

Press release: Digital Economy Bill receives Royal Assent

The Bill introduces measures to modernise the UK for enterprise. The measures have been designed to:

- empower consumers and ensure everyone has access to broadband wherever they live
- build a better infrastructure fit for the digital future
- enable better public services using digital technologies
- provide important protections for citizens from spam email and nuisance calls and protect children from online pornography

Minister of State for Digital and Culture, Matt Hancock said:

I'm delighted the Digital Economy Act has become law. This legislation will help build a more connected and stronger economy. The Act will enable major improvements in broadband rollout, better support for consumers, better protection for children on the Internet, and further transformation of government services.

The Act includes provisions which will:

- give every household a legal right to request a fast broadband connection
- give consumers and businesses better information about communication services, easier switching and automatic compensation if things go wrong
- cut the costs for new infrastructure and simplify planning rules
- enable stronger enforcement of direct marketing laws
- create civil penalties for online pornographers who do not verify the age of their customers, and ISP level blocking of non-compliant sites, and;
- help protect consumers from "bill shock" by requiring mobile network operators to offer a bill capping facility

During the passage of the Bill through Parliament, a series of useful provisions have been added, including;

- powers to ensure that the Crown guarantee of BT pensions has the necessary flexibility to allow BT and Openreach to be separated
- powers to tackle the problem of "bots" in the online secondary ticketing market,
- an extension of the public lending right to cover e-books, and;
- provision to ensure that on-demand television is accessible to people with disabilities.

Media enquiries – DCMS Press Office 020 7211 2210

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