



Rural Digital Connectivity Seminar

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

26th February 2025





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

**PARLIAMENT
STREET SW1**

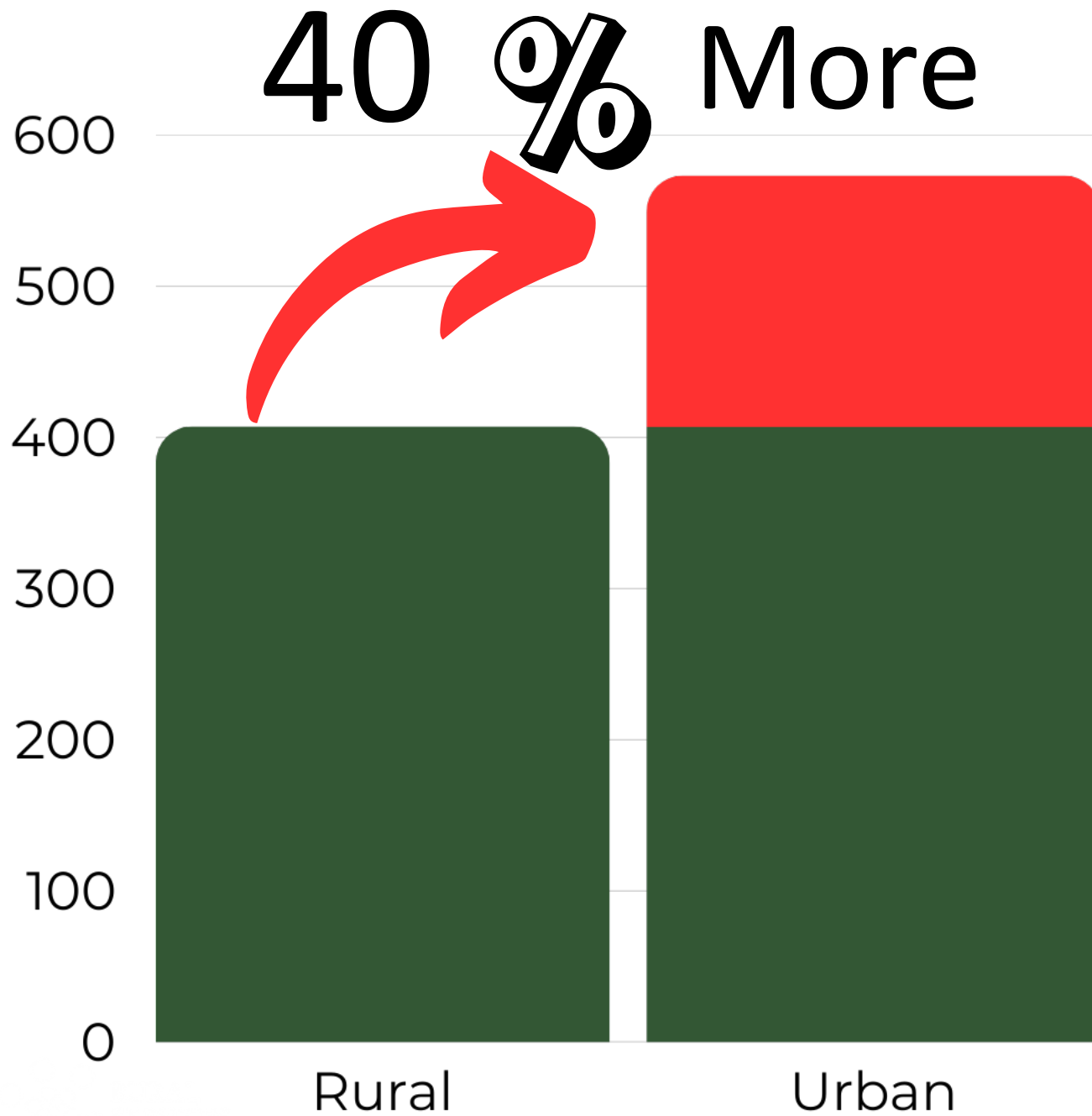


**WHITEHALL
SW1**



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

**The RSN also
campaign for
rural focused
policy in key
areas impacting
rural
communities**



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

Rural Connectivity



Fair Funding

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




 Urban voters receive 36% more per head in government funding


 Rural voters pay 20% more in Council Tax per head


Find out more [here](#)

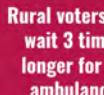
Access to Health & Care

 74% of 65+ year olds voted in the General Election (2019)

Over 30% of rural voters are 65+



 Urban Councils receive 57.5% more per head to spend on public health

 Rural voters can wait 3 times longer for an ambulance

Find out more [here](#)

Rural Transport

 Improved public transport is better for the environment...
...reduces issues of social isolation
...provides access to training, skills and employment



 Urban councils budget to spend 3.5 times more than rural on public transport

 Rural voters have fewer transport options and are reliant on private vehicles which can be expensive to run

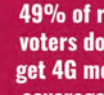
Find out more [here](#)

Rural Connectivity

 Unlocking the digital potential of rural areas could add up to £26bn annually to the UK economy...
...growing turnover for rural businesses by £15bn each year



 Only 47% of rural voters have Gigabit capability

 49% of rural voters do not get 4G mobile coverage on all networks indoors

Find out more [here](#)

Rural Economy

 There are over half a million rural businesses in England...
...that is 23% of all registered businesses



 Productivity and GVA in rural areas is lower than urban

 Rural voters earn £1,600 less a year

Find out more [here](#)

Affordable Housing

 Ten new affordable rural homes create an economic boost of £1.4m GVA...
...and yet they only cost £1.1m to build





 The rural fuel poverty gap is nearly double the national average


 Houses in rural areas are less affordable to purchase for those in the bottom 25% of earners compared to urban


Find out more [here](#)

Rural Net Zero

 Rural households emissions are 19% higher than urban...
...yet rural areas have the resources to contribute to Net Zero



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

 Rural voters are more reliant on costly fossil fuels

Find out more [here](#)

Rural Planning

 Over 600 Neighbourhood Plans have been made in rural communities showing how voters want to influence how their local area is developed



 There are almost 100,000 second homes in rural areas

 Most rural developments are too small to include affordable homes

Find out more [here](#)

There remains 3% of indoor premises in rural areas that have no coverage from **any** operator of 4G services.



Source: Ofcom Connected Nations December 2024

Only **54%** of rural premises (commercial and residential) have Gigabit capability.



Source: Ofcom Connected Nations December 2024

10% of rural premises in England still cannot access a superfast broadband connection.



Source: Ofcom Connected Nations December 2024

A greater proportion of the working population work from home in rural areas of England than in urban. And for many, digital connectivity will be an essential element of their work.



Source: Statistical Digest of Rural England, Connectivity and Accessibility, 2021 & June 2024 analysis of ONS, Labour Force Survey

Press release

Plan to increase digital skills to deliver growth and opportunity for all

Government sets out first steps to break down barriers to digital inclusion affecting 1 in 4 Britons to help put more money into people's pockets.

From: [Department for Science, Innovation and Technology](#), [Sir Chris Bryant MP](#) and [The Rt Hon Peter Kyle MP](#)

Published 26 February 2025



Digital Inclusion Action Plan. We're making sure everyone can be included in our digital world.

Digital Inclusion Action Plan sets out coordinated, long term approach to removing the barriers that prevent millions from accessing essential services, education and employment.

Includes:

- Digital Inclusion Innovation Fund
- Digital Inclusion Action Committee
- Dedicated Digital Inclusion and Skills unit within DSIT

Rural Connectivity 'In the news'

<https://www.rsnonline.org.uk/tag/rural-digital-connectivity>



17.02.2025

EMPOWERING RURAL YOUTH: HEREFORDSHIRE'S EMPLOYMENT HUB LAUNCHES NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT

The Rural Services Network is proud to highlight a remarkable initiative undertaken by one of our members, the Herefordshire Youth Employment Hub. This hub, a new cornerstone for youth engagement and support in Herefordshire, has been making significant...



16.12.2024

HOW CAN THE UK MEET 5G AMBITIONS?

A "new deal for 5G" is needed to tackle the causes of the 5G infrastructure investment gap, and catapult the UK to the global frontier for 5G connectivity, according to a report published on 11 December 24 by the Social...

[Read more](#)



10.12.2024

MILESTONES FOR CHANGE, FOR RURAL?

The Prime Minister Kier Starmer last week unveiled his Plan for Change, setting out 'ambitious but achievable milestones they aim to meet by the end of this Parliament.' The missions of the Government, are built on the foundations of...

[Read more](#)



09.12.2024

UK SPACE AGENCY LAUNCHES SATELLITE CONNECTIVITY PROJECTS FOR ENGLAND'S REMOTE AREAS

In an ambitious move to enhance digital connectivity in some of England's most isolated regions, the UK Space Agency, in collaboration with the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT), has launched a series of projects...



27.01.2025

EFFORTS TO IMPROVE MOBILE COVERAGE IN RURAL AREAS

Norfolk County Council is taking innovative steps to tackle one of the biggest challenges facing rural communities: poor mobile phone reception. As reported by the BBC, the county has faced persistent blackspots in mobile connectivity, impacting both daily...



14.01.2025

ADDRESSING RURAL CONNECTIVITY: CHALLENGES AND PROGRESS

The plight of poor digital connectivity in rural UK remains a significant barrier for over half a million businesses, as detailed in a recent article published by Countryside Alliance. These businesses, integral to the rural economy, ...