

# [Press release: Businesses urged to claim £2500 voucher for broadband boost](#)

Businesses around the UK are being urged to make use of a £2500 voucher for gigabit broadband speeds before the scheme closes due to high demand.

The Government's [Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme](#) has already helped more than 7000 UK businesses and surrounding homes, who have used the vouchers to contribute to (and in many cases fully fund) the installation cost of a full fibre gigabit capable connection.

The £67 million scheme was initially expected to run until March 2021, but high demand for vouchers means that funds are now expected to be committed a year earlier, and perhaps even sooner if the current success of the scheme continues to grow. To date, demand for the scheme has been strongest in the South West, followed by the South East, Yorkshire and the North West.

Minister for Digital Margot James said:

Our modern [Industrial Strategy](#) is clear on the importance of connectivity, as we build a full fibre Britain that is fit for the future. These vouchers provide practical and immediate help to firms struggling with slow broadband speeds. I encourage small businesses around the UK to apply now.

To ensure as many businesses and homes benefit, the maximum value of the voucher will be reduced from the current £3000 to £2500 in a move that will encourage neighbouring businesses to "pool" their vouchers. This will enable the scheme to reach more properties without the need for any additional funding. We expect more than 1000 additional businesses and homes to benefit as a result of this change.

DCMS will be carefully monitoring take-up following this change to the scheme rules to determine whether there are locations in which a higher voucher value would be justified.

The scheme is part of a series of Government initiatives to build a Britain with nationwide full fibre broadband coverage by 2033, making sure no communities are left behind. In addition to the voucher scheme, [the Chancellor recently announced £200 million](#) for an 'outside-in' approach that will see full fibre broadband rolled out in the hardest to reach rural locations at the same pace as the rest of the country. The Borderlands, Cornwall, and Welsh valleys will be amongst the first areas to be targeted.

FSB National Chairman Mike Cherry said:

Access to good broadband is vital for small businesses across the UK, and with the clock ticking on this scheme, it's important small businesses don't delay if they want to apply for funding.

More information on the Gigabit Voucher Scheme, including details on how businesses can apply can be found at <https://gigabitvoucher.culture.gov.uk/>

## Notes to Editors

### Regional/Nations breakdown of vouchers issued as of 30.10.18

(Additional Local Authority level detail is available upon request)

| Region/ Nation           | Vouchers Issued |
|--------------------------|-----------------|
| South West               | 1613            |
| South East               | 927             |
| Yorkshire and The Humber | 871             |
| North West               | 745             |
| London                   | 661             |
| West Midlands            | 475             |
| East of England          | 407             |
| East Midlands            | 369             |
| North East               | 68              |
| Northern Ireland         | 418             |
| Scotland                 | 315             |
| Wales                    | 58              |

1. The Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme is part of the Local Full Fibre Networks programme, which has the strategic objective of increasing full fibre coverage across the UK.
2. Starting in late 2017, the programme launched the first wave of its programme, designed to test its approach to market stimulation. £10m was allocated to the launch of five pilot projects across the country, including £2m on a market test for the voucher scheme. The national launch of the scheme has been designed to build on the lessons learned from our market test.
3. Gigabit vouchers can be used by small businesses and the local communities surrounding them. Businesses can claim up to £2,500 against the cost of connection either individually or as part of a group project. Residents can benefit from the scheme with a voucher worth £500 as part of a group project.
4. We anticipate that £2,500 will be sufficient to cover the individual connection costs for the majority of UK SMEs. Where this is

insufficient, SMEs can pool their vouchers together with other SMEs or with residents to share costs. We have made it easier for more residents to participate in these projects (now up to 10 residents can participate for every one SME).

5. The UK now has 95% coverage for superfast broadband with speeds of 24 megabits per second or higher. However, most superfast connections still depend on copper telephone wires, which are limited in the speeds they can support. For the fastest and most reliable broadband, capable of delivering gigabit speeds, a full fibre connection is required.
6. One gigabit is the same as 1,000 megabits – so it's a big leap forward in connection speeds that could benefit you and your business into the future. Full fibre also supports symmetrical connections – meaning your upload and download speeds can be the same.

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## **[Press release: James Brokenshire appoints new Homes England board member](#)**

Communities Secretary appoints Duncan Sutherland to the board of Homes England.

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Communities Secretary Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP has appointed Duncan Sutherland to the board of Homes England, as the agency continues its key role in making the housing market work for everyone.

Since its launch in January, Homes England has adopted a stronger, more commercial approach to developing land in areas of high demand as the government's housing accelerator.

Homes England's 5-year strategic plan was also [announced last month](#), outlining how expertise and significant government investment will drive forward key programmes such as Help to Buy.

Communities Secretary Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said:

This is an important time for Homes England as it plays a key role in delivering the homes our communities need.

Having Duncan Sutherland on board will be a great addition to Homes England, bringing his experience in development and I wish him the very best of luck in his new role.

Homes England Chairman Sir Edward Lister said:

I'm delighted to welcome Duncan to our Board. He is arriving at an exciting time with a remit to help and advise the agency on the long-term housing challenges facing this country today.

His wealth of experience and housing expertise will enhance and influence the work of Homes England and help us meet the government's ambition to accelerate housebuilding and deliver the 300,000 homes needed each year by the mid-2020s.

Duncan Sutherland said:

Housing is one of the biggest challenges we face in this country and I am looking forward to serving and contributing to the work of the Board in this innovative government agency.

## **About the new board member**

Duncan Sutherland is a housing practitioner with over 35 years' experience in property, housing, investment, regeneration and development with emphasis on public and private partnerships, involving government, local government, local communities and private investors.

Duncan is the Group Regeneration Director for Sigma Capital PLC and Chairman of Sigma Inpartnership Ltd and was also an HS2 board member between 2012 and 2018 with a focus on the benefits of regeneration and development.

## **Office address and general enquiries**

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0303 444 1209

## Social media – MHCLG

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## [News story: UK Forces return home after successful NATO exercise](#)

UK personnel from the British Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force will return as victors from Trident Juncture, the largest NATO exercise since the cold war, having successfully defeated an acting enemy force of Norwegian, German and Swedish forces.

The UK-led multinational brigade made up of mechanised infantry from the Royal Irish Regiment and Royal Lancashire Regiment, Danish tank units and Polish armoured vehicles completed the week-long final exercise in freezing conditions in Norway. The multinational brigade successfully completed a river crossing on the final day of the live exercise, demonstrating the ability of NATO allies to live, work, and operate effectively together.

Foxhounds from the 1st Battalion Royal Irish prepare to leave in the snowy conditions. Crown copyright.

The brigade conducted defensive operations in a harsh and austere environment in order to disrupt a peer opposition force's advance, before going on the offensive to regain control of lost land. The live exercise phase enabled troops to learn lessons about how to operate when faced with a highly capable and well-equipped enemy.

With Royal Navy ships and RAF aircraft also contributing to the large-scale exercise from the skies and the seas, the exercise demonstrated both the UK's leading role in the alliance and the ability of its armed forces to deploy at scale and integrate with other nations at speed.

HMS Enterprise in the Norwegian Fjords taking part in NATO's Exercise Trident Juncture 2018, the largest exercise of its size for decades. Crown copyright.

With around 50,000 participants from 31 nations, 250 aircraft, 65 ships and around 10,000 used during NATO Trident Juncture 2018, the alliance successfully demonstrated its ability to mount a collective defence response in an Article 5 scenario – when an attack on one is an attack on all.