

# £1 billion deal set to solve poor mobile coverage

- Moves to cement plans to give high-quality 4G coverage to 95 per cent of the UK by 2025, meaning consumers will get good 4G signal on the go wherever they live, work or travel
- Digital Secretary Nicky Morgan supports deal with UK Mobile Network Operators to provide additional coverage to 280,000 homes and businesses and 16,000km of roads
- New plans for all operators to share phone masts to improve UK coverage is a world first

The move will bring 4G coverage to 95 per cent of the UK by 2025 and be a huge boost for consumers. More people in rural areas will benefit from the speed and efficiency of services on the go – from booking travel, shopping online or speaking to friends and family.

Digital Secretary Nicky Morgan is supportive of a £530 million proposal from the UK's mobile network operators for a Shared Rural Network with the potential for it to be matched by £500 million investment from Government.

This would be a world-first deal with EE, O2, Three and Vodafone investing in a network of new and existing phone masts they would all share. Consumers will be able to rely on their own provider's network to use their mobile phones wherever they are.

It follows Government proposals for an overhaul of planning rules and is part of the Prime Minister's plan to level up the country with world-class digital infrastructure across the country to make sure homes and businesses are better connected.

Better 4G connectivity will make flexible working easier, boost regional economic growth and close the digital divide that exists across the country. The benefits will be felt across all four nations of the UK with the greatest coverage improvements in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

## **Digital Secretary Nicky Morgan said:**

We are determined to make sure no part of the country is left behind when it comes to mobile connectivity. We are closing in on a deal with the mobile network operators so those living in rural areas will be able to get the fast and reliable mobile coverage they need and deserve.

Brokering an agreement for mast sharing between networks alongside new investment in mobile infrastructure will mean people get good 4G signal no matter where they are or which provider they're with.

But it is not yet a done deal and I want to see industry move quickly so we can reach a final agreement early next year.

Strong competition promotes industry investment in mobile coverage in dense urban areas, but rural areas have fewer potential customers and have not seen the level of investment needed to provide good coverage.

The deal would see all four operators come together to create a new organisation to deliver the Shared Rural Network, in what would be an innovative and unique solution to the persistent problem of poor mobile coverage in the countryside. It would get the maximum use out of existing and new phone masts by allowing all four operators to host equipment on them.

Under the proposal, the four operators will invest £530 million to open up and share existing masts and infrastructure to close almost all partial not-spots – areas where there is currently only coverage from at least one but not all operators. It would also mean additional mobile coverage for 280,000 premises and 16,000 kilometres of roads.

If the operators agree to meet these ambitions on partial not spots, the Digital Secretary Nicky Morgan has been clear government will commit up to £500 million of investment to go even further to eliminate total not-spots – those hard-to-reach areas where there is currently no coverage from any operator.

Government-owned mobile infrastructure built as part of the Emergency Services Network will also be made available to all four operators, taking full advantage of government assets. This is expected to contribute to the coverage target by delivering up to an additional 2% of geographic coverage per operator, in some of the most remote, rural locations.

The Shared Rural Network proposal is subject to legal agreement. The Government's ambition is to reach a formal agreement on it early next year.

**Nick Jeffery, CEO of Vodafone UK, said:**

There is no other scheme like this in the world. It will spell an end to annoying mobile 'not spots' for hundreds of thousands of people living, working and travelling in the more remote parts of the UK. By working together, we will deliver better coverage while offering more choice for consumers and businesses using far fewer masts.

**Mark Evans, CEO of Telefonica UK (O2), said:**

These proposals represent a step-change in the way that mobile coverage is delivered. They are the most ambitious solution, of all proposals on the table and will ensure that customers across all corners of the UK can access a good connection. By providing a much-needed boost to rural communities, the Shared Rural Network represents a vital step in bridging the digital divide.

Mobile has become so much more than the phone in your hand; it's the glue that powers the UK's economy and will be a fundamental component of our national success in the years to come.

**David Dyson, CEO of Three UK, said:**

We welcome the Shared Rural Network. It is the best way to enhance mobile connectivity for the 9.3 million living in the UK's countryside: it brings mobile coverage to more places in the UK and it gives people in rural areas a similar choice as those living in towns and cities.

**Marc Allera, CEO of BT's Consumer division, said:**

While EE already has the UK's largest 4G network, we're always looking at new ways to efficiently deliver more 4G to areas that are hardest to reach.

This ambitious proposal combined with critical Government support, will remove the key barriers to tackling the tricky not-spot problem, ensuring people and businesses right across the UK get access to the digital connectivity they need, wherever they are.

**Country Land and Business Association Deputy President Mark Bridgeman said:**

We know the countryside has huge potential for job creation and new economic growth, but in order for this to happen we must ensure every community in the country is fully-connected. Today's news is a big step towards achieving that goal.

This announcement will be welcomed by everyone who lives or works in the countryside. We have been hugely frustrated at the lack of progress in improving mobile reception to date, but the legal coverage obligations now put on operators to improve the situation, through the delivery of a Single Rural Network, will ensure demonstrable improvements over the next few years for rural communities.

## **Hamish MacLeod, Director at Mobile UK, said:**

The mobile industry has a shared commitment with the Government to invest in and accelerate rural coverage improvements, and I am delighted that with the Shared Rural Network we have a proposal of action to deliver.

Working in partnership with the Government all four mobile operators, through a programme of shared infrastructure, will virtually eliminate partial not-spots and then go further to bring 4G coverage to the most rural parts of the UK. This is good news for consumers and businesses across the whole of the UK.

**ENDS**

### **Notes to Editors**

- To date, the Government has considered Ofcom's forthcoming spectrum auction to be the best opportunity for improving mobile coverage. Ofcom plan to auction licences for 5G spectrum for use of the airwaves in the 700 MHz and 3.6-3.8 GHz spectrum bands in 2020. Typically, the mobile network operators will bid for national licences to expand their network capability. Historically, Ofcom has used coverage obligations attached to the operators' licences to improve mobile coverage. Ofcom has proposed to include two coverage obligations in the auction which would require the two operators who acquire them to reach 90 per cent coverage by 2024, in exchange for a discount in the auction.
- The SRN is an alternative proposal from the mobile operators, which relies on Ofcom removing the two coverage obligations from the auction and on the Government funding roll out in total not spots. The Government believes the SRN will deliver a better result for UK consumers and do so at a lower public cost overall because it enables industry to work collaboratively on improving coverage, rather than bidding competitively to do so individually. The SRN proposal would see each individual operator reach 92 per cent coverage by 2025, with licence obligations taking effect in 2026. The collective effect of this will deliver coverage to 95% of the UK.
- To make sure the SRN is delivered, the MNOs would adopt new, legally-binding licence conditions. There will be interim coverage updates every year up to 2025. Ofcom will report regularly on progress in their Connected Nations reports.
- The industry will collectively fund up to £532m over the 20 year lifetime of the programme, with each operator's planned spend reflecting their different starting positions on rural coverage and prior

investment.

- The Government and MNOs have agreed in principle terms for the SRN. The proposal is subject to legal agreement and the ambition is to reach a formal agreement on the SRN.
- The Government's funding for the SRN would be classified as state aid and will be subject to the approval of the European Commission or (depending on the circumstances of EU Exit) the Competition and Markets Authority.
- The UK has a vibrant telecoms industry and we are keen that the SRN proposal reflects that. The programme would be delivered jointly by all four MNOs but it is expected that organisations across the industry would have the opportunity to get involved in the delivery of the programme at various levels of the supply chain, building the required infrastructure in an open, fair and transparent way.

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## [Government launches call for evidence on the welfare of primates](#)

Action to improve the welfare of primates is a step closer today, following the launch of [a call for evidence](#) which will inform the case for banning these animals being kept as pets.

Primates are a group of mammals which includes lemurs, monkeys and apes. The [latest estimate from the RSPCA](#) is that approximately 4,000-5,000 primates are currently kept as pets in the UK.

Primates have complex welfare and social needs, which those in favour of banning people from keeping them as pets say cannot be met in a domestic environment. It is an offence under the Animal Welfare Act to keep a primate while not providing for their welfare needs or to cause them unnecessary suffering.

Animal Welfare Minister Zac Goldsmith said:

Primates are very intelligent and curious wild animals with highly complex welfare and social needs which must be respected. Through the extraordinary work of Monkey World's Dr Alison Cronin, I have seen first-hand how keeping them as pets can cause immense suffering.

That is why the government is today launching this crucial call for evidence to help understand how we can better protect these wild animals. If the evidence supports it, I will ask the department to draw up a consultation on banning the practice.

This action is part of our strong commitment to protecting animals and follows steps we have already taken, including banning wild animals in travelling circuses and a commitment to increasing maximum sentencing for animal cruelty from six months to five years.

This call for evidence requests views on the welfare of primates kept as pets in England, including opinions on restricting the ownership, sale and breeding of primates. It builds on reforms that came into force in October last year meaning anyone trading in pets both online and offline will be subject to the same strict licensing conditions as other breeders and pet shops.

Pet shops are also required to give buyers written information about the animals they buy, with details of the five welfare needs owners must meet under the Animal Welfare Act around environment, diet, behaviour, housing and freedom from pain. This advice is particularly important when buying exotic pets, which can have very specific welfare needs.

Monkey World CEO Dr Alison Cronin MBE said:

Monkey World has rescued primates from the British pet trade for more than 30 years, and we have experienced a dramatic increase in the numbers. We have rescued 72 in the last 10 years, and now have a waiting list numbering more than 100.

Current laws are not protecting the monkeys from abuse or neglect, as they arrive at the park malnourished, with rickets, mobility problems and psychologically damaged as a result of living in solitary confinement, inside people's houses.

Many people are also victim of this unnecessary trade when they are taken in by unscrupulous dealers, scam ads and social media pressure. We are asking people to let Defra know that this trade is unacceptable and the current legislation is not working. The laws must change.

It is an offence not to provide for an animal's welfare needs and anyone breaking this law can face an unlimited fine or a prison sentence.

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# Extension of pub opening hours in celebration of the 75th anniversary of Victory in Europe (VE) Day

The Home Secretary has today announced plans to extend pub licensing hours across England and Wales to mark the 75th anniversary of VE Day.

Under the proposals, pubs, clubs and bars which are licensed to trade until 11pm could be allowed to open until 1am on both Friday 8 May and Saturday 9 May 2020.

The news follows the government's decision to move the early May bank holiday in 2020 from Monday 4 May to Friday 8 May to make the 75th anniversary of VE Day a public holiday.

The occasion will see celebrations and community events across the country to remember the contribution of British, Commonwealth and Allied Armed Forces personnel and all those citizens who contributed to the war effort and safeguarded the home front.

Government plans for VE Day 75, which will be announced in due course, will look to evoke the spirit and significance of this year's D-Day 75 tributes which saw large-scale events with veterans at the heart of commemorations.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

VE Day is a landmark day in our history. Extending licensing hours will pave the way for commemorative events across the UK, so we can pay tribute to the courage and determination of the millions who fought for our freedom or supported the war effort at home.

The extension of pub opening hours will be subject to a short consultation with partners including the police, licensing authorities, industry, community groups and veterans organisations.

Past national occasions where the government has extended licensing hours have included the Royal Wedding in 2018, the Queen's 90th birthday in 2016, the 2014 World Cup, the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012 and the Royal Wedding in 2011.

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# £12 million boost for youth projects

- Package includes up to £7 million towards positive youth activities and £5 million for the #iwill Fund
- Follows recent announcement of a £500 million long-term commitment towards youth services

Youth projects across the country will receive a £12 million boost as part of the Government's commitment to help young people thrive and level up opportunities, Culture Secretary Nicky Morgan announced today.

The investment includes up to £7 million for a Youth Accelerator Fund that will expand existing successful projects, and address urgent needs in the youth sector by delivering extra sessions in youth clubs, and promoting positive activities in sport and the arts to help young people develop skills and contribute to their communities.

Young people will play a key role in decisions over funding allocation by working directly with policy makers to ensure activities properly meet their needs.

A further £5 million of Government funding will also be invested in the [#iwill Fund](#) to encourage 10 to 20 year olds to take part in social action, such as volunteering in their communities by funding groups delivering these programmes.

Jointly funded by Government and the National Lottery Community Fund, the #iwill Fund has created over 500,000 opportunities for young people since it was launched in 2016.

The funding boost is additional investment and comes after the Chancellor recently announced a new [£500 million Youth Investment Fund](#) for the five years from April 2020, to give young people somewhere to go, something positive to do and someone to speak to.

Nicky Morgan, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport said:

I have big ambitions for what this government can achieve for young people – inspiring them to grow in confidence and employability, building their character and resilience, while transforming life chances through sports and the arts.

We will use this immediate investment to benefit young people in as many local areas as possible. This will pave the way for the ambitious, long-term infrastructure plans for our youth services that we will deliver over the next five years – led by the views of young people and those that work with them.

If we wish to use all the great talent in our country it is vital



that we offer opportunities to our next generation, not just in school but outside the school day.

Half of the £500 million Youth Investment Fund will be used to fund new youth centres, refurbish existing facilities and create more mobile clubs. The remainder will be invested in a range of activities that teach important life skills, such as digital skills, culture, sport and social action as well as investment in the youth work profession so young people have a trusted person they can turn to.

This will all be underpinned by the establishment of new Local Youth Partnerships across the country, designed to effectively coordinate and sustain local youth activities.

As part of the Government's commitment to the youth sector, it is investing £500,000 this year in a new Youth Worker Bursary Fund to attract youth workers from a variety of backgrounds. Hundreds of students, who otherwise would not be able to pay the fees, will be given places on approved level 2 and level 3 youth worker qualifications.

In order to ensure those working with young people are given the highest quality support and guidance, the Government is also working with the National Youth Agency to renew the entry level qualifications (levels 2 and 3) for youth work, introducing a level 3 youth work apprenticeship and carrying out a full review of the youth work curriculum.

ENDS

### **Notes to Editors**

The Youth Accelerator Fund will be divided between grants for youth projects across England and a place based fund which will be delivered in partnership with DCMS arm's length bodies.

The local community fund will demonstrate how coordinating provision across a range of sectors – such as the arts, sports and creative industries – can have a positive impact on young people in a specific location. Part of this funding will go directly towards existing projects, which are already delivering excellent programmes for young people, through for example, Sport England.

The #iwill Fund was launched in September 2016. To date it has:

Supported the Scouts and Guides to join forces and open new units across the country, extending their reach and tackling historic waiting lists;

Enabled 20,000 more disadvantaged young people to start the Duke of Edinburgh scheme;

Developed social action in education, health, social care and environmental work. Working together with the Pears Foundation this includes working with 28 NHS Trusts to bring more young volunteers into health care as part of last

year's NHS at 70 celebrations.

Ensured that 40% of those taking part are from the 20% more deprived deciles.

The Youth Investment Fund will cost £500 million over five years, including £68 million in 2020/21. It consists equally of £250 million capital and £250 million resource spending.

The Youth Investment Fund is expected to attract match funding from private, local authority and civil society sources in the range of hundreds of millions. The location of the youth centres will be determined through a process run by DCMS.

New and refurbished youth centres need constructive and high quality activities. This investment will deliver a huge range of universal, open access activities and youth services including in digital skills, arts and culture, sports, and social action.

The Government is supporting young people by investing in more services. Since the launch of the Civil Society Strategy in August 2018 it:

Continues to deliver the National Citizen Service, with more than 100,000 young people in the past year alone benefiting from taking part in this youth programme that helps build a more responsible, more cohesive and more engaged society.

Has invested £5 million to create over 10,000 new places in uniformed youth groups such as Fire Cadets and Scouts, for young people in disadvantaged areas.

Has launched a [consultation](#) as part of a review on the statutory guidance placed on local authorities to provide appropriate local services to improve young people's wellbeing.

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## [The security situation in north east Syria remains volatile](#)

The UK welcomes the fact that the US-brokered ceasefire is holding in north-east Syria and that the fighting appears to be over. We note the agreement announced on Tuesday by Presidents Putin and Erdogan that this ceasefire is now permanent and the subsequent announcement statement from the Turkish Ministry of Defence that they see no need for further operations.

In that context, let me say that we call on Turkey, as all actors in this Syrian conflict, to comply with the obligations towards civilians under international humanitarian law.

We will be looking very closely at the details and implementation of the agreements announced, including its impact on governance and the local population.

The security situation in the north-east remains volatile. Military developments have led to 180,000 people displaced, 80,000 of whom are children, and over 10,000 have fled to Iraq. A number of international aid workers felt compelled to leave, which has had a serious impact on operations. It is essential that humanitarian actors have unrestricted access to areas where people continue to be in need.

We hope that these displaced people will soon be able to return to their homes safely and that damage caused to critical infrastructure is swiftly repaired.

Mr President, on 16 October, this Council agreed press elements expressing our collective concern about the impact of recent developments on the humanitarian situation and the possible resurgence of Daesh. The Sochi agreement has not alleviated our concern. It is imperative that the Council is kept informed of the humanitarian situation, including in IDP camps, as well as on the threat posed by Daesh.

We note the return of regime forces to areas of north-east Syria, following the agreement between the SDF and Damascus. Given the appalling record of the regime's security forces elsewhere, the behaviour of these forces is something we will monitor very closely.

We continue to support the rights of Syrian refugees to return to their homes when it is considered safe to do so. But we would have serious concerns about any attempt to force refugees to return to Syria against their will.

Mr President, any returns must be voluntary and in line with UNHCR principles. Any attempt at deliberate demographic change would be unacceptable.

Mr President, the United Kingdom is one of the largest donors to the humanitarian needs of Syrians, and we do so throughout Syria, and in its neighbours. There is no politicisation in our provision of life-saving support. But as we and our European Union partners have previously made clear, we will not provide stabilisation or development assistance in areas where the rights of local populations are ignored.

All of these concerns mean that the role of the United Nations has a much more important in north-east Syria, particularly given the difficulties being faced by other humanitarian agencies. To allow humanitarian agencies to prepare, plan and respond, we would welcome clarity about how the United Nations plans to scale up its response.

Assistant Secretary-General Mueller made clear the need for the renewal of the cross-border aid resolution, 2449. And I'd also like to acknowledge Madame Marcaillou's assessment and depiction of the scale of the challenge. And as UNMAS seeks to step up its efforts, we will need and we expect to see

the regime cooperating fully and allowing access.

Mr President, we cannot let events elsewhere in Syria distract us from the dire humanitarian situation which persists in Idlib. We were extremely concerned to learn of the resumption of airstrikes and shelling last week.

Since the beginning of May, let us remember that over 1,000 civilians have been killed, including more than 500 women and children, and over 688,000 people have been forced to leave their homes. So we urge all parties to respect the ceasefire agreed on 31 August. And we look forward to the Board of Inquiry's investigation into the appalling attacks in Idlib and its subsequent update to this Council.

The United Kingdom would once again like to welcome the first meeting of the Constitutional Committee next week. This is a momentous occasion. Mr Pedersen has the United Kingdom's full backing.

A political process in line with Security Council Resolution 2254 is crucial to peace in Syria. The Syrian people have suffered through nine years of conflict and, as events in Idlib and the north-east testify, that suffering is not over.

Mr President, the Constitutional Committee is an opportunity for Syrians from all sides to sit down, to grapple with the real issues which have caused the conflict. It is an important signal. But it must more than that. It must be the start of real, genuine change. That will require serious engagement and commitment from all participants to succeed. Unless the regime realises that its actions have been a fundamental reason for the conflict, nothing will be achieved. We call on the regime representatives to demonstrate that at the upcoming first meeting.

Thank you, Mr President.