

Broadband provision in the Thames Valley area

I have received this update from the Government:

Dear John,

Thank you for your correspondence of 18 May, in which you request details of the government's plans to improve broadband provision in the Thames Valley area. I am replying as the minister responsible for this policy area and I apologise for the delay.

The government has invested heavily in Berkshire, with over £5 million of central government funding allocated. Delivery is managed by our local delivery partner, Superfast Berkshire (<http://www.superfastberkshire.org.uk/>). Through their programme and through commercial intervention, 97% of premises in your constituency have access to superfast broadband – up from 61% in 2010. 70% of premises in your constituency have access to gigabit-capable connectivity.

This infrastructure is providing fast, reliable, and future-proofed technology and these figures will increase as the government strives to meet its ambitious broadband targets. However, if constituents are still suffering from slow speeds, I would recommend that they contact Superfast Berkshire who will hold the most up to date plans and timeframes for delivery.

For those premises in rural areas of your constituency, constituents may be eligible for the Rural Gigabit Voucher Scheme. Businesses can claim up to £3,500 and residents can claim up to £1,500 to contribute towards the cost of installing gigabit-capable infrastructure when part of a group project. It is also possible for residents to pool their vouchers together, bringing the cost of installing gigabit-capable connectivity down for all of those involved in the project. It is worth noting that at least two connections will be required to be eligible for the scheme. Further details can be found at the following address: <https://gigabitvoucher.culture.gov.uk/>.

The government has made a commitment to deliver nationwide coverage of gigabit-capable networks as soon as possible. Much progress has already been made by the government, working with the telecoms industry. The government will continue to take action to remove barriers and to ensure that those in the hardest to reach areas are not left behind. For example, we have already introduced the Telecommunications Infrastructure (Leasehold Property) Bill into Parliament, which will make it easier for network builders to access blocks of flats where there is an absent or unresponsive landlord.

Improving our digital infrastructure will be instrumental in boosting productivity across the UK. This government will deliver on its promise to commit £5 billion of public money to make sure the hardest to reach areas are not left behind. We will do this via a so-called "Outside-In" approach, where

we focus on those areas that have received less commercial investment. With this funding, we can deliver world-class connectivity in rural areas at the same time as it is deployed to our cities, to ensure that a connected, 21st century Britain is a reality for all communities across the UK.

I hope that this information is helpful.

With best wishes,

Matt Warman MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Digital Infrastructure