

Broadband Boost for the South East to Level-Up 700,000

Rural Homes and Businesses

- *Hard-to-reach premises across South East England to benefit from £5 billion government scheme*
- *Includes Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire, Surrey, Kent, Hampshire, Isle of Wight and West Sussex*
- *Plans will see hundreds of millions of investment in next-generation networks*

Rural homes and businesses across South East England will get next-generation gigabit broadband built to them under a £5 billion plan to level up internet access across the UK.

New details published today from Project Gigabit, a government scheme to upgrade broadband infrastructure in hard-to-reach areas, reveal that up to 703,000 rural homes and businesses in the region and surrounding areas are in line to be connected to lightning-fast speeds.

This is in addition to commercial providers' roll out which is seeing gigabit broadband being deployed rapidly across the country - from one in ten households in the UK in 2019 to more than two in five today. The country is also on track for one of the fastest rollouts in Europe and for 60 per cent of all households to have access to gigabit speeds by the end of this year.

The Project Gigabit programme targets properties that would otherwise have been left behind in broadband companies' rollout plans, prioritising those that currently have the slowest connections

Their available speeds will rocket to more than 1,000 megabits or one gigabit per second - enough to download a HD movie in less than 30 seconds and lay the foundations for tomorrow's tech such as 8K-quality video streaming.

It means families no longer having to battle over bandwidth and will give people in rural areas the freedom to live and work more flexibly with the speed and reliability needed to start and run businesses.

The areas - including the dates work is due to start, the number of premises and estimated costs - are as follows:

Areas	Procurement start date	Contract commencement date	Number of premises	Indicative contract value
Hampshire and Isle of Wight	February 2022	January 2023	150,900	£148m - £251m
Oxfordshire and West Berkshire	May 2022	April 2023	68,600	£67m - £114m
Kent	May 2022	April 2023	122,300	£119m - £203m
Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire and East of Berkshire	May 2022	April 2023	142,000	£140m - £237m
West Sussex	May 2022	April 2023	67,800	£66m - £112m
East Sussex	August 2022	July 2023	50,300	£49m - £83m
Surrey	August 2022	July 2023	101,900	£101m - £171m

Digital Secretary Oliver Dowden said:

“We’re clamping down on patchy internet connections for rural communities in the South East and through our £5 billion Project Gigabit residents and businesses will be among the millions across the UK to get lightning-fast gigabit broadband.

“Our investment will draw in commercial providers to improve the quality and speed of connections and help us achieve our national mission to level up the regions and build back better.”

Project Gigabit will incentivise network providers to build in areas deemed ‘commercially unviable’. Areas with the largest proportion of premises identified as hard-to-reach or connected to slow speeds will be first in line for support.

Project Gigabit will accelerate our recovery from covid, fire up high growth sectors like tech and the creative industries and level up the country, spreading wealth and creating jobs the breadth of Britain.