

# [Digital Secretary attends Royal Cornwall Show to champion £5 billion boost for rural broadband](#)

- Nadine Dorries showcases plans to connect rural South West communities to lightning-fast gigabit broadband at leading agricultural show
- Comes as rural areas in Cornwall and Dorset set for £47 million broadband boost from Project Gigabit benefitting up to 26,000 hard-to-reach premises
- Up to 345,000 South West rural premises set to benefit from Project Gigabit, including as many as 159,000 in Devon and Somerset

**Nadine Dorries is calling on broadband firms to play their part in the biggest internet upgrade in British history by bidding for up to £47 million to rollout lightning-fast gigabit broadband in rural Cornwall and Dorset.**

The Digital Secretary visited the opening day of the Royal Cornwall Show this afternoon to champion the government's £5 billion broadband scheme.

She told an event hosted by the Country Land and Business Association (CLA) that thousands of people in rural parts of Cornwall are a big step closer to getting much faster broadband thanks to Project Gigabit – the biggest government-funded broadband roll-out ever seen in the UK.

Broadband companies have been invited to bid for Project Gigabit contracts to bring fast connections to up to 26,000 homes and businesses in many of the hard-to-reach areas of Cornwall (19,000) and North Dorset (7,000). Work will commence on getting the infrastructure rolled out across areas – including rural communities in Land's End, the Lizard Peninsula, Shaftesbury, Gillingham and many others from August this year.

This is on top of plans to invest as much as £667 million to connect up to 345,000 rural homes and businesses across the South West as part of Project Gigabit, including an estimated 159,000 in Devon and Somerset, 84,000 in Wiltshire and South Gloucestershire, 44,000 across the rest of Gloucestershire and an additional 56,000 premises in Dorset.

Project Gigabit is giving rural areas unlikely to be reached by commercial roll out access to internet connections capable of download speeds of one gigabit, providing the speeds and reliability needed to future-proof homes and businesses for decades to come. The nationwide scheme will boost regional productivity, economic growth and level up by helping to close the digital divide.

**Speaking at the Royal Cornwall Show, Digital Secretary Nadine Dorries said:**

“ Up and down the UK, we're spending £5 billion to connect homes and businesses onto one of the fastest networks on the planet.

“ We have pinpointed 19,000 homes and businesses across Cornwall, in places that are hard to connect. And we’re inviting broadband companies to bid for £36 million worth of contracts to connect those communities.

“ This will make a real, fundamental difference to people’s lives. It means that a person can start a business anywhere they like, knowing that they get the exact same opportunities as someone in London or Manchester. And that’s what this government is all about. Backing businesses, and backing communities, wherever they are.”

Many areas in Cornwall are already able to access top quality connectivity thanks to government investment. Ninety-five per cent of premises can access superfast speeds – which is more than enough to meet most people’s connectivity needs – thanks in part to the government’s £2 billion investment in superfast broadband since 2012.

In a further broadband boost for the South West, the government continues to run the Gigabit Broadband Vouchers Scheme (GBVS) by providing up to £210m worth of voucher funding to support rural communities across the country with the cost of installing new gigabit-capable connections. So far, more than 1,000 premises across hard-to-reach areas in Cornwall are in line for connections thanks to £2.3 million funding through this scheme.

**Secretary of the Royal Cornwall Agricultural Association Christopher Riddle said:**

“ We are very pleased to have had Nadine Dorries join us at the Royal Cornwall Show and for her to have had the opportunity to meet some of our incredible local businesses, as well as discussing investment in gigabit broadband. As a rural area, it is vitally important that we can connect, in what can be very isolated communities in some parts of Cornwall.”

ENDS

**Notes to editors**

**Project Gigabit**

Project Gigabit is the government’s flagship £5 billion programme to connect hard-to-reach communities unlikely to be connected through commercial rollout, meaning families no longer having to battle over bandwidth and people in rural areas can have the freedom to live and work more flexibly, helping businesses to grow and vital public services to thrive.

The faster connections delivered by the scheme have been levelling up rural communities across the UK: enabling businesses to grow by using digital technology to boost their productivity and giving people living in more remote areas better access to good jobs.

The **Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme (GBVS)** is an initiative under Project Gigabit offering rural homes and businesses up to £1,500 or £3,500 towards the cost of a gigabit-capable broadband connection. The value can be much higher in many areas thanks to top-up funding from local authorities.