

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.