Q. What is a Rural Growth Network?
A. A Rural Growth Network (RGN) is an initiative designed to support rural businesses and stimulate sustainable economic growth in rural areas.

RGNs will enable businesses in rural areas to reach their potential by breaking down barriers to economic growth, such as a shortage of work premises, slow internet connection and fragmented business networks. As well as transforming business prospects, each Rural Growth Network will be a pilot to help the Government look at how best to increase the economic potential of rural areas across the country.

Q. Where are the pilot RGNs?
A. Five Rural Growth Network (RGN) pilots are being established during 2012/13 in Cumbria, Devon & Somerset, Durham & Northumberland, Warwickshire and Swindon & Wiltshire.

The HotSW RGN covers rural Devon and Somerset.

Q. What does an RGN aim to do?
Each of the pilots across the country have been developed by a local private/public sector partnership to address identified barriers to growth and capitalise on local opportunities. Each pilot is different, but all involve the creation of a network of enterprise hubs across a defined rural area which:

- provide accommodation, infrastructure and facilities designed to help rural enterprises start up, innovate and grow;
- act as a focal point for a range of support for the micro and small business sector in that area;
- have a particularly strong focus on supporting women led rural enterprises
- facilitate knowledge transfer, mentoring and training and skills development across a wide range of rural businesses;
- stimulate a whole Local Enterprise Partnership / Local Authority area to recognise, celebrate and promote rural entrepreneurship

Q. What will the RGN initiative achieve nationally?
A. The RGN initiative will stimulate faster and more widespread growth, employment and economic activity in rural areas, driven by Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) or Local Authorities (LA).
The pilot RGNs will test different mechanisms and models that can be utilised by LEPs / LAs to stimulate sustainable rural economic growth. The learning from these pilot areas will be shared quickly with other LEPs or LAs to encourage and support them to take similar action.

**Q. Who is behind the RGN in the HotSW area?**
A. The bid was put together by Devon County Council (the accountable body) jointly with Somerset County Council, on behalf of the Heart of the South West (HotSW) Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

**Q. What is the Heart of the South West LEP?**
A. The Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) has been formed under the leadership of the private sector supported by the local authorities from Devon, Plymouth, Somerset and Torbay and the area’s District Councils. It is one of 39 partnerships created since the Government’s Local Growth White Paper published in October 2010. More information about the work of the LEP is available from the website www.heartofswlep.co.uk.

**Q. What will the RGN initiative achieve in Devon and Somerset?**
In HotSW specifically, the RGN will:

1. Set up innovation and enterprise centres for start-up and SME businesses in rural areas (under 10,000 residents). These will be supported by bespoke partnerships, which could for example involve our local Universities, as well as further education, to provide specialist business support with an emphasis on low carbon and food and drink sectors.
2. Develop an integrated approach to employment in rural towns – working with local businesses, landowners, and education to improve skills, enhance local productivity and increase employment opportunities.
3. Work in the eight Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty within the Heart of the South West, and the two National Parks to develop entrepreneurial opportunities, supporting businesses to capitalise on natural assets and the environment.
4. Complement the Connecting Devon and Somerset superfast broadband project to build capacity and demand within the business community, enabling a potential increase in productivity by up to 30%.

**Q. How much money has been allocated to HotSW?**
HotSW LEP has been awarded £2.9m from the RGN fund.

**Q. How is the money being distributed in Heart of the South West?**
The £2.9m is being allocated between capital and revenue projects, across both Devon and Somerset and is expected to create more than 700 jobs across the area.

**Devon - £1m total**
- Opportunity Okehampton - £150,000 will go towards developing this site for business expansion and growth. Phase 1 will create 123 direct jobs, 48 indirect (171 total). Phase 2 will create 223 direct jobs, 132 indirect (355 total).
• Holsworthy Agricultural Business Centre - £400,000 will go towards opening up the surrounding land of the site for development, and adding infrastructure to the site. This will create 300 direct jobs, 219 indirect (519 total).

• Bicton College (Bicton EaRTH Centre) - £300,000 will be invested into developing a flexible workspace for new and expanding businesses at the Bicton College site. This will create 20 direct jobs, 13 indirect (33 total).

• Dartington - £150,000 will be invested into the redevelopment of Webber’s Yard into a modern rural business park. This will create 20 direct jobs, 15 indirect (35 total).

Somerset - £1,050,000 total
Somerset will also see an investment of around £1m to continue the creation of a network of enterprise centres, supporting small businesses across the county.

The Somerset projects include:

• Highbridge – the development of a brand new enterprise centre at Isleport Business Park, Highbridge, offering business accommodation and facilities.

• Dulverton and Minehead – reconfiguring and expanding existing enterprise centres.

• Somerset work hubs – developing three flexible work hubs across the county.

The remaining funds will be used on revenue projects throughout the two counties – the details are currently being finalised and will be announced shortly.

Q. What is happening to the rest of the money? You’ve only talked about the £2m that’s been allocated so far...

The remaining funds will be used on revenue projects throughout the two counties – the details are currently being finalised and will be announced shortly.

Q. Can individual businesses apply for funding from RGNs? I’m a small business, how do I get some of this funding?

A. Money from the RGN has at this point been allocated to specific capital projects that will boost the rural economy.

However, a further package of support for rural businesses is currently being planned: more details on this will be provided once the projects have been approved.

Q. How many jobs will be created?

A. The RGN will create more than 700 new jobs across Devon and Somerset.

Q. How much impact will this have on the economy?

The £2.9m investment is expected to boost the rural economy by £40m by providing the opportunities and infrastructure that rural businesses need to grow.
Q. Why were these projects selected?
Devon County Council and Somerset County Council identified a series of projects that would meet the RGN’s objectives of supporting rural businesses and stimulating sustainable economic growth in rural areas.

Q. What will the revenue projects be?
The remaining funds will be used on revenue projects throughout the two counties – the details are currently being finalised and will be announced shortly. These projects will also support rural businesses and encourage economic growth.

Q. When will the announcement on revenue projects be made?
We expect to announce the details early in 2013.