

Shared Rural Network – Explanatory Note.

What is the Shared Rural Network?

The Shared Rural Network (SRN) is a collaboration between Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) and the Government to improve 4G coverage for people living, working and travelling in poorly served rural areas.

The network will ensure geographic coverage from at least one operator to 95% of the UK by the end of 2025, broadening consumer choice for mobile services in rural areas.

Across the UK, there will be a significant increase in the areas where all four operators deliver coverage, from 66% in 2020 to 84% by the end of 2025.

MNOs are collectively investing £532 million to extend their coverage by upgrading their existing networks, working together on shared infrastructure and building new sites. The Government is investing a further £500 million to build new masts in areas with no 4G coverage from any operator.

Cornerstone is delivering the Shared Rural Network on behalf of the MNOs and will be submitting applications to your Council Planning Department imminently.

The project utilises infrastructure – this is planning policy compliant – delivering improved service while minimising environmental impact via reduced proliferation and minimised site numbers.

What are the benefits of the Shared Rural Network?

- The SRN will deliver reliable 4G mobile connectivity allowing rural businesses to prosper and thrive.
- The new infrastructure is guaranteed to bring mobile coverage and economic benefits to areas of the UK currently missing out. Even more significant with post-Covid economic recovery.
- It will promote inward investment, creating jobs to assist in retaining skilled young people in rural areas.
- Address the urban-rural digital divide.
- Provide social benefits, including staying in touch with isolated or vulnerable friends/family and having access to learning materials and remote learning – a necessity and dependence demonstrated by the pandemic.
- Offer better services like booking GP appointments online, using apps to communicate with friends and family, boosting tourism and agriculture and having reliable access to emergency services.
- 4G can provide a means to connect to superfast broadband where fibre broadband is not yet available.

The Shared Rural Network will help deliver the economic and digital aspirations of Government and Local Authorities.

Further reading:

- Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review
- Mobile Action Plans for Scotland and Wales
- National Infrastructure Commission for Wales
- A Changing Nation: How Scotland Will Thrive in a Digital World, 2021
- Local Council Economic Strategy
- Northern Ireland Mobile Action Plan