

Agenda

SPARSE Rural and Rural Services Network Executive and Board of Director of the Rural Services Partnership Ltd meeting

**Incorporating SPARSE Rural Members, Rural Assembly and
Rural Services Partnership Members. All nominated members & officers of RSN are invited to
attend this meeting.**

**Venue: English Rural Housing Association,
7A Strutton Ground, Westminster, London, SW1P 2HY**
Date: Monday, 16th of March 2020
Time: 11.15 am – 2.30 pm

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

- 1. Attendance & Apologies.**
- 2. Notes from the previous RSN Executive meeting.** (Attachment 1)
Held on 13th of January 2020 to consider any relevant updates and approve the minutes. Main issues discussed:
 - (a) RSN Budget Report;
 - (b) Settlement proposals;
 - (c) Fairer Funding Review Update;
 - (d) Survey report on “Impact of National Policy for Affordable Housing Thresholds on the Delivery of Rural Affordable Housing;
 - (e) Rural Strategy Campaign;
 - (f) 2019 General Election;
 - (g) Update on Rural Market Towns Group;
 - (h) Utilities Against Scams.
- 3. Notes from the previous SPARSE Rural meeting.** (Attachment 2)
Held on 27th of January 2020 to consider any relevant updates and approve the minutes.
- 4. Notes from the previous Rural Economy Sub-Group meeting.** (Attachment 3)

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Held on 27th of January 2020 to consider any relevant updates and approve the minutes.

5. **Fair Funding Review: Paper from Pixel** (Attachment 4) **and Letter Sent to Local Government Minister.** (Attachment 4A)
6. **RSN Budget Report.** (Attachment 5)
7. **British Standards Institute Proposal “Successful Rural Communities”.** (Attachment 6)
The British Standards Institute (BSI) has been in touch to explore how we might work with them on a new project, the brief outline of which is attached.
8. **LGA Special Interest Group – Rural Services Network.** (Attachment 7)
Recent email from Marion Stribling, Member Services, LGA. We thought Members might like to be aware of the latest request from the LGA Leadership Board in respect of all LGA Special Interest Groups.
9. **Rural Services APPG and Rural Fair Share Group – Update.** (Attachment 8)
Notes from the previous APPG on Rural Services that took place on the 28th of January 2020.
10. **MHCLG First Homes Consultation.** (Attachment 9)
On behalf of ACRE, Jo Lavis has prepared the attached Briefing Note in respect of this consultation. Subject to the views of the Executive the RSN will respond to the consultation along the lines of this Briefing Note.
11. **Carbon Net Zero and Rural Communities.** (Attachment 10)
The views of the Executive would be appreciated on the attached briefing paper prepared by ACRE for its membership and the Rural Coalition.
12. **Queens Speech Briefing Related to RSN Priorities.** (Attachment 11 & 11A)
13. **Rural Strategy: Draft Project Plan for Further Work.** (Attachment 12)
14. **Membership Engagement Plan: Report by Nadine Trout.** (Attachment 13, 13A & 13B)
15. **Any Other Business.**
The next RSN Executive meeting is scheduled for Monday 18th May 2020.

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

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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.

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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

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.

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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.
- 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.

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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.

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

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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

18. Any Other Business.

There was no other business.

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

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Notes of last SPARSE Rural Sub-Special Interest Group meeting

Title:	Rural Services Network Special Interest Group
Date:	Monday 27 January 2020
Venue:	Westminster Room, 8th Floor, 18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

Attendance

An attendance list is attached as **Appendix A** to this note.

Item	Decisions and Actions
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1. Attendance & Apologies.

The Chair, Cllr Cecilia Motley welcomed colleagues to the meeting. Apologies were noted. (The list of attendees/apologies can be found in **Appendix A**)

Cllr Motley outlined the plans for the day.

2. Notes from the previous SPARSE Rural meeting. (Attachment 1)

Notes from the previous SPARSE Rural meeting which took place on the 24th of June 2019 were accepted as a true record.

3. Notes from the previous RSN Executive. (Attachment 2)

Notes from the previous RSN Executive meeting which took place on the 13th of January 2020 were accepted as a true record.

Members noted overall discussions from the recent meeting of the Executive including conversations about the Rural Strategy campaign.

The group noted progress on the Rural Market Towns Group and were reminded to publicise the initiative through their own contacts. So far there had been a gratifying uptake of the initiative.

4. Provisional Settlement 2020/21 and Fair Funding Review – Update.

(a) Provisional Settlement 2020/21

Mr Graham Biggs provided colleagues with updates on the provisional settlement for 2020/21 and the Fair Funding Review. He apologised that it had been difficult to nail down the analysis of the funding per head difference between urban and rural areas arising from the Provisional Settlement. Changes to authority structures had made it difficult to obtain the information on a like for like format since the consultation.

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Members noted that the provisional settlement for next year is likely to be similar to this year, however an extra billion pounds per year is expected for social care for the period of this Government. The 2% adult social care precept and the reduction in the maximum increase in core Band D council tax from 2.99% to 1.99% were noted.

Over the period from 2015/16 to 2020/21 Government Funded Spending Power per head for rural areas had decreased by 7.36% compared to urban at a reduction of 6.65%. For 2020/21, based on the Provisional Settlement, the gap between rural and urban GFSP per head was 42% (some 5% wider than in 2015/16).

The Improved Better Care Fund shows a difference of around a 21% gap between urban and rural per head. Members noted differences in council tax which also show a gap of over £105 per head.

The fundamental position remained that rural areas get less government grant per head, pay more Council Tax per head but receive fewer services, and indeed the rural/urban funding gap was getting worse.

Mr Biggs informed members that the Pixel Report would be published within the RSN Bulletin the following day.

(b) Fair Funding Review

Mr Biggs summarised the background to the Fair Funding Review and business rate retention.

He confirmed that there had never been any intention for authorities to keep 100% of all business rates generated in their area although business rate growth would be retained between re-sets.

Should income exceed assessed needs, this would be taken and distributed to those who's assessed needs exceeded their income. Members noted that legislation would be required to enable retention of 100% and therefore the current position was for 75% retention. It was felt unlikely that this would change in the near future given that the Government has announced a fundamental review of the whole business rates system.

Mr Biggs referred to a new needs-based formula to determine each council's position and therefore drive the redistribution of retained business rates. Initial findings showed that rural areas collectively could be in a positive position from this. Members heard that worryingly, certain features could impact negatively on the most sparsely populated District Councils/Borough Councils.

The Group noted the use of data to assess added costs of travel within areas for services such as refuse collections and providing certain services to householders in their own homes such as social care. It was accepted that allowance should be made for the fact that remoteness has market failure consequences. This travel time data was initially going to be added to the Foundation Formula. Now it appears that this could only be included within the Area Cost Adjustment (ACA) element of the Foundation Formula. ACA was created to recognise some geographical features, which is only a part of the full Foundation Formula.

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Members noted that Pixel (RSN Finance Consultants) are currently working hard to look at this in detail and a meeting of the Fair Share group would be called in February to discuss this. There are now many new MPs who may not currently be aware of these issues and it was agreed that it would be vital to push and flag these issues with them should the research done by Pixel show a potential problem.

Mr Biggs invited the group to share concerns. Members raised the following:

- The current formula is far too complicated;
- A short report summarising key points would be useful. Mr Biggs stated that Pixel would prepare a briefing document for SPARSE-Rural member authorities;
- Clarity of implications in terms of actual money differences between different types of councils would be vital in the report from the consultants;
- A clear demonstration showing that rural authorities will receive less allowance for rurality costs will enable MHCLG Ministers to consider their decisions on the fair funding review;
- Members noted uncertainty about possible changes to Ministerial responsibilities and the need to be prepared. Mr Biggs confirmed that this may be an issue but until a proper scale of the financial position is clear, RSN would need to continue to deal with current contacts including in MHCLG. Everything is dependant at this point on the data being produced by Pixel before any decisions on progress can be made;
- Members referred to the extra 2% chargeable for adult social care and whether this features within the funding formula. Mr Biggs acknowledged that this was the case within the Social Care Block and that it would be used when calculating needs of individual councils. Members noted plans for the green paper which would address personal funding contributions for adult social care. They acknowledged that it was too early to know the direction of the new government at this time but that there is a crisis in local authority funding for adult social care which needs to be urgently addressed;
- Members noted a definite pressure for district councils to merge together or to be re-organised into unitary councils. It was felt that the most rural sparse areas would be penalised because of a lack of knowledge and understanding in Westminster of real accessibility in delivery of services and actual travel times;
- Members were worried about rural deprivation not being given due weight.

Mr Biggs acknowledged major costs but said that there are also downfalls. He clarified the position on discretionary services between each kind of authority. The group noted the index of multiple deprivation scores on access to services and that urban issues are better indicated by the deprivation indicators.

Cllr Motley said that a clearer view would be seen once the data is received from Pixel.

Further information would be passed to colleagues in due course.

5. Budget Report as at 1st January 2020. (Attachment 3)

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Mr Biggs informed members that a balance of circa £12k was expected providing all subscriptions are paid. The position is the same as previous and outstanding subscriptions were being chased.

Mr Biggs confirmed no anticipation of fund-flow issues for the forthcoming year.

Members recalled the last increase to subscriptions in order to pay for Senior Posts at market rate in due course and this should still be achievable. The Chair expressed her gratitude at the 'voluntary' work of the Chief Executive and the Corporate Director and, indeed, for all the hard work of all RSN employees etc.

6. Any other business.

There was no other business.

The next meeting will take place on Monday 1st of June 2020.

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Attendance

Cllr Cecilia Motley	RSN
Cllr Chris Mapey	East Suffolk Council
Cllr Harry St John	West Oxfordshire District Council
Cllr Mark Whittington	Lincolnshire County Council
Cllr Mary Robinson	Eden District Council
Cllr Michael Rickman	Harborough District Council
Cllr Owen Bierley	West Lindsey District Council
Cllr Peter Schwier	Braintree District Council
Cllr Peter Stevens	West Suffolk Council
Cllr Robert Heseltine	North Yorkshire County Council
Cllr Sue Tucker	Scarborough Borough Council
Cllr Trevor Thorne	Northumberland County Council
Cllr Virginia Taylor	Eden District Council
Cllr Yvonne Peacock	Richmondshire District Council
David Inman	RSN
Graham Biggs	RSN
Jeremy Savage	South Norfolk Council
Marina Di Salvatore	West Lindsey District Council
Neil Irving	North Yorkshire County Council
Fatima de Abreu	Local Government Association

Apologies

Cllr Ken Pollock	Worcestershire County Council
Adrian Welsh	Mid Devon District Council
Cllr Adam Paynter	Cornwall Council
Cllr Anthony Trollope-Bellew	Somerset and West Taunton Council
Cllr Daniel Cribbin	Daventry District Council
Cllr Donald Davies	North Somerset Council
Cllr Giles McNeill	West Lindsey District Council
Cllr Gill Heath	Staffordshire County Council
Cllr Gwilym Butler	Shropshire Council
Cllr Louise Richardson	Leicestershire County Council
Cllr Malcolm Brown	Cornwall Council
Cllr Margaret Squires	Mid Devon District Council
Cllr Richard Foss	South Hams District Council
Cllr Richard Sherras	Ribble Valley Borough Council

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Cllr Richard Wright	North Kesteven District Council
Cllr Rob Waltham MBE	North Lincolnshire Council
Cllr Ros Wyke	Mendip District Council
Cllr Rupert Reichold	East Northamptonshire Council
Cllr Sarah Butikofer	North Norfolk District Council
Cllr Stephen Arnold	Ryedale District Council
Dominie Dunbrook	North Devon Council
Gary Powell	Teignbridge District Council
Gary Taylor	South Holland District Council
Helen Harris	Leicestershire County Council
Jenny Poole	Cotswold District & West Oxfordshire District Councils
Katherine Fairclough	Cumbria County Council
Kathy O'Leary	Stroud District Council
Lorraine Gore	King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council
Paul Henry	Suffolk County Council
Peter Wilding	Chichester District Council
Sally Nelson	North Devon Council
Stacey Burlet	Ryedale District Council
Tony Galloway	Ryedale District Council
Toyubur Rahman	Chichester District Council

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Minutes Rural Economy Sub-Group

Venue: [The LGA](#), 18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

Date: Monday, 27th of January 2020

Time: 1.00 pm – 3.30 pm

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

1. Attendance & Apologies

Attendance

Cllr Cecilia Motley	RSN & Shropshire Council
Graham Biggs	RSN
David Inman	RSN
Charles Trotman	Country Land and Business Association
Ian Cass	Forum of Private Business
Chris Stanton	Guildford Borough Council
Cllr Chris Mapey	East Suffolk Council
Cllr Gerard Brewster	Mid Suffolk District Council
Cllr Harry St John	West Oxfordshire District Council
Cllr Kevin Dukes	Bassetlaw District Council
Cllr Malcolm Leeding	Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils
Cllr Mark Whittington	Lincolnshire County Council
Cllr Mary Robinson	Eden District Council
Cllr Michael Rickman	Harborough District Council
Cllr Owen Bierley	West Lindsey District Council
Cllr Peter Schwier	Braintree District Council
Cllr Peter Stevens	West Suffolk Council
Cllr Robert Heseltine	North Yorkshire County Council
Cllr Stephen Clarke	South Northamptonshire Council
Cllr Sue Tucker	Scarborough Borough Council
Cllr Suzie Morley	Mid Suffolk District Council
Cllr Trevor Thorne	Northumberland County Council
Cllr Virginia Taylor	Eden District Council
David Rodda	Cornwall Council

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Ellie Jason	The Prince's Countryside Fund
Gary Taylor	South Holland District Council
Jeremy Savage	South Norfolk Council
Julia Raven	South Northamptonshire Council
Karl Bassett	Melton Borough Council
Ken Christy	Northamptonshire ACRE
Mandie Berry	North Somerset Council
Mandy Ramm	Nottinghamshire County Council
Marina Di Salvatore	West Lindsey District Council
Mark Winnington	Staffordshire County Council
Melanie Sealey	Devon County Council
Michael Hewitt	Cherwell District Council
Neil Irving	North Yorkshire County Council
Nilesh Joshi	National Federation of Subpostmasters
Shalon Perkins	North Lincolnshire Council
Toby Matthews	Norfolk County Council
Vinia Abesamis	Herefordshire Council

Apologies

Adrian Welsh	Mid Devon District Council
Alan Gray	North Kesteven District Council
Alice Mason	Wychavon District Council
Christine Marshall	Breckland Council
Claire Saunders	The Prince's Countryside Fund
Cllr Adam Paynter	Cornwall Council
Cllr Anthony Trollope-Bellew	Somerset and West Taunton Council
Cllr Daniel Cribbin	Daventry District Council
Cllr David Ireton	North Yorkshire County Council
Cllr Gill Heath	Staffordshire County Council
Cllr Gwilym Butler	Shropshire Council
Cllr James MacCleary	Lewes District Council
Cllr Ken Pollock	Worcestershire County Council
Cllr Louise Richardson	Leicestershire County Council
Cllr Malcolm Brown	Cornwall Council
Cllr Margaret Squires	Mid Devon District Council
Cllr Oliver Hemsley	Rutland County Council
Cllr Richard Sherras	Ribble Valley Borough Council

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Cllr Rupert Reichold	East Northamptonshire Council
Cllr Sarah Butikofer	North Norfolk District Council
Cllr Stephen Arnold	Ryedale District Council
Cllr Sue Sanderson	Cumbria County Council
Cllr Tim Oliver	Surrey County Council
Cllr Zoe Nicholson	Lewes District Council
Darren Henley	Arts Council England
Dominie Dunbrook	North Devon Council
Emily Kent	Cornwall Council
Gary Powell	Teignbridge District Council
Giles Hughes	West Oxfordshire District Council
Helen Harris	Leicestershire County Council
Ian Hunter	Creative Rural Industries Consortium
James Tenant	East Northamptonshire Council
Jenny Poole	Cotswold District Council/West Oxfordshire District Council
John Birtwistle	UK Bus - First Group
Julian German	Cornwall Council
Liz Small	North Yorkshire County Council
Lorraine Gore	King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council
Mark Carroll	Essex County Council
Mark Pople	Daventry District Council
Melanie Burgoyne	Chichester District Council
Paul Henry	Suffolk County Council
Peter Sharp	Lewes District and Eastbourne Borough Council
Revd Richard Kirlew	Sherborne Deanery Rural Chaplaincy
Sally Nelson	North Devon Council
Sarah McMillan	Northumberland County Council
Sean McGrath	Lancashire County Council
Stacey Burlet	Ryedale District Council
Tony Galloway	Ryedale District Council
Tony Jefferson	Stratford District Council
Toyubur Rahman	Chichester District Council
Trevor Beattie	South Downs National Park

2. **Notes from the previous Rural Economy Sub-Group meeting held on the 24th of June 2019 were agreed as a correct record.** (Attachment 1)
3. **“It’s Time for a Rural Strategy” – progressing the campaign.** (Attachment 2)

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During the 13th of January 2020 RSN Executive meeting the future of “It’s Time for a Rural Strategy” campaign was discussed. The decisions of the Executive are set out in the attachment.

The House of Lords Select Committee on the Rural Economy supported the Call for a Rural Strategy. They noted the need for socio-economic functions to be integral to that and the desired outcomes. But Theresa May’s Government decided the position should be tackled by rural proofing not by a Government Strategy.

The current Minister Theresa Villiers has been approached but exiting position only acknowledged so far. Clearly, we need for the pressure on Government to continue. The All-Party Parliamentary Group will be recommended to have this item on their programme. The Regional Roadshows will continue. Next dates for these events are outlined below:

- 9th of March – Rural Strategy Roadshow & South East Regional Seminar – Chichester District Council;
- 19th of March – Rural Strategy Roadshow, Warwick – Warwick Business School, Warwick University;
- 23rd of March – South West Regional Seminar – East Devon District Council.

We need to look at new issues, like Climate Change, but also keep on top of Rural Service issues and look at the barriers around rural. Need to prove that rural can flourish if those barriers are removed. We need to continue work on Fair Funding, Devolution and Rural Housing issues as well.

RSN accept they must work with others and the Chair emphasised the need to ensure complementary co-ordination with similar campaigns led by other groups.

4. Local Industrial Strategies.

4.1. Presentation by Charles Trotman, CLA Senior Economic Adviser, RDPE External Working Group. “How LEPs can maximise their contribution to UK Productivity by including rural business”. (Attachment 3)

Charles totally agreed with Graham about the need for joint thinking. The CLA had direct links into Government. A common uniform message from all groups was important. The Industrial Strategy was still a very live document in his view, but he agreed the Grand Challenges therein did not fit well in the rural context. The rural productivity level was 8% less than urban. There was

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a need for policy measures for LEPs to take on the policies of rural proofing if that position was to change.

Key issues:

- a. Infrastructure
 - A mobile network with shared masts.
 - Approaches need to be developed to tackle lack of digital skills in the workplace. Support needs to be developed for rural firms in recruitment, development and retention of skilled staff. While most of the country is covered by digital broadband but take up as low as 50-55%. Digital skills are fundamental for opportunities to be taken up in the first place.
- b. Need for a common language about what rural entails and what rural opportunities are. LEPs need to be made to take up the rural challenge. Brexit issues remain. There is a need for regulatory alignment with the European Union and for appropriate labour levels. If migrant labour is to be lost there is a need in upskilling of local labour.
- c. Policy vacuum – in a lot of the 38 LEPs between the LEPs itself and the rural economy. Leicestershire have demonstrated how it is might be done. It is for other LEPs to show similar initiatives. EU rural funding will in CLA's view, be rolled over until 2024. They want to see the same percentage of these funds being ringfenced.
- d. They are calling for Treasury to give rural their due percentage. Of the present £100 million pot. This would give £16 million of matching funds.
- e. Further Education colleges should be charged with providing the right courses to cover the right skills to replace the migrant labour leaving the country.
- f. Openreach are expanding their rural programme as they must make a commitment to rural areas for a fibre network in accordance with government policy.
- g. However, the way we leave will have to be negotiated to ensure this happens. This will be a challenge. A proper negotiation procedure has to be established.
- h. Graham Biggs outlined the problems that lack of statistical data down to a local level to allow the LEPs to fully consider the rural position.
- i. CLA have some of these down to District Council level but the information has been provided by DEFRA on a confidential base.
- j. It was felt that some LEPs might be making some positive noises, but this was not necessarily being taken forward in delivery terms – there was a need for LEPs to be required to rural proof their strategies and funding decisions.

4.2. Presentation by Ian Cass, Managing Director, Forum of Private Business “The Threat to Rural Pubs”. (Attachment 3 A)

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

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- a. 3,000 members in the UK.
- b. Government are poor with small business and with rural businesses. This needs to improve if full opportunities are to be grasped.
- c. The brewing structure now seen as an opportunity for non-brewers. They purchase pubs and look for unrealistic rents and also look for the pub to close so they can achieve housing land values.
- d. Pubs are not necessarily closing for lack of customers but because of the agendas of the landowners.
- e. What can be done: link and work with CAMRA; trying to get literature to tenants and to rural communities.

Document produced by RSN, CAMRA & Forum of Private Business will be going to Parliament. Looking for lightening of planning laws.

6 big firms now own most of the country's 21,000 pubs. It is a real problem as a pub is very much at the heart of rural communities across England.

Meeting endorsed the campaign by Forum of Private Business and thanked Ian Cass for his presentation.

4.3. Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership Local Industrial Strategy. (Attachment 4)

The document supplied by Helen Harris (Economic Growth Manager at Leicestershire County Council) was noted and supported.

4.4. RSN Chief Executive Graham Biggs to update members on the proposed work between the RSN and the Institute for Economic Development in "Rural Proofing" Local Industrial Strategies.

RSN working with IED to establish a matrix of data. The RSN's initial assessment was that a lot of data was not available at a local enough level. Graham didn't necessarily accept that District level was low enough.

The RSN were happy to work with CLA and DEFRA officers in unearthing all the appropriate data but remained concerned that there were currently significant data omissions.

Economic Development Officers would be consulted in due course.

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5. “Land of Opportunity. England’s Rural Periphery”. (Attachment 5)

RSN welcomed the report from NLGN in collaboration with Cornwall Council and its call for a Rural Commission. RSN are happy to sign up to 90% of it but do have outstanding queries outlined below:

- a. Exclusion of counties based on a town over 123,000 could be slightly misleading.
- b. Discussion was necessary as there was a need to bring lobbying activity together as far as possible to prevent separate reports being used as an excuse by government to not progress any overall rural strategy.
- c. Be good to have discussions.
- d. Individual member authorities would obviously take whatever lead they felt desirable but there was a need for national campaigns to dovetail as far as possible.
- e. AOB
Agriculture Bill
RSN would circulate the LGA’s paper when it became available.
Concerns were expressed about some of the long-term implications to the wider economy.
It was felt the LEPs should be inputting into this more than they were.

6. Any other business.

The next meeting date of this group will be Monday 1st of June 2020.

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers



Rural Services Network (RSN)

Impact of proposed funding changes on rural authorities

BRIEFING NOTE FOR MPs REPRESENTING RURAL CONSTITUENCIES AND RSN MEMBERS FOLLOWING A MEETING OF THE RURAL FAIR SHARE GROUP OF MPs ON 24TH FEBRUARY, 2020

Introduction

1. The government is committed to implementing its Fair Funding Review in April 2021. This review will change the distribution of the Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA), as well as some grants that are currently outside SFA, such as Public Health and social care. It is potentially the most important change in local government funding for well over a decade.
2. The Rural Fair Share Group and the Rural Services Network (RSN) have been effective at winning the debate about funding rural local authorities. In recent years, the government has created new funding streams (e.g. the Rural Services Delivery Grant -RSDG) and increased the funding through these grants, from £15m in 2015-16 to £80m in 2020-21. It should be noted, however, that despite representations over the years by the RSN, RSDG is only received by so-called super-sparse authorities: many rural authorities who gained from the increase in sparsity in the 2012 consultation do not receive any RSDG.
3. More generally, RSN has won the argument that rurality and sparsity are important drivers of cost in rural authorities. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has accepted the strength of this argument and, in the Fairer Funding Review (FFR), is proposing a new indicator to reflect the additional costs related to longer travel times in rural (and very urban) areas.
4. However, there is still a long way to go, and ministers have yet to make any final decisions: rural authorities still need to make their case for a fairer (and therefore larger) share of funding. The threat to rural authorities is twofold. The first is that the government is proposing the removal of the sparsity indicators from the SFA and replacing them with an indicator that measures just the additional costs associated with travel time in rural areas. This change is likely to reduce the specific funding associated with "sparsity". The second threat is that ministers might decide to prioritise the "needs" of counties (some of which are not particularly rural) and the "red wall" authorities in the urban north and midlands – and that rural District/Borough Councils could end up with a lower share of "needs".
5. In this paper, we outline two tests that RSN has agreed should be used to ensure that improved rurality and sparsity measures actually translate into higher levels of funding for

its member authorities at District, County and Unitary authority levels in 2021-22. RSN and supportive MPs have agreed to seek to discuss these tests (and current issues) with MHCLG so that they understand how, through the RSN, rural MPs and authorities will judge whether they have benefitted from the FFR. These tests are:

Test 1: Closing the Rural: Urban funding gap at District/Borough, County and Unitary Authority level as well as overall

Test 2: Increasing the funding driven by sparsity and rurality indicators

Background

6. Most of the funding for rurality or sparsity currently is within the Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA). Some of the service blocks within the SFA have their own sparsity indicators, including adult social care and environmental, protective and cultural services. These indicators were given a higher weighting in 2013-14 – again proving that the rurality argument advanced by the RSN and the Rural Fair Share Group of MPs has been successful. But the gains from increases in SFA were mostly wiped-out through the application of damping which caused, on average, a 75% reduction in the benefits of the changes as exemplified by MHCLG at the time. Of course, this means that rural authorities did benefit by the other 25% - worth over £45m per annum collectively
7. In 2013-14, rural authorities won the battle but lost the war. The two tests that we are proposing will help to ensure that this does not happen again to rural authorities.

Latest proposals in Fair Funding Review and impact on rural authorities

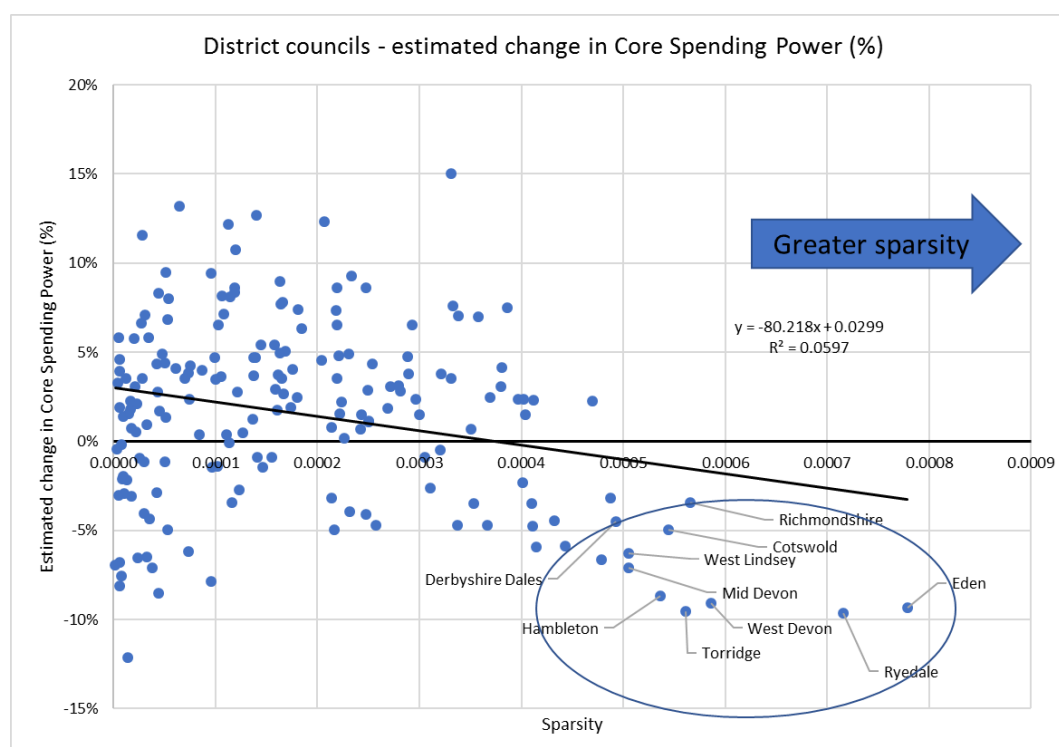
8. These are the principal changes that the government is proposing within the FFR:
 - *New formulae for social care and public health grant funding.* These are very robust new formulae based on sophisticated statistical research. Overall, County and Unitary and many District/Borough rural authorities appear to benefit from the changes. For instance, predominantly rural (PR) authorities would receive, on average, a 4.7% increase in their funding for older people's social care and a 2.6% for younger adult's social care. These changes appear to benefit rural authorities despite the removal of the sparsity indicator from the older people's formula.
 - *Flatter distribution of "need" within the Foundation Formula.* The government is proposing a basic formula which distributes funding on a per-head basis, with only a top-up for area costs. (It is likely that a small deprivation factor will also be added in the next consultation paper.) The effects on rural authorities are complicated – with the most-rural authorities losing-out from this change in isolation from other changes.
 - *Changes to the Area Cost Adjustment (ACA).* This is a familiar element of local government funding which has compensated authorities for different levels of labour and premises costs. New elements are being added in, however, including traversal, dispersal and remoteness. The new elements are designed to compensate authorities for longer travel times (principally in sparsely-populated areas) and where distance from alternative markets (remoteness) results in higher costs. These new "travel" elements will replace the current funding provisions for rurality or sparsity. Both of these new elements should favour rural authorities in general. However, these elements will not compensate for the impact of the loss of the current rurality provisions as they will only form part of the ACA rather than the main "needs assessment" in the Foundation Formula.

- *Update of resource equalisation.* Although this is a technical adjustment, it is hugely important: it effectively resets the assumption about the amount of council tax that each authority is able to collect. Resource equalisation tends to favour urban authorities because they have lower than average taxbases, and higher than average needs. Some very rural authorities will gain, however (Isle of Wight, Lincolnshire, Durham, Northumberland) because they have relatively low taxbases.
9. Overall, our modelling suggests that rural authorities overall will benefit from the package of changes that the government is proposing. Table 1 shows that – based on our latest modelling – predominantly rural authorities might gain by as much as 4.8% (£412m); significantly rural authorities might gain, but by less (0.4%). The gains are particularly good for rural unitary and county councils.

Table 1 – Estimated overall impact of the Fair Funding Review

	Core Spending Power (£M)	Change (£M)	Change compared to CSP (%)	Population	Change per head (£)
Significant Rural	10,892.5	47.699	0.4%	28,475,000	1.68
Predominantly Rural	8,540.8	412.199	4.8%	17,831,500	23.12
Predominantly Urban	25,059.3	-360.606	-1.4%	32,567,700	-11.07

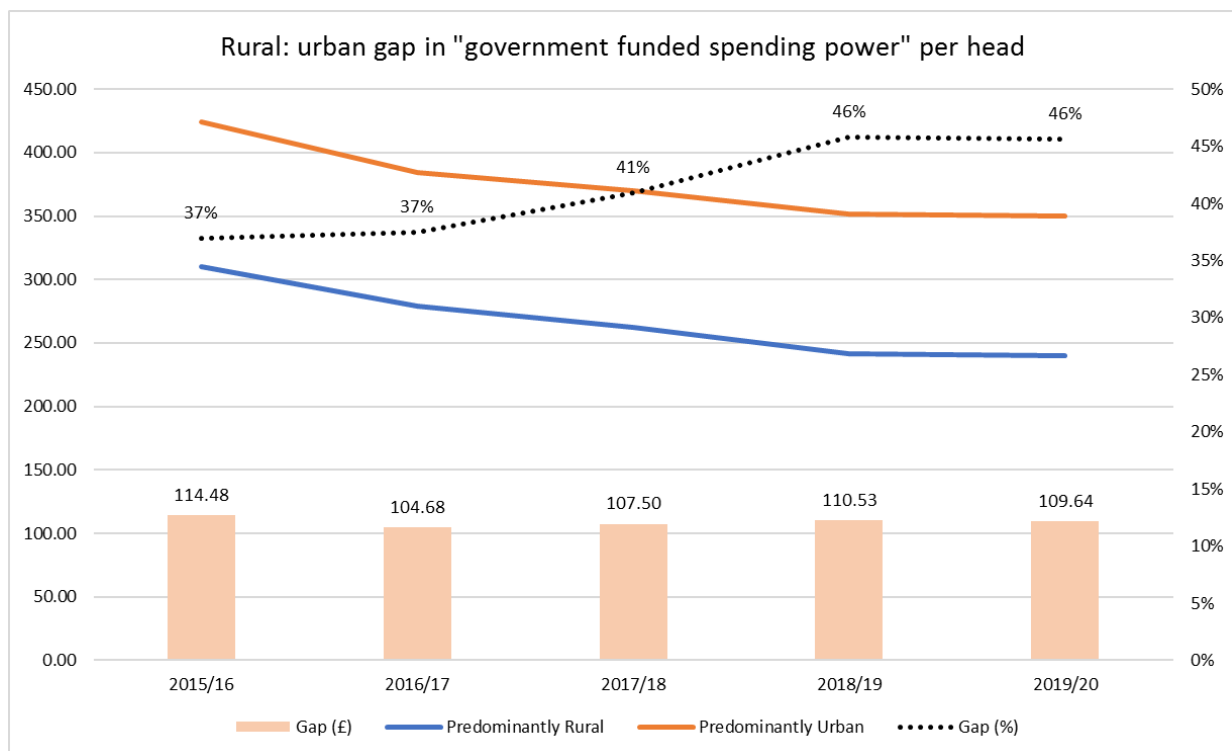
10. The reasons for the net gains by rural authorities are complicated. But, in simple terms, rural authorities on average are gaining more from the new social care and foundation formulae changes than they are losing from the effects of resource equalisation.
11. We have, however, identified a worrying effect on the most sparsely populated rural districts councils. The scattergraph, below, shows that – perversely – the district councils



with the highest levels of sparsity will all have reductions in their “needs assessments” as a result of the Fair Funding proposals relating to the treatment of sparsity, in most cases in excess of 5%. These are the councils that are most dependent on the sparsity indicators in the current funding formula – and who lose-out from the move to a flatter distribution of funding. More analysis to follow in a later section.

12. Many of most sparsely populated rural districts which appear to lose out from these changes would receive less funding for sparsity allowances than before the 2013/14 formula changes referred to in paragraph 6 above. Indeed, some would get less than the current RSDG amounts they receive. This is surely an unintended consequence.

Test 1: Closing the Rural: Urban funding gap

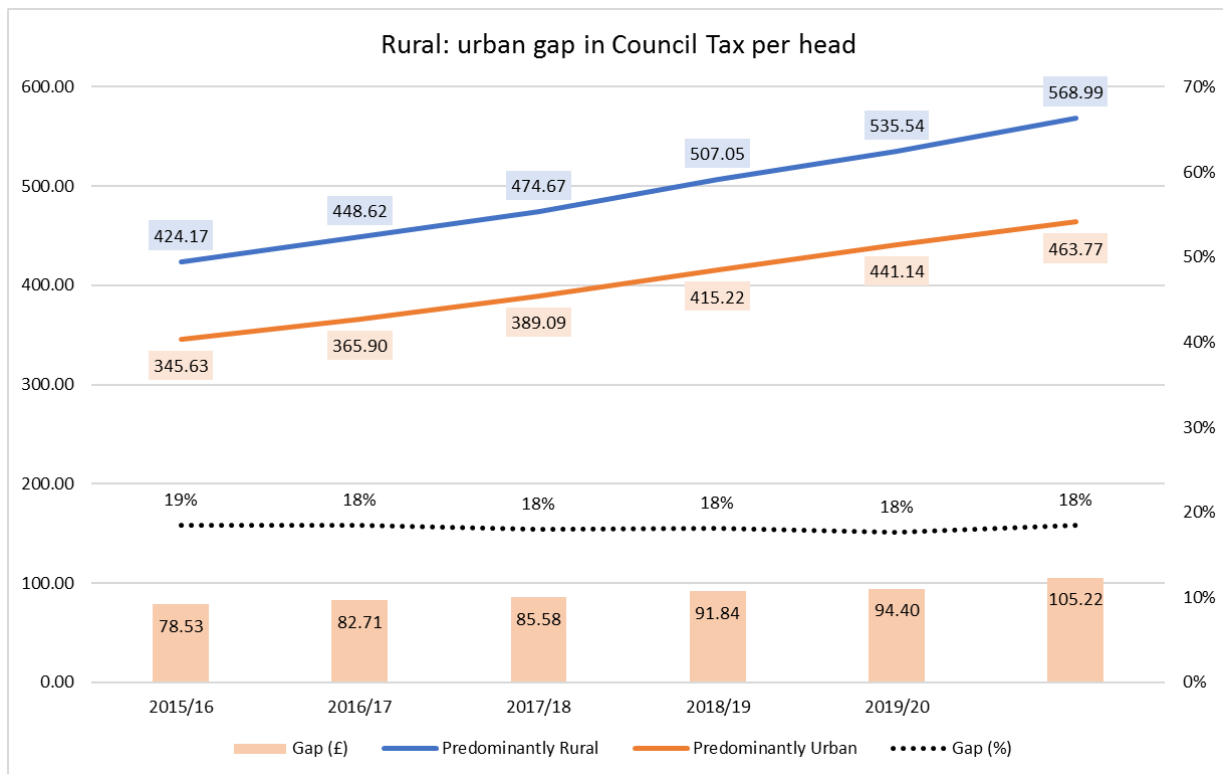


13. The first of our tests is to compare the funding per head received by rural and urban authorities. There are different measures that can be used to measure the rural: urban funding gap, but our preference is to use “government funded spending power”. This measure encompasses all the funding provided for local government by central government, including Rural Services Delivery Grant, SFA, New Homes Bonus and the adult social care grants. Government funded spending power is a metric devised by the RSN as a simple means of demonstrating the unfairness of the present distribution formula. It does not include Council Tax.

14. Urban authorities receive much more government funding per head than rural authorities. In 2015-16, the funding gap per head was £114, with urban authorities

receiving 39% per head more than rural authorities. This funding gap has barely moved in cash terms over the last five years, despite increases in the Rural Services Delivery Grant. The rural: urban funding gap is still £109 per head – but urban authorities now receive 46% more per head!

15. Over the period of the next spending review, or during the implementation of the FFR, RSN wants to see this funding gap materially reduced **for each tier of rural authorities**. Our target is that gap in GFSP per head should reduce for each tier by at least £5 per head per year and that this should continue over the whole period of the next SR. Based on our modelling of the FFR, the increase in SFA should help to narrow this gap overall – based in the figures in Table 1, the gap would narrow by £33 per head, which is about 25% of the current funding gap (£109 per head).
16. Typically, rural authorities are more reliant on their local taxpayers than urban authorities. Whilst it may be reasonable to take council tax income into account in determining resources available to meet needs, it is not reasonable for rural taxpayers to be required to pay more towards service costs than their urban counterparts or for their council tax to increase more quickly. Spending Power – which is the measure used by government – includes Council Tax and significantly distorts the true size of the gap in government funding between urban and rural areas.
17. Council tax per head is £105 higher in rural authorities than in urban authorities. And this gap has increased since 2015-16 (from £78). Rural taxpayers are being asked to pay more than their urban counterparts in council tax to provide local services and as a means to partially offset the (growing) gap in government funding. Essentially, at present, rural residents get less government grant per head for their Councils than do urban – but pay more per head in Council Tax whilst receiving fewer services. **The FFR must remove this unfairness across all tiers of Principal Councils.**



18. The RSN and the Rural Fair Share Group have agreed to press MHCLG Ministers to adopt reducing the rural: urban funding gap as a measure of “success” in its FFR. Adopting such a measure ensures that all the changes in the FFR are taken together.

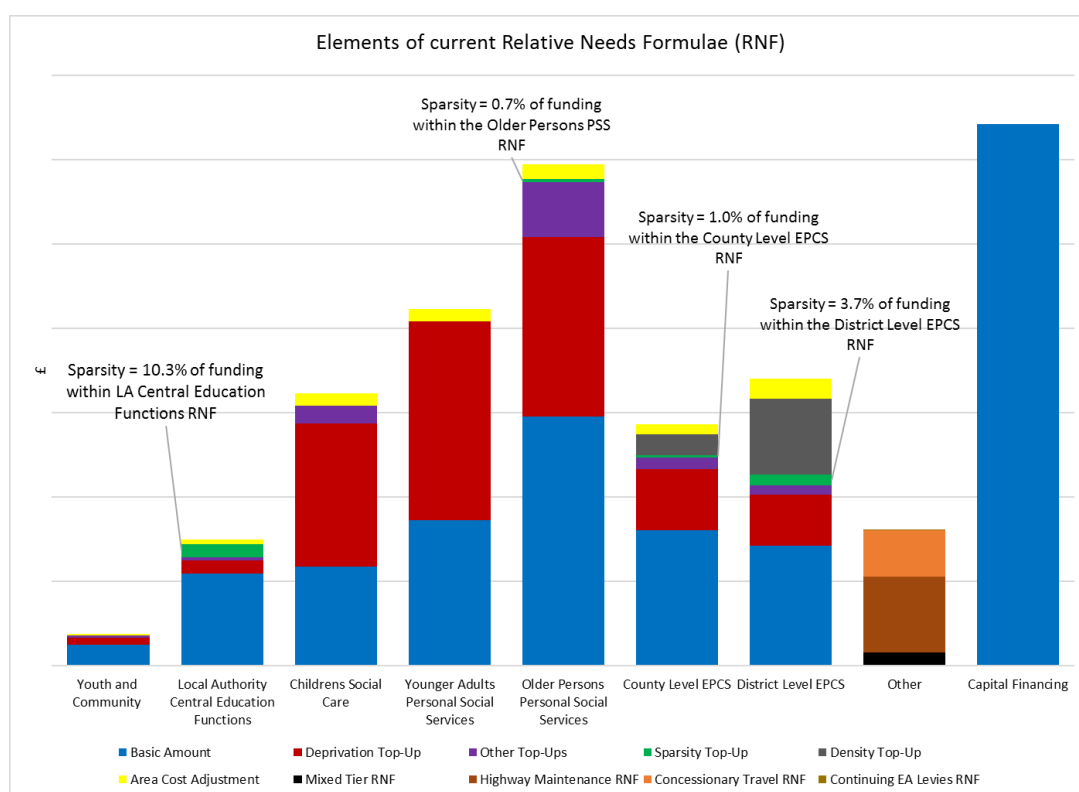
19. Many rural authorities will benefit from the other changes that the government is proposing, such as a flatter distribution of funding in the Foundation Formula. And whilst this is not directly a “rural” indicator, it benefits many rural authorities. Furthermore, by adopting a very wide measure of funding, RSN and the Rural Fair Share Group can ensure that the government does not repeat what it did in 2013-14, when it gave to rural authorities with one hand, and took away with the other. It will be a clear position for the Rural Fair Share Group to once again press the government to take seriously the funding of rural authorities.

Test 2: Increasing the funding driven by sparsity and rurality indicators

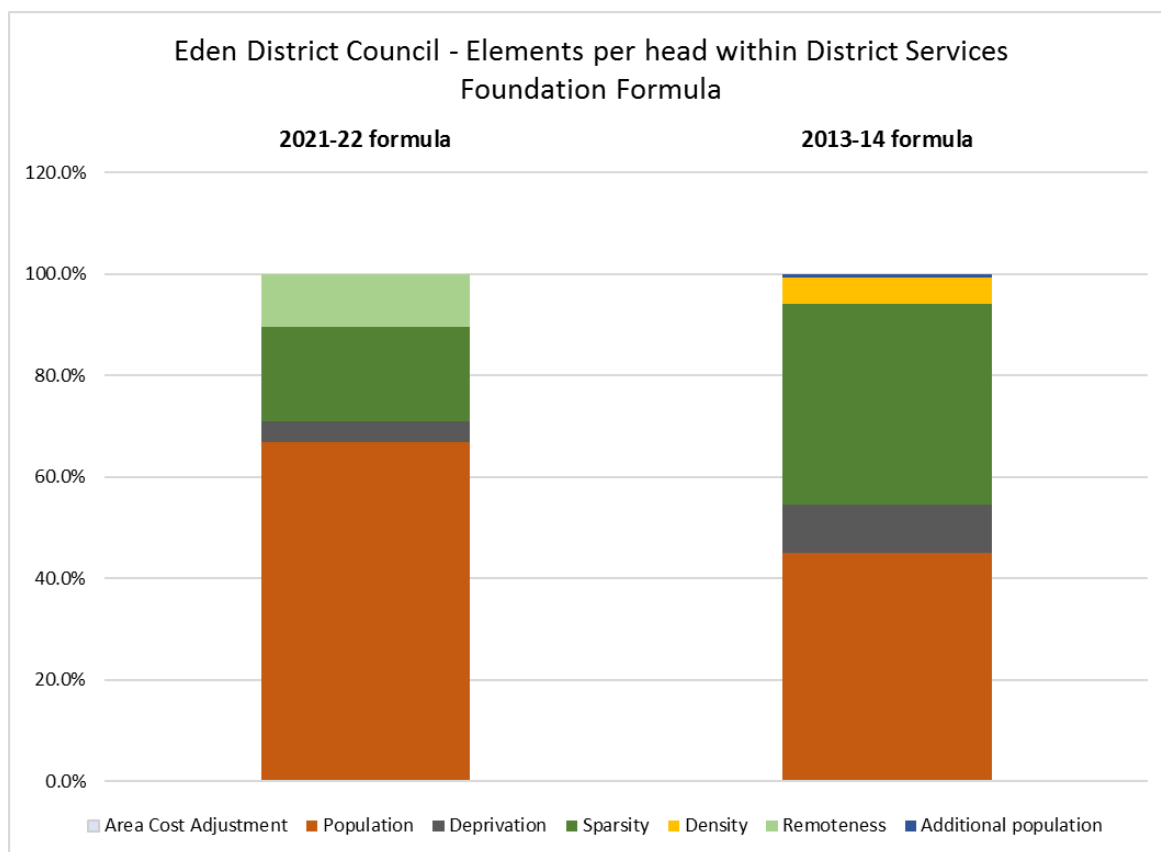
20. The second metric adopted is to actually measure the specific funding for rurality and sparsity for each of the tiers of rural Principal Councils within the SFA and across other sources of government funding, such as the Rural Services Delivery Grant.

21. Measuring the specific funding that is allocated to rurality and sparsity is important because it ensures that these specific factors retain a strong profile. It also provides a direct route for ministers to increase the funding for rural authorities in a targeted way.

22. Whilst the funding-gap metric is useful for ensuring that rural authorities collectively receive a larger share of funding, measuring specific rurality and sparsity funding helps to ensure that funding is directed towards the most rural authorities. Some rural authorities – particularly those with the highest levels of sparsity – are rightly worried that their current relatively high levels of funding through the RSDG (even though it was created to offset some of the negative effects of the damping of the 2013/14 formula changes in respect of increased allowances for sparsity) will be eroded through the FFR.
23. Currently, there are sparsity indicators in four of the service funding formulae. The highest sparsity weightings are 10.3% of the Local Authority Central Functions (for home-to-school transport) and 3.7% of the District Services EPCS block. These indicators will be removed in the new funding formula in 2021-22 and replaced by the travel time and remoteness indicators within the Area Cost Adjustment. Our modelling indicates that



sparsity will distribute much less in the future funding formula than it does now.



24. To illustrate these changes, we have analysed Eden District Council's funding from the current EPCS formula and its Foundation Formula replacement. The share of funding based on population alone increases from 45% in the current formula to 67% in the proposed future formula. In contrast, the funding specifically for rurality would fall – from 40% now to 29% in the proposed new formula. Funding for rurality in the future formula would come from a combination of compensation for additional travel times (18.5% of funding) and remoteness (10.5% of funding).
25. Based on the government's current proposals, the share of funding distributed specifically by sparsity or rurality indicators will drop significantly. The RSN and the Rural Fair Share group do not accept that the rurality costs faced by rural Councils are limited to travel costs. There are costs – not covered by data - associated with unmet need, lack of economies of scale, poor external markets and the need for the provision of more service hubs on access to service grounds. Both the RSN and the Rural Fair Share Group accept that there is merit in using data in the formula but not to the exclusion of other drivers of cost felt by rural authorities at each tier level.
26. Overall the current proposals do not appear to damage the share of funding received by rural authorities collectively, although it does impact very adversely on the most-rural district councils. Being able to identify specific funding indicators for rural authorities makes it easier to ensure that funding for rural authorities is protected.

Next steps

27. Overall the Fair Funding Review is going in a direction that rural authorities can support and should be welcomed. Pixel modelling suggests that rural authorities collectively will gain from the Review in aggregate. There are some commitments that rural authorities – supported by the Rural Fair Share Group will be seeking from the government. In that regard a sharply focused briefing note will be prepared and the Fair Share Group Chair – Derek Thomas MP (St. Ives) will seek an urgent meeting with the Secretary of State and Local Government Minister to put forward the issues.

The commitments sought are:

- To close the funding gap between rural and urban authorities for District/Borough, County and Unitary Councils by at least 50% over the next funding period. We estimate that the current proposals will only close 25% of the funding gap.
- To reconsider re-introducing specific allowances for sparsity and rurality cost drivers for which there is no data but which are demonstrably real and significant in addition to those in the Area Cost Adjustment (traversal, dispersal and remoteness). These indicators in the ACA only recognise the additional unit costs in rural areas – they do not recognise the wider cost burdens on rural authorities or the unmet needs in rural areas. Cost drivers concerned are associated with such matters as unmet need, lack of economies of scale, poor external markets and the need for the provision of more service hubs on access to service grounds. [It would be absurd for the government to recognise – as it has -the strength of the rural funding argument – and then to substantially reduce the “needs assessments” of the most sparsely-populated local authorities such as Eden, Richmondshire, West Devon and Hambleton].
-

Adrian Jenkins

Pixel Financial Management

February 2020

adrian@pixelfinancial.co.uk



Luke Hall MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
(Minister for Local Government & Homelessness)
Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

25th February, 2020

Dear Minister,

FAIRER FUNDING REVIEW (FFR)

In closing the debate on the Final Settlement for 2020/21 on 24th February you said:

“Members also touched on the importance of supporting rural communities in the settlement. The rural services delivery grant, at £81 million this coming year is, again, the highest paid out to date. We completely understand the importance of supporting rural communities, which is why in the review of relative need and resources we have proposed the crucial area cost adjustment, which will include an adjustment for the additional service costs associated with sparsity, isolation and market size. All those factors will be accounted for in a robust manner.”

Let me say from the outset that the Rural Services Network and the Rural Fair Share Group of MPs with which we work with (which met on 24th February and which is now led by Derek Thomas MP – St Ives) are supportive of the general thrust of the FFR as we can presently see it from a rural perspective. We are also supportive of the use of appropriate data to support the analysis of needs and cost drivers where that data exists – but not to the exclusion of other drivers of cost felt by rural authorities at each tier level.

However, we disagree with the proposals to replace the current sparsity indicators with indicators for travel costs data (traversal and dispersal) within the Area Cost Adjustment (ACA). Higher unit costs in rural areas do not represent the full additional costs relating to service provision in the rural context. There are real and substantial costs associated with such features as unmet need, diseconomies of

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scale, poor external markets and the need for the provision of more service hubs. Provision for these should be reflected in the Foundation Formula via a sparsity indicator.

Based on modelling by our Finance Consultants, Pixel Financial Management, we see some significant reductions in the “need assessments” in the new formula for the most sparsely populated District/Borough Councils (those that are most dependent on the sparsity indicators in the current funding formula). The modelling indicates that sparsity will distribute much less in the future funding formula than it does now. Those authorities most severely impacted are very sparsely populated councils such as Eden, Ryedale, West Devon and Richmondshire. Eden’s “need assessment” might reduce by as much as £700,000 (equivalent to 10% of Core Spending Power) as a result of the replacement of the sparsity indicator with the new travel-time indicators.

Many of most sparsely populated rural districts which – based on the Pixel modelling – appear to lose out from these changes would receive less funding for sparsity allowances than before the 2013/14 formula changes. Indeed, some would get less than the current RSDG amounts they receive. This is perverse and surely an unintended consequence?

At this stage we just wish to flag up to you the concerns expressed above. We are preparing a sharply focussed briefing note for the Rural Fair Share Group – Derek Thomas MP (copied into this letter) will be requesting an urgent meeting with the Secretary of State and yourself to explore these issues further.

Best wishes

Chief Executive

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	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
1											
2											
3											
4		RSN (INCOME & EXPENDITURE) 2019/20 AND									
5		ACTUAL TO END FEBRUARY 2020									
6		ESTIMATE 2020/21									
7		INCLUDES 2018/19 ACTUAL AND REVISED ESTIMATE									
8							ACTUAL TO	ESTIMATE	ACTUAL	ESTIMATE	
9							END MARCH 19	2019/20	TO END FEBRUARY	2020/21	
10		INCOME					£	£	£	£	
11											
12		DEBTORS FROM PREVIOUS YEAR (NET OF VAT)									
13		SPARSE/Rural Assembly held by NKDC at year end					3000	3450	3450		
14		RHA - Website Contris.					300				
15		RSP Subscriptions						990	990		
16		Coastal Communities Alliance (Gross)						1090	1090		
17		CCN re Bexit Roundtable					381				
18		SPARSE Rural/Rural Assembly					300636	312078	308628	301627	
19		Ditto Held by WDBC at Month End									
20		RSN Extra £350Levy					35350				
21		RSP Existing Member Fees (NET RHCA)					14195	19232	18732	20728	
22		Commercial Partner First Group Buses					10000	10000	10000	10000	
23		Income from Rural Housing Group					7417	7540	7540	7691	
24		Income from Fire & Rescue Group					4260	3839	3839	3918	
25		Income from RSP Rural Towns Group (Net)								7000	
26		FIRE GROUP LEVY RE SPARSITY EVIDENCE					6000				
27		OTHER INCOME									
28		Rural Conference Income					14918		21375		

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
29		Rural Conference Surplus						13056		12500	
30		CCN re Joint Needs Group Project						8500			
31		Recharges to Rural England Back Office Support					1400	1428	1428	1457	
32		RE recharge re Elec NW Commission					1100				
33		RE Secondment Income						7077	7077		
34		RE recharge re Southern Water Commission					1000				
35		Income from RE Project Support						1750		3250	
36		EE/Other Sponsorship					5000				
37		Coastal Communities Alliance Gross)					3268	4358	3333	4445	
38		Income re Rural Strategy Regional Roadshows @						11050	4050		
39		RHCA - Fee Income					8642	1160		2954	
40		RHCA Expenditure Reimbursement re 2019					5000	20727		18152	
41		RHCA Exp Reimbursement 1/1 - 31/3/2020						4500			
42		RHA Website Re-charge								1560	
43		RHA Website Dev/Maint Contributions								665	
44		RE Website Maintenance					2040	2406	2406	2332	
45		Miscellaneous Survey					979	276	276		
46		Contras - Rural England					3002		1796		
47		Contra - Travel							528		
48		Contra - Accountants							199		
49		Contra RHCA Sub							188		
50		Contra - Fraud Refund							84		
51		VAT									
52		VAT Refund					3144		681		
53		VAT Received					17181		20989		
54		TOTAL INCOME					448213	434507	418679	398279	
55		ADD RHCA INCOME RE 2019							12733		
56		ADD RHCA INCOME RE 2020							6778		
57		GRAND TOTAL INCOME							438190		
58											

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
59							ACTUAL TO	EST	ACTUAL	ESTIMATE	
60							END MARCH 19	2019/20	END FEBRUARY	2020/21	
61		EXPENDITURE					£	£	£	£	
62		General Provision for Inflation (Non Salary)								2000	
63		VAT Paid on Goods & Services					17293		16915		
64		VAT Paid to HMRC					160		5193		
65		NET WAGES & GENERAL CONTRACTS (GROSS)						255000	222441	249221	
66		Corporate Management				DI,GB,AD, 1 JT, 100% KB 80%	132470				
67		Finance/Performance and Data Analysis				, DW, 100%,	23844				
68		Financial Support - Consultants & Expenses						20000	2891	15000	
69		Communications - Lexington & Rose R				RoseR,RCM	35371	26091	18868	26091	
70		Administrative and Technical Support				AD3, RI, WI,WC,BA, MB 100%	43123				
71		Research and Monitoring				BW, 100%	7025	3425	3425	10000	
72		Economic Development Service				AD5 100%	5202				
73		Coastal Communities Contract					3696	3700	1871	3700	
74		Rural Communities Housing Group				AD2 100%	6763				
75		Employee Deductions - Tax/NIC					27723		22207		
76		Employee Deductions - Pensions							4685		
77		Provision for Annual Pay award								3384	
78		PAYE - Employers NIC (11 mths)					10374	10000	8915	11251	
79		PENSIONS Employer contrib					2362	4200	3523	5000	
80		OTHER EXPENDITURE									
81		RSN/CCN Joint Needs Group Project						17000			

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
82		Rural Strategy Campaign					775	12000	10873	10000	
83		Rural Strategy Roadshows@						11050	3553		
84		Rural Strategy Videos								1500	
85		General Election - Lexington						2300	2300		
86		Conferences/Seminars									
87		Rural Conference					7209		8550		
88		Rural Conference Drinks Reception					962	1058	1058	1200	
89		Rural Conference2019 - IN ADVANCE					250				
90		Regional Meetings/Seminars					1946	1847	1847	2200	
91		RSP Meetings						1644	1644	1200	
92		Service Level Agreements									
93		Rural Housing Group (RHG)					782	920	920	1000	
94		RHG Website Maint					1224				
95		RE Website Maint					2040				
96		Rural Inland CIC transfer of part of First Group Support					7000	7000	7000	7000	
97		Parliamentary Groups					905	533	533	1500	
98		RHCA Direct Set Up Costs					4530				
99		Fire Group Expenses					562	400	63		
100		Business Expenses									
101		Website Upgrade					650	500	500		
102		Travel and Subsistence					23685	20000	16452	21000	
103		Print, Stat,e mail, phone & Broadband@					4037	4500	4323	4500	
104		Meeting Room Hire					1972	1823	1823	1500	
105		Website and Data Base software etc					4965	4700	4363	4700	
106		Rent of Office & Associated Costs					4827	6955	5515	9800	
107		Accountancy Fees						1937	1826	1507	
108		Companies House Fees					13	13	13	13	
109		Bank Charges					92	90	79	90	
110		IT Support					280	400	165	700	
111		Insurance					744	800	440	800	

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
112							ACTUAL TO	EST	ACTUAL	ESTIMATE	
113							END MARCH 19	2019/20	END FEBRUARY	2020/21	
114							£	£	£	£	
115		Corporation Tax						0		300	
116		Membership of Rural Coalition					250	500	500	300	
117		Corp Man General						253	253	250	
118		CAPITAL /Printers/Laptops					876	362	362		
119		CONTRAS									
120		Rural England @							2261		
121		RHCA Subs Refund@							188		
122		Debit Card Fraud							84		
123		Travel Refunds@							133		
124		ARREARS - PREVIOUS FINANCIAL YEAR				£24,769					
125		Employee Deductions						2393	2393		
126		Employer NIC						1024	1024		
127		Employers Pension Contrib									
128		Regional Meetings/Seminars					450	240	240		
129		Contact for Service Corporate Management						1917	1917		
130		Contract for Service (ADMIN)					1660	409	409		
131		Communications					500				
132		Extra Media by RCM					963				
133		Rose Regeneration					2000	1750	1750		
134		Lexington Communications Contract						3482	3482		
135		PIXELL					21958	10692	10692		
136		Research Costs					11420	2100	2100	4575	
137		RSN Online arrears					4523				

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
138		RHA website Maint					300				
139		Travel and Subsistence arrears					823	609	609		
140		Printing, Phone and Stationery (arrears)					9	153	153		
141		Office Costs					286	0			
142		Data base etc (arrears)					433				
143		TOTAL EXPENDITURE					431307	445770	413324	401282	
144		ADD TOTAL RHCA EXPENDITURE							3109		
145		GRAND TOTAL EXPENDITURE							416433		
146											
147		TOTAL INCOME					448213	434507		398279	
148		LESS TOTAL EXP					-440818	-445770		-401282	
149		DIFFERENCE BETWEEN IN YEAR INC & EXP					7395	-11263		-3003	
150		ADD GEN BALANCE BROUGHT FORWARD					25875	24768		13505	
151		BALANCE CARRIED FORWARD					33270	13505		10502	
152		Less RHCA Balance					-8502				
153							24768				
154											
155		RHCA INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT									
156											
157								ESTIMATE	ACTUAL	ESTIMATE	ACTUAL END
158								2019/20	END DEC	2020/21	Feb-20
159								FROM OCT	2019		
160								2018			
161								£	£	£	£
162											
163		Subs Received Nov 2018 to 31st March 2019									
164		In repect of 2018/19 Financial year						2148.99	2148.99		
165		In respect of 2019/20 Financial Year						6353.17	6353.17		
166		Subs Due 2019/20									

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
167		Subs Receivable 1st April 2019 to 3st December 2019						14403.84	12733.00	28400.00	3520.00
168		Subs Receivable in Pipeline						1614.00			
169		RECEIVABLE FOR 2020									6778.00
170		TOTAL DUE TO DATE						24520.00	21235.16	28400.00	10298.00
171											
172											
173		LESS EXPENDITURE									
174		RSN Management Fee						-20727.00		-18121.00	
175		RSN Share of Fee Income over Management Costs						-1160.00		-2954.00	
176		RHCA Share of Fee Income over Management Costs						-2633.00	-3109.00	-7325.00	
177								-24520.00		-28400.00	
178											

Successful rural communities

A standardization programme to enable thriving and sustainable communities

Background

Rural communities continue to face countless challenges. A lack of well-paid and diverse employment opportunities, a dearth of affordable housing, and the depletion of infrastructure and services are all contributing to rural decline.

The common characteristic of rural areas is the predominance of primary industries, particularly farming (including substance level), fishing and mineral extraction. In more developed countries this is often associated with a low density of population, services, transport and cultural or government infrastructure. Distance becomes a defining issue as well as a lack of opportunity, investment and social activity. These issues are unlike those faced by cities and urban regions, and can be compounded by difficult terrain, a hostile environment and peripheral location, although uplands and beautiful landscapes can be attractive to visitors, bringing in turn both advantages and disadvantages.

Lower populations and distance from decision-making centres can also result in a lack of investment and of government development. The proposed standardization programme aims to give greater profile to the problems of rural areas, encourage coordinated action/investment and establish reference standards to assess interventions and offer guidance on what constitutes a successful community. It is very possible that such a set of metrics would have wider applicability. Given that enhancing social cohesion and reducing inequality is likely to form part of such considerations, the programme could offer considerable support to repairing communities post-Brexit.

Target audience

The target audience for the programme comprises local authorities, local communities themselves, and all organizations operating within the communities, including service providers and community groups.

The standardization programme – A stepped approach

1. *Self-assessment portal*

This online assessment portal would give communities the ability to determine and address their level of success, sustainability and resilience against defined principles. An online register could be established to give communities the opportunity to publish self-declarations of compliance. Independent evaluation of these self-declarations could provide added assurance.

2. *Formal guidance standard for 'Successful Rural Communities'*

This framework standard would go right to the heart of what constitutes the nature of communities, the 'glue' that binds them together and the elements that make them 'tick'.

It would cover five key themes:

1. Belonging to place
2. Shared values, interests and structures
3. Interdependence
4. Viability/Prosperity
5. Sustainability and resilience

On the basis of principles established on these themes, communities would be able to determine their position on a development, or maturity, matrix, and set targets for continuous improvement.

It is envisaged the content of the standard would include:

- Principles of a 'successful community'
- Interactive library of rural issues and case studies
- 'Community Toolkit' – of resources for community use
- Portfolio of possible interventions/policies for local authorities
- Standardized measures that allow evaluation of local government policies or projects

While this framework would be intended as guidance on best practice, it could be further developed to underpin certification that might support fund-raising, planning policy and community investment.

3. Community Enhancement Programme

If implementation of the standard for Successful Rural Communities were to be given strong support by relevant government departments, it could be used to underpin a Community Enhancement Programme in which community success, sustainability and resilience could be measured against improvement targets.

Next steps

September to December 2019

BSI will continue to engage with a range of interested stakeholders, including:

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| • Adventurous activities providers | • National Trust for Scotland |
| • Arts organizations | • Residents' groups |
| • Devolved Administration Departments | • RGS |
| • Faith representatives | • Rural businesses |
| • Financial services companies | • Rural schools |
| • Local government | • The Hill Farming APPG |
| • MPs for rural constituencies | • The tourism industry |
| • National Association of Small Schools | • Upland farmers |
| • National Parks UK | • UK Government Departments |
| • National Trust | |

January 2020

BSI will stage a conference in central London, to bring all interested parties together to establish a Vision Framework, and measures that would enable the delivery of more affordable housing, the enhancement of employment opportunities and the improvement of infrastructure in rural communities. The conference should afford BSI the opportunity to recruit members of the expert group that will take forward the development of the programme.

From: Marion Stribling <Marion.Stribling@local.gov.uk>
Date: 19 February 2020 at 14:06:27 GMT
To: "david.inman@sparse.gov.uk" <david.inman@sparse.gov.uk>
Subject: LGA Special Interest Group - Rural Services Network

Dear David

For your information the Leadership Board agreed last year that Special Interest Groups (SIGs) will be established for five years. Should they wish to continue as a SIG after that five year period they will be asked to make the case to the Leadership Board for their continuation. For all existing SIGs the five year period will end in summer 2024; at this time we will ask you to submit an annual report as usual, but we will also ask you to include some detail on why you wish to continue your work (should you wish to do so). You may also attend a meeting of the Leadership Board to present your annual report and explain the reasons for your continuation as a SIG. The LGA's Statement on SIGs has been updated to reflect the new arrangements, and further details can be found on our webpage [here](#).

I will be in touch again in April to request your latest annual report.

If you have any queries please email me.

Kind regards
Marion Stribling
Member Services



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Rural Services APPG

**All-Party Parliamentary Group on Rural Services
28th January, 2020 at 11.30 a.m.
Room N, Portcullis House, London**

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

PRESENT

Rt Hon. Philip Dunne MP (Ludlow)
Rt Hon Owen Paterson MP (North Shropshire)
Baroness Byford
Lord Ewan Cameron
Chris Loder MP (West Dorset)
Flick Drummond MP (Meon Valley)
Greg Smith MP (Buckingham)
Huw Merriman MP (Bexhill & Battle)
Julie Marson MP (Hertford and Stortford)
Harriett Baldwin MP (West Worcestershire)
Ruth Edwards MP (Rushcliffe)
Selaine Saxby MP (North Devon)
Rob Butler MP (Aylesbury)
Jonny Haseldine (For Anne-Marie Morris MP – Newton Abbot)

In attendance

Graham Biggs, MBE (RSN -Secretariat)

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from:

MP Name	Constituency
Rt Hon David Mundell (APPG Observer)	Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale & Tweeddale
Rt Hon Damian Hinds	East Hampshire
Rt Hon Robert Jenrick (APPG Observer)	Newark
Rt Hon Liam Fox	North Somerset
Bishop Alan (St Albans)	
Peter Aldous	Waveney
Lord Crathorne KCVO	
Richard Bacon	South Norfolk
Rebecca Pow (APPG Observer)	Taunton Deane
Rt Hon Dr Therese Coffey	Suffolk Coastal
Tom Tugendhat	Tonbridge and Malling
Alicia Kearns	Rutland and Melton
Andrew Bridgen	North West Leicestershire
Anne-Marie Morris	Newton Abbot
Jerome Mayhew	Broadland
Julian Sturdy	York Outer
Kevin Hollinrake	Thirsk and Malton
Dr Luke Evans	Bosworth
Richard Holden	North West Durham
Sally-Ann Hart	Hastings and Rye
Simon Fell	Barrow and Furness
Steve Double	St Austell and Newquay
Nigel Evans	Ribble Valley
Danny Kruger	Devizes
Rosie Duffield	Canterbury

1. Introduction

Philip Dunne (Chairman of the APPG in the last Parliament) welcomed those in attendance.

He referred to the work of the Group in the last couple of years including the APPG's investigations in Adult Social Care in the Rural Context and the presentations at the last meeting from young people living in rural areas and organisations which represented them. He drew particular attention to the fact that as the APPG Chair he had – at the invitation of the then Chief Secretary to the Treasury – led a group of rural organisations to put forward rural issues in respect of the then (subsequently postponed) Spending Review. A sign that rural issues and this APPG were being taken seriously.

2. Notes of Previous Meeting

The notes of the meeting held on 7th May, 2019 – Challenges for Young People in Rural Areas – were noted.

3. Appointment of Officers

The following were (without opposition) appointed as the Officers of the Group for the following year:

Chairman: The Rt Hon Philip Dunne MP (Ludlow)

Vice- Chairmen:

Rosie Duffield MP (Canterbury)

Selaine Saxby MP (North Devon)

Scott Mann MP (North Cornwall)

Julie Marson MP (Hertford and Stortford)

Chris Loder MP (West Dorset)

Lord Cameron

Treasurer: Lord Crathorne

Secretary: Baroness Byford

4. Parliamentary Vulnerability Day – 10th March 2020 (10.00 a.m. – 2.00 p.m.)

Graham Biggs outlined the programme for the day which was focussed on the issues facing young people in rural areas. It would include a presentation on a Rural England C.I.C report on the issues 16-18 year- old youngsters face in accessing Further Education & Training.

Huw Merriman asked to speak at the event to highlight issues of employment for young people in his constituency

5. Future Work of the Group/Future Meetings

The Group considered a report from Philip Dunne outlining suggested ways for the APPG to work over the next 12 - months.

The suggested processes were agreed.

After discussion the Group agreed that it would first consider issues relating to Connectivity. This would include rural roads, rural transport and accessibility issues for rural residents without a car, and broadband/ mobile phone connectivity.

It was noted that Cornwall Council would be a Pilot authority under the development of a Bus Strategy. It was felt that Baroness Vere – Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department of Transport could be invited to address the Group and that the Chief Executive of First Group could also be invited.

5. Date of Next Meeting

To be confirmed

The meeting closed at 12.50 p.m.

ACRE Briefing note on Government consultation on the design and delivery of First Homes

On 7th February the Government published its consultation on First Homes.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/864265/First_Homes_consultation_document.pdf

The closing date for responses is Friday 3rd April.

This briefing note sets out the government proposals, an analysis of their relevance and impact on delivering rural affordable housing. Proposed responses to the consultation questions are provided in the commentary on the detailed proposals and are shown in bold text. These take into account comments and advice of Rural Housing Enablers at their recent Network meeting.

Overall response

The lack of affordable sale housing and the low level of first-time buyers in rural areas is well documented.¹ In this context the First Homes proposal that sets a discount, currently at 30% of market values, could make a valuable contribution to addressing this challenge. In so doing it could help to redress the rapidly ageing rural population, contribute to a thriving rural economy and increase the customer and user base to sustain local services and businesses.

The details are however important and there are aspects of the First Homes proposal that could mean that this tenure could fail to meet the needs of the intended beneficiaries in rural areas and undermine the delivery of other forms of affordable housing. Helpfully, the consultation provides the opportunity to raise these and offer suggestions on how the tenure could be rural proofed before it is introduced. In summary the key areas where rural circumstances need to be taken into account are as follows.

The higher house prices and lower locally earned incomes ²in rural areas means that it would be helpful if the level of discount was set at local level, using locally earned median incomes and a standard mortgage borrowing calculator to determine the level of discount. This would be sensitive to rural circumstances and avoid using a definition of key workers that could otherwise exclude employees who are critical to the functioning of the rural economy.

Landowner willingness to release land at a price that makes it viable to develop this and other forms of affordable housing requires that First Homes remain affordable in perpetuity, even in a rising housing market. A form of 'buy back' arrangement funded with Government grant would avoid this happening. It would also ensure that First Homeowners are not trapped because they are unable to sell their home, without it entering the open market.

The prevalence of larger houses in the rural housing stock and an ageing population means that more than just first-time buyers would benefit from this form of discounted sale housing. For example, older residents who are seeking to downsize to release capital to cover everyday costs and care needs.

¹ Halifax Building Society - Rural Review 2017

² See Defra Rural Statistical Digests

Housing Needs Surveys and Strategic Housing Market Assessments continue to demonstrate that the greatest need in rural communities is for truly affordable rented homes. There are a number of proposals in the consultation that could lead to rented affordable homes being squeezed out, including proposed changes to Entry Level Exception sites.

The changes to the Entry Level Exception Site (ELES) policy could pose an existential threat to the continuation of rural exception site policy. As ELES will only be required to provide First Homes the land price will be higher. This will reduce landowner willingness to release lower value rural exception sites that unlike ELES deliver affordable and social rented housing.

Detail of Proposals and rural impacts and proposed response

Determining the level of discount

The consultation proposes:

- to set a national minimum discount of 30% of open market values, which will hold for initial and subsequent sales.
- Local authorities will have discretion to set a higher percentage, on a scheme by scheme basis.
- the discount will be secured in perpetuity by the use of restrictive covenants, which will be renewed at each sale.
- The valuation will be undertaken by an independent valuer each time the home is sold.
- A price cap will limit the price at which First Homes can be used, it is proposed that the value will be set before the discount is applied.

Setting out the principal of First Homes in national policy will be essential if this form of tenure is to be secured. However, there is a danger that as proposed this will not result in properties that are affordable to local people in rural areas who are looking to move into home ownership. Primarily, this is because the consultation does not offer any mechanism for linking the level of discount to locally earned incomes. Evidence shows that there is a price premium for rural homes and locally earned incomes are lower, which is further demonstrated by the affordability ratios for rural areas.³ **This makes it critical that local authorities should be able to set a higher % discount, determined using locally earned median incomes data and industry standard mortgage borrowing calculators. Local Plan policy should make provision for this to be reviewed on an annual basis.**

As the consultation acknowledges there is considerable variation in house prices. Evidence has continually shown there is a rural premium⁴ which means that even a cap based on a county, or even local authority price, is unlikely to reflect rural housing prices. **It is, therefore, essential that whilst national policy should require a price cap to be set before**

³ Halifax Building Society - Rural Review & Defra Statistical Digests

the discount is applied, this should be at the discretion of the local authority. Local Plan policy should make provision for this to be reviewed on an annual basis.

The revised NPPF made a welcome change to policy for affordable housing, setting out that viability testing and setting affordable housing contributions should be at the Plan Making stage and only in exceptional cases at the point of decision making on individual sites. This has the positive affect of ensuring that developers take this into account when the negotiate land values, making it possible for schemes to be policy compliant. **The same principle of setting the discount at the Plan Making stage is equally necessary for the delivery of First Homes.**

The use of restrictive covenant that will be renewed on each sale is potentially helpful as long as it does not result in the covenant not being re-applied. The consultation is silent on how this would be avoided. **One way of safeguarding perpetuity would be to include the First Home local occupancy and perpetuity requirements in the scheme's Section 106 agreement that runs with the land.**

It will also be important to ensure that sellers do not try to manipulate the value of the home through their appointment of an independent valuer. Some local authorities using this form of tenure require more than one valuation. **An alternative and cheaper approach would be to require that the independent valuer is RICS registered and uses its Red Book valuation practice.**

Eligibility for First Homes

It is proposed that First Homes is for:

- Local people as defined by the local authority, with reference to residency or work location.
- a cascade that allows the homes to be offered to wider geographic area if the homes are unsold after a given period of time.
- First time buyers should have priority in accessing First Homes, but that this restriction should fall away if there are no buyers within a given time period.
- First Homes could also be used to prioritise key workers, defined as those providing front line public services.
- To target First Homes at those unable to buy in the open market Government is considering setting an income cap for purchasers

The eligibility principals of First Homes closely resemble those that apply to homes provided on a rural exception site, with the same cascades to avoid properties standing empty. The potential difference is the definition of the geography of 'local'. **For a rural exception site it will be important that the first level of cascaded is limited to the parish and in some cases the immediately surrounding parishes. However, there needs to be some flexibility so that these homes could be made available to a wider group of people to address economic**

or demographic challenges of some rural areas. The definitions of 'local' should as now be set out in the scheme's S106 Agreement.

The evidence shows lower levels of first-time buyers in rural areas, excluded by high house prices. **Targeting First Homes at this group would be helpful. However, the nature of the rural housing stock often makes it difficult for some homeowners to find a home appropriate to their changing needs.** Increasingly affected are older residents seeking to downsize either for reasons of physical health or to release cash to support every day living and care costs.

It is also the case that as well as front line public sector workers there are other workers who are key to the functioning of the rural economy who cannot afford to buy a home where they work. For example, those in the tourist, land management and conservation sectors. **For these reasons whilst First Homes could be prioritized for first time buyers, local authorities should have the discretion to allow other groups to access this tenure.**

Setting an income cap is both necessary and allows flexibility in defining which groups can access First Homes. **Again, given the lower level of locally earned incomes in rural areas, it is important that this is determined at a local level, with policy making provision for annual review. Using the same income level for defining the cap and level of discount would bring consistency to the approach.**

The use of a cascade to ensure that properties are not left empty is a tried and tested part of the rural exception site approach. There is some local variation in the time periods attached to triggering cascade so standardisation would be helpful. The adopted timescale will need to balance the time needed to advertise and assess prospective purchasers against the needs of developers for cash flow and lenders willingness to extend mortgages. **Practice indicates that the trigger for the cascade would be in the first instance after 12 weeks. It will be important to ensure that the cascade does not allow for First Homes to be sold into the open market.** To do so would undermine the principle of affordability in perpetuity and landowner willingness to release sites at a price that makes it viable to build First Homes.

Supporting the First Homes Buyers scheme

- First Home residents will be required to sell the home at the same level of discount at which they bought the home. This will mean that any uplift in value from improvements may not be achieved on sale.
- Government is minded to leave local authorities responsible for the administration of First Homes, including checking conformity with eligibility criteria, with the option to outsource this process to a housing association of Community Land Trust.
- Views are sought on how to allocate First Homes where there is excess of demand.

This section of the consultation again sets out the principle of the initial discount being applied at subsequent sales. It does not, however, address what happens when a rise in house prices means that even with the prescribed level of discount the homes are no longer affordable to qualifying buyers. This was the experience of some of the early forms of rural discounted market housing and there have been examples of difficulties selling shared ownership homes where the resident has a high equity stake. This could be a potential flaw in the design of First Homes.

To avoid this challenge the **Government could make grant available to a housing association or formal community led housing group to buy the property. They would then be required to resell it at an appropriate local discount. The presence of this grant would overcome some of the concerns of mortgage lenders lending on properties with perpetuity arrangements and ensure the homes remained in the affordable sale sector.**

As it is proposed that local authorities take a leading role in defining the detailed parameters of First Homes in their area, it would be sensible if they were responsible for its administration. **However, given their already stretched capacity this would need to be funded. This could be achieved by charging a small % fee of around 0.5% of the resale price, paid for by the vendor, perhaps with a sliding scale according to price and level of discount.**

Integral to all aspects of running, monitoring and allocating First Homes will be the use of a transparent process for registering and prioritising applicants. This will need to be aligned with the S106 Agreement.

Supporting competitive mortgage lending

The Government are proposing:

- To create a standard model agreement that still allows for local discretion thus reducing the need for them to interpret different models
- They are minded to introduce a mortgage protection clause into the model agreement that would allow the waiver of the need to sell at a discount if the lender had to take possession because of default on mortgage payments.

This is familiar territory for rural affordable sale housing. In rural areas, the difficulties accessing mortgage lending on shared ownership properties with perpetuity arrangements is leading to some housing associations to seek waivers from the statutory perpetuity protections. **The production of a standard agreement for properties with a perpetuity clause that is accepted by lenders will, therefore, be extremely welcome. Indeed it is essential.**

It is also the case that most Local Planning Authorities now allow for mortgage in possession exemption clauses, recognising that their absence can make it difficult to

raise development and mortgage finance. **However, given the importance of the perpetuity arrangements this should be phrased as a last resort, with an agreed cascade and timescales for seeking to sell the property at the mortgage value before the exemption is triggered.**

Restrictions on letting First Homes

It is proposed that:

- First Homes should be restricted to purchasers using them as their sole or primary residence.
- To allow the homes to be let out for up to two years, without requiring local authority permission, where the owner has to be away from their home for an extended period of time due to work or care commitments. Lettings for a longer period should be at the discretion of the local authority and assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Given the concerns in some rural areas of the leakage of homes bought under Right to Buy into holiday lets, second homes and high value private rented homes these provisions are helpful. **There is a question of how this would be enforced, but there may be lessons to be learnt from the use of the Principal Residence condition in Exmoor National Park and St Ives. There could also be a requirement that if the property is let, this is at a rent discounted against open market rents at a similar % discount at which the home was bought and restricted to occupation by someone who meets the local connection criteria.**

It will be important that these provisions are included in the covenant and the S106 agreement.

Delivering First Homes and Setting Developer Contributions for First Homes

- The consultation flags up that this will be considered as part of other measures to speed up the planning process and that consideration is being given to legislating to ensure delivery.
- It identifies two routes for delivering First Homes:
- A requirement to deliver First Homes as part of a market development with two options:
 - prescribe that a % of the affordable homes contribution should be First Homes, or
 - prescribe that a % of all units delivered in sites of more than 10 dwellings should be sold as First Homes.
- A revised Entry Level Exception site policy (this is covered in more detail in the next section of this Briefing Note.)

- Exempt First Homes from the Community Infrastructure levy.

Market led development sites in rural areas can make a contribution to meeting a range of housing needs, including different forms of affordable housing. **This would be more likely to happen if the design of the First Homes scheme followed the NPPG revision that allows Local Planning Authorities to set their own site thresholds for affordable housing contributions in designated rural areas. In other words, not restricted to sites of 10 dwellings or more. It would deliver even more if the definition of designated rural areas was changed to include all parishes of 3,000 population or less and all parishes in National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.**

First Homes would overcome the reticence of some local authorities to apply a local connection requirement on affordable sale homes on S106 sites, even those in rural communities. Importantly it would also extend perpetuity arrangements for this tenure to settlements of more than 3,000 population.

It is surprising that the consultation does not identify rural exception sites as a route to deliver First Homes. There is a range of affordable housing needs in rural areas, including from first time buyers, those seeking to downsize, those employed and or running local businesses and services. **First Homes could make a helpful contribution to meeting these needs as part of the tenure mix on a rural exception site.**

The consultation acknowledges that First Homes could have an impact on the delivery of other forms of affordable housing but is silent on how this will be avoided. This will be a problem in rural areas where local evidence demonstrates the majority need is for truly affordable rented homes. The scheme income from a First Home will be higher than for affordable rented homes and other forms of affordable sale housing. In consequence there is a danger that First Homes will squeeze out other affordable housing tenures. **For this reason, it is important that the % First Homes to be delivered on a site is expressed as a % of the affordable housing contribution, not as a % of all the homes on the site.**

The consultation mentions a renewed Affordable Homes Programme as a means of supporting other affordable and social housing tenures. However, it is ambiguous about whether grant funding will be available for First Homes. **Where local affordability requires a significant % discount, or where market values are low, grant will be needed to make schemes viable. As a departure from current policy this will in some instances be required on market led sites as well as both kinds of exception site.**

Delivery through Exception Sites

The consultation acknowledges and distinguishes between Entry Level Exception Sites and rural exception sites. It proposes

- To change EntryLevel Exception sites to:
 - specify that the affordable homes should be First Homes,

- to allow some cross-subsidy from market housing on these sites,
 - remove the size threshold of 1 hectare, but retain that they should be proportionate to the existing settlement
- It does not propose to adjust the rural exception site policy to directly support delivery of First Homes. Government is proposing to offer further guidance to improve delivery through this route and how it sits alongside the Entry Level Exception Site policy.

The consultation incorrectly states that it funds Rural Housing Enablers through the Community Housing Fund.

Entry Level Exception Sites

The changes to the Entry Level Exception site pose an existential risk to the rural exception site policy. The income from a scheme providing solely First Homes will be greater than that from a mixed affordable tenure rural exception site, particularly as reflecting local needs affordable rent will be the majority tenure on the latter. In consequence an Entry Level Exception Site will support a higher land price, making it unlikely that landowners will release land for lower value rural exception site development. Potentially, this will cut out a major route to delivering rural affordable rented housing. This will particularly affect the almost 70% of parishes that do not fall under the definition of rural areas and therefore not communities where the NPPG states local planning authorities can set their own thresholds for affordable housing contributions.

Two changes to the Government's proposed approach to Entry Level Exception sites might mitigate against the risk to rural exception sites. **Firstly, only allow Entry Level Exception sites adjoining settlements of more than 5,000 population. In these centres there will be more development opportunities, including market led sites that can deliver the full range of affordable housing.**

Secondly, Government could specifically stipulate that the cross subsidy from market housing should only be to a level that makes a scheme of First Homes financially viable. This will help reduce landowner price expectation. Without this change it is unclear what distinguishes an Entry Level Exception site from an allocated market led development with an affordable housing contribution.

Rural Exception Sites

The consultation correctly highlights the low level and uneven geographic distribution of delivery through rural exception sites. What it does not report is that the number of homes delivered on rural exception sites last year was lower than at any time since 2013.

They do, however, remain an important route to delivering rural affordable housing in

communities where there are no sites allocated in the Local Plan. A Government guidance note promoting their use and clarifying their relationship with Entry Level Exception sites would be helpful. **It could include guidance on:**

- The purpose of rural exception sites
- RES land values - pointing out that these should not be valued as development sites. It would be helpful to set a benchmark value of £10k a plot.
- Clarifying that by definition these cannot be allocated, not even in Neighbourhood Plans.
- The different incentives that can be used to encourage landowners to release rural exception sites at an appropriate value. These include: providing the nominations to some of the properties, use of leasehold disposal on a 125 year lease rather than freehold sale, providing a property of plot for the landowner to use for his own purposes.
- The type of tenures that are appropriate for a rural exception site.
- The perpetuity arrangements that secure the homes as affordable in perpetuity.
- The mechanisms and allocations policies that can ensure the homes are occupied by people with a local connection to the community. This should include the importance of local authority allocation policies and practice conforming to S106 Agreements.
- The use of cascades to avoid properties being empty
- The process for developing a rural exception site, with engagement of the community at its heart.
- The evidence required to support a rural exception site development and the sources that can be used.

There are three other barriers to rural exception site development that the Government could address.

These are small schemes with few opportunities to achieve economies of scale to cover infrastructure costs. They are often in very sensitive landscapes with high design requirements. Their small scale makes it difficult to take advantage of cheaper and quicker modes of construction. **Recognising these costs through a rural premium on grant levels could encourage more providers into rural exception site development.**

These schemes are resource intensive because of the high levels of community engagement involved and slow pre-development timescales. This introduces costs and delay that dissuades many larger resource rich housing associations from engaging in

this form of development. Enabling support could turn this round, but many rural local authorities operate with a minimal housing enabling staff. Moreover, since the withdrawal of government match grant for Rural Housing Enablers (RHEs) their numbers have halved, and most are now part-time. The Community Housing Fund has not funded RHE posts, although some have attracted funding by extending their service to support community led housing groups. **An uplift on grant levels where RHE has been involved could be used to cover the costs of their engagement and increase their geographic coverage and depth of involvement.**

In a few rural areas the absence of site allocations and lack of landowners willing to release rural exception sites leaves some rural communities with no opportunities to meet their housing needs. In these extreme circumstances Compulsory Purchase of sites could help. This would be assisted by two changes to legislation. **Firstly, Government amends the 1961 Land Compensation Act so that Compulsory Purchase Order valuation is based on existing use value. Secondly, it amends legislation so National Park Authorities are able to purchase land to meet housing needs in Park communities.**

If you would like to discuss any of the points raised in this briefing, please contact:

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Summary for ACRE Network and the Rural Coalition

Carbon net-zero by 2050, a rural community perspective

The dispersed population of rural England can seem to be a prime example of a how we are hooked on unsustainable activities: car dependent, oil burning, intensive agriculture, low density housing etc.. The challenge, therefore, for rural communities in England starts with perceptions, along with the substantive challenge to become net-zero alongside our urban counterparts.

ACRE's values, along with that of other rural organisations, places those at most risk of disadvantage at the centre of our thinking. These are also the people in rural communities for whom urgent measures to reduce carbon emissions, e.g. banning use of solid fuels, replacing cars and travel requirements, and changing land management practice could create the greatest difficulty.

What are the sources of net increase in global atmospheric CO₂?

There are several. Their interrelationships mean they are often conflated even though they have different origins and require different solutions. There are net gains, but also losses in capacity to fix CO₂ out of the atmosphere:

- Net additions of CO₂ coming into the atmosphere from the use of carbon deposits created over 66 million years ago e.g. coal, oil, gas, limestone (cement manufacture) etc
- Net additions of CO₂ coming into the atmosphere through release from more recently fixed carbon e.g. burning forests, draining wetlands, degraded soils etc.
- Decay of other greenhouse gases, e.g. Methane, to CO₂ (12-year half- life)
- Reduced fixing of CO₂ from the atmosphere by natural systems e.g. forests and wetlands by replacement with agricultural systems that release captured greenhouse gases more quickly.

Why are rural areas central to tackling this issue?

Since relatively little CO₂ fixing activity happens in urban centres e.g. agriculture, forests, natural green space etc. it becomes clear that rural areas need to fix CO₂ on behalf of urban ones. It is highly desirable for people living in urban areas to minimise discretionary activities that generate net CO₂, however, they cannot, by doing so, reduce it. This is the intrinsic nature of urban areas, separated as they are from CO₂ fixing activity and dependent on substantial energy and other inputs. They are always going to be net CO₂ contributors, whereas rural people and the rural economy can be re-purposed and incentivised to achieve net reductions in atmospheric CO₂.

The UK's climate change targets

The UK's Climate Change Committee UKCCC has recommended targets to Government to be achieved by 2050, varied slightly for Scotland and Wales:

Sector	Measure	2017	2050 scenario	
			Core	Further Ambition
Power	Share of low-carbon generation	50%	97%	100%
	Low-carbon generation (TWh)	155	540	645
Buildings (Share of low-carbon heat*)	Low-carbon heat in existing homes	4.5%	80%	90%
	Low-carbon heat in non- residential buildings		100%	100%
Industry	CCS**	0%	50%	100%
	Low-carbon heat***	<5%	10%	85%
Surface transport (Share of fleet)	Battery electric cars and vans	0.2%	80%	100%
	Electric and hydrogen HGVs	0%	13%	91%
Aviation	g CO ₂ per passenger-km	110	70	55
	Sustainable biofuel uptake	0%	5%	10%
Shipping	Ammonia uptake	0%	75%	~100%
Land use and forestry	Afforestation (% of UK land area)	13%	15%	17%
	Peatland restoration (% area in good condition)	25%	n/a	55%
Engineered removals (MtCO ₂)	BECCS	0	20	51
	Direct air capture	0	n/a	1

However, the UKCCC has made some counter-intuitive decisions that seem to be primarily designed to make the achievement of these targets more palatable to an urban and consumption dominated economy:

1. Current levels of consumption are not questioned other than in the field of diet and agriculture (See latest UKCCC: Land Use: Policies for a Net Zero UK). Indeed, emissions generated outside of the UK through 'unnecessary' over consumption of imported goods are ignored entirely.
2. The entire analysis appears to be rooted in changing, to an almost unrealistic extent, the GHG emissions of the **current** pattern of production and consumption.
3. The continued growth of air travel goes un-questioned.
4. The analysis is based on the current model of large-scale generation and distribution of electricity (a requirement of urban areas), without considering local or distributed generation.
5. Embedded GHG emissions in building materials are included under 'Industry' emission contributions, thereby hidden and heavily exported.

What changes in Government policy does the ACRE Network advocate?

- An objective and fair land-use planning system that goes beyond development management and directs land to be used in a way that achieves long term public benefit, including net-zero. Rural land use policy must ultimately be 'better than net-zero', not just zero!
- Incorporates a food strategy that can reduce reliance on unhealthy, over-processed, food; ensure local supply chains can be re-established, and ensure any public investment supports reduction in packaging, food miles etc
- Enables rural communities both to grow in size and become more internally sustainable through the retention of local services. Growth of local businesses that result from economic activity arising from changed land use e.g. greater use of timber in construction. Affordable housing, to meet local needs, is an essential component of this growth.
- Support afforestation and other carbon sequestration. Development of energy crops in a consistent long-term way that does not create perverse incentives for land managers and enables local jobs and businesses to develop
- Value all rural areas for their contribution to water management, biodiversity, food production and GHG sequestration, and does not put undue resource or value on just attractive, designated landscapes (NPs and AONBs)
- Avoids economic over-reliance on the visitor economy, instead seeking a balance between this and creation of resilient local economies

What can rural communities do and how can the ACRE Network and other rural organisations help?

1. Reaching isolated and vulnerable rural people with pro-active and trusted initiatives to improve the thermal insulation of their homes and installation of alternative heating
2. Building on existing community assets, such as Village Halls and their car parks, to put in place charging points for electric vehicles
3. Exemplar zero-carbon initiatives in community owned buildings (Village Halls) to demonstrate what is possible through PVs, improved insulation, wind power, heat pumps etc.
4. Extending current models of community ownership in rural areas to encompass renewable power generation on a whole community scale. Scottish practice would suggest this is both achievable and financially viable in the medium term.
5. Electrification of vehicles used by community transport schemes
6. Local growing, green space management, distribution and recycling initiatives that will reduce both food miles and waste miles.
7. Local tree planning initiatives and green 'whole parish plans' that work with local land owners/managers to understand the community's whole carbon cycle and net contribution to carbon zero.
8. Re-purposing of existing support to communities that are addressing local housing need to also ensure maximum use is made of local materials, especially timber.
9. Community-wide collective initiatives to 'save money and save the planet' enabling everyone to remain motivated and informed through collective effort.
10. Linking rural communities together through Citizen Science initiatives to monitor progress and retain motivation

Action with Communities in Rural England

Jeremy Leggett, February 2020



**RURAL SERVICES NETWORK
EXECUTIVE MEETING 16TH MARCH 2020
REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

THE LEGISLATION ETC. IN THE QUEEN'S SPEECH – DECEMBER 2019

Attached to this report is a document setting out the legislative etc. proposals in the December 2019 Queen's Speech where there are issues affecting rural areas. I have tried to group these under the RSN's priorities – but there is some overlap.

With the exception of the wording contained in boxes relation to RSN POSITION STATEMENT the description of the proposals etc. are taken exactly from a Cabinet Office Briefing Paper.

The Executive is asked to consider the RSN Position Statements and agree them (with or without amendment) so that we have an agreed policy position when the various proposals are put forward by the Government.

For information Lexington have been commissioned in respect of the following:

Commitment grid update: Lexington will update the policy commitment/manifesto grid to reflect the commitments which are progressing (i.e. being picked up in the Queen's Speech and legislation announced elsewhere) and those which are not.

Standalone MP Priority Grid:

Lexington will create an MP priority grid based on four key areas [an affordable place to live, a thriving rural economy, a settlement (including fairer funding for rural services) to support local action, and a place everyone can get around (i.e. adequate transport provision)] noting questions asked/comments made on key issues by new and existing MPs since the election. For example, we might make a note to say that X MP asked a question about affordable housing in rural areas so that we have a ready-built list of MPs based on interests for you to be able to refer to in your campaigning activity and additional opportunities to extend your engagement. For this kick-off phase of the project, details will be limited to up to 25 MPs for each of the four key areas.

Graham Biggs
Chief Executive
26th February 2020

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

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THE LEGISLATION IN THE QUEEN'S SPEECH – DECEMBER, 2019

PART 1: PROPOSALS RELATING TO THE RSN'S PRIORITY FOR A THRIVING RURAL ECONOMY. [PRIORITY INCLUDES BUSINESS SUPPORT; SUPPORT FOR RURAL TOWNS/HIGH STREETS AND ACCESS TO SKILLS AND TRAINING].

PROPOSAL 1

Agriculture Bill

Stated purpose of the Bill is to:

- Free our farmers from the bureaucratic Common Agricultural Policy and move to a system based on 'public money for public goods'.
- Replace the current subsidy system, which simply pays farmers based on the total amount of land farmed, and instead reward them for the work they do to enhance the environment, improve animal welfare and produce high quality food in a more sustainable way.
- Deliver on the Government's manifesto commitments to support farmers and land managers to ensure a smooth and phased transition away from the bureaucratic and flawed CAP to a system where farming efficiently and improving the environment go hand in hand.
- Set out the framework for a new Environmental Land Management scheme, underpinned by the principle of 'public money for public good'.

The stated main benefits of the Bill would be:

- Rewarding farmers and land managers for delivering public goods including improved water quality, increased biodiversity, improved animal welfare and better public access to our countryside.
- Championing British food with a transparent and fair supply chain from farm to fork.
- Rewarding farmers who protect our environment. This will significantly contribute to meeting the goals of our 25 Year Environment Plan and to reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

The stated main elements of the Bill are:

- A seven-year agricultural transition period in England during which Direct Payments will be phased out. Transitional schemes will enable investment in



new equipment, technology and infrastructure to support change during this period.

- Introducing a new system where we pay for public goods including environmental protection, access to the countryside, and work to reduce flooding.
- Powers to improve transparency and fairness in the supply chain and provide consumers with more information about how their food is produced.

RSN POSITION STATEMENT

This is not an area where the RSN has a developed policy position. General comments, however are:

- The food and farming industry is nationally important, generating over £108 billion a year for the UK economy and underpinning our food security. It is particularly important for our most rural areas where farming is often central to the economic and social life of the community as well as playing a vital role in conservation. The establishment of the first British agricultural policy in over 40 years is therefore hugely important, not just to farmers but to the future of the countryside and the nation as a whole.
- How the Government chooses to structure a new agricultural policy will determine the landscape of our countryside, the food we eat, and the nature of many rural communities for a generation and beyond.
- The new agricultural policy must start with the objective of securing a productive and competitive farming industry by looking at ways of supporting farmers in their task of producing food. The environmental outcomes that the Government wants to reward in a new system of support payments such as improved air quality, climate change mitigation, and improving the health or welfare of livestock, are sound objectives but they cannot be achieved without working with farmers to deliver them. Unless we recognise the dual role of farmers as food producers and conservationists then we risk turning farmers into environmental contractors with little incentive to continue farming, which would be damaging to the jobs and communities that depend on farming as well as weakening our food security.
- This Bill must provide powers to support productivity, particularly for upland farmers. Farmers in the uplands and other marginal areas are limited to low intensity grazing which has small profit margins and is often more exposed to market volatility than other sectors of the industry. Without direct income



support, many hill farmers would struggle to make a profit even with financial assistance for providing environmental outcomes and/or starting or improving productivity. Their work, however, often provides the most amount of public good in creating and maintaining some of our most iconic rural landscapes which support many of our rarest habitats and wildlife and are central to rural tourism and leisure for millions of people.

- Potentially, there are implications for rural areas associated with proposed changes to Immigration Rules.

PROPOSAL 2

Infrastructure and Investment

National infrastructure strategy

- 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.
- The Strategy will set out the Government's long-term ambitions across all areas of economic infrastructure including transport, local growth, decarbonisation, digital infrastructure, infrastructure finance and delivery.
- The Strategy will have two key aims:
 - To unleash Britain's potential by levelling up and connecting every part of the country. Prosperity will be shared across all of the UK, and long-standing economic challenges addressed, through responsible and prudent investment in the infrastructure.
 - To address the critical challenges posed by climate change and build on the UK's world-leading commitment to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.
- The Strategy will also provide the Government's formal response to the National Infrastructure Commission's 2018 National Infrastructure Assessment, which made a series of independent recommendations to government across all sectors of economic infrastructure (transport, energy, digital, waste, water and flood management).

RSN POSITION STATEMENT

- It is essential that the infrastructure needs of rural areas are not overlooked and are given appropriate policy and financial support to address those needs



- The maintenance of existing infrastructure – importantly including local roads hard hit by long term neglect during the austerity years and exacerbated by recent flooding events – must be an essential component and priority of the future National Infrastructure Strategy
- Flood Defenses must also be a priority

PROPOSAL 3

Broadband legislation

The stated purpose of the legislation is to:

- Support the roll out of gigabit-capable broadband across the UK to achieve nationwide coverage as soon as possible so people can reap the huge benefits of the fastest, most secure and resilient internet connections.
- Make it easier for telecoms companies to install broadband infrastructure in blocks of flats.
- Ensure that all new homes are built with reliable and fast internet speeds.

The stated main benefits of the legislation would be:

- Faster speeds (one gigabit, i.e. 1,000 megabits per second) boosting productivity, driving innovation in our public services and giving people the fast connectivity, they need to reap the benefits of the digital revolution.
- Increasing download speeds with a gigabit-capable network, which are more than 30 times the speed of superfast broadband and will allow the download a High Definition film in fewer than 45 seconds.
- Faster and more reliable internet connections for people living in flats. New measures will also ensure that all new homes are built with the fastest connectivity available, increasing certainty for businesses investing in gigabit speed networks.

The stated main elements of the legislation are:

- Creating a cheaper and faster light-touch tribunal process for telecoms companies to obtain interim code rights (or access rights) for a period of up to 18 months. This will mean that they can install broadband connections where



the landlord has failed to respond to repeated requests for access.

- Amending legislation so that all new build homes are required to have the infrastructure to support gigabit-capable connections.
- Requiring developers to work with broadband companies to install gigabit-capable connections in virtually all new build homes, up to a cost cap.

Other stated measures

- To ensure that no part of the country is left without next-generation broadband, the Government has recently pledged £5 billion to support the rollout of gigabit-capable broadband in the hardest to reach 20 per cent of the country.
- In the two years to 2021 the Government have already committed £650 million to stimulate the market to deploy gigabit-capable connections in urban and rural areas through:
 - The £400 million Digital Infrastructure Investment Fund.
 - The £200 million Local Full Fibre Networks Programme which funds locally-led full fibre projects.
 - The £200 million Rural Gigabit Connectivity Programme which will deploy gigabit capable broadband to local hubs in rural areas, starting with primary schools.
 - The £67 million Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme.
- To further support the commercial environment for investment, the Government laid its Statement of Strategic Priorities for Ofcom in Parliament, formally confirming the regulation needed to maximise the deployment of gigabit-capable broadband.
- The Government has committed to spend £1.8 billion to bring superfast broadband to over 96 per cent of the country, with thousands of homes and businesses connected each week.
- Not all areas of the country have decent broadband. To tackle this the Government has introduced the Universal Service Obligation of 10 megabits per second. This is due to come into force in March next year and will give every home and business the legal right to request a decent connection up to a Reasonable Cost Threshold of £3,400 per premise.



➤ RSN POSITION STATEMENT

- Digital connectivity is a key enabler of business innovation and an important driver of productivity growth. Rural based businesses in all economic sectors and of all sizes (including the self-employed) need access to fast and reliable broadband and mobile networks if they are to thrive, compete and reach new markets.
- Digital connectivity creates new opportunities for businesses to set up in or locate to rural places, bringing jobs and wealth to those areas. It also provides opportunities for homeworkers to operate virtually, yet efficiently, from rural settings.
- Digital connectivity allows those who are on the move to stay in contact, download information and work remotely, in keeping with modern day expectations of business people, residents of all ages and (crucially, from a rural perspective) those visiting or holidaying in an area.
- Digital connectivity offers rural residents the option to access many services without having to make long or complex journeys. It has rapidly become a key means for accessing banking, education and even healthcare, to name just three examples. It can also help address rural loneliness and isolation.
- Digital connectivity will allow the aspirations of and benefits from the Industrial Strategy's Grand Challenges to be realised in rural areas. This will include developments such as agri-tech for crop or livestock management, virtual health consultations and augmented reality at visitor attractions.
- In short, if rural communities are poorly connected, digitally, that is a major barrier to increased productivity and growth and those areas are likely to find themselves left yet further behind economically and facing disadvantages.
- The outdoor signal is notably better. However, complete 'not spots', where no 4G signal is available from any operator, make up 3% of England's rural landmass. Across 22% of that rural landmass it is not possible to access a 4G signal from all four networks.
- During 2019 mobile network operators launched 5G at 40 UK locations on a commercially funded basis. All 40 of these locations were in large cities or towns. Unless public sector funding starts to flow soon, rural areas will fall behind in the 5G roll out.
- Research from 2018 estimated that if rural based businesses could resolve their connectivity and other digital constraints, that would add a minimum of £12 billion annually in Gross Value Added to the UK economy.

PROPOSAL 4



Business rates

- The Government is committed to conducting 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.
- We are committed to 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.

RSN POSITION STATEMENT

- The fundamental review is welcomed. Business Rates are a significant factor in leaving rural high streets with far too many vacancies affecting the economic health of the area generally
- In the rural context Business Rates growth will fall behind increased service costs and cannot be relied on (with Council Tax) to fund Local Government services. It will be a difficult balance between a fairer Business Rates system overall and the funding of local government services.

PART 2: PROPOSALS RELATING TO THE RSN's PRIORITY FOR A FAIR DEAL ON HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE.

PROPOSAL 5

NHS Funding Bill and NHS Long Term Plan



NHS FUNDING BILL

- The Government is committed to increasing investment to deliver a world-class health service that provides high quality care for all.
- 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.
- This is the largest cash settlement in NHS history and the first time any Government has delivered such a commitment in legislation.

DELIVERING THE NHS LONG TERM PLAN

- In September 2019 the NHS published a set of recommendations for legislative changes that would enable the NHS to go faster and further in realising the ambitions set out in the 10-year NHS Long Term Plan.
- The Government welcomes the NHS's leadership of this work, and all the input from people across the health and care system and is committed to supporting the implementation of the NHS Long Term Plan.
- The Government is considering the NHS's recommendations thoroughly and will bring forward detailed proposals shortly. This will include measures to tackle barriers the NHS has told Government it faces.
- This will lead to draft legislation that will accelerate the Long -Term Plan for the NHS, transforming patient care and future-proofing our NHS.
- Wider reform will also be supported through transforming hospitals and investing in staff. This includes delivering 50,000 more nurses, with non-repayable maintenance payments of at least £5,000 per year for nursing, midwifery and some allied health professional students, 6,000 more doctors and 6,000 more primary care professionals in general practice.
- The NHS People Plan will ensure that qualified doctors, nurses and allied health professionals with a job offer from the NHS, and who have been trained to a recognised standard, will be offered fast-track entry, reduced visa fees and dedicated support to come to the UK.

Other stated measures

- Under this Government there will be 50 million more appointments in GP surgeries every year. These will enable more people to access care and



reduce the time that patients are left waiting.

➤ **RSN POSITION STATEMENT**

- The RSN Call for a Rural Strategy proposed the following:
- **A fair allocation of funding to rural areas:** funding for the NHS, social care and public health should each be overhauled to reflect actual patterns of demand and to take full account of the extra costs of service provision in sparsely populated areas⁷. As a matter of principle, rural and urban residents should receive equitable service provision.
- **A rural proofed model for health care delivery: in many areas the NHS**
 - Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STPs) propose reconfiguring secondary and tertiary health care services, including A&E, elective and other hospital provision. Often these plans would result in more centralised services. Whilst a medical case can be made for specialising care at one location, this needs balancing against the need for patient (and visitor) access to services, not least from outlying rural areas. STPs should also seek more local delivery for non-urgent treatments at clinics, health centres and community hospitals, whilst improving hospital patient transport.
- **A stronger focus on filling vacancies:** recruiting GPs, care workers and other health or social care professionals is difficult in many rural areas. A growing number of surgeries report unfilled vacancies for family doctors, with postings in smaller or rural surgeries apparently less attractive to trainee and younger health care professionals. It is important that rural communities benefit sufficiently from the NHS fund to attract recruits into hard-to-fill posts. Helpful recent recommendations made by the new National Centre for Rural Health and Care include introducing a spatial component to Health Education England's STAR workforce planning tool and developing centres of excellence in rural health and care delivery.
- **A joined-up approach to health and social care:** options for integrating health and social care services may be constrained in rural areas, but the benefits of doing so are perhaps even greater than elsewhere. To that end, the Better Care Fund has been a helpful (pooled) funding pot, despite giving less to rural than urban areas. The direction of travel indicated by the NHS Long Term Plan is helpful, placing the emphasis on preventative approaches and encouraging innovation. The delayed Social Care Green Paper needs to offer further opportunities to move to a more sustainable and effective approach. It will be important for it to recognise rural service delivery cost issues.

PROPOSAL 6



Social care reform

- Putting social care on a sustainable footing is one of the biggest long-term challenges facing society.
- The UK needs a long-term solution that will stand the test of time, and so we are committed to an ambitious three-point plan:
 - The Government is providing councils with an 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. This funding will support local authorities to meet rising demand and continue to stabilise the social care system. This will help pay for more social care staff and better infrastructure, technology and facilities.
 - The Government will urgently seek a cross-party consensus in order to bring forward the necessary proposals and legislation for long-term social care reform in England.
 - In doing so, the Government will ensure that nobody needing care will be forced to sell their home to pay for it.

RSN POSITION STATEMENT

The RSN Call for a Rural Strategy said:

A fair allocation of funding to rural areas: funding for the NHS, social care and public health should each be overhauled to reflect actual patterns of demand and to take full account of the extra costs of service provision in sparsely populated areas. As a matter of principle, rural and urban residents should receive equitable service provision. Rural residents should not be paying more Council Tax for fewer services. Despite some additional funding announced in the 2018 Budget, local taxation has become unable to meet the growing need for social care and a case now exists to finance social care services managed by local authorities differently, with their statutory provision fully funded by central Government. This would address the current unfairness and make it easier to cope with future demand.

PROPOSAL 7

Mental health reform

- The Government needs to modernise the Mental Health Act to ensure people have greater control over their treatment and receive the dignity and respect they deserve.



- People subject to the Act will receive better care and have a much greater say in that care.
- Patients will have greater choice and autonomy, including the ability to set out their preferences around care and treatment in advance.
- The Government will reform the process for detention, improve care and treatment whilst someone is detained and give them better support to challenge detention.
- The Government commissioned the Independent Review of the Mental Health Act to look at rising rates of detention under the Act; the disproportionate number of people from black and minority ethnic groups detained under the Act; and processes that are out of step with a modern mental health care system. We will respond to the Review's recommendations through a White Paper in the new year followed by legislation when Parliamentary time allows.
- The Government will make it easier for people with learning disabilities and autism to be discharged from hospital and improve how they are treated in law.

RSN POSITION STATEMENT

- The RSN has not specifically separated issues relating to Mental Health support from the generality of issues relation to Health and Care.
- The RSN has referred to the need for accessible help and support for younger people dealing with mental health issues.
- The RSN has referred to the issues of isolation and loneliness as exacerbating factors in the rural context.

PART 3: PROPOSALS RELATING TO THE RSN's PRIORITY FOR A PLACE TO LEARN AND GROW

PROPOSAL 8

EDUCATION

- A great education is fundamental to the success of children, their families and



our communities, as well as the success of our country.

- The Government is giving schools a multi-billion-pound boost, investing a total of £14 billion more over three years, on top of £4.5 billion for teacher's pensions. Overall, that translates to £150 million a week. The core schools' budget will be £7.1 billion higher in 2022-23 compared to this year.
- 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.
- It is vital we ensure that the pay offer for teachers is positioned at the top of the graduate labour market – ensuring we recruit and retain a world class profession – and that is why we have announced plans to significantly raise starting pay to £30,000 nationally by September 2022.
- The Government will also continue to expand the successful free schools programme, promoting choice, innovation and higher standards to kick-start wider improvement.
- The Government wants to bring renewed focus to further and technical education, and will ensure our post-16 education system enables young people and adults to gain the skills required for success and to help the economy.
- This means an extra £400 million for 16-19-year-old education next year, an increase of 7 per cent overall in 16-19-year-old funding and the biggest injection of new money in a single year since 2010.
- There will also be additional investment in T Levels, supporting continued preparation for these courses with the first three starting from September 2020.
- This means that funding is increasing even faster for 16-19-year-old schooling than for 5-16-year-old schooling.
- The Government will invest an additional £3 billion over the course of this Parliament to support the creation of a 'National Skills Fund'.



- The Government will invest £1.8 billion over five years in a rebuilding programme to upgrade the entire further education college estate.
- The Government are also planning to establish 20 Institutes of Technology across England- unique collaborations between further education colleges, universities, and employers — offering higher technical education and training in science, technology, engineering and maths subjects, to give people the skills they need for key sectors such as digital, construction, advanced manufacturing and engineering.
- The Government is committed to making sure higher education funding reflects a sustainable model that supports high quality provision, maintaining our world-leading reputation for higher education and delivering value for money for both students and the taxpayer.
- The Government will ensure that our universities are places where free speech can thrive, and will strengthen academic freedoms.
- The Government wants to ensure we deliver better value for students in post-18 education, have more options that offer the right education for each individual, and remove barriers to access for disadvantaged young people.
- The Government is considering the thoughtful recommendations made in the Augar Review carefully.
- The Government will boost Ofsted inspection so that parents can be confident they have the fullest picture of quality at their child's school. We will consult on lifting the inspection exemption so that outstanding schools are inspected routinely.
- To ensure children are getting an active start to life, The Government will invest in primary school PE teaching and ensure that it is being properly delivered. The Government wants to do more to help schools make good use of their sports facilities and to promote physical literacy and competitive sport.

Stated Key Facts

- This year the core schools budget is £43.5 billion. Additional funding will allow for a cash increase of £2.6 billion next year, £4.8 billion in 2021-22, and £7.1 billion in 2022-23, compared to this year. This is in addition to the £1.5 billion per year we will continue to provide to fund additional pension costs for



teachers over the next three years. By 2022-23 the core schools budget will rise to £52.2 billion.

- The schools NFF allocates core funding for mainstream schools and will provide primary schools at least £3,750 per pupil next year, and secondary schools at least £5,000 per pupil. Special schools, pupil referral units, and alternative provision academies are funded separately through the high needs formula, at a rate of £10,000 per place. Local authorities can also provide top-up funding in respect of individual pupils in these settings.
- In 2020-21 alone, school funding will increase by 5 per cent overall compared to in 2019-20 – with the lowest-funded schools seeing higher gains.
- As part of this investment, we are providing £780 million of additional funding for complex special educational needs specifically next year – that is a 12 per cent increase.
- Secondary free schools are amongst some of the highest performing state-funded schools in the country. In 2018, seven of the top 15 provisional Progress 8 scores for state-funded schools in England were achieved by free schools, including three in the top five.
- Record proportion of 16 and 17-year-olds are participating in education or apprenticeships, the highest since consistent records began.
- In 2019, the proportion of English 18-year olds entering higher education increased to a record entry rate of 35.0 per cent.
- The proportion of English 18 year-olds from disadvantaged backgrounds entering HE increased from 11.3 per cent in 2006 to 21.6 per cent in 2019. (Full time undergraduate study).
- In 2019, £38 million was made available to help the first T level providers to build new classrooms, refurbish buildings and upgrade their equipment in readiness to deliver the new qualifications from September 2020.



RSN POSITION STATEMENT

The RSN Call for a Rural Strategy said:

Rural schools often benefit from having experienced staff and most of them perform well, if measured against pupil achievements at key stages or in exam results. However, there are significant challenges which should be addressed by a Rural Strategy. They are:

- o Sustaining schools with small (or fluctuating) pupil numbers;
- o Managing school budgets when operating costs are high;
- o Recruiting and retaining teaching and support staff; and
- o Finding appropriate models for school collaboration.

What would make a difference?

- **A presumption against school closures:** the long-standing Government policy, which is a presumption against rural school closures, has been helpful in protecting many small schools. There can be circumstances where closures are justified, but generally if village schools close there is a considerable social cost: the community is less sustainable and children are required to travel further. School rolls are more prone to fluctuation from year to year in small schools and the presumption helps protect them through this cycle. A rural strategy would offer a good opportunity to restate the intention behind this presumption and its 2013 statutory guidance, while stressing that decisions should make the interests of children paramount.
- **A fair and realistic funding basis:** historically, the funding (per pupil) received by schools varied significantly and to the detriment of those in predominantly rural
 - o areas. The National Funding Formula for schools, now being gradually introduced, is very welcome, but it should allow for more than minimum staffing levels and should benefit all small rural schools (which it currently does not). Schools with a small roll often miss out on capital funding for maintenance or modernisation, with expenditure being focused on larger school development projects. It is important that sufficient funding is set aside for smaller projects, to make rural schools fit for purpose.
- **A stronger focus on rural recruitment:** a third of rural head teachers say that their school's location impedes their ability to attract new teaching staff. Some teachers are put off by the prospect of teaching mixed age groups or having less opportunity to develop specialisms. Gaps in staffing can also be harder to manage in small schools. A more effective strategy is needed to encourage teaching staff to take up vacancies that arise in rural schools. This could include exposure to rural schools during teacher training, more effort to attract people



from rural communities into the teaching profession and the provision of (affordable) key worker housing.

- **A workable approach to collaboration:** smaller rural schools may benefit particularly from collaboration or clustering, where it allows them to share resources and expertise. This can include shared Heads and shared teaching staff. Moreover, there is some evidence that collaboration is associated with better pupil performance. However, given their higher cost base, small or isolated schools are often seen as unattractive by Multi-Academy Trusts – the Government’s preferred collaboration structure. National policy should recognise this limitation, making extra support available so that small rural schools can adopt a model which best suits their circumstances and enables them to deliver an excellent education.
- In figures released by the Government on February 11, 2020, schools in areas classified as Predominantly Urban, received 8% on average more than those in Predominantly Rural areas for 2019/20.
- Rural schools typically play an important role at the heart of their community and provide a high-quality education. It is imperative that education policies – focused on the needs of children – support them and help them to face particular rural challenges. At a minimum however, they need to be fairly funded to ensure that rural pupils do not suffer disadvantage.

PART 4: PROPOSALS RELATING TO THE RSN’s PRIORITY FOR AN AFFORDABLE PLACE TO LIVE.

PROPOSAL 9

Housing

- The Government will support people to realise the dream of homeownership. One of the biggest divides in our country is between those who can afford their own home and those who cannot.
- The Government will shortly launch a consultation on First Homes. This will provide homes for local people and key workers at a discount of at least 30 per cent - saving them tens of thousands of pounds.
- The discount on First Homes will be secured through a covenant. This means these homes will remain discounted in perpetuity, supporting people now and in the future, who aspire to own a home of their own.
- The Government will also renew the Affordable Homes Programme, building hundreds of thousands of new homes for a range of people in different places.



This will help us prevent people from falling into homelessness while also supporting further people into homeownership.

- We will introduce a new, reformed Shared Ownership model, making buying a share of a home fairer and more transparent. This new model will be simpler to understand and better able shared owners to buy more of their property and eventually reach full ownership.
- To deliver on the homes this country needs, the Government is committed to building at least a million more homes over this Parliament. In the coming months we will set out further steps to achieve this, including an ambitious Planning White Paper and funding for critical infrastructure.
- The Planning White Paper will make the planning process clearer, more accessible and more certain for all users, including homeowners and small businesses. It will also address resourcing and performance in Planning Departments.
- The new £10bn Single Housing Infrastructure fund will provide the roads, schools and GP surgeries needed to support new homes. Alongside First Homes, this will ensure local people truly benefit from house building in their area and build support for new developments
- To help those who rent, the Government will build a rental system that is fit for the modern day – supporting landlords to provide high quality homes while protecting tenants. The Government's Better Deal for Renters will fulfil our manifesto commitments to abolish 'no fault' evictions and to introduce lifetime deposits, alongside further reforms to strengthen the sector for years to come.
- The Government is taking forward a comprehensive programme of reform to end unfair practices in the leasehold market. This includes working with the Law Commission to make buying a freehold or extending a lease easier, quicker and more cost effective – and to reinvigorate commonhold and Right to Manage.
- The Government will ensure that if a new home can be sold as freehold, then it will be. We will get rid of unnecessary ground rents on new leases and give new rights to homeowners to challenge unfair charges. The Government will also close legal loopholes to prevent unfair evictions and make it faster and cheaper to sell a leasehold home.
- For those in the social rented sector, we will bring forward a Social Housing White Paper which will set out further measures to empower tenants and



support the continued supply of social homes. This will include measures to provide greater redress, better regulation and improve the quality of social 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.

Stated Key facts

Housing Supply/Affordable Homes

- Annual net additions in England reached over 241,000 in 2018-19, the highest in over 30 years.
- Since 2010, we have delivered over 464,500 new affordable homes, including over 331,800 affordable homes for rent.
- Through the Housing Infrastructure Fund, the Government has already allocated £3.07 billion to unlock over 280,000 homes.

➤ **RSN POSITION STATEMENT**

➤ **The RSN Call for a Rural Strategy says:**

- **A planning policy to fit rural circumstances:** most development sites in rural areas are small. Recent changes to planning policy exclude small sites (of less than 10 dwellings) from the requirement that private developers include a proportion of affordable homes. Despite certain qualifications in designated rural areas, the impact on affordable housing delivery is proving significant and negative. Indeed, this had been the main way that such housing was built and it required no public subsidy. A simple solution would be to exempt all small rural settlements from the policy change, allowing affordable housing quotas again where they are most needed.
- **A realistic definition of affordable:** in most rural areas the greatest need for affordable housing is that for social rented housing. Many households cannot afford to pay anywhere near open market prices or rents. However, national policy has broadened the definition of 'affordable housing' to include Starter Homes, which are for sale at a 20% discount, and Affordable Rent, which is for



rent at up to 80% of market prices. These tenures have their place, but the overriding need is to increase

- the supply of truly affordable homes. This could be assisted by improved funding for housing associations (see below) and allowing local planning authorities more discretion to set tenures in Local Plan policies.
- **A dedicated rural affordable housing programme:** a specific grant programme is needed, designed to boost delivery by housing associations in small rural settlements. This could be managed by Homes England and run at a scale which meets the shortfall in delivery identified by the 2014 Rural Housing Policy Review. It should offer grant rates which account for the fact that small-scale development in rural areas is comparatively costly. Grants should also be sufficient to encourage good design and energy efficiency measures. Similarly, a share of the Community Housing Fund, which usefully supports community land trusts, co-housing and self-build projects, should be allocated to rural projects, thus meeting the original objective for this fund.
- **A bolstering of landowner and community support:** landowners' willingness to release land for rural exception sites, at prices which forego hope value, depends on them being assured it will only ever be used for affordable housing. At present there is uncertainty, which undermines policy delivery. One way to boost delivery of exception sites would be putting into law the ability to attach an affordability purpose to the sale deeds. Rural community support for affordable housing development would be enhanced if the occupancy of new homes was widened from those on local housing registers, to include those in nearby parishes or settlements who currently live in insecure rented or tied accommodation. Government could also explore exempting the sale of land for rural exception sites from Capital Gains Tax.
- **A replenishing of social housing:** The Right to Buy policy for local authority housing tenants has severely depleted the stock of affordable homes in rural areas. Figures show that for every 8 rural homes sold to their tenants, only 1 replacement home was built. At present only half of the sale proceeds go back to local housing authorities. Those authorities should be able to retain 100% of the proceeds from Right to Buy sales, enabling them to re-invest it and replenish the stock of affordable homes. This would complement the recent Government announcement, that it is lifting the cap on local authority borrowing to build social housing.
- In respect of the First Homes proposals recently consulted on the RSN's position is that the lack of affordable sale housing and the low level of first time buyers in rural areas is well documented. In this context the First Homes proposal that sets a discount, currently at 30% of market values, could make a valuable contribution to addressing this challenge. In so doing it could help to redress the rapidly ageing rural population, contribute to a thriving rural economy and increase the customer and user base to sustain local services and businesses.



- The details are however important and there are aspects of the First Homes proposal that could mean that this tenure could fail to meet the needs of the intended beneficiaries in rural areas and undermine the delivery of other forms of affordable housing. Helpfully, the consultation provides the opportunity to raise these and offer suggestions on how the tenure could be rural proofed before it is introduced. In summary the key areas where rural circumstances need to be taken into account are as follows.
- The higher house prices and lower locally earned incomes in rural areas means that it would be helpful if the level of discount was set at local level, using locally earned median incomes and a standard mortgage borrowing calculator to determine the level of discount. This would be sensitive to rural circumstances and avoid using a definition of key workers that could otherwise exclude employees who are critical to the functioning of the rural economy.
- Landowner willingness to release land at a price that makes it viable to develop this and other forms of affordable housing requires that First Homes remain affordable in perpetuity, even in a rising housing market. A form of 'buy back' arrangement funded with Government grant would avoid this happening. It would also ensure that First Home owners are not trapped because they are unable to sell their home, without it entering the open market.
- The prevalence of larger houses in the rural housing stock and an ageing population means that more than just first-time buyers would benefit from this form of discounted sale housing. For example, older residents who are seeking to downsize to release capital to cover every day costs and care needs.
- Housing Needs Surveys and Strategic Housing Market Assessments continue to demonstrate that the greatest need in rural communities is for truly affordable rented homes. There are a number of proposals in the consultation that could lead to rented affordable homes being squeezed out, including proposed changes to Entry Level Exception sites.
- The changes to the Entry Level Exception Site (ELES) policy could pose an existential threat to the continuation of rural exception site policy. As ELES will only be required to provide First Homes the land price will be higher. This will reduce landowner willingness to release lower value rural exception sites that unlike ELES deliver affordable and social rented housing.

PART 5: PROPOSALS RELATING TO THE RSN's PRIORITY FOR CLEAN GROWTH (NET ZERO/DECARBONISATION).

PROPOSAL 10

Climate change

- Climate change is one of the greatest challenges we face.
- The UK has shown that we can grow our economy whilst reducing emissions. We have decarbonised faster than any other G20 nation since 2000, are a world-leader in offshore wind, and there are now nearly 400,000 jobs in low carbon industries and their supply chains.
- The Government has already led the world by legislating for Net Zero



greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. In the last 12 months the Government has:

- Achieved a record 53 per cent share of electricity generation from low carbon sources, supported by policies including the Contracts for Difference scheme.
 - Launched the Offshore Wind Sector Deal, to deliver increased offshore wind capacity, boost the UK economy and continue to reduce costs.
 - Announced an Industrial Energy Transformation Fund with £315m of government funding to help business decarbonise and reduce their energy bills.
 - Published our Carbon Capture, Usage and Storage Action Plan, in line with our ambition of having the option to deploy CCUS at scale during the 2030s.
 - Launched the £400m Charging Infrastructure Investment Fund to drive uptake of electric vehicles.
 - Published our Green Finance Strategy, Resources and Waste Strategy and Clean Air Strategy to leave our natural environment in a better state than we found it and catalyse investment in green infrastructure, technologies and services.
 - Announced that the UK will double its international climate finance to £11.6 billion in the period 2021 to 2025.
- We will build on our progress with an ambitious programme of policy and investment, with our first Budget prioritising the environment. This will help deliver the green infrastructure needed to improve lives and achieve Net Zero, including by investing in carbon capture, offshore wind, nuclear energy, and electric vehicle infrastructure so that individuals are always within 30 miles of a chargepoint. We will make sure we help lower energy bills investing in the energy efficiency of homes, schools and hospitals. And away from home, we will use our £1 billion Ayrton Fund to develop affordable clean energy for developing countries.
 - The government will continue to use our position as a global leader in this area by hosting the UN Climate Change Summit in Glasgow in 2020 (COP26). We will ask our partners to match the UK's ambition.
 - With a focus on nature-based solutions at our upcoming COP summit, at home we will be substantially increasing our tree-planting commitment and creating a



£640 million new Nature for Climate fund.

- Our natural environment is one of our greatest assets, and can play a crucial role in the fight against climate change. This government will:
 - introduce a landmark Environment Bill – the first one in twenty years – that will create an ambitious environmental governance framework for post Brexit, as well as banning the export of plastic waste to non-OECD countries;
 - establish a new £500 million Blue Planet Fund to help protect our oceans from plastic pollution, warming sea temperatures and overfishing;
 - lead diplomatic efforts to protect 30 per cent of the world’s oceans by 2030; and,
 - in our trade negotiations, never compromise on our high environmental protection
- We will also ensure that we are protecting our citizens by investing £4 billion in flood defences and lowering energy bills by investing £9.2 billion in the energy efficiency of homes, schools and hospitals.
- We will increase our ambition on offshore wind to 40GW by 2030, and enable new floating turbines.
- We will support decarbonisation of industry and power by investing £800 million to build the first fully deployed carbon capture storage cluster by the mid-2020s; and £500 million to help energy-intensive industries move to low-carbon techniques

RSN POSITION STATEMENT

Other than commenting that the needs and circumstances of rural areas must be fully reflected in proposals and that rural areas provide many of the opportunities to meet urban needs but must be beneficiaries of the actions the RSN has no existing position. It will be developed in the next phase of work on the Rural Strategy

PART 6: PROPOSAL IN RESPECT OF WHICH THE RSN HAS NO CURRENT POLICY POSITION

PROPOSAL 11



English devolution

- We are committed to levelling up powers and investment in the regions across England and allowing each part of the country to decide its own destiny.
- This means proposals to transform this country with better infrastructure, better education, and better technology.
- We will publish a White Paper setting out our strategy to unleash the potential of our regions, which will include plans for spending and local growth funding.
- It will provide further information on our plans for full devolution across England, levelling up powers between Mayoral Combined Authorities, increasing the number of mayors and doing more devolution deals.
- These increased powers and funding will mean more local democratic responsibility and accountability.
- We remain committed to the Northern Powerhouse, Midlands Engine, and Western Gateway strategies.

Stated Key facts

- 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.
- By its completion in March 2021, the Local Growth Fund will have invested £12 billion in projects to boost jobs and growth across England.
- 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.
- Growth Deals will be delivered with the Devolved Administrations.
- The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will operate across the UK.
- Some of the city and growth corridor policies will cross borders between England and Wales, and impact in Scotland.

RSN POSITION STATEMENT

- Whilst the RSN does not have a stated position on Devolution it has often commented that there should be no national prescription and that it is a matter for local decision.
- It has stated in the past that it does not feel that a Mayoral Model is right for rural areas.
- It has also stated that Devolution must not be a backdoor way of forcing the creation of Unitary Authorities or the merger of Districts unless fully supported by the area concerned

PART 7: RSN PRIORITIES WHERE THERE ARE NO MEASURES INCLUDED IN THE QUEEN'S SPEECH

PLACES

Fairer funding to address the rural penalty.
 Rural Vulnerability
 Support to Rural Towns/High Streets

FUTURE OF MOBILITY



A place everyone can get around

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Rural Strategy Campaign Development 2020: Project Plan

Title: 'Revitalising Rural – Realising the Vision'

Rural Services Network: February 2020 (v2.1)

A/ The Story So Far

On 1st March 2019 the Rural Services Network (RSN) launched its campaign, calling on Government to produce a comprehensive, cross-departmental and properly funded Rural Strategy for England with local delivery as far as practicable.

In support of its campaign the RSN produced a document titled, *It's Time for a Rural Strategy* (<https://www.rsnonline.org.uk/time-for-a-rural-strategy>). This was not a strategy but, rather, it articulated why a Rural Strategy was needed and called for action on a range of economic, services and other social issues which would remove barriers to achieving the best outcomes for rural areas and the country as a whole. This was widely circulated to Ministers and senior civil servants at all relevant Government Departments and to an array of rural interest groups.

In further support of the campaign the RSN, Rural Coalition, ACRE and Plunkett Foundation organised a series of 'Regional Roadshows' (sponsored by Calor Ltd) to explain the call on government, generate more support and identify any significant regional variations. As a result of the RSN's activities more than 1,000 organisations and individuals have signed up to support the campaign.

In April 2019 the House of Lords Select Committee on the Rural Economy published its report and detailed the evidence it had collected during the course of its work. The Select Committee also called on the Government to produce a Rural Strategy. Its report and the RSN's campaign received further support from the RSA's Food, Farming and Countryside Commission report which was published in July 2019.

However, in its formal response to the House of Lords Select Committee (June 2019) the Government did not support the creation of a rural strategy. Instead, it said:

"Over the coming months, the government will expand on its strategic vision and set out how, working across departments and working with stakeholders, it is putting in place a range of measures to ensure that rural areas continue to thrive. This vision is framed in terms of desired outcomes for rural areas which respect their diversity and recognise that success – in terms of quality of life and economic prosperity – will need different approaches in different parts of the country."

The government agrees with the Committee that those living and working in rural areas can face particular challenges stemming, for example, from relatively poor

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infrastructure and the additional cost of delivering services in sparsely populated areas. Without doubt, these distinct characteristics must be recognised in policy making and the government believes that rural proofing is the best means to achieve that through embedding an appreciation of rural issues at all levels of delivery, rather than risk rural areas being placed in a silo through having a single rural strategy."

The RSN and its partner organisations welcomed the Government's intention to expand on its strategic vision and desired outcomes and offered to work with it to that end. Our future work as set out in this project plan should be viewed in that light.

The RSN, however, does not accept the Government's contention that rural areas risk being placed in a silo through having a single rural strategy. Only a poorly thought out and poorly resourced strategy runs that risk. Neither does the RSN consider that rural proofing obviates the need for a strategy. Rural proofing without a strategy tends to be unfocused, reactive and piecemeal. We accept that rural proofing should be a valuable tool which would help achieve the objectives of a strategy or vision.

In addition to the future activity set out in this Project Plan the RSN and its partner organisations (including Parliamentarians from both Houses) will, therefore, continue to press the case for a strategic response to rural issues.

Since the December 2019 General Election, the new Government has cited "levelling-up" as a core element of its policy agenda, to help left behind communities and families share in the benefits of growth. We will make the case for this levelling-up to apply to rural areas and, in that regard, for rural areas to receive a fair share of the resources and policy attention (tailored to the rural context).

B/ Taking the Campaign Forward

In his foreword to the Government's Industrial Strategy the (then) Business Secretary, Rt Hon Greg Clark MP said:

"A serious strategy must also address the weaknesses that keep us from achieving our full potential. For all the excellence of our world-beating companies, the high calibre of our workforce and the prosperity of many areas, we have businesses, people and places whose level of productivity is well below what can be achieved.

By improving productivity while keeping employment high, we can earn more – raising living standards, providing funds to support our public services and improving the quality of life for all our citizens.

So, this Industrial Strategy deliberately strengthens the five foundations of productivity ..."

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The five foundations of productivity, which are referred to, are:

- People
- Infrastructure
- Business environment
- Places
- Ideas

The RSN will now set about producing documentation under the title 'REVITALISING RURAL – REALISING THE VISION'. This will be based around the five foundations of productivity listed above, though it will also make cross-references to the Grand Challenges expressed in the Industrial Strategy where appropriate (these being Artificial Intelligence and Data, an Ageing Society, Clean Growth and the Future of Mobility). The RSN documentation will also link to current national policy priorities, such as 'levelling-up' and the Government's 2050 Net Zero target. The thrust will be to demonstrate how rural areas can help the Government achieve its aims and to identify barriers to rural areas doing so (citing ways in which those barriers might be addressed). It will seek to show that boosting rural productivity requires action across economic and social agendas, since in practice these are inextricably linked.

It is proposed that the following policy topics are covered (and mapped against the five foundations of productivity):

People: (taken as referring to the rural workforce)

- Training, apprenticeships and further education (including businesses' digital skills)
- Access to affordable housing
- Transport and access to jobs or opportunities
- Migration/migrant workers

Infrastructure:

- Digital connectivity (broadband and mobile)
- Electricity network capacity, e-charge points and renewable energy

Business environment:

- Local Enterprise Partnerships and Local Industrial Strategies
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund and business grants
- Access to business advice and training

Places:

- Land use planning system
- Rural town high streets
- Accessible health and care services
- Sustaining village schools and other local assets
- Role of Parish Councils and community action

Ideas:

- Sustainable farming and land management
- Decarbonising rural economies and communities

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

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- Managing an ageing rural population

Cross references will be built-in, where appropriate, to fair funding and the need to level up in rural areas.

C/ The Project Plan

Objectives:

- To maintain sector leadership by building on the RSN's earlier call for a comprehensive, cross-government and properly funded Rural Strategy (that supports local delivery);
- To keep rural issues on the political agenda at a critical time, with a new Government in place and a large intake of new MPs;
- To move the discussion on from the earlier RSN call for a Rural Strategy document, adding depth around selected policy areas related to the foundations of productivity;
- To assist RSN engagement with Parliamentarians, Government Departments, rural interest organisations and others;
- To create media and promotional opportunities for the RSN based around the policy priorities agreed by its membership.

Approach: the work programme to achieve this will consist of the following broadly sequential steps:

- i. Topic selection: on 13th March 2020 the RSN Executive (by the adoption of this Project Plan) will agree the main policy topics of strategic importance for rural England's economies and communities. These will form the basis of the work programme. RSN members will be informed of the Project Plan details and initial comments invited. These topics will both link back to the Rural Strategy call document and link forward to current Government policy ambitions.
- ii. Initial drafting: this will generate written drafts for opening sections about each of the selected topics, together with an overarching introductory section setting out the purpose and rationale of the document. These topic sections will summarise or provide a narrative about the Government policy context and the rural dimension (both opportunities and challenges or barriers/unfairness's) and seek to demonstrate how removing barriers will help to revitalise rural areas, thus realising the vision. This will make use of existing material e.g. rural evidence, but will involve some further information search and exploration. There may be limited new secondary data analysis if that would add real value (most probably by the RSN data analyst);
- iii. Engagement with interests: this will make use of opportunities, such as RSP member sessions, RSN main meetings and regional seminars, as well as contacting some with a known interest or knowledge on the selected topics. This will be used to test/improve

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the narrative described above and to identify/gather information about potential rural solutions. Through the process of creating this Project Plan the RSN will seek support for its proposals across its membership and across the broad range of organisations concerned about the economic, social and environmental well-being of rural England. Although the timeline below shows this step in sequence, it may be necessary to take advantage of opportunities as and when they happen;

- iv. Complete drafts: the narrative documents will be further developed to turn them into full drafts, which indicate how addressing these rural needs would help Government meet its (national) policy ambitions. These could include a fairer distribution of economic growth, moving towards the net zero emissions target and addressing loneliness/isolation. Each topic chapter or note will have added to it some text setting out two or three practical asks of Government or measures which it should support. The documents will be fairly high level and probably each no more than four pages long – supplementary documents with finer grain detail may be prepared in due course to support the high-level documents;
- v. Consult and finalise: a consultation will be carried out with relevant groups of RSN members and external partners to gather comments. The documents will then be amended and signed off. An overview or summary document of no more than four pages will be produced.

Although topics will be agreed on 13th March 2020, some flexibility of approach should be retained in order to adjust for national policy developments deemed sufficiently relevant.

Output: the physical output from this work will be a set of between four and six narrative chapters or documents (one per selected policy topic or theme) plus an overarching or summary document. This documentation will need to demonstrate the links between them and the need for a co-ordinated (rather than piece-meal) approach, based on local delivery (at the lowest level possible) wherever practicable. These will be (high level) strategic documents which are publishable, albeit mainly to be disseminated online. Whilst focussed on their topic, they will illustrate the interplay between economic, social and environmental benefits, not least in terms of contribution to Government policy ambitions. Dissemination will be backed up by representational and promotional activities involving a range of RSN officers, to include the use of social media messaging.

Timescale: from February to September 2020, aiming to launch the main output from this work at the RSN annual conference on 8th/9th September 2020 (though some promotional work will undoubtedly follow on from that point). A draft project timeline is shown on the final page.

Other resources: the process for producing and disseminating these documents can be informed and assisted by:

- Further planned Rural Strategy Regional Roadshows;

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- Video-conferencing sessions with RSP members representing various sectors;
- An ability to issue calls for local evidence to Sparse Rural members (if needed);
- Access to an existing rural evidence base and an ability (if needed) to undertake some further in-house analysis;
- RSN use of its social media accounts;
- Messaging to reach print and broadcast media (perhaps involving Lexington);
- Existing engagement with a range of rural interest groups;
- Existing contacts with groups in both Houses of Parliament.

Partner linkages: the Rural Coalition and its member organisations (including ACRE and NALC), the Rural Services APPG, the RSN Peers Group, the Rural Fair Share Parliamentary Group, the Rural Housing Alliance, the National Centre for Rural Health & Care/Rural Health & Care Alliance and the NICRE initiative by the higher education sector.

Fit with other RSN work: this work will need to fit, in particular, with the following:

- RSN input to the Fair Funding Review about future local government resource allocation;
- RSN work on affordable housing with ACRE and the Rural Coalition to inform the Spending Review.

A project timeline is shown below.

Timeline in 2020 for producing the topic and overview documents

Project stages	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September
Topic selection								
Early drafting								
Engagement								
Complete drafting								
Consult and sign off								
Launch (RSN conference)								

Note: the timings above are quite tight, but they try to take account of expected peaks in workload and likely holiday leave.

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Report to: Executive

Date: 16 March 2020

Title: **Membership Engagement Plan**

Author: Nadine Trout, Member Development and Support Manager, RSN

Contact: Nadine.Trout@sparse.gov.uk or 01752 686 641

Recommendation of the report:

That the Executive:

- i. Considers the proposed engagement plan detailed below.
- ii. Suggests any desired changes.
- iii. Tasks the Member Development and Support Manager to deliver the engagement plan by December 2021.

Background

In December 2019 the Rural Services Network advertised a new job opportunity, for a Member Development and Support Manager, to act as a replacement for the RSN's Policy Director and to maintain membership. The new role attracted over 30 applicants and resulted in an appointment being made in February 2020 of Nadine Trout.

The Membership Engagement Plan

It is recognised that in order to retain members it is key to have a robust membership engagement plan. Over the coming months it is recommended that a plan - focused on RSP and paid for RHCA membership - includes:

a. Membership audit and segmentation

Time spent fully understanding the current membership and segmenting organisations by:

- Location
- Type
- Size
- Coverage
- Purpose
- Relevant strategy theme(s)

b. Understanding of existing member engagement

Documenting levels of member engagement to date by analysing members engagement including:



- Logo and write up on website
 - Open rates of e-newsletters
 - Observatory and website usage
 - Attendance at member meetings, seminars and events
 - Engagement in research opportunities
- c. Nudging member benefit take up
Based on intelligence gathered from recommendation b. above contact members highlighting the benefits they have personally utilised and reminding them of benefits they haven't yet accessed and might like to try. It is also proposed that the attached leaflets are sent to all members highlighting RSN/RSP achievements to date.
- d. Surveying
Conduct quick and easy to use surveys to garner members preferred method of contact, and where possible engage with members in their preferred way. This may include for example setting up LinkedIn interest groups.
- e. Trial webinars
Many organisations are declaring a climate change emergency and are keen to reduce travel where possible. By using webinars the Network could potentially offer more events cheaply and efficiently, as well as tailor topics to specific segments of the membership.
- f. Proactive and consistent communications
Review all forms of communication to members to ensure consistent messaging and a clear call to action including:
- RSN website
 - Printed literature
 - E-newsletters
 - Social media
- g. Establish regular member review sessions
Schedule review meetings for each member throughout the course of the year, via phone or video conferencing to ensure each member feels valued and is signposted to relevant opportunities.

Conclusion

Managing membership via the methods outlined above should also help with the natural growth of new membership, as member benefits will be clearly understood and an easier sell.



Attachment 13A
**RURAL
SERVICES
NETWORK**

Our 2019



Neighbourhood Planning
evidence base produced for all
parishes within Sparse Local
Authority members



Hosted the **National Rural
Conference 2019** in
Cheltenham with CCRI



Arranged Rural Services
APPG meeting on **Rural
Youth**



Attended **roundtable
discussions** at the Treasury
with key rural organisations

127

Local Authorities in membership

6

Regional networking seminars held around the country
with 20 different expert speakers attending to share
their experiences

Rural bulletins published to over 20,000 people each
week

50

36

Unique Member Insight analysis spreadsheets
personalised down to individual member authorities
level

Rural funding digests produced which highlight a
selection of funding and grant opportunities

12

4

Economic profiling services produced with
individualised member local authority information

Hinterland publications published providing a unique
insight from rural specialist Ivan Annibal

50

13

Rural analysis articles published

Priorities areas for action

We believe that there are 8 key elements which make up a
vibrant rural community. Learn more by visiting:

www.rsonline.org.uk/category/priority-areas-for-action





Call on Government for a Rural Strategy

2 Roadshows focusing on the Rural Strategy took place in the North East and the North West

Presentation on Rural Strategy Campaign to:

- **Liberal Democrat Party Conference**
- **Labour Party Conference**
- **Yorkshire Farming, Food and Community Network**

592 individuals and 320 organisations signed up to support Rural Strategy campaign

The 2019/20 Settlement saw the retention of £81M of Rural Services Delivery Grant hard fought for by the RSN. We continued campaigning to see the principle extended to all rural authorities



**RURAL
SERVICES
NETWORK**



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www.rsnonline.org.uk

**Represented members
on the National Centre
for Rural Health & Care
and National Rural
Crime Networks**

RHCA
THE RURAL HEALTH & CARE ALLIANCE

NRCN
National Rural Crime Network



London RSN meetings



Evidence submitted to Parliamentary Inquiry and consultation

- **EFRA Select Committee on Rural Broadband**
- **Oral and written evidence submitted to House of Lords Select Committee on Rural Economy**
- **Response submitted to Mandatory Minimum per pupil funding levels in 5-16 school funding**
- **Response to Fair Funding Consultation**
- **MHCLG Making Home Ownership Affordable**
- **MHCLG Local Government Finance and the 2019 Spending Review**
- **Payment Systems Regulator Access to and use of Cash**

97

2x Sparse meetings

2x Rural Assembly meetings

2x Rural Economy Group meetings

**2x Rural Health and Care Group
meetings**

Our 2019



Neighbourhood Planning
evidence base available for
use by member organisations



RSN hosted the **National
Rural Conference** 2019 in
Cheltenham with CCRI



RSN Arranged **Rural
Services APPG** meeting on
Rural Youth



Hosted 2 **London meetings**
where all **RSP members**
could attend

203

Organisations in RSP membership

6

Regional networking seminars held around the country with 20 different expert speakers attending to share their experiences

Rural bulletins published to over 20,000 people each week

50

12

Rural funding digests produced which highlight a selection of funding and grant opportunities

Hinterland publications published providing a unique insight from rural specialist Ivan Annibal

50

13

Rural analysis articles published

Priorities areas for action

We believe that there are 8 key elements which make up a vibrant rural community. Learn more by visiting:

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**Represented members
on the National Centre
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and National Rural
Crime Networks**

RHCA
THE RURAL HEALTH & CARE ALLIANCE

NRCN
National Rural Crime Network



Sharing rural knowledge

Rural Services Partnership organisations have shared their experiences and best practice this year:

- **Rural Services Partnership Spotlight publications – published quarterly**
 - These have included features on 22 of our members in more detail to publish their work and to share best practice with other rural organisations.
- **6 member organisations have featured as speakers at the Regional networking seminars**
 - Organisations have shared best practice and discussed particular rural issues in their region