# Rural Services Network Member training: Campaigning and rural policy

Kerry Booth, Chief Executive Rural Services Network

10 June 2025

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# Membership body of around 500 organisations

# Rural Services Network

## Special Interest Group of the Local Government Association

# National Champion for rural services ensuring that rural have a strong voice



RURAL SERVICES NETWORK

# 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





https://rsnonline.org.uk/images /meetings/onlineseminars/2025/programme.pdf







### 8 Key Sessions over 4 Days



### **RSN Annual National Rural Conference**

**30 Expert Speakers** 



#### **Rural News**

Exclusively brought to you by the Rural Services Network

RURAL SERVICES NETWORK

The Rural Bulletin

What's new at RSN HQ this week!

#### Dear Kerry

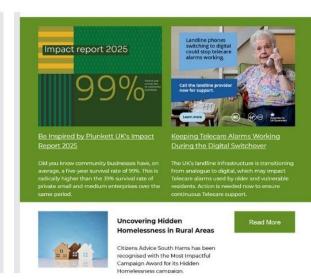
Welcome to this week's Rural Bulletin.

Last week. I was in London attending the Rural Taskforce workshops-a key part of Government Mission Delivery-where discussions focused on how to ensure rural priorities are firmly embedded in national policymaking.

This week's bulletin brings together a wealth of rural insights and stories. We share Plunkett UK's Impact Report 2025, highlighting the transformative power of community-owned businesses in rural areas. We also spotlight the latest measures from the Government to support SME housebuilders, the challenges uncovered around hidden homelessness in rural communities, and the crucial need to protect Telecare alarm users during the ongoing digital landline switchover.

Additionally, we cover highlights from the National and International Perspectives of Dementia conference and feature the inspiring work of Citizens Advice South Hams, which recently received national recognition for its campaign tackling hidden homelessness.

A reminder that our next RSN Member Exclusive Seminar takes place tomorrow! Join us as we focus on Rural Transport-a vital topic for communities across the country. If you haven't yet booked, we encourage you to secure your spot today.





Read the June 2025 edition of the Rural Funding Digest here.



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SPOTLIGHT ON RURAL HOUSING - APRIL 2025



the Impact of Devolution on Affordable Rural I

and more information at this Best

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#### Consultation Support

**Respond to Government Consultations** 

We make our members voices heard, examples:

- Reforms to the Right to Buy
- Transport Select Committee, Buses Connecting Communities,
- Local Government Provisional Settlement,
- Comprehensive Spending Review, Local Government Finance Principles and Objectives
- Review of the Fuel Poverty Strategy
- Improving the Energy Performance of Privately Rented Homes
- Business Rate Reset



### **Government Policy Reviews**

Our Rural Lens Series provide a useful overview on government policy



https://www.rsnonline.org.uk/tag/rural-lens

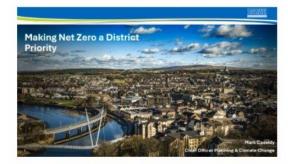


Analysis

#### **Best Practice**



Mark Cassidy, Chief Officer - Planning and Climate Change, Lancaster City Gouncil, "Making Net Zero a District Priority"



Reece Emmitt, Stakeholder Engagement Manager, National Energy System Operator, "Introduction to the National System Energy Operator and Strategic Spacial Energy Planning"

https://www.rsn online.org.uk/tag /membersnotice-board



#### MEMBERS NOTICE BOARD





#### PATIENT PARTNERSHIP WEEK 2025

The Patients Association is excited to announce the launch of Patient Partnership Week 2025. This week-long programme of free online events will explore how genuine partnership with patients can create a fairer, more responsive and more effective health and care.

Read more

02.06.2025



#### LIQUID GAS UK RESPONDS TO ESNZ COMMITTEE REPORT ON RETROFITTING HOMES FOR NET ZERO

George Webb, CEO of Liquid Gas UK, the trade association for the LPG and renewable liquid gases industry, has responded to the Energy Security and Net Zero (ESNZ) Committee's ' Retrofitting Homes for Net Zero ' report. The...

Read more



#### RURAL COMMUNITY PROJECT FUND OPENS FOR 2025/26

A project call for rural areas of West Norfolk is opening again, inviting expressions of interest for grants to support projects that create new and improved community infrastructure, providing essential community services and assets for local people in...

Read more

#### 19.05.2025



#### SAFEGUARDING TERRESTRIAL TV: AN UPDATE FROM THE BROADCAST 2040+ CAMPAIGN

Intersection
Intersection<

Read more

#### 19.05.2025



#### PEAK DISTRICT ACCESSIBILITY CHAMPION RECEIVES ACCOLADE IN MEMORY OF NATIONAL PARKS COLLEAGUE

VORKING WITH NURAL COMMUNITIES PREMOTING NURAL ALST PRACTICE A Peak District National Park Authority officer has received an award for dedication to improving people's accessible enjoyment of the region in the inaugural presentation of a new accolade for excellence in England's National Parks. Sue Smith,...



#### Representation

### **Influenced Further Afield**

With government departments, House of Lords and National service providers

- DEFRA Rural Impact Forum
- Part of Digital Voice Advisory Group for BT on telephone switchover
- Broadcast 2040 campaign, the future of analogue TV
- DEFRA Rural England Prosperity Fund meeting
- Rural Coalition
- Part of Rural Homelessness Coalition
- Part of National Alliance for Cultural Services
- Board of National Rural Crime Network
- National Centre for Rural Health and Care Board
- Future of TV Stakeholders Forum

As well providing the secretariat for the All Party Parliamentary Group for Rural Services



National campaigning



RURAL SERVICES NETWORK

The Rural Services Network is fighting for a fair deal for rural communities, in all public sector funding





We want a fairer distribution of national resources to rural areas and for more nuanced national policies that reflect rural circumstances.



# RSN Campaign currently being developed



# Three Foundations for Unlocking Rural Prosperity

### Fairly Fund Rural Public Services

Use right measures and metrics to understand rural challenges

### **Rural specific plan**



Department for Environment Food & Bural Affairs

Government Statistical Service

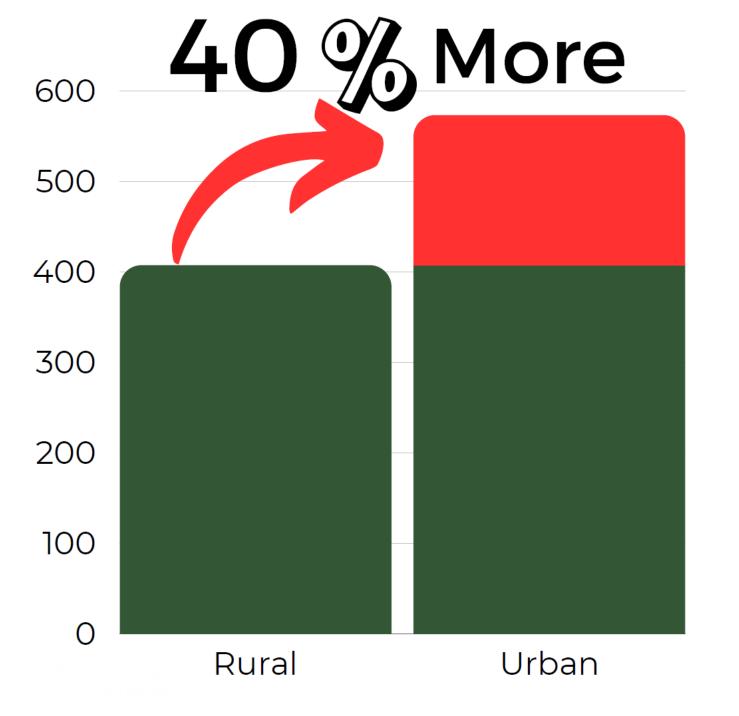
Statistical Digest of Rural England: 7 - Rural Economic Bulletin





This plan sets out the ambitious - but achievable - milestones we aim to reach by the end of this Parliament.

RURAL SERVICES NETWORE



Government Funded Spending Power in urban Councils is 40% MORE per head than in predominantly Rural Councils for 25-26





Rural Residents pay 20% more in Council tax per head compared to Urban Residents











Houses in rural areas are less affordable to purchase for those in the bottom 25% of earners compared to urban areas.



Source: Statistical Digest of Rural England, November 2023



Figure B-1: Workplace based median gross annual earnings (current prices), 2009 to 2022

### Wages earned in rural areas are lower than in urban areas, and the cost of living in rural areas is higher.

## Rural Affordable Housing

Holiday homes are 'hollowing out' coastal areas, says MP

abour MP Luke Pollard says Covid-19 has 'turbo-charged' ho



oastal communities are being "hollowed out irretrievably" by a surge in holiday homes, an MP has warned, as new figures showed more than 17,000 roperties in England have been "flipped" into short-term lets since Covid

Annual price paid for terrace or semi-detached house in rural areas is higher in rural areas compared to urban (outside of London)

> Proportionally more homeless Rural households in 2022/23 than in 2018/19



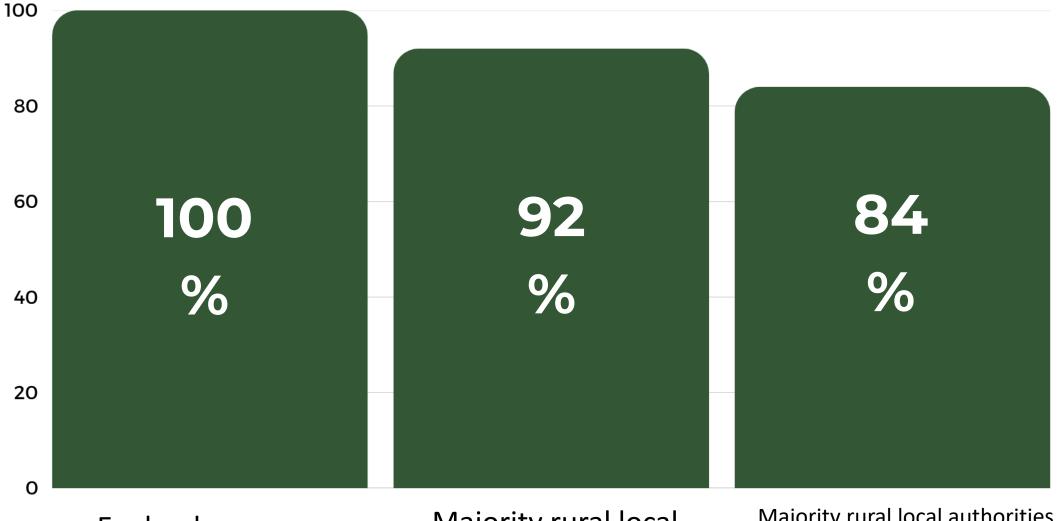
# Challenges for the rural economy

Challenges for the Workforce	Challenges for the employers / businesses	
Lack of affordable housing options	Lack of broadband / mobile signal for businesses to increase productivity/markets	
Lack of Public Transport to access skills/training/education/employment	Suitably qualified workforce	
Lack of Broadband / mobile connectivity to access skills/training/education	Lack of Infrastructure	
Seasonal nature of tourist industry	Less ability to work within economies of scale	



DEFRA Rural Digest 2025

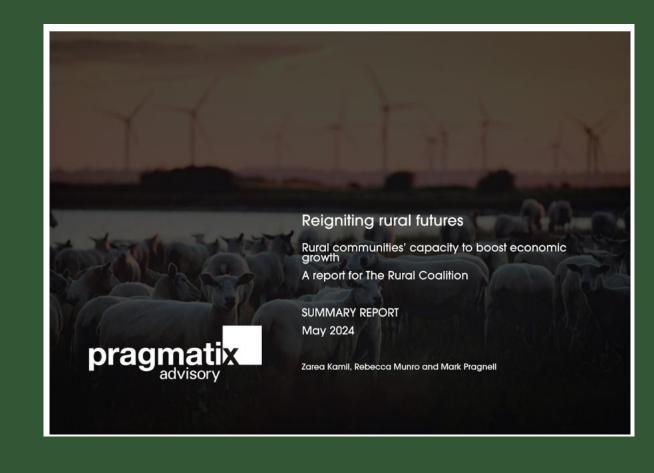
### **Productivity Levels measured by GVA**



England average (excl London) Majority rural local authorities

Majority rural local authorities with majority residing further from major town

# RURAL ECONOMY: A SLEEPING GIANT WORTH £19 BILLION



**The report** shows that with the right policy framework, the rural economy could increase productivity significantly, leading to an additional £9 billion to £19 billion per year in tax revenues.

This growth would not only support rural communities but also have farreaching benefits for the national economy, helping to fund essential public services and drive broader economic initiatives.



### **Rural Transport**



Source: https://www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk

Research suggests that about 1 in 4 bus routes have ceased in county and rural areas over the eleven years from 2010/11 to 2021/22.



Urban councils budget to spend 3.4 times more than rural on public transport.

Source: RSN analysis of Revenue Account Budget, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities 2024/25

Over the decade from 2013 to 2023, bus vehicle mileage in predominantly rural areas declined.



Source: DfT Public Service Vehicle Survey - Bus Statistics , Annual bus statistics, year ending: March 2023 data tables

Urban areas (excluding London) have double the number of taxis and private hire vehicles as a proportion of population than rural areas.

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Rural - 2.6 per thousand people

Urban - 5.5 per thousand people

Source: RSN analysis of Taxi and PHV Licensing Authorities, DfT July 2024

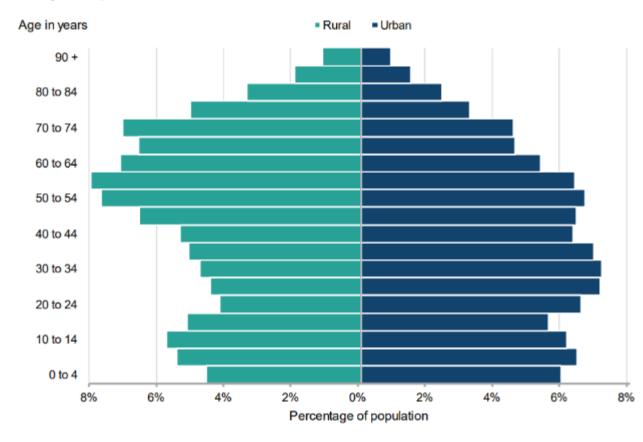


### **The Rural Reality**

# Access to Rural Health and Care Services

### Figure B-1: Percentage of population within age bands of 5-year intervals from 0 to 90+, by Rural-Urban Classification in England based on LSOA level data, 2020

The legend is presented in the same order and orientation as the stacks in the bars



Rural areas have an ageing population which places additional demands on services

Isolation and lack of public transport - leading to mental health concerns; distance from services; the nature and quality of the housing stock.

Urban areas receive 16% MORE in social care grant than rural areas



### **Rural Net Zero**

DEFRA Rural Digest 202

The rural fuel poverty gap is nearly double the national average.



Rural households emissions are higher than urban households.





In 2023 there were 10 times fewer electric buses/coaches in rural areas per head of population than in urban areas.

Source: RSN analysis of Western Power Distriubtion, 2023



In January 2025, the number of public charging devices available per 10,000 households with access to a car/van



Almost 70% more public charging devices available in urban areas

of rural homes are 25% not connected to the gas network



# **The Rural Reality**

There remains 3% of indoor premises in rural areas that have no coverage from any operator of 4G services.



Source: Ofcom Connected Nations December 2024

10% of rural premises in England still cannot access a superfast broadband connection.

access a superfast broadband connection

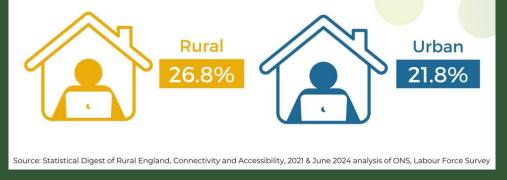
Source: Ofcom Connected Nations December 2024

Only 54% of rural premises (commercial and residential) have Gigabit capability.



Source: Ofcom Connected Nations December 2024

A greater proportion of the working population work from home in rural areas of England than in urban. And for many, digital connectivity will be an essential element of their work.





# Residential Superfast Coverage

	Total	Urban	Rural
England	98%	99%	90%

# Residential Gigabit Capable Coverage

"The coverage of gigabit-capable broadband networks – which includes hybrid fibre coaxial (HFC) cable in addition to full fibre – has grown to reach 83% or 25 million residential premises in the UK by July 2024. This suggests the Government's target of 85% coverage by 2025 is likely to be reached. "Connected Nations 2024

	Total	Urban	Rural
England	84%	88%	54%



# Rural Planning

Key to ensuring we get the right homes in the right places with the right access to infrastructure



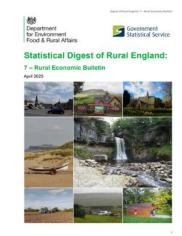


# What is the answer?

Fairly Fund Rural Public Services Use right measures and metrics to understand rural challenges

### **Rural specific plan**







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