



It's Time for a Rural Strategy: A National Framework with Local Delivery

**Please join us for the Rural Strategy Roadshow, Chichester
 Monday 9 March 2020 (11am – 4.30pm) at Chichester District Council,
 Committee Room 1, East Pallant House, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 1TY**

[Please follow this link to book your free place at the Rural Strategy Roadshow](#)

Registration & teas and coffees from 11.00am for 11:30am start.

Organised by a partnership of Rural Services Network, Action with Communities' in Rural England, The Rural Coalition, The Plunkett Foundation and Chichester District Council.

As we approach the 20th anniversary of the last Rural White Paper, we believe it is time to comprehensively review the opportunities and threats facing rural areas and communities in England. Therefore, we hope you will accept our invitation to join us with a range of rural advocates and practitioners from your Region to consider how a new Rural Strategy can deliver for England's rural communities and to join the campaign calling on the Government to produce such a strategy.

Today the challenges facing rural areas leave residents and communities feeling isolated and overlooked by a political and financial system that is seemingly focused on towns and cities. Yet, nearly 20% of England's population live in the countryside, more in total than in Greater London. There is a genuine need for their voice to be heard.

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“Rural” all too often conjures up imagery of idyllic countryside living, but this stereotype is massively detrimental to those living and working in rural areas and does a great disservice to the genuine challenges they face.

The significant outflow of people from rural areas to urban-based jobs and services continues to be a source of concern. There is a prevailing sense that the potential of rural areas is being squandered, despite projections that unlocking their digital potential could add at least £12bn of extra productivity each year to the UK economy. There is also the continuing uncertainty of the impact of Brexit and the fear that the UK’s exit from the EU will serve to compound these existing challenges, especially in those areas currently heavily impacted by EU policies and reliant on EU funding streams.

On 1st March 2019 the Rural Services Network launched a campaign calling on the Government to produce an urgent comprehensive, cross-cutting strategy for rural areas, in the light of a warning that people living in our towns and villages “simply cannot afford to wait any longer for politicians to take their concerns seriously and act on them”. The call is the result of concern about deep-seated challenges related to sustainability of rural communities, including rural economies and service delivery in rural areas which for too long have been inadequately addressed creating a situation that is now urgent to address. [You can access The RSN’s Campaign and Template Strategy by visiting our website.](#)

The case for a Rural Strategy has been considerably strengthened by the House of Lords Select Committee Report on the Rural Economy, published last year on the 27 April 2019 and entitled ‘Time for a Strategy for the Rural Economy’. [You can access the “Time for a strategy for the rural economy” report published by the House of Lords Report here.](#)

The Rural Strategy Roadshow aims to champion a new Rural Strategy to raise the profile of rural issues and address the challenges faced by the rural communities, with the intention of achieving genuine equality for future generations of people living and working in rural England. We will look at a range of issues and opportunities, related to community, governance, connectivity and access and essential services in developing the building blocks of a new Rural Strategy.

We have held similar events in the North East and North West, and this is our South East event in our schedule of Rural Strategy Roadshows. This event will include discussions on prioritising ‘asks’ of Government for rural areas, regional perspectives to highlight in the Rural Strategy and how we can work together to make this happen. There will be focussed discussion on how a rural strategy can help your region, highlighting different regional perspectives and actions required.

We are inviting representatives from local government, business (including community business) and economy, government agencies, community, voluntary organisations and others with an interest. We do hope you will be able to join us, and we look forward to working with you on 9th of March 2020.

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