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# Government Launch £67m UK Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme

Thursday, March 15th, 2018 (12:01 am) - Score 9,193

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The UK government has launched a new nationwide Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme (GBVS), which is funded by a pot of £67m and aims to provide vouchers worth up to £3000 for businesses (SME) or £500 to residents to help with the costs of connecting to “full fibre” (FTTP/H) broadband.

The GBVS scheme is said to “build on” the wider £200m Local Full Fibre Networks (LFFN) programme (we’ve

been told the £67m is “new spend” from the £31bn National Productivity Investment Fund), which earlier this week allocated £95m of its funding to help stimulate commercial investment in “gigabit capable” broadband across 13 areas (mostly urban locations). More details of how that £95m is being spent can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

All of this is intended to help support the government’s commitment to make “full fibre” broadband available to at least 10 million homes and businesses by 2022, which they consider to be the “gold standard” of connectivity alongside the forthcoming rollout of ultrafast 5G based Mobile technology. However course most of that FTTP/H coverage will come from commercial investment (e.g. [Openreach](#), [Virgin Media](#), [Hyperoptic](#) etc.).

The above is also being supported by [Ofcom](#)’s recent regulatory changes (e.g. easier access to [Openreach](#)’s (BT) cable ducts and a simpler electronic BT communications code), as well as the government’s 5 years business rates holiday for new fibre optic lines and their £400m Digital Infrastructure Investment Fund (DIIF); the latter is targeted more at alternative network providers.

Philip Hammond, Chancellor of the Exchequer, said:

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“We’re backing Britain’s small businesses by investing £67 million to bring full-fibre broadband to more businesses up and down the country.

This means faster, more reliable broadband access as we build the digital infrastructure we need to make our economy fit for the future.”

Matt Hancock, DCMS Secretary of State, said:

“Small businesses are the backbone of the British economy and now they can turbo-charge their connectivity with gigabit speeds.

By building a full fibre future for Britain we are laying the foundations for a digital infrastructure capable of delivering today what the next generation will need tomorrow.”

We should point out that some local authorities already have similar broadband voucher schemes of their own, such as the £2.8m [Connect Westminster](#) project in London or the [Ultrafast Connectivity Voucher](#) scheme in Wales.

The new one is also similar to the old Connection Voucher Scheme for UK businesses, which gobbled £81m+ of public funding and approved grants for 54,000+ SME businesses (15,000 in Greater London alone) across 50 UK city areas, enabling them to install a “*superfast broadband*” (30Mbps+) service via individual vouchers worth up to £3,000 ([here](#)).

Sadly the old scheme came to an end in October 2015, after the funding dried up ([here](#)), but now the government seem to be trying it again for ultrafast “*gigabit capable*” (1000Mbps) broadband ISP services. In addition, the new scheme is also open to residential use, albeit only up to £500 per voucher but we understand that it may be possible to aggregate these (very useful for community builds).

The new voucher scheme has already been trialled in four areas at a cost of £2m ([here](#)) and as a result of that around 1,000 vouchers were issued to small businesses. Vouchers may only be used to support the cost of installing eligible connections. Suppliers can offer vouchers to both new and existing customers.

Sadly the only way residents can benefit from the voucher scheme is as part of a local community group, which must also include small businesses. “*Residents and businesses taking part in a group scheme are able to join together to pool the value of their vouchers. Within this group the total value of vouchers used by businesses must always be greater than the value of vouchers taken by residents,*” said HM Treasury in a statement.

The fact that vouchers can be aggregated in this way is vitally important because the

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government recognises that “*in some areas the value of a single voucher will not fully meet the installation costs of a gigabit capable full fibre connection.*” Indeed such connections can cost tens of thousands to deliver and possibly even more in a few very remote areas.

Registration for new suppliers (ISPs) will open before the launch of the scheme at the end of March 2018. The scheme will be open until March 2021 or until all available funding has been allocated.

Floyd Widener , [Hyperoptic](#)'s Chief Sales Officer, said:

“We fully support the formation of a National Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme. Hyperoptic will absolutely be joining the programme. We have already had great success with local schemes – we are the leading provider in the Connect Westminster Scheme via number of vouchers issued. Gigabit connectivity revolutionises the way a business can operate and allowing residents to become part of the scheme will expedite the deployment of full fibre networks to even more of the UK.

We are convinced that strategic application of Connection Voucher Schemes that encourage businesses and residents to opt for full fibre not only helps encourage and facilitate the rollout of full fibre more than large projects of simply putting fibre in the ground, it also supports the output of our digital economy.”

We believe that fixed wireless networks might also be able to apply, provided they can meet the minimum criteria of being able to deliver a 100Mbps+ connection with the potential to reach 1Gbps speeds (download and upload). The upgraded broadband service must also deliver a “*step change*” in service which, for the avoidance of doubt, needs to be at least a doubling of speeds compared to the connection currently being consumed ([guide](#)).

Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme (GBVS)

<https://gigabitvoucher.culture.gov.uk/>

UPDATE 8:50am

We've had some new comments.

Evan Wienburg, [TrueSpeed](#) CEO, said:

“What we achieved during the pilot sets a blueprint for the rest of the country as the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme is rolled out nationwide. The £67 million investment announced today is a very welcome move, and a catalyst that will enable hundreds of millions of

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pounds of private money to be invested across the country.

It provides a cost-effective way for the Government to support privately funded full fibre infrastructure providers in their efforts to connect the digitally left behind. This is a vital building block in the creation of a nationwide digital economy that will help the country to thrive.”

Malcolm Corbett, CEO of INCA, said:

“It’s great news that the voucher scheme is being extended. The scheme helps improve the investment case for new digital infrastructure and speeds up the UK’s shift towards a full fibre and 5G future.”

UPDATE 9:40am

The national telecoms giant, Openreach ([BT](#)), has also welcomed the news.

A Spokesperson for Openreach said:

“Our network is the digital platform for millions of small businesses across Britain, so we welcome the Government’s new scheme as it will help them access the faster, more reliable full fibre services we build.

We’ll be working closely with our wholesale customers, and directly with business communities, to help small businesses take advantage of the scheme.”

UPDATE 11:04am

Another comment, this time from rural [FTTH ISP Gigaclear](#).

Joe Frost, Business Development Director at [Gigaclear](#), said:

“We hear first-hand how frustrating sub-par internet connections can be, so welcome the decision to roll out the broadband voucher scheme nationwide. We have already become a registered partner and are fully supportive of initiatives that encourage adoption. This is a further step towards a nationwide full fibre roll out that is crucial for the future our digital economy.”

UPDATE 1:02pm

Phone Line

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We've had a bunch of new comments.

CLA Senior Economist, Dr Charles Trotman, said:

“Poor broadband remains one of the biggest barriers to rural economic growth. The CLA called for schemes such as this gigabit voucher to meet the connectivity needs of rural communities so we are pleased the investment is being made on a national scale.

The ability of rural businesses and homes to pool vouchers will also be essential in ensuring that the momentum towards universal connectivity is maintained. When used together with other schemes, such as Openreach's Community Fibre Partnership, hard to reach rural areas will finally realise the advantages of superfast broadband.”

A Spokesperson for the [ISPA](#) said:

“[ISPA](#) welcomes the roll out of the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme (GBVS) at a national level, and is greatly encouraged by the Government's commitment to encouraging ultrafast infrastructure deployment. ISPA members have been instrumental in the proliferation of fibre connections in the UK, and many have had success with existing voucher schemes in local areas.

Widening the scope of the scheme is a welcome step towards future-proofing the UK's digital infrastructure and reaching the Government's target of 10m premises with access to full fibre broadband by 2022.”

Mark Cowgill, Co-Founder & Director Exa Networks, said:

“We are delighted with the expansion of the Gigabit Voucher Scheme and have been a big supporter of the DCMS scheme since day one.

We have had tremendous success on the pilot, in particular in West Yorkshire with our DarkLight service which is delivering speeds of up to 10Gbps. The scheme has allowed us to expand the network significantly which also benefited others who did not qualify for vouchers, and previously would have been out of reach for the DarkLight network.

To now be able to offer this in our other DarkLight and Gigabit cities, means another 34 towns and cities around the UK will be able to take advantage of the vouchers, as well as our standard gigabit products in all other areas. Exa would like to congratulate DCMS and the Chancellor on the success of the pilot and for promoting the take up of

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## Full Fibre Networks in the UK.”

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By [Mark Jackson](#)

Mark is a professional technology writer, IT consultant and computer engineer from Dorset (England), he also founded ISPreview in 1999 and enjoys analysing the latest telecoms and broadband developments. Find me on [Twitter](#), [Google+](#), [Facebook](#) and [Linkedin](#).

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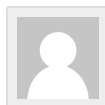
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Web Dude

March 15, 2018 at 5:06 pm

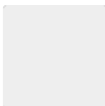
Interesting to see the terms regarding a mix of business and residential vouchers...

I suppose there may be 5 businesses and that would allow for up say 25-29 residential voucher requests near me, but another ~200 residential units left without any vouchers.

(Small estate with 2 high rise blocks, 2 3-floor blocks and individual homesm plus aluminium more than copper, and no VM for anyone in this estate)

[Barry Ashdown](#)

March 15, 2018 at 5:36 pm



These circuits must be gigabit capable from day one. In the regular leased line market that means a gig bearer with a minimum of 100Mb released. 100/Gig costs about £100 p.m. more than 100/100Mb. The £3K voucher applied to de-amortised setup costs on a 36M term reduces the rental by £83 p.m.

I guess how you view it is a bit glass half full/empty. For an extra £17 you are getting the same speed but with lower cost upgrade path.



David Haigh

March 15, 2018 at 9:19 pm

Money From Government, but two stories down OR are saying they will only do 20 a month! So who is going to benefit from this when the Governments main supplier isn't will or capable to supply!



[More Gigabit Broadband Vouchers!](#)

March 16, 2018 at 2:41 pm

The first wave of the scheme proved popular for us, and we already had a waiting list for the nationwide release so this was extremely welcome news.

My worry here though is that £67m alone might not be enough to truly meet the needs of SMEs across the country.

Fortunately, as the article already pointed out, many local authorities are running additional 'fibre' or 'digital' related schemes. With this in mind, I'd encourage any SME interested in taking advantage to explore BOTH the DCMS website AND the Local Authority and regional funding websites to get a full picture – and access to more funding options.

In some cases, you may qualify for both.



Joe M

March 25, 2018 at 2:10 pm

The world has changed a lot in recent years. Using aliexpress retail prices (wholesale like alibaba a lot cheaper), its only \$14 per SFP fiber modem, and around \$2 for 100 core fiber. Install it once instead of Openreach practice of double install – first install an empty tube, and then install one single fiber by blowing it. Instead dragging a 100 core or 50 core through a duct once ought to be a lot more efficient. The 0.01db loss fusion splicers are \$1000 which takes 3 minutes to bond a fiber. If all that is used, I can imagine you would average around £150 per household installation charge instead of about £800 for

Openreach. So when government gives away these vouchers, the money will spread itself around a lot further if they looked into how it was spent and whether all of that goes into cheaper to provision and faster to provision 1gbit internet node instead of out dated fiber provisioning that just eats up a lot of the cash with very few links to show for it.

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