

'Despite the Government's recognition of the importance of high speed broadband to the economy of rural areas we are concerned about the faltering progress that has been made to date. Poor broadband speeds and reliability issues are a key constraint to small rural businesses and also, of course, impose limitations on all manner of wider service delivery.

We feel it would be timely for consideration to be given by the appropriate Commons Select Committee (Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee) to fully examine the existing position in respect of rural broadband and the anticipated position during the life of this Parliament. Unless rural areas, including remoter rural areas, are afforded some explicit priority there is a very real danger that they will suffer an increasing comparative disadvantage. One practical approach might be to articulate targets for high speed broadband coverage in terms of the geographical area covered rather than simply population.'