

STATE OF RURAL SERVICES 2021

EVIDENTIAL REPORTS AND DOCUMENTS FROM OTHER ORGANISATIONS RELEVANT TO THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 AND RESTRICTIONS ON RURAL SERVICE PROVISION

RE Stakeholder Group reports

The following reports were mentioned at the Rural England Stakeholder Group meeting in November 2020 and/or have been sent through since:

Plunkett Foundation – Better Business reports on community shops and community pubs, published late October 2020, containing information from an additional 2020 survey and focus groups.

<https://plunkett.co.uk/community-owned-pubs-and-shops-show-resilience-in-the-face-of-covid-19/>

Federation of Small Businesses – looked at digital services from a business perspective. This report was published in 2019, so is pre-Covid and instead provides context.

<https://www.fsb.org.uk/resources-page/one-in-three-closed-small-firms-fear-they-ll-never-reopen-amid-widespread-redundancy-plans.html>

<file:///C:/Users/brian/Downloads/FSB-Voice-of-Small-Business-Index-Quarter-2-2020.pdf>

National Federation of Young Farmers – relevant information was gathered within the survey of young farmers clubs in summer 2020. An interim report was published in June and a final report in October 2020. Hard copies have been saved on file.

Defra – a project starting in late 2020 seeks to understand lived rural experiences. It has been commissioned from CCRI/Gloucestershire University and Newcastle University. Community resilience is likely to be a theme. Results should be available by summer 2020.

ACRE – the latest decennial survey of Village Halls was conducted pre-Covid and was published in October 2020. The plan is now to refresh this information with a shorter follow-up survey.

<https://acre.org.uk/cms/resources/comm-guides/village-hall-survey-report-2020-final-digital-edition.pdf>

ACRE – have collated information from across the ACRE Network about the impact of Covid, which includes information about local rural services. Use of this information will presumably need agreement with ACRE.

Rural Services Network – has similarly gathered intelligence from groups within its membership about the impact of Covid on rural communities and services. Again, use of this information will presumably need agreement with the RSN.

CLA – report on the number of young city dwellers now wishing to move to live in a rural area (2020):

https://www.farminguk.com/news/1-in-2-young-people-want-to-swap-city-for-countryside_56817.html

It would be useful to know if there are other relevant reports or evidence sources from Rural England stakeholders.

Other reports

A variety of other relevant reports and evidence sources, coming from beyond the Stakeholder Group, have been logged below. This is a working list and will be added to. It would, again, be useful to know of others that could be added on this topic.

Carnegie Trust report (not rural-specific) on pandemic experiences, including community responses (2020):

<https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/covid-19-and-communities-listening-project-a-shared-response/>

Local Data Company and PWC report on the rising trend in shop closures (2020):

<https://www.localdatacompany.com/blog/store-closures-twice-the-rate-of-last-year>

Rural Shops Report 2020 by the Association of Convenience Stores (2020). A 2021 report in this series may soon be published:

<https://www.acs.org.uk/research/rural-shop-report-2020>

Post Office Limited report on the value of post offices (2020):

<https://postofficeimpact.co.uk/>

Citizens Advice (2020) twitter comment on Post Offices with a chart:

But right now they're struggling: temporary closures have doubled since 2013, with 2 in 3 closed for more than a year. And 1 in 7 POs is now an outreach branch, open just a couple of hours a week...



Citizens Advice – see this excerpt taken from their Post Office News (December 2020):

Post Office to receive £227m subsidy and investment next year

The government has announced a total of £227m to secure the future of the post office network. The November Spending Review announcement covers a continuation of the network subsidy of £50m for 2021/22 and an additional £177m capital investment. The news follows calls from Citizens Advice and other organisations for government investment to fix the problems in the network and allow post offices to deliver greater social value.

The Post Office subsidy which is designed to cover the operating costs of the network has slowly reduced over time, as government policy has required the Post Office to increase revenue from retail and reduce reliance on state funding. Currently, around 5,000 post offices rely on this funding to stay open. This includes around 2,500 serving communities that would otherwise be without a shop.

Post Office Ltd (POL) says the capital investment will be used to invest and improve products and services available to customers such as Drop & Go and the introduction of automated cash deposits at branches. The investment will also go towards developing support services for postmasters.

Citizens Advice has consistently highlighted the important role post offices play in maintaining local economies and ensuring people can access essential services. With the right funding, post offices could provide even more social value, such as an Address & Collect service to help people access their post. But the network is under pressure - temporary post office closures have doubled since 2013, and 1 in 7 post offices is now an outreach branch. We're calling on the government to work with Post Office Ltd to ensure the subsidy is sufficient and is spent where it is needed.

University of Bristol – Where to Withdraw? Mapping Access to Cash Across the UK (2020)

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/geography/pfrc/Where%20to%20withdraw%20-%20mapping%20access%20to%20cash%20across%20the%20UK.pdf>

Which – Bank branch closures: is your local bank closing? Analysis by Which (2020)

<https://www.which.co.uk/money/banking/switching-your-bank/bank-branch-closures-is-your-local-bank-closing-a28n44c8z0h5>

Ofcom – Connected Nations 2020 report for England on broadband and mobile connectivity (2020)

https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0023/209444/connected-nations-2020-england.pdf

Communications Consumer Panel – report on rural connectivity (2020):

<https://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/downloads/summary-of-the-panels-national-hubs---rural-connectivity.pdf>

Healthwatch England – Your Doctor Will Zoom You Now (2020) – about patient experiences:

<https://www.nationalvoices.org.uk/publications/our-publications/dr-will-zoom-you-now-getting-most-out-virtual-health-and-care>

Whistle – story about online shopping growth in the run-up to Xmas (2020):

https://postandparcel.info/128546/news/e-commerce/46-of-online-christmas-shoppers-will-increase-their-online-festive-shopping-this-year/?utm_source=Triangle+Management+Services&utm_campaign=8fd7269a11-P%26P_Daily&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_21ab6af013-8fd7269a11-76844201

Ofcom – page/report containing recent data about postal and parcel trends (2020):

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/about-ofcom/latest/features-and-news/delivering-postal-users-needs-in-a-digital-age>

County Councils Network – report on Reversing the Decline of County Buses (2020):

<https://www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk/government-warned-not-to-overlook-county-areas-in-bus-strategy-as-new-report-lays-bare-the-scale-of-decline-in-rural-public-transport/>

BW, 21/12/20