

[News story: New deal to help schools save cash on computer equipment](#)

DfE to offer schools the chance to save on tablets, laptops and desktop devices.

DfE and [Crown Commercial Service](#) (CCS) will launch the second in a series of bulk buying deals (sometimes referred to as 'aggregated deals') for schools considering buying new tablets, laptops or desktop devices at the beginning of the autumn term.

One hundred schools took up the previous deal, buying over 2,000 devices. Some schools saved thousands of pounds, with average savings of 8%.

CCS will publish full details of the deal on 4 September 2017. Schools will then have until 29 September 2017 to send CCS their equipment requirements.

CCS will work with suppliers to get the best prices and notify schools after they award the contract on 6 November 2017. Schools will then be able to place their orders for delivery and arrange payment at the agreed price.

We currently plan that the tablet devices will be branded products – for example, Apple iPad. Whereas laptop, desktop and Chromebook devices will not have a brand specified to increase competition and get the best prices.

We have scheduled further buying opportunities for spring 2018 and will announce dates later.

[Read more about ordering hardware for schools and see a webinar](#) explaining the process in more detail.

[Press release: M3 gets first 'orange' smart motorway emergency area](#)

The redesigned emergency area has a highly visible orange road surface and better signs to help improve its visibility make it more obvious to drivers on smart motorways. It is also hoped that it will encourage drivers to only use them in emergency situations.

image of the new style emergency area on the M3

The first of the new emergency areas went live on the M3 near Camberley this morning (Friday 14 July). More upgrades are planned should the trial be

successful. This change is part of an ongoing review into the design and spacing of emergency areas on smart motorways that is due to report in the autumn.

Highways England Chief Executive Jim O'Sullivan said:

We know that smart motorways are safe. But we also recognise that drivers need to have confidence when using them and be clear about where they can stop in an emergency.

That is why we are trialling these highly visible new style emergency areas. The bright orange colouring will make them as easy as possible to spot and should also discourage drivers from using them in non-emergency situations.

This is just one of the ways we are helping drivers to understand smart motorways and their benefits. I hope it helps drivers feel more confident about using a smart motorway.

Smart motorways use variable speed limits to manage traffic and tackle frustrating stop-start congestion, new technology to give drivers better information on road conditions ahead and – in smart motorway upgrades delivered since 2004 – convert the hard shoulder into an extra traffic lane. Evidence shows that smart motorways are successfully adding extra capacity, improving journey times and are just as safe as conventional motorways.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said:

Our roads are some of the safest in the world but we are always looking at making them safer.

Smart motorways are adding extra lanes to our busiest motorways and – as recent evidence shows – reducing the rate of crashes.

We are making emergency refuge areas more visible to ensure motorists in trouble can easily identify where to stop safely.

The redesigned emergency area supports Highways England's drive to improve awareness of smart motorway driving, including what to do in an emergency and when to use an emergency area. It sits alongside a national TV, radio and social media campaign covering key themes such as not driving in lanes closed by Red X signs, how to stop in an emergency and the importance of carrying out appropriate vehicle checks, like checking fuel levels, before setting out on a journey to avoid unnecessary breakdowns.

If the redesigned emergency areas are successful and drivers find the changes beneficial, more orange emergency areas will be introduced across England's network of smart motorways.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[News story: Bristol buses released from undertakings by CMA](#)

The undertakings, covering FirstGroup Holdings Limited, 'FirstGroup', and local authority bus services, were put in place following the 1989 merger of local bus companies Badgerline and Midland Red West, which was investigated by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission (MMC).

The MMC ruled in 1989 that the merger would remove competition for bus services contracted by the former Avon County Council. Local authorities tender for – and subsidise – unprofitable bus services to maintain important transport links for residents.

Badgerline was subsequently renamed FirstGroup Holdings Limited (a subsidiary of FirstGroup plc), which then became subject to the restrictions, including a cap on the amount they could receive from the local authority for running a tendered service – and a requirement to return any excess profit from such services.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has been [reviewing the undertakings](#) since January 2017 to consider if there has been any change of circumstances which would justify the removal or variation of the undertakings.

During the investigation it was found that FirstGroup's share of tendered bus services in the region has reduced significantly since the MMC report and that in the most recent tender rounds, FirstGroup did not win any contracts at 3 of the 4 Local Transport Authorities. The CMA engaged with local stakeholders during the investigation, none of which argued that the undertakings were having a beneficial effect and should be retained.

In June, the CMA launched a consultation on its provisional decision to remove the undertakings. No representations were received and the CMA has therefore decided to release the undertakings. A notice of release of undertakings is published alongside the [CMA's final decision](#).

Notes for editors

1. The CMA is the UK's primary competition and consumer authority. It is an independent non-ministerial government department with responsibility for carrying out investigations into mergers, markets and the regulated industries and enforcing competition and consumer law. For CMA updates, follow us on Twitter [@CMAgovuk](#), [Flickr](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#).
 2. Media enquiries to the CMA should be directed to press@cma.gsi.gov.uk or 020 3738 6798.
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[Press release: Schemes across the country to receive £15 million of natural flood management funding](#)

New allocations of flood management funding will allow homes, businesses and communities around the country to benefit from increased flood protection, [Floods Minister Thérèse Coffey](#) announced today.

34 community led projects have been named as winners of a [£1m government funded competition](#), the first of its kind, and will now be able to realise their innovative plans to use landscape features such as ponds, banks, meanders, channels, and trees to store, drain or slow flood water.

24 other catchment scale projects have also been allocated funding to develop larger scale projects which will benefit wider areas; with Cumbria, Greater Manchester Merseyside and Cheshire and Walsingham all receiving over £1m of funding.

Environment minister Thérèse Coffey said:

This funding will help more than 50 projects around the country take full advantage of innovative natural flood management measures. Flood defence technology and engineering is better than ever and by using a mix of natural and concrete defences, we can provide the best flood protection for individual areas.

Methods such as restoring floodplains and planting trees will not only help protect families, homes and businesses from flooding, they will also bring environmental benefits to the wider area and all the people who live in these many communities.

Minister Coffey announced the successful allocations in Sutton and Roxwell, where she visited two of the schemes which will receive funding.

Following flooding in Roxwell last year the community bid for funding to improve land and ditch management and reduce the risk of the local brook overtopping again. This project has been allocated £50,000 so the community can work with local landowners to help slow the flow of water down to the brook.

Sutton's sustainable drainage in schools project will receive £50,000 to improve the town's natural flood defences. This scheme will be run across seven of Sutton's schools, providing improved flood protection to over 100 properties.

Emma Howard Boyd, Chair of the Environment Agency, said:

Natural flood management is an important part of our approach, alongside traditional flood defences and helping homeowners to improve their own property resilience. There is no 'one size fits all' solution to flooding and this scheme is a fantastic example of how we can use a variety of measures that work together to reduce flood risk.

These allocations come from the £15 million of natural flood management funding which was announced in March, following the Autumn statement.

Details of the allocations are available [here](#).

[News story: Defence Secretary announces £120m investment in UK air power](#)

The deals will create 330 British jobs and help the RAF to continue to perform at its best by improving training for fast jet pilots and making sure the Hercules C-130J aircraft can continue to support the UK's Armed Forces around the world.

The Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon, said:

These contracts demonstrate our commitment to supporting the UK's air power, through maintaining battle proven aircraft and training the next generation of fast jet pilots.

This substantial investment will ensure our Air Force can continue to perform at its very best. Backed by our rising defence budget and £178 billion equipment plan, these contracts will create high

skilled jobs in Britain and > ensure that our Armed Forces have the best equipment and training available to keep the UK safe.

The first contract, worth £110 million, is with British company Marshall Aerospace and Defence Group. It will replace the centre wing box for the RAF's Hercules C-130J aircraft and will create 330 jobs in Cambridge, adding to the over 5,100 UK jobs Marshall already support in the region.

This replacement will extend the Hercules C-130J aircraft's out of service date to 2035, making sure this essential aircraft can continue to transport personnel and equipment around the world, having previously supported defence and humanitarian relief efforts in Iraq, Nepal and South Sudan.

The MOD has also signed a £9.5 million contract with QinetiQ to provide Typhoon pilots trained at RAF Waddington with the latest cockpit technology to prepare them for front line combat.

With the nature of global conflict ever evolving, it's vital that the Armed Forces are trained effectively to deal with a variety of scenarios. This technical update to RAF Waddington's training equipment will give Typhoon crews based at the station's Air Battlespace Training Centre 10 weeks of simulated battle training a year.

The trainee aircrew will be exposed to state-of-the-art, simulated battlefield situations and the training facilitators can develop scenarios, provide mission management support and post mission debriefs, ensuring the crews will be best prepared for deployment.

It will also allow instructors at RAF Waddington to connect to Typhoon training devices at RAF Lossiemouth and RAF Coningsby, guaranteeing fast jet pilots based across the UK access to the latest cockpit and simulated training technology.