

Rural Economy Growth Review

Enabling Rural Businesses to Grow & Diversify - Broadband and Mobile - Flexible use of Agricultural Buildings

How are we supporting rural businesses to grow and diversify?

The Review has identified what only Government can do to promote economic growth in rural areas and address barriers holding it back.

1. Superfast Broadband & Mobile Telecommunications

Lack of access to superfast broadband is a major barrier to economic growth and this is especially acute in remote rural areas. The Government's aim is to have the best superfast broadband in Europe by 2015. This is backed by £530m of Government investment to support the rollout into areas which the market would not reach unaided. In addition, Government is:

- **Launching the £20 million Rural Community Broadband Fund** and committing to exploring its extension to 2015.
- Supporting work in North Yorkshire to engage business and communities to raise awareness and **stimulate demand for superfast broadband**, as a model for other areas.
- **Optimising the rural benefits of the additional £150m investment**

announced by the Chancellor on 3 October to improve mobile coverage.

2. Flexible Use of Agricultural Buildings

Businesses need the right buildings and workspaces to develop and thrive. However, farmers can be constrained from growing their business because of the need to obtain planning consent for what are often sensible and relatively minor changes of use of their farm buildings. Evidence suggests that around 26% of agricultural holdings with traditional buildings have at least one building unused. Government is therefore proposing to

- **Consult on changes to make it easier for rural business to find the premises they need to expand by allowing existing agricultural buildings to be used for other business purposes.**

How will these measures help growth?

Superfast broadband and mobile communications enables rural businesses to reach new markets, to set up more easily from home, to expand, to attract inward investment, and to compete effectively with larger companies by offering niche products.

The creation of new agricultural permitted

development rights will give farmers increased freedom to develop their business sustainably, taking advantage of changes in markets and new business opportunities.



Further information

- [Rural Community Broadband Fund](#)
- [DCMS Broadband](#)
- The Consultation on farm buildings will shortly be available on the [Community and Local Government's website](#)