



Rural Economy & Regeneration

The National Rural Conference

September

2025

Government Priority – Grow the Economy



Kickstarting Economic Growth

- Milestone: Raising living standards in every part of the United Kingdom
- Milestone: Rebuilding Britain

“Growth is the defining mission of my Government.

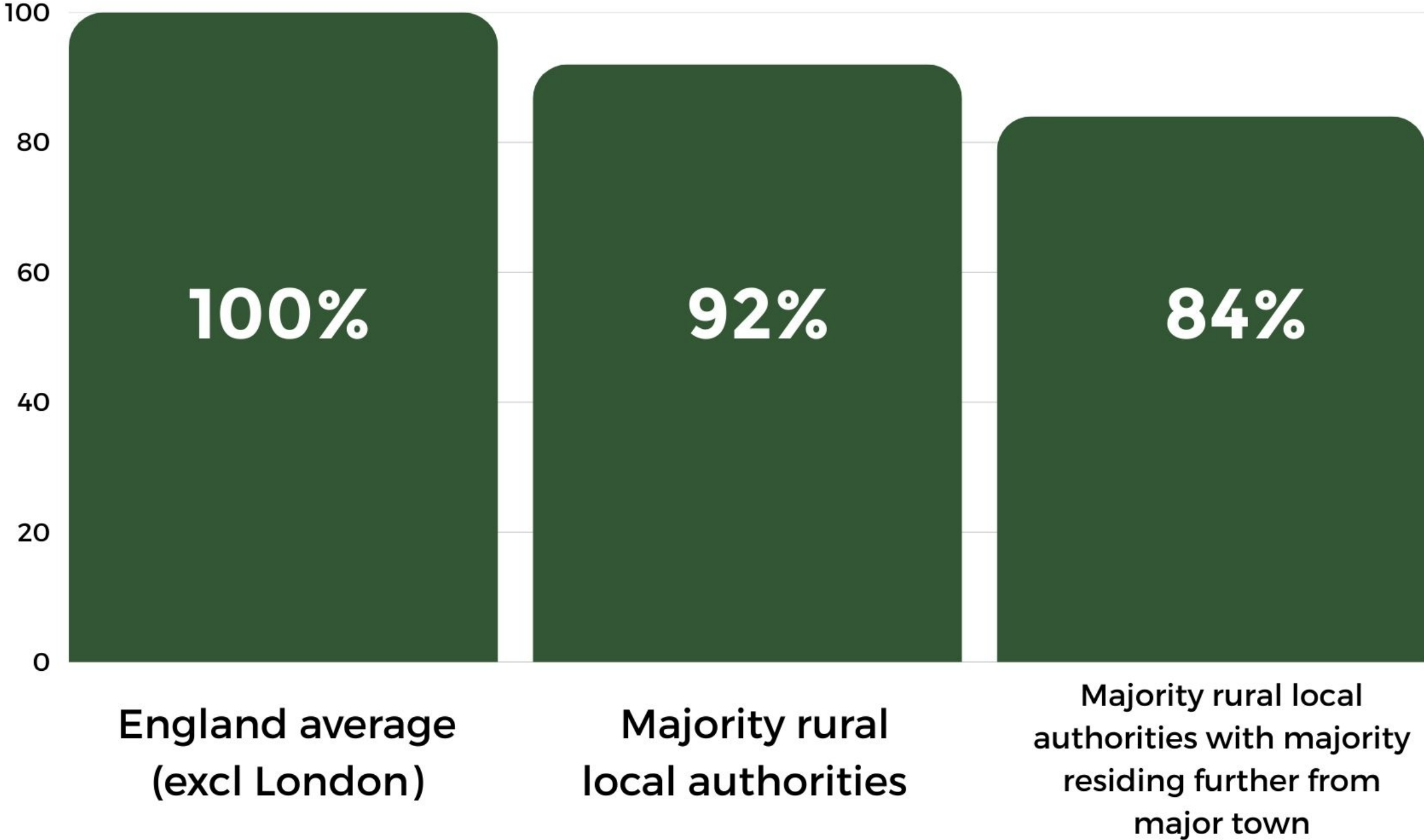
It’s the only way to deliver our plan for change and put more money in your pocket.”

Kier Starmer Prime Minister, Jan 2025

The Rural Economy is in Crisis



Rural Productivity is lower than the England Average

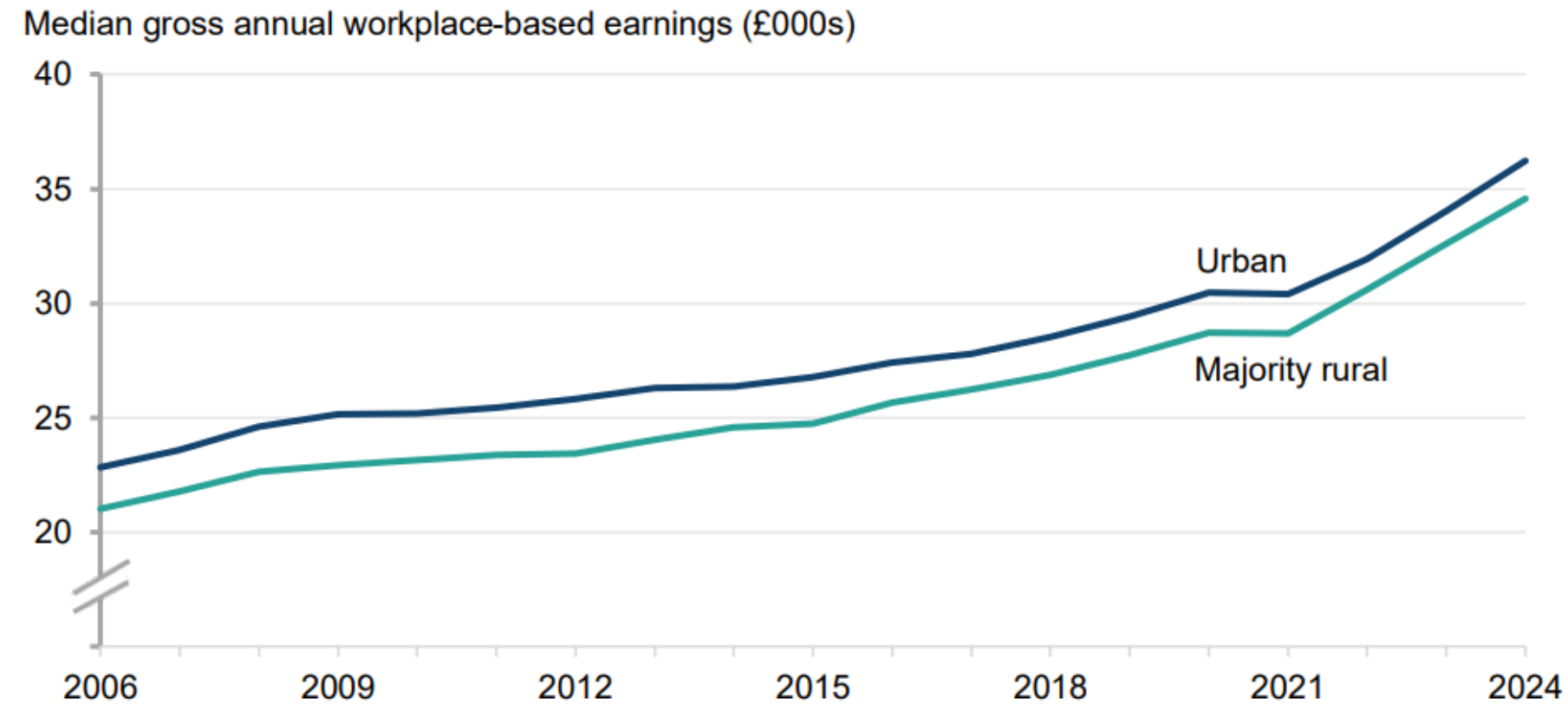


The Rural Problem



Figure B-1: Line chart showing median workplace-based earnings for majority rural and urban local authorities, as defined within the 2021 Rural-Urban Classification, in England, current prices (not adjusted for inflation), 2006 to 2024

“Urban” excludes London. Annual gross earnings are presented in thousands.



Wages earned in the rural economy are lower than in urban areas



Job Rich – Career Poor: Consistently higher employment rates than urban since 2007, but lower wages

Services Are Disappearing



40% reduction in rural post offices since 2010, affecting banking and government services



85% of rural branches closed since 2000



Only 54% of rural areas have gigabit broadband vs 82% urban

Rural communities lack access to essential government, financial and digital services which can impact the ability of the rural economy to grow

Economy doesn't exist in isolation





Rural Potential



The report Reigniting Rural Futures shows that with the right policy framework, the rural economy could increase productivity significantly, leading to an additional £9 billion to £19 billion per year in tax revenues.



This growth would not only support rural communities but also have far-reaching benefits for the national economy, helping to fund essential public services and drive broader economic initiatives.

The Treasury stands to gain substantially from an invigorated rural economy, making this an opportunity too significant to ignore.

Delivering for All

A ROADMAP FOR RURAL PROSPERITY
Every person, in every place, deserves the chance to thrive, including everyone in our rural communities.

Rural Economies

Rural areas hold immense untapped economic potential—a sleeping giant worth £19 billion, as identified by the Rural Coalition. Yet, this potential is often overlooked due to metrics and policies designed for urban contexts.

Rural enterprises, from small businesses and sole traders to larger ground breaking engineering and aerospace businesses, drive innovation, create jobs, and foster vibrant communities.

Unlocking this potential requires tailored support, infrastructure investment, and policies that reflect the realities of rural economies, ensuring they contribute fully to the nation's prosperity.

£19B With the right investment, rural areas could add **£19 Billion annually** to the national economy.

↓ Wages earned in the rural economy are **lower** than the national average.

Key Asks ✓

- 1. Fair Funding**
Ensure that rural areas receive their fair share of support to grow the economy and create a system where decision making and resources are devolved to local areas as far as possible, creating the flexibility for tailored solutions to prioritise and meet local needs and opportunities.
- 2. Metrics and Measures**
Protect rural communities by ensuring that the metrics used to devise strategies or programmes for growth (including skills) are not based on 'one-size-fits-all' thinking but reflect the disadvantage in rural economies within regions.
- 3. Rural Policy**
Deliver a support programme for SMEs and community entrepreneurs in rural areas, especially start-ups and those seeking to grow.

Ensure policy and strategy is Rural Proofed in a way that is meaningful and demonstrable and also includes outcome monitoring. There is now a real case for placing Rural Proofing on a stronger legal footing, in the way that it has been in Northern Ireland.

Provide opportunities for the growth of the green economy and supporting infrastructure, namely the national grid and digital and mobile connectivity.

Everyone deserves the right to contribute to a thriving economy which is critical for national growth. SMEs, community enterprises, and green industries must be supported to unlock rural potential and drive innovation and employment.

<https://www.rsnonline.org.uk/delivering-for-all>