



**Tim Farron MP**  
House of Commons  
Westminster  
SW1A 0AA

**The Rt Hon Rachel Reeves MP**  
**Chancellor of the Exchequer**

HM Treasury  
1 Horse Guards Road  
London SW1A 2HQ

24/10/2024

Dear Chancellor,

We are writing in advance of the forthcoming budget to press for a series of measures to support rural communities.

We are advocating a range of policies that will provide essential support to rural areas. These initiatives will strengthen local infrastructure, protect vital services, and support families and businesses that are the backbone of rural communities.

We are calling for the following actions to be incorporated in the upcoming Budget:

1. **Strengthen Community Assets:** Grant local authorities enhanced powers to protect and preserve pubs, community farms, and other vital infrastructure. These institutions are the heart of rural life and critical to community cohesion.
2. **Restore and Expand Rural Bus Services:** Equip all local authorities with the ability to restore lost bus routes and add new services where there is local demand. By increasing powers for franchising and streamlining funding processes, we can ensure reliable and accessible transportation options for rural residents.
3. **Strategic Small Surgeries Fund:** Establish a dedicated fund to sustain healthcare services in rural and remote areas. This will ensure small surgeries can continue to operate and provide essential medical care to communities that are often underserved.
4. **Universal Gigabit Broadband Access:** Commit to extending gigabit broadband to every home and business, including in remote and rural communities. Supporting local, tailored solutions is crucial to ensuring no property is left behind in the digital economy.
5. **Expand Rural Fuel Duty Relief:** Rural motorists face disproportionately high fuel costs. Expanding Rural Fuel Duty Relief will help ease this burden and support mobility in areas where public transport is limited.
6. **Launch a PumpWatch Price Comparison Initiative:** Implement a price comparison service for petrol and diesel to promote transparency and ensure fair pricing for rural residents.

7. **Comprehensive National Food Strategy:** Develop a robust National Food Strategy to tackle rising food prices, end food poverty and ensure food security. Such a strategy should also address health and nutrition issues that affect rural communities.
8. **Increase farming budget and help farmers transition to ELMS:** Allocate an additional £1 billion to support the farming sector, which is vital to the rural economy, helping farmers to both produce food and environmental outcomes.
9. **End the Sewage Scandal:** Take decisive action to end the sewage pollution affecting rivers, streams, and coastlines in rural areas. Clean water is essential to both public health and local tourism, which many rural communities depend on.
10. **Second Homes and Short-Term Lets:** Provide local authorities with more powers to manage the number of second homes and short-term rentals in their areas. This measure will help maintain the affordability and availability of housing for local residents.

We firmly believe that these policies will address key issues faced by rural communities and help create a fairer, more equitable future for everyone. We respectfully request a meeting to discuss how these initiatives can be implemented effectively in the upcoming Budget and look forward to your support for these essential measures.

Yours sincerely,

**Tim Farron**

Liberal Democrat Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs Spokesperson

Ian Roome  
 Danny Chambers  
 Claire Young  
 Ben Maguire  
 Zoe Franklin  
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 John Milne  
 Freddie van Mierlo  
 Tom Gordon  
 Gideon Amos  
 Edward Morello  
 Sarah Gibson  
 Victoria Collins  
 David Chadwick  
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 Clive Jones  
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