

Infrastructure development



OUR ASK

Where major infrastructure projects have the potential to disrupt and damage farmland and farm businesses, ensure steps are taken so farms can keep operating profitably and are properly and promptly compensated for any land taken and damage caused.

Why it's needed

Many farmers and growers have found themselves increasingly subject to major infrastructure projects – such as the roll out of HS2, overhead and underground electricity cables and road improvements schemes – on their land with limited consultation and communication on the detail.

These large-scale projects can have a significant impact on food production, and the long-term viability of their businesses, at a time when the importance of our food security has never been in sharper focus.

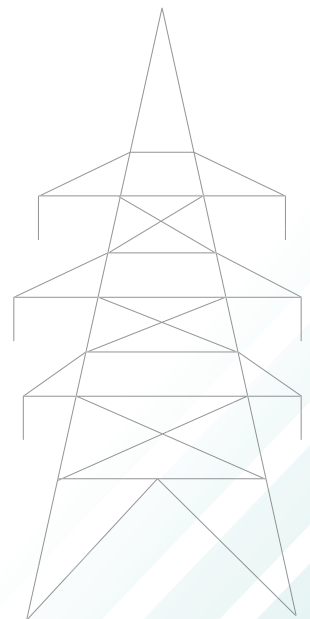
While the NFU recognises, and supports the need for, national infrastructure projects to deliver energy security and transport links, they can cause huge disruption to day-to-day farming practices which can last for many years. Farmers often find it extremely difficult to establish dialogue with operators to explore alternative

options and the prospect of a lengthy dispute places added financial and emotional strain on food producers.

There are many ways infrastructure projects can impact viable farm businesses. They include farms literally being cut in half either permanently, by road or rail schemes, or temporarily, by the construction of underground cabling or water pipe projects. The siting of pylons in fields can also cause permanent disruption to day-to-day agricultural operations.

The disruption can include the loss of direct access to land, leading to lengthy transport routes by road. There can also be damage to soil and field drainage when reinstatement work and aftercare is not correctly designed and carried out.

To achieve the best outcome for both food production and new infrastructure, farmers must be at the forefront of consultation and negotiation on new developments. We need earlier dialogue from developers with farmers before a final route is chosen to reduce the impact of the scheme on farms. Detailed design is also needed earlier in scheme negotiations, so that the true impact can be evaluated and mitigated.



The next government should have a properly coordinated offshore electricity transmission network to connect offshore wind farms to enable underground cables to come on to land where the electricity is needed. It should also look at using a combination of underground cables and overhead lines for projects to upgrade the electricity transmission network on land so that energy security and food security can work hand in hand.

For transport, especially new rail networks and road schemes, the next government must ensure that National Highways and developers consult openly with landowners at an early stage on different proposed routes, so they understand the impacts on landowners and farmers and mitigation works can be designed into projects.

Where there are no alternatives to these projects, it is vital that farmers and growers

are suitably and promptly compensated for land taken or permanently affected, including the sterilisation of land where pylons are located and the day-to-day disturbance caused to cultivations.

There is also a real opportunity for the next government to address how compensation for farmers and landowners is calculated by looking at compulsory purchase law.

What it would deliver

Working with farmers and growers to provide an additional level of certainty in national infrastructure planning would be good for everyone involved but, crucially, will also create clearer dialogue between operators and affected communities to provide clarity on proposed projects. Fundamentally, those

people affected must be fully consulted on the impact the proposals could have on their farming businesses and food production.

By ensuring farmers and landowners are fully involved in the development and implementation of infrastructure projects, we

can minimise disruption while ensuring our transport, energy and communications networks contribute to economic growth and our food and energy security.

Working now to get fairness for farmers affected by current schemes will also help those affected by future projects.

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