



# Revitalising Rural

Realising the Vision

# Graham Biggs

## RSP Group Meeting

23 November 2020



RURAL  
SERVICES  
NETWORK

# House of Lords Select Committee on the Rural Economy



Lord Foster, making the case for Rural



RURAL SERVICES NETWORK  
**Revitalising  
Rural**  
Realising the Vision



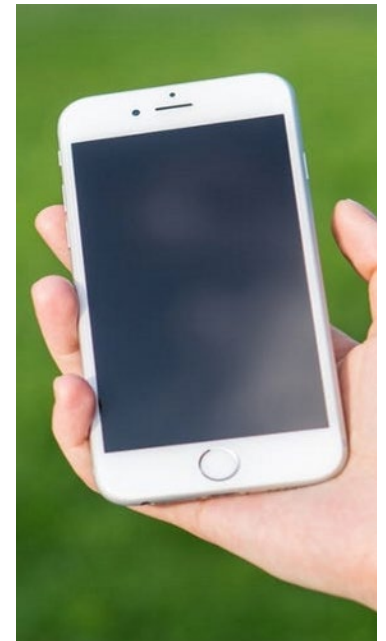
# The Government responded...

- “Over the coming months, the government will expand on its strategic vision and set out how, working across departments and working with stakeholders, it is putting in place a range of measures to ensure that rural areas continue to thrive.”



# ...but not all rural communities are thriving still

- Urban areas still receive some 62% per head in Settlement Funding Assessment grant more than rural counterparts
- The average house purchase price is £44,000 higher in rural areas than it is in urban
- Business turnover per employee is lower in rural areas than it is in urban areas
- Earnings (mainly from wages) for jobs which are based in rural areas are lower than for jobs based in urban areas
- It is not possible to get an indoor 4G connection on all four networks at a majority (58%) of rural premises



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# Revitalising Rural



Sustainable  
Farming and  
Land  
Management



Further  
Education,  
Training &  
Apprenticeships



Rural Town  
Centres & High  
Streets



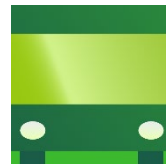
Availability of  
Affordable  
Housing



Managing an  
older population



Business Advice  
& Guidance



Transport &  
Access to Jobs &  
Opportunities



Accessible  
Health & Care  
Services



LEPs & LIS



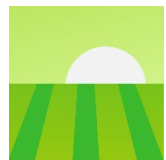
Decarbonising  
Rural  
Communities



UK Shared  
Prosperity Fund



Fair Funding



Land Use  
Planning System



Digital  
Connectivity



Village Schools &  
Local Assets



Parish Councils  
& Community  
Action

# Every Chapter contains...

- Why it matters
- The national policy context
- The rural dimension
- Policy solutions
- Specific Policy asks



# We have started raising the profile of Revitalising Rural

## COMMENT

### Time to revitalise rural areas



Councillor Cecilia Motley  
is Chair of the Rural Services Network

The key messages from last month's annual National Rural Conference were loud and clear: the importance of rural areas to the national economy and 'revitalising rural'.

As Chair of the Rural Services Network (RSN), which hosted the conference, I was delighted to see almost 400 delegates from across our membership take part.

The contributions of such a wide range of organisations from our local authority of England reinforces the importance of rural debate and the rural voice.

The conference emphasised that rural issues cannot be considered in isolation. The rural economy is interdependent with connectivity, transport, and access to health and care services, which need to be fairly funded in rural areas.

The RSN is working to ensure that government incorporates rural needs in its plans for levelling up the country, post-pandemic. RSN's Revitalising Rural campaign, to be launched this autumn, has a series of policy asks to ensure that rural areas have the same opportunities as urban ones to develop and realise their potential.

The conference focused on 'revitalising rural' and five key issues, which form part of Revitalising Rural campaign. Among the key asks for each policy area discussed in the conference were:

- **Rural economy** – the Government should create a dedicated rural funding stream of a proportionate size within the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
- **Rural connectivity** – the Government should formalise its commitment to bring forward the nationwide rollout of full-fibre broadband networks to 2025,

and use its Better Bus Strategy to improve existing routes and restore valued routes between rural towns.

- **Rural housing** – the Government should rethink proposals that will decimate affordable housing provision in rural areas.

- **Rural environment** – the Government should incentivise homeowners to boost energy efficiency by creating a net-zero retrofit programme.

- **Rural health and wellbeing** – health hubs should be created in rural towns, providing treatments and tests that would otherwise require travel to a main hospital, and the NHS Workforce Plan should address severe NHS staff shortages in many rural areas. Consultations on proposed changes to the current planning system and the 'Planning for the future' White Paper (see first 651)

formed a key theme throughout the week. Delegates were treated to an erudite session, with Lord Best, Chair of the Affordable Housing Commission, sharing his insights on both contentious issues.

Martin Collett, of English Rural Housing, perhaps captured the mood of the conference best with his final thoughts, saying: "We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reimagine and revitalise rural communities."

If we are creative, collaborative and, with the right policy framework, supported by all levels of government, we can together help rural communities to thrive. But to do this, the most fundamental ingredient is more affordable rural homes."

In his summing up, Graham Biggs, Chief Executive of the RSN, said: "We know that progress cannot be made in rural areas until the Government delivers a fairer distribution of national resources to rural areas and more nuanced policy decisions to reflect the rural context."

*"We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reimagine and revitalise rural communities"*

**i** The Rural Services Network is a special interest group of the LGA, see [www.rsonline.org.uk](http://www.rsonline.org.uk)



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# Next Steps...



- Preparing for Launch 2021
- Engaging with Member organisations to share message of Revitalising Rural
- Engaging with the decision makers in Parliament