

Press release: Universal broadband to reach every part of the UK

BT has put forward an offer to voluntarily provide this service across the country, which would largely be delivered by Openreach. The offer has been received after the government committed to introduce a Universal Service Obligation (USO) through regulation to give every home and business in the UK the right to request a high speed connection of at least 10 Megabits per second (Mbps). That's the speed that will meet the typical needs of a family for them to be able to stream films, carry out video conferencing and browse the web at the same time.

The BT proposal would mean many premises will receive substantially more than 10Mbps – homes and businesses are also expected receive connections more quickly than could be delivered under a regulatory approach. The Government will now consider this offer alongside a consultation on the regulatory USO – which is being launched today.

Culture Secretary Karen Bradley said:

The government is taking action to ensure that people everywhere in the UK can get a decent broadband connection as soon as possible. We warmly welcome BT's offer and now will look at whether this or a regulatory approach works better for homes and businesses.

Whichever of the two approaches we go with in the end, the driving force behind our decision making will be making sure we get the best deal for consumers.

The communications regulator, Ofcom, has advised that 10Mbps, with quality requirements to limit delays and support uploading content as well as downloading it, meeting the needs of a typical household. It will also provide improved connectivity for many small businesses. A regulatory USO would provide a safety net, meaning that fast and reliable broadband was available to everyone, regardless of where they lived. The consultation being launched today outlines detailed proposals for how this new right to request a connection would work in practice.

This will help Government take a decision on the best way to get better broadband in hard to reach areas. No decision has been taken, and the Government will carefully weigh the merits of the two approaches. Unlike under a regulatory USO, the proposal from BT is to proactively build the necessary network infrastructure to connect the majority of households and businesses rather than wait for this to be done on request.

It is also proposed that BT would fund this investment and recover its costs through the charges for products providing access to its local access networks. The approach to recovering these costs will be considered in

Ofcom's current wholesale local access review.

BT Chief Executive Gavin Patterson said:

We are pleased to make a voluntary offer to deliver the Government's goal for universal broadband access at minimum speeds of 10Mbps.

This would involve an estimated investment of £450m – £600m depending on the final technology solution.

This investment will reinforce the UK's status as the leading digital economy in the G20. We already expect 95% of homes and businesses to have access to superfast broadband speeds of 24Mbps or faster by the end of 2017. Our latest initiative aims to ensure that all UK premises can get faster broadband, even in the hardest to reach parts of the UK.

The Government will now work with BT over the coming months to develop the proposal – which, if it is accepted, will be legally-binding. The Government will make a decision following its consultation on the regulatory USO.

Notes to editors:

1. BT proposes to use a range of technologies to deliver this, including fibre to the cabinet, fibre to the home and fixed wireless. Fixed wireless will be made available at an affordable price for hard to reach premises.
 2. They would use these technologies to take the UK's 10Mbps coverage to around 99 per cent by 2020. All of these technologies will come with quality standards including a minimum 1Mbps upload speeds, and requirements to minimise delays from contention and latency.
 3. Fixed coverage would be made available to as many premises as possible. BT expects to complete the build of this fixed network by either December 2021 or December 2022 depending on the mix of technologies used, some of which are subject to trial and industry consultation.
 4. The number of premises that will only have satellite as an option is expected to be 0.3% by the end of 2022.
 5. Today, over 93 per cent of UK homes and businesses can already get superfast broadband (24 Mbps+), and as a direct result of the Government's Superfast Broadband Programme, this will increase to 95 per cent by the end of this year.
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[News story: Foreign Secretary condemns missile test by North Korea](#)

The Foreign Secretary, Boris Johnson, said:

The UK strongly condemns North Korea's second test of an intercontinental ballistic missile and calls on the regime to immediately stop all activity that breaches UN Security Council resolutions.

The UK will stand alongside our allies and partners as we confront the growing threat North Korea poses to regional and international security. Once again North Korea shows no regard for its international obligations.

We urge the DPRK regime to put the well-being of its own people ahead of the illegal pursuit of nuclear and ballistic missile programmes.

[Press release: £200 million boost for rural England](#)

Funding for rural businesses that will generate thousands of jobs and provide new support to expand and improve their premises has been announced as part of a £200million grant offer.

Announcing the latest round of [Rural Development Programme](#) funding, Lord Gardiner confirmed that for the first time under the current scheme specific funding will be available to support new rural broadband projects, and provide significant amounts of funding to on-farm businesses to invest in new infrastructure such as new buildings and machinery.

The current Rural Development Programme for England is expected to generate 6,750 new jobs. Already more than 1,400 projects have been agreed which are expected to create over 2,300 jobs.

The grants will also fund landowners to improve farm productivity and invest in rural tourism opportunities.

Rural Affairs Minister Lord Gardiner said:

One in three businesses in this country are based in the countryside, and this government is committed to providing the support they need to create a strong and prosperous rural economy.

This funding will make sure businesses in remote locations can get online, help farmers install cutting-edge technology, create new tourist hotspots and bring high quality jobs to rural communities across the country.

This round of funding will include:

- £30m to improve rural broadband – the grants available will encourage growth by helping provide broadband services at speeds of 30Mbps or faster where this is not available or planned. It will supplement existing [Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport](#) investment in rural broadband.
- £45m to help rural businesses grow and invest in new equipment – rural businesses, including those engaged in tourism and food production, can apply for funding to invest in their company, helping them to expand, diversify, and invest in new technology.
- £120m for projects that improve farm productivity – this money will help farmers, foresters and landowners manage their land more effectively. Funding will be available for a wide range of purposes, including woodland management equipment, creating on-farm reservoirs and using water more efficiently.

Lord Gardiner made the announcement during a visit to the Suffolk Cookhouse project in Ipswich, which received £422,000 in 2012 to open a new food hall. The hall is now one of the biggest tourism hubs in the region, bringing together local artists and food producers, and creating 45 jobs.

The first grant funding that will become available will be for reservoirs and forestry equipment and these are expected to be open for applications from Monday, while funding for broadband, rural business support, on-farm food processing, arable and horticultural productivity and resource efficiency will be made available later in the year. A further £6.6m will be available for animal health and welfare projects.

This funding is part of planned investment of at least £3.5 billion into our rural economies by 2020 under RDPE, supporting the third of businesses in the UK which are based in the countryside. All projects agreed before we leave the EU will be guaranteed for their lifetime – providing stability and certainty while future support for farmers and rural communities is developed.

Further information

- Today's announcement supports the manifesto commitment to bring sustainable growth to rural economies, entrepreneurs, farmers and landowners.
- The [RDPE Growth Programme](#) provides funding for projects in England which create jobs and growth in the rural economy. Under the RDPE Growth Programme, there are currently calls for projects open for: business development, food processing and rural rural tourism infrastructure.
- [Countryside Productivity](#) aims to improve productivity of farm and forestry businesses by making targeted investments to encourage best practice and innovation.

[News story: Statement by France, Germany, the United Kingdom and United States: Iran's space launch vehicle inconsistent with UNSCR 2231](#)

With its latest launch of a Simorgh space launch vehicle on 27 July, Iran has again demonstrated activity inconsistent with UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2231. We condemn this action.

This resolution calls upon Iran to not undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons, including launches using such technology like this launch. Space launch vehicles use technologies that are closely related to those of ballistic missile development, in particular to those of Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles.

This step follows missile launches into Syria on 18 June and the test of a medium range ballistic missile on 4th July.

Iran's programme to develop ballistic missiles continues to be inconsistent with UNSCR 2231 and has a destabilising impact in the region. We call on Iran not to conduct any further ballistic missile launches and related activities. We are writing to the UN Secretary General with our concerns. The governments of France, Germany and the United Kingdom are discussing these issues bilaterally with Iran and are raising their concerns.

[Press release: Independent review of building regulations and fire safety](#)

An independent review of building regulations and fire safety has been announced by the government today (28 July 2017).

This follows the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower, which raised serious questions about the fire safety of high rise residential buildings, and subsequent government testing of aluminium composite material (ACM) cladding from similar buildings across the country.

The [first result from large scale tests](#) of building cladding systems has also been published today. These latest tests simulate a tall building and allow experts to understand better how different types of cladding panels behave with different types of insulation in a fire.

The first system tested, a wall cladding system using an aluminium composite material (ACM) cladding with unmodified polyethylene filler (Cat 3) and foam insulation, failed the test which is set out in current building regulations guidance.

Immediate action is already underway to ensure the safety of residents in these buildings. But the results also make clear that we need to understand how current building regulations and fire safety works in order to make them as effective as possible in the future.

This forward-looking independent review, to be led by Dame Judith Hackitt, Chair of EEF, the Manufacturers' Organisation, will look at current building regulations and fire safety with a particular focus on high rise residential buildings. It will report jointly to the Communities Secretary Sajid Javid and the Home Secretary Amber Rudd.

It will examine:

- the regulatory system around the design, construction and on-going management of buildings in relation to fire safety
- related compliance and enforcement issues
- international regulation and experience in this area

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid said:

Since the tragic Grenfell Tower disaster, the government has been working to make sure people living in high rise buildings are safe.

It's clear we need to urgently look at building regulations and fire safety. This independent review will ensure we can swiftly make any necessary improvements. Government is determined to make

sure that we learn the lessons from the Grenfell Tower fire, and to ensure nothing like it can happen again.

As part of the review, Dame Judith will consult the [Buildings Regulations Advisory Committee](#) – which advises the government on changes to building regulations– as well as the construction and housing industry, the fire sector, international experts, MPs and the public.

The review will also work closely with other government departments and the devolved administrations and consider the implications of changes to the regulatory system on other government objectives.

Review Chair, Dame Judith Hackitt said:

I am honoured to be asked by government to lead this important independent review. This review will look at building regulations and fire safety to see what changes can be made for the future to make these more effective.

I am keen to engage widely with industry and the public to inform the recommendations from the review. I want the recommendations to lead to any necessary improvements in the system being made.

Terms of reference for this independent review will be published in summer 2017, once the terms of reference for the Grenfell Tower Public Inquiry have been agreed.

It is expected that the review will present an interim report before the end of the year, and a final report no later than spring 2018. The government will act swiftly on any recommendations from this review to make sure people living in high rise buildings are safe.

Short biography of Dame Judith Hackitt

Dame Judith was Chair of HSE from October 2007 to March 2016. She previously served as a health and safety Commissioner between 2002 and 2005. She was made a Dame in the 2016 New Year Honours for services to health and safety and engineering in particular for being a role model for young women. She was awarded a CBE in 2006.

In April 2016, she was appointed as Chair of EEF, The Manufacturers' Organisation in April 2016.

Dame Judith is a chemical engineer and graduated from Imperial College in 1975. She worked in the chemicals manufacturing industry for 23 years before joining the Chemical Industries Association (CIA) in 1998. She became Director General of CIA (from 2002-2005) and then worked in Brussels for the European Chemical Industry Association (CEFIC).

She was elected as a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering in July 2010

and currently chairs the External Affairs Committee. Dame Judith is a Fellow of the Institution of Chemical Engineers and a member of council. She was President of IChemE from May 2013 to May 2014.

Dame Judith is also Chair of Semta – the Science, Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies Alliance, and a non-executive director of the High Value Manufacturing Catapult.