



Rural Services Network Campaigning and rural policy

**Kerry Booth, Chief Executive
Rural Services Network
June 2023**



The background of the slide features several stacks of gold coins. The stacks are arranged in a row, with the tallest stack on the left and the shortest on the right. The coins are highly reflective, showing highlights and shadows. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

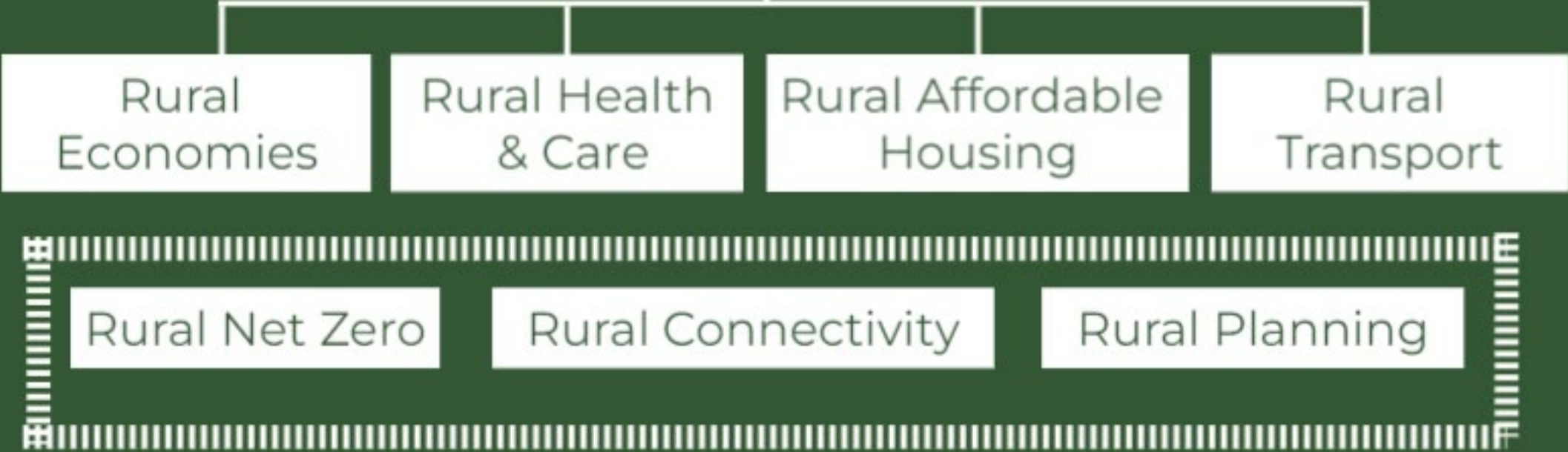
The Rural Services Network is fighting for a fair deal for rural communities, in all public sector funding



**We want a fairer
distribution of
national resources
to rural areas and
for more nuanced
national policies
that reflect rural
circumstances.**

Rural Services Network

Fair Funding



Rural Facts



Urban areas get 38% more in Government Funded Spending Power than rural areas.

Urban areas in 2023/2024 will receive some 38% (£135) per head in Government Funded Spending Power more than their rural counterparts



£110

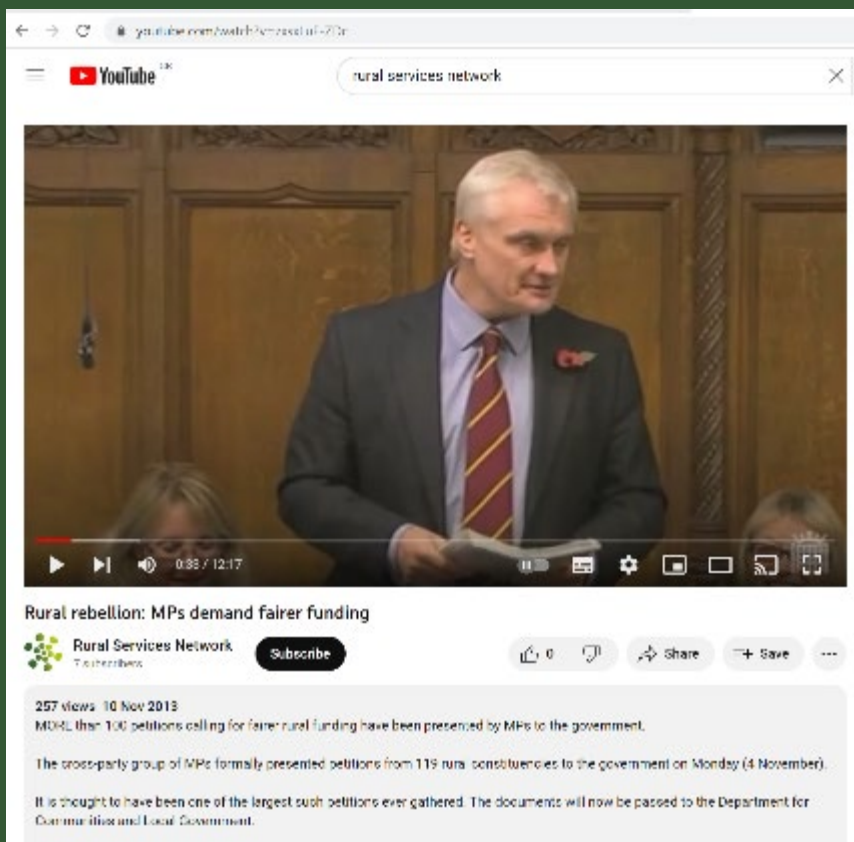
Rural Residents pay on average £110 per head more in Council Tax

Rural residents will pay on average, 20% (£110) per head **more** in Council Tax than their urban counterparts due to receiving less Government Grant



Urban authorities in 2022/2023 budgeted to spend almost **double** that of rural authorities on discretionary services





The Rural Services Network has been campaigning for fair funding for local authorities for a number of years, supporting MPs with information and statistics to understand the approach of Government to rural areas.

Fair Funding Campaign Timeline

July 2012 –

Government issues technical consultation which includes exemplifications (based on the 2012/13 formulae) showing the impact of proposed changes to sparsity weighting in the formulae. The exemplifications show a significant redistribution in favour of rural areas

Dec 2012 –

The technical changes to sparsity were supported by the majority of respondents to the July 2012 consultation and were consequently implemented in the provisional settlement for 2013/14. However, the damping mechanism (and other changes) wiped out the majority of the gains to rural authorities leaving them with only about a quarter of the additional funding arising from the technical changes. The formula was the frozen from further change.



Fair Funding Campaign Timeline

Summer 2014 –

DCLG/Defra undertook a joint study on the additional cost of rural services. This study looked at 30 authorities including rural and urban across a number of local government services.

Dec 2014 –

As part of the provisional settlement, the Government publishes the results of the study into the additional cost of rural services. They concluded:

“Several drivers for additional rural costs were identified in the research including the small size of rural authorities, scattered and remote populations, lack of private sector providers and poor broadband and mobile coverage in rural areas.”



Government investment in the Rural Services Delivery Centres

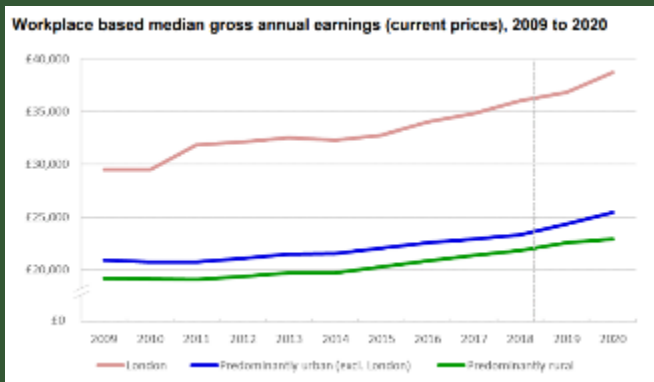
£689 Million for the most sparsely populated rural councils in last 10 years



We continue to campaign for fair funding for rural areas:

- In the last few weeks, we've met with DHLUC Officials about the funding formula
- Last week, we met with Rt Hon Michael Gove, alongside some Leaders of Councils to ask for fair funding for rural areas
- We are working on a campaign in the coming months with MPs

Rural Affordable Housing



Wages earned in rural areas are lower than in urban areas, and the cost of living in rural areas is higher.

House prices are less affordable in Predominantly Rural areas than in Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London).

In 2020/21, the average lower quartile house price was 9.2 times the average lower quartile earnings in Predominantly Rural areas. This compares with 8.0 times in Predominantly Urban areas (excluding London)

Annual average sale price of houses:

Rural	£388,400
Urban (excl London)	£277,500

Over £100,000 more expensive!

Holiday homes are 'hollowing out' coastal areas, says MP

Labour MP Luke Pollard says Covid-19 has 'turbo-charged' housing crisis in rural and coastal towns



Whitby residents have voted overwhelmingly for curbs on second homes. Photograph: Edwin Remsberg/Getty Images

Coastal communities are being "hollowed out irretrievably" by a surge in holiday homes, an MP has warned, as new figures showed more than 17,000 properties in England have been "flipped" into short-term lets since Covid-19.

New research: a huge rise in holiday lets is strangling rural communities



News story

Right to buy extension to make home ownership possible for millions more people

The Prime Minister has announced 2.5 million tenants renting their homes from housing associations will be given the right to buy them outright.

From: [Prime Minister's Office, 10 Downing Street](#), [The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP](#), [The Rt Hon Thérèse Coffey MP](#), and [The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP](#)
Published 9 June 2022



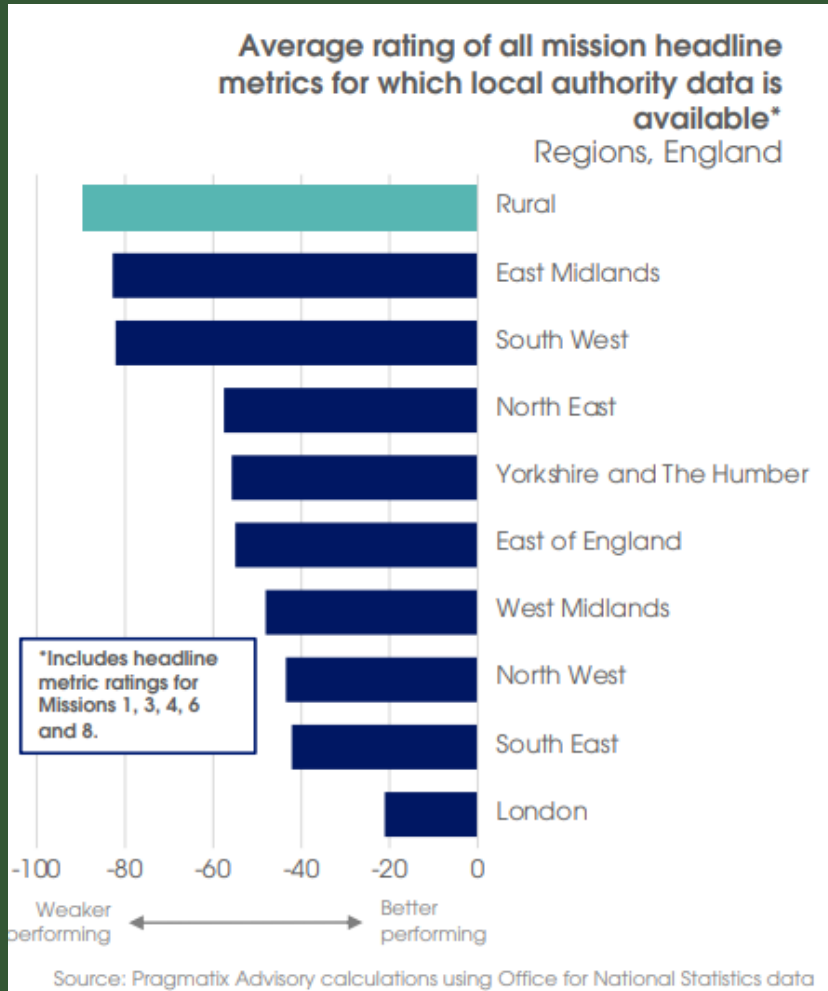
Campaigning for a fair deal for rural communities

Rural Affordable Housing – our asks

We want to see Government:

- **Produce a rural housing** strategy detailing how the numbers of homes (both for ownership and affordable rent) will be built and delivered across rural communities over the next decade. In so doing, introduce and fund an ambitious annual target for the number of new genuinely affordable homes built in rural areas and deliver this through a dedicated rural affordable housing funding programme.
- **Fund Rural Housing Enablers** for all rural local authorities for the next 5 years
- **Rural proof** all planning policy changes which may be introduced – to ensure that they help and support the provision of affordable housing in rural areas
- Exclude rural from the right to buy extensions.
- Help tackle the causes of rural homelessness

Does rural need levelling up?



Were England's rural communities a distinct region, their need for Levelling Up would be **greater** than that of any other part of the country

Productivity in England

Productivity in
England is
£56,000



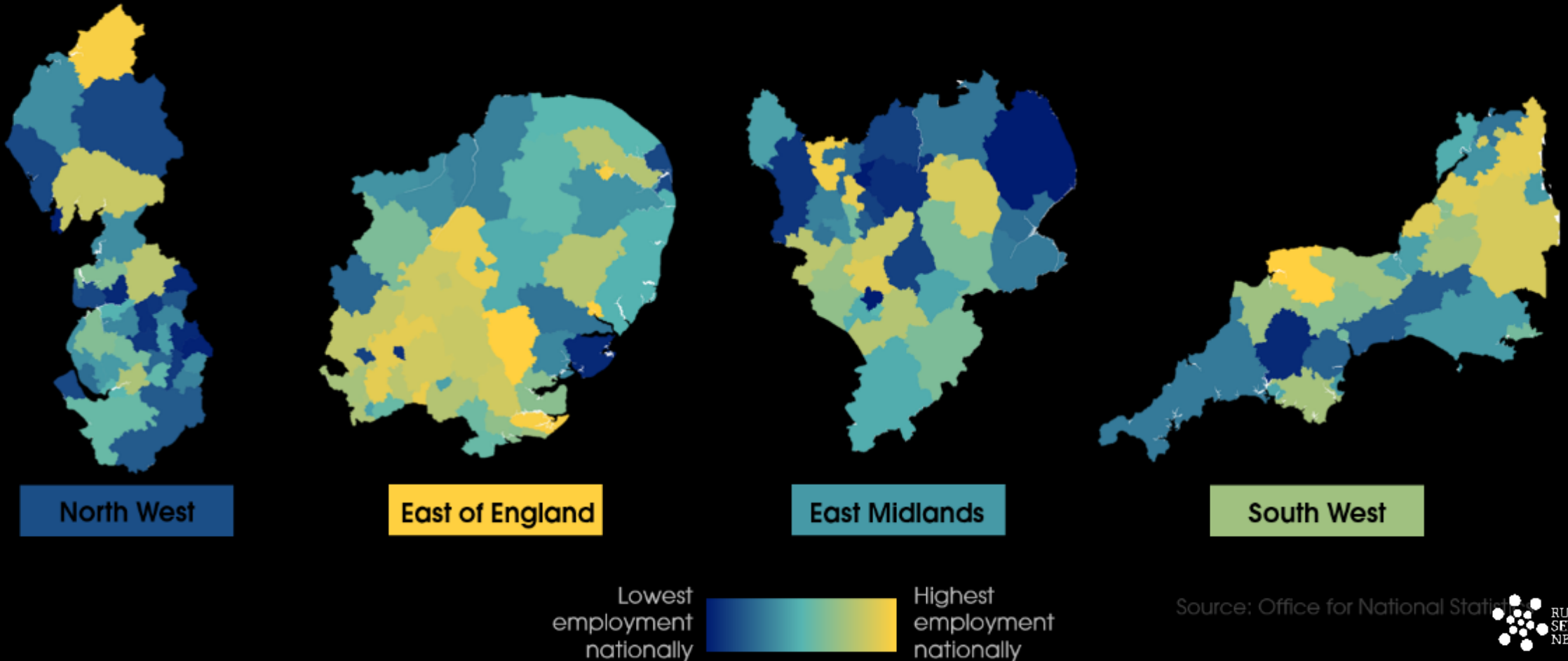
Productivity in
England is 23%
higher than in
rural areas

Productivity in
Predominantly
rural is £45,400

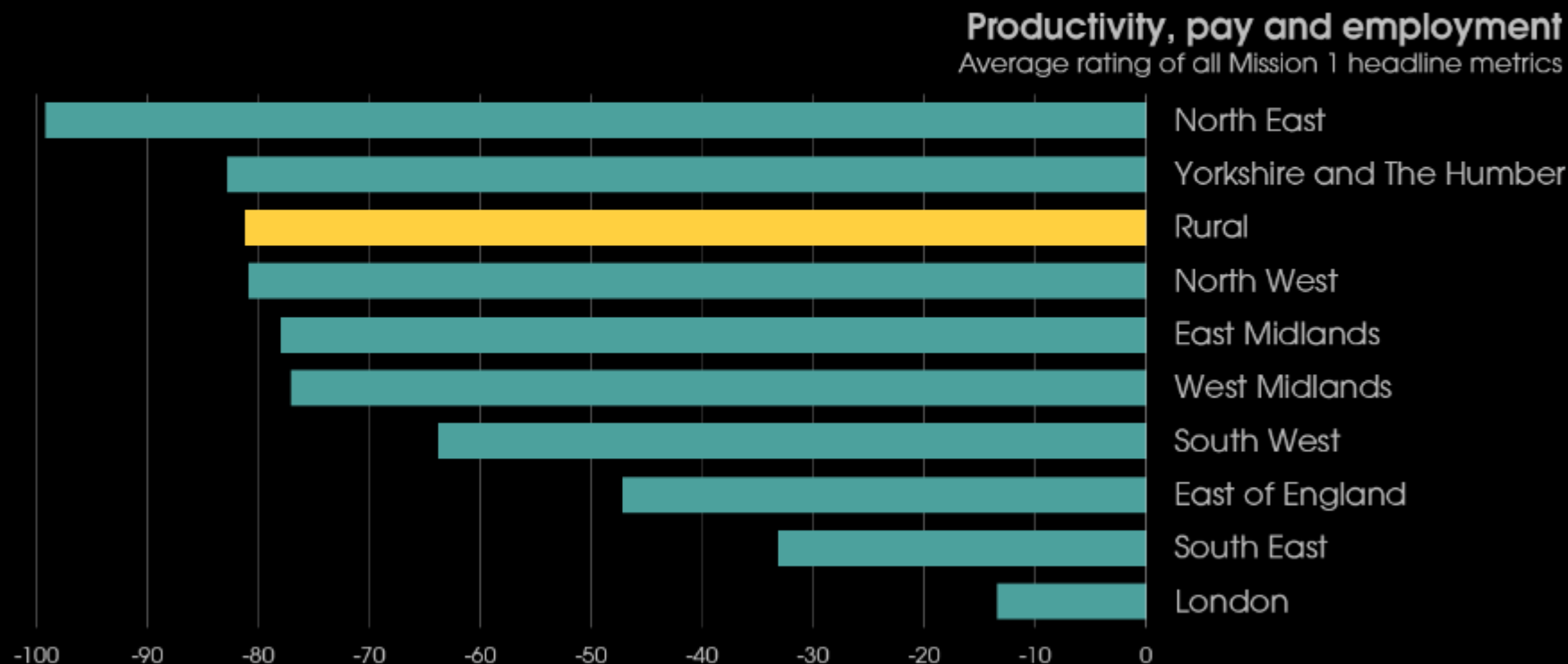


Differences within are greater than between regions

Employment rate for 16- to 64-year-olds
2021, per cent, national scale



But there's also a serious economic gap to close



Source: Pragmatix Advisory calculations using Office for National Statistics data

Challenges for the rural economy

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

Rural Economies– our asks

We want to see Government:

- **Ensure** that the choice of metrics include more rural-relevant indicators such as work placed based incomes, fuel poverty levels, access to further education and house prices relative to local earnings. All national programmes, in addition to reflecting the circumstances and needs of rural communities and business, must also fully reflect the full range of costs in providing support and services across rural areas
- **Devolve** decision making and resources to local areas as far as possible, creating the flexibility for tailored solutions to prioritise and meet local needs and opportunities
- Deliver a support programme for small and micro businesses in rural areas and community entrepreneurs, especially start-ups and those seeking to grow
- **Ensure** that meaningful and demonstrable rural proofing is a fundamental part of all economic (and other) policy development, delivery, and outcome monitoring

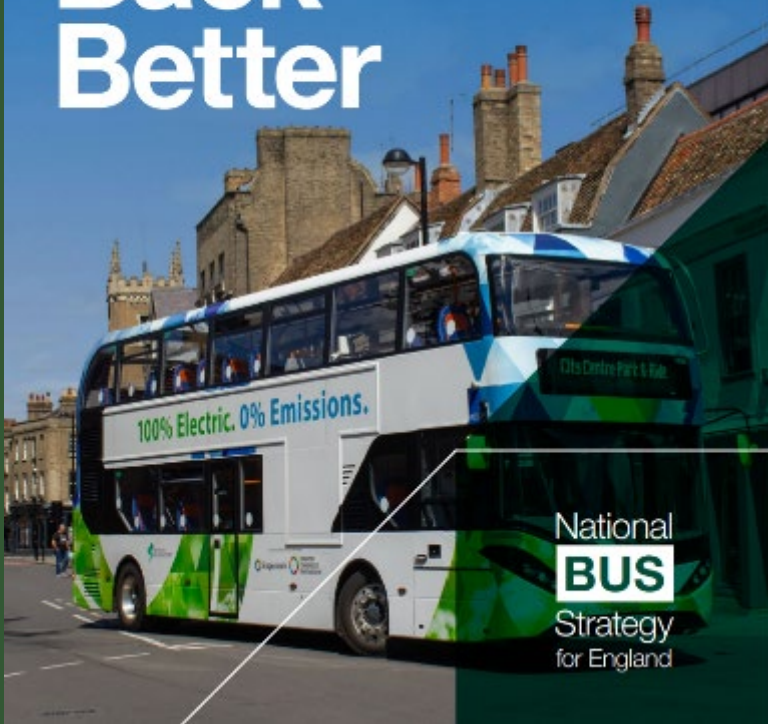
PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Discretionary Spend Comparison

In 2022/23 planned expenditure on **PUBLIC TRANSPORT** per resident is **OVER 5X MORE IN** predominantly **URBAN AREAS**



Bus Back Better



T: 04.2022 RURAL ANGER ON BUS FUNDING

ACCESS TO SERVICES NEWS RURAL TOWNSEND RUS FUNDING POLICIES RURAL WELLBEING TV RUS IN FUNDING CAMPAIGN



On the 5th April the Government announced its long-awaited funding allocations for Bus Service Improvement Plans.

The RSN's Chief Executive, Graham Biggs, comments here:

"Well now we have it – or rather for most rural areas now you don't!!"

The headline to the Government's announcement is misleading in referring to a £7 billion package to level up transport outside London. Only £1.08bn has been allocated to Bus Service Improvement Plans. £5.7bn is in respect of 'City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement' announced by the Chancellor in the Autumn Statement.

I cannot recall the last time that so many rural councils voiced their anger at specific service funding allocations. Words like "complete waste of time, energy and resources" and "rural clearly doesn't exist in the mind of Government" were commonplace. The suggestion that those not receiving funding did not show sufficient ambition rubbed salt into an open wound. Ambition must surely reflect where the service is now and be realistic in what can be achieved in given timescales – otherwise it is ambition doomed to fail.



HM Government

Unleashing rural opportunity



Future of Rural Transport Rural Strategy...on it's way?

Rural Transport- our asks

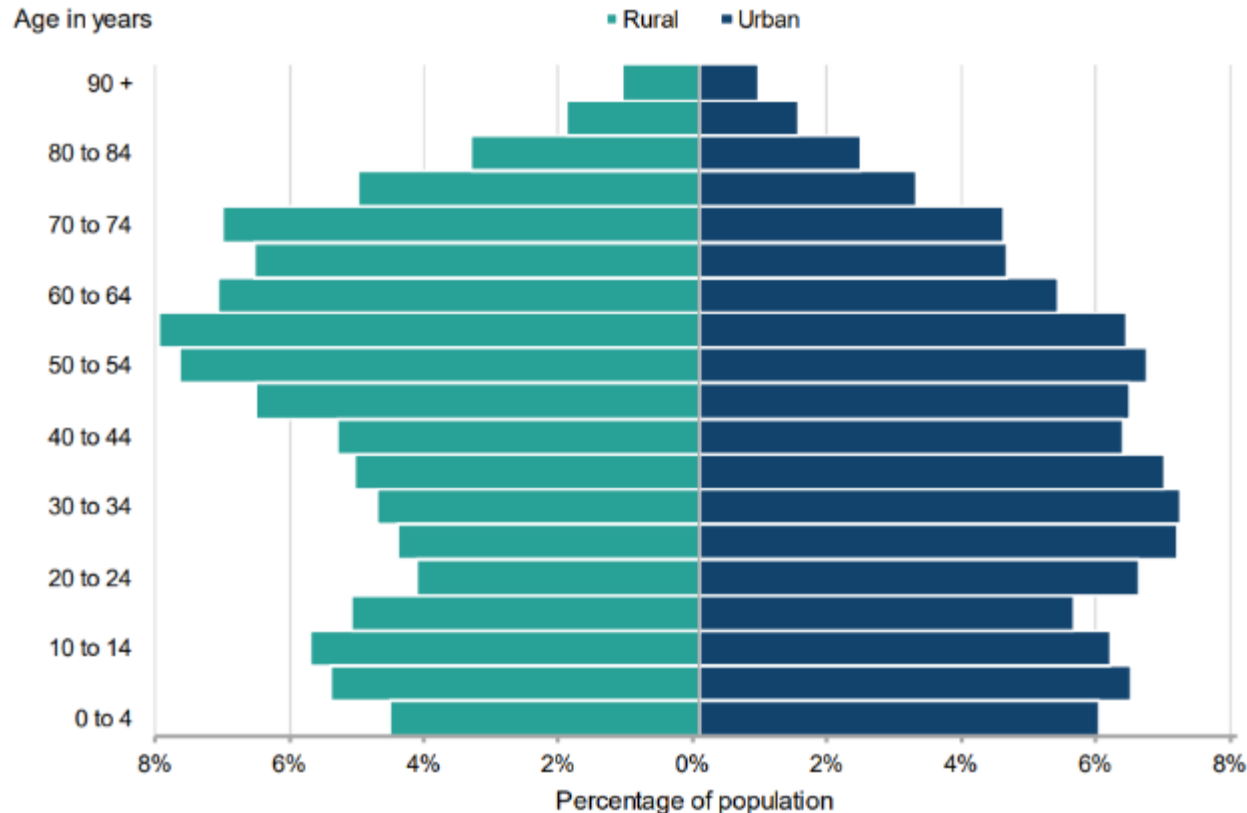
We want to see Government:

- **Develop** an evidence-based Future of Transport Rural Bus Policy that acknowledges that busses are essential infrastructure and places a duty on (and allocates funding to) local authorities to provide socially necessary rural buses
- **Create** a larger Community Transport funding pot which is sustained over a longer period. It should, especially, promote the use of community and demand-responsive transport schemes which serve outlying settlements and feed into bus or rail routes. App-based journey planners and booking technologies should be piloted to attract new users, as should through ticketing between transport providers. However, in many rural areas this will require improvements to mobile connectivity.
- Extend the rural fuel duty relief scheme.

Access to Rural Health and Care Services

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

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



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

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

National Reports on rural health

- The EFRA Committee produced a detailed report on Rural Mental Health in May 2023.⁹ It concluded “**Rural communities’ needs are not fully reflected in mental health policy and services and NHS planning**” and “NHS mental health services are often not fairly accessible for rural communities with services largely centered in towns and cities creating barriers to access, compounded by the limitations and weaknesses of rural public transport and digital connectivity”.
- In its evidence to the EFRA Committee the Nuffield Trust provided useful context on the NHS being “defined and perceived as a national service”, when “in reality”, some parts of England such as rural areas “**face disproportionate problems in delivering care to the standards people expect**”. This makes it difficult for them to recruit staff, “with smaller more distributed populations, fewer younger people and a greater competition for the locum or agency staff relied on to deal with shortfalls”
- Professor Sir Chris Whitty, The Chief Medical Officer for England has commented “The health challenges of rural areas are distinct from those of urban areas, and **they've received much less attention than they should have.**”

Rural Health and care – our asks

We want to see Government:

- Address the urgent need for a work force strategy to aid retention and recruitment across all health and care services.
- Ensure that all proposals designed to tackle the core drivers of disparities in health outcomes are fully rural proofed.
- Ensure that the whole range of extra costs of delivering services in rural areas (and not just travel costs) are accurately reflected in all funding formulae, including Public Health and Social Care and the NHS.

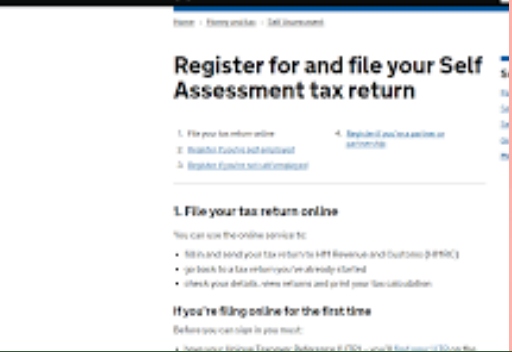


Rural Net Zero

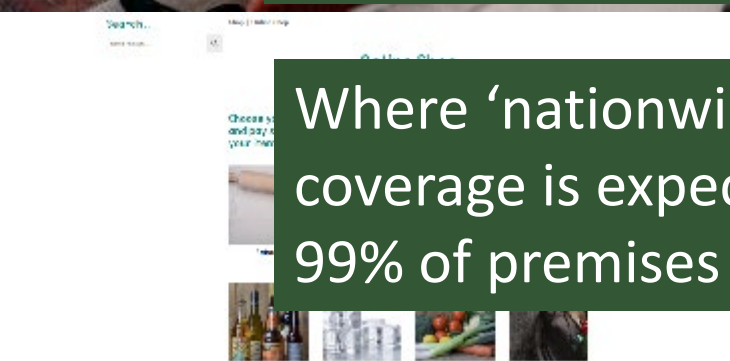
Rural Net Zero – our asks

We want to see Government:

- **Commit** to not increasing duty or taxes on vehicle fuel cost. Such duties/taxes disproportionately hit rural residents, business, and service providers.
- **Commit** to the equitable treatment of rural residents and businesses in the transition from fossil fuel heating in off-gas grid areas and the costs arising in rural areas. Options are needed that are suitable for **all** homeowners, dependent on their situation (financial, physical and property).
- **Commit** to a Heat Pump Ready first, not Rural First policy
- **Ensure** that all economic growth programmes include explicit objectives to support low carbon and net zero growth.



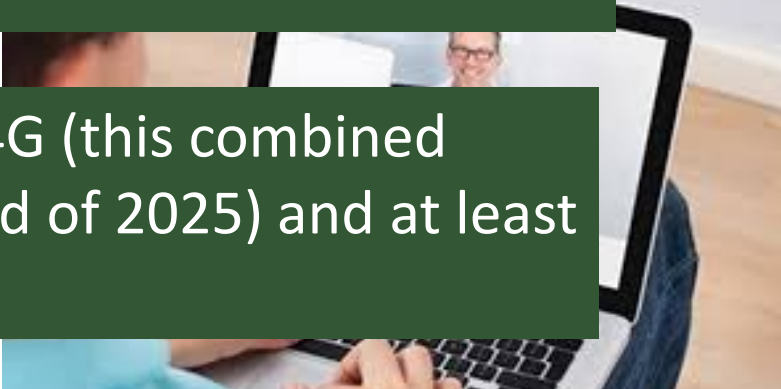
Mission 4: By 2030, the UK will have nationwide* gigabit-capable broadband and 4G coverage, with 5G coverage for the majority of the population.



Find out if a vehicle has any MOT certificate and when it runs out. You'll need the vehicle's registration number (number plate).



Where 'nationwide' means 95% of the UK landmass for 4G (this combined coverage is expected to be achieved for the UK by the end of 2025) and at least 99% of premises for gigabit-capable broadband.



What is happening to improve rural connectivity?

Shared Rural Network

The Shared Rural Network (SRN) is transforming mobile coverage, countrywide. The project was developed by the UK's four mobile network operators (MNOs) with support from Government. The programme will make 4G mobile broadband available to 95% of the UK. The operators expect this will extend mobile coverage to an additional 280,000 premises and for people in cars on an additional 16,000km of the UK's roads, boosting productivity and investment in rural areas.

The project consists of MNOs investing to extend their coverage by upgrading their existing networks, working together on shared infrastructure and building new sites, with new government-funded masts being built to target areas with no mobile coverage from any operator. Through its work, the SRN will increase the parts of the UK that get a mobile service from all operators from 66% to 84%, improving consumer choice.

Each of the MNOs' individual networks will cover 90% of the UK, enabling rural businesses and communities to thrive.

Project Gigabit

The Government has promised £5 billion to subsidise the roll-out of gigabit-broadband to the 'hardest to reach' premises in the country that will not be reached by private investment (20% of the UK). This is around 5 million premises mostly in rural areas.

The funding programme is called 'Project Gigabit' and follows programmes that aimed to increase demand for gigabit-broadband and provided vouchers to help connect rural premises.

The Chancellor allocated £1.2 billion of the £5 billion Project Gigabit funding in the 2020 Spending Review, for the years 2020-2025. The remaining £3.8 billion is reserved for future years.

Rural Connectivity – our asks

We want to see Government:

- Take Action to urgently address the issues facing hard and very hard to reach areas for broadband technology and release funding already allocated to relevant programmes.
- Bring forward national targets for the roll out of Gigabit broadband networks in rural areas, with faster commissioning and delivery of Project Gigabit contracts in areas of the country where it would otherwise be uncommercial.
- Instruct Industry regulator, Ofcom, to review and upgrade the broadband Universal Service Obligation, which (at 10 Mbps) is out-of-date and inadequate for, what have become, some everyday essential uses.
- Protect traditional TV and radio until at least the 2040s

Rural Planning

- Respond to Government Consultations on key issues affecting rural areas
- Liaise with your planning departments on a rural response to these consultations
- Often about ensuring that the implications for rural areas which may be different to that of urban, are considered by Government.

Rural Services APPG

Priorities this year are:

- Rural Fair Funding
- Rural Net Zero – off gas grid
- Rural Transport
- Rural Health & Care

**We will continue to work
on your behalf, fighting for
a fair deal for rural
communities, in all public
sector funding**