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## Agenda

### RSN AGM & Rural Assembly meeting

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**Hosted: Online via Zoom**  
**Date: Monday, 16<sup>th</sup> November 2020**  
**Time: 1:00pm – 3:30pm**

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### RSN AGM meeting

- 1. Attendance & Apologies.**
- 2. Appointment of Chairman and Members of the Executive.**  
Details of present members set out below.

<b>RSN Executive Role</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Surname</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Chair	Cllr	Cecilia	Motley	Shropshire Council
Vice Chair (Unitary)	Cllr	Robert	Waltham MBE	North Lincolnshire Council
Vice Chair (West Midlands)	Cllr	Roger	Phillips	Herefordshire Council
Vice Chair (County 1)	Cllr	Philip	Sanders	Devon County Council
Vice Chair (County 2)	Cllr	Gill	Heath	Staffordshire County Council
First Vice Chair (Yorkshire)	Cllr	Robert	Heseltine	North Yorkshire County Council
Vice Chair (Without Portfolio)	Cllr	Peter	Thornton	South Lakeland District Council
Vice Chair (East)	Cllr	Peter	Stevens	West Suffolk Council
Vice Chair (North)	Cllr	Mary	Robinson	Eden District Council
Vice Chair (North East)	Cllr	Trevor	Thorne	Northumberland County Council
Vice Chair (South West)	Cllr	Adam	Paynter	Cornwall Council
Vice Chair (South East)				
Vice Chair (Without Portfolio)	Cllr	Sue	Sanderson	Cumbria County Council
Vice Chair (Without Portfolio)	Cllr	Jeremy	Savage	South Norfolk District Council
Vice Chair (Without Portfolio)	Cllr	Mark	Whittington	Lincolnshire County Council South Kesteven District Council

- 3. Notes from the last RSN AGM & Rural Assembly meeting.** (Attachment 1)  
Held on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2019 to consider any relevant updates and approve the minutes.
- 4. Notes from the previous RSN Executive meeting.** (Attachment 2 & 3)  
Held on 2<sup>nd</sup> July and 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020 to consider any relevant updates.

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5. **Changes to Service Delivery to RSN Members 2020.** (Attachment 4)  
Report from Kerry Booth, Assistant Chief Executive.
6. **2021 RSN Meeting schedule.** (Attachment 5)
7. **To agree the subscriptions for 2021/22 as recommended by the Executive.**  
(Attachment 6)

2021/22 will be the final year of the phased increases agreed in 2018/19. The Executive is recommending an 'inflation' increase of 2.75% for 2021/22 (in addition to the phased increase) to match the pay award. Future years inflation increase will be determined year on year (2% a year from 2022/23 is assumed for calculation purposes. The recommendations as they apply to each local authority member are set out in Attachment 6.

NB The Rural Services Partnership AGM being held on 23rd November will consider the Executive's Recommendation for a 2.75% increase in RSP (& RHCA) subscriptions for 2020/21.

8. **Budget 2020/2021 and Estimates 2021/2022 (Constitutional requirement).**  
(Attachment 7)

### **Rural Assembly meeting**

9. **RSN response to Planning White Paper and Changes to the Current Planning System.**  
[Click here to view RSN's submitted response to the Planning White Paper](#)  
MHCLG Consultation: Changes to Planning Policy and Regulation. (Attachment 8)
10. **National Rural Conference 2020.**  
Verbal report from Kerry Booth, Assistant Chief Executive.
11. **Revitalising Rural: Realising the Vision.**  
Presentation from Graham Biggs MBE, Chief Executive with a general debate after.
12. **Report from the Chair of the Rural Services APPG.**  
Verbal report from Rt Hon Philip Dunne MP.
13. **Any Other Business.**  
The next Rural Assembly meeting is scheduled for Monday, 12<sup>th</sup> April 2021 and the next joint RSN AGM & Rural Assembly meeting is scheduled for Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> November 2021.

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## Notes of last RSN AGM & Rural Assembly meetings

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<b>Title:</b>	<b>Rural Services Network Special Interest Group – AGM Meeting &amp; Rural Assembly</b>
<b>Date:</b>	Monday, 2 <sup>nd</sup> December 2019.
<b>Venue:</b>	Local Government Association, 18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

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### **PART 1: RSN AGM SPECIFIC ISSUES**

Item	Decisions and Actions
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<b>1</b>	<b>Attendance &amp; Apologies for absence.</b>
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The group noted apologies for the meeting. A list of attendees/apologies can be found in **Appendix A**.

<b>2</b>	<b>Consider the Minutes of the last RSN AGM meeting.</b> (Attachment 1)
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Members accepted the minutes of the last RSN AGM (12.11.2018) as a true account of the meeting.

<b>3</b>	<b>Appointment of Chairman for the ensuing year (to also be the Chair of the SPARSE Rural SubSIG).</b>
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Cllr Robert Heseltine proposed that Cllr Celia Motley continue in her current position as an excellent chairman. The proposal was seconded and agreed by the group. No further nominations were received.

Cllr Motley thanked colleagues for their support and acknowledged the good work of staff at RSN who she said invariably respond to changes in a professional and constant manner. Members were thanked for their continued support and their attendance at meetings.

<b>4</b>	<b>To approve the revised Constitution.</b> (Attachment 2)
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Mr Inman outlined details of the amended Constitution which now includes a new Clause 1.4.

It states:

The focus of the Group is for the betterment of the rural areas of England and the people who live and work in these areas. The Group cannot and does not deal with any matters relating to disputes or potential disputes between the various tiers of local government serving these rural areas.

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David Inman, Director  
Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ  
Tel: 01822 813693

[www.rsnonline.org.uk](http://www.rsnonline.org.uk) email: [admin@sparse.gov.uk](mailto:admin@sparse.gov.uk) twitter: @rsnonline

Members agreed the Constitution as proposed and to include the additional clause.

**5 Appointment of Vice Chairmen for the ensuing year (to also be the Vice-Chairman of the SPARSE Rural SubSIG).**

The nomination of Cllr Heseltine as First Vice-Chairman by Cllr Motley was agreed by members.

The list of other nominations proposed was noted and agreed en-bloc. Representatives from the South East were invited to put their names forward if they had an interest in filling the vacant post.

Members agreed that Executive could fill that position without the need for further consultation.

**6 Any other Business.**

There was no other business.

The next RSN AGM meeting will be held on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2020.

**PART 2: RURAL ASSEMBLY SUB-SIG ISSUES**

**7 Consider the Minutes of the last Rural Assembly meeting. (Attachment 3)**

Members accepted the minutes of the last Rural Assembly meeting (08.04.2019) as a true account of the meeting.

**8 Consider the Minutes of the last RSN Executive meeting. (Attachment 4)**

The minutes of the last RSN Executive meeting (30.09.2019) were agreed as a true record of the meeting. A few points from the last RSN Executive meeting were discussed:

1. Mr Biggs asked the group to note that it has been agreed that work will be taken forward with the Institute of Economic Development around “rural proofing” of Local Industrial Strategies. Further information on this will be provided at a future meeting.
2. David Inman then updated members on work around the Rural Market Towns Group. More than 200 invitations have been sent out to town and parish councils all over England. 48 towns and large parishes have responded with an interest in joining the group. Ideally, it would include a market town / parish from each of the areas of member authorities. Members noted that the exercise is currently under way and the group will proceed further to the next RSN Executive meeting in January 2020. Members asked for clarification on the actual market towns which

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David Inman, Director  
Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ  
Tel: 01822 813693  
[www.rsnonline.org.uk](http://www.rsnonline.org.uk) email: [admin@sparse.gov.uk](mailto:admin@sparse.gov.uk) twitter: @rsnonline

have already signed up and were [referred to the website for more details](#).

3. Members were asked to note two points within the minutes:  
**Paragraph 9a:** Increase to the subscription by 2% above the staged increases already approved.  
**Paragraph 16:** Rural vulnerability will continue as a cross-cutting priority.

## 9 Membership (Constitutional Requirement).

Mr Inman outlined ongoing difficulties around recruiting new members and spoke about the loss of several members over time due to austerity issues. He acknowledged that establishing and addressing the different needs of members and potential members is difficult given the restraints of the group, but that RSN are working hard to reach consensus on most issues.

## 10 Member Contributions.

Members formally approved for 2020/21 the proposed 2% raise in subscription beyond the staged increases previously approved.

## 11 Budget 2019/20 and Estimates 2020/21 (Constitutional requirement). (Attachment 5)

Members were informed of a shortfall of £27k in membership payments received to date. Mr Inman stated that chasing these payments was a priority but, besides that, the budget is as anticipated and there should be a positive balance. Mr Biggs indicated that members would be contacted to see if they can push their own authorities for payment of owed subscriptions.

**Decision:** The budget was approved.

## 12 National Rural Conference 2019.

Cllr Motley invited Kerry Booth (Assistant Chief Executive, RSN) to provide a summarised report on the National Rural Conference. There had been 86 delegates at the conference and close to 120 people in attendance, including speakers and the exhibitors etc. Feedback had been very positive, and the overall feeling was good. Some had asked for networking opportunities to be increased next year.

Members were pleased with the successful outcome of the conference.

## 13 Meeting Dates for 2020. (Attachment 6)

Members noted a slight variation to the dates proposed for the regional meetings and these were subsequently agreed.

Members noted the importance of ensuring that they sign in their attendance at meetings, both for feedback to the authorities and to ensure accuracy of the

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David Inman, Director  
Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ  
Tel: 01822 813693  
[www.rsonline.org.uk](http://www.rsonline.org.uk) email: [admin@sparse.gov.uk](mailto:admin@sparse.gov.uk) twitter: @rsonline

minutes.

#### **14 Speaker Presentations.**

Cllr Motley welcomed speakers.

##### **Speaker 1**

##### **Andrew Lee, South Downs National Park Our Work Supporting the Economy in the National Park Area**

The Chair welcomed Mr Lee, Director of Countryside Policy & Management South Downs National Parks. Members received a presentation which outlined work currently underway to support the economy in the National Park area.

Mr Lee outlined some of the challenges involved and the key messages around the mechanisms needed in order to allow rural areas to be more ambitious. National Parks are keen to work with other rural services to enable a better understanding of issues in common. Members noted the kinds of problems which limit rural areas in thriving.

The speaker provided economic insights into the South Downs National Park work programme and members noted their policy framework aimed at distributing development to include affordable housing, supporting digital and other relevant benefits to rural areas. Rural economy and tourism are key. Members noted current projects which provide opportunities for employment, increased tourism and effective land use which include an expansion of industries such as vineyards, development and support of neighbourhood plans, affordable housing. Members heard about farming and work around sustainability and were referred to work on Whole Estate plans in order to inform and act as a tool in planning and preparation.

The Chairman thanked Mr Lee for an interesting and informative presentation.

The following points were raised:

- What are thoughts on the Glover review on proposals new governance models in National Parks? – It was thought that interesting but watch this space.
- What are the views on climate change thrust in planting more trees? Surely pasture is higher priority. – Mr Lee informed members that 20% of their landscape is already woodland – livestock farmers must not be neglected, and a balance needs to be met. More research needs to be done on benefits.
- How can you avoid pressure and imposition from Central Government on the local plan assessment of local housing needs? – Mr Lee said that National Parks are not required to provide this.

He spoke about the importance of the National Parks brand.

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David Inman, Director  
Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ  
Tel: 01822 813693

[www.rsonline.org.uk](http://www.rsonline.org.uk) email: [admin@sparse.gov.uk](mailto:admin@sparse.gov.uk) twitter: @rsonline

The presentation can be found [here](#).

## **Speaker 2**

### **Alison Farmer, Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning Developments in Protected Landscapes**

The Chairman welcomed Ms Farmer from Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning. The group received a presentation on developments around landscape architecture and environmental planning. Members noted some of the factors which contribute to national beauty and consideration of different aspects which make areas so distinctive.

The group noted definitions of valued landscapes and policies around local plans. Ms Farmer identified some of the values which identify and inform land management guidance and assessment of particular areas in order to form an evidence base to take needs forward. These values provide a guide so that judgements can be made as to where the limits should be set.

Members noted information which provide an indication of how different elements affect capacity to enable new development and establish what matters and why. This provides information in considering how to conserve and enhance natural beauty of these landscapes. Ms Farmer outlined how this evidence determines decisions on good design and fit as well as relationships to existing settlements and the importance of mass, colour and materials. She stated the importance of many considerations in thinking about conserving and enhancing protective landscapes and making a positive contribution.

The Chairman thanked Ms Farmer and asked about the willingness of developers to work with this subtle model and whether there is resistance because they are afraid that it may lead to uniformity of areas? Ms Farmer responded by informing the group that on the whole, developers are on board, but there are still issues around the processes and keeping everyone happy. However, dialogue is taking place and will continue and hopefully improve.

Members raised the following concerns:

- Surface water must be considered.
- Neighbourhood plans credibility decreases over time and it is difficult to keep motivation going to use them to inform future planning.
- Looking at the wider landscape, these principles should also be considered and not just for protected landscapes. Members felt that in the rush to build, these considerations are not properly considered.

The Chairman thanked the speaker for an interesting and informative presentation.

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David Inman, Director  
Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ  
Tel: 01822 813693

[www.rsonline.org.uk](http://www.rsonline.org.uk) email: [admin@sparse.gov.uk](mailto:admin@sparse.gov.uk) twitter: @rsonline



The presentation can be found [here](#).

## 15 Time for a Rural Strategy Campaign. (Attachment 7)

Mr Biggs (Chief Executive, RSN) outlined the latest position and the suggested a way forward in lobbying government for a rural strategy campaign and invited Kerry Booth (Assistant Chief Executive, RSN) to speak. In the first instance, she asked all members to sign up to support for the campaign and agreed to provide them with a link to the relevant site.

Members went on to receive a presentation on the issues faced by rural areas and the need for a cross governmental department and properly funded rural strategy to ensure that these are recognised, and work can co-ordinated be done to try and address them. The main priorities were set out in the RSN's "It is Time for A Rural Strategy" document

Mrs Booth outlined details of various solutions which would help rural areas to thrive - including a fair deal for local government (and other public services') funding and access to affordable or social housing. Service delivery on health and social care is funded less favourably in rural areas despite a higher proportion of people needing it. At times extra provision is needed in rural areas just to allow them to have the same benefits as others, such as access to hospitals, transport, etc.

Mrs Booth discussed issues around education and how important focus on rural recruitment is. Members noted the higher costs in council tax in rural areas, despite receiving less services. They agreed that they should also not be penalised for dealing with adverse weather which is more extensive in these areas. Government should have a duty to provide a more transparent rural proofing process and a proper legal basis for rural proofing.

Mr Biggs re-addressed the background around the need for the campaign and reminded members of the House of Lords Select Committee which had been set up to look at the same issues. He outlined the recommendations and the Government's response to these together with SPARSE's commentary. Members noted that the Government had since rejected the request for the actual Rural Strategy - although they have outlined that they would develop a strategic vision.

Mr Biggs reminded the group that no further information has come through since June 2019 and given the current political situation and the upcoming general election, it would be important to engage again as soon as possible in order to obtain better clarity on the way forward. Work continues via the regional roadshows and with other organisations and dates will be provided for any outstanding. Mr Biggs acknowledged that the template needs more work to include some more important national issues such as Climate Change/Zero Carbon.

It was felt that it would be important to engage with government in acknowledging

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David Inman, Director  
Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ  
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[www.rsnonline.org.uk](http://www.rsnonline.org.uk) email: [admin@sparse.gov.uk](mailto:admin@sparse.gov.uk) twitter: @rsnonline



the positivity of investing in rural areas and this work will be taken forward. Evidence would be necessary to ensure interest. Members noted that the Chair of the Select Committee has agreed to lend his name to a discussion on tactics in keeping this debate live and this was positive in being able to use parliamentary processes to take the right steps forward.

Members noted the involvement of the former Rural Services APPG in a type of scrutiny role. Anticipated changes to the fairer funding formula will inform how things move forward and it would be important to articulate in detail the reason why fairer funding is so important to rural areas.

Members noted the number of responses from the recently circulated consultation and raised one objection referring to recommendation in the Lords Report and our response on good practice. Members noted the objection to RSN's response and the definition of sustainability. Mr Biggs informed members that he will be meeting the member body them to discuss but the initial inclination is not to change it.

Mr Biggs referred to the Manifestos of the different political parties and the upcoming General Election. He reiterated the importance of including fairer funding for rural areas whoever wins.

Members noted that a revised document as to the Commentary including changes following the recent consultation will be circulated to members.

Cllr Motley thanked Mrs Booth and the Mr Biggs for the update.

## **16 Any other Business.**

There was no other business and the meeting was closed.

The next Rural Assembly Meeting will be held on 6<sup>th</sup> of April 2020.

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David Inman, Director  
Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ  
Tel: 01822 813693

[www.rsonline.org.uk](http://www.rsonline.org.uk) email: [admin@sparse.gov.uk](mailto:admin@sparse.gov.uk) twitter: @rsonline

**Appendix A**

**Attendance**

Alison Farmer	Landscape, Architecture and Environmental Planning
Andrew Lee	South Downs National Park
Ben Colson	Bus Users UK
Cecilia Motley	RSN
Cllr Daniel Cribbin	Daventry District Council
Cllr Malcolm Brown	Cornwall Council
Cllr Malcolm Leeding	Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils
Cllr Mary Robinson	Eden District Council
Cllr Oliver Hemsley	Rutland County Council
Cllr Owen Bierley	West Lindsey District Council
Cllr Peter Stevens	West Suffolk Council
Cllr Robert Heseltine	North Yorkshire County Council
Cllr Roger Phillips	Herefordshire Council
Cllr Sue Tucker	Scarborough Borough Council
Cllr Trevor Thorne	Northumberland County Council
Cllr Victoria Wilson	Staffordshire County Council
David Inman	RSN
Fatima De Abreu	LGA
Gavin Jones	Hastoe Group
Graham Biggs	RSN
Gwilym Butler	Shropshire Council
Jeremy Savage	South Norfolk Council
John Wynn-Jones	Centre for Health and Care
Kerry Booth	RSN
Lillian Burns	National Association of Local Councils
Marina Di Salvatore	West Lindsey District Council
Martin Collett	English Rural Housing Association
Nik Harwood	Young Somerset
Peter Garrett	Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils
Revd Richard Kirlew	Sherborne Deanery Rural Chaplaincy

**Apologies**

Andrew Potter	Hastoe Housing Association
Andrew Proctor	Norfolk County Council
Chris Mapey	East Suffolk Council
Chris Stanton	Guildford Borough Council
Cllr Adam Paynter	Cornwall Council

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Cllr Jan Goodeve	East Hertfordshire Council
Cllr John Ward	Babergh District Council
Cllr Julian German	Cornwall Council
Cllr Ken Pollock	Worcestershire County Council
Cllr Peter Schwier	Braintree District Council
Cllr Peter Tattersley	Braintree District Council
Cllr Peter Thornton	South Lakeland District Council
Cllr Rob Waltham MBE	North Lincolnshire Council
Cllr Sue Sanderson	Cumbria County Council
Cllr Yvonne Peacock	Richmondshire District Council
Digby Chacksfield	Easton and Otley College
Dr Adrian Tams	NHS Health Education England (Midlands)
Gary Powell	Teignbridge District Council
Ian Cass	Forum of Private Business
John Birtwistle	UK Bus - First Group
John Longden	Pub is the Hub
Kerry Bolister	Housing Plus Group
Louise Aynsley	Suffolk County Council
Peter McNamara	Note Machine Group
Richard Flinton	North Yorkshire County Council
Richard Wyles	South Kesteven District Council
Rita Lawson	Tees Valley Rural Action
Sue Cooper	South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse District Councils

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David Inman, Director  
Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ  
Tel: 01822 813693  
[www.rsnonline.org.uk](http://www.rsnonline.org.uk) email: [admin@sparse.gov.uk](mailto:admin@sparse.gov.uk) twitter: @rsnonline



## Minutes

### 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.

Hosted: Online via Zoom  
Date: Thursday, 2nd July 2020  
Time: 3.15 pm

#### Attendance:

Cllr Cecilia Motley (Chair)	Shropshire Council / Rural Services Network
Graham Biggs	Rural Services Network
John Birtwistle	First Group
Kerry Booth	Rural Services Network
Martin Collett	English Rural Housing Association
Nik Harwood	Young Somerset
Cllr Gill Heath	Staffordshire County Council
David Inman	Rural Services Network
Cllr Adam Paynter	Cornwall Council
Cllr Roger Phillips	Herefordshire Council
Anna Price	Rural Business Group
Cllr Mary Robinson	Eden District Council
Cllr Sue Sanderson	Cumbria County Council
Cllr Jeremy Savage	South Norfolk Council
Cllr Peter Stevens	West Suffolk Council
Cllr Trevor Thorne	Northumberland County Council
Cllr Peter Thornton	South Lakeland District Council
Nadine Trout	Rural Services Network
Cllr Mark Whittington	Lincolnshire County Council

#### Apologies:

Cllr Robert Heseltine	North Yorkshire County Council
Cllr Rob Waltham MBE	North Lincolnshire Council

1. **Notes from the previous RSN Executive meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> of March 2020.**  
(Attachment 1)  
Agreed as a correct record.

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## 2. **Thoughts for the Future of the Network – report from Corporate Director.**

(Attachment 2, Attachment 2A)

A detailed paper was presented to the Executive from the RSN Corporate Director. The paper set out the current situation in relation to the Network. It set out perceived strengths and weaknesses.

**The Executive agreed as follows:**

### **Engagement with Member Councils**

- (a) Strengthen the Nominated Member situation by establishing with all member authorities both a **Nominated Member and a Deputy**. If these nominees were not already on the authority's Cabinet, or Executive Arrangements, there would be a request for a Cabinet Member to also be involved - at least with the Annual Rural discussion meetings referred to in (c) below.
- (b) The establishment of an **'RSN Insider' publication** which would be sent out four or five times a year to those involved Members and to Key Officers. This would provide a full briefing on the Networks current activities.
- (c) A series of **Annual Rural Discussion Meetings** for each member authority would be introduced. These meetings would be conducted online and would involve a senior member of the RSN staff and the Nominated Member and Deputy, a Cabinet member, and at least one of the Key Officers. These meetings would seek to establish the Authority's rural views across the spectrum of the RSN's operation. This would include in respect of Fairer Funding (Sparse Rural members only), Rural Service Provision, Current RSN Campaigns, the Rural Economy and issues surrounding Rural Vulnerability and Disadvantage. Discussion would also take place at these meeting about the way in which member authorities dealt with Rural Issues and whether that had any individual special arrangements.  
These Annual Rural Discussion Meetings would ensure annual input and discussion with all member authorities, facilitating RSN policy making. They would take place in addition to the current formal meetings, regional seminars, and the annual National Rural Conference in September.
- (d) There would be **annual requests to all member authorities for** specific named **'Key Liaison (Senior) Officers'** in relation to Public Relations, Democratic Services, Economic Activity, Public Health and Finance. We anticipate that this would allow some specialist work in these areas. All Management Board members, traditional cross section officer appointees and all Council Members would in the future also receive RSN service.

### **Towns and Parishes**

- 1) It was decided to try to recruit to the RSP Rural/Market Towns Group at least one Town within each member area - thus, hopefully, materially widening this emerging Grouping.

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- 2) A system of local social & economic profile of our Principal Council's area to be established to support engagement with the Rural/Market Towns Group members in those areas.
- 3) The Executive at its next meeting will review the existing 'categories' of membership of the Rural/Market Towns Group.
- 4) The suggestion of creating an English Rural Parishes Group was not endorsed at this juncture. The issue would be considered further if the future role and responsibilities etc. of Parish Councils is set out in the Government's proposed Devolution White Paper.

### **Sounding Boards**

Sounding Board surveys will be operated by the RSN at least twice a year focussed on Rural Strategy themes. The Sounding Boards will continue to operate at the levels of:

- Principal Councils in membership
- Parishes in RSN Community Group membership
- Rural/Market Towns Group
- Rural Small Business
- Rural Young People

### **3. RSN Budget Report. (Attachment 3)**

The report was accepted, and new format agreed subject to the % of budget column being removed and a new column added to show variances to the original budget.

### **4. Rural Strategy Campaign Progress – report from Chief Executive. (Attachment 4)**

The Chief Executive's report informed the Executive of the progress on implementing the agreed workplan to produce the Reinvigorating Rural: Realising the Vision document. It also outlined the proposed member consultation processes which were agreed.

The documents needed to reflect the impacts of COVID-19 set out in the papers for the next item on the Agenda.

The RSN Executive accepted that the policy asks (once determined) would form the basis of the RSN's representational work over the life of the current Parliament. The Chief Executive stressed that it was important that the document – especially in respect of the 'current policy context' and the 'policy asks' – was maintained as a 'live-document' and updated as things changed. Lobbying/representational work may be based on opportunities as they arise on individual topics in the various sections of the document. The budget had no expenditure in it for future financial years and that would need to be addressed.

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#### **Rural Services Network**

Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ

Tel: 01822 813693

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## 5. COVID-19 Related Issues.

### (a) Draft RSN Position Statements on various COVID-19 issues (Attachment 5)

This paper was agreed.

### (b) For consideration as part of the Rural Strategy work - Assessment of Rural Issues and 'Asks' for a COVID-19 Recovery Plan (Attachment 6)

This paper was agreed for the purposes of the consultation with members referred to in Minute 5 above.

### (c) General Discussion on the work of the RSN and member engagement 'during lockdown' (Attachment 7)

Kerry Booth outlined the different ways that RSN has been providing services to its members during lockdown, including online seminars, targeted surveys to feed into DEFRA on key issues such as the Rural Economy and Domestic Abuse, and an increased social media presence. The Executive noted the report.

## 6. National Rural Conference 2020 – report from Kerry Booth, Assistant Chief Executive. (Attachment 8)

Due to the pandemic, the National Rural Conference cannot take place in Cheltenham and is going to be moved online for this year. Kerry outlined the format for the event which will take place over the course of a week with a range of plenary and seminar sessions taking place online focusing on key issues relating to Revitalising Rural.

The Executive agreed the proposed format which they felt was a positive and exciting way forward.

## 7. Fairer Funding Review: Update.

The Chief Executive reminded members that due to the pandemic the Government had (again) postponed the Fair Funding/Needs and Resources Review. No new timetable had been set.

The move to 75% Business Rate Retention was now uncertain given both the impact of the pandemic and the fact that the Government is to carry out a fundamental review of Business Rates (again no timescales have been set).

Kerry Booth reported on the very successful and well attended recent Zoom Finance Seminar led by Adrian Jenkins (Pixel).

The Chief Executive reported that he had recently commissioned a short piece of work from Pixel on the costs of 'remoteness'. Members agreed that it was important that the RSN continued to build and evidence the case for rurality costs being much more than travel time.

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Rural Services Network

Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ

Tel: 01822 813693

[www.rsonline.org.uk](http://www.rsonline.org.uk) email: [admin@rsn.gov.uk](mailto:admin@rsn.gov.uk) twitter: @rsnonline





The Chief Executive referred to the announcement earlier that day on the government's new funding package for councils to help address COVID-19 pressures and cover lost income during the pandemic. He stated that the RSN would try to assess the impact (in terms of Council Tax and percentage of net budgets) of extra costs/lost income not covered by government support for rural areas.

**8. Work of RSN and iEDO on LIS and rural economy opportunities – report from Nadine Trout, Member Development & Support Manager. (Attachment 9)**

Work of RSN and iED on LIS and a proposed Rural Economy Opportunities Toolkit.

Nadine took the Executive through the proposed content of a Rural Economy Opportunities Toolkit. The Executive were supportive of the content with one member citing the importance of referencing agriculture, supply chains and Brexit in the toolkit.

It was agreed that the Rural Economy Opportunities Toolkit content be approved and the Member Development and Support Manager be tasked with launching the Toolkit in partnership with the iED (Institute of Economic Development), at the Rural Services Network National Conference in September 2020.

**9. To note the Annual Report to the LGA. (Attachment 10)**

This was an annual report for LGA purposes, but the Chairman commended the document saying it represented an excellent overview of the RSN's work. She asked that it be sent to members on a suitable occasion and included on the website.

**10. Regional Seminars 2020 update.**

North East & West Midlands Regional Seminars took place online on 19th May and 30th of June 2020 and were received well. The team will endeavour to continue organising meetings online for the foreseeable future where possible. It was agreed that face to face meetings were unlikely to be held in this calendar year.

The Chief Executive suggested, and the Executive agreed, that we would try to organise the SPARSE Rural and Rural Economy Group meetings (which were postponed earlier in the year) online via Zoom.

Event	Rescheduled Date	Format and Platform
East Midlands Regional Seminar (Rural Skills & Education)	28.07.2020	Online via Zoom
National Rural Conference 2020	14 Monday 15 Tuesday 16 Wednesday 17 Thursday 18 Friday 09.2020	Online via Zoom and possibly other platforms

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North West Regional Seminar (Rural Vulnerability)	05.10.2020	Online via Zoom
SPARSE Rural meeting	12.10.2020	Online via Zoom
Rural Economy Sub Group meeting	12.10.2020	Online via Zoom
Yorkshire Regional Seminar (Rural Housing)	02.11.2020	Online via Zoom
Rural Social Care & Health Sub Group	16.11.2020	Online via Zoom
RSN AGM	16.11.2020	Online via Zoom
Rural Assembly	16.11.2020	Online via Zoom

#### 11. Any Other Business

The next RSN Executive is scheduled for Monday, 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

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## Minutes

### 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.

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**Hosted: Online via Zoom**  
**Date: Monday, 28th September 2020**  
**Time: 11:15am – 2:30pm**

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#### **Attendance:**

Cllr Cecilia Motley (Chair)	Shropshire Council / Rural Services Network
Graham Biggs	Rural Services Network
John Birtwistle	FirstGroup plc UK Bus Division
Cllr Malcolm Brown	Cornwall Council
(attended on behalf of Cllr Adam Paynter)	
Kerry Booth	Rural Services Network
Martin Collett	English Rural Housing Association
Nik Harwood	Young Somerset
Cllr Robert Heseltine	North Yorkshire County Council
David Inman	Rural Services Network
Cllr Roger Phillips	Herefordshire Council
Anna Price	Rural Business Group
Cllr Mary Robinson	Eden District Council
Cllr Sue Sanderson	Cumbria County Council
Cllr Peter Stevens	West Suffolk Council
Cllr Peter Thornton	South Lakeland District Council
Nadine Trout	Rural Services Network
Cllr Mark Whittington	Lincolnshire County Council

#### **Apologies:**

Cllr Gill Heath	Staffordshire County Council
Cllr Adam Paynter	Cornwall Council
Cllr Jeremy Savage	South Norfolk Council
Cllr Trevor Thorne	Northumberland County Council
Cllr Rob Waltham MBE	North Lincolnshire Council

**1. Notes from the previous RSN Executive meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2020.**

(Attachment 1)

Agreed as a correct record.

**Matters Arising:**

- 1.1.** The Devolution White Paper will be issued later in the year, or at the start of the New Year.
- 1.2.** Some felt that the Fair Funding Review, which had been delayed once, would be further delayed with a 'hold over' LG settlement occurring for 21/22.
- 1.3.** The Comprehensive Spending Review may now just be relating to the 1 year and not be the exercise spanning the life of the current Parliament as initially intended.
- 1.4.** The Pixel study into 'remoteness' referred to in the minutes will begin shortly. Pixel will be contacting 4 or 5 authorities asking if they would like to participate and provide evidence of additional costs associated with remoteness.

**2. Revitalising Rural: Realising the Vision. (Attachments 2 & 2A)**

[Please click here to view all campaign documents<sup>1</sup>](#)

The Chief Executive outlined the current situation. Apart from the Fair Funding document (which will be circulated to the RSN Executive members for approval when it becomes available) members expressed their approval both for the chapters and the campaigns approach.

There had been a strong response from RSN members and considerable involvement in the consultation from several members too. It is felt to be a substantial document but one that fully reflects member input.

Going forward to keep the document alive and current it will be important to incorporate on-going consideration of all chapters into all appropriate RSN meetings. It was recognised that keeping the document updated and current would provide a constant challenge as matters move on quickly and this needed to be a rolling plan to reflect this. A Dissemination Plan is being developed and discussions held with Lexington about media coverage. RSN Executive members would be kept updated on progress.

Members congratulated the officers and Brian Wilson on what is a truly comprehensive document. They felt it had been produced with a high standard achieved in all chapters.

**Suggestions made:**

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.rsnonline.org.uk/revitalising-rural>

- It was felt the word 'reform' might be an appropriate term to use in some areas as opposed to the word 'change'.
- Councils need to be consulted about their views on current Government planning proposals. Their views will need to be considered when updating the Revitalising Rural document.
- National lockdown situation emphatically emphasised the need for comprehensive good standard broadband and the need for the Universal Service Obligation to be improved, including consideration of affordable connectivity.

**3. Rural/Market Town Group – Update.** (Attachment 3) Corporate Director, David Inman made a presentation showing the membership achieved to date and showing the distribution of RMTG members across RSN membership.

- 3.1.** Our initial aim has been to recruit parishes and towns with a population ranging from 3,000 to 30,000 into the Rural/Market Town Group. The larger of these towns have been identified by Defra as Rural Hub Towns. In the future it possible that ceiling figure of 30,000 will increase after the 2021 census results.
- 3.2.** We currently have 119 parishes and towns in membership. 75 are paying members, 40 are on a one-year free trial membership. The sub for membership varies in accord with community population:
- Towns with population size of 5,000 charged £110 per year.
  - Towns with population size between 5,000 and 10 000 charged £130 per year.
  - Towns with population size of 10,000 and over charged £150 per year.
- 3.3.** The initial purpose of this initiative was recruit as many members across England following the c200 rural areas that Defra have identified as rural areas of reasonable size across England. The first invites covered all these areas. Obviously as would be anticipated success has been mixed. Where a Local Council has declined, we have sought out a substitute. If that substitute has declined, we have sought a further town or parish substitute.
- 3.4.** At the last RSN Executive members requested that every RSN member has at least one RMTG member in their area. Currently this is the case in respect of about 100 of our current 123 member areas.
- 3.5.** Some of the 200 Defra rural areas have no or few market 'towns' and in those cases, we have engaged in discussion with larger parishes. The current group is made up of 87 % local councils named 'town' and 13% local councils named 'parish'.
- David noted that terminology regarding town and parish varies, and in the SE in particular the phrase local councils prefer is 'parish' despite its size, when the phrase 'town' is more likely used in other regions.
- 3.6.** During this recruitment exercise process the government has been 'hinting' at its enthusiasm for a move towards Unitary Local Government model. Time

frame and methodology are likely to be considered in the promised Devolution White Paper, seemingly to be issued prior to the end of 2020. Although it may be that the drive to Unitary is not to be as extensive as once was recently surmised; it is likely that even the narrower Unitary system being suggested might still influence our foreseen income situation.

- 3.7.** As with all our services the role and the focus on the RMTG (and indeed local councils as a whole) will need to be revisited in the context of such relevant passages in the Devolution White Paper as we seek a widening of the RMTG's membership and scale of operation at that time. Local groups of market towns within a Region or County or Unitary Council area, where they do not exist currently, could become a possibility to look at. It is felt they would need to involve annual meetings (conducted virtually for each such grouping). In the meantime, it is clearly important to do all we reasonably can to maintain membership at the current or if possible, at an increased level.
- 3.8.** A review of the existing 'categories' of membership of the Rural/Market Town Group will be undertaken and considered at the next RSN Executive meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2020.

#### **4. Subs for 2020-2021.**

Members considered the position very fully and decided the increase to be recommended to the Annual General Meeting for 'inflation' would be one of 2.75% to match the pay award for local government staff to which RSN staff contracts were tied.

#### **5. Engagement with Member Councils and Nominated Members. (Attachment 4)** Report from Graham Biggs, Chief Executive.

During the previous 2<sup>nd</sup> July RSN Executive meeting, members considered and recommended the introduction of a series of supplementary individual online Zoom meetings with each RSN member authority based largely around greater focus on the nominated member role. The recommendation has been subject to the staff giving consideration as to how this would be undertaken, and the additional workload involved. The Chief Executive reported this has now been successfully done. It was agreed the system would therefore be adopted. A report would be given to the RSN AGM on 16<sup>th</sup> November outlining the system for all Local Authority members of the RSN.

#### **6. RSN draft response to the 'Changes to the Current Planning System' Consultation which closes on 1st October.**

The RSN draft response was approved.

- 6.1.** Members expressed real concern about Government's proposals, particularly regarding housing. It was felt that organising the RSN Discussion Event on

the Planning White Paper for the 20<sup>th</sup> October is timely. The RSN Executive strongly held the view that affordable house renting schemes are in urgent need in rural areas. Current Government suggestions relating to quotas from development sites were very disappointing in that context.

- 6.2. It was agreed that a Special RSN Executive meeting on Housing will be arranged in November to discuss rural housing policies we should be promoting.
- 6.3. **Members noted that a future APPG is seeking to invite the Secretary of State or a Minister to a special APPG in November to discuss the planning proposals for which the date is yet to be set.**
- 6.4. **It was felt micro policy was likely to affect macro areas, and at this stage there was obviously no attempt at rural proofing policies.**

[Please click here to view RSN's draft response to the MHCLG Consultation: Changes to Planning Policy and Regulation](#)<sup>2</sup>

- 7. **RSN's response to the 'Planning for the Future' consultation which must be submitted by the end of October 2020.**

A specific seminar for RSN members - RSN Discussion Event on the Planning White Paper has been arranged for Tuesday, 20<sup>th</sup> October. RSN will prepare a draft response and circulate to attendees at that meeting for consideration. We will consult RSN Executive members by email on the draft response before submission.

- 8. **To approve the RSN response to the Treasury regarding Comprehensive Spending Review.**

This has been considered by the RSN Executive members via email. This item was added to agenda to get a formal resolution of the RSN Executive to approve the submission which had to be made by 24<sup>th</sup> September.

[Please click here to view the final submission paper sent to the Treasury](#)<sup>3</sup>  
[Please click here to view Appendix with supporting information paper](#)<sup>4</sup>

**It was formally resolved, and the document was unanimously agreed.**

- 9. **A Plan for Jobs: Rural Analysis.**

The analysis of the Treasury Plan for Jobs from a rural perspective was noted and endorsed by the RSN Executive.

[Please click here to view attachment on A Plan for Jobs: Rural Analysis](#)<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> [https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/changes\\_planning\\_system\\_consultation.pdf](https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/changes_planning_system_consultation.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/FINAL\\_CSR\\_SUBMISSION\\_Aligned\\_to\\_.pdf](https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/FINAL_CSR_SUBMISSION_Aligned_to_.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/Supporting\\_Information\\_to\\_RSN\\_CS.pdf](https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/Supporting_Information_to_RSN_CS.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> [https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/Revitalising%20Rural/RR%20Final%20Docs/A\\_Plan\\_for\\_Jobs\\_Rural\\_Analysis.pdf](https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/Revitalising%20Rural/RR%20Final%20Docs/A_Plan_for_Jobs_Rural_Analysis.pdf)



**10. Rural Economy Toolkit.**

The Rural Economy Toolkit produced by the RSN and Institute for Economic Development was noted and endorsed. This was discussed during the Rural Economy Plenary Session of the National Rural Conference 2020 and it will be put to the Rural Economy Sub-Group meeting on Monday, 12th October.

The Rural Economy Toolkit will officially be “launched” at a joint RSN/IED webinar on Monday, 19<sup>th</sup> October.

[Please click here to view the Rural Economy Toolkit](https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/Revitalising%20Rural/RR%20Final%20Docs/Rural_Economy_Toolkit.pdf)<sup>6</sup>

**11. National Rural Conference 2020.**

The meeting received a verbal report from Kerry Booth, Assistant Chief Executive. There had been 8 sessions in total spread over the 5 days. The conference week has been extremely successful. Nearly 400 people attended sessions held throughout the week, which is a significant increase in comparison to previous years of running the conference live. The number of officers attending the online conference has massively increased in comparison to previous attendance of the live conference.

Kerry and the staff were congratulated on the week which had been a real success.

**12. Fire meeting 2021 and engagement with Fire & Rescue Services.**

It seemed certain there would be no LGA Fire Services Annual Conference this year and therefore no opportunity to hold any physical meeting of the Rural Fire Group at the end of the Conference, as had happened in previous years.

It was decided that RSN would seek to set up a Zoom event in place of this Group Meeting which Councillor Roger Phillips would chair. RSN would work to do this during the coming months. The Chief Executive stressed the need for the group to try to present the rural angle in respect of the Fire Settlement whether this was through the existing formula arrangements or any new system being established by the Home Office.

**13. RSN Meetings & Events 2021.**

- RSN Seminar Programme 2021. (Attachment 5)
- RSN Meeting Programme 2021 and Schedule of Dates. (Attachment 6)

**13.1.** Attachments were considered. Due to the recent move to online events, seminars will now focus on topics rather than regions, and will be run online,

<sup>6</sup> [https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/Revitalising%20Rural/RR%20Final%20Docs/Rural\\_Economy\\_Toolkit.pdf](https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/Revitalising%20Rural/RR%20Final%20Docs/Rural_Economy_Toolkit.pdf)

allowing RSN to engage all our members nationally. Each year we will run 9 seminars.

- 13.2.** In terms of forthcoming meetings there were:  
 97 people currently booked for SPARSE Rural meeting;  
 130 for the Rural Economy Sub-Group meeting;  
 89 for the RSN Seminar: Rural Vulnerability; and  
 103 for the RSN Discussion Event on the Planning White Paper
- 13.3.** Online event registrations were considerably more than usual statistics. The meeting agreed the Programme to be put to the 16<sup>th</sup> November RSN AGM for consideration.

- 14. RSN Budget Report.** (Attachment 7)  
 Report was noted.

- 15. RSP Full Accounts; Appointment of Tax Accountants and Appointment of RSP Ltd Chair of Directors.** (Attachment 8)  
 This item involved only those who were RSP Directors and only RSP directors voted on this item.  
 The Directors considered the papers and accounts put before them.  
**Agreed:**  
 Nick Harwood was proposed by Cllr Cecilia Motley, seconded by Graham Biggs as the RSP Chair for 20/21. Motion carried.  
 Tax Assist were proposed to continue as RSP Tax Accountants for 2020/21. Motion carried.

- 16. Any Other Business.**

- 16.1. All Party Parliamentary Group Business**  
**Graham Biggs outlined future events:**  
 • **APPG for Rural Services meeting – 3:30pm-4:15pm, 13th October 2020**  
 Featuring Rt Hon Stephen Barclay MP, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury.  
 • **APPG for Rural Services meeting – 11am-12:30pm, 28th October 2020.**  
 On how to level-up digital connectivity for rural communities with Matt Warman MP, Minister for Digital Infrastructure and Gareth Elliott, Head of Policy and Communications at Mobile UK.
- 16.2. The Chief Executive reported that English Rural HA, CPRE and RSN had commissioned a study into the economic and fiscal case for the Government investing in affordable rural housing.** Cost to the RSN £2000. As the Chief Executive of English Rural HA, Martin Collett declared an interest in this matter.
- 16.3.** Martin Collett asked how the staff were coping in these days of pandemic and working from home. He wished it to be recorded that if it were felt there was

anything the Executive could do to assist their welfare the Executive would be delighted to try to assist them.

The next RSN Executive meeting date is Monday, 11<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

## Changes to Service Delivery to RSN Members 2020

Report to the Rural Services Network Annual General Meeting

### Recommendation:

That member organisations of the RSN, note the changes in service delivery introduced during 2020.

### Context:

The RSN has recognised a need for greater engagement with its member organisations to ensure that it was meeting their needs and is able to effectively represent the 'rural voice' at a national level.

In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown introduced in March 2020 meant that changes to working practices had to be introduced.

### Changes introduced in 2020

#### 1) Meeting Format

RSN hold a number of general membership meetings each year, along with specialist subject meetings focusing on the Rural Economy and Rural Health and Social Care. It was decided to move these meetings online, hosted via Zoom. In addition, at their recent meeting in September the RSN Executive approved the 2021 meetings schedule to be hosted online.

Whilst it is recognised that poor broadband connection may result in difficulties for some members to join online meetings, there has been a significant increase in attendance compared to 'in-person' London meetings.

	June 2019		October 2020		
	Local Authorities represented	Local Authority delegates	Local Authorities represented	Local Authority delegates	RSP delegates
Sparse meeting	16	18	44	55	-
Economy Sub group meeting	16	18	47	58	15

#### 2) Seminar format

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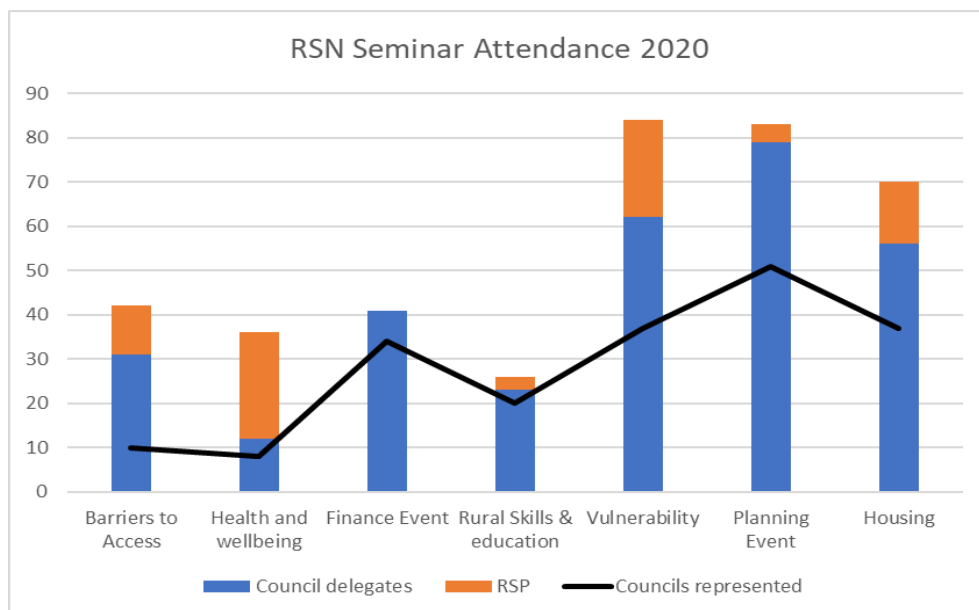
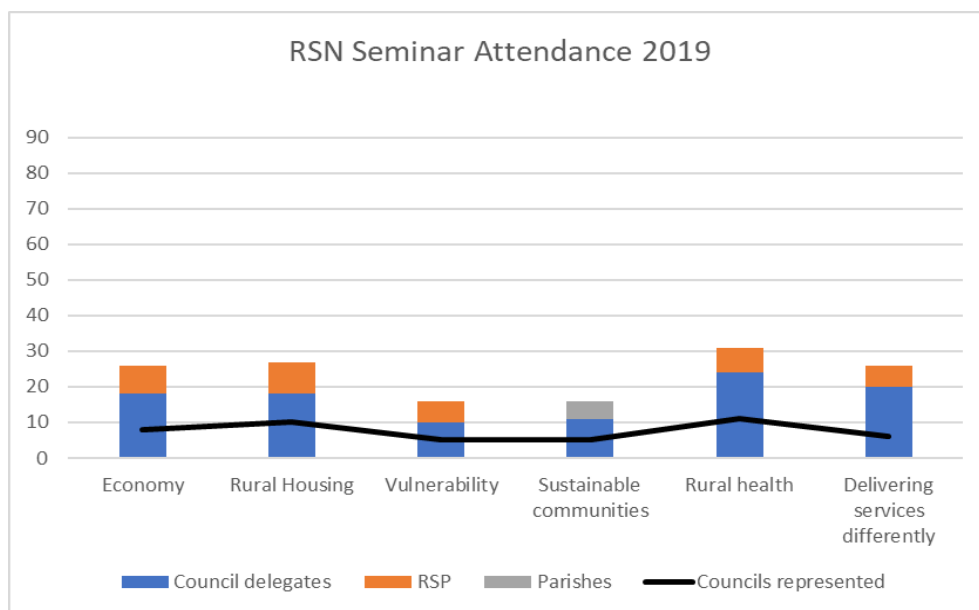
Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ

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The Seminar schedule for 2020 was moved online during the lockdown and the Executive recently approved the 2021 schedule also being hosted online. These meetings were held with a regional focus to enable regional networking and to hold meetings that were easy to access. Online meetings have meant that delegates are able to attend from all over England if they have a particular interest in that topic. In 2021, as can be seen in Attachment 5 – Meeting Schedule 2021, it has been agreed that there will be 9 seminars, following the broad themes of the Revitalising Rural document.

Attendance at seminars has increased significantly compared to those events held in person.



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We have noticed a wider range of attendees so whereas previously it was mainly Councillors that attended, Officers have now also been attending and taking part in discussions at seminars. Being able to attend an event for 2 hours rather than take a day out of the office to travel to an event has meant that the seminars are more accessible, cost effective and attractive to both members and officers to attend. This is positive as it means that the sharing of best practice, expert knowledge and discussion at seminars is reaching wider across the organisations of the RSN.

### **3) Rural Stakeholder Impact Forum**

The RSN was invited to be part of the Defra Rural Impact Stakeholder Forum, this was a weekly meeting during lockdown 1 of key rural organisations brought together to share information with DEFRA, and other Govt Depts about the situation in rural areas, and to share messages with the membership from DEFRA of Govt initiatives. This meeting is continuing every other week and the RSN continues to be represented.

### **4) Specialist surveys**

The RSN carried out a number of surveys during the summer of 2020 to enable the results to be shared with Government departments. These included the impact on the rural economy of lockdown measures, the effectiveness of Government support for the Rural Economy and Domestic Abuse and homelessness. The comprehensive feedback provided by members has meant that the RSN has been able to represent their views to rural MP's and DEFRA.

### **5) Detailed engagement with key members and officers**

Recent events and Government consultations on key issues affecting rural communities, in particular the Planning White Paper and Changes to the Current Planning System Consultation, along with the Comprehensive Spending Review Consultation has meant that the RSN has had significant engagement with specialist senior officers and portfolio holders across member organisations. In addition, we held a dedicated Planning White Paper event to discuss implications for rural communities. This has resulted in comprehensive contributions from across the membership of RSN, enabling the RSN to put to Government a coordinated and thorough rural response.

## **Changes agreed by the Executive to be implemented**

### **1) Nominated member and deputy**

For our local authorities in Sparse or Rural Assembly membership, we currently ask for a Nominated Member who can represent their authority and who is the point of contact for RSN to share information, invitations to meetings and so on.

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It was been decided to strengthen this representative role by developing some key principles for the 'rural champion' nominated member role and for deputies to be appointed. In addition, we will produce a "beacon" publication for those Nominated Members and Deputies

## **2) Meetings with individual councils**

In order to increase the understanding of issues affecting rural councils in membership and to gain direct feedback on the work of the RSN, it has been decided to introduce a series of Annual Rural Discussion Meetings for each local authority in membership. These would be conducted online and would involve a senior officer of RSN along with the Nominated Member/Deputy, a Cabinet Member and at least one of the Key Officers meeting once a year to share the work of the RSN, and contribute to the policy making and representative role of the RSN at a national level.

## **3) Key Liaison roles**

The RSN currently updates the contacts it holds with local authorities annually to ensure it has the correct contacts to engage with. The contact update would specify the following officer roles to enable specialist work and engagement to be undertaken in these areas:

PR/ Media, Democratic Services, Economic Development, Public Health and Finance. In addition to this, CX, Senior Management and the traditional cross section of roles along with Members with specific responsibilities.

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### Rural Services Network Meetings & Events Schedule 2021

Date	Time	Event	Format
Monday, 11/01/2021	11:15am - 2:30pm	RSN Executive meeting	Online via Zoom
Monday, 25/01/2021	11am - 12:30pm	SPARSE Rural meeting	Online via Zoom
Monday, 25/01/2021	1pm - 3pm	Rural Economy Sub Group meeting	Online via Zoom
Wednesday, 27/01/2021	11am - 1pm	RSN Seminar: Rural Education, Training & Apprenticeships	Online via Zoom
February/March 2021		Rural Vulnerability Day	Online via Zoom
Wednesday, 24/02/2021	11am - 1pm	RSN Seminar: Rural Transport	Online via Zoom
Monday, 15/03/2021	11:15am - 2:30pm	RSN Executive meeting	Online via Zoom
Wednesday, 31/03/2021	11am - 1pm	RSN Seminar: Rural Digital Connectivity	Online via Zoom
Monday, 12/04/2021	11am - 12:30pm	Rural Social Care & Health Sub Group meeting	Online via Zoom
Monday, 12/04/2021	1pm - 3:30pm	Rural Assembly meeting	Online via Zoom
Tuesday, 27/04/2021	TBC	RSP Vulnerability Group	Online via Zoom
Tuesday, 27/04/2021	TBC	RSP Partner Group meeting	Online via Zoom
Wednesday, 28/04/2021	11am - 1pm	RSN Seminar: Decarbonisation	Online via Zoom
Monday, 17/05/2021	11:15am - 2:30pm	RSN Executive meeting	Online via Zoom
Monday, 21/06/2021	11am - 12:30pm	SPARSE Rural meeting	Online via Zoom
Monday, 21/06/2021	1pm - 3pm	Rural Economy Sub Group meeting	Online via Zoom
Wednesday, 26/05/2021	11am - 1pm	RSN Seminar: Rural Health & Social Care	Online via Zoom
Wednesday, 30/06/2021	11am - 1pm	RSN Seminar: Rural Housing	Online via Zoom
Wednesday, 28/07/2021	11am - 1pm	RSN Seminar: Rural Business Advice	Online via Zoom
Tuesday-Wednesday, 07-08/09/2020	Two day event	National Rural Conference 2021	Online via Zoom
Monday, 27/09/2021	11:15am - 2:30pm	RSN Executive meeting	Online via Zoom

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Monday, 27/09/2021	11:15am - 2:30pm	RSP Directors' meeting	Online via Zoom
Wednesday, 27/10/2021	11am - 1pm	RSN Seminar: Rural Town Centres, High Streets & Village Hubs	Online via Zoom
Monday, 15/11/2021	11am - 12:30pm	Rural Social Care & Health Sub Group meeting	Online via Zoom
Monday, 15/11/2021	1pm - 3:30pm	RSN AGM	Online via Zoom
Monday, 15/11/2021	1pm - 3:30pm	Rural Assembly meeting	Online via Zoom
Tuesday, 23/11/2021	TBC	RSP Vulnerability Group	Online via Zoom
Tuesday, 23/11/2021	TBC	RSP Ltd (AGM)	Online via Zoom
Tuesday, 23/11/2021	TBC	RSP Partner Group meeting	Online via Zoom
Wednesday, 24/11/2021	TBC	RSN Seminar: Rural Economic Vibrancy & Local Enterprise Partnerships	Online via Zoom
TBC	TBC	Rural Fire & Rescue Group Meeting	Online via Zoom
TBC	TBC	TWO Rural/Market Town Group Meetings	Online via Zoom
TBC	TBC	TWO Rural/Market Town Group Clerks Advisory Panel Meetings	Online via Zoom

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**Please note that Attachment 6 is available to our RSN members upon request only. If you wish to receive this attachment, please email us at [admin@sparse.gov.uk](mailto:admin@sparse.gov.uk) with the subject link 'RSN AGM & Rural Assembly meeting 16/11/2020 - requesting Attachment 6' and we will send you this document.**

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1						<b>Attachment 7</b>
2						
3	<b>The Rural Services Partnership Limited</b>					
4	<b>Budget vs. Actuals: RURAL SERVICES PARTNERSHIP - FY21 P&amp;L</b>					
5	April 2020 - March 2021					
6	<b>AS AT 1ST NOVEMBER 2020 ACCRUAL BASIS</b>					
7	Total					
8		<b>2020/21 ACTUAL 04/10/20</b>	<b>2020/21 REVISED BUDGET</b>	<b>2020/21 VARIATION FROM ORIGINAL BUDGET</b>	<b>2020/21 OVER ANNUAL BUDGET</b>	<b>ESTIMATED BUDGET 2021/22</b>
9	<b>INCOME</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
10	Coastal communities contract income	3,377.92	5,557.00		-3312.46	5668.00
11	National rural conference	2,608.02	2,583.00	2439.00	-1146.98	5000.00
12	RHCA Membership	4,717.52	33,838.00	1685.00	-22975.48	24661.00
13	RSP Membership	17,840.58	19,610.00	139.00	-2278.92	20150.00
14	Rural England Annual Re CHARGES		6,789.00		-6789.00	6925.00
15	Rural England project support		1,300.00		-1300.00	1000.00
16	Rural fire and rescue	3,917.00	3,923.00		-627.00	4001.00
17	Rural housing group subscriptions	6,400.00	7,175.00		-775.00	7318.00
18	Rural housing group website	915	2,275.00	1360.00	1360.00	
19	Rural Strategy Income	6,097.92	6,098.00	6098.00	6097.92	
20	Rural Towns Group	10,440.00	10,440.00		-1400.00	11000.00
21	Services		132.00	132.00	131.87	
22	SPARSE - Rural general grant	225,975.00	301,586.00		-75611.00	306053.00
23	Strategic partnering arrangements	10,000.00	10,000.00		0.00	10000.00
24	Unapplied Cash Payment Income		-120.00	-120.00	-120.00	
25	<b>Total Income</b>	<b>£292,288.96</b>	<b>411186.00</b>	<b>11733.00</b>	<b>-108746.05</b>	<b>401776.00</b>

	A	B	C	D	E	F
26	Cost of Sales					
27	GROSS WAGES	£134,907.96	235361.00	-6439.00	-103888.00	251880.00
28	Total Cost of Sales	£134,907.96	235361.00	-6439.00	-103888.00	251880.00

	A	B	C	D	E	F
29	<b>Gross Profit</b>	<b>£157,381.00</b>	<b>175825.00</b>		<b>5250.52</b>	<b>149896.00</b>
30	<b>Expenses</b>					
31	Accountancy	1,202.00	2,000.00		-873.00	2040.00
32	Bank charges	55.9	90.00		-42.55	92.00
33	Coastal communities contract	1,870.63	5,721.00		-3850.37	4080.00
34	Communications	14,199.50	29,616.00		-15970.60	36000.00
35	Databases	4,072.64	7,000.00		-3325.54	6000.00
36	EMPLOYER Pension contributions	3,188.75	4674.00	74.00	-2559.14	4900.00
37	Employer's NI contributions	1,376.20	10248.00	248.00	-9273.80	11054.00
38	Fair Fundinging Work external support		27500.00		-20000.00	22000.00
39	Insurance	275	1175.00		-900.00	1200.00
40	IT Support	288.77	700.00		-411.23	715.00
41	Legal and professional fees	1,090.42	1090.00	1090.00	1077.42	13.00
42	Meeting Room Hire		0.00	-1500.00	-1500.00	1000.00
43	Nat Centre RHC		7631.00		-5700.00	7784.00
44	National rural conference expenses		1500.00		-1500.00	1500.00
45	Printing, postage stationery & phone	2,066.37	4786.00		-2912.85	4882.00
46	Professional subscriptions	182.00	550.00		-368.00	550.00
47	Rent and service charge	4,330.76	8700.00	-1100.00	-4369.24	9986.00
48	Rural England Service	7,000.00	7000.00		0.00	7000.00
49	Rural Strategy/Rural Policy Expenses	4,660.17	25000.00	4800.00	-17550.00	15000.00
50	Travel and subsistence	-85.58	1000.00	-5000.00	-6093.28	4000.00
51	HOUSING		0.00	-500.00	-500.00	500.00
52	Parliamentary		0.00	-800.00	-800.00	800.00
53						
54	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>45773.53</b>	<b>145981.00</b>	<b>-2688.00</b>	<b>-97422.18</b>	<b>141096.00</b>
55	<b>Corporation Tax</b>			<b>-1000.00</b>		<b>5516.00</b>
56	<b>Uncategorised Expenditure</b>	<b>32.00</b>	<b>32.00</b>	<b>-2000.00</b>		
57	<b>CAPITAL ITEMS IT EQUIPMENT</b>	2265.00	2265.00	2265.00		
58	<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>48070.53</b>	<b>148278.00</b>	<b>-3423.00</b>		<b>146612.00</b>

	A	B	C	D	E	F
59	<b>Net Operating Income</b>		<b>27579.00</b>			<b>3284.00</b>
60	<b>Net Income</b>		<b>27579.00</b>			<b>3284.00</b>
61	<b>BALANCE BROUGHT FORWARD</b>		<b>18901.00</b>			<b>46480.00</b>
62	<b>BALANCE CARRIED FORWARD TO 2021/22</b>		<b>46480.00</b>			<b>49764.00</b>
63						
64						
65	<b>RE ANNUAL CHARGES INCOME BREAKDOWN</b>					
66	Back Office		1457.00			
67	Staff Costs (Incl Vuln Panels)		3000.00			
68	Website		2332.00			
69						
70	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>6789.00</b>			
71						
72	<b>RE PROJECT INCOME BREAKDOWN</b>					
73	Toolkit		500.00			
74	Utility Vulnerability Panel		800.00			
75						
76	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1300.00</b>			





## **MHCLG CONSULTATION: CHANGES TO PLANNING POLICY AND REGULATION.**

### **Consultation Response from the Rural Services Network.**

**29<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2020**

### **About the Rural Services Network (RSN)**

The RSN is a Special Interest Group of the Local Government Association. Our membership includes 120 Local Authorities serving rural areas across England and over 200 non local government service providers and organisation concerned with rural issues.

We are the national champion for rural services, ensuring that people in rural areas have a strong voice. We are fighting for a fair deal for rural communities to maintain their social and economic viability for the benefit of the nation as a whole.

### **OVERVIEW**

The Government states that: "This consultation sets out proposals for measures to improve the effectiveness of the current planning system."

Four main proposals cover changes to the standard method for assessing local housing need, securing of First Homes through developer contributions, temporarily lifting the small sites threshold below which developers do not need to contribute to affordable housing and extending the current Permission in Principle to major development.

**Following consultation of our membership, RSN is extremely concerned about and fundamentally opposed to two of the proposals included in this consultation.**

Government statistics already show a chronic shortage of affordable housing in rural areas. Lower quartile affordability ratio for mainly rural districts is 9:1, only 8% of properties are social housing (compared with 19% in urban areas), and last year only 5,558 new affordable homes were built in rural communities with fewer than 3,000 residents. Two specific elements of the consultation raise significant concern as follows:

#### **1. Affordable Housing Thresholds**

The proposal to raise the threshold that triggers affordable housing contributions from 10 to 40 or 50 dwellings for a limited time period will drastically reduce the supply of rural affordable homes. This is because in many rural communities, residential developments tend to be smaller than 10 dwellings. Many rural communities, therefore, will see no affordable homes being provided at all.

**Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers**

**Rural Services Network**  
 Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ  
 Tel: 01822 813693  
[www.rsnonline.org.uk](http://www.rsnonline.org.uk) email: [admin@sparse.gov.uk](mailto:admin@sparse.gov.uk) twitter: [@rsnonline](https://twitter.com/rsnonline)



The consultation document proposes an exemption to this rule in designated rural areas based on the S157 1985 Housing Act definition. However, this measure will be largely ineffective because it will not apply to 70% of smaller rural communities.

Despite good intentions, these changes will not, in practice, help SME builders in rural areas. Indeed, they are likely to be detrimental to the interests of such firms. During the 2008 recession, these developers continued to build because housing associations bought the affordable homes, guaranteeing the developers with an income that supported cash flow, kept the site under construction, contractors working and promoting future market housing. Removing affordable housing requirements will lead to higher land values and this will inevitably further constrain the ability of SME builders to compete in purchasing sites.

In a survey of our local authority members on this issue carried out this month, 78% said that raising the threshold to 40 dwellings would result in a loss of rural affordable housing from their pipeline of schemes in their communities of 3,000 population or fewer. This proposal, therefore, will not support SME builders in small rural communities and will not provide the affordable homes so desperately needed.

The threshold policies in Local Plans are based on evidence of local housing need, have been viability tested, scrutinised at Examination, and found to be sound. Raising the threshold as proposed would mean that these needs would no longer be met, particularly in villages and rural towns where site opportunities are more limited.

## **THE RSN OPPOSES THESE PROPOSALS FOR THE REASONS STATED ABOVE**

### **2. First Homes Exception Sites**

The proposed 'First Homes Exception Sites' will seriously damage the supply of Rural Exception Sites in non-designated areas and, with it, the ability to meet a broad range of housing needs.

Landowners will choose to sell their land for First Homes Exception Sites which, because they will provide predominantly affordable housing for sale, are likely to command a higher land value than Rural Exception Sites. They will also cause confusion and destroy the emphasis on community engagement and support. Gone will be the opportunity provided by Rural Exception Sites to provide a mix of affordable homes tailored to the specific needs of the community, often including discounted market sale in perpetuity.

A recent high-level analysis for ACRE that compares site values between First Homes Exception Sites and Rural Exception Sites across a sample of low, medium and high value markets shows that in all cases a First Homes Exception Site developed for 100% First Homes at the minimum discount offers a higher land value than rural exception sites.

In high value areas this is a positive residual value and landowners are likely therefore to sell for First Home Exception sites.

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Kilworthy Park, Tavistock, Devon PL19 0BZ

Tel: 01822 813693

[www.rsnonline.org.uk](http://www.rsnonline.org.uk) email: [admin@sparse.gov.uk](mailto:admin@sparse.gov.uk) twitter: [@rsnonline](https://twitter.com/rsnonline)



In low value and medium areas both forms of exception site result in a negative residual value. To plug the viability gap market housing can be included on both forms of site. However, unlike rural exception sites the land value of First Homes Sites is not pegged. In consequence the land value is likely to rise and landowners will choose to sell as a First Homes Exception Site. In such instances the level of market housing on a First Homes Exception Site could be at a level that none of the dwellings are in the form of rented housing, which is the primary need in rural areas, even in low value areas such as some coastal and remote areas where wages are low and there are high levels of second and holiday homes.

This risk is recognised in the proposal by not applying First Homes Exception sites in designated rural areas. However, again the chosen definition to define these areas means 70% of small rural communities will be excluded. This definition needs to be altered.

### **THE RSN OPOSSES THESE PROPOSALS FOR THE REASONS STATED ABOVE**

#### **Proposed Revisions in Aggregate**

The combination of the change to affordable housing thresholds and the proposed First Homes Exception Sites could have a catastrophic effect on the delivery of rural affordable housing.

Two small changes to the proposals could avoid these risks whilst still achieving the government's overall ambition:

- (i) Replace the definition of designated rural areas from those areas listed under S157 regulations to all parishes with a population of 3,000 or fewer. This would provide a definition that is transparent and readily understandable, easy to evidence and update, efficient and simple to apply, whilst providing consistent coverage across rural England.
- (ii) Adopt the wording in the NPPG1 that was introduced in July 2019 that allows local planning authorities to set their own thresholds for affordable housing in their designated rural communities but, as above, not just those with S157 designation.

It is critical that rural communities are allowed to thrive and that the many key workers who have been so important during the covid-19 pandemic and beyond, are able to afford to live in the communities they serve. These revisions will be fundamental in helping to achieve that end.

#### **Rural Exception Sites**

The consultation document states the following in paragraph 66: "We intend to protect the important role that rural exception sites play in delivering affordable homes in rural areas, with rural exception sites being retained as a vehicle for delivering affordable housing in designated rural areas. However, we recognise that this delivery mechanism is currently underused in many cases, and we will update planning guidance in due course."

It is very welcome to hear the government commitment to the importance of Rural Exception Sites. These have been, and remain, critical in delivering affordable homes in many rural communities.

#### **Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers**



Additional funding and clear planning policies which influence landowners to release sites would help other areas take advantage of this important mechanism.

However, this paragraph could be interpreted as suggesting that Rural Exception Sites will only be applicable in designated rural areas. This would be a retrograde step for those rural areas not included within the designation used. Rural Exception Sites are a fantastic example of what the Government states it is seeking to achieve – greater and constructive engagement of communities in the future of their communities. Rural Exception Sites must remain available to all rural communities as a key mechanism to achieve local engagement and the affordable homes needed by key workers, and rural communities and businesses to maintain local services and a sustainable rural economy.

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