



Rural Services Network

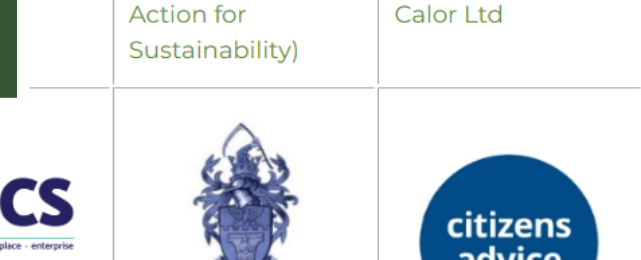
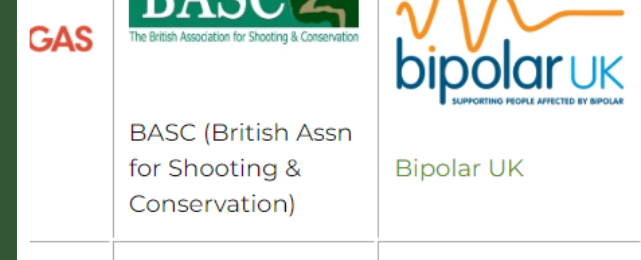
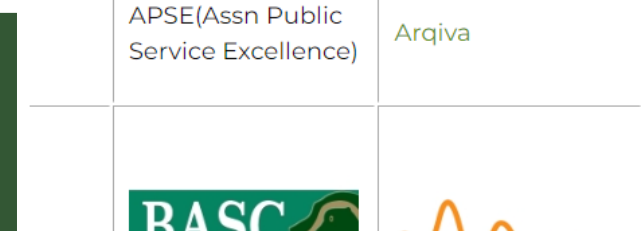
RSN ANNUAL REVIEW 2023

Kerry Booth, Chief Executive
November 2023





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



We are the national champion for rural services



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



We represent a range
of organisations in
rural areas across
England



We provide a voice for
rural areas in
Parliament

We hosted a range of events...

Event	Subjects Covered
<u>Seminar</u> <u>Rural Net Zero</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fair transition to low carbon heating for rural communities• Electric vehicle infrastructure in rural areas• North Norfolk District Council Climate Emergency Journey
<u>Seminar:</u> <u>Rural Connectivity</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tackling Data Poverty• Digital Voice, getting it right for our customers• Gigafast Staffordshire – connecting our rural communities• Protecting broadcast and radio services for rural communities
<u>Seminar:</u> <u>Rural Fair Funding</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rural Police Funding• Local Government Funding and Rural Services Delivery Grant• Impact of unfair funding on discretionary services
<u>Seminar:</u> <u>Rural Economy</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The importance of micro businesses to the rural economy• Rural Poverty Today: the policy challenges• Levelling up the Rural Economy

RSN Seminar: Rural Planning
Online via Zoom
11:00-13:00, Wednesday, 25th October 2023

Agenda

- 11:00 **Welcome & Introduction to the topic of Rural Planning**
[Kerry Booth](#), Chief Executive, Rural Services Network
- 11:05 [Martin Collett](#), Chief Executive, [English Rural](#)
Rural Exception Sites
Short Q&A with the speaker
- 11:25 Richard Crawley, Programme Manager, [Planning Advisory Service](#)
Biodiversity Net Gain and what it might mean for rural places
Short Q&A with the speaker
- 11:45 Rebecca Phillips, Professional Lead (Planning Appeals), [Planning Inspectorate](#)
Planning appeals in Rural Areas
Short Q&A with the speaker
- 12:05 **Open forum discussion led by Kerry Booth, Chief Executive of RSN focusing on Rural Planning**
Wider discussion with evidence and examples of Good Practice that members wish to share.
- 13:00 **Close of Seminar**
If you or your colleagues are interested in attending RSN Seminars, please click on the image below to view our RSN Seminar Programme 2023 and register.



Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

Rural Services Network
PO Box 101, Craven Arms, SY7 7AL
Tel: 01822 851370

www.rsonline.org.uk email: events@sparse.gov.uk twitter: [@rsnonline](https://twitter.com/rsnonline)

2024

SEMINAR PROGRAMME

Rural Net Zero

31st January 2024

11:00-13:00



Rural Connectivity

28th February 2024

11:00-13:00



Rural Fair Funding

27th March 2024

11:00-13:00



Rural Economy

24th April 2024

11:00-13:00



Rural Transport

22nd May 2024

11:00-13:00



Rural Affordable Housing

26th June 2024

11:00-13:00



Rural Planning

23rd October 2024

11:00-13:00



Rural Health and Care

27th November 2024

11:00-13:00



RSN Seminar: Rural Transport
Online via Zoom
11:00-13:00, Wednesday, 17th May 2023

Agenda

- 11:00 **Welcome & Introduction to the topic of Rural Transport**
[Kerry Booth](#), Chief Executive, Rural Services Network
- 11:05 [Nigel Hinch](#), Director, [Ability](#) and [Caroline Whitney](#), Director for England, [Community Transport Association](#)
More than a Bus
Short Q&A with the speakers
- 11:25 [Sharon Payne](#), Regional Rural Transport Lead, [Transport East](#)
Understanding & Establishing the Rural Mobility Centre of Excellence
Short Q&A with the speaker
- 11:45 [John Birtwistle](#), Head of Policy, [First Bus](#) with [Morag Robertson](#), Senior Logistics Specialist, [Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport](#) and [Ben Colson](#), former Chairman, [Bus Users UK](#)
A new approach to solving the rural bus crisis
Short Q&A with the speakers
- 12:05 [Louis Mertens](#), Principal Transport Planning Officer (behaviour change), [North Somerset Council](#)
Then 29 come at once: launching demand responsive bus in North Somerset
Short Q&A with the speaker
- 12:25 **Open forum discussion led by Kerry Booth, Chief Executive of RSN focusing on Rural Transport**
Wider discussion with evidence and examples of Good Practice that members wish to share.
- 13:00 **Close of Seminar**
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- Almost 500 delegates attended the RSN National Rural Conference in 2023.
- 25 speakers including Lord Benyon from DEFRA, Simon Fell MP the Rural Connectivity Champion and leading experts in their field and local authorities shared their expertise and experiences

“The Rural Affordable Housing Session event held this morning was absolutely riveting. It was so encouraging to hear success stories but also realities presented by hard working, experienced people who can identify opportunity where others can see none.”

“I find the RSN to be an invaluable resource of information, data and ideas for understanding the complexities of rural life, economy and society. As a network, it allows me to learn about work being carried out in other regions, which inspire the way I work with the communities and businesses in my area. The annual conference is always highly informative, well-organised and has a wide range of topics and expert speakers.”

**PARLIAMENT
STREET SW1**



**WHITEHALL
SW1**



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

A national voice campaigning for rural issues

Fairer Funding

The RSN is fighting for a fair deal for rural communities in order to maintain their social and economic viability for the benefit of the nation as a whole.



Facts about Rural Funding

1

Successive Governments have underfunded Rural Councils

2

Rural residents pay more in council tax

3

It costs more to deliver services in rural areas

Rural Facts



Urban areas get 38% more in Government Funded Spending Power than rural areas.

Urban areas in 2023/2024 will receive some 38% (£135) per head in Government Funded Spending Power more than their rural counterparts

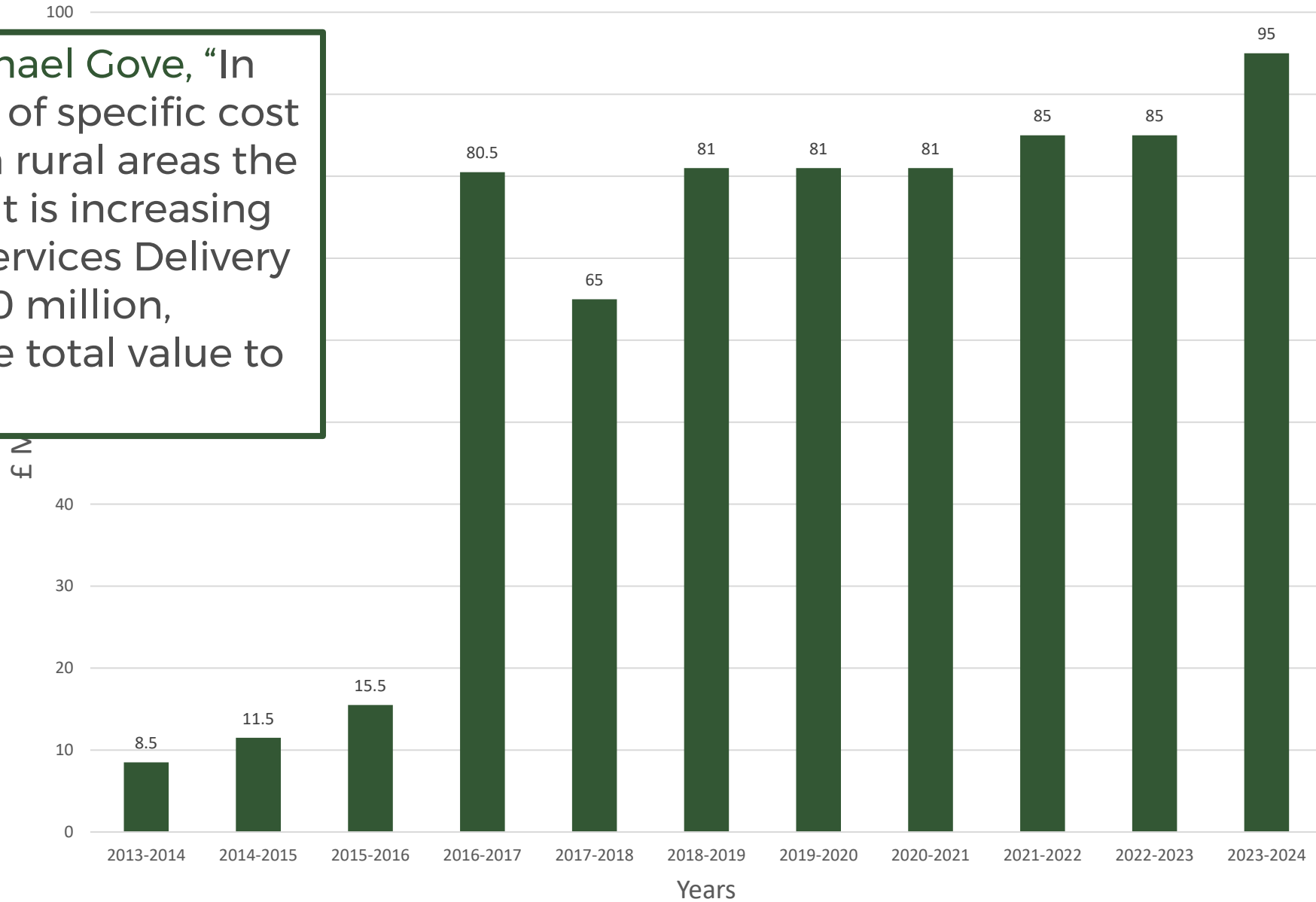


Rural Residents pay on average £110 per head more in Council Tax

Rural residents will pay on average, 20% (£110) per head **more** in Council Tax than their urban counterparts due to receiving less Government Grant

Chart to show progression of Rural Services Delivery Grant

Rt Hon Michael Gove, “In recognition of specific cost pressures in rural areas the Government is increasing the Rural Services Delivery Grant by £10 million, bringing the total value to £95 million.



Discretionary Services

Urban budget to spend
double that
of rural on discretionary services

Rural Discretionary Spend





The RSN is representing rural and ensuring that the rural voice is heard:

DEFRA Rural Impact Forum

Rural Coalition

National Centre for Rural Health and Care

Rural Homelessness Coalition

BT Digital Voice Advisory Group

National Rural Crime Network

Secretariat for All Party Parliamentary Group on Rural Services

All Party Parliamentary Group for Rural Services



Derek Thomas MP



Phillip Dunne MP



Rob Butler MP



Rosie Duffield MP



Helen Morgan MP



Selaine Saxby MP



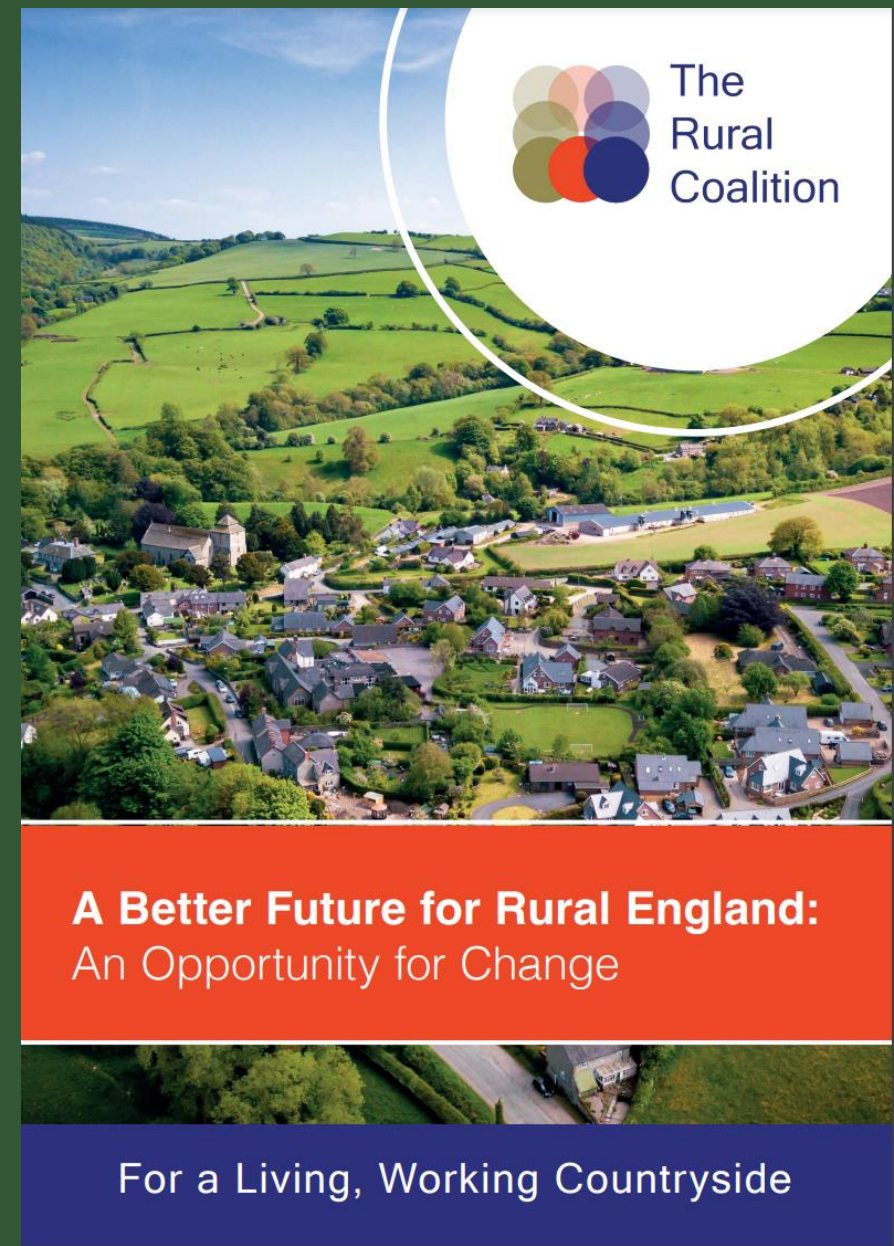
Julian Sturdy MP



Lord Carrington

Rural Coalition

Action with Communities in Rural England	National Housing Federation
Arthur Rank Centre	Plunkett Foundation
CPRE, The Countryside Charity	Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors
Country Land and Business Association	Royal Town Planning Institute
National Association of Local Councils	Rural Services Network
National Centre for Rural Health and Care	Town and Country Planning Association
National Farmers Union	



Rural Lens Review

In recent months, the RSN has undertaken a series of reviews providing a deep dive into government proposals from a rural perspective.





Ensuring rural have a voice in Government consultations

- Technical consultation on the Infrastructure Levy
- Registration scheme for short-term lets in England
- Major Conditions Strategy
- Permitted Development Rights
- Proposed amendments to the Boiler Upgrade Scheme Regulations
- Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill: reforms to national planning policy
- House of Lords Select Committee - Communication and Digital Committee Inquiry into Digital Exclusion and Cost of Living- call for evidence
- Local Government Finance
- Improving Broadband for Very Hard to Reach Premises
- Universal Broadband Obligation (USO)

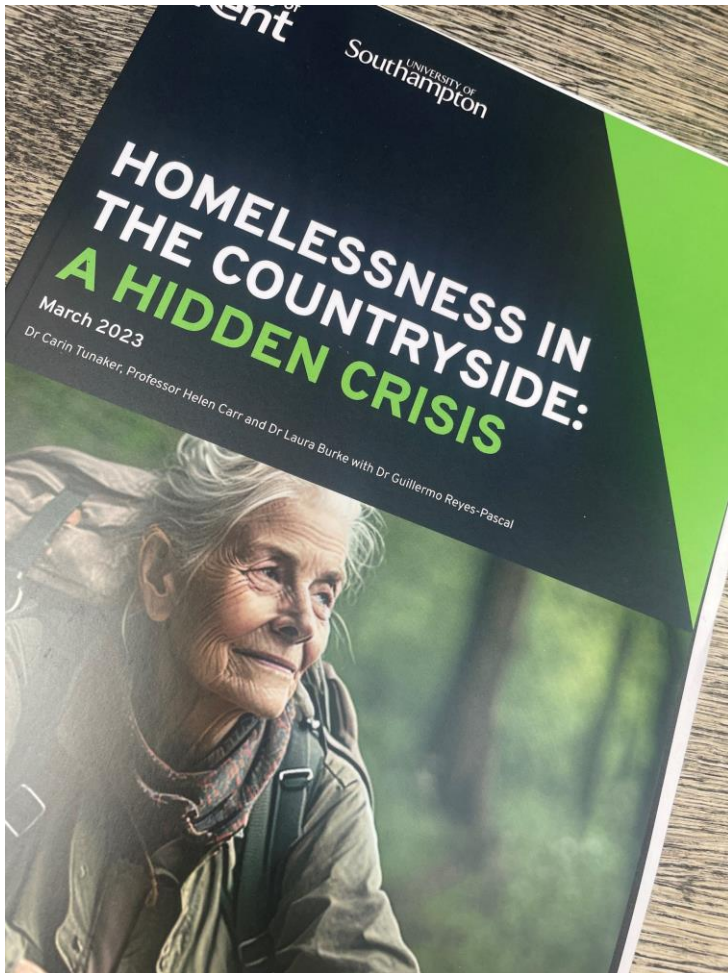
Campaigning for a fair deal for rural communities

RSN Publications straight to your inbox with the information you need:

- Rural News
- Commentary
- Research
- Grant opportunities
- Best practice
- Parliamentary Round Up



Research



The countryside is battling a 'hidden homelessness' crisis driven by soaring housing costs and a gaping shortfall in local authority funding, a new report shows.

The study found that isolation also made the problem far worse for those facing homelessness in rural areas, where limited transport options and the absence of support placed them at greater risk. Those with physical or mental health needs were found to be most vulnerable.

#RuralHomelessnessCounts

86% Of Housing and Homelessness Providers consider rural homelessness to be a Significant or Acute problem	91% Of respondents in rural areas have seen homelessness increase in the past five years	80% Of organisations in rural areas believe a lack of funding/resources is the main obstacle in addressing homelessness in their area	81% Of respondents believe that rough sleeping is experienced differently in rural compared to urban areas		
23% of respondents think stigma is a barrier people experiencing homelessness face when seeking support	24% increase to official rural rough sleeping figures in just one year	<p>" UNAFFORDABLE HOUSING IN RURAL AREAS IS AT CRISIS POINT, LEAVING MANY AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS. "</p>			
STRATEGY: All future homelessness and rough sleeping strategies consider the needs of rural communities and 'at risk' residents living in them.	SYSTEMS: Improved processes for better counting and identifying instances of rural homelessness. Dedicated investment to fund much needed rural social housing and welfare system to cover the cost of rent.	SERVICES: Delivering new homelessness support services in rural communities that address mental health and social and physical isolation.			
COUNTING THE INVISIBLE: Rough sleeping counts ignore hidden rural homeless					
<table border="0"> <tr> <td>UNSEEN + UNSUPPORTED + ISOLATED + UNAFFORDABLE = RURAL HOMELESSNESS CRISIS</td> <td> </td> </tr> </table>				UNSEEN + UNSUPPORTED + ISOLATED + UNAFFORDABLE = RURAL HOMELESSNESS CRISIS	
UNSEEN + UNSUPPORTED + ISOLATED + UNAFFORDABLE = RURAL HOMELESSNESS CRISIS					
<p>Rural Homelessness: a growing crisis - not just an urban problem</p> <p>Lack of Support Services: government policy failing rural communities</p> <p>Urgently Needed: a new cross-government commitment to address the hidden crisis of rural homelessness</p>		<p>+ BETTER DATA + CROSS GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT + FAIRER FUNDING + RURAL/URBAN PARTNERSHIPS = RURAL HOMELESSNESS SOLUTIONS</p>			
<p><small>Data: September 2022 Kent University & Southampton University Commissioned by English Rural, CPRE - The Countryside Charity, The National Housing Federation, Homeless Link, Hastoe HA, Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE), The Rural Services Network, Citizen Housing, Trent and Dove HA, and The Rural Housing Alliance.</small></p> <p><small>www.englishrural.org.uk info@englishrural.org.uk 020 7820 7930</small></p> <p><small>ENGLISH RURAL</small></p>					



Campaigning for a fair deal for rural communities



Press Release

Survey
run by
RSN and
Rural
Issues
Group of
Citizens
Advice

A survey of rural households out today by the Rural Services Network (RSN), shows that more than 75% of respondents say that their financial situation has got worse over the last year. The RSN, which represents rural councils and other rural service providers, conducted the survey with the Rural Issues Group of Citizens Advice to better gauge the impact of the cost of living crisis on households in rural areas across England.

Responses to the online household survey were received by a staggering 6,780 rural residents in a clear demonstration of the severity of the situation.

Headline findings of the survey showed:

- **After paying for essentials, two thirds of respondents are in households with a little income left over for other things. However, a fifth of respondents live either in households with no income left over, or in households where the essentials alone exceed their income. These essentials included rent or mortgage, food and drink, essential car or travel costs and childcare.**
- **Rural residents are cutting back on spending across the board and this is especially true for low income households where notable examples are reduced spending on home heating (90%) and visits to hospitality venues (91% of such households).**



Campaigning for a fair deal for rural communities

Rural voters want change



Councillor **Roger Phillips**
is Chair of the Rural Services Network



“The focus is on narrowing the gap between regions, but what about the gaps within regions?”

It has been clear over the past few weeks that we are preparing for a General Election.

As our National Rural Conference 2023 alluded to in September, change is coming, and it seems many of the announcements, from all parties, are already courting the rural vote.

Our conference, attended by Lord Benyon, Minister for Biosecurity, Marine and Rural Affairs, highlighted some of the biggest issues and challenges facing our rural communities.

From rural transport to the rural economy, all aspects were put under the microscope by a series of experts.

Our conclusion? To truly level up rural areas, we need proper, continued investment through fair funding. Rural areas do not want handouts as short-term solutions.

Once government understands the specific needs of rural areas, addresses the bespoke challenges, and assigns the correct funding to address them, then rural areas will flourish.

Research carried out by the Rural Services Network, using the Government's own metrics in its Levelling Up White Paper, showed that if rural England was thought of as a distinct region, it would be in the greatest need of support.

The focus is on narrowing the gap between regions, but what about gaps within regions?

Rural areas have so much to offer. There are more than 500,000 rural businesses in England – 23 per cent of all registered businesses. Yet productivity and gross value added in rural areas is lower than in urban ones.

Far too much focus is placed on agriculture and the hospitality industry, which means other industries are squeezed out of the debate and their potential is being lost.

Unlocking the digital potential of rural areas could add up to £26 billion annually to the UK economy and grow turnover for rural businesses by £15 billion. Yet only

36 per cent of rural voters have gigabit capability and 4 per cent do not get mobile coverage indoors.

Building 10 new affordable rural homes would create an economic boost of £1.4 million and cost just £1.1 million to build. However, most rural developments are too small to include affordable homes.

What is clear is that the solutions for rural life are intrinsically linked. Without good jobs and a thriving economy, rural areas will flounder.

But the people holding these jobs need somewhere to live, without paying extra to do so simply because the central funding formula works against them. They need access to healthcare, schools and reliable transport to get them there.

More than that, rural areas have a greater sense of community.

We heard a story at conference from a rural village in Devon where an older gentleman had fallen off his bike. In the

six hours it took the ambulance to arrive, the village used its Facebook page and WhatsApp group to find a qualified medic and erect a shelter over the injured man to keep him dry and warm.

These are the same communities creating hundreds of neighbourhood plans so they can have an influence on how their local areas are developed; and working together to create community energy groups to give their places access to green and sustainable energy.

Almost 10 million people live in rural England. That is more than the whole of Greater London. The rural vote could swing the next General Election and, as politicians, we ignore it at our peril.

i **The Rural Services Network** is an LGA special interest group; see www.rsonline.org.uk to find out more. See p27

RSN Online @RSNOnline · Jul 6
Unlocking growth in rural areas is key to a post-pandemic recovery. As part of [@natfednews](#) [#RuralHousingWeek](#), our Chief Executive Kerry Booth is guest blogging on this and she wants to know your thoughts...
rsonline.org.uk/rsn-backs-call...

[#RuralHomelessnessCounts](#)



RSN Online @RSNOnline · Jul 3
This week we are supporting [@natfednews](#) and [#RuralHousingWeek](#). Today, we are talking about Hidden Homelessness – a growing crisis in rural areas, driven by increasing housing costs and a shortfall in local authority funding. [#RuralHomelessnessCounts](#)



RSN Online @RSNOnline · Nov 3
[@rsonline](#) is disappointed at the lack of targeted action from the Government on rural mental health despite the findings from the EFRA Committee. [#ruralmentalhealth](#) Read the latest on this story here: rsonline.org.uk/government-com...



Kerry Booth
Chief Executive
Rural Services Network

RSN Online @RSNOnline · Sep 13
Giving local communities the power to build the right homes, in the right places. Excellent research from [@EnglishRural](#) and [@UCL](#) 🏡🌱 Please take a few moments to read and understand 🙌

English Rural 🏡🌱 @EnglishRural · Sep 11
NEW REPORT: Discover the 'magic ingredient' that could transform Affordable #RuralHousing in England! 🌱🏡 From empowering communities to spotlighting landowners, our research with @UCL offers a blueprint for change. Let's make Rural Exception Sites a national priority! 🏡🌱

Find out more at:

www.rsnonline.org.uk



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