

To: **Dept. of Transport**

by email:

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Date: 16/02/2021

Dear DfT

**Re: Future of transport: rural strategy - call for evidence**

Please see our comments on the following pages.

**About the South Downs Network (SDN)**

The SDN was formed over 30 years ago to campaign for the formation of the South Downs National Park and the protection of the environment. The SDN is made up of over 40 independent groups and charities across the South Downs National Park including CPRE and the Wildlife Trusts in Hampshire & Sussex; (see: <https://southdownsnetwork.org.uk/about/our-members/>). We share information and campaign for the best possible environment to protect the beauty and landscape of the Park and its environs with the aim of ensuring a sustainable future and meeting the carbon challenge.

Yours faithfully



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## **South Downs Network (SDN) Future of transport: rural strategy - call for evidence**

Recommended key measure: Use a tiny fraction of the Highways England budget to restore rural bus services:

Funding for supported buses has been halved in the last eight years, leaving many parts of England and Wales without public transport, according to a new report released by the Campaign for Better Transport. The Buses in Crisis report reveals that local authority bus budgets in England and Wales were cut by £20.5m last year - the eighth year in a row budgets have been cut. Since 2010/11, supported bus budgets in England and Wales have been cut by £182 million - a 45% reduction. All that is needed is less than 1% of the Highways England budget!

Opening remarks:

- Recently the Transport Secretary Grant Shapps has [told a UK transport committee panel](#) that there is now an ambition to see “half of all journeys in towns and cities to be walked or cycled by 2030.” Mr Shapps reiterated the statement first set out during the launch of the Government’s Gear Change document. Please would the DfT embrace rural communities as well as towns and cities?
- To get more people cycling and walking, safer country lanes are needed. **Cycle paths and Quiet Lanes need to be introduced.** The Government report ‘[Facts on Road Fatalities](#)’ (June 2015) say rural roads carry 40% of road traffic, but account for 62% of road fatalities. It goes on to say accidents that occur on rural roads are more likely to be of a fatal nature than those on urban roads, and that rural roads have a much higher average speed than urban roads. This problem continues to be the case in recent years. The [RoSPA say in their report of 2018](#) that “More deaths occur on rural roads than on urban ones. In 2016, there were 1,015 fatal accidents on rural roads compared to 593 on urban roads.”
- The confidence of the public has reduced over the years in the bus network because of the difficulty in accessing timetable information, the perception of unreliability and in many rural areas, the complete loss of services. A major rethink on bus services is needed so that nowhere is left without regular services and access to the wider public transport network. This needs to be provided alongside good information and affordable fares.
- If rural digital telecommunications can be improved, it will make it more possible for people to work remotely and not have to travel into an office as well as improve provision of other services at a distance.
- There should be every encouragement for rail, bus and governmental organisations to come together so that it is possible for a single ticket to be purchased to travel across the region (if not the country) without financial penalties or without buying a new ticket for every leg of the journey.
- The Government's cycling and walking strategy toolkit forces local county, borough and city councils to consider only the more densely populated areas

when putting forward schemes for government funding. This needs rectifying.

- For years, funding has always favoured large urban areas. Local parishes have been left to fend for themselves. This is very unfair, since those who dwell in cities and towns use the countryside roads to get to their destinations. The countryside and south east's beautiful areas have come into sharper focus more recently, with the government suggesting that we use the countryside for our health and mental wellbeing. Countryside venues are choked with cars and lanes as they become the province of urban commuters heading for key outdoor destinations, probably because of the 'bandwagon' effect of newspapers recommending places to go during the Covid pandemic.
- But what happens when the Covid pandemic recedes? (Which we all hope it will). The countryside will still be a public transport desert. Bus services are almost non-existent in many areas and rail operators are reducing services at many rural stations with the aim of so-called 'greater efficiency'. Such measures will just drive more people to head for the car. But is this a good strategy and shouldn't a regional transport body consider such matters?
- Planning integrated with sustainable transport infrastructure should be the mantra of the Government. We recommend adopting this checklist: [Checklist for new housing developments by Transport for New Homes \(funded by the Foundation for Integrated Transport\)](#) and the recommendations of the Royal Town Planning Institute: [Consider Transport actions/policy/interventions of the Royal Town Planning Institute \(RTPI\) report "Urgent action required to address transport emissions to meet net zero targets"](#)
- We recommend the Government supports the proposals by the HOUSE OF LORDS Select Committee on the Rural Economy – see Appendix A (attached)
- We recommend the Government supports the proposals by the Independent Research, Networking and Information Exchange across Rural England – see Appendix B (attached)

See next page:

## Survey Form Response

Your details

### Q1. Your (used for contact details only):

name? Victor S Ient, MSc.,

email? [vic.ient.SDN@gmail.com](mailto:vic.ient.SDN@gmail.com)

### Q2. Are you responding:

on behalf of an organisation? Yes

Organisation details: **South Downs Network:** <https://southdownsnetwork.org.uk/>

Which category best describes your organisation?

Charity or other non-government organisation:

Non-governmental, National Park focussed community rural campaigning and environmental organisation.

### Issues facing rural areas

#### Q3. What are your views on:

##### a. Dependence on the private car.

There is an overwhelming dependence on the private car in rural areas which has been exacerbated by cuts in bus services. Department for Transport (DfT) figures show local and central government support for buses has fallen by £800m a year over 10 years<sup>1</sup>. Local councils are under so much pressure to meet housing targets and make more development, very often in the countryside, without considering access to sustainable transport.

There is a misconception that everyone has access to a car. For instance, fewer young people own a car than in the 1990s. For young people in the countryside this means moving to the city. Moving away from the countryside seems the only option for lowest income households who have higher levels of non-car ownership, 40% have no car access<sup>2</sup>. The proportion of those aged 17-20 holding a driving licence has fallen by almost 40% in recent years, dropping from 48% in the early 1990s to 29% in 2014.

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<sup>1</sup> See BBC analysis: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-51815726>

<sup>2</sup> Inequalities in Mobility and Access in the UK Transport System by the Office for Government Science: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/784685/future\\_of\\_mobility\\_access.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/784685/future_of_mobility_access.pdf)

Licence rates for those aged between 20 and 29 dropped from 75 to 63% over the same period<sup>3</sup>.

For older people the problem of the lack of a bus service in rural villages comes into sharp focus when they have to consider giving up the car because of health reasons. This then drives them to relocate into larger towns and leave their lifelong village home.

New developments in rural areas are designed around the car, and the National Planning Policy Framework guidance on inclusion of sustainable alternatives often fails to secure delivery of these: it can be ignored as it is non-statutory.

#### **b. Access to key services.**

This particularly affects the infirm, disabled and lower income groups who don't have a car, can't afford a car or can't drive. With bus services having been cut or cancelled altogether, the problem of rural communities is now reaching its peak. In 2019 the Financial Times reported that bus funding in England was slashed by 40% in 10 years with more than 3,000 services lost or reduced after years of austerity cuts<sup>4</sup>.

Access to adult education, hospitals, shops, leisure, and health centres/doctors surgeries is becoming more difficult from rural villages without a car.

#### **c. Access to employment.**

Access (other than by car) is bedevilled by the lack of rail and bus services often causing people to migrate from village to the cities leaving the countryside the domain of the wealthy middle classes who then spend their time commuting into cities. A pattern has developed whereby the village is not a place of work. Rural employment is declining as commuting to work to major towns is increasing. If business parks are set up in rural areas they are often only realistically accessible by car because of their isolated location and the lack of public transport.

#### **d. Social isolation.**

For those who cannot drive (anyone under 17), have no access to a car, or who choose not to drive, the village can be like a prison. Young people migrate to towns/cities while those remaining have a poorer social life and fewer opportunities to 'expand their circle'. This especially applies to older people. See the Age UK report entitled: Missed opportunities: the impact on older people of cuts to rural bus services<sup>5</sup>.

### **Q4. Do you think there are other issues facing rural areas that we should consider in the strategy?**

Yes

#### **Issues facing rural areas: other**

Q5. What issues?

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<sup>3</sup> See this analysis of a 2018 Government report: <https://www.autoexpress.co.uk/car-news/102466/number-of-young-adults-with-driving-licences-falls-by-40-per-cent>

<sup>4</sup> See the FT report: <https://www.ft.com/content/ad5743bc-f673-11e9-9ef3-eca8fc8f2d65>

<sup>5</sup> See Age UK report: [https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/reports-and-briefings/active-communities/rb\\_may13\\_bus\\_services\\_in\\_rural\\_areas.pdf](https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/reports-and-briefings/active-communities/rb_may13_bus_services_in_rural_areas.pdf)

According to the Rural Coalition there are 9.3 million people living in the small towns, villages, hamlets, and farms of rural England, comprising 17% of the country's total population. There are 524,000 registered businesses employing up to 3.7 million people and with an annual turnover of £404 billion<sup>6</sup>.

According to the LGA the lack of affordable housing, poor quality housing and significant fuel poverty in the most rural areas are threatening the wellbeing and sustainability of communities. House prices are 26 prices higher in rural areas and there is much less housing association and council housing<sup>7</sup>.

But set against this backcloth, we see that too often government's focus is on the larger towns and cities. City mayors get extra powers, low traffic neighbourhoods are designed for cities, £27 billion is being spent on motorways and trunk roads, funding allocations for transport, go to major rail stations and motorway improvements to connect with major airports and industrial centres. Even this government's cycling and walking strategy toolkit is so designed to favour only urban areas.

Rural communities need a new deal, including the provision of good public transport by road or rail and active travel infrastructure in the countryside to help people get to their job, to the railway station and to the local town shops and essential services. It's no good having a cycle network, ending at the edge of an urban area. We should stop cutting bus services and cancelling stopping services at rural railway stations. The countryside isn't something to look at or pass through. It is somewhere to live in! These covert times have brought our health and wellbeing into sharper focus. Perhaps we're beginning to realise that the countryside is better for our health? Rural strategy is needed which is not based upon filling up your car with petrol or diesel fuel and making the climate crisis worse in the process.

### **Trends in innovation for rural transport**

In our experience the opportunity for 'innovation' for rural transport needs leadership, investment and firm government backing. Without long-term support and a long-term investment plan, rural transport will go the way of the 'Post Bus' experiment. Post buses were first launched in Wales in 1967 and the last one ended in 2017<sup>8</sup>

### **Q6 What Examples, in rural areas, do you have for the trends of:**

#### **Increasing use of active travel modes?**

There is an increase in cycling in rural areas, but it is hampered by the lack of safe routes. Electric bicycle sales have rocketed, enabling people to move around the countryside more easily and over longer distances. It has enabled older fitter people to cycle long distances.

In the Covid crisis, there has been a dramatic increase in leisure cycling, but as vehicle traffic returns to the roads the safety issue rears its ugly head. It may be that cyclists are deterred as the traffic increases again back to normal levels. It is impossible to develop temporary cycle lanes on narrow country roads. There has to be a cycling strategy for the countryside and not just the towns.

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<sup>6</sup> Rural Coalition report: <https://acre.org.uk/cms/resources/rural-coalition-statement-2017-low-res.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> LGA report:

[https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/1.39\\_Health%20in%20rural%20areas\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/1.39_Health%20in%20rural%20areas_WEB.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> See The Scotsman 2017: <https://www.scotsman.com/news/transport/last-postbus-reaches-end-road-1442044>

There is no evidence to say that walking has increased in rural areas. As with cycling the lack of safe routes is a barrier to people walking even a short distance for leisure or to access the nearest bus stop or railway station.

### **Micromobility?**

The future for lightweight pedal or battery-powered micro devices such as scooters may have a future in urban areas, but without dedicated pathways their use in the countryside could lead to accidents with cars and other vehicles.

### **More effective integration of journeys?**

There is no leadership from the national government or from many local councils to achieve integration of existing transport services for bus and rail in rural areas, towns or villages. Indeed, some bus services do not connect with rural railway stations. The rail operators seem uninterested in helping local communities unless there is a particularly active local volunteer group. One rare example of success is the Cooksbridge Station Partnership<sup>9</sup> where they persuaded GTX/Southern to make more trains stop at Cooksbridge. In contrast to this the same company has reduced the rail service operating to Southease station, which is adjacent to an important YHA hostel and on the national long-distance path – the South Downs Way. More could be done by organisations such as the National Trust, who have a focus on visitors arriving by car. As we recover from the Covid crisis, tourism in the UK is going to be an important part of our economy. It's surprising that all these organisations seem to be lacking in ideas for integrated and innovative sustainable transport.

We see a successive reduction in stopping services in rural areas without consultation with the local community. Bus operators in Sussex, such as Compass Travel are operating on a commercial basis and they can only keep bus services running so long as there is income to pay for the service. These companies need an incentive to extend their services from the more lucrative urban areas into rural areas.

As far as we know, there is no coordination by the local county councils to assist in the integration of rail and bus journeys. We have experience of West & East Sussex so other councils may be performing better. The 'shadow' regional transport body, Transport for the South East (TfSE) has recently turned down a request by ourselves to implement a thematic study into rural mobility. There seems no hope for rural communities.

However, independent of the county transport authorities, Cuckmere Community Buses<sup>10</sup> operate an integrated service linking with railway stations (Lewes, Berwick and Seaford railway stations), along with services to villages fanning out from Alfriston and linking with tourist attractions such as Drusilla's, Charleston House and Middle Farm. They also visit towns such as Hailsham, Polegate and Eastbourne.

There is much more that can be done by linking tourism with village transport and extending commercially viable services further out into the countryside from

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<sup>9</sup> Cooksbridge Station Partnership see: <http://www.hamsey.net/your-community/cooksbridge-station-partnership/>

<sup>10</sup> Cuckmere Community Bus Ltd is a community business in East Sussex. It was set up in 1976 to provide local residents who did not have access to a car a reliable and competitively priced local bus service in the Cuckmere Valley region. This was at the request of the local community following the withdrawal of rural bus services by a commercial bus operator. It is a registered charity, and entirely run by volunteers. See: <https://cuckmerebuses.org.uk/>

nearby urban communities. Brighton and Hove buses have successfully implemented a limited number of services to tourist attractions such as Devil's Dyke and Drusilla's. Also, Compass Travel provides taken the initiative to extend bus services from Lewes to the Bluebell line at Sheffield Park, helping communities en route but connecting with a major tourist attraction. However, these innovations are limited and integration with rail stations is ad hoc.

### **Digital models for more flexible services?**

Whilst there is research underway for initiatives relating to digital models for more flexible services, these do not seem to focus on rural communities.

### **Data and digital improvements unlocking market knowledge?**

Non-digital Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) are already in existence in some rural areas, but the service is patchy, and it's not coordinated or supported by any digital connectivity. Some community transport trusts do operate a dial-a-ride service and door-to-door service. Availability in rural areas usually involves waiting lists of maybe a week or more.

The service is normally limited to special groups such as the disabled and elderly. These traditional services have often been criticised because of their relatively high cost of provision, their lack of flexibility in route planning and their inability to manage high demand.

Bus real time information apps are used by those who have the ability to use a smart phone. However it also relies upon there actually being a bus service to that particular rural locality.

Generally speaking, our RTPI systems do not exist in the countryside.

The Williams report<sup>11</sup> on rail transport is so delayed that if published its findings may be out of date. Many people campaigned for integrated/smart ticketing. Certainly, if the Government coordinated and integrated bus and rail ticket service it would help rural communities.

Connected and autonomous vehicles, MaaS and intelligent transport systems are in their infancy, even for cities, so the likelihood of these applying in rural locations are probably many decades away.

Without a reliable and frequent bus and rail service it seems pointless to talk about overlying digital technology. When there just aren't the public services in existence.

Probably the most immediate and easy to implement, would be RTPI bus displays in village centres.

### **New modes of transport?**

We note that the DfT are trialling Future Transport Zones ((FTZ) and that they are funding trials of 6 key transport innovations:

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<sup>11</sup> A white paper with details on plans for rail reform, including the ongoing role for community rail partnerships, will be published once the course of the pandemic becomes clearer. The Department for Transport hope to be able to update members further at the upcoming Community Rail Conference – 16 March: <https://communityrail.org.uk/williams-rail-review/>

1. Mobility as a Service: A one-stop-shop for journey planning and ticketing across all types of transport.
2. Mobility Stations: An integrated space for seamlessly changing between transport modes.
3. Dynamic Demand-Responsive Transport: Improving access to transport within communities.
4. E-scooters: Better connected last-mile journeys extending the reach of core transport corridors.
5. E-cargo bikes: Green transport reducing congestion for freight in city centres.
6. Transport Data Hub: A regional data warehouse to improve transport planning and management.

We also understand that these trials will last until 2024 - nearly four years away. From our research it seems that most of these initiatives are focused on urban areas.

There needs to be an initiative put together for rural areas which focuses on:

- The provision of a basic bus service coordinated with rail services. There is no hiding the fact that this will cost money but taking a small fraction of the money away from the £27 billion allocated for major road construction could go a long way to restoring sustainable transport in rural areas. Providing a reliable regular bus service will a) encourage people to leave their car home and b) making provision for those that don't have access to a car.
- The expansion of the current fragmented service operated by enthusiastic local transport trusts, so as to provide dial-a-ride and door-to-door transport on a much wider basis.
- E-scooters and E-cargo bikes are unlikely to be practical options in the countryside but electric bikes which enable the user to cover much greater distances are already being taken up by more users. However, the expansion of the bike usage can't take place without safe roads and lanes on which to travel. Infrastructure for cycleways in the countryside is desperately needed connecting transport hubs such as railway stations and connecting villages to larger towns. This can only be achieved by allocation of funds to build 2 or 3 m wide safe routes. Taking a small amount of money away from the £27 billion allocated for motorways would achieve significant differences in the countryside and give confidence to the public to shift to cycling rather than sticking with car transport. Safe cycleways could even encourage the use of the cargo bikes – especially those which are electrically assisted.
- Where there is no physical room for a cycle path the existing legislation should be used to create Quiet Lanes providing a network of low traffic routes away from major A roads. Quiet Lanes connecting with pathways and railway stations with onward sustainable travel to shopping and essential services in larger towns and urban areas could be a win-win, both tackling climate change and bringing sustainable transport to the countryside.

### **Strong community links?**

There is good evidence available of the difference being made by enthusiastic local community groups, but it's sad to see county transport authorities (county

councils) and the shadow transport body for the south-east (TfSE) are distancing themselves from helping these initiatives. The DfT should direct county authorities to roll up their sleeves and get stuck in to help these initiatives.

We commend the work of **Transport Futures East Sussex**<sup>12</sup> and their partners Campaign for Better Transport, Hastings Alliance and Sustainable transport for East Sussex. We also commend the work of **Hastings Greenway**<sup>13</sup> which aims to form a largely traffic - free network of leisure, amenity and utility walking and safe cycling routes, which will also be accessible for people with disabilities.

We also commend the work of the South Downs National Park in their ambition to create long distance multiuser paths such as the **Centurion Way**<sup>14</sup> (between Chichester & Midhurst) and **Rother Way** from Petersfield to Midhurst (proposals not yet publicised).

The DfT should fund a 'ringfenced' project to carry out a pilot so as to speed up and expand some of these initiatives to help connect up rural transport. If they work more money should be diverted from Highways England RIS funds to expand sustainable travel.

In each area the DfT should set up a '**rural taskforce**' of:

- bus and train operators
- cycling/sustainable transport local groups
- tourist destinations companies & organisations (such as the National Trust)
- Employers (Chambers of Commerce)
- District/county councils and other bodies such as national parks
- Highways England

to agree rural community projects so that they may bid for ringfenced funds.

#### **Q7. Do you think there are other trends in innovation we haven't included?**

Yes

#### **Trends in innovation for rural transport: opportunities**

#### **Q8. What trends in innovation?**

The government should fund innovative projects which will influence behavioural change using digital tools to achieve a change in the preferred mode of transport from car to sustainable means. This will help reduce our carbon footprint and achieve a healthier lifestyle:

- Travel to work
- Tourism
- Leisure and exercise
- Shopping and access to services

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<sup>12</sup> See: <https://hastingsalliance.com/>

<sup>13</sup> See: <http://www.hastingsgreenway.org/>

<sup>14</sup> See: <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/pathway-extension-further-improves-access-for-walkers-and-cyclists/>

in rural areas.

**Q9. Do you think the future of transport rural strategy should include that:**

Title	Yes	No	Don't know
new modes of transport and new mobility services must be safe and secure by design principle?	Yes		
the benefits of innovation in mobility must be available to all parts of the UK and all segments of society principle?	Yes		
walking, cycling and active travel must remain the best options for short urban journeys principle?	Yes		
mass transit must remain fundamental to an efficient transport system principle.	Not necessarily in rural areas		?
new mobility services must lead the transition to zero emissions principle?	YES		
mobility innovation must help to reduce congestion through more efficient use of limited road space, for example through sharing rides, increasing occupancy or consolidating freight principle?	Yes		
the marketplace for mobility must be open to stimulate innovation and give the best deal to consumers principle?	Yes		
new mobility services must be designed to operate as part of an integrated transport system combining public, private and multiple modes for transport users principle?	Yes		
data from new mobility services must be shared where appropriate to improve choice and the operation of the transport system principle?	Yes		

**Encouraging transport innovation in rural areas**

**Q10. Are there specific considerations for testing and trialling new technologies in rural areas you think we should consider?**

Yes.

Item/Description	Action
'Quiet Lanes' orders should be applied to protect rights of pedestrians and cyclists to enjoy trips for all journey purposes and increase the viability and attractiveness of those modes for all ages.	Instruct County Councils to survey their counties for implementation on all low traffic routes. This is a very low-cost

Item/Description	Action
	<p>option for providing safe walking and cycling where separate paths cannot be constructed.</p>
<p>Extend Electronic bus displays ['real-time passenger information' (RTPI)] to villages and to rural railway stations.</p>	<p>Extend Electronic bus displays to villages and to rural railway stations.</p> <p>This will help give confidence to the public that a bus is on its way. Waiting at the bus stop when you're not sure whether the timetable displayed is up-to-date is a worrying process. People will be attracted to a service if they have more confidence in it.</p>
<p>Bus/Rail Passes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extend the Seniors bus pass for start of travel in rural area before 9:30 am (in Covid lockdown currently the 9:30am restriction is already lifted)</li> <li>• Make the student bus pass a national single card service for rail and bus. In other words, remove any local area restrictions.</li> <li>• Introduce a national young person's bus pass for those young people who are not students but at work.</li> </ul>	<p>Buses in the countryside are infrequent enough so enabling older people to get into their nearest town to do their shopping on the earliest bus will make it easier for them to return within the same day without concern of missing a later bus</p> <p>Providing student passes that are usable across all forms of public transport without having to buy a different pass for each bus operator or rail operator would be a major boost to help young people get around especially in the countryside.</p> <p>For those young people not at work there is no cheap form of public transport. Young people often migrate to live in the nearest town or city. Creating a national pass for all forms of transport will enable more young people to stay living in the countryside.</p>
<p>Secure Cycle Lockers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some designs even include electricity points for charging up electric bikes</li> </ul>	<p>Knowing that there is a secure place to store your bicycle when you reach your destination will encourage more people to use this now popular form of transport.</p>

Item/Description	Action
	<p>An electric bike helps people cycle further so having a place to securely store it when you reach your destination will encourage even more people to use this sustainable form of transport rather than a car. Less cars means less pollution in the countryside.</p>
<p>Buses only operate to the fringes of urban areas.</p>	<p><b>Cross subsidisation:</b> Encourage the extension of already viable bus services operating to the fringe of urban areas through into rural locations.</p> <p>With more houses being built in the countryside we need to find ways of extending the bus service to those new and existing communities. With a small amount of subsidy to get a service started it may be possible to extend the service to villages which are poorly served at the moment.</p> <p>An existing example of this is the number 28/29 bus between Brighton and Tunbridge Wells. This service is called the Regency route and is heavily used at both ends but it has the advantage of servicing villages on its route which would otherwise not have a bus service.</p>
<p>Promote and incentivise Rover tickets that offer combined travel (without separate tickets) of rail and bus in Tourist areas AONBs and National Parks.</p> <p>Such an intervention will require government support for the ticketing system and subsidies in certain places. It will also require the support of organisations like the National Trust whose main clientele visit their location by car and not public transport.</p>	<p>Introduce and incentivise Rover tickets.</p> <p>If motorists can be attracted to using bus and rail travel in the countryside it will make such services more viable. This in turn will help local communities get a more frequent and reliable bus service.</p>
<p>Review all rural railway stations with these criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• covered cycle storage</li> <li>• integration with local bus service</li> <li>• electronic bus timetable provision</li> <li>• electric car charging and cycle charging points</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• gives confidence to cycle train commuters to transfer to train + may persuade car drivers to switch to train travel</li> </ul>

Item/Description	Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• secure individual cycle storage units</li> <li>• combined ticketing and car parking charges to make car to train more attractive</li> <li>• create a policy to get LTAs to work with bus and rail providers on linking timetables especially in rural areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• helps persuade travellers to use bus &amp; rail rather than car</li> <li>• RTPI (electronic bus times) gives confidence to travellers to use buses</li> <li>• electric charging benefits the local community (shops &amp; café) economically whilst charging is underway.</li> <li>• Assists the change to zero carbon travel</li> <li>• secure individual cycle storage units provides an income stream for manufactures and service providers</li> <li>• combined ticketing makes train/car transfer easy and attractive</li> <li>• better timetabling helps people transfer between different modes of transport</li> </ul>
<p>With the advent of e-bikes, we should focus on connecting up rural areas, especially into larger urban areas, with high quality cycle links. This would shift travel from car to bike (as per <a href="#">Copenhagen cycle superhighways</a>).</p>	<p>There needs to be a new approach to make all roads, particularly rural ones, safer for walking and cycling and where that is problematic, new infrastructure for active travel needs to be built.</p>
<p>National Cycle Network</p>	<p>Prepare special case for submission to the government for investment in a major improvement in the National Cycle Network and the improvement or creation of cycling medium distance infrastructure in-between key locations in the south-east.</p>
<p>Support the expansion of the 'Digital Highway (5G and fibre network) to assist businesses and employees to work remotely.</p> <p>Notes:</p> <p>Remote working &amp; learning continues to be a major part of many employees' daily routine (see notes below). <a href="#">Last July the ONS reported that 46.6% of people in employment did some work at home</a>. This figure is unlikely to reduce until well after COVID-19</p>	<p>It's likely that at least part of an employee's week and part of the business operations of a company will be carried out remotely in the future. Remote working, improved business and communications applications and e-commerce help keep the UK's 1.4 million SMEs in business. Government and TfSE</p>

Item/Description	Action
<p>is over. The question is how many people will remain home workers?                      Sales of new cars in the UK fell by nearly a third in 2020, to the lowest level in almost 30 years (<a href="#">The Times reported earlier in January 2021.</a>)</p>	<p>should seek ways to help these businesses.</p> <p>Intervention: partner with Telecom suppliers to investigate where the gaps are in the provision for high quality networks.</p>

**Q11. In your view what should the role of:**

**Central government be in encouraging innovation in rural areas?**

Provision of the:

1. Research to understand the problem/issues
2. Powers to implement measures
3. Targeted (ringfenced) funding
4. Monitoring capabilities to review results

**Sub-national transport bodies be in encouraging innovation in rural areas?**

Manage/Provide:

1. Developing strategies to investigate & resolve problem/issues
2. Develop policies to implement the strategies
3. Apply powers to implement schemes policies
4. Engage rural expertise
5. Apply funding to targeted services & schemes
6. Manage bids to implement schemes & projects
7. Monitor schemes
8. Co-ordinate resources, consult with and agree plans with organisation\*

\* Including public bodies (district/borough councils, county councils & national parks) & private enterprises (businesses and rural enterprises such as the National Trust) as well as Network Rail, Highways England & bus and freight operators. Work with Active Travel England & Sustrans, consult and with NGO across the region.

**Local authorities be in encouraging innovation in rural areas?**

National Parks, district & borough councils alongside county councils should have powers and responsibilities to plan & execute schemes:

1. Consulting with local communities, rural businesses, tourist organisations and interested parties on detailed schemes
2. Developing detailed schemes to agree funding
3. Engaging expertise
4. Implement schemes
5. Monitor completed projects

**Q12. Do you think government should encourage the private sector to develop innovative new transport services in rural areas?**

Yes

There are opportunities for the private sector to become a significant partner in some sectors of rural transport. Here are some examples:

1. Provision of cycle lockers at railway stations, town and village centres and at tourist locations. This will provide a secure housing for the more expensive electric bikes which have grown in popularity. See these examples: [www.cyclemanagement.co.uk](http://www.cyclemanagement.co.uk) and <https://www.bikeaway.com/>
2. Provision of electric charging points at tourist locations coordinated as part of a secure locker service.
3. Provision of cycle hire at railway stations and tourist venues
4. Possible provision of the dial-a-ride and door-to-door services in rural areas to strengthen and partner with the existing community transport services. This could be seen as an express service for higher income customers
5. Provision of cycle pickup and drop-off services for tourist locations
6. Provision of 5G digital hubs in villages and rural business centres in advance of a general rollout
7. Engage with tourist organisations for joint bus and mobility projects in the countryside.
8. Bring Heritage Railways<sup>15</sup> into the fold to get more passengers using Active Travel and bus services to reach their locations.

**Encouraging transport innovation in rural areas: government**

**Q13. How do you think government should encourage the private sector?**

See above list.

Encourage participation via national, regional and local forums. The national and local chambers of commerce could take more responsibility as they do in other parts of Europe. LEPs have not been a success but participation jointly with district councils could be an opportunity for greater public & private partnership to undertake successful projects.

Set up a '**rural taskforce**' for each county:

- bus and train operators

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<sup>15</sup> These include:

Bluebell Railway, Sheffield Park, Sussex

Kent & East Sussex Steam Railway, Tenterden, Kent

Mid Hants Railway, The Watercress Line, New Alresford, Hampshire

Spa Valley Railway, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent

Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway

- cycling/sustainable transport local groups
- tourist destinations companies & organisations (such as the National Trust)
- employers (Chambers of Commerce)
- district/county councils and other bodies such as national parks
- Highways England
- business and business organisation

to agree rural community projects so that they may bid for ringfenced funds.

Please note many bus services are already in the private sector such as Compass Travel (<https://www.compass-travel.co.uk/>). These bus companies have taken a battering over the last 10 years and they need support to grow services again.

Final comments

**Q14. Any other comments?**

Yes:

*Let us bring back bus services to local villages – take a small slice of the £27 billion Highways England budget to restore the decline over the last 10 years!*

Thank you

See

Appendix A - The House of Lords report 'Time for a strategy for the rural economy'

Appendix B - 'Unlocking the digital potential of rural areas across the UK' by Rural England CIC

on the following pages.....

## Appendix A

We recommend the Government supports the proposals in this document:

[Time for a strategy for the rural economy](#)

published 27 April 2019 HOUSE OF LORDS Select Committee on the Rural Economy<sup>16</sup>

Highlights:

- The Government must give more support to local authorities in devising and delivering place-based approaches to rural development, and funding allocations should reflect this.
- Affordable housing rollout of high-speed digital 5G network.
- In 2015/16 people living in the most rural areas travelled almost twice as far per year as those living in urban areas.
- The longer distances to travel and inadequate public transport often hamper attendance at full or part-time training courses at Colleges. LEPs and local authorities should work together to explore public transport solutions and to reinvigorate schemes such as “Wheels to Work and Training” where mopeds (or scooters) are available to students for loan.
- Inadequate public transport can deter people from living and working in a rural area, can make accessing markets or training courses difficult, and can prevent potential customers accessing rural suppliers. It is time to consider a new approach, built on existing examples of good practice. Currently there are several “pots” of money in a range of Government departments. Government should consider consolidating all these funding streams into a single public transport support “pot”. This would enable local authorities to make a single bid and enable better planning for future service provision.
- Similarly, there could be better co-ordination of existing services such as school buses, community transport and minibus patient collection schemes, and a consolidated support fund should draw upon the successful example of “Total Transport” pilots which sought to maximise benefits from existing transport resources including community transport. Government should also support targeted investment in rural road maintenance.
- Para 200. Community participation in the rural economy can take many forms and is highly dependent on place. It can include involvement in initiatives such as local fibre connectivity or community transport; take-up of community rights and community ownership; involvement with service delivery or amenity management; other voluntary activity; and support or participation in the work of parish and town councils.

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<sup>16</sup> See: [Time for a strategy for the rural economy](#)

- Para 88. Bus routes remain an essential service for people needing to access education and training.
- Para 112. Public spending cuts have had a significant impact on rural transport provision and in particular rural bus use. In addition, complex funding streams and poorly integrated services mean that rural economies are often held back by transport connections that are poorer than they need to be.
  
- Para 113. Government should undertake a full review of funding streams to rural public transport as part of a new rural strategy. The aspiration should be to develop a “single transport investment pot” that could be used to better support rural transport using a place-based approach, in collaboration with local authorities and other public bodies.
  
- Para 115. The programme should also seek to explore the potential of community transport as a means of supporting and supplementing existing routes. In this context, Government should reconsider proposals to change guidance on eligibility of Section 19 and 22 permits issued to not-for-profit community transport providers. The introduction of a short-distance exemption is welcome, but Government must ensure that new guidance on the non-commercial exemption does not threaten the viability of community transport operators.

## Appendix B

We recommend the Government supports the proposals in this document:

[Unlocking the digital potential of rural areas across the UK](#) by **Rural England CIC**<sup>17</sup> & **Scotland's Rural College** published in March 2018<sup>18</sup>.

Of particular interest for this project is that, even when such concerns about network connectivity are put aside, more than half (52%) the rural businesses surveyed identified some other constraint which has reduced their ability to go digital. For smaller businesses this concern most often relates to accessing external or outsourced digital support. For larger businesses it most often refers to their ability to recruit staff with appropriate digital skills. If the digital potential of the UK's rural economy – estimated by this research to be at least £15 billion in turnover and £12 billion in GVA – is to be unlocked, these constraints will need to be addressed or at least ameliorated. This would provide a significant productivity boost to the UK economy.

This project has found that many rural-based businesses place a high value on one or more of the following:

- Work-life balance, including not having to commute to urban centres on busy roads;
- Rural environment, including working in a beautiful, safer and more tranquil setting;
- Sense of community, including working within a friendly, small community;
- Cost of premises, including lower overheads which assists competitiveness; and valued staff, not least having committed and sometimes resourceful employees.

The recommendations made fall under five themes:

- Simpler signposting to digital support and information
- Better access to support, including digital enterprise hubs
- Smarter digital training and skills development
- Faster and more reliable rural digital connectivity
- Stronger rural targeting by existing policies and strategies

Digital enterprise hubs are of particular not in this report.

Rural economy support programmes: the current LEADER and EAFRD rural support programmes will cease after the UK leaves the European Union, as will wider Structural Fund programmes which some rural areas benefit from.

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<sup>17</sup> Independent Research, Networking and Information Exchange across Rural England

<sup>18</sup> See: <https://ruralengland.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Unlocking-digital-potential-website-version-final.pdf>

Part of the Government's proposed Shared Prosperity Fund (to replace EU funding streams) should be used for a dedicated rural programme capable of supporting the digital needs of rural based businesses. but sadly we are still waiting for the promised £220 million to be announced. See: [Still waiting for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund | Equally Ours](#)

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