

Meeting:	Hampshire Prosperity Partnership Board
Date:	19 January 2026
Title:	Rural Business Support Update
Appendices	N/A
Report From:	Strategic Economy
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The Purpose

1. To provide an update on our work on the rural business support programme and the next steps for delivery.

Background

2. Supporting the rural businesses of Hampshire is one of the priorities identified by the HPPB in January 2025. See point 14 (p27) in the HPPB prioritisation paper from the January 2025 HPPB meeting: [HPPB-250106-Agreeing-HPPB-Priorities.pdf](#)
3. The UK Government have provided funds for specific support in rural areas of England through the Rural England Prosperity Fund which comes to an end in March 2026. Various programmes have been run by Hampshire Boroughs and Districts eligible for the funding during the last two years across the following:
 - a. Basingstoke and Deane
 - b. East Hampshire
 - c. New Forest
 - d. Test Valley
 - e. Winchester
 - f. Isle of Wight

Proposed Approach

4. Following a Local Authorities and wider stakeholders review during 2025, the Growth Hub team have developed an approach which will enable the support for rural businesses to pick up where the Government's Rural England Prosperity Fund finishes in March 2026.
5. It is proposed that two streams of work are undertaken:

a. **Stream 1: Strengthen Business Support for Rural Enterprises**

- Follow up with businesses that received Rural England Prosperity Fund grants.
- Partner with Hampshire Fare, Solent Growth Partnership, and Hampshire Chamber to identify support gaps and to avoid any duplication, as well as reviewing the outcomes of the business support landscape project.
- Provide strategic advice to landowners and farmers exploring diversification, with potential links to CLA – the Country Land and Business Association – and other stakeholders.

b. **Stream 2: Rural Innovation Programme**

- **Support rural businesses** in agriculture, forestry, and ecological services to develop new products, services, and revenue streams.
- **Collaborate with Sparsholt College** to tap into expertise in animal health, welfare, and land-based innovation, with potential for joint ventures, pilot projects, and knowledge exchange that benefit rural enterprises. (Wessex Health may be a good partner for this also).
- **Explore commercial applications** of ecological services (e.g. biodiversity net gain, carbon offsetting, sustainable land management) to create new market opportunities for rural businesses.

6. Initial mapping of the industries and opportunities will complete in January 2026, alongside partnership development, with a view to undertaking initial networking and pilot activities throughout February to May 2026.
7. Delivery of the finalised programme will commence in June and run until the end of the calendar year. The subject matter and deliverables will be determined by the work undertaken in Q1 of 2026.

Next Steps

8. HPPB to note the progress update and provide further suggestions and comments on the proposed approach.