

# THE RURAL COALITION

*Putting rural at the heart of Government*

*The Rural Coalition is an alliance of thirteen national organisations who have come together with a shared vision of a living, working countryside. In the run-up to the General Election and the subsequent Government, the Rural Coalition calls on all Political Parties and Parliamentary candidates to give a commitment to:*



- ✓ **Recognise** that 'rural' is more than agriculture and the natural environment
- ✓ **Make** rural proofing a fundamental part of policy development and delivery
- ✓ **Deliver** a fair deal for rural communities in policies and funding
- ✓ **Devolve** decision-making, funding and delivery to the most appropriate local levels
- ✓ **Involve** rural communities in planning and delivering solutions

AS A **MATTER OF PRIORITY**, THE INCOMING GOVERNMENT SHOULD:

**Develop** a comprehensive, long-term and properly-funded rural strategy to establish a cross government framework for addressing the needs and potential of rural areas.



**IMMEDIATE ACTION IS REQUIRED TO:**

- ! **Tackle** the rural affordable housing crisis
- ! **Ensure** funding and delivery recognise the additional costs and challenges in providing services in rural areas, including social care, local government, education, the NHS and emergency services.
- ! **Support** social action and volunteering by rural communities
- ! **Provide** the proper infrastructure and support for rural business, including improving productivity, access to training and help for rural high streets.

*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*

## PEOPLE:

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Nearly 10m people live in rural England, about 17% of the total population, more than live in Greater London (2016). In 2011 29% of the rural population were aged 60 or over (21% in urban areas) (2011 Census). By 2039 nearly 50% of all rural households will contain people aged 65 or over.

## ECONOMY:

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There are nearly 5 and a half million registered businesses based in rural areas, 24% of all the registered businesses in England, with an annual turnover of some £434bn. 85% of rural businesses are from non-land-based sectors. Most rural businesses are small or micro businesses. (2017)

## JOBS:

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22% of all rural jobs are home based (13% in urban areas). Many jobs are seasonal and/or low paid. Median average annual earnings are 10% less than annual earnings in England as a whole. (2017)

## HOUSING:

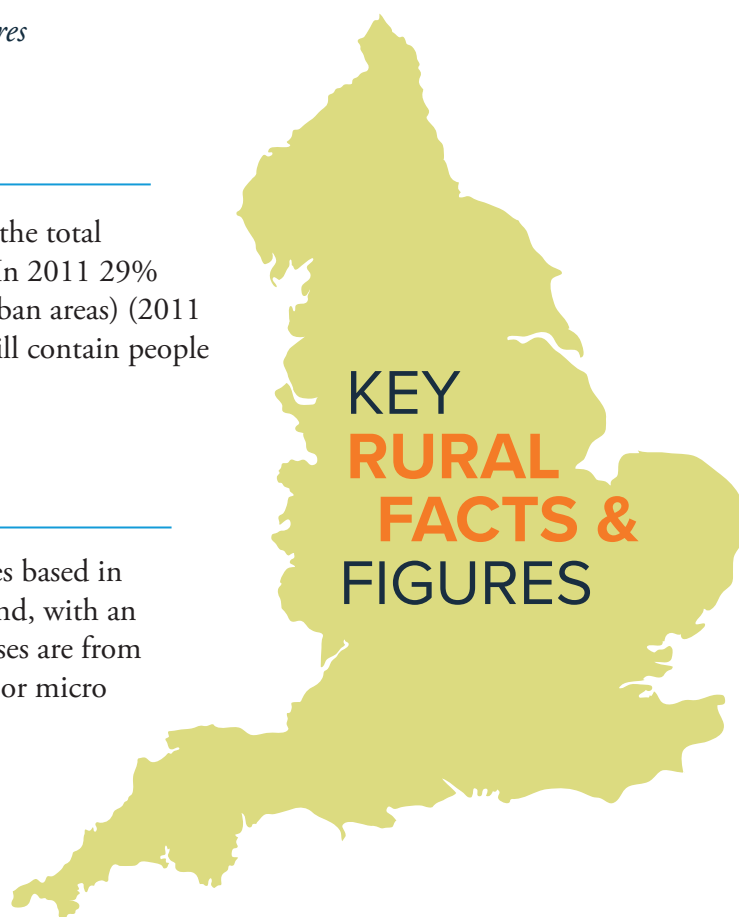
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Average house prices in rural areas are £44,000 higher than in urban areas (2017). The cheapest 25% house prices are nearly 8 and a half times greater than the lower quartile annual earning (2016). There is a severe lack of affordable housing; only 8% of households in villages live in social housing, compared to 19% in urban areas (2011 Census).

## SERVICES:

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Local bus routes in rural shire counties have suffered deep cuts. In the 6 years to 2016/17, transport budgets in shire rural counties were cut by £80m or 40%.



## HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE:

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In 2017/18 rural residents funded 76% of the cost of adult social care in their areas through their Council Tax, compared to 53% of urban residents. NHS funding to rural areas does not reflect the ageing population.

## CONNECTIVITY:

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11% of rural domestic and commercial premises are unable to access a basic broadband download speed of 10 Megabits per second. The (2018) NFU Broadband and Mobile survey showed that 42% of respondents had access to broadband speeds of 2Mbps or less and only 17% of farmers had access to a reliable outdoor mobile signal. 4G mobile signals are only possible inside 42% of rural premises.

### *Data sources include:*

*ONS, Defra, Halifax Building Society, MHCLG, Department of Transport, Campaign for Better Transport, Rural Services Network, Ofcom, NFU, Rural England/SRUC*