



CRC 18/09

30 June 2009

### **Summit shines spotlight on rural business success**

Business leaders, local authorities, community organisations and economic development agencies from around the country are today (30 June 2009) meeting in Aylesbury to discuss how inspiration and leadership can help release the potential of rural economies.

The summit, organised by the Commission for Rural Communities (CRC), East of England Development Agency and South East of England Development Agency, will showcase success stories and agree action to help promote the achievements and contribution of rural economies. Delegates will also hear from Rural Affairs Minister, Dan Norris.

It is the second in a series of events following a report last year to the Prime Minister from Dr. Stuart Burgess the Chairman of the CRC and the Government's Rural Advocate focusing on releasing the potential of England's rural economies. His recommendations included taking steps to raise the profile of rural economies, for example through rural champions, and encouraging the creation of strong sharing networks to support improvement and efficiency for rural and sub-regional authorities on local economic development.

Dr. Burgess explains: "There are around 1 million rural businesses in England, employing more than 5 million people and with a combined annual turnover of more than £300 billion. Today's summit is about how we can work together to raise the profile and aspirations of rural businesses. Inspiration and leadership in our rural economies is even more important at this time, to help lift us out of recession which has taken a strong hold in rural areas.

Dan Norris, Rural Affairs Minister, said: "Lots of rural businesses have real success stories to tell. They are innovative and committed, and contribute hugely to the national economy. The government will continue to support rural businesses and communities through the economic recession, and will ensure that they are able to benefit fully from the help we are making available to them."

#### **ENDS**

For further information contact Chris Wynne-Davies on 01242 534070

#### **Notes to editors:**

1 Further details of the summit 'Releasing the Potential of Rural Economies: Inspiration and Leadership' being held on 30 June, can be found at:  
[www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/events/releasingthepotentialofruraleconomiesinspirationandleadership](http://www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/events/releasingthepotentialofruraleconomiesinspirationandleadership)

2 The report, 'England's rural areas: steps to release their economic potential', by the Rural Advocate to the Prime Minister was submitted last summer and can be found at:  
[www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/files/crc67\\_englands\\_rural\\_areas1.pdf](http://www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/files/crc67_englands_rural_areas1.pdf)

Hilary Benn, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs set out the Government's response to the report at the first summit on innovation held earlier this year in York. 'Resilience and Opportunity: The Government's response to the report of the Rural Advocate England's rural areas: steps to release their economic potential', February 2009 can be found at:  
[www.defra.gov.uk/rural/pdfs/voice/rural-advocate-response.pdf](http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/pdfs/voice/rural-advocate-response.pdf)

3 The CRC was established in April 2005 and became an independent body on 1 October 2006 following the enactment of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. The role of the CRC is to provide well-informed, independent advice to government and ensure that policies reflect the real needs and circumstances of people living and working in rural England. We give particular focus to tackling disadvantage and economic underperformance.

We have three key functions:

- Advocate: the voice for rural people, business and communities;
- Expert adviser: providing evidence-based, objective advice to government and others; and
- Independent watchdog: monitoring and reporting on the delivery of policies nationally, regionally and locally.

Further information about the CRC and its work can be found at: [www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk](http://www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk)