

Press release: £200 million boost for rural England

Funding for rural businesses that will generate thousands of jobs and provide new support to expand and improve their premises has been announced as part of a £200million grant offer.

Announcing the latest round of [Rural Development Programme](#) funding, Lord Gardiner confirmed that for the first time under the current scheme specific funding will be available to support new rural broadband projects, and provide significant amounts of funding to on-farm businesses to invest in new infrastructure such as new buildings and machinery.

The current Rural Development Programme for England is expected to generate 6,750 new jobs. Already more than 1,400 projects have been agreed which are expected to create over 2,300 jobs.

The grants will also fund landowners to improve farm productivity and invest in rural tourism opportunities.

Rural Affairs Minister Lord Gardiner said:

One in three businesses in this country are based in the countryside, and this government is committed to providing the support they need to create a strong and prosperous rural economy.

This funding will make sure businesses in remote locations can get online, help farmers install cutting-edge technology, create new tourist hotspots and bring high quality jobs to rural communities across the country.

This round of funding will include:

- £30m to improve rural broadband – the grants available will encourage growth by helping provide broadband services at speeds of 30Mbps or faster where this is not available or planned. It will supplement existing [Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport](#) investment in rural broadband.
- £45m to help rural businesses grow and invest in new equipment – rural businesses, including those engaged in tourism and food production, can apply for funding to invest in their company, helping them to expand, diversify, and invest in new technology.
- £120m for projects that improve farm productivity – this money will help

farmers, foresters and landowners manage their land more effectively. Funding will be available for a wide range of purposes, including woodland management equipment, creating on-farm reservoirs and using water more efficiently.

Lord Gardiner made the announcement during a visit to the Suffolk Cookhouse project in Ipswich, which received £422,000 in 2012 to open a new food hall. The hall is now one of the biggest tourism hubs in the region, bringing together local artists and food producers, and creating 45 jobs.

The first grant funding that will become available will be for reservoirs and forestry equipment and these are expected to be open for applications from Monday, while funding for broadband, rural business support, on-farm food processing, arable and horticultural productivity and resource efficiency will be made available later in the year. A further £6.6m will be available for animal health and welfare projects.

This funding is part of planned investment of at least £3.5 billion into our rural economies by 2020 under RDPE, supporting the third of businesses in the UK which are based in the countryside. All projects agreed before we leave the EU will be guaranteed for their lifetime – providing stability and certainty while future support for farmers and rural communities is developed.

Further information

- Today's announcement supports the manifesto commitment to bring sustainable growth to rural economies, entrepreneurs, farmers and landowners.
- The [RDPE Growth Programme](#) provides funding for projects in England which create jobs and growth in the rural economy. Under the RDPE Growth Programme, there are currently calls for projects open for: business development, food processing and rural rural tourism infrastructure.
- [Countryside Productivity](#) aims to improve productivity of farm and forestry businesses by making targeted investments to encourage best practice and innovation.

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[News story: Statement by France, Germany, the United Kingdom and United](#)

States: Iran's space launch vehicle inconsistent with UNSCR 2231

With its latest launch of a Simorgh space launch vehicle on 27 July, Iran has again demonstrated activity inconsistent with UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2231. We condemn this action.

This resolution calls upon Iran to not undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons, including launches using such technology like this launch. Space launch vehicles use technologies that are closely related to those of ballistic missile development, in particular to those of Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles.

This step follows missile launches into Syria on 18 June and the test of a medium range ballistic missile on 4th July.

Iran's programme to develop ballistic missiles continues to be inconsistent with UNSCR 2231 and has a destabilising impact in the region. We call on Iran not to conduct any further ballistic missile launches and related activities. We are writing to the UN Secretary General with our concerns. The governments of France, Germany and the United Kingdom are discussing these issues bilaterally with Iran and are raising their concerns.

Press release: Independent review of building regulations and fire safety

An independent review of building regulations and fire safety has been announced by the government today (28 July 2017).

This follows the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower, which raised serious questions about the fire safety of high rise residential buildings, and subsequent government testing of aluminium composite material (ACM) cladding from similar buildings across the country.

The [first result from large scale tests](#) of building cladding systems has also been published today. These latest tests simulate a tall building and allow experts to understand better how different types of cladding panels behave with different types of insulation in a fire.

The first system tested, a wall cladding system using an aluminium composite material (ACM) cladding with unmodified polyethylene filler (Cat 3) and foam insulation, failed the test which is set out in current building regulations

guidance.

Immediate action is already underway to ensure the safety of residents in these buildings. But the results also make clear that we need to understand how current building regulations and fire safety works in order to make them as effective as possible in the future.

This forward-looking independent review, to be led by Dame Judith Hackitt, Chair of EEF, the Manufacturers' Organisation, will look at current building regulations and fire safety with a particular focus on high rise residential buildings. It will report jointly to the Communities Secretary Sajid Javid and the Home Secretary Amber Rudd.

It will examine:

- the regulatory system around the design, construction and on-going management of buildings in relation to fire safety
- related compliance and enforcement issues
- international regulation and experience in this area

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid said:

Since the tragic Grenfell Tower disaster, the government has been working to make sure people living in high rise buildings are safe.

It's clear we need to urgently look at building regulations and fire safety. This independent review will ensure we can swiftly make any necessary improvements. Government is determined to make sure that we learn the lessons from the Grenfell Tower fire, and to ensure nothing like it can happen again.

As part of the review, Dame Judith will consult the [Buildings Regulations Advisory Committee](#) – which advises the government on changes to building regulations– as well as the construction and housing industry, the fire sector, international experts, MPs and the public.

The review will also work closely with other government departments and the devolved administrations and consider the implications of changes to the regulatory system on other government objectives.

Review Chair, Dame Judith Hackitt said:

I am honoured to be asked by government to lead this important independent review. This review will look at building regulations and fire safety to see what changes can be made for the future to make these more effective.

I am keen to engage widely with industry and the public to inform the recommendations from the review. I want the recommendations to lead to any necessary improvements in the system being made.

Terms of reference for this independent review will be published in summer 2017, once the terms of reference for the Grenfell Tower Public Inquiry have been agreed.

It is expected that the review will present an interim report before the end of the year, and a final report no later than spring 2018. The government will act swiftly on any recommendations from this review to make sure people living in high rise buildings are safe.

Short biography of Dame Judith Hackitt

Dame Judith was Chair of HSE from October 2007 to March 2016. She previously served as a health and safety Commissioner between 2002 and 2005. She was made a Dame in the 2016 New Year Honours for services to health and safety and engineering in particular for being a role model for young women. She was awarded a CBE in 2006.

In April 2016, she was appointed as Chair of EEF, The Manufacturers' Organisation in April 2016.

Dame Judith is a chemical engineer and graduated from Imperial College in 1975. She worked in the chemicals manufacturing industry for 23 years before joining the Chemical Industries Association (CIA) in 1998. She became Director General of CIA (from 2002-2005) and then worked in Brussels for the European Chemical Industry Association (CEFIC).

She was elected as a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering in July 2010 and currently chairs the External Affairs Committee. Dame Judith is a Fellow of the Institution of Chemical Engineers and a member of council. She was President of IChemE from May 2013 to May 2014.

Dame Judith is also Chair of Semta – the Science, Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies Alliance, and a non-executive director of the High Value Manufacturing Catapult.

[News story: First systems test reaffirms actions for landlords](#)

The first of the 'systems tests', assessing the fire safety of whole buildings, has been taking place at Building Research Establishment (BRE).

These large scale tests will allow experts to better understand how different types of cladding panels behave with different types of insulation in a fire.

Immediately after the Grenfell Tower fire, the government began a testing programme on aluminium composite material (ACM) on high rise residential

buildings, which is one element of a wall cladding system.

Following advice from the Independent Expert Advisory Panel, BRE has now started a further programme to test the wall system of a building in its entirety. Three different types of ACM cladding are being combined with 2 different types of insulation to test their combustibility when taken together, with 6 combinations being tested in total.

Each test involves building a 9-metre-high demonstration wall with a complete cladding system including cladding panels, insulation and cavity barriers. This is then subjected to a replica of a severe fire inside a flat as it spreads out of a window, to see whether it meets the requirement to resist vertical fire spread.

The first test was of a wall cladding system consisting of ACM with polyethylene filler (Category 3) and foam insulation, with fire breaks and cavity barriers in place.

The expert panel advise that the [results show](#) this combination does not meet current building regulation guidance.

- 82 buildings are currently known to have this combination of materials in their wall cladding systems – 47 of which are local authority or housing association owned or managed
- the government has [issued advice](#) to every building owner known to be affected and other interested parties

In a statement, the Independent Expert Advisory Panel said:

This next phase of testing provides further information for landlords to make informed decisions about what actions to take to ensure the safety of residents and reassure the public.

This reconfirms the advice already provided to building owners about the immediate steps they should take to ensure buildings are safe.

Landlords of buildings with cladding using the same combination of materials as in this first full scale test must now act on the additional advice they have been given since this test, to seek professional advice about any necessary remedial work.