



All the political parties know they need to have "Pro Business" manifesto - rightly. But we must ensure it's not only big business who are the beneficiaries:

We must see:

- High speed broadband as a way of levelling out the playing field for small rural businesses, and a flexible approach in those areas it will never be possible (satellite, shared spaces, collaborative projects). See recent example "First village gets superfast broadband" <http://tinyurl.com/y3dldza>
- Fairer distribution of public sector support/funding/training - it's a lottery sometimes shops get support, sometimes only start ups - all need training and business advice to help them grow it shouldn't be dependant on where they are; we have a brilliant idea for a voucher system!
- Reduction of red tape and more flexibility in planning, signage etc.- crucial for rural businesses success
- Specific measure to support collaborative working to allow small businesses access to public procurement contracts
- Funding support for rural businesses creating new jobs and encouraging young people to stay in the community

We would like to see:

- Specific support for rural micro businesses (5 employees and under) – they are different to other sme; not in the least that their transport costs and journey times are double
- Recognition of the impact small rural businesses have on their community and economy and offer support accordingly
- Understanding of the huge diversity of rural businesses - they are not just about agriculture
- A rural business advocate (as well as the rural advocate) to champion and encourage business activity (local food, tourism, crafts etc).
- Business support voucher system (again!) for women in business (they often dip in and out depending on other commitments) so sometimes fall outside the rules

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You asked on Twitter for ideas on manifesto for rural business, what will help, what will hinder.

- Improve broadband coverage in rural areas, broadband speed, and mobile phone coverage, so it's easier to do business.
- Ask people with rural businesses for their opinions when compiling policies. Issues such as staffing and training staff can be more challenging in a rural area.

- Simplify VAT and regulation for small rural business and ensure it's kept to a minimum so rural business can focus on creating profit.
- Paperwork and administration take considerable time, and keeping up with ever changing policies and regulations is very time consuming. For example, the TOMS tour operator margin scheme for VAT on tour operators is horrendous.
- Introduce effective business mentor scheme for rural business, to inspire, motivate and guide rural business, which can often be isolated.
- Ensure those involved in delivering training or services to rural business have some experience of running a business, so help can be better targeted.

Helen Allen - Farmer

- Effective control of bTB in wildlife in addition to the measures already implemented in cattle.