9 dwellings. Diagram Three shows the different thresholds by type of local authority.

Diagram Three: Current size thresholds



For 49% (30) of respondents this was a higher threshold than their authority had in place before the Written Ministerial Statement and /or changes to the NPPF. The adoption of a higher threshold was greatest in the Mainly Rural councils, with 53% (16) making this change.

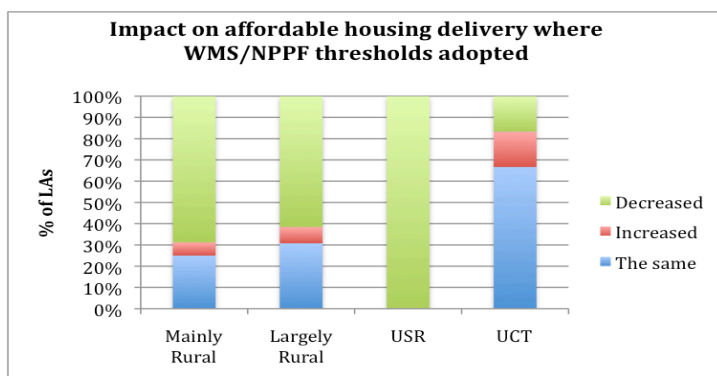
Diagram Four: Changes in thresholds since WMS/NPPF changes



Impact on delivery of rural affordable housing

Of those who had adopted a threshold in line with the WMS/NPPF, 66% (29) reported that the delivery of rural affordable housing had reduced. As Diagram Five shows this is particularly marked in the Urban with Significant Rural Areas, and is the experience of the majority of Mainly Rural and Largely Rural local authorities.

Diagram Five: Impact on affordable housing delivery where WMS/NPPF thresholds adopted



Even amongst the 23 authorities that have retained a threshold below national policy 61% (14) reported that the delivery of new rural affordable homes has fallen. The principal reason, given by 56% (13) respondents, was that developers will not include affordable housing in these small developments, citing

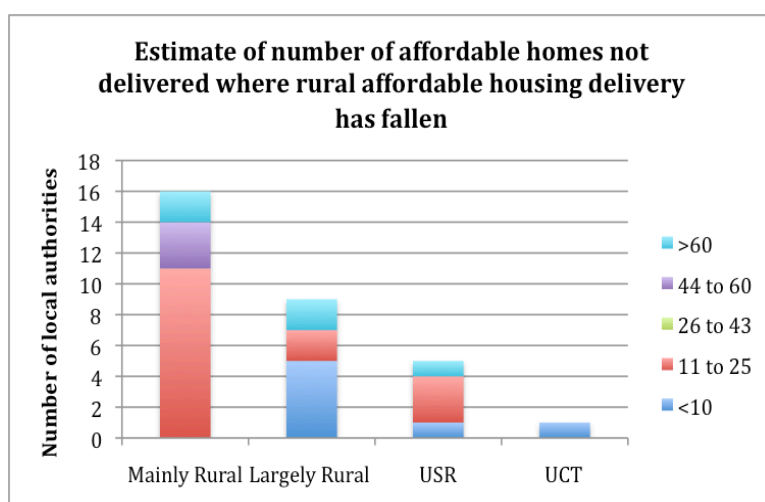


the changes arising from the WMS and NPPF. In one case the Planning Inspector ruled against affordable housing being included because the Local Plan policy was contrary to national policy.

Numbers of affordable homes foregone

Respondents who reported a reduction in delivery were asked to give an estimate of how many affordable homes had not been foregone. Thirty-one authorities responded to this question and their replies illuminate the scale of loss. Diagram Six shows how this varies across the different types of local authority.

Diagram Six: Estimate of number of affordable homes not delivered where rural affordable housing delivery has fallen



Across the 16 local authorities that reported they had foregone between 11- 25 new rural affordable homes, this represents a loss of between 275 - 400 such dwellings.

Use of commuted sums

The WMS policy for rural areas stipulated that any affordable housing contribution in designated rural areas could only be in the form of a financial sum, rather than as previously with an option to take the contribution as affordable homes built on the site. An expressed concern was that the lack of sites would mean it was unlikely the money would be used to support rural affordable housing delivery in the community where it was raised.

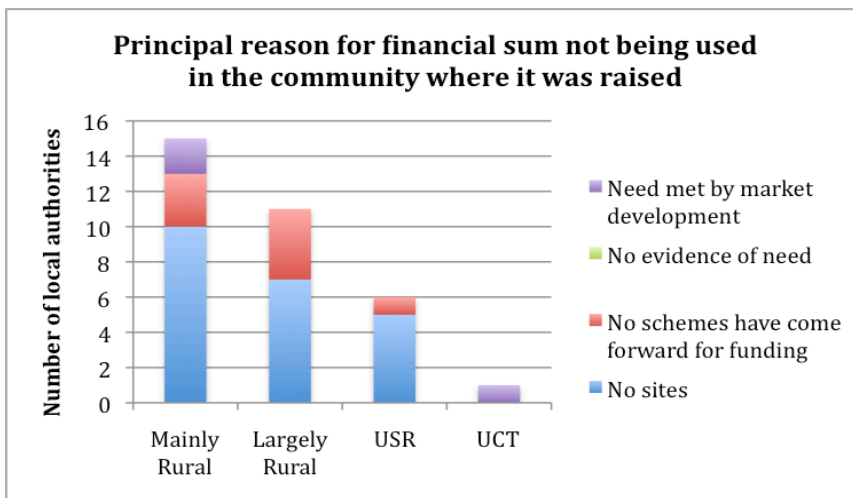
Where authorities have taken a financial contribution from rural sites of less than 10 dwellings only 2 (5%) reported that they always have used the money where it was raised. More encouragingly, 11 (31%) said this was usually the case and a further 7 (20%) that it was used in another rural community. However, 9



(26%) recorded they had not spent the money and 5 (14%) that they had only used it to support affordable housing delivery in urban areas.

A slightly higher number of local authorities responded to the question, what is the principal factor that limits the use of the raised commuted sum in the community where it was raised. 51% (23) said this was because of a lack of sites. Diagram Seven shows responses by type of authority.

Diagram Seven: Principal reason for financial sum not being used in the community where it was raised



Type of housing that has replaced affordable housing

Those local authorities that had raised the site thresholds in response to the WMS and NPPF changes were asked what impact this had on the form of housing that was built on the sites where previously they would have taken an affordable housing contribution. 61% (14) of the respondents answering this question reported that the affordable housing had been replaced with principally higher value properties.

Future policy and Site supply

In 2015 the High Court overturned the Written Ministerial Statement, but in 2016 it was re-instated following an appeal by the Government to the Court of Appeal. The latter does however leave room for some local discretion, *“[iv] Likewise, if in future an LPA submits for examination local plan policies with thresholds below those in the national policy, the Inspector will consider whether the LPA’s evidence base and local circumstances justify the LPA’s proposed thresholds. If he concludes that they do and the local plan policy is adopted, then more weight will be given to it than to the new national policy in subsequent decisions on planning applications.”*²

² Court of Appeal Case Number C1/2015/2559 paragraph 26 - <http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWCA/Civ/2016/441.html>

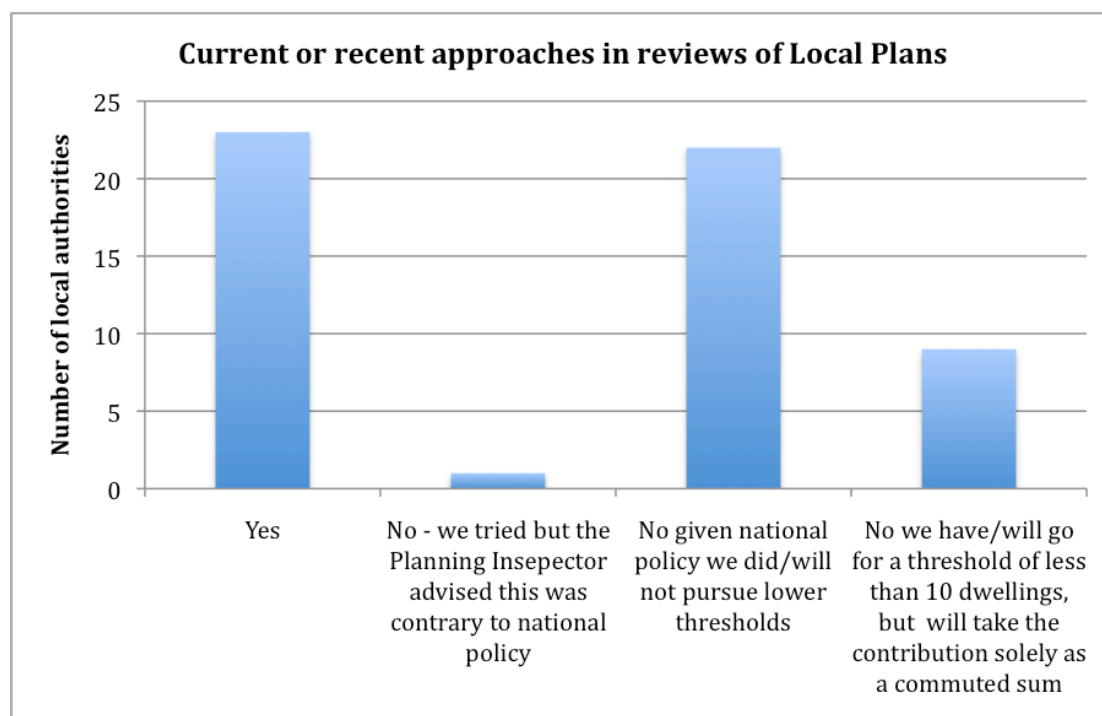


Anecdotally it appeared that LPAs are wary of acting on this flexibility. To explore this further the survey explored the approach that LPAs had sought to take in reviews of their Local Plan and what would be their preferred approach.

Approach taken in Local Plan reviews currently underway or carried out over the last 3 years

Fifty-three respondents reported that they were either in the midst or had undertaken a review of their Local Plan over the last three years. As Diagram Six shows 23 have considered setting a threshold of less than 10 dwellings for on-site affordable housing contributions in their rural areas. It also shows that national policy has prevented them pursuing a lower threshold.

Diagram Eight: Current or recent approaches in reviews of Local Plans



Impact of changes to the NPPG in March 2019

In March 2019 the NPPG was revised stating that LPAs could choose to set their own lower threshold [i.e. less than the generic 10 dwelling threshold] and seek contributions above that threshold³

However, the wording in the NPPF remains unchanged stating that in designated rural areas policies may set a threshold of 5 units or fewer.⁴ Neither make it clear whether this can be in the form of on-site contributions or whether is still restricted to taking financial contributions.

³ NPPG Paragraph: 023 Reference ID: 23b-023-20190315

⁴ NPPF - Paragraph 63



The survey asked local authorities what has been the impact of the change in the NPPG in March 2019 on their approach to taking affordable housing contributions from rural sites of less than 10 dwellings. 68% (40) said it had not had any impact.

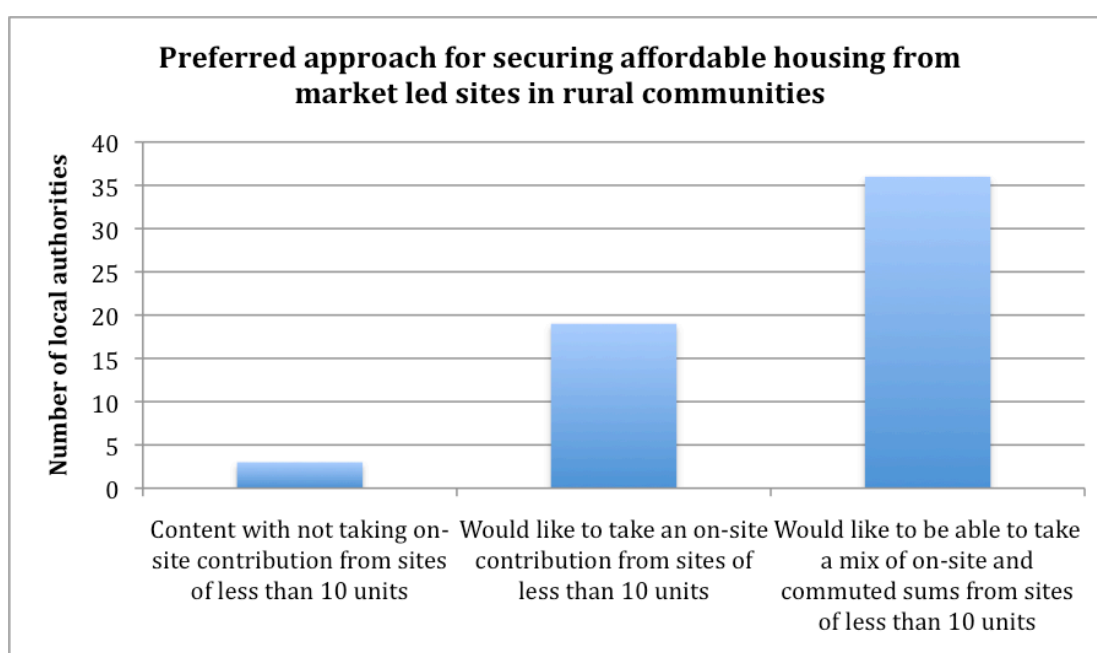
Table One: Impact of changes to NPPG in March 2019

No change	40
The lack of an accompanying change in the NPPF wording means we are unlikely to adopt a lower threshold	7
The lack of an accompanying change in the NPPF wording means we are still unlikely to take an on-site contribution, rather than commuted sum, from small rural sites	2
Not aware this change had happened - but unlikely to change our approach	5
Not aware this change had happened - but would be interested in changing our approach	5

The approach LPAs would like to be able to take

When asked what approach they would like to be able to take, 95% (45) of respondents would like to take an affordable housing contribution in some form from sites of less than 10 dwellings in their rural areas, with 62% of them wanting the option to be able to take the contributions as a mix of on-site and commuted sums.

Diagram Nine: Preferred approach for securing affordable housing from market led sites in rural communities



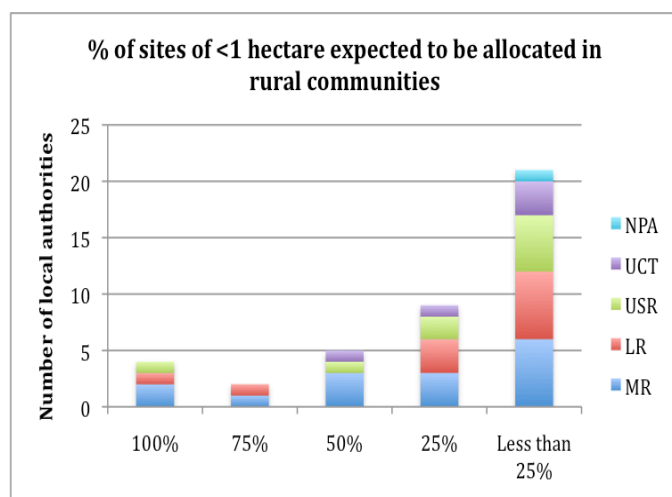


Impact of NPPF approach for meeting 10% of Housing Requirement on sites of less than 1 hectare

Paragraph 68 of the NPPF requires that LPAs should allocate sites to meet 10% of the Housing Requirement on sites of less than 1 hectare. Given that generally rural sites are relatively small this could potentially improve delivery of rural affordable housing, although currently they would have to be of sufficient size to trigger an affordable housing contribution. To assess the likelihood that this requirement could achieve this benefit the survey asked what percentage of these sites do respondents think they will allocate in their rural communities.

Diagram Ten shows that most respondents do not expect to make more than 25% of these allocations in their rural communities.

Diagram Ten: Percentage of sites of less than one hectare expected to be allocated in rural communities

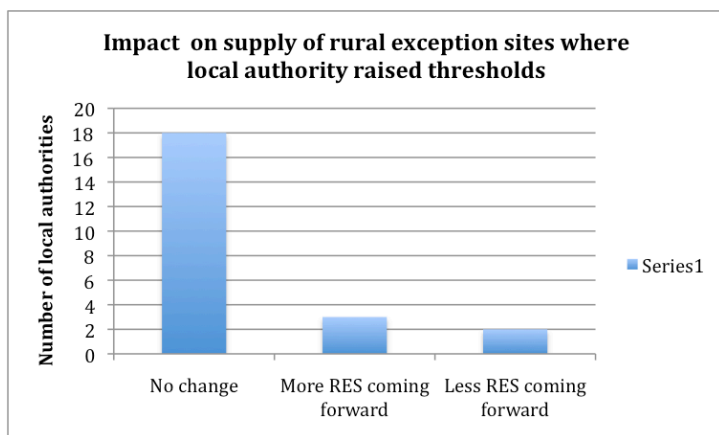


Impact of changes to site thresholds on supply of rural exception sites

One of the potential impacts of the raising of site thresholds was that it would result in landowners holding onto sites in the expectation that they would be allocated, with the attendant increase in value. This in turn could reduce the number of rural exception sites that were offered.

As Diagram Eleven shows for most authorities that had increased site thresholds the supply of rural exception sites had not changed. However, as set out above, finding sites is the principal factor that prevents committed sums being used in the community where they are raised. Furthermore, as the evidence presented in the next section shows site supply remains a barrier to delivery.

Diagram Eleven: Impact on supply of rural exceptions sites where local authority raised thresholds



Other comments

At the end of the survey respondents were invited to provide any other comments or highlight issues that affect the delivery of rural affordable housing. These are summarised in Table Two.

Table Two: Summary of respondents' additional issues affecting the delivery of rural affordable housing

Comment	Number of respondents
There is a lack of RPs willing to take on a small number of dwellings and/or develop small rural schemes. Two specific consequences were noted. Firstly, where the developer cannot find an RP to take on the affordable homes, they dispose of them as low-cost affordable housing that does not address local needs. Secondly, it makes it difficult to spend the commuted sums raised in the villages where they are raised.	5
A number of respondents reported that not all their rural communities are designated as 'rural' under the 1985 Act, but are for the purposes of Right to Acquire exemptions. This means that they have adopted different thresholds for different rural communities, with lower thresholds for those in the 'rural areas' designated under the 1985 Act. In other areas a similar situation has arisen where rural communities in an AONB are designated with lower thresholds, but in the remaining rural communities the threshold of 10 dwellings or more applies.	5
A high Housing Need Requirement figure, calculated using the national methodology means the LA will focus on large strategic sites and less room for allocating small sites in villages	1
Not being able to meet the 5-year land supply requirement has had a significant negative impact on the supply of Rural Exception Sites. Developers have gained permission to build these out as market developments with only a quota of affordable homes. The numbers of these is often so small RP are not willing to take them on.	1
Delivery is constrained by the lack of site supply and the cost of sites that do	5



come forward.	
Linked to the above some respondents noted the viability challenge of making an affordable housing contribution stack up, where there is a housing need, but market values are low. Allied to this note was made of the lack of government grant for market led schemes in these areas. Interesting too one LA noted that since raising the threshold to 10 dwellings with a presumption that any contribution would be taken on-site there has been a reduction in the level of commuted sums available to support affordable housing delivery on other sites,	5
Developers submitting schemes below the policy threshold and choosing affordable rent and low-cost home ownership products that are unaffordable to those on an average locally earned incomes.	3
Affordable housing is critical to the sustainability of rural communities	1
Neighbourhood Plans have had a positive impact on delivery in rural areas	1
Where a local authority adopts a policy of only allocating sites in the larger villages, in the remainder the policy requirement is for sites to deliver 100% affordable housing. In the latter threshold policies do not apply.	1

Three examples of a rurally sensitive threshold policy

The Court of Appeal Judgement in 2016 was very clear that the NPPF was one material consideration that should be taken into account when developing Local Plan policy and taking planning decisions. As noted above it went on to state that a local authority could set a lower threshold if this was justified by evidence and local circumstances. Two respondents noted that they have used this discretion and adopted lower thresholds with on-site contributions into their Local Plan.

South Downs National Park

The SDNPA has recently adopted its new Local Plan (July 2019) that includes Policy SD 28⁵ that provides a sliding scale for affordable housing contributions and thresholds as low as three dwellings:

- 50% from sites of 11 or more dwellings;
- 40% for sites of 10 dwellings 3 units for sites of 9,
- 1 unit for sites of 4 or 5 dwellings,
- a financial contribution for sites of 3 dwellings negotiated case-by-case.

At the Examination in Public SDNPA justified their approach citing the Court of Appeal Judgement which recognised that the WMS and PPG does not necessarily either outweigh the Local Plan, or prevent a different approach being taken through the plan-making process to respond to specific local circumstances. Furthermore, the judgement states that it remains legitimate for local plans to take a different approach to that set out in PPG with regards affordable housing thresholds, provided there is robust local evidence to support it.

⁵ South Downs Local Plan - adopted July 2019 https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/SD_LocalPlan_2019_17Wb.pdf



SDNPA's evidence included the following elements:

- the local context and evidence of housing need
- demonstration that over 60% of homes delivered were on sites of 10 or less.
- The threshold levels and were supported by the economic viability evidence.

The inspector concluded there is a pressing need for affordable homes in the National Park. He also noted the clear evidence that a majority of around 62% of affordable homes delivered in the Park have been on small sites below 10 and often of 4 or 5 dwellings. Given also that the policy focus of housing growth within the National Park is on affordable home provision, the Inspector concluded there is clearly exceptional justification for a sliding scale of contributions for sites below the normal 10, 9- or 5-unit thresholds.

Silverdale and Arnside AONB - adopted into South Lakeland and Lancaster Local Plan

South Lakeland and Lancaster Councils adopted a Local Plan in March 2019 specifically for the Arnside and Silverdale AONB area.⁶ It includes policy AS03 - Housing Provision that requires:

- 50% affordable housing on sites of 2 or more dwellings
- Only where this is demonstrably unachievable will a lower percentage be acceptable
- In assessing the level and type of affordable housing on each site the Councils will have regard to site viability, individual site costs and other scheme requirements, the affordable housing guidance set out in an Appendix
- The affordable housing will be on-site and only in exceptional cases as a commuted sum, which will be assessed on a case-by-case basis

The Planning Inspector⁷ accepted this approach on the grounds of: the evidence presented on the levels of housing need; viability assessments, which included site typologies, proved that a 50% contribution was viable; the limited development opportunities to meet specific and significant housing needs in the AONB where housing numbers are modest given the special qualities of the area.

North Devon and Torridge Local Plan

Recognising that affordable housing from small sites made such an important contribution to rural affordable housing supply, North Devon District Council Local Plan included flexibility in their Local Plan policy to allow lower thresholds to be adopted should national policy change.

<https://consult.torridge.gov.uk/portal/planning/localplan/adoption/>

⁶ Arnside and Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Development Plan Document - March 2019
<https://www.southlakeland.gov.uk/media/6461/final-aonb-dpd-adoption-accessible.pdf>

⁷ Report of the Examination of the Arnside and Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Development Plan Document - 2018 paras 29 - 35
<https://www.southlakeland.gov.uk/media/6314/aonb-dpd-inspectors-report-jan-2019.pdf>



The Local Plan was prepared using evidence from a viability assessment that indicated it was usually viable for the smallest sites to deliver some on site provision and had proposed no thresholds at all. The WMS made it difficult to adopt this approach. However, with the agreement of the Inspector the policy was modified to apply the WMS thresholds 'unless changed in national policy or guidance'.

This allowed the LPA to publish an amendment to their policy in May 2019 through 'Practice notes' that now interprets Policy ST18 in light of NPPF changes. The policy now requires that in designated rural areas affordable housing will be sought on site at a level of 30% on sites of 6 or more dwellings or where the site has an area of 0.5 dwellings or more.

Conclusions

The evidence provided by this survey confirms the negative impact that the national policy of raising site thresholds has had on the delivery of rural affordable housing. This includes the partial exemptions for taking affordable housing contributions from small sites in 'rural areas' designated under the 1985 Housing Act.

The survey reveals that the thresholds adopted by respondents' councils reflect those set out in the national guidance. 49% of respondents had raised their thresholds in response to the WMS and revised NPPF. In these areas 66% of respondents reported a reduction in the delivery of affordable housing in their rural communities. The majority of these also reported that the affordable homes that would have been delivered under their earlier lower threshold policy had been replaced with higher value residential properties.

For those adopting the rural threshold and requirement that the affordable housing can only be taken as a commuted sum, 31% had usually been able to use the money in the community where it had been raised. However, 25% had not spent any of it. The principal reason for being unable to use the money in the rural communities where it had been raised was a lack of sites in these communities.

Not all respondents were able to quantify how many affordable homes were lost, but 31 did reply to this question. Just over half, sixteen local authorities, reported that over the last two years they had lost 11- 25 new affordable dwellings as a result of raising their threshold policy. Across these areas this amounts to 200 - 475 homes. Delivery is of course always uncertain, but to have a feel for the number of homes that could be delivered if the policy were to change, across predominantly rural areas this could amount to an additional 495 to 1125 affordable homes per annum. This could be a 10% - 25% increase in the 2017/18 level of delivery in settlements of less than 3,000 population.

Given the evidenced levels of housing need in rural areas it is not surprising that there is an appetite for a change in policy that would allow local planning authorities to be able to take an affordable housing contribution from sites of less than 10 dwellings. 94% of respondents reported this preference, with 62% of them wanting the option to be able to take the contributions as a mix of on-site and commuted sums. Yet as the survey revealed most are dissuaded from doing so because of national policy, despite the Court of Appeal stating that where there is the evidence LPAs do have the flexibility to set thresholds below those set out in the NPPF.



An issue not covered by the questionnaire, but raised through respondents' comments was the inconsistency of application of the policy because not all rural communities come under the 'rural area' designation for their area. Nationally, approximately 28% of parishes of less than 3,000 population⁸ are designated as 'rural' under the 1985 Housing Act. In these communities the lower site threshold with commuted sum affordable housing contributions can be taken. In contrast all rural settlements of less than 3,000 population are designated as 'rural' under the 1996 Housing and Planning Act. Yet, in some of these it is not possible to apply the rural thresholds. In their comments LPAs called for the ability to apply a consistent approach to all their rural settlements. Previous evidence has suggested that these should be defined as parishes of less than 3,000 population, with some flexibility to include larger parishes in National Parks and AONBs.

Successful delivery of rural affordable housing is dependent on an integrated package of policy and funding mechanisms being in place. As respondents reported other challenges will also impact on delivery. It is however essential to recognise that without sites no affordable housing will be built. Re-opening up the opportunity to take an affordable housing contribution on site from small market sites will increase rural affordable housing supply. The viability testing requirements set out in the revised NPPF and NPPG will ensure that policy thresholds do not affect deliverability. By using cross -subsidy from the market sales the numbers of affordable rural homes can be increased without calling on public grant. Ultimately, allowing LPAs to set rurally appropriate thresholds with the flexibility to take on-site and/or commuted sums will result in a plan led approach to meeting housing needs in rural communities. In so doing LPAs will be equipped to fulfil the NPPF requirement set out in paragraph 77 that, 'In rural areas, planning policies and decisions should be responsive to local circumstances and support housing developments that reflect local needs.'

Jo.Lavis
Rural Housing Solutions
November 2019
Appendix One - Survey questionnaire

1. Name of local authority

2. What is your authority's current size threshold for triggering an affordable housing contribution from market led developments in rural communities?

- Less than 3 dwellings
- 3- 5 dwellings
- 6 - 9 dwellings
- 10 dwellings
- Greater than 10 dwellings

⁸ The % figure has been calculated using Statutory Instrument parish lists for local authorities and number of parishes in National Parks not covered by LA SI lists. A few of the NP parishes are over 3,000 population, but have been included in this calculation. Some local authority SIs include parishes in the AONBs in their area, others do not. Where the parish is in an AONB but not in the local authority SI it is not included in the calculation.



3. Is your authority's current threshold for sites in rural communities different to that in place prior to the Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) and/or changes to the NPPF ?

- No change
- Site threshold is higher
- Site threshold is lower

4. Has the form in which you take the affordable housing contributions from sites in rural communities changed since the WMS and changes to the NPPG and /or NPPF?

- No change
- We now only take a financial contribution rather than on-site contributions
- We have changed to taking a mix of financial and on-site contributions

5. If your authority has retained a threshold of less than 10 dwellings for **on-site** contributions in your rural communities has this delivered new affordable homes?

- Yes
- No because developers will not include affordable housing, citing the changes to the WMS and changes to the NPPG and /or NPPF?
- No because at appeal the Planning Inspector has judged that our policy is contrary to national guidance?

6. If you have reviewed your Local Plan in the last three years or are in the process of doing so, have you, or are you considering, setting a site threshold of less than 10 dwellings for **on-site** affordable housing contributions in your rural communities?

- Yes
- No - we tried but the Planning Inspector advised that this was contrary to national policy
- No - given national policy we did /will not pursue lower thresholds in our rural communities
- No - we have/will go for a less than 10 dwelling threshold, but will take this solely in the form of a commuted sum.

7. If your authority has adopted a threshold for rural developments in line with the WMS/NPPF what has been the overall impact on new rural affordable housing supply?

- The same
- Increased
- Reduced



8. If the levels of delivery have fallen, approximately how many affordable dwellings in rural communities have you had to forego in the last two years?

- Less than 10
- 11 - 25
- 26 - 43
- 44 - 60
- More than 60

9. If you have secured commuted sums, in place of on-site affordable housing contributions from sites of less than 10 dwellings in your rural communities, where have you spent the money raised?

- Always in the rural community where it was raised
- Usually in the community where it was raised
- Always spent to support delivery of affordable housing in another rural community.
- Usually spent to support delivery of affordable housing in another rural community.
- Always spent to support delivery of affordable housing in the urban communities of the local authority.
- Not spent the money

10. Which of the following factors have limited the use of commuted sums to support affordable housing in the community where it was raised?

- no sites have become available
- no schemes have come forward requiring funding
- no evidenced need in that community for affordable housing
- another larger market led development has provided the affordable housing required to meet the housing needs of the community

11. If you have adopted a threshold of more than 10 dwellings in your rural communities, what has been the impact of the new higher thresholds on the supply of rural exception sites?

- No change
- Less sites coming forward
- More sites coming forward

12. If you have raised the threshold, what has been the form of housing provided on rural sites from which in the past you would have taken an on-site affordable housing contribution?

- No change
- A mix of market housing types and sizes
- Primarily higher value residential dwellings



13. What approach would you like to be able to take?

Content with not taking on-site affordable housing contributions from sites of less than 10 dwellings in rural communities.

Would like to be able to take an on-site affordable housing contribution from sites of less than 10 dwellings in rural communities

Would like to be able to take an on-site affordable and/or commuted sum affordable housing contribution from sites of less than 10 dwellings in rural communities.

14. In March 2019, the NPPG was changed in respect of taking affordable housing thresholds from sites in rural areas (Paragraph: 023 Reference ID: 23b-023-20190315). However, the NPPF (paragraph 63) remained unrevised. What impact has this had on your approach to taking affordable housing contributions from sites of less than 10 dwellings in rural areas?

No change

The lack of an accompanying change in the NPPF wording means we are unlikely to adopt a lower threshold.

The lack of an accompanying change in the NPPF wording means we are still unlikely to take an on-site contribution, rather than commuted sum, from small rural sites

Not aware this change had happened - but unlikely to change our approach

Not aware this change had happened - but would be interested in changing our approach

15. In meeting the NPPF (paragraph 68) requirement that 10 % of the housing requirement is met by sites of less than 1 hectare what % of these sites have/do you expect to allocate in rural communities as part of the requirement for a 5 year land supply?

100%

75%

50%

25%

less than 25%

16. Are there any other comments or issues that you would like to highlight that are affecting the delivery of rural affordable housing in your area?



Rural Services Network Executive Meeting

13th January 2020

Report of the Chief Executive: Progressing the “Time for a Rural Strategy” Campaign

1. Present Position

Members will be aware of the present position, but I will comment on it at the meeting.

2. Progressing the Campaign

2.1. Since the Rural Assembly Meeting, Brian Wilson and I have been giving thought to two key question, namely:

- Beyond lobbying work - How best to progress the RSN call on Government for a Rural Strategy in 2020? and
- How (if we decide to go down this route) to persuade Government that rural areas are a good place to invest in?

2.2. These are some initial and not terribly structured thoughts for discussion at this meeting of the Executive.

2.3. **We need to produce a Campaign Strategy document to keep track of actions, earmark resources etc (for internal use and to share with key partners (Rural Coalition, ACRE and the Plunkett Foundation in respect of the Regional Road shows) but need a steer from the Executive on these key questions before so doing.**

How to Progress

2.4. Some options for taking forward the Rural Strategy call are (and they are neither exclusive or mutually exclusive):

- A.** That we essentially expand and deepen the current RSN document. However, we are not sure a straightforward expansion would add much or be the best way to carry others with us.
- B.** That we select several recommendations of key importance which are essentially the same in both the RSN document and the House of Lords report and focus effort on working them up. The question, of course, will be



which issues and whose pet hobby horses do we leave out? In our work around the General Election we focused on the RSN's priority policies of housing, transport, health and social care, education, fair funding, skills and training, connectivity and rural economy.

- C. Building upon this, that we develop the selected policy recommendations by seeking to define the policy and delivery actions, targets, estimated costs, outputs, outcomes (and delivery timescales) we are seeking. This type of approach may be attractive to more technically minded civil servants (not least the Treasury), though politicians may be swung at least as much by a hearts and minds approach.
 - D. That we work with RSN members to produce a document showing what local authorities can offer/deliver against selected recommendations. This could be expanded by working with partner bodies to show what parish/town councils, ACRE Network members, community organisations etc could also offer. Such a document could put that offer to central Government, seeking its policy and funding contributions.
 - E. That we move away from the topics used in the Rural Strategy call e.g. affordable housing, digital, transport, and start developing this in a more forward-looking and cross-cutting way. This could mean selecting four or five big policy challenges for Government, such as an ageing population, climate change/zero carbon and the productivity gap. This might prove politically attractive.
 - F. That we accept Government is unlikely to go (much) beyond its previously stated position responding to the Rural Strategy and House of Lords report. We therefore cajole, engage, offer help to Defra to "flesh out its rural vision" etc. We are not convinced Defra is even doing that currently, based on what the Rural Coalition heard from Lord Gardiner. Should he again be made Rural Affairs Minister this (minimalist) option may have to be considered seriously.
 - G. That we don't seek to produce another policy - based document(s) at all, but focus our effort instead on campaigning, engaging Parliamentarians and media approach. Any supporting documents are likely to be to support press releases, events, etc, and have budget implications for the use of Lexington's services.
- 2.5. One key question is how much this should be an RSN-driven exercise or should we specifically seek a partnership exercise with other (Rural Coalition) players?** RSN members may want to see some organisational leadership and profile in return for their membership and this is important in membership recruitment and retention terms. And an RSN-driven exercise



also gives us more freedom over its direction. However, more might ultimately be achieved by working collaboratively and Government may well be more receptive to a joint ask that has wider buy-in. We doubt this is a simple either/or. From experience to-date RSN can be a key player within a collaboration. **I am inclined to suggest that this is/remains an RSN driven exercise but subject to wide consultation with members/partners before anything is finally agreed or published.**

- 2.6. A new Government and (probably) new Ministers should present a fresh opportunity. On the other hand, we have a Defra that will be focused on delivering Brexit-related work on agriculture and the environment. The rural affairs agenda - if it stays in Defra - will be low priority. In any event we suggest we go for direct targeting of the other departments – whilst arguing for a cross-departmental strategic approach.
- 2.7. The Conservatives have a large number of rural MPs who could be harnessed via APPGs, PQs and so on. That said, the Party has, in part, built its majority by switching campaign attention away from its traditional base to the northern (urban) heartlands.

Investing in Rural

- 2.8. On this question (above) a dilemma is whether to argue that:
 - A. Public investment will prove good value for money by capitalising on all the latent opportunity within rural areas; or
 - B. Public investment is needed to target and address market failures in rural areas i.e. an equity point.
- 2.9. It may be possible to argue both, though it risks a mixed message. One area where it's more likely to work is digital connectivity, where markets clearly fail to deliver the infrastructure on their own, yet it seems largely accepted that economic benefits will flow if local economies are better connected and enabled. Those arguing this point often emphasise the contribution of rural areas to the national economy.
- 2.10. The 'growth agenda' has tended to focus on maximising economic opportunity. We just wonder whether that agenda has peaked (post Cameron and Osborne) and whether, with all parties moving on from austerity, we will see more effort going again into tackling perceived unfairness's and the left behind places or groups. We may be overstating this point, given the largely opportunity driven nature of LEP work and upcoming Local Industrial Strategies. But - unless it was just for General Election consumption - there does seem to be a change in the political mood.



- 2.11. This is not just an academic point. It should steer whether to focus effort on policy agendas that play better into the opportunity argument (e.g. business support, training/employment opportunities, digital connectivity) or those that play better into the left behind argument (e.g. bus/transport services, health and social care services, affordable housing).

3. A Menu for Future Activity

3.1. I doubt we have a single “either or” option here.

3.2. I think we need a menu of future action which is flexible enough to respond to event, opportunities and threats as they arise.

A. In terms of progressing the call for a rural strategy I consider we should carry on as previously agreed, namely

- Meeting the Lord’s Select Committee members and other Peers we more regularly engage with to agree “tactics” to keep the issue of a Strategy alive
- Agree a programme with the APPG to consider the Lords recommendations, call for discussions with Ministers etc. – it is likely the APPG will want to prioritise issues in the Queen’s Speech and Conservative Manifesto.
- Continue the Regional Roadshows – although varying the format and content somewhat to reflect current circumstances.
- Carry out the proposed Video Conferencing sessions with RSP members representing the relevant sectors.
- Take whatever opportunities present themselves to promote to Government the need for a Strategy.

B. Developing the Case: Suggested Approach

- ✓ We select a small number of big policy issue of strategic importance and develop a narrative around a theme (to the effect) of “Re-Invigorating Rural: a 2020 Vision for the Future of Rural England”. **By way of a reminder I attach below this Report to the Executive Appendix A** a summary of our original February 2018 document making the case for a new National Rural Strategy.
- ✓ In respect of the above we can both address the perceived disadvantage/unfairness of the present policies etc. and advance the case that resolving those issues will Re-Invigorate Rural. In this we seek to draw out the link between services/social issues and the ways they impact on rural economies (including innovation and enterprise) and well-being. (The recently formed National Innovation Centre for Rural Enterprise (NICRE) – which has accessed £3.7m over three years from the Research England Development Fund and has CCRI/Gloucestershire University as a key delivery partner – will be carrying out research into this link.)



- ✓ It perhaps makes sense to focus on the Grand Challenges of the Industrial Strategy (although bearing in mind that was a Strategy produced by the Theresa May government). Those Grand Challenges are expressed as
 - Artificial Intelligence and data;
 - Ageing society;
 - Clean growth;
 - Future of mobility.
- ✓ The above will pick up RSN priorities on Broadband/Mobile Connectivity, Adult Social Care, Transport/Accessibility as well as Net Zero/De-Carbonisation.
- ✓ In addition to the above we must add Fair Funding (priority being local government funding but to include all public services), Rural Housing, Business Support, Skills and Training to meet RSN priorities and those of its membership.
- ✓ Of course, we will continue our activity around the Fair Funding Review (for local government – including Adult & Children's Social Care and Fire and Rescue services. Education Funding also needs to be kept under review.
- ✓ We are working with other rural interest groups on rural housing issues to put to the Treasury following last year's meeting with the then First Secretary.
- ✓ We must review legislation as it comes - not just relating to the topics already mentioned. Devolution proposals could have implications for rural areas. That is why we need to ensure that those rural implications are put forward in order to re-enforce the need for a comprehensive strategy so as to avoid unintended consequences.
- ✓ **I would stress that the above relates to preparing high level strategic documents which essentially re-enforce the links between them and with the economic potential of rural areas.**
- ✓ Over time we may also be able to produce a number of lower level, more detailed service specific points if supported to do so by our membership with input, evidence and case studies.

Graham Biggs
Chief Executive
30th December 2019



APPENDIX A

*Draft template (FEBRUARY, 2018)***Foreword**

Rightly or wrongly, rural communities feel neglected by central government. Exiting the European Union provides a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to re-set the policy approach to rural areas, their communities, the economies which operate within them and their environment, in a way which recognises and enables the potential contribution of rural England to be released and enhanced.

Possible future scenarios**2025 Scenario 1**

Small businesses across rural England are struggling to survive as a result of what they describe as the 'triple whammy' of loss of markets due to export tariffs, skills shortages, and the closure of support schemes formerly funded by the EU's regional policy and rural development policy. Farm families are hard hit, especially in upland areas such as our national parks and AONBs, by the loss of export markets and EU subsidies and by a reduction in opportunities to earn off-farm incomes. District, County and Unitary Councils lose funding as they are now reliant on Business Rates and Council Tax – services suffer. Environmental groups are concerned that land abandonment is damaging landscapes and habitats – tourism businesses suffer. Rural communities complain that the lengthy economic downturn and public spending cutbacks together with a failure to rural-proof national policies, are leading to losses of essential services, such as aspects of social care, health care, schools, leisure opportunities, shops and transport, with many voluntary and community organisations also having to close their services. Young people and older people requiring care face particular hardships. MPs representing rural constituencies are forming an all-party parliamentary group to promote the need for a coherent rural policy.

2025 Scenario 2

Small rural businesses are leading the economic recovery from the initial economic shock of leaving the EU. Aided by a national rural industrial strategy which recognises the economic potential of rural innovation and enterprise (including tourism and culture) and builds on lessons from the rural growth pilots, rural businesses are outperforming those in most cities. Farmers are adapting to the new trade deal with the EU and to new national support schemes which are better targeted toward provision of public goods such as landscape, wildlife, flood prevention and carbon sinks, and to diversifying income sources. Rural communities are thriving due to the growth in employment opportunities, renewed investment in affordable rural housing, and effective joint working between better resourced and less financially challenged unitary, county, district and parish/town councils and community and voluntary organisations. These are all part of a new coherent rural strategy, agreed between central and local government and other key stakeholders, which is encouraging and enabling innovations in service and infrastructure provision, in planning and place-shaping, and in skills provision and business support. The OECD is sending a team of experts to study this successful approach so that other countries can learn from our experience.



A National Rural Strategy can ensure we collectively achieve the second of these scenarios.

The value of current EU funding

Currently, rural areas in the UK benefit from more than **£3 billion per year** in EU funds in support of agriculture and rural development, as part of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy. It is widely accepted that £1 spent in the rural economy circulates around 3 times – thus the value of current EU funds into the rural economy is around £9 billion a year.

Five-sixths of the £3 billion a year is spent on so-called Pillar 1 'basic' support to all farms according to the area of land they manage, in order to provide income support and some basic environmental and safety conditions on land management. One-sixth of that sum is spent on Pillar 2 aid through the Rural Development Programmes for each UK principality. For England this is broadly broken down as follows:

Rural Development Programme (England) 2013-20	
Scheme	£m
Countryside Stewardship	860
Environmental Stewardship	1959
English Woodland Grant Scheme	95
Growth Programme	177
Countryside Productivity	141
LEADER	139
Farming Recovery Fund	9
Technical Assistance	127
Total	3,507

As this table shows, a very large proportion of spending within the Rural Development Programme (in addition to the Basic Payment Scheme for farmers) is spent on environmental management schemes for farmers and a much smaller share of funds for farm and forestry investments and the diversification of the rural economy, as well as building local capacity and providing rural services often through the LEADER approach.

Regarding other EU funds, in particular European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and European Social Fund (ESF) £6.5 billion is allocated across the English Local Enterprise Partnerships for the period from 2014-20. This figure is not broken down in any analysis in terms of rural areas.

XX Add something about future trade deals XX



Our Countryside, Our Future

In the year 2000 the Rural White Paper, entitled 'Our Countryside, Our Future,' attempted to put in place a comprehensive policy framework for rural England under three themes:

- a Living Countryside
- a Working Countryside
- a Vibrant Countryside

Our analysis of this White Paper shows that whilst several national announcements and actions followed, the desire for a coordinated approach to rural areas remains a significant challenge.

In the context of withdrawal from the EU, there has never been a more pressing need to address this challenge.

A new National Rural Strategy

We are calling for a new long-term Rural Strategy (for at least the next decade) in a post Brexit world, to be developed and agreed between central and local government and other key rural stakeholders and properly resourced. This should enable the full potential of the **economies** of rural areas to be realised, further developed and sustained (to support the national economy). To realise the economic potential, market failures must be remedied, and serious attention must also be paid to **social and community** issues. There must be a fair deal for rural residents and communities in the use of national resources.

A National Rural Strategy will require strong, visible and coherent cross-departmental leadership from within central government alongside an England-wide "rural deal" which shares power, resources and responsibility with local government and communities through a framework of triple devolution and capacity building.

This strategy should focus on the following:

1. A thriving rural economy

Rural economies are incredibly diverse and make a significant contribution to national economic performance. There is no such thing as a single, homogeneous "rural economy" – indeed in most rural areas multiple economies operate with different needs and opportunities.

Farming and tourism are of fundamental importance but to pigeon-hole rural economies as being solely about these sectors is a mistake.

The environment is of pivotal significance to rural economies. Farming, forestry and land management sectors help to create the environment on which the tourism sector depends on and to which a vast array of economic activities are attracted – from manufacturing and service industries to knowledge intensive and creative sectors.

Enterprise and opportunity are abundant with rural areas often providing a breeding ground for high growth / scale-up businesses which can migrate to more populated areas as expansion plans require.



Rural Services Network Executive Meeting

13th January 2020

Taking the “It’s Time for a Rural Strategy” Campaign forward – outcomes from the RSN Executive meeting.

A MENU FOR FUTURE ACTIVITY

(1) In terms of progressing the call for a Rural Strategy, the RSN will proceed as previously agreed, namely:

- Meeting the Lord’s Select Committee members, and other Peers we more regularly engage with, to agree “tactics” to keep the issue of a Strategy alive.
- Agree a programme with the APPG to consider the Lords recommendations, call for discussions with Ministers, etc. (It is likely the APPG will want to prioritise issues in the Queen’s Speech and Conservative Manifesto).
- Continue the Regional Roadshows – although varying the format and content somewhat to reflect current circumstances.
- Carry out the proposed Video Conferencing sessions with RSP members representing the relevant sectors.
- Take whatever opportunities present themselves to promote to Government the need for a Strategy.

(2) Developing the Case: Agreed Approach.

We select a small number of big policy issue of strategic importance and develop a narrative around a theme of “Reinvigorating Rural: Realising the Vision”:

- ✓ In respect of the above we address both: the perceived disadvantage/unfairness of the present policies etc. and advance the case that resolving those issues will reinvigorate and release rural potential. In this we seek to draw out the link between well-being, services/social issues and the ways they impact on rural economies (including innovation and enterprise).
- ✓ RSN will focus on the Grand Challenges of the Industrial Strategy (although bearing in mind that was a Strategy produced by the previous Government). Those Grand Challenges are expressed as
 - Artificial Intelligence and data;
 - Ageing society;
 - Clean growth;
 - Future of mobility.
- ✓ The above will pick up RSN priorities on Broadband/Mobile Connectivity, Adult Social Care, Transport/Accessibility as well as Net Zero/De-Carbonisation.



- ✓ In addition to the above we must add Fair Funding (priority being local government funding but to include all public services), Rural Housing, Business Support, Skills and Training to meet RSN priorities and those of its membership.
- ✓ Of course, we will continue our activity around the Fair Funding Review for local government – including Adult & Children's Social Care and Fire and Rescue services. Education Funding also needs to be kept under review
- ✓ Continue working with other rural interest groups on rural housing issues to put to the Treasury following last year's meeting with the then First Secretary
- ✓ Review legislation as it comes - not just relating to the above topics. (Devolution proposals could have implications for rural areas – we need to ensure rural implications are put forward and re-enforce the need for a comprehensive strategy so as to avoid unintended consequences.)
- ✓ **The above relates to preparing high level strategic documents which essentially re-enforce the links between them and the economic potential of rural areas.**
- ✓ We may also, over time, be able to produce a number of lower- level, more detailed, service specific points, if supported to do so by our membership with input, evidence and case studies.



Rural Services Network Executive Meeting

13th January 2020

General Election 2020: Report of the Chief Executive

1. Introduction

Now we know the Government for the next 5 years and the Ministers we will have to deal with (until the likely re-shuffle in 2020).

2. Manifesto and Other “Commitments”

As part of the work arising from the General Election, we asked Lexington (our media consultants) to review the Manifestos of all of the main (English!!) political parties focusing on the RSN’s priority policies of housing, transport, health & social care, education, fair funding, skills & training, connectivity and rural economy.

Attached to this report (Attachment 9A) is that review in respect of the Conservative Party Manifesto. The attachment also includes a column which I have added (very much as a shorthand note) of the RSN “Lines of Challenge” to the broad-brush policy statements concerned. Attachment A1 is the whole Section of the Manifesto dealing with Rural life and coastal communities.

We will be following up this review to add to this grid “commitments” made by Boris Johnson in the Conservative leadership campaign; by Boris Johnson’s Government up to the Election; in the Autumn Statement and in the Queen’s Speech at the Opening of Parliament.

The purpose of this work is as a means of holding the Government to account and, if the Executive agrees to do so, to write to appropriate Minister with rural issues before they start putting detail to the proposals (in legislation or otherwise).

3. Local Government Finance Related

Attached (Attachment 9B) is a document produced by our Finance Consultants, Pixel Financial Management) on 13th December for information. We may be able to update on these comments at the meeting.

We have looked at the current levels of Government Funded Spending Power per head for rural average compared to the average for those constituencies that have moved from Labour to Conservative MPs in the General Election. The results are:

Predominantly Rural	£256.81
Changed constituencies	£399.60
Predominantly Urban	£365.80
GLA	£432.42



AS can be seen those “changed constituencies” get some 55.6% more “grant” (per head) than Predominantly Rural and more than the Predominantly Urban average – but less than Greater London.

4. Letter to Prime Minister from the Rural Coalition

Attached for information (Attachment 9C) is a copy of a letter sent on behalf of the Rural Coalition (the RSN is a member of the Coalition).

5. Queen’s Speech and Implications for Local Government

Attached for information (Attachment 9D) is a commentary from Pixel some of the main implications for Local Government of the legislative programme set out in the Queen’s Speech at the Opening of Parliament on 19th December.

We will need to undertake some further analysis of the legislative programme from the perspective of the Rural Strategy Campaign.

[Please follow this link to the full Queen’s Speech December 2019.](#)¹

Graham Biggs
Chief Executive
20th December 2019

¹[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/853886/Queen s Speech December 2019 - background briefing notes.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/853886/Queen_s_Speech_December_2019_-_background_briefing_notes.pdf)

This grid outlines pledges made in the Conservative 2019 manifesto.

KEY CONSTANT RSN CHALLENGE LINES

1. MORE PEOPLE LIVE IN RURAL AREAS THAN THERE ARE LIVING IN GREATER LONDON

2. NO ONE SHOULD BE DISADVANTAGED BY WHERE THEY LIVE

3. THERE MUST BE FAIR FUNDING ACROSS ALL PUBLIC SERVICES WHICH FULLY REFLECT THE COSTS OF DELIVERY SERVICES ACROSS RURAL AREAS

Department	Sector	Details of Commitment	Financial pledge	SPECIFIC RSN CHALLENGE
Department of Health and Social Care	Health and Welfare	Extra funding for the NHS, with 50,000 more nurses and 50 million more GP surgery appointments a year.		Need to ensure Rural Gets its fair share of these new resources.
		Invest £34 billion per year by the end of Parliament in additional funding.	£34 billion annually	
		Within the first three months of our new term, we will enshrine in law our fully funded, long-term NHS plan.		
		Build 40 new hospitals in ten years. BY 2030		
		Extend healthy life expectancy in five years. BY 2025		
	Social care	We announced in the autumn additional funding of £1 billion for the year beginning in April 2020. We are now confirming this additional funding in every year of the new Parliament.	£1 billion	Whilst the RSN acknowledges that a new funding formula is being developed while these additional funds are distributed under the present formula which they (which they will be for 2020/21) Urban Areas will get some 1.5% more per head than rural - despite higher service delivery costs. Rural areas will also face having to fund some 7% more than urban through Council Tax.
Department for Transport	Transport	Build Northern Powerhouse Rail between Leeds and Manchester and then focus on Liverpool, Tees Valley, Hull, Sheffield and Newcastle.		
		Invest in the Midlands Rail Hub, strengthening rail links including those between Birmingham, Leicester, Nottingham, Coventry, Derby, Hereford and Worcester.		
		invest in improving train lines to the South West and East Anglia.		

		Give city regions the funding to upgrade their bus, tram and train services to make them as good as London's, with more frequent, better-integrated services, more electrification, modern buses and trains and smart ticketing.		
		£28.8 billion investment in strategic and local roads.	£28.8 billion	
		Restore many of the Beeching lines, reconnecting smaller towns such as Fleetwood and Willenhall that have suffered permanent disadvantage since they were removed from the rail network in the 1960s.		
		Invest in superbuses with lower fares. Keep bus fares low, bring back and protect rural routes, and speed up your journeys.		Need to see the detail and timescales for "bringing back & protecting rural bus routes.
		Invest in the bus network to improve infrequent or non-existent services in the countryside, including more on-demand services.		Need to see details and timescales.
Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport	TV licences	Free TV licences for over-75s and believe they should be funded by the BBC.		
Department for Education	Education	£780 million in new funding to support children with Special Educational Needs next year alone. 2020		Need fair share for rural which fully reflects service delivery costs in the rural context.
		Invest £500 million in new youth clubs and services.		Need fair share for rural which fully reflects service delivery costs in the rural context.
	Skills and Training	Create a new National Skills Fund worth £3 billion. OVER THE NEXT PARLIAMENT. Will provide matching funding for individuals and SME's for high-quality education and training. Will consult widely on the overall design.		Need fair share for rural and for rural issues of accessibility to be addressed.
Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs	Rural Economy	Use additional police resources to tackle rural crime.		Need to see the detail.
		Cement Opportunity Areas programme to raise standards and support regeneration.		Need to see the detail.
	Environment	Create a Great Northumberland Forest, we will reach an additional 75,000 acres of trees a year by the end of the next Parliament, as well as restoring our peatland. END OF NEXT PARLIAMENT		

		Create new National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.		
		Increase penalties for fly-tipping, make those on community sentences clean up their parks and streets.		
		Make no changes to the Hunting Act.		
		Net Zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.		Need to fully understand issues and opportunities for rural areas.
		£500 million Blue Planet Fund to help protect our oceans from plastic pollution, warming sea temperatures and overfishing.	£500 million	
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	Energy bills	Extend the water rebate for those in the South West.		
		Keep the triple lock, the winter fuel payment, the older person's bus pass and other pensioner benefits.		Older person's bus passes needs buses to use them on and should be able to be used on Community Transport services
		Lower energy bills by investing £9.2 billion in the energy efficiency of homes, schools and hospitals.	£9.2 billion	
	Infrastructure	£100 billion in additional infrastructure spending – on roads, rail and other responsible, productive investment.	£100 billion	Needs a fair share to meet rural needs
		Flood defences will receive £4 billion in new funding.	£4 billion	
	Shared Prosperity Fund	£500 million of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund is used to give disadvantaged people the skills they need to make a success of life.	£500 million	
		The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will be used to bind together the whole of the United Kingdom, tackling inequality and deprivation in each of our four nations.		Need the detail including allocations to the Home Nations and rural fair share. Processes to access need to reflect rural context (including- but not limited to - the continuation of LEADER type programmes.
Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government	Housing	Ensure that new GP and school places are delivered ahead of people moving into new housing developments.		Rural Context.
		Discount homes in perpetuity by a third for local people who cannot otherwise afford to buy in their area.		Need to see the detail
		End rough sleeping by the end of the next Parliament.		
		300,000 homes a year by the mid-2020s.		
		Build at least a million more homes, of all tenures, over the next Parliament		Affordability for local people on local incomes in rural areas is key in rural areas.

		Protect and enhance the Green Belt.		
	Reviving High Streets	New Safer Streets Fund will invest in preventative measures like CCTV and community wardens.		Must include Rural Towns.
		Establish a £150 million Community Ownership Fund to encourage local takeovers of civic organisations or community assets that are under threat – local football clubs, but also pubs or post offices.	£150 million	
		Help communities that want to create ‘pocket parks’ and regenerate derelict areas.		
	Local Authorities	Local people will continue to have the final say on council tax, being able to veto excessive rises.		Should not apply to rural Parish/Town Council precepts.
	Devolution	Remain committed to devolving power to people and places across the UK. PUBLISH AN ENGLISH DEVOLUTION WHITE PAPER SETTING OUT THE PLANS NEXT YEAR		There are potentially huge implications here for Rural areas/Councils.
Department for Work & Pensions	Benefits	Publish a National Strategy for Disabled People. BEFORE END 2020		
Treasury	Tax	We will not raise the rate of income tax, VAT or National Insurance.		
	Reviving High Streets	Cut taxes for small retail business and local music venues, pubs and cinemas.		Must be 100% funded by central government.
	Budget	First Budget will prioritise the environment: investing in R&D; decarbonisation schemes; new flood defences, which will receive £4 billion in new funding over the coming years; electric vehicle infrastructure including a national plug-in network and gigafactory; and clean energy		Applicability to rural?
SPECIFIC REFERENCES TO RURAL				
		Conservative manifesto		

		<p>This is why, in his first months as Prime Minister, Boris Johnson has set out an agenda for levelling up every part of the UK – not just investing in our great towns and cities, as well as rural and coastal areas, but giving them far more control of how that investment is made. In the 21st century, we need to get away from the idea that ‘Whitehall knows best’ and that all growth must inevitably start in London. Because we as Conservatives believe you can and must trust people and communities to make the decisions that are right for them.</p>		
		<p>We will invest in superbus networks with lower fares – flat fares in urban areas – and increased frequency. We will keep bus fares low, bring back and protect rural routes, and speed up your journeys. We will invest in electric buses, developing the UK’s first all electric-bus town.</p>		
		<p>Support rural life and coastal communities. Even as the UK forges ahead in the future, we must not forget those communities that have not shared fully in the growth generated by our economy.</p>		<p>Must refer to rural not just "left behind" urban towns.</p>
		<p>This Government is committed to levelling up all parts of the United Kingdom – and getting Brexit done will enable us to give new support to people in rural and coastal communities, and for our farming and fishing industries.</p>		
		<p>We will use our additional police resources to tackle rural crime.</p>		

Support rural life and coastal communities

Even as the UK forges ahead in the future, we must not forget those communities that have not shared fully in the growth generated by our economy.

This Government is committed to levelling up all parts of the United Kingdom – and getting Brexit done will enable us to give new support to people in rural and coastal communities, and for our farming and fishing industries.

We intend to make their lives much easier.



Grant Abraham
Candidate for Strangford
Sheep Farm Owner

A post-Brexit deal for farming

- ▶ Once we have got Brexit done, we will **free our farmers from the bureaucratic Common Agricultural Policy and move to a system based on ‘public money for public goods’.**
- ▶ To support this transition, we will **guarantee the current annual budget to farmers** in every year of the next Parliament.
- ▶ In return for funding, they must **farm in a way that protects and enhances our natural environment**, as well as safeguarding high standards of animal welfare.
- ▶ When we leave the EU, we will be able to **encourage the public sector to ‘Buy British’** to support our farmers and reduce environmental costs.
- ▶ We will **increase the annual quota for the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme** we are piloting from 2,500 to 10,000.

A post-Brexit deal for fisheries

- ▶ Upon leaving the EU, we will **leave the Common Fisheries Policy**, becoming an independent coastal state and **taking back control of our waters.**
- ▶ We will **maintain funding for fisheries across the UK’s nations** throughout the Parliament and support the regeneration of our coastal communities.
- ▶ There will be a **legal commitment to fish sustainably** and a legal requirement for a plan to achieve maximum sustainable yield for each stock.

Attachment 9 A1

- ▶ We want to **roll out gigabit broadband across the country by 2025, with £5 billion funding already promised and provide greater mobile coverage** across the country.
- ▶ We will use our additional police resources to **tackle rural crime**.
- ▶ For areas – such as some coastal towns – which have historically been poorly served in terms of education and public services (among much else), we will **cement our Opportunity Areas programme** to raise standards and support regeneration. We will also **invest in the bus network** to improve infrequent or non-existent services in the countryside, including more on-demand services.

Just as in the wider economy we can combine strong employment growth with high employment standards, so we believe that **British farmers and fishermen should be able to profit by producing food and fish that are the envy of the world** – both for their quality and the high standards to which they were produced.

We want people, both at home and abroad, to be lining up to buy British. And one of the great opportunities of Brexit is the chance to **lead the world in the quality of our food, agriculture and land management** – driven by science-led, evidence-based policy.

And we want those same farmers and fishermen to act as the **stewards of the natural world**, preserving the UK's countryside and oceans as they have for generations.

Stewards of our environment

Our Environment Bill will guarantee that we will protect and restore our natural environment after leaving the EU. Because conservation has always been at the very heart of Conservatism.

- ▶ We will set up a new independent **Office for Environmental Protection** and **introduce our own legal targets, including for air quality**.
- ▶ We will **invest in nature**, helping us to reach our Net Zero target with a £640 million new **Nature for Climate fund**. Building on our support for creating a **Great Northumberland Forest**, we will reach **an additional 75,000 acres of trees a year** by the end of the next Parliament, as well as **restoring our peatland**.
- ▶ We welcome the Glover Review and will **create new National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty**, as well as making our most loved landscapes greener, happier, healthier and open to all. We will **make the coast to coast path across the most beautiful areas of the North a National Trail**.
- ▶ We will continue to **lead the world in tackling plastics pollution, both in the UK and internationally**, and will introduce a new levy to **increase the proportion of recyclable plastics in packaging**. We will introduce extended producer responsibility, so that producers pay the full costs of dealing with the waste they produce and boost domestic recycling. We will **ban the export of plastic waste to non-OECD countries**, consulting with industry, NGOs and local councils on the date by which this should be achieved.
- ▶ We will **crack down on the waste and carelessness that destroys our natural environment and kills marine life**. We will **increase penalties for fly-tipping, make those on community sentences clean up their parks and streets**, and introduce a **deposit return scheme** to incentivise people to recycle plastic and glass.
- ▶ We will **make no changes to the Hunting Act**.



General Election 2019 result: new Conservative government

1. The Conservative party won a clear majority in yesterday's General Election (majority of 80). Such a large majority gives the new government the scope to make bolder policy decisions in areas that affect local government (devolution, investment, social care), as well as the ability to implement primary legislation. The new government's instincts on the overall quantum of funding for local government, and how it is distributed, will take a little longer to emerge.

Provisional local government finance settlement

2. In the short term, the priority for local government finance will be the timing and content of the provisional settlement.
3. Given the very limited number of days before Christmas, a delay into the New Year is possible, but seems unlikely.
4. The 2020-21 settlement will almost certainly follow the proposals set out in October's Technical Consultation. We would expect that officials have already prepared a settlement on this basis that is ready to be announced immediately ("oven ready"?). Pixel's MTFP model (v3.8) is set up in line with the Technical Consultation and we would be surprised if the provisional settlement departs from this.
5. The only new funding that was in the manifesto was the Potholes Fund (£500m per year from 2020-21). We assume that this will replicate the £400m Roads Funding in 2018-19, of which about three-quarters goes to county authorities.

Legislative programme

6. The Queen's Speech on 19th December will outline the new government's legislative programme. Once again, a government with a majority will be able to get parliamentary approval for primary legislation, something that a government has not been able to do since the General Election in 2017 when the Conservatives lost their majority.
7. We do not yet know the extent to which the new government will be able to deliver its legislative programme, or whether it will be distracted by other concerns. Such a large

majority should make it easy to pass legislation, but Whitehall also needs the focus of ministers to develop an effective policy programme. Brexit, trade negotiations, and possibly trouble with Scotland could crowd-out much-needed decisions on public finances, the economy and public services.

8. For local government, a government with a working majority might mean that the Local Government Bill can be reintroduced (it was pulled in 2017). This Bill would have introduced 100% business rate retention and other powers around the Business Rate Retention System, as well as abolishing the levy. Is this something that the new government will do, or will it continue with the compromise reforms that have been developed over the past two-and-a-half years?
9. Having a majority might also give the new government the power and capacity to address social care. In the manifesto, the Conservatives proposed “[building] a cross-party consensus”: this was never likely, but with a majority it is now not needed. We should, therefore, expect to see the long-awaited social care green paper sooner rather than later.
10. Potentially there will be proposals affecting local government in the wider legislative programme. Of most importance will be the proposed “English Devolution White Paper”, which is expected in 2020.

Public finances and local government funding

11. New spending proposals were at a bare minimum in the manifesto. The additional £1bn for social care in 2020-21 will be continued into later years – but there was no new money for social care. The only new money for local government was the £500m Pothole Fund.
12. It is likely that the funding level implied by the manifest is the minimum, and that more will be announced in the next Budget or Spending Review 2020. The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) are certainly of the view that the Conservative manifesto under-plays their actual spending plans. In both 2015 and 2017, the Conservatives spent a lot more than promised in their manifestos. The IFS thinks something similar will happen following the 2019 election as well: “There is so little in the manifesto, it seems inconceivable that what’s there is a real blueprint for a five-year term”.
13. How much additional funding would be possible within the constraints of the new government’s fiscal rules? There would be very little scope to increase spending within the old fiscal rules (deficit cannot be higher than 2% of GDP); the available headroom was almost all used in the SR19. The new rules proposed in the manifesto were vague (“we will not borrow to fund day-to-day spending”) and we will have to wait until the next Budget (expected in February 2020) to get more detail. A change in chancellor might allow the government to follow a looser fiscal policy, which might result in more money for local government.

14. Existing spending plans already give schools and the NHS cash-terms increases of around 5% to 5.5% per year. We would expect more funding for social care: the manifesto refers to the additional £1bn funding as a “first step ... to stabilise the system”. Without any new funding, the IFS estimates that, under the Conservatives’ plans, even if local authorities increase council tax by 4% per year, this will still not meet the rising costs and service demands.
15. The large parliamentary majority might change the dynamics in the Fair Funding Review (FFR). This Conservative government is now representing a much more diverse range of places: it has MPs from places it has never represented before, some of which are amongst the most deprived in England.¹ To date, the proposals in the FFR would result in a much flatter needs distribution. It would seem odd to persevere with the proposal to exclude a deprivation indicator from the Foundation Formula when such an indicator would benefit many of the government’s new constituencies. It is too early, however, to tell how or even if the change in the places the government represents will result in a change in the outcome of the FFR. Generally, we would expect the new government to be more sympathetic to the arguments from urban (but not London) authorities.
16. Conversely, a government with a comfortable majority is much less at risk of being hijacked by a group of unhappy MPs, which might give some MPs less leverage in future than they have had over the last four years.
17. Another way for the government to show that it is helping its new constituencies in the North and Midlands is through capital investment or devolution of powers. In some ways, it will be easier for the government to allocate new funding – especially capital investment – in this way than by changing the distribution of existing funding streams. The latter tend to be a zero-sum game: more funding to urban (deprived) areas means less for county areas. Conservative governments since 2010 have used capital investment and devolution in this way (e.g. “Northern Powerhouse”).

Adrian Jenkins

Pixel Financial Management

13 December 2019

adrian@pixelfinancial.co.uk

¹ Most of the most-deprived constituencies are still represented by Labour MPs. Out of the upper decile of deprived authorities, only 10 out of 65 are now Conservative constituencies. These are, in order: Blackpool South (3rd most deprived in England), Walsall North (21st), Birmingham Northfield (26th), Great Grimsby, Burnley, West Bromwich West, Stoke-on-Trent Central, Clacton, Blackpool North and Cleveleys, West Bromwich East. In contrast, there were only 3 following the 2017 election.

Corinium Suite, Unit 9, Cirencester Office Park, Tetbury Road, Cirencester, Gloucestershire GL7 6JJ

01285 653477 www.acre.org.uk @ACRE_national

18th December 2019

Dear Prime Minister,

UNLEASHING RURAL ENGLAND'S POTENTIAL

On behalf of our respective organisations, we offer our congratulations on your success in the General Election and your re-appointment as Prime Minister. Through our members, together we represent communities across rural England and we share a common interest in achieving and sustaining a living, working and thriving countryside.

We welcome the recognition in your Manifesto of the need to support rural life and coastal communities and, in particular, the confirmation of the commitments on broadband and mobile coverage; the intention to tackle rural crime; and the desire to improve the bus network. However, rural communities and businesses must also benefit from the other policies outlined in the Manifesto, such as improvements to the NHS and social care; support for small businesses (which are the bedrock of the rural economy); investing in schools; and improving public services. Rural communities, and not just towns and cities, would also benefit from the proposed Community Ownership and Cultural Investment Funds.

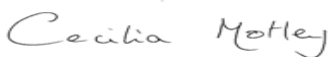
The various formulae which distribute central government funding to support service delivery at the local level need amending as soon as possible so that they fully reflect the rural context – including the higher costs of service delivery. Without this, rural communities will not receive a fair share of existing resources or the additional funding detailed in your Manifesto.

Rural areas will also need help to participate fully and to achieve their full potential; many feel left out or overlooked and remote from the decisions affecting their lives. It is, therefore, essential that the impacts of Brexit and your wider domestic policy agenda on rural communities and economies – not just agriculture, but more widely – are fully understood and reflected in programmes, such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Our previous letter to you in July made the case for the Government to set out its vision for, and commitment to, communities and businesses in rural England through a comprehensive rural strategy, providing the framework for rural proofing policies and programmes and for their delivery in a way that enables rural England to play its full part in the future of the country. We still believe this is the best way forward and we hope that you will look again at developing such a strategy across government. But, meanwhile, we are ready to play our part in assisting you and your Government to ensure the rural dimension is built in as you implement your programme in the coming years. We can offer the help of our members from all parts of the country, who have a wealth of knowledge and expertise.

We very much look forward to working with you and your Government. We are copying this letter to Theresa Villiers, in her capacity as lead Minister for rural policy.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Cecilia Motley, Chair, Rural Services Network (RSN)



David Emerson, CBE, Chair, Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE)



Margaret Clark CBE, Chair, Rural Coalition & Plunkett Foundation

Queen's Speech (December 2019)

1. The Queen's Speech on 19 December 2019 opens the new session of parliament. There seems to be a much more substantial legislative package than the manifesto indicated. Some of the measures announced will affect local government and its funding. Once again, social care is a significant priority, albeit without any new money at this stage. The most significant proposals affecting local government could be around devolution.
2. The full briefing document published by the government is available here:
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/853886/Queen s Speech December 2019 - background briefing notes.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/853886/Queen_s_Speech_December_2019_-_background_briefing_notes.pdf)
3. Spending plans for the **NHS** will be confirmed in law: "Early legislation will be brought forward to enshrine in law the multi-year funding settlement for the NHS, agreed earlier this year, that will see a £33.9 billion increase in cash terms by 2023-24." There is no change to the existing 5-year spending plans for the NHS.
4. The government wants to **reform social care** and find a "long-term solution that will stand the test of time". It has a "three point plan" to address social care:
 - "additional £1 billion for adults and children's social care in every year of this Parliament. In addition, the government will consult on a 2 per cent precept that will enable councils to access a further £500 million for adult social care for 2020-21."
 - "urgently seek a cross-party consensus"
 - "ensure that nobody needing care will be forced to sell their home to pay for it".
5. Importantly, for local government, the first point simply confirms the additional resources announced for social care in the Spending Review 2019 (SR19), i.e. £1bn grant and £500m from precept. The continuation of the £1bn grant funding beyond 2020-21 was announced in the Conservative Party manifesto. No new further funding is announced here, and there is no indication that the 2% precept will be extended, although that must remain a possibility.
6. **Spending on schools** will be "levelled-up", which we assume takes place within the spending plans announced in the SR19:
 - "Every school will have more money for every child and we will level up minimum per-pupil funding for secondary schools to £5,000, and primary schools to £3,750 next year, and £4,000 the year after."
 - "From next year, we will legally require all local authorities to deliver the minimum per-pupil funding in their local area. And that will be an important first step towards

delivering this funding directly to schools, through a single national formula, so that it is fair and equitable for every school in the country.”

7. “Recruitment for the **20,000 new police officers** ... announced in the summer is already underway”. Funding for the additional officers will be announced in the police settlement in the new year.
8. **Homelessness** is mentioned as part of the government’s plans for housing: “This Government has committed to end rough sleeping by the end of this Parliament. The Government will continue to invest in key rough sleeping interventions, building on the progress that we made last year in reducing rough sleeping numbers. The Government will also continue to support those at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping through the continued enforcement of the Homelessness Reduction Act.” Funding has been increasing in recent years, and this might indicate some further increases in the next spending review.
9. The manifesto showed that the new government will prioritise an **increase in infrastructure investment**, some of which will possibly be directed through local government: “The National Infrastructure Strategy will be published alongside the first Budget, and will set out further details of the Government’s plan to invest £100 billion to transform the UK’s infrastructure.”
10. Proposals for an **English devolution bill** could substantially increase devolution and expand the mayoral combined authorities (MCA). A White Paper will be published next year including “plans for spending and local growth funding”:
 - “levelling up powers and investment in the regions across England and allowing each part of the country to decide its own destiny”
 - “transform this country with better infrastructure, better education, and better technology”
 - “plans for full devolution across England, levelling up powers between Mayoral Combined Authorities, increasing the number of mayors and doing more devolution deals.”
 - “committed to the Northern Powerhouse, Midlands Engine, and Western Gateway strategies”
11. It is likely the government will propose devolving more services, powers and functions, and also expanding the number of mayoral deals. It is not clear what plans the government has for county areas, or whether they are intent on creating more unitaries as part of the devolution deals.
12. There is some compelling evidence and justification for the expansion of devolution in England:

- “All of the largest non-capital cities in the UK, with the exception of Bristol, are less productive than would be expected for their size and huge potential. They are also less productive compared to almost all similarly-sized European cities. “
 - “Evidence suggests areas with more integrated leadership, across a functional economic area, support higher rates of economic growth and higher rates of productivity when compared with areas with more fragmented governance.”
 - “37 per cent of residents in England, including almost 50 per cent in the North, are now served by city region mayors with powers and money to prioritise local issues.”
 - “We want to expand the benefits of devolution across England and put more trust in local people to choose what is best for their communities.”
 - “We have brought in a £3.6 billion Towns Fund for towns across England to level up our regions. In September we invited 100 places to develop proposals for a Town Deal. We will invest £500 million in new youth clubs and services, helping give young people a future. We have also announced the latest cultural capital programme in a century, which will see £250 million made available to support local libraries and regional museums.”
 - “We have established City Region Mayors across England and devolved key powers over transport, planning and skills. We want to do more devolution deals, level up powers, implement an effective funding model for Mayoral Combined Authorities and invest further in infrastructure.”
 - “EU structural funds contracting is expected to end in financial year 2020-21, with spend tailing off until 2023, but we want to build on this with a new replacement to ensure investment is targeted where it is needed most.”
13. The proposal to create a **“funding model” for MCAs** is interesting. To date, MCAs have been half-in and half-out of the mainstream local government funding system. Most (but not all) MCAs can raise a precept, but there is no upper threshold on council tax increases. None are included within the Settlement Funding Assessment (although some do receive funding for fire services). And two MCAs are formally part of the business rates system. Will MCAs be included within the new funding formula in 2021-22 and, if so, will this attract new funding from outside the sector?
14. Another reform of business rates is announced, but this time there is more momentum behind a fundamental reform: “We will **reform business rates** to protect high streets and communities from excessive tax hikes and keep town centres vibrant. We will bring forward the next business rates revaluation and make future revaluations in England more frequent.” The specific proposals are:
- “a fundamental review of business rates”

- “The Government recognises the role of business rates as a source of local authority income and will consider input from the sector as part of the review of business rates. Further details on the review will be announced.”
 - “increasing the retail discount from one-third to 50 per cent, extending that discount to cinemas and music venues, extending the duration of the local newspapers discount, and introducing an additional discount for pubs”
 - “We will also progress legislation to bring forward the next business rates revaluation by one year from 2022 to 2021 and move business rates revaluations from a five-yearly cycle to a three-yearly cycle. This will allow the Government to press ahead with delivering an important reform that has been strongly welcomed by business.”
 - “More frequent revaluations will ensure that business rates bills are more up to-date reflecting properties’ current rental values. Moving to three-yearly revaluation will make the system more responsive to changing economic conditions”
15. The wording suggests more than just tinkering with discounts and reliefs, although it appears that there will be some of that as well. Recent governments have probably gone as far as is possible to mitigate the cost of business rates. If the government wants to further reduce or change the impact of business rates, then something more fundamental will be required. Improving local high streets within 5 years, as the government intends, is likely to include some fundamental changes to business rates.
16. Business rates as a source of income for local government is acknowledged, but the strong impression is that the primary concern is to create a viable business tax rather than to preserve the sector’s income stream. Any proposed changes to business rates are unlikely to affect the planned increase in retention in 2021-22, but now for the first time the warning lights are starting flash.
17. The proposals for more-frequent revaluations, starting in 2021, just confirm the government’s existing plans. Primary legislation was needed to change the timing.
18. There is more clarity on the government’s **new fiscal rules**, which have not been made as explicit as this before.
- “to have the current budget in balance no later than the third year of the forecast period” [this replaces the current rule which was that the deficit could not be larger than 2% of GDP]
 - “to limit public sector net investment to an average of 3 per cent of GDP”
 - “to reassess plans in the event of a pronounced rise in interest rates taking interest costs above 6 per cent of government revenue”
19. A large increase in investment was flagged in the manifesto. But the commitment to balance the budget in the third year of the parliament indicates a much tighter fiscal

policy than was pursued by the previous chancellor (and tighter than we had expected as well). The budget deficit is currently about £45bn (around 2% of GDP) and closing this gap will require some substantial fiscal consolidation. Given that a large proportion of the public sector is protected, this does raise the risk that there is less scope for any growth in funding for local government. The ability of the government to raise more from tax increases is limited by its triple lock – and the risk of a recession could make these plans very difficult to achieve.

Adrian Jenkins

Pixel Financial Management

19 December 2019

adrian@pixelfinancial.co.uk

Proposals for Rural Conference 2020

We are intending to hold the National Rural Conference 2020 on 1st & 2nd September 2020 at the University of Gloucestershire in Cheltenham. We will not have confirmation of the facilities available to us until later in 2020 when they are agreed with the facilities team.

Theme of the conference:

It is proposed to focus the conference this year around three main themes, the Rural Economy, Rural Housing and Rural Health and Wellbeing with an underlying theme of the environment. We recognise the importance that organisations are giving to the environment with a number of councils declaring climate emergencies, developing action plans, and considering the impact of their actions on the local environment especially in relation to energy efficiency.

Format of the conference:

We will include a range of plenary and workshop sessions, with workshops on both days of the conference. It is anticipated to start at around 11.30 on Day 1 to enable delegates time to arrive without needing to stay overnight the previous night.

Following on from feedback from previous conferences, we aim to have slightly longer for the workshop sessions, to enable proper debate and contributions from delegates.

We have a number of youth organisations in membership of the RSP and would like to invite one of them, along with some young people to run one of the workshops to provide a varied experience for delegates.

Pricing structure:

We are aiming to keep the cost of attending the conference the same as in the previous year. There will be the opportunity for an early bird booking rate and we have also considered offering a very early rate, if you book on before the end of March 2020 and before the Agenda is published, so that delegates may book on still in the financial year of 2019/2020 if they wanted to.

Exhibitors and Sponsorship:

We are in negotiation with the Post Office as the main sponsor for the event and should hear from them with a decision shortly. In relation to the exhibitors, we are considering offering a one day exhibition rate, so that the two days could be themed in terms of exhibitors, for example we could have housing related exhibitors on the day of the conference where we will be discussing rural housing, making it more relevant for those attending.



Rural Services Network Executive Meeting

13th January 2020

The Rural / Market Town Grouping of the RSN - Report from the RSN Corporate Director

Since September we have been looking to form a new Grouping of Rural Market Towns as an extra area of our overall Network. We are seeking to pepper-pot such a grouping across all of the Defra identified rural areas in England. Some 200 invitations have gone out. These invitations have gone out to market centres in 2 tier areas based on one per district having a rural area and 3 in each unitary council area. It a comprehensive and quite complicated rural area jigsaw that we are trying to put together in the hope that every one of the 200 or so identified rural areas across England can each secure some representation on this new group. It is planned that a wider and more in-depth group can be established out from that base over time. It is estimated that there are some 800 'rural market centres' of the various rural catchments across England. Whilst most of these have Town Council's some of the local councils approached are larger parishes because suitable towns do not exist in every area.

In starting this initiative, we felt that a favourable response from some 20 to 25 percent of those local councils being approached would be an encouraging start. It is looking as if it will be better than that and at this stage 55 local councils have joined, and the eventual figure may by April reach between somewhere between 65 to 80 authorities from the initial 200.

Here is the current situation as detailed now on the RSN website.

A RURAL/MARKET TOWN GROUPING OF THE RSN

Why do we need a rural market town grouping?

The RSN believes that Rural Communities are frequently overlooked in a policy environment dominated by urban thinking and policy concerns. This often means communities either miss out on the benefits or experience unintended consequences from policies which are poorly thought through from a rural perspective. This means that government policy currently neglects the many hundreds of important rural towns across England.

We believe these towns play a vital role not only in the lives of their inhabitants but also in both the local and national economy. That is why we want them to receive more focus.

Rural areas and their intricate network of rural communities should be able to realise their potential within the national economy and need to be appropriately recognised and supported in government thinking and actions.



What is the Rural Market Town Group?

To underline the importance of these English towns, the role they play and their potential going forward, The Rural Services Network have developed a new initiative to develop a Rural/Market Town Grouping within the Rural Services Network. This new Grouping will work to add to our Call on Government for a Rural Strategy.

We have begun this initiative by approaching one town or the largest village in each of the 200+ rural areas across England which has been identified by Defra for their distinctive characteristic. This process will be expanded in time to ensure that all those that wish to be involved are fully engaged.

Whilst we appreciate and celebrate the diversity of our rural areas, we seek to create a universal voice to represent all different types of rural areas across England ensuring that no form of rural area is excluded.

Up to until now 55 Towns have already agreed to commence the group and we look forward to hearing from the remainder of the 200 councils approached. We are currently on target for the 120 members we seek.

These are:

Ackworth (*Wakefield*), Alcester (*Avon*), Alnwick (*Northumberland*), Ampthill (*Bedfordshire*), Ashby de la Zouch (*North West Leicestershire*), Balsall (*Solihull*), Belper (*Amber Valley*), Berkswell (*tbc*) (*Solihull*), Brampton (*Carlisle*), Buckingham (*Aylesbury Vale*), Chalfont St Giles (*Chiltern*), Cleator Moor (*Copeland*), Clitheroe (*Ribble Valley*), Crediton (*Mid Devon*), Dalton in Furness (*Barrow in Furness* (*tbc*), Downham Market (*Kings Lynn*), Earl Shilton (*Hinckley and Bosworth*), Faversham (*Swale*), Finedon (*Wellingborough*), Great Torrington (*Torridge*), Hartley Witney (*Hart*), Harworth and Birecotes (*Bassetlaw*), Hexham (*Northumberland*), Launceston (*Cornwall*), Ledbury (*Herefordshire*), Leominster (*Herefordshire*), Lutterworth (*Harborough*), Mablethorpe and Sutton (*East Lindsey*), Marlborough (*Wiltshire*), Midsomer Norton (*Bath and North East Somerset*), Minster (*Thanet*), Olney (*tbc*) (*Milton Keynes*), Penwith (*Eden*), Penzance (*Cornwall*), City of Ripon (*Harrogate*), Petersfield (*East Hants*) (*tbc*), Saffron Walden (*Uttlesford*), Sandy (*Central Bedfordshire*), Saxmundham (*East Suffolk*), Seaton (*East Devon*), Skipton (*Craven*), Sleaford (*North Kesteven*), Sudbury (*West Oxfordshire*), Stowmarket (*Mid Suffolk*), Tavistock (*West Devon*), Tenbury (*Malvern Hills*), Tenterden (*Ashford*), Thornbury (*South Gloucestershire*), Uckfield (*Wealden*), Uppingham (*Rutland*), Uttoxeter (*East Staffs*), Wallingford (*South Oxfordshire*), West Chiltington (*Horsham*), Whitby (*Scarborough*) and Wotton-under-Edge (*Stroud*).

Services provided to the group will include:

- Engagement in Rural Strategy campaign to ensure feedback from Market Town Group is included within consultation
- Development of some good practice and learning material related to the key policy areas and delivery challenges or opportunities for rural/market towns
- Receiving the Rural Bulletin, a weekly newsletter provided by the Rural Services Network highlighting rural news, issues affecting rural communities, and highlighting the work of the Rural Services Network
- Provision of a dedicated newsletter highlighting relevant latest policy developments, showcasing interesting member practice and flagging relevant initiatives or funding opportunities
- Periodic online surveys of the members of rural/market towns, to gather comparative information about topics of particular interest to this grouping



The spread of these member authorities is particularly encouraging.

About 60 local councils have declined become involved to date. Where that has happened, we have identified a further council in the area involved to get in touch with so this in effect a rolling process attempting to eventually get as close to that 200 Area representation as we can. Obviously the 200 target is always going to be impossible to hit simply because some of these areas will have less inward rural identification than others, but it would be good to get as close as we can to this target. We can then honestly state that the Group stretches and represent across a high percentage of the areas in England who contain rural output areas. If possible, that would be a really good basis to be seeking to represent these rural market 'towns' and the catchments that surround them.

We will periodically keep the Executive updated on the progress of the initiative.

David Inman
Corporate Director
2nd of January 2020