

Rural Services Network

It's Time for a Rural Strategy



A thriving rural economy



A place everyone can get around



A fair deal on health and social care



An affordable place to live



A digitally connected countryside



Fairer funding to address the local rural penalty



A place to learn and grow



A rural proofed policy framework

9.4
Million
people



RURAL
SERVICES
NETWORK

17%
Of the
population



FOREWORD

Graham Biggs

Rural Services Network Chief Executive



Rural communities are frequently overlooked in a policy environment dominated by (majority) urban thinking and by urban policy concerns. So called “rural mainstreaming” has often led to policies which are inappropriate in a sparsely populated or rural setting. The result is that communities miss out on the benefits, or experience unintended consequences from policies which are poorly thought through from a rural perspective.

Rural economies are also widely misunderstood, with their potential to grow and add value to the national economy overlooked. Too often they are conflated with agriculture and landbased industries. Whilst agriculture certainly remains an important consideration, it is today one element within broad-based and diverse rural economies.

It is time for a Rural Strategy which raises rural opportunities and challenges up the political agenda: which is forward looking and ambitious, recognising the contribution that rural areas make and those they could make to the wellbeing and prosperity of the nation as a whole.





A thriving rural economy

Businesses of all types, sizes and sectors should be supported to prosper, grow and provide decently paid employment opportunities

547,000
rural
businesses

£246
billion
productivity

84%
working
in SMEs

22%
of jobs
home based

£21,400
average
wage

Challenges identified to address:



Reducing the productivity gap



Helping rural businesses (especially SMEs) to grow locally



Supporting further diversification



Sustaining high streets and their businesses in rural towns



Creating better paid and more secure jobs

What would make a difference?



A dedicated rural business support programme



A rural proofed Industrial Strategy



A re-purposing of Local Enterprise Partnerships



A training offer to suit small rural businesses



A further education system accessible to rural pupils



RURAL VULNERABILITY FACT
Median workplace based annual gross pay for full time workers

RURAL

URBAN

£26,919 £29,480





A digitally connected countryside

All rural households and businesses should have the option of affordable and reliable access to broadband and mobile networks. Digital infrastructure should be considered essential for a modern economy and to enable fair access to services and other opportunities





In rural areas, 11% of premises are unable to access broadband connection of 10Mbps

A basic phone call cannot be made inside 41% of rural buildings on all 4 mobile networks

Challenges identified to address:

-  Extending broadband networks to those premises still missing out
-  Future proofing broadband policy, so rural areas do not fall behind again
-  Capitalising on the benefits from the roll out of superfast networks
-  Addressing issues with mobile network coverage (including 4G)

What would make a difference?

-  A USO that is fit for purpose
-  A focus on full fibre roll out
-  A drive to connect rural business
-  A review of mobile connectivity



RURAL VULNERABILITY FACT
Percentage of premises unable to access a decent broadband service

RURAL

URBAN

7%

1%

Provision worsens the more rural an area is. For rural hamlets and isolated dwellings the figure is 35%





A place everyone can get around

People of all ages must have the means to travel to services, jobs and other opportunities. Not least those in the 1 in 9 rural households that do not own a car. Transport is crucial to life opportunities and its absence can compound isolation and loneliness

Low income households are 70% more likely to own a car in rural areas

In 2012, less than half of households in rural areas had access to regular and nearby bus service

Challenges identified to address:

-  Reversing the widespread decline in rural bus service provision
-  Making bus services a more attractive option for rural travellers
-  Providing sustained support for complementary community transport schemes
-  Ensuring future transport innovations will benefit rural communities

What would make a difference?

-  A fair deal from Local Government funding
-  A viable deal for transport operators
-  A sustainable approach to community transport
-  A realistic concessionary fares scheme
-  A search for new rural solutions



RURAL VULNERABILITY FACT
Percentage of people that are living in areas with the poorest accessibility to services

RURAL

URBAN

50%

2%





Fairer funding to address the local rural penalty

The needs of rural communities are best met when policy decisions are taken locally by those who understand the area. This means devolving decisions

Urban areas in the 19/20 still receive 66% (£119) per head in Local Government Settlement Funding Assessment grant more than their rural counterparts

Rural residents pay, on average, 20.7% (£98) per head more in Council Tax than their urban counterparts due to receiving less government grant

Challenges identified to address:

-  Ensuring that local authorities retain the capacity to serve their rural communities
-  Boosting the capacity of parish and town councils to bring about local solutions
-  Recruiting and retaining volunteers with sufficient time and the right skills
-  Providing the support infrastructure to facilitate community action in more areas

What would make a difference?

-  A properly resourced local authority sector
-  A realistic deal for parish and town councils
-  An underpinning for local action
-  A support package for communities
-  A local response to extreme weather



RURAL VULNERABILITY FACT
Amount paid on average by residents in Council Tax due to disparities in Government Grant received

RURAL

URBAN

£569.11

£471.41





A fair deal on health and social care

Rural communities, like communities everywhere, need access to high quality healthcare and some require extra support from social care services

By 2039, nearly half of all households in rural areas will contain people aged 65 or over

In 17/18 rural residents funded 76% of the cost of adult social care through Council Tax compared to 53% in urban

Challenges identified to address:

-  Ensuring that patients can get to secondary and tertiary health services
-  Delivering quality primary health care locally within rural settings
-  Making sure social care reaches those who need it in remote locations
-  Benefiting rural clients through improved health and social care integration

What would make a difference?

-  A fair allocation of funding to rural areas
-  A rural proofed model for health care delivery
-  A stronger focus on filling vacancies
-  A joined up approach to health and social care
-  A housing policy ready for an ageing population



RURAL VULNERABILITY FACT
Adult social care as a percentage of Local Authority total service expenditure

RURAL URBAN

24%

20%





A place to learn and grow

Rural schools typically play an important role at the heart of their community and provide a high quality education. It is imperative that education policies – focused on the needs of children – support them and help them to face particular rural challenges




Almost 27% of total number of schools in England are in rural areas

More than 33% are defined as very small (<110 pupils)

Challenges identified to address:

-  Sustaining schools with small (or fluctuating) pupil numbers
-  Managing school budgets when operating costs are high
-  Recruiting and retaining teaching and support staff
-  Finding appropriate models for school collaboration

What would make a difference?

-  A presumption against school closures
-  A fair and realistic funding basis
-  A stronger focus on rural recruitment
-  A workable approach to collaboration



RURAL VULNERABILITY FACT
The percentage of secondary schools that have received 'outstanding' as the most recent inspection routine

RURAL

URBAN

18%

24%





An affordable place to live

Rural communities are only likely to thrive economically and socially if they are home to residents from a mix of age groups and backgrounds. This includes providing those brought up locally or working there with a chance to buy or rent a home they can afford

Affordable house prices are £44,000 higher in rural areas than in urban

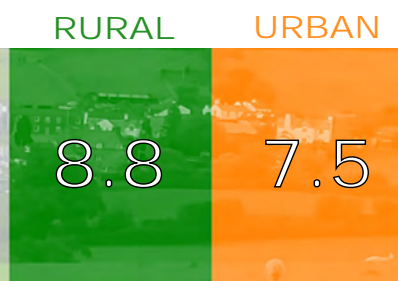
Only 8% of households in rural villages live in social housing compared to 19% in urban

- ### Challenges identified to address:
- Bringing forward development sites at a price suited to affordable housing
 - Making sure such homes are and remain genuinely affordable
 - Planning new housing in ways which attract community support
 - Ensuring the funding model for affordable house building adds up

- ### What would make a difference?
- A planning policy to fit rural circumstances
 - A realistic definition of affordable
 - A dedicated rural affordable housing programme
 - A bolstering of landowner and community support
 - A replenishing of social housing



RURAL VULNERABILITY FACT
Ratio of annual earnings to house prices
(excl London)





A rural proofed policy framework

Mainstream policies, such as those on housing, health, education, planning and economic growth must be workable in rural areas where there can be distinct challenges delivering to small and scattered settlements or where economics of scale are harder to achieve

DEFRA have a Rural Proofing process for other departments to follow

BUT Lord Cameron's review said:

- Implementation is patchy
- Does DEFRA have sufficient staff resources working on rural affairs?

Challenges identified to address:

-  Reaffirming the rural proofing commitment and placing it on a firmer footing
-  Providing sufficient staff and resources to carry out the rural proofing function
-  Making it clearer what rural proofing actions policy makers are taking
-  Ensuring that rural proofing filters down more consistently to the local level

What would make a difference?

-  A proper legal basis for rural proofing
-  A more transparent proofing process
-  A better resourced team within DEFRA
-  An effective approach to local policy delivery



RURAL VULNERABILITY FACT
Predicted % increase in next 20 years of number of people aged 65 and over (2016-2036)

RURAL

URBAN

112%

66%





Addressing rural inequalities

Below is just a snapshot of the rural inequalities which creates vulnerability across England's rural communities

	RURAL	URBAN
Amount paid on average by residents in Council Tax due to disparities in Government Grant received	£569.11	£471.41
Hourly rate for personal social care home (external) 2017/2018	£17.02	£15.53
Public Health Allocations to local authorities in 2018/2019 from Government, allocation per head	£42.97	£66.91
Government funding for fire authorities per head in 2018/19, per head	£12.94	£17.40
Average weekly transport costs	£111.80	£74.30
Percentage of weekly disposable income spent on average weekly transport cost	14.5%	10.7%
Estimated percentage of households not connected to the gas network	23.7%	8.2%
Percentage with access to a Further Education site within 30mins travel time using public transport/walking	51.0%	93.6%
Percentage of employees, self employed people and trainees receiving on the job training in the previous 4 weeks	12.9%	13.3%
Proportion of working age population with NVQ level 4 or equivalent	35.4%	44.7%
Predicted percentage increase in next 20 years of number of people aged 85 and over	107%	79%
Percentage of dwellings that cannot access a 10Mbps broadband connection	11%	1%
Average fuel poverty gap for fuel poor households in 2015	£561	£303
Fuel poverty gap - additional income required to bring a household to the point of not being fuel poor	£442	£296
Percentage of households that are classed as fuel poor (2015)	12%	11%
Residual fuel usage (non gas, non electricity, non road transport fuels) (tonnes of oil equivalent) per resident	0.44ktoe	0.10ktoe
Average domestic electricity consumption, sales per consumer (kwh)	4339kWh	3668kWh
2015/16 hospital admissions as a result of self harm directly standardised rate per 100,000 aged 10-24	477.6	419.0
2014/15 percentage of 15 year olds, diagnosed by a Doctor with a long term illness, disability or medical condition	14.5%	13.5%

People in rural areas typically need to spend 10 – 20% more on everyday requirements than those in urban areas. The more remote the area, the greater these additional costs become

Lord Foster of Bath

Chair of House of Lords Select Committee on the Rural Economy

“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.”





Sign up to support our campaign:
rsnonline.org.uk/time-for-a-rural-strategy

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