



Welcome to RSN Seminar Rural Town Centres, High Streets and Village Hubs 27th October 2021





**RURAL
SERVICES
NETWORK**

2021 ONLINE SEMINAR PROGRAMME

1. Rural Education, Training & Apprenticeships

Wednesday 27/01/2021
1 pm - 3 pm

[CLICK HERE TO BOOK ATTENDANCE](#)

2. Rural Transport

Wednesday 24/02/2021
11 am - 1 pm

[CLICK HERE TO BOOK ATTENDANCE](#)

3. Rural Digital Connectivity

Wednesday 31/03/2021
11 am - 1 pm

[CLICK HERE TO BOOK ATTENDANCE](#)

4. Rural Decarbonisation

Wednesday 28/04/2021
11 am - 1 pm

[CLICK HERE TO BOOK ATTENDANCE](#)

5. Rural Health & Social Care

Wednesday 26/05/2021
11 am - 1 pm

[CLICK HERE TO BOOK ATTENDANCE](#)

6. Rural Housing

Wednesday 30/06/2021
11 am - 1 pm

[CLICK HERE TO BOOK ATTENDANCE](#)

7. Enabling Rural Business

Wednesday 28/07/2021
11 am - 1 pm

[CLICK HERE TO BOOK ATTENDANCE](#)

8. Rural Town Centres, High Streets & Village Hubs

Wednesday 27/10/2021
11 am - 1 pm

[CLICK HERE TO BOOK ATTENDANCE](#)

9. Rural Economies

Wednesday 24/11/2021 | 11 am - 1 pm

[CLICK HERE TO BOOK ATTENDANCE](#)

The RSN seminar programme is free to members of the RSN as part of their membership. For full details [click here](#)





Rural Town Centres, High Streets and Village Hubs

This presentation will cover:

- Revitalising Rural Campaign
- Recently announced Government Funding



Revitalising Rural

Realising the Vision

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



Revitalising Rural
Realising the Vision

RURAL SERVICES NETWORK

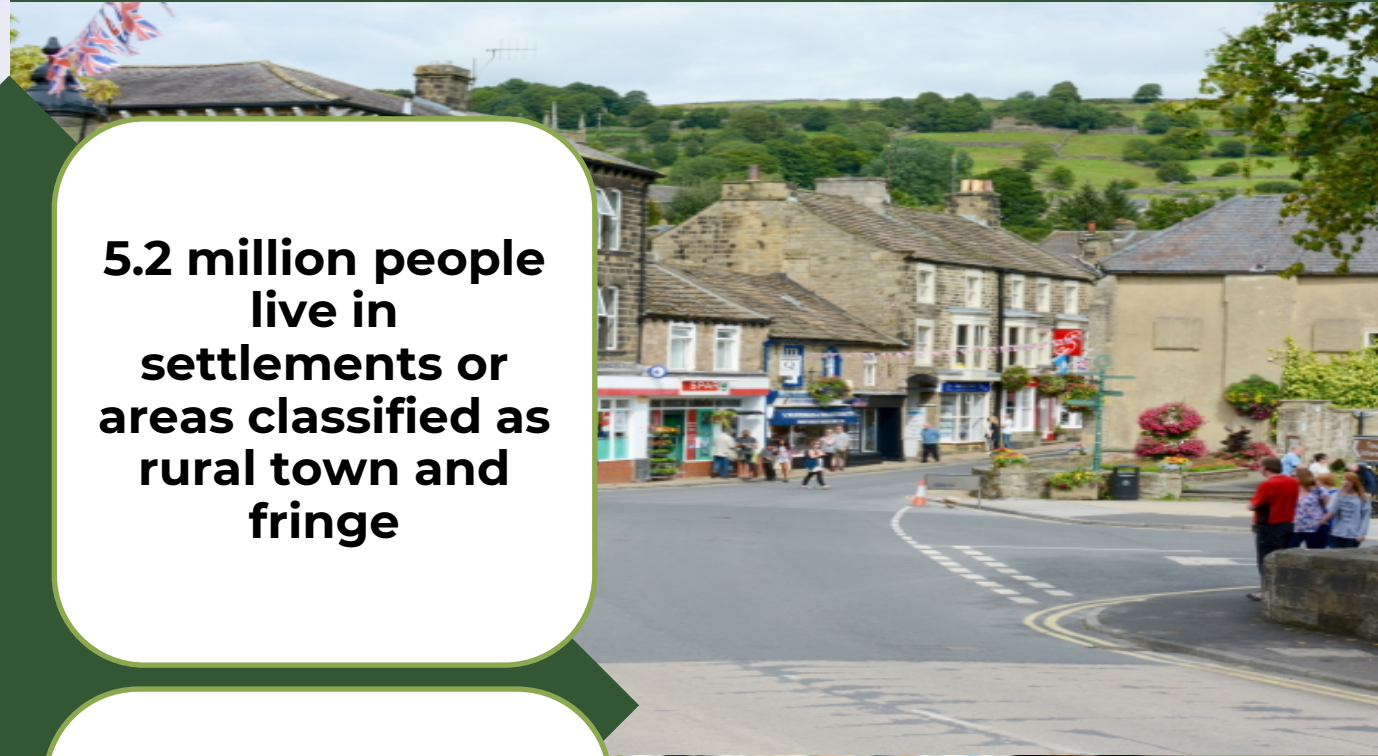


Rural Town Centres and High Streets





Rural or market towns play unique role in rural economies and life, acting as focal point for hinterland of smaller villages and hamlets



5.2 million people live in settlements or areas classified as rural town and fringe



Only 45% of rural residents have a bank branch within 5km of their home



Urban counties spend 29% more than rural counties on library services

Specific Policy Asks on Rural Town Centres and High Streets



Towns Fund and Future High Streets Funds

- Govt should support rural place making by reviewing and expanding Towns Fund / High Street Fund so additional places benefit
- Criteria for and flexibility of these funds should be reviewed to ensure small rural towns can access them



Business Improvement Districts

- Grant Fund should be launched to help Local Authorities and Town Centre business partners develop more BID proposals for rural towns.
- While they are useful, it is substantive task for small rural local authorities.



Bank Branches

- Code which banks follow before closing a branch needs strengthening so that decisions can be challenged and reversed, particularly when it is the last bank in a community.

Specific Policy Asks on Rural Town Centres and High Streets



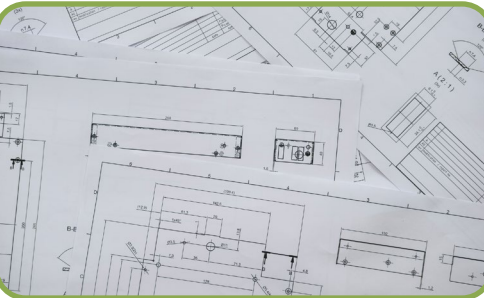
Access to Cash

- Govt must:
 - Prevent further deterioration of cash infrastructure
 - Protect ATMs – as only sustainable national infrastructure that can maintain free access to cash 24/7
 - Protect key schemes including LINK and Post Office Framework
 - Include deposit taking facilities in definition of ‘reasonable access’



Public Services

- Govt should implement findings of Fair Funding Review taking into full account extra cost of providing services to rural areas.
- This will benefit town centres by helping to sustain public services locally and assist grant support for arts, heritage, sport and leisure venues



Planning

- National and local plan ‘change of use’ policies need careful calibration to enable vacant and underused buildings in rural town centres for find productive use as housing where appropriate. They should not however undermine town centre vibrancy by allowing retail premises to convert for financial gain.
- There is significant scope to boost the role of town centres by making them transport hubs and ensuring they benefit from ultrafast digital networks.



Government Funding Pots

Levelling Up Money

Towns Fund

Identified potential recipients by filtering towns by population, then applying a needs based regional allocation formula

Community Renewal Fund

Will allocate £220 million of investment via a competitive process prioritising projects that target investment in communities in need, especially in its 'top 100 priority places'

Levelling Up Fund

The Fund will prioritise places in need of economic recovery and growth, regeneration and improved transport connectivity

Government announced a range of new funding mechanisms, to support the economic development of local communities, both for post-covid recovery and to support its 'levelling up' agenda

Government Funding favours
northern urban locations

Metrics and Ministers miss
rural requirements

Findings of RSN
commissioned research

**Towards a shared
Prosperity Fund**

Learning Lessons for Shared
Prosperity Fund

Focus on real income levels

Government Funding favours northern urban locations

- Choice of where to allocate funds has been based on:
 - Statistical evidence of need
 - Strategic judgement of politicians and officials
- Lack of clear and consistent explanation for how ministerial judgement has been applied

Metrics and Ministers miss rural requirements

- Metrics used to prioritise fund allocations fail to reflect reality for sparse communities
- Ministerial judgements ensured that the Towns Fund, against civil service guidance, set minimum threshold limits for those areas that could apply, rural towns with wide hinterland catchments were ineligible for the fund.

Learning lessons for Shared Prosperity Fund

- Process for allocation and prioritisation of funds should learn lessons from recent practice and be transparent.
- Using many indicators to assess need, and to target levelling up funds, may give the impression that a wide range of factors are being fairly considered. In practice, they leave the process complicated, confused and open to unintended (and potentially intended) bias.

Focus on real income levels

- Recommend prioritising funds based on real income levels achievable from local jobs
- Would show clear line between action between aim of fund and action on the ground

Further Issues with Government Funds



- The first round of the Levelling Up Fund prioritises bids that can demonstrate investment or begin delivery in the next year – a further issue for smaller, rural authorities with capacity challenges.
- Funds that require local authorities to bid for them, can disadvantage rural local authorities with small teams and limited capacity and resources

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

RURAL LENS REVIEW



**Build Back Better
High Streets**

Published August 2021



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 bright highlights and deep shadows. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light color, possibly a wall or a window, which makes the gold coins stand out prominently.

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