



The Rural Services Network

National Rural Conference 2024

Delivering for Rural – Unlocking rural prosperity



Wednesday 18th September

Community Services Discussion Session

Community Services



Community Services



Rural shops generated £17.1bn in sales and over £3.8bn in GVA over the last year

The percentage of rural stores in the convenience sector that provide each service is as follows:



Source: ACS's Annual Intelligence 2023/2024

Source: Rural Shop Report 2024, Association of Convenience Stores



Banks and building societies have closed 6,094 branches since January 2015, at a rate of around 53 each month.

The state of the sector in 2023



Community Businesses, are predominantly located in rural communities

There are now 787 community businesses trading across the UK			
419 shops	176 pubs	70 land-based	122 other

Source: Plunkett Impact Report 2024



Urban councils budgeted to spend double that of rural on discretionary services this year

The Rural Reality

Everyone deserves a chance to live in a thriving community that enables them to reach their full potential.

Challenges and implications for our rural communities:

- Services such as banks, post offices are often being centralised as our world moves to 'digital by default'. This can leave rural communities at a disadvantage in accessing services.
- Rural Local Authorities are struggling with underfunding and are able to spend less on discretionary services, in some areas the running of these services is being taken over by Parish or Town Councils
- Community businesses are a successful model and the long term survival rate is 92%

Community Services

As an organisation the RSN:

- Works in partnership to have a stronger voice.
- We are currently part of:
 - DEFRA Rural Impact Forum
 - Rural Coalition
 - Rural Homelessness Coalition
 - National Alliance for Cultural Services
 - National Centre for Rural Health and Care
 - National Rural Crime Network
 - Rural Housing Alliance
 - BT Digital Voice Advisory Group
- The RSN provides the Secretariat for the All Party Parliamentary Group on Rural Services
- We also use the strength of our network to learn and campaign together
- We ensure that the views of rural service providers are represented in key policy discussions

