

PM and Digital Secretary welcome broadband jobs boom

- Prime Minister and Digital Secretary praise telecoms firms for creating 22,000 jobs in gigabit-speeds revolution
- Comes as government ups forecast for percentage of gigabit-capable homes and businesses in UK
- New figures show rollout will reach 60 per cent by the end of 2021, up from 50 per cent

Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Digital Secretary Oliver Dowden met with the biggest names in broadband today (1 April) and praised the industry for creating more than 22,000 jobs over the last year as forecasts for gigabit rollout are revised further upwards.

They welcomed the firms' work to help the nation build back better from the pandemic with top-of-the-range gigabit broadband and underlined the government's commitment to provide whatever support it can to bolster industry efforts to connect as many homes and businesses as possible by 2025.

They also discussed the detail of the £5 billion Project Gigabit scheme to connect hard to reach areas and emphasised our ambition to put out this investment quicker if providers put forward feasible plans to go further and faster with rollout.

The event came as the government upped its forecast for the proportion of homes and businesses with access to gigabit-capable connections by the end of the year from 50 per cent to 60 per cent – which is on track to be among the fastest build rates in Europe and a huge rise from the 9 per cent of gigabit-capable premises when the government was elected in 2019.

The increase is thanks to the steps the government has taken to remove barriers to rollout and the broadband companies committing to build more than originally expected following Ofcom's Wholesale Fixed Telecoms Market Review, which set out how regulation will drive commercial investment in next-generation broadband while protecting consumers from high prices.

Digital Secretary Oliver Dowden said:

Our plan to level up communities across the UK by giving them the fastest broadband on the planet is working. We're now on track to connect 60 per cent of homes and businesses to gigabit speeds by the end of the year and I'm thrilled to see the tens of thousands of jobs being created as we build back better from the pandemic.

But we want to go further and faster, which is why today the Prime Minister and I sat down with the biggest names in broadband to discuss what more we can do together to end the battle over bandwidth.

It was a useful and constructive meeting where we emphasised our goal to speed up investment from our £5 billion Project Gigabit fund if providers can put forward workable plans to accelerate the delivery of lightning-fast connections for every part of the UK.

The meeting gave CEOs and ministers an opportunity to discuss the details of the recently announced [Project Gigabit](#) – a £5 billion infrastructure scheme to bring next-generation broadband to the hardest to reach parts of the country.

Earlier this month the government published a delivery plan for the first phase which will target one million homes in areas with slow connections and which would otherwise have been left behind in broadband companies' rollout plans.

It also announced a £210 million boost to the popular [Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme](#), £110 million for connecting public sector buildings, and a call for evidence on how to reach the 1 per cent of very hard to reach premises using satellite and 5G technology.

The work DCMS is doing to remove the barriers to gigabit rollout and Ofcom's Wholesale Fixed Telecoms Market Review were also among the topics discussed.

Attendees included:

- BT – Philip Jansen, CEO
- Openreach – Clive Selley, CEO
- CityFibre – Greg Mesch, CEO
- Virgin Media – Lutz Schuler, CEO
- Gigaclear – Gareth Williams, CEO
- Sky – Stephen van Rooyen, CEO
- TalkTalk – Tristia Harrison, CEO
- Hyperoptic – Dana Tobak, CEO
- Ofcom – Melanie Dawes, CEO

ENDS

[UK and Qatar expand defence partnership](#)

As part of the agreement, RAF Leeming in North Yorkshire will become the British base for the new UK-Qatar joint Hawk training squadron, utilising Qatar's recently acquired fleet of nine Hawk T2 variant aircraft.

The decision to base the new Squadron at RAF Leeming represents a long-term

commitment to the base, which provides a strategic and operational Main Operating Base for the RAF.

Providing valuable training opportunities for both nations, the updated defence agreement will also see the RAF Voyager deploy to Qatar to periodically provide air-to-air refuelling training for the Qatari Emiri Air Force's (QEAF) fleet of fast jet aircraft.

The RAF Voyager fleet already supports Defence activity around the world and the Qatar AAR service over the next two years will be part of this. The deployments will be planned to co-ordinate with the UK's operational and training needs and will benefit the RAF by enhancing its interoperability with international personnel and equipment.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

In the face of new and emerging threats, it is vital we collaborate with our international allies to tackle our shared security challenges and our long-standing relationship with Qatar exemplifies this.

By working together we continue to share skills and expertise whilst promoting global security and driving prosperity at home.

I'm delighted RAF Leeming has been chosen to base the historic second UK-Qatari joint squadron, which recognises the globally-held high regard of RAF flying training.

His Excellency Dr Khalid bin Mohamed Al Attiyah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs in Qatar, said:

An important step in the ever growing military partnership that joins QEAF and RAF, the joint Hawk training squadron is an integral component in increasing interoperability and coordination between both airforces, leading to closer cooperation and alignment in future military and peacekeeping efforts.

The formation of a second UK-Qatar joint squadron, which was initially announced last year, will provide additional flying hours for RAF pilots and see long-term international investment in new infrastructure and training facilities at RAF Leeming. This will include a Hawk training simulator, and the refurbishment of existing facilities.

Our collaboration with Qatar can be showcased by the on-going achievements of

12 Squadron – the first joint squadron in the RAF since the Second World War and the Battle of Britain.

Together, the strengthened defence partnership will boost Qatar’s ability to tackle our shared security challenges in the Middle East, contributing to regional stability and protecting the prosperity and security of the UK at home.

Notes to Editors:

- The Government of Qatar has committed to a £6 billion package which includes 24 Typhoons, nine Hawk T2 Mk167 jet trainers, and a bespoke support and training package.
- Hawk and Typhoon aircraft ordered by the Government of Qatar are being assembled in the UK, supporting thousands of jobs at locations including BAE Systems’ sites in Warton and Samlesbury, Lancashire. This will secure work on the assembly line until the middle of the decade.

[£250 million additional funding to boost collaboration and protect ongoing research](#)

Press release

Scientists and researchers will get an extra £250 million funding this year to support pioneering research and drive the UK’s ambitions to become a science superpower.



As a result, UK scientists will have access to more public funding than ever before. This takes total Government investment in R&D to £14.9 billion in

2021/22 and follows four years of significant growth in R&D funding, including a boost of more than £1.5 billion in 2020/21.

It will mean UK Government R&D spending is now at its highest level in four decades.

This investment reinforces the Government's commitment to putting research and development at the heart of plans to build back better from the pandemic. It will support vital and pioneering research while enabling the UK's brilliant scientists, researchers and businesses to access and benefit from the world's largest collaborative research programme, Horizon Europe – worth around €95 billion over the next decade.

Last month the Government announced the new Advanced Research & Invention Agency (ARIA), backed with £800 million by 2024/25 and tasked with funding high-risk, high-payoff research that offers the chance of high rewards, supporting ground-breaking discoveries that could transform people's lives for the better.

The Government remains committed to reaching its target of 2.4% of GDP being spent on R&D across the UK economy by 2027 and increasing the budget for research and development to £22 billion.

Notes to editors

- The UK will associate to Horizon Europe as part of the Trade and Co-operation Agreement (TCA) with the EU. We will pay a fair and appropriate share into the budget of this programme to enable the UK science and research sector to further their collaborations with our European partners.
- Horizon Europe will be at least 20 percent larger than the previous framework programme, giving UK scientists and innovators access to the largest collaborative funding scheme in the world.
- In addition to the £14.6 billion budget for R&D in 2021/22 set at the recent Spending Review, the Government will be providing funding for ongoing UK research projects already awarded under Horizon 2020, Euratom and Copernicus, which is worth over £500 million in 2021/22 for UK scientists and innovators.
- The Government will be making available a further £250 million for R&D through BEIS in 2021/22. This comes on top of the £400 million increase in UK core research budgets announced at SR20 for UKRI and National Academies in 2021/22.
- £400 million earmarked at Spending Review for 2021/22 to support government priorities and drive the development of innovative ways to build new science capability will help to pay for association to Horizon – meeting the key ask of the science community.
- The terms set by the EU for the UK's participation in Horizon EU involve significant upfront payments, which will benefit UK scientists in future years. Despite these upfront payments the generous envelope for R&D means that, based on estimated receipts to our scientists from Horizon, overall public funds for UK scientists and innovators in 2021/22 will increase compared to 2020/21

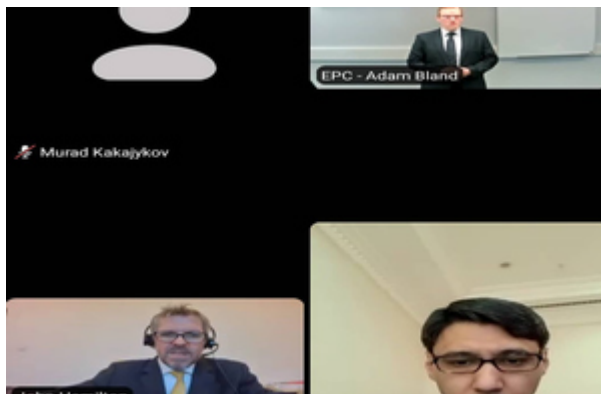
- This follows four years of significant growth in government R&D funding and boost of more than £1.5bn in 2020/21 alone.
- BEIS will now be confirming science budgets for its partner organisations in 2021/22 as quickly as possible.
- BEIS will provide a breakdown of its R&D spending when final allocations are published later in the year.

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[Growing cooperation between the Turkmenistan and United Kingdom defence ministries](#)

World news story

Officers from the Turkmenistan Ministry of Defence and its Civil Defence and Rescue Operations Department have completed UK government training in crisis management.



On 31 March officers from the Turkmenistan Ministry of Defence and its Civil Defence and Rescue Operations Department completed a 3-day online training in Crisis Management. The course was from the United Kingdom's Cabinet Office Emergency Planning College.

The course participants explored the principles of crisis management and the integrated emergency management framework. Decisive and well-managed execution, continuous improvement, and adaptation were key in keeping crisis management systems current and up to date; learning from mistakes was part of this development. The training provided an overview of UK legislation and structures related to crisis response, the role of UK government during such situations.

British Embassy in Turkmenistan Charge d' Affaires John Hamilton

On the last day of the training course the British Embassy's Charge d' Affaires John Hamilton, took the opportunity to thank the Government and Ministry of Defence of Turkmenistan for their active participation, and stressed that crisis can take any form, natural or man-made, and we must be ready to deal with them all.

Mr Hamilton reminded participants that:

A fast growing risk we need to prepare for are the consequences of climate change. We see changes in weather patterns all around the world causing droughts, floods, hurricanes, mudslides and a host of other disasters both immediate and slowly evolving. Overcoming all of the challenges of climate change is the greatest challenge our generation will face.

The British Embassy and United Kingdom Ministry of Defence were pleased to offer this online course for the officers of the Ministry of Defence of Turkmenistan, and for their active participation in making the course so successful. We look forward to working together again in future.

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[Industrial action at DVLA: Tuesday 6 April to Friday 9 April](#)

News story

The scheduled dates for industrial action at DVLA and how it may affect our services.



Industrial action is scheduled to take place between Tuesday 6 and Friday 9 April that will directly affect DVLA services. During this time, you are likely to experience delays with the paper applications you send to us and if trying to reach our contact centre.

Our online services are available and are the quickest and easiest way to deal with us. For information and to access our services, go to www.gov.uk/browse/driving.

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