

# Rural Business



## Importance of connectivity to rural businesses

Technological advancements have changed the ways in which businesses operate. High-speed connectivity removes barriers, allowing businesses to explore opportunities to maximise growth, get immediate access to information, and focus on more efficient ways of working.

In rural, hard to reach areas, the infrastructure needed to deliver these services has previously been difficult to install, with impacts felt across communities. A DEFRA report found that half of rural businesses said being in a not-spot area had a negative impact on business profits, turnover and productivity, with many estimating reported losses of £100-£250 a month due to poor mobile connectivity<sup>1</sup>. The Shared Rural Network aims to remove these barriers, allowing rural businesses to improve operations and exploit the full potential of the internet across a range of sectors.

## How will rural businesses benefit from the Shared Rural Network?

Rural communities play host to a variety of industries and businesses. Whether it is a small arts and crafts business run from home, or a large-scale farming operation, the need for reliable mobile connectivity is a key driver to success. Over 80% of businesses say that the availability and quality of digital infrastructure impacts where they decide to invest<sup>2</sup>.

The importance of having good mobile phone coverage alongside fixed broadband, allows for flexible working away from the office. Documents and files can be accessed on the go, emails from potentially new and existing clients and customers can be received, and payments can be taken through mobile devices. Businesses can better market themselves and their services with the ability to connect with new audiences through social media; and they can reach customers and clients without needing to travel excessive distances.

Administration can be streamlined by making use of online tools and services, sales and stock can be managed more effectively, and by accessing price comparison and other retailing sites there are savings to be made on stock, equipment or materials.

The increased ability to have mobile connectivity on the move via the Shared Rural Network will allow outdoor rural businesses to work more efficiently. Whether it's improved vehicle management, the ability to track stock, or even something as simple as the ability to check weather conditions regularly, all can inform better work patterns and practices.

Faster speeds delivered by 4G have led to innovation and different ways of working across business sectors. Whether it's the ability to use audio-visual streaming services for quality and regular communication or allowing access to cloud computing so that businesses can be based remotely, the Shared Rural Network will help businesses connect better, often helping reduce traditional operating costs.

<sup>1</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/412201/Mobile\\_network\\_not\\_spots\\_final\\_report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/412201/Mobile_network_not_spots_final_report.pdf)

<sup>2</sup><http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/environment-food-and-rural-affairs-committee/rural-broadband-and-digital-only-services/written/103245.html>

