SCOPING THE STATE OF RURAL SERVICES 2021 REPORT

Short paper for the Rural England Stakeholder Group

1. Work on the next State of Rural Services report is due to commence at the start of the 2021 calendar year, with the final report being ready for publication on the annual Rural Vulnerability Day in early 2022. Although this is still some way off it would be useful to hear any initial views from the Stakeholder Group about the scope of the report.

2. Previous reports were produced by Rural England in 2016 and 2018 (and the Rural Services Network produced some similar reports prior to that). The earlier Rural England reports covered eight or nine service topics, deliberately spanning public, private and civil society sector provision. They sought to present the most recent statistics about provision in rural areas and/or rural community access to services. They also sought to identify any obvious trends over time. The topics covered were as shown in the table below.

2016 report topics:	2018 report topics:
Local buses and community transport	Local buses and community transport
Welfare services	Broadband and mobile connectivity
Access to cash	Public library services
Further education	Hospitals
The retail sector	Public health services
Mental health services	Young people's services
Older people's services	Shops and online shopping
Public health services	Personal advice services
Community assets	

3. These two previous reports can be viewed from the following links:
    2016 report https://ruralengland.org/the-state-of-rural-services-2016-report/
    2018 report https://ruralengland.org/state-of-rural-services-report-2018/

4. The format could be altered this time, though it appears to have worked quite well in the past, providing evidence about the specific service topics and some overarching findings about rural service provision. Earlier reports have achieved good press coverage. Statistics in them have been mined or re-used by some partner organisations for purposes, such as policy consultation responses, engagement with the press and lobbying documents, though it is hard to judge how widely that happens.

5. There may be value in revisiting (say) eight topics covered in one or other of the earlier reports, to track trends and update the findings. Afterall, these topics were selected before because they were felt to be important for rural communities and businesses. However, there could be other service topics which the Stakeholder Group would like to see explored instead and a longer list of services is therefore appended.

6. There may be value in picking topics which appear to be high profile or particularly pertinent to current circumstances, such as the economic recovery that will be needed following the Covid-19 restrictions and consequent economic recession. However, it should be recognised that this report is not due for publication until early 2022 and that any statistics it can draw

upon are bound to be derived from data collected or surveys run a year or two previously. That said, there may be some softer evidence available about Covid-19 impacts.

7. Topics could also be chosen to reflect likely interest from and use by potential users of the report. To put it another way, starting from the end point, "What is the report for"? Those users could include the media, rural interest groups, national and local politicians, and organisations which represent service sectors.

8. At this stage plans for the 2021 State of Rural Services report are very undeveloped, so all ideas or comments from the Stakeholder Group are welcome, whether about its scope, its style or its structure.

9. We envisage coming back to the Stakeholder Group later in 2020 (by email) with an outline project plan which names the proposed service topics.

BW, July 2020

Long list of service types (not exhaustive)

Public and community transport
Roads and roadside maintenance
Affordable housing (and/or homelessness support)
Pre-schools and nurseries
Primary and secondary schools

Further education and training
Health care services (GPs, hospitals, pharmacies, etc)
Mental health services
Public health services
Older people's services (homecare, residential, day care)

Facilities/services for young people
Broadband and mobile connectivity
Gas, electricity, water and sewerage
Waste collection and recycling
Shops and retail (including home delivery)

Pubs, bars, cafes and restaurants
Post Offices
Postal services (collection and delivery)
Public libraries
Cultural and heritage services

Policing and community safety
Emergency services (fire/rescue, ambulance and police)
Flood and coastal defences
Welfare services for unemployed and needy
Economic development/business support services

Sports and leisure facilities (perhaps including allotments)
Community halls and buildings
Lighting, seating and other street furniture
Local environmental services (parks, play areas, footpaths, street cleaning, etc)