



Rural Net Zero

**Kerry Booth, Chief Executive
Rural Services Network
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What is Countryside COP?

The event takes place 20–24 November, bringing together the rural community and businesses to showcase and inspire activity ahead of COP28 in UAE.

Countryside COP provides a platform for anyone interested in the countryside to hear how the UK's rural economy and agriculture can help tackle climate change and improve sustainability.



We are a membership body with over 500 organisations all with an interest in delivering services in rural areas



APSE(Asn Public Service Excellence)



Arqiva



BASC (British Assn for Shooting & Conservation)



Bipolar UK



CAfs (Cumbria Action for Sustainability)



Calor Ltd



Campaigning for a fair deal for rural communities

We are the national champion for rural services



We provide a network
for rural areas to come
together and share
best practice



We represent a range
of organisations in
rural areas across
England



We provide a voice for
rural areas in
Parliament

The background of the image features several stacks of gold coins. The stacks are arranged in a way that creates a sense of depth, with some stacks in the foreground and others receding into the background. The coins are highly reflective, showing bright highlights and deep shadows. The overall tone is warm and metallic.

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 PLANNING

RURAL ECONOMIES

RURAL TRANSPORT

RURAL CONNECTIVITY

RURAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING

FAIR FUNDING

RURAL NET ZERO

RURAL HEALTH & CARE

RURAL SERVICES NETWORK

WINNING THE RURAL VOTE

A ROADMAP TO RURAL SUCCESS

40% of constituencies are rural

Their vote can swing the election

Foreword Kerry Booth, RSN Chief Executive



WINNING THE RURAL VOTE

We are at a moment in time where rural public services are underfunded, and expensive to provide, houses are unaffordable for local people, public transport provision is patchy and the rural economy is not getting the support it needs to grow and prosper, as digital and mobile connectivity lags behind that of the rest of the country.

It doesn't have to be this way.

Now is the time for the potential of rural areas to be recognised, and decisive action taken by those that lead us, to finally make a difference for rural communities.

40% of constituencies are rural. These votes will be tightly contested at the next election, and the answer for political parties to harness this vote is simple:

- Listen to the needs of rural communities
- Understand the challenges they face
- Take action to support their potential

The Rural Services Network, as the national champion for rural areas has put together a series of asks which we want to see the political parties adopt in their manifestos. The challenges rural communities face cannot be tackled in isolation, our communities need homes they can afford, with good jobs, connectivity to enable businesses to grow, and access to public services that are fairly funded.

This roadmap provides the answers for political parties and policy makers and the benefit of these policies would be felt not only by rural communities, but by the nation as a whole.

Kerry

The Rural Services Network is the voice for rural services:

- We represent more than 500 public, private & third sector organisations
- We are the Secretariat for All Party Parliamentary Group on Rural Services
- We scrutinise government policy from a rural perspective and respond to government consultations
- We are a trusted source for Parliamentarians, researchers and the media
- We are a Special Interest Group of the Local Government Association (LGA)
- We are a member of the Rural Coalition



Campaigning for a fair deal for rural communities



Almost
10 million
people live in
rural England...
...that is MORE
THAN the whole
of GREATER
LONDON



Fair funding

Public services should be fairly funded with additional costs of delivering in sparsely populated areas recognised



Why it matters:

Successive governments have underfunded rural councils, leaving rural voters at a disadvantage. Urban residents receive 38% more in Government Funded Spending Power per head compared to rural residents. Rural voters also pay, on average, 20% more per head in Council Tax because their local council gets less government grant. To make matters worse, council services cost more to deliver in rural areas; residents are spread across large geographies, yet are still in need of vital services. Rural voters deserve their fair share of the funding pot to ensure functioning and sustainable communities, especially given the cost of living crisis which disproportionately affects them.

Calls for first 18 months in office:

- **Deliver** fairer funding by applying in full (without damping) the effects of the changes made (but not fully implemented) to the Needs Assessment component of the funding formula in 2013 and increase the exemplified benefits to rural councils to reflect inflation in the intervening years.
- **Protect** rural council taxpayers by fairly funding public services to ensure they are not asked to pay more to fund local services than their urban counterparts.
- **Ensure** funding for the Social Care Reform proposals uses a formula which recognises the whole range of costs faced by rural councils and care providers. This includes financially addressing the current backlog in assessments etc.

Calls for first 3 years in office:

- **Address** fairer funding through the completion of the Needs and Resources Review for Local Government Funding in the first 12 months of the next Spending Review period and fully implement the changes in 2026/27. Also maintain the Rural Services Delivery Grant.
- **Develop** the mechanism for a successful Rural England Prosperity Fund and continue this dedicated fund.
- **Create** public funding formulae which ensure the unique service needs, delivery constraints and the whole range of extra costs of delivering services in rural areas (and not just travel costs) are properly reflected.

www.rsnonline.org.uk



Urban voters
receive 38%
more per head
in government
funding

Rural voters
pay 20%
more in
Council Tax
per head

Rural Net Zero - what does it mean?





Rural households emissions are 19% higher than urban...

...yet rural areas have the resources to contribute to Net Zero



Key issues for Rural Net Zero:

- Energy Inefficiency of rural properties
- Decarbonising the transport network
- Electricity network resilience
- Green skills agenda
- Government policy – rural proofed!?



25% of rural homes are not connected to the gas network

Rural voters are more reliant on costly fossil fuels



Success??

Government has delayed off grid homes moving to non fossil fuel boilers...

...but what next?

How do we get ready for it?

What do we want for rural?

Rural Net Zero

Rural communities want to embrace Net Zero but government policy needs to address the challenges they face

WINNING
THE
RURAL
VOTE
A ROADMAP TO
RURAL SUCCESS

Why it matters:

Rural areas with their abundance of natural assets are well placed to embrace the country's transition to Net Zero and tackle biodiversity loss, and with government investment can deliver jobs in green growth sectors. Rural communities must benefit from schemes that are based within their area and not just be a location for urban solutions. Many government actions proposed cannot be implemented until rural electricity supply networks are improved and reasonably priced sustainable energy alternatives are available. From energy production to unlocking digital potential to increase jobs, rural areas offer a range of opportunities that could benefit all.

Calls for first 18 months in office:

- **Deliver** a 'fabric first' Energy Strategy which address rural needs. This means, ensuring rural is ready to embrace the move to a technology neutral approach to Net Zero so that individuals can choose the most appropriate solutions. Government should focus on funding and capability support to achieve low carbon homes including an emphasis on skills to support the roll out of schemes in rural areas.
- **Protect** rural communities and businesses by not increasing duty or taxes on vehicle fuel cost. Such duties/taxes disproportionately hit rural residents, business, and service providers until comprehensive electric roll out is implemented.
- **Ensure** that all economic growth programmes include explicit objectives to support low carbon and Net Zero growth. Specialist advice and related grant funding should be made available for existing rural businesses to help them reduce their carbon footprint and the UK meet its 2050 targets.

Calls for first 3 years in office:

- **Address** the gaps in the network of public charging points across rural Britain. As many rural areas are tourist hotspots, increasing this network will boost the economy in rural areas.
- **Develop** rural communities which are self-sufficient by decentralising energy networks in rural areas. By building networks that are based on local renewable production, rural communities could retain money within their local economies and support local jobs.
- **Create** a Net Zero Rural Britain by working with the energy industry to ensure that the electricity distribution network is resilient, reliable and fit-for-purpose across all rural Britain before additional demands are put upon it.