

[Press release: Readout of PM call with Prime Minister Morrison: 19 May 2019](#)

The Prime Minister spoke to Australia's Prime Minister Scott Morrison to congratulate him on his election victory.

Prime Minister Morrison welcomed the strong bilateral relationship with the UK, and the leaders looked forward to continuing the close cooperation between our countries.

They also discussed the opportunities for engagement in the months ahead, including upcoming talks between our Foreign and Defence Ministers.

The leaders looked forward to meeting again at the next opportunity.

[Press release: £200 million rollout of full fibre broadband begins](#)



31 schools in rural areas amongst the first to benefit

The starting gun has been fired on a programme to rollout gigabit-capable full fibre broadband to the most rural and remote locations in the UK, Digital Secretary Jeremy Wright announced today.

Last summer, Government identified that approximately 10 per cent of UK premises, largely in rural and remote areas, would be unlikely to receive gigabit-capable connections commercially by 2033.

An “Outside In” approach is being taken to make sure rural areas are not disadvantaged in the race for full fibre broadband. This new approach will help ensure that the identified 10 per cent of premises are reached at the same time as the commercial roll out happens across the UK.

The Rural Gigabit Connectivity (RGC) programme, launched today, is the first step of this approach.

DCMS Secretary of State Jeremy Wright said:

Our decision to tackle some of the hardest to reach places first is a significant shift in Government policy and will be instrumental in delivering our plans for a nationwide full fibre broadband network by 2033. Our rollout of superfast broadband transformed the UK’s digital landscape, and our modern Industrial Strategy is focused on investing in the infrastructure that will make Britain fit for the future.

Rural Affairs Minister Lord Gardiner said:

This funding will make sure that rural businesses, homes and communities can get online and make the most of the opportunities digital connectivity provides.

I am determined to champion rural communities and drive forward full fibre broadband connections in the most hard to reach areas across the UK, helping to ensure no one living in our countryside is left behind.

RGC is a two year, £200 million UK-wide programme focused on rural areas. Government has initially prioritised sites in Cornwall, Cumbria, Northumberland and Pembrokeshire. Additional sites in Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales and the rest of England will be announced in the coming months.

The RGC Programme will trial a model connecting local hubs* in rural areas, starting with primary schools. Working with the Department for Education, DCMS has identified the first 31 schools eligible for a connection under the scheme. These new speeds will enable 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 will also allow the decommissioning of the school’s local servers to reduce hardware, maintenance and IT support costs.

Other public buildings will then be added throughout the course of the programme, for example health sites and community halls.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

In most parts of the country a fast, reliable internet connection is taken for granted – but that is not the case for everyone. This programme will mean that schools in these areas won't be held back from accessing all of the opportunities the internet has to offer.

These first 31 schools will see the tangible benefits that fast broadband has to offer, from reducing teacher and staff workload, to improving access to high-quality learning resources.

The RGC programme also has a rural gigabit broadband voucher component, offering up to £3,500 for small businesses and up to £1,500 for residents. This will be offered to encourage greater take-up of gigabit-capable connectivity to residents and businesses in rural areas.

There will also be opportunities to explore other ways of rolling out gigabit capable connectivity in rural and hard-to-reach areas using the Outside in approach.

The funding for the scheme comes from the Government's National Infrastructure Productivity Fund (NPIF). The NPIF is designed to bolster UK productivity, which is crucial to raising living standards. Through the NPIF, the government is investing in the vital infrastructure needed to make it easier for people to connect with others, and work remotely and flexibly.

The Exchequer Secretary Robert Jenrick said:

We want everyone across the country to have access to fibre broadband connections no matter where they live. We've set a target of having 15 million premises able to connect to full fibre by 2025 with a nationwide network by 2033 and committed to ensuring the most rural areas aren't left behind.

This investment enables communities that have not previously benefited from broadband to leapfrog to the most advanced fibre technology – boosting productivity and enhancing quality of life.

The RGC programme will complement other BDUK Programmes, such as Superfast Broadband and Local Full Fibre Networks, but will not overlap with areas where a gigabit-capable solution is already available or will be delivered through these existing interventions.

Notes to Editors

- A 'Hub' is a public sector building, which is deemed to be eligible for intervention and aligns with qualifying criteria set by the Government's Building Digital UK (BDUK). The approach would involve upgrading an eligible rural public sector building with gigabit-capable connectivity. The benefit of this approach is two-fold: Firstly, it provides a gigabit capable provision to the public building, and therefore an improved

public service. Secondly, the surrounding area can become increasingly viable for commercial intervention, stimulating the market to build more networks in these areas.

There are now three programmes delivering full fibre in the UK – Rural Gigabit Connectivity (RGC) programme, Local Full Fibre Networks and Superfast Broadband. These will now all be aligned under one overarching programme called ‘The UK Fibre Programme’. Broadband Delivery UK has now been renamed Building Digital UK, although the BDUK moniker remains the same.

How the RGC delivery process will work

Once potential Hub sites have been identified, the sites will be filtered against the Programme’s eligibility criteria to confirm which sites are eligible for funding.

The eligibility criteria will take into account a number of factors, including rurality, funding considerations, state aid compliance, existing interventions (commercial or otherwise), value for money and deliverability within timescales of the Programme.

Once this assessment has taken place, BDUK and the strategic partner will work through an assurance process. If approved, this will result in BDUK committing funding, and the organisation entering into an agreement with a supplier to deliver the Hub upgrades.

List of first 31 Schools identified as eligible for a Gigabit capable connection

Blisland Primary Academy

Cornwall

Braddock C of E Primary School

Cornwall

Calstock Community Primary School

Cornwall

Darite Primary Academy

Cornwall

Delaware Primary Academy

Cornwall

Grade-Ruan C of E School

Cornwall

Halwin School

Cornwall

Mevagissey Community Primary School

Cornwall

Sithney Community Primary School

Cornwall

St Erme with Trispen Community Primary School

Cornwall

St Kew Atlantic Centre of Excellence Academy

Cornwall

Madron Daniel (previously St Maddern's) C of E School

Cornwall

St Mellion C of E Voluntary Aided School

Cornwall

St Mewan Community Primary School

Cornwall

St Winnow C of E School

Cornwall

Trannack Primary School

Cornwall

Treverbyn Academy

Cornwall

Trythall Community Primary School

Cornwall

Wendron C of E Primary School

Cornwall

Werrington Community Primary School

Cornwall

Eaglesfield Paddle CE Primary School

Cumbria

Holme St Cuthbert Primary School

Cumbria

Rosley C of E School

Cumbria

Acomb First School

Northumberland

Cambo First School

Northumberland

Cambois Primary School

Northumberland

Ellingham C of E Aided Primary School

Northumberland

New Hartley First School

Northumberland

St Michael's C of E Primary School

Northumberland

Tweedmouth Prior Park First School

Northumberland

Ysgol Llanychllwydog

Wales

[News story: More support to help employers offer T Level industry placements](#)

The [industry placement](#) is a critical part of the T Level qualification giving

young people the chance to gain vital hands on workplace experience in their chosen profession Education Secretary Damian Hinds has said today, as he unveils a [new package of support for employers](#).

More than 200 businesses including leading firms like Fujitsu and GlaxoSmithKline, are already backing these landmark reforms – working with the Government to help design the new T Level course content so they provide young people with the skills industry value.

A unique part of a T Level will be the completion of a high-quality industry placement – of at least 315 hours, or approximately 45 days – where students will build the knowledge and skills they need in a workplace environment.

The package of support announced today follows extensive consultation with employers and further education providers and directly reflects their feedback to help make sure more employers can offer these vital placements in readiness for the T Level rollout in September 2020.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

The completion of a high-quality industry placement will be at the heart of every T Level and is part of what will set these new courses apart from every attempt to reform technical and vocational education in the past 70 years.

To make a success of T Levels, we need businesses working in partnership with us and colleges. Industry placements will help young people build the confidence and skills they need to get a head start in their careers and they'll help businesses maximise their talent pipeline for the future.

This new package of support is designed to help ensure we can deliver high-quality placements for every T Level student from 2020.

The package includes:

- [New guidance](#) to support employers and providers to offer tailored placements that suit their workplace and the needs of young people – such as offering placements opportunities with up to 2 employers and to accommodate students with part time jobs or caring responsibilities
- Ahead of the roll-out of the first three T Levels in September 2020 – a new £7 million pilot scheme to explore ways to help cover the costs associated with hosting a young person in their workplace such as equipment and protective clothing.
- Bespoke 'how to' guides, workshops and practical hands-on support for

employers – designed alongside industry bodies to make it as easy as possible for them to offer placements.

T Levels represent the biggest shake up to technical education in a generation. To support the development and delivery of industry placements, the Government has already provided nearly £60 million in funding and worked with around 400 further education providers and over 2,000 employers including Marriott and Warren Services to identify the best ways of delivering them. [Around 1,550 students took part in placement opportunities last year with thousands more placements underway this academic year \(18/19\).](#)

Industry placements will provide businesses with an opportunity to attract a diverse range of talent and build the skilled workforce they need for the future.

Matthew Fell, CBI Chief UK Policy Director, said:

There has long been a need for an increase in prestigious technical options after GCSEs that parents, teachers, and businesses understand. This package of measures to help employers deliver placements is welcome, because if T Levels are going to be a success they will require long-term commitment from Government. Support will be most needed for small and medium-sized businesses, so special attention should be paid to these firms.

David Hughes from the Association of Colleges (AoC) said:

AoC is delighted that the Department has responded to college voices advising how best to support successful Industry Placements as an integral part of T Levels. The new flexibilities directly address our concerns about students with caring responsibilities and part time work. The new approach will allow more young people to study for a T Level and benefit from a placement.

Jane Gratton, Head of People Policy at the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), said:

Business has long called for a high-quality vocational alternative to the A Levels to ensure young people are work-ready and have greater technical skills and knowledge when they join the workforce. T level industry placements are crucial to developing these enhanced skills, and the greater support and flexibility will enable firms of all sizes to open their doors to young people, introduce them to the exciting careers on offer in the local area, and identify a great pipeline of future talent.

[The first three T Levels for Digital, Education and Construction will be first taught from September 2020. A further seven will to be taught from 2021, including three in Health and Science, with a further 15 coming onboard from 2022 onwards in sectors such as legal, financial and accounting, engineering and manufacturing, and creative & design.](#)

To support the further education sector to deliver the new T Level courses, the Government will provide an additional half a billion pounds every year once they are all fully rolled out. The Government is also investing £20 million to help prepare the sector for the introduction of T Levels. This includes the [£5 million Taking Teaching Further programme](#), which aims to attract more industry experts to work in the sector, and the [£8 million T Level Professional Development offer](#) to help teachers and staff prepare for the roll-out of the new qualifications.

Find out more about [industry placements](#) here.

[Press release: Government delivers new £10m fund to plant over 130,000 urban trees](#)



Urban trees.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove announces grants will be made available over the next two years to green town and city spaces.

A new £10 million plan will see more than 130,000 trees planted across England's towns and cities, Environment Secretary Michael Gove announced today.

Through the Urban Tree Challenge Fund, grants will be made available over the

next two years to green urban areas and help meet the government's target to plant one million urban trees by 2022.

Planting more trees is crucial in the fight against climate change, because trees store carbon and can help make our towns and cities more resilient. Trees in urban areas improve health and wellbeing, connect people with the outdoors, absorb noise, reduce flood risk, lower temperatures through shading, and create green spaces for communities to come together.

The scheme, which will be administered by the [Forestry Commission](<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/forestry-commission>), will be open to individuals, local authorities, charities and NGOs. Grants will fund the planting of trees and the first three years of their care to ensure they can flourish into the future.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

Trees are vital in the fight against climate change, which is why we must go further and faster to increase planting rates.

We need trees lining the streets of our cities and towns, not only to green and shade them but to ensure that we remain connected to the wonders of the natural world and the health and wellbeing benefits that it brings us.

Government Tree Champion Sir William Worsley said:

Trees are the lifeblood of our nation, and it is more important than ever to ensure they are rooted not only in our countryside, but in our towns and cities too.

The benefits of planting urban trees are endless, and I encourage anyone with the ability to apply for this fund to get involved and help green our towns and cities.

The grant will be delivered as a challenge fund, and therefore requires match funding from those who apply.

The scheme will support projects which can provide the greatest environmental and social benefits, and applications will be processed by the Forestry Commission. A map will be available to check eligibility before applying.

Forestry Commission Chair Sir Harry Studholme said:

I am delighted the Forestry Commission have been asked to deliver the Urban Tree Challenge Fund. The fund is an important part of the work that the Forestry Commission is doing to expand England's tree and woodland cover.

It allows us to plant more trees much closer to where people live and work, and where the many benefits of trees make the most difference. We look forward to lots of new planting happening this Autumn.

Chair of [England's Community Forests](#) and Director of [The Mersey Forest](#), Paul Nolan said:

There is an increasing understanding of the role that trees and woodlands play in helping to make our towns and cities better places for people and nature to thrive.

We need to be planting many more trees over the next 25 years, and England's Community Forests welcome this new investment that is being announced by the government.

The launch of the fund forms part of the government's [Year of Green Action](#), a year-long drive to help people to connect with, protect and enhance nature. This commitment forms part of the government's [25 Year Environment Plan](#) to instill a legacy for the future, with a focus on children and young people.

Earlier this year the government [consulted on a raft of forestry measures](#) which included proposals to ensure communities have their say on whether street trees should be felled, with legislation to be brought forward later this year.

The government is committed to growing woodland cover, and this year we will consult on a new English Tree Strategy to accelerate woodland creation and introduce a flagship Environment Bill to address the biggest environmental priorities of our age.

The fund will be open this week for applications.

[Press release: Statement on 10th anniversary of the end of conflict in Sri Lanka](#)

Mark Field, Minister for Asia said:

On the 10th anniversary of the end of the armed conflict in Sri Lanka, we should take the opportunity to reflect and remember those from across all communities who lost their lives and suffered

during the conflict. The UK is a long-standing friend of Sri Lanka and we will continue to support reconciliation and transitional justice in order to build a peaceful, prosperous and stable future.

We were all deeply shocked by the terror attacks on Easter Sunday, and I reiterate our deepest condolences to those affected, and our solidarity with the people of Sri Lanka. Now more than ever it is important to build on Sri Lanka's diversity, its multi-ethnic and multi-religious society and traditions, to promote peaceful relations among all communities and faith groups, so that the whole of Sri Lanka can thrive and prosper.

Further information