

**NORTH YORKSHIRE RURAL COMMISSION REPORT - RURAL NORTH YORKSHIRE: THE WAY FORWARD**

**Introduction**

This paper lists the content of the full North Yorkshire Rural Commission [Report](https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/north-yorkshire-rural-commission) published in July 2021. Also included are some of the additional messages we have raised with the Commission and Task Force for consideration.

Community First Yorkshire provided inputs to the report, sharing data and insights from this and other meetings we attend or convene.

The Report focusses on recommendations to influence Government and local partners about the needs and opportunities for rural communities. The priorities will shape the local plan for Government investment through the Shared Prosperity Fund due out in 2022 and Devolution once York and North Yorkshire have a mayoral structure in place.

**Members of the Equality and Inclusion Partnership:**

* **are asked to provide their observations either from this brief outline of the content or from reviewing the Full or Summary Report.**

**Rural Commission Report Content**

Key findings and recommendations by policy theme economy:

Energy transition

Digital connectivity

Farming and Land Management

Rural schools, education and training

Rural housing

Rural transport

Cross cutting themes:

The demographic challenge and the missing generations

Economic cost of the missing generation to North Yorkshire’s economy

Leadership

Climate Change.

Each section contains specific actions to respond to the findings. It is against the actions that a detailed Action Plan has been produced.

**Rural Task Force**

Jane Colthup, Chief Executive, Community First Yorkshire is a member of the Task Force brought together to shape and monitor the Action Plan. Other members of the Task Force include local authorities, the national parks, Defra, Yorkshire Agricultural Society and York and North Yorkshire LEP.

From our work and experience of the challenges people face living and working in rural areas and our understanding of the opportunities for change, we support what has been identified as part of the Action Plan.

We have also highlighted a number of issues to be given more emphasis in the Action Plan:

* **Loneliness and isolation.** Particularly evident during Covid-19 and in our rural areas, these issues are of a concern regarding people’s health and general wellbeing. We have seen the strength of neighbourliness in our rural areas during this time with new connections made. The amount of reaching out to others that has taken place during the pandemic is a priority to retain. VCSEs, Local Authorities and Community First Yorkshire are looking to sustain the links that have been made, and to continue to encourage people to support one another to re-engage in activities or get in for first time.
* To explore more the potential which Covid-19 has highlighted to build on **news patterns of work which could benefit rural areas**, where people can work remotely with less frequent office visits.
* We would also like to see the report **acknowledging the role of the VCSE sector** in rural North Yorkshire, in terms of the breadth of its work and its impact evidence in particular by the significant work to connect people during this Covid-19 period.
* Community First Yorkshire would have liked to see **more commentary and analysis, concerning ethnicity and inclusion in the report.** The challenges facing people from all minority groups around the county, including record levels of hate crime for example, lack of access to housing, are not highlighted.
* **Distance and ease of access to services** is highlighted in many health reports, summarised as ‘distance=delay’. Delays to access health appointments can lead to health deterioration which may be avoidable with early diagnosis and treatment. The health sector and Community First Yorkshire are very mindful of this correlation. Pilot transport projects are underway in parts of county to see what options there might be to provide better connectivity between transport and the provision of health services.
* **Addressing the issue of affordable housing**, we have drawn attention to the potential of Community Led Housing. Community First Yorkshire hosts the Community Led Housing Hub for North Yorkshire and East Riding, and provide a model for community investment and mixed use housing schemes.
* The importance of working with village halls, community buildingsand faith communities, to develop a strategy to **invest in and extend the use of community buildings** to ensure remote rural communities have places for people of all ages to meet and connect with one another.

Our involvement in the Task Force will enable us to bring these matters forward, reinforce the messages concerning the vital role of VCSE organisations and provide impartial advice concerning addressing the needs and opportunities for all members of rural communities. Views shared at this and other meetings will form part of our on-going input to the Task Force meetings.