

SAFEGUARDING

RESOLVING THE RURAL PROBLEM

The Problem

Energy and Water Companies depend on people recognising they are vulnerable.

This allows companies to give them special consideration and attention.

Vulnerability can come and go with illness and other situations.

Rural areas are more dispersed and have a high percentage of older residents. Encouraging people to become involved and sign up for Priority Services Registration is much more difficult.

Demographic projections anticipate by 2039 one in 3 of people living in a rural area will be over 65 and a third of those people will be over 80.

We need an initiative seeking to deal with this problem.

Who are we?

We are the **Rural Services Network** working with the research based Community Interest Company (CIC) Rural England.

We work with:

- c150 Rural Local Authorities in the Local Government Association
- 80 other non local authority service deliverers, grouped as the Rural Services Partnership Ltd, a not for profit Company Limited by Guarantee.

And we:

- specialise in representation, best practice identification and networking. www.rsnonline.org.uk
- provide a free service to parish councils, community councils, and chambers of commerce in member areas. Our weekly information reaches some 45,000 people across the rural areas of England. Of those some 9,000 parish councils receive our material.
- provide services to, and work with, the **National Rural Crime Network** www.nrcn.net; **Rural Housing Alliance** www.ruralhousingalliance.net; **Rural Services All Party Parliamentary Group** www.ruralfairshare.org

Rural England CIC has 7 Directors wishing to see research continuing on rural issues in England and some 40 Stakeholder Organisations with a clear rural interest plus individuals who were previously involved with the Commission for Rural Communities www.ruralengland.org

Who should be involved?

All Power Distributors, Power Providers and Water Companies. Ofgem and Ofcom and organisations with a special interest in these areas.

What we want to do

- Establish an Essential Services Group to meet 3 times a year over a 5 year period
- Undertake measures to ensure people in rural areas recognise their vulnerability and register for assistance.
- Establish a parliamentary rural vulnerability day and extensive registers of rural points of contact for companies and organisations to work with.

There will be two levels of participation

SILVER - for companies to be involved once a year (£500 p.a. sub)

GOLD - to drive the programme forward (additional £1500 p.a.). We hope most major companies will be able to be involved at this level.

Our Hoped for Outcomes

- Parliamentary consideration of the growing vulnerability problem in rural areas
- The number of people signing the Priority Services Register in rural areas at least doubling in number over the five years
- Defined and linked locality networks looking at vulnerability problems of rural residents throughout all the rural areas of England
- A report on a rural vulnerability issue in rural England being undertaken by the Rural England CIC once a year

Impact Measuring

- Analysis of the Priority Services Register
- Analysis of take up rates of the of Fuel Poor Discounts, Energy Saving Schemes and Home Heating Support

These areas have a growing problem which may often be entwined with a Fuel Poverty situation. We think special analysis of the rural situation alongside special rural initiatives lie at the heart of dealing with the situation.

The Full Report going to the Rural England Stakeholders can be found on the Rural England Website www.ruralengland.org