

Press release: More than 100 rural schools to get gigabit speed broadband

More than 100 rural primary schools across England are set to get gigabit-capable broadband connections within the next few months as part of the Government's commitment to improve internet infrastructure in rural areas.

Under the £3 million pilot programme, 3 schools have already been connected, and 52 have signed contracts with work expected to be completed in the coming weeks. There are also ongoing discussions with another 72 schools who are interested in participating. The trial was originally planned to reach 100 schools, but the project has been delivered under-budget, allowing even more schools to benefit.

Minister for Digital, Margot James said:

This project is a great example of the Government's new "outside in" approach to rolling out full fibre broadband, which is taking gigabit broadband to the hardest to reach rural areas first. As well as making a dramatic difference for students in the classroom, by using the schools as broadband hubs we are also making ultrafast broadband available to thousands of rural homes and businesses across the country more quickly.

Those schools already connected under the programme have seen their broadband speeds jump from 0.5 Megabits per Second (Mbps) to 100Mbps, and have the capability to be upgraded to 1,000Mbps (1Gbps) in the future should they wish to do so.

These new speeds are enabling whole classes to simultaneously surf the internet on tablets as part of structured lessons, and gives schools easier access to online training and educational learning. Access to cloud services not only means savings as staff go paperless, but it has also enabled the decommissioning of the school's local servers to reduce hardware, maintenance and IT support costs.

Mary See, Headteacher at Cheselbourne Village School, Dorset said:

Having new super-fast broadband reach our school has revolutionised the way we work. The much faster and reliable access to the web has allowed staff to work more efficiently; while the children, although still geographically remote, are no longer technologically isolated and will have the same opportunities as their urban peers in preparing for a more technological future.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

In our inter-connected world, a fast, reliable internet connection has never been more important. The schools will be connected to the world of technology, enabling teachers to realise the benefits that fast and reliable broadband has to offer, from reducing teacher workload to improving access to high-quality resources.

I don't want schools in villages and rural areas to be left in the slow lane when it comes to broadband, and the funding announced today will benefit the schools that are most in need.

Kim Mears, managing director for Strategic Infrastructure Development at Openreach said:

We're really pleased to be able to support the Government's drive to connect up schools with full fibre broadband through our Full Fibre Infrastructure Build programme, which enables schools not in our commercial roll out plans to still connect to our full fibre network – without incurring any build costs. Without fast reliable connectivity there is the risk that children will miss out on what is now an essential learning tool, so being able to connect up schools in this way is great news.

The trial is part of the Government's £190 million [Local Full Fibre Networks](#) (LFFN) programme, and will see the schools benefit from fully-funded and future-proof full fibre connections directly into their classrooms. In addition the new connection being provided to schools has had the added benefit of increasing connectivity for the surrounding homes and businesses. Once the fibre has been laid (with the school acting as a "hub") connecting other premises in the area becomes much more commercially viable to broadband providers.

The trial will be instrumental in shaping the new £200 million Rural Gigabit Connectivity Programme, targeting the hardest to reach areas in the UK. Building on the same principle, the programme will deliver gigabit capable connections to key public and business buildings, including schools, as well as encouraging broadband providers to create additional connections to local homes.

Notes to Editors

1. In the recent [Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review](#) (FTIR), the Government made it a priority to connect hard-to-reach rural areas, with the overall aim to connect 15 million premises to full fibre broadband by 2025, and the whole of the UK by 2033.
2. In addition to the existing Local Full Fibre Networks Programme a further £200m of funding was announced in the 2018 Autumn Budget to pilot the ["Outside In"](#) approach described in the FTIR – connecting harder to reach areas of the UK. That funding is available from April 2019 and the Programme will be called the Rural Gigabit Connectivity

programme (RGC)

List of schools connected already or due to be connected shortly

Dorset

Cheselbourne Primary

Derbyshire

Peak Forest Primary

Devon

Cheriton Fitzpaine Primary School, Highampton Community Primary School, Princetown Community Primary School, Holbeton School, Farway Church of England Primary, Filleigh Community Primary School, St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Gloucestershire

Hartpury Church of England Primary, Slimbridge Primary School, Northleach Church of England Primary School, Churchdown Parton Manor Infant School, Churchdown Parton Manor Junior School

Kent

St John's Primary, Blean Primary School, St John's CE Primary School

Lincolnshire

Horblings Browns, Wrangle Primary School, The Hackthorn Church of England Primary School, Fleet Wood Lane Primary, Fairfield Infant and Nursery School, Quadring Cowley, Dunston St Peters School, Langtoft Primary School, Louth Kidgate Primary Academy, The Hackthorn Church of England Primary School, Whaplode Primary, Sturton by Stow Primary School, Nocton Primary School, Digby CofE Primary School, St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Bucknall Primary School, Legsby Primary School

Somerset

Banwell Primary School, East Anstey Primary School

Wiltshire

Wardour Catholic Primary School, Lacock Church of England Primary School

Cambridgeshire

Wittering Primary School

Derbyshire

Wigley, All Saints CofE Junior School, Osmaston CofE (VC) Primary School,

Stoney Middleton CofE (C) Primary School, Stretton Handley Church of England Primary School, Brailsford CofE Primary School, Peak Dale Primary School, Thornsett Primary School, Pilsley CofE Primary School, Parwich Primary School, Kilburn Junior School, Duke of Norfolk CofE Primary School, Saint Mary's Catholic Primary, Hady Primary School, Westhouses Primary School, Eureka Primary School, Stanton Primary School

East Sussex

St. Peter's CE Primary School, St. Michael's CE Primary School (Playden), Stonegate CE Primary School

Herefordshire

Bromesberrow St Mary's Church of England (Aided) Primary School

Northamptonshire

Old Stratford

West Sussex

Wivelsfield Primary School