

Britain's 'gigaboom' brings next-generation broadband to 1 in 2 premises

- Half of UK premises now able to access gigabit-capable broadband, up from 6% in 2019
- Ministers and broadband operators mark significant milestone during London Tech Week
- Stourbridge, West Dunbartonshire and Solihull see the greatest jumps in gigabit coverage
- Comes shortly after Virgin Media O2 expands gigabit network to cover over 10 million homes

On the second day of London Tech Week, ministers and the telecoms industry welcomed this significant milestone in bringing next-generation internet speeds to every corner of the UK.

Passing 50 per cent national coverage means more than 15 million properties can access a broadband connection capable of download speeds of 1,000 megabits or one gigabit per second.

This is a huge leap in gigabit broadband availability, which stood at just 6 per cent in January 2019.

Since then the government has embarked on [Project Gigabit](#), the biggest broadband rollout in British history, with an unprecedented £5 billion of funding to connect hard-to-reach areas.

The telecoms industry has also vastly expanded its investment in and rollout of gigabit-capable networks. Earlier this month Virgin Media O2 connected a further 1.7 million homes to gigabit services, expanding its gigabit network to cover more than 10 million homes across the country, with plans to upgrade its entire footprint of 15.5 million homes before the end of 2021.

Digital Secretary Nadine Dorries said:

We've passed the halfway point in our national mission to level up the UK with lightning-fast gigabit broadband.

Millions of people can now access the fastest, most reliable internet connections, allowing them full advantage of new technologies over the next forty years.

Thanks to the work of industry and our record £5 billion investment, we are making phenomenal progress in the Prime Minister's infrastructure revolution.

Lutz Schüler, Chief Executive Officer of Virgin Media O2 said:

As the UK's largest gigabit provider, Virgin Media O2 is leading the charge to roll out next-generation services across our entire network at an unrivalled pace. Our continued investment has brought future-proof gigabit connectivity to more than 10 million homes and we're committed to finishing the job.

With a clear plan to connect our entire network to gigabit speeds by the end of the year, we're proud to be playing the leading role in delivering most of the Government's broadband target ahead of schedule and boosting the UK up the global broadband league tables."

Andrew Ferguson, editor of ThinkBroadband said:

We are pleased to see the UK break through the 50 per cent mark for gigabit availability across the UK and if existing plans from providers come to fruition we are looking at 65 to 68 per cent gigabit coverage in early 2022.

The next few years are going to be transformative for the UK broadband market with the many full fibre networks being built and we look forward to mapping all of them and ensuring the public can easily see what their broadband options are.

Across the country, communities have seen massive increases in gigabit broadband coverage spurred by public and commercial investment. West Dunbartonshire in Scotland, for example, has seen gigabit broadband availability surge from just 1 per cent in July 2020 to 95% today.

In Blackpool, gigabit broadband coverage jumped from 2 per cent in January 2019 to nearly 85 per cent today. In Reading, it has rocketed from 5 per cent in January 2019 to 93 per cent.

Elsewhere, Stourbridge in Worcestershire has seen gigabit broadband availability jump from 0% in January 2020 to 96% today. While in Solihull in the West Midlands, it stood at 3% in Jan 2019 but has now hit 91.5% today.

Gigabit connectivity, which is predominantly delivered via full or hybrid fibre broadband cables running into homes and businesses, will be increasingly necessary in the coming years as more and more internet-connected 'smart' devices become available for the home. And it will provide the bandwidth needed for families to run and enjoy new developments in entertainment such as 8K TV and VR gaming on multiple devices at the same time.

As more people work remotely, gigabit broadband will also bring much faster and more reliable connectivity to rural and hard-to-reach communities, making

them more attractive places for people to settle, raise families and start and grow businesses.

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Notes to Editors

- Today's new gigabit broadband availability figures have been compiled by [ThinkBroadband](#), the independent broadband checker website.