

RSP & RSN Meeting 28th April 2025

Chair: Councillor Roger Phillips, Rural Services Network

Hosted: Online via Zoom

Date: Monday 28th April 2025

Time: 10.30-12.00

1. Welcome to the Joint AGM by Cllr Roger Phillips, Chair of RSN

2. Attendance:

| Name | Organisation |
|----------------------|---|
| Cllr Roger Phillips | RSN / Herefordshire Council |
| Kerry Booth | Rural Services Network |
| Nadine Trout | Rural Services Network |
| Renee van Baar | Midlands Connect |
| Ian Cass | Forum of Private Businesses and the Micro Business Alliance |
| Barbara Piranty | Gloucestershire Rural Community Council |
| Cllr Keith Horgan | East Cambridgeshire District Council |
| Rachel Allen | North Yorkshire Citizens Advice |
| Cllr. Janet Duncton | West Sussex County Council |
| Cllr. Sarah Pugh | West Suffolk Council |
| Cllr. Roger Phillips | Herefordshire Council |
| Laurence Keeley | Land and Leisure |
| Cllr. Peter Thornton | Westmorland and Furness Council |
| Steph Lloyd | OFTEC |
| Cllr. Teresa Davis | Mid Suffolk District Council |
| Cllr. Gale Waller | Rutland County Council |
| Cllr. Claire Hodson | Torridge District Council |
| Cllr. Ken James | Torridge District Council |
| Lucy Saker | RABI |
| Maryann MacAulay | RSN |
| Natalie Birch | RSN |
| Graham Biggs | RSN |

Apologies

| Name | Organisation |
|-------------------------|--|
| Gary Powell | Teignbridge District Council |
| Abi Culley | Warwickshire County Council |
| Nik Harwood | Young Somerset |
| Clair Raybould | Lincolnshire CCGs |
| Cllr. John Evans | Uttlesford District Council |
| Alistair Beales | Borough Council King's Lynn & West Norfolk |
| Cllr. Murray Turner | South Kesteven District Council |
| James Crawford-Smith | English Rural |
| Jen O'Neill | Community Transport Association |
| Cllr. Gordon Czapiewski | Mid Devon District Council |

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|-------------------------|---|
| Cllr. Philip Atkins OBE | Staffordshire County Council |
| Barbara Cannon | Cumberland Council |
| Suzy Deeley | RABI |
| Ian Sherriff | Faculty of Health Plymouth University |
| Cllr. Robert Heseltine | North Yorkshire Council |
| Nicholas Marks | Calor GB |
| Chanelle Dwyer | Community Transport Association |
| Cllr. Jane Whittaker | Northam Town and Torridge District Cllr for the Northam and Orchard Hill Ward |

3. [Notes from the previous RSN AGM & Rural Assembly meeting.](#)

These minutes were approved as a record of that meeting.

4. **Round up of RSN work in 2024-2025**

Nadine Trout, Assistant Chief Executive of the RSN presentation a summary to the meeting of the achievements and work of the RSN in 2024-2025 including:

- The national bodies where the RSN represents rural areas
- Government consultations that have been responded to
- The research and policy services we provide our members
- A roundup of the publications which our members receive
- Summary of the seminars and events we provide for our members

[The presentation can be accessed at this link.](#)

5. **RSN Campaign – Delivering for All**

Kerry Booth, Chief Executive of the RSN provided a presentation setting out some new principles for the RSN campaign.

It introduced the concept of three foundations to unlock Rural Prosperity:

- Fairly fund rural services
- Use the right measures and metrics to understand rural challenges
- Have a Rural focused plan, not a one size fits all approach

Kerry talked through these three foundation principles and shared some of the other challenges that rural areas currently face from a policy perspective. These would still be included in the Delivering for All campaign.

[The presentation can be accessed at this link.](#)

The delegates responded to an online poll and the following discussion points were made:

Cllr Duncton - West Sussex County Council, highlighted concerns relating to Housing and Planning and the use of Grade 1 and 2 agricultural land. She also noted concerns over the impact of Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation on rural areas. Community Land Trusts were put forward as an option where Housing Associations were unwilling to take on 3 or 4 new properties in a rural area.

Cllr Pugh – West Suffolk Council, highlighted concerns about the National Grid and the lack of capacity for new connections. Local Authorities are receiving applications for large solar panel farms but no capacity in National Grid to accept them. Would prefer moving to solar panels on sheds, and houses rather than fields.

Cllr Thornton - Westmorland and Furness Council, highlighted concerns over the capacity of the network in rural communities where there may be only one power line in, and with changes in habits meaning people will be using more electricity with EV and Heat pumps, this may not be suitable.

Cllr Waller – Rutland Council, highlighted concerns over losing farmland to large solar farms and the lack of requirement for developers to provide any planning gain for communities unless they choose to do so. There have been instances of significant disruption to local communities with significantly longer journeys to work and inability to access normal routes locally.

Steph Lloyd – Oftec, highlighted concerns over the one size fits all approach to heating whereas some properties will need a different solution. Not all homes will be suitable for a heatpump, due to the way they have been constructed or restrictions on changes that can be made to properties and so there should be a discussion around alternative options for these homes.

Barbara Piranty - Gloucestershire Rural Community Council, highlighted concerns over the impact of LGR and Devolution on rural communities and potential changes to housing targets as local authorities merge. She also mentioned the impact of the lack of the right type of properties in rural areas for example the need for some people to downsize to free up larger family homes.

Rachel Allen – North Yorkshire Citizens Advice, highlighted concerns over the way that the Citizens Advice fit into the process.

Kerry agreed to meet with Rachel separately to explore this issue.

Action: All of the issues highlighted by delegates will be considered as part of the review of Delivering for All to help shape the campaigning work of the RSN moving forward. The approach was noted by delegates.

6. National Rural Conference 2025

Kerry Booth, Chief Executive of the RSN provided some highlights of the 2024 conference, including that it featured 8 sessions over 4 days, featuring 30 speakers and 655 delegates representing 131 organisations.

There was a poll amongst delegates to determine areas they would like to see covered at the 2025 conference and whether their organisations would want to feature to share best practice.

[The presentation is available at this link.](#)

7. The date of the next meeting will be the AGM on 1st December 2025.