



Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP
Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury
10 Downing Street
London SW1A 2AA

26 October 2022

Dear Prime Minister

On behalf of the Rural Coalition, may I congratulate you on becoming Prime Minister. As you have made clear, the nation faces unprecedented challenges and we look forward to working with you and your Government to ensure that rural communities and businesses in England can overcome the difficulties they face and can unlock their potential to play a full part in the country's future success.

As you will know from your own very rural constituency, the issues facing rural areas are similar to those for the country as a whole, but circumstances in rural areas often differ and require differing approaches, not least in addressing the difficulties caused by sparsity and distance from key services and markets. It is critical, therefore, that policies and the means of implementing them are rurally sensitive. The Rural Coalition is an alliance of thirteen national organisations who share a vision of a living, working countryside and work together in common cause. Through their national and local networks, our members bring a wealth of experience and expertise of the key economic and social issues affecting rural areas both now and in the future and knowledge of how they can be addressed in the most effective and appropriate ways. We have worked closely with Ministers and officials in Defra and other Government Departments to ensure that the rural dimension is properly taken into account in policy and delivery.

We believe that there are some key actions which are fundamental to enabling real and positive growth and social change in rural England. Broadly, these are as follows:

- Making rural proofing a reality and embedding it across Government
- Introducing a fairer funding regime addressing the disparities between urban and rural areas
- Achieving an appropriate and meaningful increase in rural affordable housing, safeguarded for future generations
- Unlocking the potential of rural economies and enabling rural businesses and entrepreneurs to thrive

- Ensuring a 'just' transition to net zero and improving infrastructure so that rural residents and businesses are not unfairly penalised
- Providing equality of access to services for rural people and improving local transport to make it more flexible and sensitive to local needs
- Supporting social infrastructure to enable rural communities to make the best use of local resources and networks
- Setting out a comprehensive strategy or vision for rural areas to unlock their potential to contribute to the future prosperity of the nation.

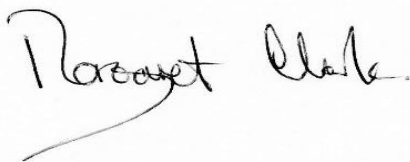
We understand that to achieve these ambitions will require commitment and action over a period of time and we are keen to work with your Government to identify the best means of doing this and to help deliver the outcomes.

More immediately, the current major increases in the cost of living are having a severe impact on rural residents and businesses. Urgent action is needed to ensure that the measures already introduced to address some of the problems, such as the rise in energy prices, reach those in rural areas, especially where properties are off grid. It is critical also that any further measures developed have the needs and circumstances of rural areas built in from the outset. We, of course, stand ready to offer any advice or help to enable this to happen.

We do not underestimate the challenges facing the country and we look forward to building a positive and constructive relationship with you and your Ministers as we seek to ensure that rural areas of England contribute fully to the country's future prosperity.

I am copying this letter to Dr Therese Coffey as Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Yours sincerely



Margaret Clark CBE
Chair, Rural Coalition

Members of the Rural Coalition: Action with Communities in Rural England, CPRE – The Countryside Charity, Country Land and Business Association, The Arthur Rank Centre, National Association of Local Councils, National Centre for Rural Health and Care, National Farmers Union, National Housing Federation, Plunkett Foundation, Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, Royal Town Planning Institute, Rural Services Network, Town and Country Planning Association.

President: Rt Revd Dr Alan Smith, Bishop of St Albans