

Press release: Countdown to high speed broadband for all begins

Ofcom now has up to 2 years to implement the scheme, meaning that by 2020, everyone in the UK will have a legal right to an affordable connection of at least 10 Mbps, from a designated provider, no matter where they live or work, up to a reasonable cost threshold.

Digital minister Margot James said:

In the 21st century, accessing the internet is a necessity not a luxury. We are building a Britain that is fit for the future, and we're now putting high speed broadband on a similar footing as other essential services like water and phone lines.

The Government believes that only a regulatory USO offers sufficient certainty and the legal enforceability that is required to ensure high speed broadband access for the whole of the UK by 2020. 95% of the UK already has access to superfast broadband, and the USO will provide a "digital safety net" for those in the most remote and hardest to reach places.

The specification for the USO design includes:

- A download speed of at least 10Mbps, with quality requirements for upload speeds, responsiveness of connections, and data cap; this could be delivered by a range of fixed line and wireless technologies
- A per premises cost threshold of £3,400, enabling coverage to around 99.8% of premises. Consumers outside this threshold will be able to get a satellite connection, or would have the option to cover the excess themselves (in the same way the universal service right to a landline telephone works)
- A requirement for demand aggregation, so that people within an area can combine their per premise cost thresholds, to ensure that as many people who want to get connected do get connected
- For it to be funded by industry rather than public funding; and
- Uniform pricing so that those connected under the USO do not have to pay more for similar services to consumers served commercially.

Although the USO minimum speed will initially be set at at least 10Mbps, this

will be kept under review and we expect it to be increased over time. Ofcom advise that 10Mbps is the speed required for a typical household's use of internet access to services such as web browsing, email and video services.

Government and Ofcom are now working to put in place a number of processes to implement the USO as quickly as possible. This includes the running of a process to designate the universal service provider(s) who will be required to offer the service, giving both small and large providers a chance to put their names forward for consideration. Ofcom will also be responsible for establishing an industry fund that will support delivery of connections made under the USO.

Following the creation of new powers when the Government passed the Digital Economy Act 2017, the Government consulted on the design of the USO. The detailed response to this consultation has also been published today.

Notes to Editors

1. Ofcom's Connected Nations 2017 report shows that the number of premises without 10Mbps broadband download and 1Mbps upload speeds is 1.1 million, or 4% of premises, compared with 1.6 million or 6% of premises in 2016
2. The designated provider will be under statutory obligation to connect people up to the cost threshold, and to connect them if they are willing to pay excess costs above the threshold.

[News story: NHS gets funding green light for new buildings, wards and beds](#)

The funding was announced today by Secretary of State for Health and Social Care Jeremy Hunt. It is the biggest investment of its kind in the NHS in over 10 years. The NHS will spend the money on programmes to meet local demand, such as new urgent care centres and refurbishing mental health facilities.

The Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin sustainability and transformation partnership (STP) will receive £300 million to transform local hospital services. It proposes to use the funding to develop an emergency care site and a separate planned care site, with 24-hour urgent care centres at both sites.

The remainder of the money will be awarded to 39 smaller projects, including:

- £6 million to upgrade services of 8 trusts across Yorkshire
- £8 million for a new health and wellbeing centre to join up local NHS

services in Kent

- £13 million for 2 new urgent care centres in Newton Abbot and Torquay, and refurbishment of Torbay Hospital's A&E department
- several million pounds for local NHS services in London, including one project worth up to £11 million

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care Jeremy Hunt said:

As the NHS approaches its 70th birthday, we are backing it with one of the largest capital programmes in NHS history. As well as a whole new emergency care development in Shropshire, we are backing local NHS services with new buildings, beds and wards so that staff who have been working incredibly hard over winter can have confidence we are expanding capacity for the future.

Further major projects are also under consideration across the country and we intend to announce one large scale scheme the size of the Shrewsbury and Telford plan every year going forward based on high-quality plans coming forward from local NHS leaders.

The government is also releasing £150 million to support the NHS's work to become more efficient. This additional money will be used to:

- improve the use of a digital programme that helps the NHS use its workforce better
- enable more efficient use of energy in hospitals, which could save the NHS £12 million a year in the first 3 years
- improve pharmacy IT and administration systems to reduce medication errors and improve patient safety

[Press release: Creative Industries Sector Deal launched](#)

- More than £150 million will be jointly invested by government and industry to help the country's world-leading cultural and creative businesses thrive as part of landmark Sector Deal
- Britain's creative industries are worth £92 billion, employ two million people and are growing twice as fast as the rest of the economy
- New Cultural Development Fund will see cities and towns have access to £20 million to invest in culture and creative industries

- Plans to nurture and develop the next generation of creatives include industry-led careers programme and a new London Screen Academy

Britain's world-leading creative industries are set to consolidate the country's position as a global creative powerhouse, following a groundbreaking new Industrial Strategy deal agreed between Government and the [Creative Industries Council](#) (CIC) on behalf of the sector.

As part of a [Creative Industries Sector Deal](#), to be announced today by the Digital and Culture Secretary Matt Hancock, Business Secretary Greg Clark and Co-Chair of the CIC, Nicola Mendelsohn, more than £150 million is being jointly invested by Government and industry to help cultural and creative businesses across Britain thrive.

A Cultural Development Fund will also be launched for cities and towns to bid for a share of £20 million to invest in creative and cultural initiatives. The power of culture and creative industries to boost economic growth is evident across the country. In Hull nearly 800 jobs have been created and almost £220 million invested in Hull's tourism and cultural sectors since the city was named UK City of Culture 2017. And in Bristol creative hubs like the Bristol Temple Quarter are delivering thousands of jobs in design, media and music businesses.

The Sector Deal aims to double Britain's share of the global creative immersive content market by 2025, which is expected to be worth over £30 billion by 2025. To seize on the opportunity of this expanding market, government is investing over £33 million in immersive technologies such as virtual reality video games, interactive art shows and augmented reality experiences in tourism.

Britain is already leading the way in developing immersive technologies. PWC has predicted that the UK's virtual reality industry will grow at a faster rate than any other entertainment and media industry between 2016-2021, reaching £801 million in value, and that by 2021 there will be 16 million virtual reality headsets in use in the UK.

Improving the nations skills is at the heart of the [Government's modern Industrial Strategy](#) and to ensure the industry has the skilled workers it needs to deliver this, up to £2 million will be made available to kickstart an industry-led skills package, including a creative careers programme which will reach at least 2,000 schools and 600,000 pupils in two years. A new London Screen Academy, with places for up to 1000 students, will also open in 2019.

Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Matt Hancock, said:

Britain's creative industries are an economic and cultural powerhouse and this ambitious deal will make sure they continue to thrive as we build a Britain fit for the future.

Our creative industries will help develop the talent of the future,

ensure people are rightly rewarded for their creative content and give our firms the support they need to compete on the global stage. Millions of people around the world enjoy our world-class artistic and cultural output and we want Britain to stay a frontrunner in these vibrant sectors.

Business Secretary Greg Clark said:

The Industrial Strategy is all about building on our existing strengths and seizing the opportunities of the future. Our creative industries have been, for centuries, world renowned and at the forefront of innovation. That's why I was determined to place the creative industries at the heart of our Industrial Strategy.

To boost this innovation, we put the creative industries at the heart of our ambitious Industrial Strategy and this joint deal is a landmark moment for our relationship with this world-leading sector. By working together with universities and industry, and by investing £150 million, we will unlock growth across the UK.

The Deal is evidence of our continued commitment to our world leading creative sector, establishing a partnership that can build on the UK's position and reputation as one the most creative places on earth.

Nicola Mendelsohn, Co-Chair of the Creative Industries Council, said:

This breakthrough deal represents a huge vote of confidence in our creative industries to continue to deliver the world class economic performance and workforce that the UK needs. We look forward to working together with Government to realise its full benefits and the potential of the creative industries in all parts of the UK.

Investment in Virtual and Augmented Reality

Creative businesses are constantly innovating, matching creativity with technology to develop exciting new products and new ways to engage growing audiences. To seize on the opportunity of this expanding market, immersive technologies such as virtual reality video games, interactive art shows and augmented reality experiences in tourism, will receive over £33 million of government funding.

Exceptional growth is forecast for the virtual reality and video game sectors in the next five years with UK consumer spending on video games set to reach £5 billion by 2021.

Government will also support the highly successful UK Games Fund with an additional £1.5 million over the next two years so that it can further boost young entrepreneurs and new product creation in the trailblazing games sector.

The UK's video games industry is already established as the largest in Europe and the fifth largest globally, and this investment will drive growth further.

Flagship film studios expansion

Film studios across the country are increasing their capacity to keep up with demand for production space, including multi-million pound expansions at Pinewood and Warner Bros. Studios Leavesden, as well as significant new projects such as Pacifica Ventures' £100 million investment in Barking and Dagenham and Liverpool's Littlewoods Studios.

Over the last five years inward investment in Britain's film and high-end TV industries has grown by more than 100 per cent to over £2 billion production expenditure a year, and with the right conditions that annual figure could double again by 2025.

The Sector Deal demonstrates business confidence and investment opportunities in the sector, is at an all-time high. Britain's creative industries are worth £92 billion, employ two million people and are growing twice as fast as the rest of the economy. The sector includes music, fashion, design, arts, architecture, publishing, advertising, video games and crafts.

The deal contributes to the Industrial Strategy's vision of good jobs, greater earning power for all, and prosperous communities across Britain. It aims to unlock future growth across Britain, create jobs and develop the cutting-edge technology of the future. The creative industries already export substantially more than their share of the economy and growth at home will also help power the sector to make further strides abroad.

The commitments include:

- £72 million from the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund with £39 million for the Arts and Humanities Research Council to support eight creative research and development partnerships across Britain and £33 million to invest in immersive technology products, services and experiences. This will support new uses of virtual reality in areas like video games, interactive art shows and augmented reality experiences in tourism that will capture the world's attention and double Britain's share of the global creative immersive content market by 2025.
- £2 million to extend the 'Get it Right' campaign to tackle online piracy and educate consumers on the value of copyright and direct them to legitimate websites.

- A new free school based in Islington with places for 1000 students (16+) from across the capital. The London Screen Academy's curriculum will include UAL Creative Diploma and A-levels and is set to open in Sept 2019. Improved access to finance from the British Business Bank for high-growth creative businesses outside of London, with up to £4 million to be invested in a new programme of investment readiness support for creative businesses.
- A new creative industries Trade and Investment Board, comprising industry and government, to replace the current Sector Advisory Group with the ambition of increasing creative industry exports by 50 per cent by 2023 and boosting the number of creative businesses exporting.
- New action to crackdown on copyright infringement. A landmark code of practice brokered by government and industry in 2017 reduced the prominence of illegal sites returned in search results. A series of roundtables between rights holders and platforms will consider the need for and develop a similar approach in relation to the online advertising industry, social media, and online marketplaces.

John Kampfner, Chief Executive of Creative Industries Federation said:

The Creative Industries Sector Deal is a welcome first step, highlighting the significant contribution our sector makes to UK innovation, productivity, and growth. But government's commitments cannot end here. We look forward to continued commitment in supporting the next generation of creatives which will ensure our creative industries remain world-leading. To this end, the Federation will be leading on a Creative Careers Campaign to showcase the richness and diversity of creative careers to young people, teachers, parents and carers across the UK. We look forward to working with government to equip the next generation for future work.

Geoff Taylor, Chief Executive BPI & BRIT Awards, said:

This Industrial Strategy deal demonstrates that Government is now taking a strategic approach towards the creative industries as a key driver of economic growth. There will be opportunities for the music sector in new funding for VR/AR content, the creative careers programme, the Cultural Development Fund and improved access to finance. But the key new elements for music are the commitment to resolve the Value Gap and to require online intermediaries to play a more active role in tackling copyright infringement, through the establishment of new roundtables leading to anti-piracy Codes of Practice for social media platforms, online advertising networks and online marketplaces.

It is also good news that Government has pledged £2m in additional funding for the Get it Right campaign, to encourage consumers to use genuine sites to discover and access content.

Speech: Call for Humanitarian Assistance in Syria

Thank you Mr President. Thank you for being here today to underscore the vital importance of this topic, and thank you particularly for your very powerful statement. The United Kingdom supports your call for ICC referral.

Thank you also to the Under-Secretary-General for your continued efforts to keep the Council informed of the need for protection and registration. I support their calls. I will not rehearse the catalogue of suffering that we have heard so eloquently today but that omission should not be taken as any indication that the United Kingdom is not as horrified as others by what is happening on the ground. Specifically Mr President, it is diabolical that access is actually worse in the face of such suffering. Diabolical is a strong word, but there are no others to describe what is happening. The worst destruction and suffering has continued in Eastern Ghouta. Those who support Assad have not taken steps to help stop the violence. Instead of which Assad and his spotters have violated the strong words of this Council in Resolution 2401. This makes a mockery of the Council's authority as Ambassador Delattre set out. Since the 11 March, an estimated 100,000 people have left Eastern Ghouta and are in make-shift reception sites in rural Damascus. Thousands more have been bused to Idlib. Because there are no independent monitoring or provisions for civilians' safety, those fleeing and those staying remain vulnerable, and at risk of mistreatment and abuse by the regime, including being detained, disappeared or separated from their families. Humanitarians, health workers and first responders on the ground report that the regime is deliberately targeting them. This is illegal and those that help the regime are complicit in that illegality.

The situation continues even for those who are left behind. An estimated 150,000 civilians remain in Eastern Ghouta. They suffer from acute food shortages and lack of medical supplies. They are afraid, and above all, they remember how the regime punished the civilians who fled from Eastern Aleppo in December 2016. This is why Ambassador Al-Otaibi's call for protection and registration is so urgent. We welcome UN plans to scale up support to deal with the dire situations in the IDP camps and collective shelters. We call on Russia to use its influence with the regime to ensure that the UN and its partners can also provide assistance and protection for those who remain in Eastern Ghouta.

Whether civilians choose to stay or leave, it is essential that they be

protected against attack and have access to the essentials to survive. This is not just a plea on the grounds of humanity; it is a requirement under international humanitarian law. It is the job of the Council and all members of the Council to uphold international humanitarian law. Those who side with regime in its actions are themselves guilty of violating that law.

Mr President, I would like in closing to highlight two further areas. The suffering of the Syrian people continues in Idlib, where civilians have been under attack by regime forces for many years. More than a million internally displaced Syrians live there, including those who have fled Eastern Ghouta. In Afrin, we recognise Turkey's legitimate interest in the security of its borders, but at the same time we remain concerned about the impact of operations on the humanitarian situation. And my Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary have raised the need for both protection of civilians and access with President Erdoğan and his Ministers. It was good to hear from the Under-Secretary-General that there may at last be signs of progress in Afrin.

Mr President, after seven years of conflict, over 13 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance in Syria. The Assad regime has created the situation and is now preventing humanitarian actors from relieving some of the horror it has inflicted. We call on Russia to use its influence to ensure that, at a minimum, the UN can fulfil its mandate to ensure humanitarian assistance and protection for Syrians on the basis of need, regardless of any other considerations.

Mr President, I was at Geneva in 2012. I think we all feel that that was a huge missed opportunity in the light of events. The situation has escalated every year since that time, and as the Undersecretary General said, the level of access is worse. The Council has a small opportunity to put measures in place to reduce the risk of reprisals. As you said Mr President, if this Council cannot do it, who can?

Thank you.

[News story: Third Tide-Class Tanker Arrives in UK](#)

The arrival of RFA Tidesurge comes just weeks after her sister ship, RFA Tidespring, met up at sea with aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth for the first time.

The 39,000-tonne tankers can carry up to 19,000 cubic metres of fuel and 1,400 cubic metres of fresh water in support of Royal Navy operations all over the world.

The detailed customisation work to prepare RFA Tidesurge and her sister ships

for operations is being undertaken at the A&P shipyard in Falmouth, sustaining around 300 jobs.

Minister for Defence Procurement Guto Bebb said:

The arrival of RFA Tidesurge in Cornwall marks another key milestone in the Tide Class programme. Tidesurge will soon join her sister ships in providing the integral support which powers our warships and helps our Royal Navy maintain a truly global presence.

While in Falmouth RFA Tidesurge will be fitted with UK specific armour, self-defence weaponry and communications systems, with the total UK work content, including A&P, in the Tide Class programme worth around £150 million and sustaining further jobs at 27 UK-based companies.

The customisation work is expected to take around four months after which RFA Tidesurge will begin final sea trials before entering service in Autumn this year.

Meanwhile, RFA Tidespring, which was preparing to conduct a Replenishment at Sea (RAS) refuelling when it met with HMS Queen Elizabeth in February, is currently acting as the training tanker for the Navy's Flag Officer Sea Training (FOST) and will take part in exercise Joint Warrior in the Spring. RFA Tiderace, which is currently docked at A&P Falmouth, is undergoing preparations for her capability trials which are expected to commence in early April.

Sir Simon Bollom, Chief of Materiel (Ships) at Defence Equipment and Support, the MOD's procurement organisation, said:

I'm proud to say that the delivery of the tanker programme will provide vital support for the Royal Navy, providing it with fuel and fresh water, while also being able to undertake a wide range of maritime operations, including humanitarian relief.

The fourth of the Tide Class vessels – RFA Tideforce – is expected to be delivered later this year.

A&P Group has held the contract to support and maintain RFA ships at home and abroad since 2008. Under the Cluster Support Programme, A&P Group provides maintenance support to groups of MOD vessels, which include RFA Argus and the RFA Bay Class vessels Mounts Bay, Cardigan Bay and Lyme Bay.