

NEWS RELEASE

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Election call for candidates to commit to delivering fairer rural funding

A coalition of thirteen leading rural organisations is calling on Prospective Parliamentary Candidates and their political parties to commit to delivering fairer funding for rural areas following the election on 12 December.

As figures across the political spectrum take to the airwaves to announce spending commitments on a range of issues, members of the Rural Coalition are calling on future MPs to factor in the needs of rural communities in their spending plans.

A statement issued by the Coalition today says the new Government must address the inequality in funding and delivery between urban and rural areas, recognising the additional costs and challenges in providing services in rural areas, including social care, local government, education, the NHS and emergency services.

For example:

- In 2019/20 urban local authorities received 66 per cent more - £119 per resident more - in funding than rural authorities
- In 2017/18 rural residents funded 76 per cent of the cost of adult social care in their areas through their Council Tax, compared to 53 per cent of urban residents
- Average house prices in rural areas are £44,000 higher than in urban areas (2017). The cheapest 25 per cent house prices are nearly 8 and a half times greater than the lower quartile annual earning (2016).
- 11 per cent of rural domestic and commercial premises are unable to access a basic broadband download speed of 10 Megabits per second and 4G mobile signals are only possible inside 42 per cent of rural premises.

Margaret Clark CBE, chair of The Rural Coalition, said: “It is unfair that rural areas have systematically received less grant-per-head than urban areas when local challenges mean vital services like social care and public transport cost significantly more to deliver in these places.

“We desperately need politicians that understand that ‘rural’ is much more than agriculture and the natural environment. That’s why we’re calling on political candidates to recognise urban-rural inequalities and to commit to ensuring a fairer deal for rural communities and businesses.

“Fairer funding and rural-proofed policy making are needed as matter of urgency to end the negative impact that the status quo is having and to give our rural communities a chance to thrive.”

Other areas requiring urgent attention noted in the Coalition’s statement include:

- Tackling the rural affordable housing crisis

- Supporting social action and volunteering by rural communities
- Providing the proper infrastructure and support for rural business - including accessible training and support for rural high streets.

As a priority, the Rural Coalition is urging the next Government to establish a cross-Government framework for addressing the needs and potential of rural areas and, in turn, develop a comprehensive, long-term and properly-funded rural strategy.

The full statement from the Rural Coalition is available here: [<https://acre.org.uk/our-work/rural-coalition.php>]

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Notes to Editors

Please contact Julie Cummings or Olivia Rex, for more information. Email: communications@lexcomm.co.uk Phone: 0207 025 2300

The Rural Coalition

The Rural Coalition is thirteen national organisations who subscribe to a vision for a living and working countryside in England. Given many shared values, we seek to be more influential by joining in common cause. Below we set out our key principles, policies and actions which we would urge the Government to apply to rural communities.

Members of the Rural Coalition: Action with Communities in Rural England; CPRE, the countryside charity; Country Land and Business Association; Germinate: 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. **Chair:** Margaret Clark CBE