



# HOUSE OF LORDS

## SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE RURAL ECONOMY

### CALL FOR EVIDENCE

#### INTRODUCTION

The House of Lords Select Committee on the Rural Economy was appointed by the House on 17 May 2018. The remit of the Committee is “to consider the rural economy, and to make recommendations”.

The rural economy is a fascinating subject and one that incorporates a wide range of important topical issues. The House of Lords Select Committee on the Rural Economy recently began its inquiry and hopes to gather as much evidence as possible between now and the new year. The Committee is required to agree its report by the end of March 2019.

The Committee has already held a number of public hearings to get an overview of the subject matter and to learn about some of the key themes relating to the rural economy. It is now issuing this Call for Evidence to explore some of these issues in further depth.

A list of questions is set out below, covering subjects the Committee particularly wants to learn more about. The Committee is keen to hear from as many individuals and organisations as possible with interest and expertise in the rural economy. It hopes to learn more about successes and failures, opportunities and barriers, and prospects for the future. The Committee is also particularly keen to learn of interesting new ideas on how the rural economy – or specific aspects of it – can function better.

The issues the Committee is likely to cover in its inquiry include (but may not be limited to):

- Recent changes and developments in the rural economy
- Transport connections
- Digital infrastructure
- Provision of essential services including healthcare and education
- Support for local amenities such as shops and pubs
- Rural housing and planning policy
- Rural businesses, business investment and new rural industries
- Employment and skills
- Demographic challenges
- Rural deprivation and isolation
- National and local government policy, and devolution

The Committee hopes that the report it produces will have a wide-ranging impact on policymakers, practitioners and the public, celebrating successes where they have occurred and challenging people, organisations and Government to do better where necessary. With these objectives in mind, the Committee requests written evidence.

The questions below cover a broad range of subjects. Respondents who are able to answer all of the questions are welcome to do so; however, **there is no obligation to answer every question** and the Committee welcomes all evidence that addresses any of the subjects raised, even if you only feel able to respond to one of the questions on the list below. The Committee encourages respondents to interpret the questions broadly and to provide as much information as possible that may be of use to its inquiry.

**This is a public call for written evidence to be submitted to the Committee. The deadline is 4pm on Monday 10 September 2018.**

## **QUESTIONS**

### **General issues**

1. What do you understand by the “rural economy”? How has it changed over recent years, and what has been the impact of these changes?
2. Could you give examples of notable success stories and good practice in the rural economy? How might rural successes be replicated and better promoted?
3. How do you see the future of the rural economy? Where is the greatest potential for growth, and what might be the impact of technological and other changes?

### **Infrastructure and services**

4. How can access to transport be improved in rural areas?
5. What barriers to growth are created by poor digital connectivity? How can connectivity be improved across the board?
6. What can be done to improve and maintain provision for essential services such as healthcare, education and banking in rural areas?
7. What can be done to support local shops, community pubs and other rural amenities at risk of closure?

### **Business, employment, skills and demography**

8. How can rural businesses be helped to thrive, and how can new industries and investment be supported? How might labour and skills shortages be overcome?

9. How can deprivation and inequality in rural areas be tackled?
10. How can more young people be encouraged to stay in or return to rural areas and contribute to their communities?
11. What can be done to address the challenges associated with an ageing rural population, such as social isolation and social care provision? What opportunities are there for the older retired population to help support the rural economy?

### **Rural housing and planning**

12. How can the affordability of rural housing be improved? What are the other challenges associated with rural housing and how can these be addressed?
13. How have recent planning policy reforms affected rural housing and the wider rural economy? What changes, if any, are needed to planning rules?

### **Government policy, devolution and local government**

14. Do the Government and other public bodies pay sufficient attention to the rural economy and if not, why not? What might be done to ensure that Government and other public bodies hear and act on rural voices?
15. What is being done in local government to support rural economies? How effectively do other public bodies such as Local Enterprise Partnerships operate in rural areas, and how might coordination between bodies be improved?

## **Guidance for making submissions**

Written evidence should be submitted online using the submission form available at <https://www.parliament.uk/rural-economy-committee-submission-form>.

If you do not have access to a computer you may submit a paper copy to:

Clerk to the Select Committee on the Rural Economy,  
Committee Office,  
House of Lords,  
London SW1A 0PW.

### **The deadline for written evidence is 4pm on 10 September 2018.**

Short, concise submissions, of no more than six pages, are preferred. A longer submission should include a one-page summary. Paragraphs should be numbered. Submissions should be dated, with a note of the author's name, and of whether the author is acting on an individual or corporate basis. All submissions made through the online submission form will be acknowledged automatically by email.

Personal contact details supplied to the Committee will be removed from submissions before publication but will be retained by the Committee staff for specific purposes relating to the Committee's work, such as seeking additional information.

Submissions become the property of the Committee which will decide whether to accept them as evidence. Evidence may be published by the Committee at any stage. It will normally appear on the Committee's website and will be deposited in the Parliamentary Archives. Once you have received acknowledgement that your submission has been accepted as evidence, you may publicise or publish it yourself, but in doing so you must indicate that it was prepared for the Committee. If you publish your evidence separately, you should be aware that you will be legally responsible for its content.

You should be careful not to comment on individual cases currently before a court of law, or matters in respect of which court proceedings are imminent. If you anticipate such issues arising, you should discuss with the Clerk of the Committee how this might affect your submission.

Certain individuals and organisations may be invited to appear in person before the Committee to give oral evidence. Oral evidence is usually given in public at Westminster and broadcast online. Persons invited to give oral evidence will be notified separately of the procedure to be followed and the topics likely to be discussed.

Substantive communications to the Committee about the inquiry should be addressed through the Clerk, whether or not they are intended to constitute formal evidence to the Committee.

This is a public call for evidence. Please bring it to the attention of other groups and individuals who may not have received a copy direct.

You can follow the progress of the inquiry at <https://www.parliament.uk/rural-economy-committee>