

Questions for the Conservative leadership candidates from the Rural Coalition

1. Evidence shows that urban-focussed policies and delivery frequently overlook or marginalise the needs and circumstances of rural communities and businesses.
Question: How will you ensure that rural proofing of proposals before they are finalised is fully embedded and becomes a reality across government?
2. Rural areas receive over 35% less per head in local government funding and residents pay some 20% more in Council Tax for fewer services; the cost of providing essential public services is 67% funded by Council Tax payers in rural areas compared to 55% in urban areas.
Question: How will you address the disparities in funding between urban and rural areas and introduce a fairer funding regime for both funding formulae and other funding streams?
3. Housing in rural areas is unaffordable for those on local wages or low incomes, both for purchase and rent, which undermines the economic and social viability of rural communities.
Question: How will you bring about an appropriate and meaningful increase in the supply of housing, affordable on local earnings in rural areas, safeguarded for future generations?
4. Rural economies go beyond farming and the visitor economy and many are diverse and innovative but they are hampered by lack of access to skilled labour, training, finance and suitable premises and appropriate support.
Question: How will you unlock the potential of rural economies and enable rural businesses and entrepreneurs to thrive?
5. The transition to net zero presents an opportunity in rural areas but also a challenge, particularly for those places with restricted infrastructure, especially energy, broadband and mobile coverage.
Question: How will you ensure a 'just' transition to net zero and improve infrastructure to ensure that rural residents and businesses are not unfairly penalised?

6. Rural people have limited access to services others take for granted, such as health and social care, post-16 education, banking and other facilities, exacerbated by poor or non-existent public transport.

Question: How will you address the challenges of providing equity of access to services for rural people and improve local transport to make it more flexible and sensitive to local needs?

7. Rural communities have demonstrated resilience and ability to help themselves through local parish councils, community ownership of key assets and local support networks. But they depend on a limited cadre of volunteers and suffer problems of capacity.

Question: How will you provide support for the social infrastructure needed to enable rural communities to make the best use of local resources and networks?

8. There are many competing claims on rural areas and their role in the nation's future wellbeing is fragmented and unclear.

Question: Will you commit to setting out a comprehensive strategy or vision for rural areas which will set out ways to unlock their potential to contribute to the future prosperity of the nation?