

House of Lords Rural Economy Committee Report: *Time for a Strategy for the Rural Economy* **Debate on 8 October 2019**

Summary

On 8 October 2019 Lord Foster of Bath (Liberal Democrat) is due to move that “this House takes note of the Report from the Select Committee on the Rural Economy *Time for a strategy for the rural economy*”. The report was published in April 2019, and the Government responded in July 2019.

In their report, the House of Lords Rural Economy Committee argued that “successive governments have underrated the contribution rural economies can make to the nation’s prosperity and wellbeing”. In addition, the committee stated that governments have “applied policies which were largely devised for urban and suburban economies, and which are often inappropriate for rural England”. The committee said that to enable the rural economy to fulfil its potential the Government should:

- develop a rural strategy;
- ensure improved “rural-proofing” is applied to all policies; and
- institute a “place-based approach” which takes into account the diversity of the countryside.

The committee also investigated how the Government could address some of the challenges facing rural areas, including:

- poor digital connectivity;
- housing, planning and rural working spaces;
- access to skills and rural business support; and
- delivering essential services at a local level.

In its response to the report, the Government agreed with the committee’s assertion that rural-proofing is important. However, the Government disagreed that developing a rural strategy would be beneficial, arguing that to do so would “risk rural areas being placed in a silo”. In response to the committee’s argument that all policies should be instituted using a “place-based approach”, the Government emphasised the importance of the existing Local Industrial Strategy framework.

Ofcom, the UK’s communications regulator, also responded to the report. The regulator said that it shared the committee’s concern that people in rural areas often could not access reliable mobile and broadband services, and set out its work to improve rural connectivity.

Key Information

- House of Lords Rural Economy Committee, [Time for a Strategy for the Rural Economy](#), HL Paper 330 of session 2017–19, pp 5–19 and 159–75; [Government Response](#), 3 July 2019; and [Ofcom Response](#), 1 August 2019

Extracts from the report by the House of Lords Rural Economy Committee and responses from the Government and Ofcom.

- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, [Rural Economic Activity](#), 29 November 2018

Government statistics regarding rural economic activity and employment.

- Rural Enterprise UK, [Rural Economies and the UK Industrial Strategy](#), July 2018; and [What's Holding Rural Businesses Back?](#), July 2017

Papers by rural enterprise-focused research initiative led by Newcastle University.

- Nuffield Trust, [Rural Health Care: A Rapid Review of the Impact of Rurality on the Costs of Delivering Health Care](#), 20 January 2019, pp 2–7

Extract from a research paper examining the additional costs of providing health services in rural areas and the current system for adjusting healthcare funding to take these additional costs into account.

- Institute for Public Policy Research, [A New Rural Settlement: Fixing the Affordable Housing Crisis in Rural England](#), June 2018

Summary of a think tank-authored paper proposing methods of increasing rural housing supply in order to bring down house prices.

Parliamentary Debate, Statements and Questions

- House of Lords, '[Written Question: Mobile Phones: Rural Areas](#)', 2 August 2019, HL17524
- House of Commons, '[Written Question: Post Offices: Rural Areas](#)', 31 July 2019, 281127
- House of Commons, '[Written Question: Rural Areas: Public Transport](#)', 23 July 2019, 277286
- House of Commons, '[Written Question: Broadband: Rural Areas](#)', 11 July 2019, 274451
- [Debate on 'Agriculture, Fisheries and the Rural Environment'](#), HL Hansard, 2 November 2017, cols 1440–85

Further Reading

- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, [Health and Harmony: The Future for Food, Farming and the Environment in a Green Brexit](#), 14 September 2018

- Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, '[Rural Gigabit Connectivity Programme—Key Information](#)', 29 May 2019
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, '[Statistical Digest of Rural England](#)', 18 July 2019
- Campaign to Protect Rural England, '[CPRE's Response to the Affordable Housing Commission Call for Evidence](#)', April 2019
- House of Lords Library, '[Agriculture, Fisheries and the Rural Economy](#)', 30 October 2017
- Jeremy Philipson et al, '[Shining a Spotlight on Small Rural Businesses: How Does Their Performance Compare with Urban?](#)', *Journal of Rural Studies*, May 2019, vol 68, pp 230–9

A full list of Lords Library briefings is available on the research briefings page on the internet. The Library publishes briefings for all major items of business debated in the House of Lords. The Library also publishes briefings on the House of Lords itself and other subjects that may be of interest to Members. Library briefings are compiled for the benefit of Members of the House of Lords and their personal staff, to provide impartial, authoritative, politically balanced briefing on subjects likely to be of interest to Members of the Lords. Authors are available to discuss the contents of the briefings with the Members and their staff but cannot advise members of the general public.

Any comments on Library briefings should be sent to the Head of Research Services, House of Lords Library, London SW1A 0PW or emailed to purvism@parliament.uk.