

£250,000 boost for broadband in conference centres

- The competition is part of the UK Government's Tourism Sector Deal
- Investment will help to boost the £32 billion business events sector

Tourism Minister Rebecca Pow has launched a competition for conference centres across the UK to apply for funding to improve broadband infrastructure with the aim of hosting more international conferences at UK venues.

The £250,000 funding will be awarded to venues across the UK to support the improvement of on-site broadband facilities and help them attract more international business events.

Applications for funding will be open to event venues with conference facilities, including hotels and event centres, that bid for – or plan to bid for – events which attract international delegates.

Winners will be able to upgrade their existing connectivity to full fibre broadband which will support faster data speeds and higher usage volumes. This forms part of the Government's commitment to rollout the required digital infrastructure to create more opportunities for businesses. Conference venues will be able to offer more interactive content, and organisers can live stream the events to international audiences.

Tourism Minister Rebecca Pow said:

We want the UK to attract the biggest and best international business events to help grow our economy and encourage trade and investment. Ensuring our conference facilities can deliver the connectivity and facilities organisers want and need is crucial to help achieve this and there is a great deal of scope to expand this area.

Our Tourism Sector Deal is providing a broadband boost to the country's business events industry, and I would encourage all eligible venues to apply."

In 2017, the UK hosted 592 international association meetings with business visitors making up almost a quarter of the 38 million visits to the UK in 2018 and providing a boost to visitor numbers during the off peak season. The sector is currently worth £32.6 billion to the UK economy with delegates spending £4.5 billion and more than half returning as leisure visitors.

This investment, part of the UK Government's Tourism Sector Deal, will help

to attract more business visits and events by making destinations across the UK more attractive to international event organisers.

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport's Building Digital UK scheme has already boosted the broadband capacity at more than 60 hotels through the Gigabit voucher scheme.

Michael Hirst, Chair of the Events Industry Board said:

The business events industry welcomes the UK government's new £250,000 competition to improve broadband connectivity in event venues. This is a strong recognition of the importance of helping to support the growth of first class infrastructure in Britain's large range of diverse world class business event facilities. It will help immensely in continuing to present Britain as a leading global destination for business events.

To be eligible, venues must have capacity for more than 400 delegates, have hosted at least one international event in the last year where a third of attendees were from outside the UK, or be able to demonstrate plans to do so in the next year.

The funding is part of the UK Government's Tourism Sector Deal which sets out how we will work with the sector to grow the country's tourism industry and to ensure we have the infrastructure to cope with the predicted growth in international business and leisure visitors.

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Notes to editors:

- Further information on the scheme and application forms can be found [here](#).
- By 2025 experts predict that there will be an additional 9 million visitors to the UK each year.
- Trade conducted at international business is estimated to be worth over £150 billion annually.