

APPG submission from FSB on ‘Levelling Up’

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Small businesses should be at the centre of levelling up plans.

In the towns and areas of the South East where it is most key to level up, small businesses form the majority of private sector employment, even though there is a lower density of businesses of all types.

Driving the rate of new start-ups is key for the creation of jobs and levelling up.

People are most likely to start businesses in areas where they currently live, so people should be equipped with the support and finance they need to start up a business.

To achieve this, government should scale up the New Enterprise Allowance, with more mentors and larger weekly payments, and look to improve enterprise education in schools.

Government must improve broadband and mobile connectivity across the UK, including the hard-to-reach areas.

While the progress made by the government’s project gigabit has been essential, the initial goal of reaching 100% by 2025 has since been downgraded to 85%. Providing reliable broadband for the remaining 15% is vital, including in the hard-to-reach areas.

Electric Vehicle (EV) infrastructure is essential for net zero and ensuring no area is left behind in the push.

The target for the end to the sale of new petrol vehicles is approaching, and so inadequate EV infrastructure will have a seriously detrimental impact on both individuals and businesses.

Charging points are currently too spread out in rural areas, and nearly always located on A roads, which may be out of the way for many.

Additionally, while rural petrol stations may face many of the same issues as EV points, for example in terms of locations, these are staffed, and so maintained.

There is more assurance of reliability, whereas a charging point can be unmanned and risks stranding people.

Intercity and intra-regional transport needs improving.

This would broaden the talent pool for other areas as people are less likely to need to move out of the area for a good job.

This can be achieved through wider and more regular bus services, the reversal of Beeching cuts, and by improving the coordination and integration of transport planning and delivery.

Alongside infrastructure, investment in skills across will also be vital to ensuring levelling up everywhere.

Businesses and local universities and FE colleges must work together to understand local skills needs, and careers advice in schools should be developed to encourage young people into technical as well as higher education.

Government should amend the Lifetime Skills Guarantee to allow people who already hold a Level 3 qualification to retrain.

This will ensure workers are able to adapt to the changing nature of work and skills shortages.

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