

# **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