

[Simon Blagden CBE confirmed as new Chair of Building Digital UK](#)

Simon Blagden CBE has been appointed by Digital Secretary Nadine Dorries to chair Building Digital UK (BDUK) – the agency in charge of delivering the government’s roll out of faster broadband and mobile coverage across the UK.

Simon has 30 years’ experience in the IT, telecoms and digital industry. For 14 years he was non-executive Chairman at Fujitsu Telecommunications UK.

The new role will place him at the helm of the executive agency overseeing Project Gigabit, the biggest broadband roll out in British history backed with a record £5 billion to connect hard-to-reach areas across the UK, as well as the £1 billion Shared Rural Network which will dial up 4G phone signal rural areas.

In 2000 he joined Spescom, a specialist business communications technology group based in Johannesburg, as CEO to lead its international telecoms and IT business. He continues to serve as non-executive Chairman of management consultancy Larkspur International. In 2016, he was awarded a CBE for services to the economy.

He will step down as Chair of the Telecoms Supply Chain Diversification (TSCD) Advisory Council, a position he has held since last year. The Advisory Council is a non-statutory advisory committee of independent members set up to provide advice to the government on measures to build a more diverse, innovative and secure telecoms supply chain.

Digital Secretary Nadine Dorries said:

“ BDUK is critical to rolling out the lightning-fast broadband and mobile coverage needed to improve lives and drive productivity across the UK. Simon will be an extremely capable chair of BDUK thanks to his deep understanding of telecoms and wide breadth of experience in the sector.

“ He will lead the team delivering the country’s biggest digital connectivity projects, including our £5 billion investment in Project Gigabit and the £1 billion Shared Rural Network.”

Chair of BDUK, Simon Blagden CBE, said:

“ I’m pleased to be taking on the role as Chair of BDUK at this exciting time for the telecoms sector. I am determined to use my experience gained through more than 30 years in the industry to maximise BDUK’s potential and to advance the pace and ambition of our delivery.

“ Communities from Perth in Scotland to Padstow in Cornwall are already benefiting from gigabit-capable connections to their homes, businesses, schools, hospitals and libraries. My priority will be for BDUK to build on these foundations and deliver the digital infrastructure that is vital for

people, communities and businesses across the UK.”

Ends

Notes to editors

Chair appointment

- The appointment is for a term of four years. The role is for two days per week, remunerated at £80,000 per annum.
- The new Chair was appointed through a fair and open process, in line with the methods used for other DCMS Public Appointments.
- Responsibilities include, but are not limited to:
 - Playing a leading role in BDUK’s engagement with its key stakeholders, both within government and externally with telecommunications network providers and suppliers
 - Establishing a close and effective working relationship with the CEO and ensuring that the Board is effective in holding the executive to account for programme delivery and providing direction
 - Effectively leading the Board, drawing out the skills and experience of other Non-Executive Directors
 - Promoting the highest standards of integrity, probity and corporate governance, ensuring that BDUK complies with all governance requirements
 - Ensuring the Board has a succession planning strategy, including providing advice to Ministers on other appointments to the Board; maintaining a focus on promoting equality and diversity through Non-Executive and Executive appointments and throughout the organisation as a whole

Building Digital UK

BDUK is an executive agency, sponsored by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport. It works to ensure that homes and businesses across the UK can access fast and reliable digital connectivity, by investing in the rollout of gigabit-capable broadband across fixed and mobile networks.

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.

Shared Rural Network

The Shared Rural Network is the government’s £1 billion deal with the four

Mobile Network Operators to ensure 95% of the UK's geography has a 4G signal by the end of the programme. This will be delivered through a shared network of new and existing phone masts in partial not spots (areas where there is currently coverage from at least one, but not all operators) and total not spots (areas where there is currently no coverage from any operator). More information on the programme can be [found here](#).