

PM and Digital Secretary welcome broadband jobs boom

- Prime Minister and Digital Secretary praise telecoms firms for creating 22,000 jobs in gigabit-speeds revolution
- Comes as government ups forecast for percentage of gigabit-capable homes and businesses in UK
- New figures show rollout will reach 60 per cent by the end of 2021, up from 50 per cent

Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Digital Secretary Oliver Dowden met with the biggest names in broadband today (1 April) and praised the industry for creating more than 22,000 jobs over the last year as forecasts for gigabit rollout are revised further upwards.

They welcomed the firms' work to help the nation build back better from the pandemic with top-of-the-range gigabit broadband and underlined the government's commitment to provide whatever support it can to bolster industry efforts to connect as many homes and businesses as possible by 2025.

They also discussed the detail of the £5 billion Project Gigabit scheme to connect hard to reach areas and emphasised our ambition to put out this investment quicker if providers put forward feasible plans to go further and faster with rollout.

The event came as the government upped its forecast for the proportion of homes and businesses with access to gigabit-capable connections by the end of the year from 50 per cent to 60 per cent – which is on track to be among the fastest build rates in Europe and a huge rise from the 9 per cent of gigabit-capable premises when the government was elected in 2019.

The increase is thanks to the steps the government has taken to remove barriers to rollout and the broadband companies committing to build more than originally expected following Ofcom's Wholesale Fixed Telecoms Market Review, which set out how regulation will drive commercial investment in next-generation broadband while protecting consumers from high prices.

Digital Secretary Oliver Dowden said:

Our plan to level up communities across the UK by giving them the fastest broadband on the planet is working. We're now on track to connect 60 per cent of homes and businesses to gigabit speeds by the end of the year and I'm thrilled to see the tens of thousands of jobs being created as we build back better from the pandemic.

But we want to go further and faster, which is why today the Prime Minister and I sat down with the biggest names in broadband to discuss what more we can do together to end the battle over bandwidth.

It was a useful and constructive meeting where we emphasised our goal to speed up investment from our £5 billion Project Gigabit fund if providers can put forward workable plans to accelerate the delivery of lightning-fast connections for every part of the UK.

The meeting gave CEOs and ministers an opportunity to discuss the details of the recently announced [Project Gigabit](#) – a £5 billion infrastructure scheme to bring next-generation broadband to the hardest to reach parts of the country.

Earlier this month the government published a delivery plan for the first phase which will target one million homes in areas with slow connections and which would otherwise have been left behind in broadband companies' rollout plans.

It also announced a £210 million boost to the popular [Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme](#), £110 million for connecting public sector buildings, and a call for evidence on how to reach the 1 per cent of very hard to reach premises using satellite and 5G technology.

The work DCMS is doing to remove the barriers to gigabit rollout and Ofcom's Wholesale Fixed Telecoms Market Review were also among the topics discussed.

Attendees included:

- BT – Philip Jansen, CEO
- Openreach – Clive Selley, CEO
- CityFibre – Greg Mesch, CEO
- Virgin Media – Lutz Schuler, CEO
- Gigaclear – Gareth Williams, CEO
- Sky – Stephen van Rooyen, CEO
- TalkTalk – Tristia Harrison, CEO
- Hyperoptic – Dana Tobak, CEO
- Ofcom – Melanie Dawes, CEO

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