

30m to spark rollout of next generation 5G in rural Wales and help countryside capitalise on tech revolution

Digital Secretary Nicky Morgan has launched a £30 million UK-wide competition to spark a tech revolution in countryside communities and help rural Britain seize the opportunities of 5G technology.

Up to ten rural locations will be chosen to run innovative trials of 5G applications and stimulate commercial investment in 5G technology which offers mobile speeds 10 to 20 times faster than previous generations.

The Rural Connected Communities competition is the latest wave of £200 million funding to pioneer 5G testbeds across the country and deliver the benefits of the highest speeds of mobile connectivity available.

Monmouthshire has previously been selected as a 5G testbed site to improve rural connectivity. The 5G Rural Integrated Testbed (5GRIT), a partnership of SMEs and universities has been trialling the innovative use of 5G technology across a range of rural applications including smart agriculture, tourism and connecting poorly-served communities, using shared spectrum in the TV bands and a mix of local ISPs and self-provision.

The new funding will build on projects like these and trial other uses of 5G in rural communities to help drive business growth, enhance lives and encourage innovation.

Digital Secretary Nicky Morgan said:

The British countryside has always been a hotbed of pioneering industries and we're making sure our rural communities aren't left behind in the digital age.

We're investing millions so the whole country can grasp the opportunities and economic benefits of next generation 5G technology.

In modern Britain people expect to be connected wherever they are. But poorer connectivity in rural areas risks hampering economic growth and social mobility.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

This funding demonstrates the UK Government's commitment towards

eliminating the disparity in connection between urban and rural areas whilst exploring innovative ways to use 5G technology to develop emerging industries, supporting our rural economy in Wales.

This is a great opportunity for rural areas to boost the productivity and capacity of their digital infrastructure and I'd encourage local partners to come together to apply to benefit their communities.

ENDS

Notes to editors

- The deadline for RCC applications is 25 October 2019 with the winning projects expected to be announced before the end of the year. For information about the RCC competition and the process for submitting an application [please go to the competition page](#)
- The UK Government has committed to extend geographical mobile coverage to 95%, to ensure continuous mobile connectivity is provided to all major roads, and to be a world leader in 5G.