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**PUBLIC GOVERNANCE AND TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE  
TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY COMMITTEE**

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**OECD Rural Policy Reviews: The Case of England, United Kingdom**

**Issues for discussion**

**23rd Session of the Territorial Development Policy Committee (TDPC)**

**8-9 June, 10:00-18:00  
CC10, OECD Conference Centre  
2, rue André Pascal, 75016 Paris**

*This document is submitted to delegates of the TCPC for DISCUSSION.*

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## RURAL REVIEW OF ENGLAND, UNITED KINGDOM

### KEY FACTS

- Using the OECD definition, about 10% of England's population is considered rural. Roughly 28% of the population in intermediate regions and about 4% in predominantly urban regions are rural [Chap. 1].
- England has developed an approach to rural policy that considers both rural and urban areas. England's rural typology is based on sparseness, which captures the difference between more densely settled rural areas near urban places and the less common remote rural regions [Chap. 1].
- On average, rural England has better socio-economic indicators than the urban part of the country. The rural population is growing due to an influx of retirees and commuters from urban areas [Chap. 1].
- Settlement patterns in rural England have resulted in a large number of very small or micro-communities [Chap. 1] and there is a shortage of affordable housing. The planning system plays a major role in determining new housing availability [Chap. 1].
- The largest employers in rural areas are public services, manufacturing and distribution [Chap. 1].
- The economies of rural England support at least 4.5 million jobs. Rural communities have a limited number of economic functions and a limited mix of firms. This reflects their small size in terms of labour force and local market potential. Many goods and services cannot be profitably produced in a small community and have to be imported. [Chap. 1].

### KEY POLICY ISSUES

- How to strengthen rural mainstreaming and "rural proofing" [Chap. 3.2] and improve "rural evidence" to better capture the rural story [Chap. 3.4].
- Understanding and expanding urban-rural linkages for effective rural policy. [Chap. 3.5].
- Introducing greater rural housing market flexibility to ensure that regional labour markets work efficiently [Chap. 3.2].
- Improving the delivery of services in rural areas to the population and rural businesses, particularly in sparsely populated regions [Chap. 3.6].

### KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Look for market based solutions to rural development problems and resist the urge to replace existing financial incentives with more regulations. [Chap. 4].
- Introduce a distinct rural component to the "city region" strategy or incorporate policies for those rural areas that fall outside of the city region approach [Chap. 4].
- Reinforce mainstreaming with other measures in the short term, better integrate the mandates of mainstreaming and rural proofing, and clarify the responsibilities for each.
- Consider more rural-specific interventions especially for sparsely populated areas [Chap. 4].
- Strengthen the rural economy by joining up housing policy, planning policy and economic development strategies at the local level [Chap. 4].
- Broaden the focus beyond that of pure economic development to better identify new ways to enhance the competitiveness of the rural economy and reduce the number of government-imposed restrictions on individual choice [Chap. 4].

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