



Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

12th February 2021

Re: The Role of Planning in the Future of Rural Transport

Dear Secretary of State,

We are writing to you as concerned leaders of rural local authorities, under the auspices of the Countryside Climate Network, a cross-party leadership sub-group part of the UK100 network which represents over 40% of the UK's land area.

We are taking this opportunity to share first hand the planning-related challenges we face in decarbonising our transport emissions in the hope that you will incorporate a much wider and deeper vision in shaping and realising the future of rural transport. We are also writing to Grant Shapps MP and Kwasi Kwarteng MP in parallel, because for too long the solutions to tackling climate change have been considered in siloes and without clear determination of how governmental departments can and should work together to deliver comprehensive solutions, we will fail to tackle the climate emergency.

Following collective conversations in collaboration with industry representatives, we are keen to understand how you are working alongside your colleagues at DfT to ensure these fundamental planning-related considerations are factored adequately into the vision for the Future of Rural Transport.

Whatever planning policy becomes in the coming months and years, it will need to take into account rural transport needs. There is a chance that the reforms will remove the legal requirement for our local plans and therefore we lose one of our biggest tools to shape our communities. What the future looks like for rural communities and rural transport infrastructure in particular needs more consideration in this respect.

In an unprecedented 12 months, we have learned that home working on a mass scale reduces public transport demand, but in the long term should this alter what houses look like,

how they operate and how we plan for them? There is a huge ambition for house building, and it is crucial the Government has in mind rural transport needs in these plans. Planning for accessibility is still focused towards larger urban areas, but it is crucially important that accessibility planning is understood and implemented in our rural contexts.

If scarcity of parking provision becomes the norm for new developments, MHCLG needs to think about the alternatives that will facilitate behaviour change away from car ownership. In much the same way that the EV charging infrastructure is being considered, other modes and their requirements also need to be accommodated - bike storage and parking - for both passenger and cargo bikes, for example. Those without access to a car in rural communities already face social isolation, these inequalities need to be addressed and it is fundamentally important that the Government provide support to ensure that further disparities are not inadvertently introduced into the system by a bad planning policy and a lack of a whole systems approach.

Our world, and our rural communities are changing, the government needs to understand these changes so that interventions can be made in this dynamic context. Rural regeneration must be at the heart of any government effort to support local authorities to improve future transport. All solutions need to factor in economic, social and environmental considerations - and contribute towards achieving rapid decarbonisation.

UK100's Resilient Recovery Declaration highlighted the need to speed up the transition to low and zero emission travel and enable the UK to be a global leader in developing zero emission vehicles including buses and freight. It underlined that this should include a commitment to providing seamless access to electric vehicle charging infrastructure across the UK. Further support should be provided to citizens and businesses to switch from polluting vehicles to greener ones while also providing long-term investment in public transport networks and in creating built environments that prioritise walking and cycling.

We are keen to engage with you and your officials, especially in a cross-departmental way, to help shape the development of solutions that will bring benefits to rural areas. Collaboration with us will help build public consent and support in communities currently heavily dependent on fossil fuel based transport.

We look forward to your reply and establishing an ongoing relationship that can help the country achieve Net Zero in line with legislation and the science.

Yours sincerely



Cllr. Steve Count, Leader,
Cambridgeshire County Council



Polly Billington, Director, UK100
Vice-Chair, Countryside Climate Network

Chair. Countryside Climate Network
Co-Chair, UK100

On behalf of the following CCN members:

- Adur District Council
- Cambridgeshire County Council
- Canterbury City Council
- Central Bedfordshire Council
- Cheshire East Council
- Cornwall Council
- Cotswold District Council
- Derbyshire County Council
- Durham County Council
- Essex County Council
- Gloucestershire County Council
- Herefordshire Council
- Lancaster City Council
- Leicestershire County Council
- North Somerset District Council
- North Yorkshire County Council
- Shropshire Council
- South Gloucestershire Council
- South Lakeland District Council
- Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
- Suffolk County Council
- Wiltshire Council
- Worthing Borough Council
- Wychavon District Council

Cc:

Rt. Hon. Kwasi Kwarteng MP

Rt Hon. Grant Shapps MP