

# Rural Strategy Road Show

Monday 9<sup>th</sup> of March 2020

11am – 4.30pm

Chichester District Council

Committee Room 1

East Pallant

Chichester

West Sussex

PO19 1TY



[https://www.rsnonline.org.uk  
/time-for-a-rural-strategy](https://www.rsnonline.org.uk/time-for-a-rural-strategy)

Graham Biggs  
Chief Executive, Rural Services Network

# Rural Services Network

**The Rural Services Network** is 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.

# Why are we here today?

*“Rural Communities are frequently overlooked in a policy environment dominated by urban thinking and policy concerns. This often means communities either miss out on the benefits or experience unintended consequences from policies which are poorly thought-through from a rural perspective.”*

**1<sup>st</sup> March – RSN call on Government to develop a Rural Strategy**

# Why do we need a Rural Strategy

**Almost 1 in 5 people in England live in rural areas and yet we have no comprehensive Rural Strategy to respond to their needs**

Press release  
**Prime Minister  
Powerhouse  
appointment**

Appointment will see the  
oversight and coordination  
boosted to improve its impact  
across the country.

Published 7 June 2016  
From: Minister

Press release  
**PM launches Government  
loneliness strategy**

Prime Minister Theresa May  
loneliness strategy.

Published 15 October 2018  
Last updated 16 October 2018 — [see all updates](#)  
From: [Prime Minister's Office, 10 Downing Street](#), [Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport](#), [Office for Civil Society](#) and [The Rt Hon Theresa May MP](#)

November 2016  
From: [HM Treasury](#) and [The Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP](#)

**e strategy**

y sets out the  
ts vision for the North.

# What do we want?

*“If rural communities are to be sustainable, the Government must seize this opportunity to work with communities to produce **a long-term, funded rural strategy** which recognises the contribution rural areas make and have the potential to make to the wellbeing and prosperity of the nation as a whole.”*

Why do  
we need  
a rural  
strategy?



# What would RSN include in a Rural Strategy?



- £ Fairer funding to address the local rural penalty
- 📄 A rural proofed policy framework

- 📈 A thriving rural economy
- 📶 A digitally connected countryside
- 🚌 A place everyone can get around
- 🏠 An affordable place to live
- ❤️ A fair deal on health and social care
- 🎓 A place to learn and grow



# Timeline of 2019

## RSN

- Launched campaign March 2019
- Called on Govt to produce Rural Strategy

## House of Lords

- Select Committee on the Rural Economy
- Concluded there is a need for a Rural Strategy

## Government

- Says no to strategy, but acknowledges rural areas face particular challenges
- Emphasis on Rural Proofing
- General Election December, 2019

# Select Committee on Rural Economy

- Chaired by Lord Foster of Bath
- Report published 27 April 19 with a large number of recommendations for Government
- Received evidence from number of key rural organisations – including the RSN - Parliamentarians and communities

# Lord Foster of Bath:

"Rural communities and the economies in them have been ignored and underrated for too long. We must act now to reverse this trend, but we can no longer allow the clear inequalities between the urban and rural to continue unchecked. A rural strategy would address challenges and realise potential in struggling and under-performing areas, and allow vibrant and thriving areas to develop further. **Doing nothing is not an option.**"

# What was the Government's response?

- Some positive elements:
- *"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.*
- The Government will work to improve rural proofing and DEFRA will publish an annual report on rural proofing
- The Government is reviewing Local Authority funding and has proposed including an Area Cost Adjustment to capture sparsity costs.

# Government response to House of Lords Report

- But...
- The Government believes that rather than a distinct Rural Strategy, **it is best to ‘embed an appreciation of rural issues at all levels of delivery’- rather than “risk rural areas being placed in a silo through having a single rural strategy”**
- It mentions that the ‘UK Shared Prosperity Fund will allocate funding to those places with the greatest need’ ...will rural areas with their scattered geography fit into these categories?
- Government doesn’t want to ‘interfere’ in other agencies or organisations responsibilities to force them to be proactive about rural areas and issues

# Government response to House of Lords Report

- Defra will establish a Rural Affairs Board to support and steer work on rural proofing
- ‘Final decisions are due to be made following the Spending Review – appears numerous times!!!

# House of Lords Debate

- The House of Lords debated the Government's response to their Report 8<sup>th</sup> Oct 2019
- <https://parliamentlive.tv/event/index/c2535866-cc39-40bb-bbd2-a06a94729468?in=16:54:28&out=16:56:52>
- We have been meeting with Lord Foster to continue discussions on this work

What is the RSN proposing  
to do next to promote  
these issues



# So what are we going to do next?

- RSN are developing a document entitled
  - Revitalising Rural, Realising the Vision
- This will be structured around the five foundations of productivity referred to in the industrial strategy (I.S.)
  - Ideas
  - People
  - Infrastructure
  - Business Environment
  - Places

It will also corollate to both the I.S Grand Challenges and national policy priorities (for instance Net Zero Carbon)

# Revitalising Rural, Realising the Vision

- Emphasis on demonstrating how rural areas can help Government to achieve its aims
- Will also identify barriers to rural areas doing that and how these could be removed
- RSN will also flag up rural issues in new legislation etc.

# What will we be considering?

## People

- Training, apprenticeships and further education (including businesses' digital skills)
- Access to affordable housing
- Transport and access to jobs or opportunities
- Migration

## Infrastructure

- Digital connectivity (broadband and mobile)
- Electricity

## Business

- Local Enterprise Partnerships and Local Industrial Strategies
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund and business grants
- Access to business advice

# What will we be considering?

## Places

- Land use planning system
- Rural town high streets
- Accessible health and care services
- Sustaining village schools and other local assets
- Role of Parish Councils and community action

## Ideas

- Sustainable farming and land management
- Decarbonising rural economies and communities
- Managing an ageing rural population

# Discussion 1

Please discuss on your tables and have someone nominated to feed back to the whole room

- If you could ask the Government for 2 things for rural areas, what would they (in priority order) be?
- Do you support the general thrust of the RSN proposals for the way forward?

# Discussion 2

Please discuss on your tables and have someone nominated to feed back to the whole room

- Are there particular regional perspectives from the South East we need to highlight in the Rural Strategy?
- How would a Rural Strategy help the South East Region?
- How can we work together to make this happen?

Thank you for listening

<https://www.rsnonline.org.uk/time-for-a-rural-strategy>

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