



Introduction from Fergus Ewing MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity



We are all “digitally connected” in ways that would have seemed unimaginable even a decade ago. It is, therefore, vital to creating a fairer Scotland and a more prosperous economy that everyone across Scotland is able to access broadband and mobile services.

Of course telephony is, like defence or foreign affairs, a matter which is solely the responsibility of the UK Government to deliver. But as a government, we weren't prepared to wait around for action – we wanted quicker progress to meet our economic aims, so simply got on with the job, putting in our own funding and resources, establishing partnerships. In my role as Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy and Connectivity, I am determined that we forge effective partnerships across the public sector, with the UK regulator Ofcom and with industry to help deliver better connectivity for the people of Scotland.

Through our Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband (DSSB) programme, we are working with our partners to deliver access to a broadband network to 95% of premises all across the country. I am delighted that over 700,000 homes and businesses across Scotland now have fibre broadband available to them and we are on track to meet all targets for coverage by December this year.

Across Scotland, almost 90% of premises can now access fibre broadband. But I am aware that there is more to do, particularly to ensure that people's actual experience of broadband and mobile connectivity is a good one.

We also want to extend our ambition so that by 2021, 100% of premises will have access to superfast broadband, which is above 30mbps (the current DSSB programme classes 24mbps and above as superfast) and in this year's budget, we've committed an additional £51 million to kick start that drive.

We want to promote an ‘outside in’ approach – prioritising future public investment on our hardest to reach rural areas while pressing the UK Government to prioritise rural coverage in future obligations it sets for the industry on coverage.

At the same time, we are working with the mobile providers to take forward our Mobile Action Plan – the only one of its kind in the UK. A key challenge is working out how better to fill in the “not spots” that currently exist and to keep on growing voice and data connections.

We've already achieved a lot in our near ten years in government – we're determined to deliver ever more and I look forward to keeping you up to date of our progress towards achieving the 100% superfast broadband target.

Best wishes

Fergus Ewing MSP

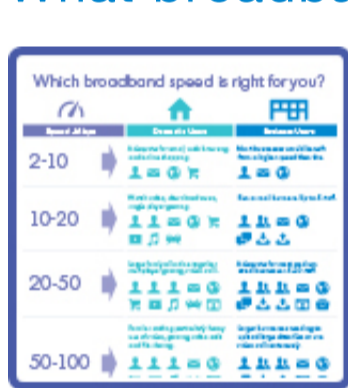
Are you ready to go faster?

Check out [our interactive map](#) to see whether fibre broadband has arrived in your area yet. And if it has, remember you need to contact your internet service provider to order it—an upgrade does not happen automatically!

If fibre broadband is not yet available for you, find out about some other options, including the Better Broadband Scheme, [here](#).



What broadband speeds do you need?



Although superfast broadband speeds bring great benefits to homes and businesses, the exact advantages differ depending on what activities you need to do online.

If, for example, you only do basic emailing and web surfing, you might not really need especially fast broadband speeds. However, superfast speeds can make a big difference if, say, you have many people online together, you want to enjoy crystal clear Skype, upload videos to the internet or run a business as efficiently as possible. Very few people really need the highest available speeds and only 6% of businesses use ultrafast 100 Mbps speeds. (Source: ONS, 2016).

Since the price of your superfast broadband will largely be driven by the speed that you request, it is worth giving some thought to your particular requirements, so that you don't pay more than you need to. [Our chart](#) gives you a handy guide to the different speeds, to help you make the right choice.

Fibre broadband helps Tom beat the unpredictable weather!

Tom Madden is Head of Development at D8, a design agency in Glasgow. He lives in the village of Bridgehouse in West Lothian and now he has a fibre connection at home, he often works from his home office rather than commute into the city every day. He says: "Having fibre broadband made an even more dramatic difference over the winter. On days when it was snowing or if there are transport problems, I can continue working from home, without any loss of productivity, rather than try to battle into the office." All across Scotland, more and more people are discovering how fibre broadband can help them continue working, whatever the weather. [Find out more about Tom's story](#).



Are you on a 'long line'?



One of the most common reasons for superfast speeds not being available yet is 'long lines'.

If your local cabinet is enabled for fibre but your home or business is too far from the cabinet to benefit from an uplift to superfast speeds, this is what is called having a 'long line'. The distance from the cabinet to your property has to be no more than 1.2 km (as the network cables run not as the crow flies) to be able to get superfast speeds, which are defined as speeds over 24 Mbps. You can find out more about what different speeds mean [here](#).

The good news is that you may still be able to enjoy faster broadband. Although this won't be a superfast speed, you may get a higher speed than you presently get on basic broadband by connecting to the new fibre service, often between 5-15 Mbps. Not all Internet Service Providers offer a fibre uplift service that is not 'superfast' so you will need to research options through various providers. To find out more about this, [check out our factsheet on long lines](#).

Are you on an 'exchange only' line?

The other most common reason for superfast speeds not being available yet is 'exchange only' (EO) lines. This happens when the copper cable from your home or business is connected directly to a telephone exchange instead of passing through a green roadside cabinet on its way to the exchange.



EO lines create unique engineering challenges, meaning some people on EO lines cannot connect to fibre yet. To enable EO premises for fibre broadband, the engineers need to build two new cabinets – a copper cabinet and a fibre cabinet, then connect the two and re-arrange the lines. However, the good news is that the vast majority of people on EO lines will be able to enjoy superfast speeds by the time the Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband fibre rollout completes in December 2017. We have already connected well over 200,000 Scottish properties with EO lines to the fibre network and by the time the rollout is completed in December 2017, we will have brought fibre broadband to over 320,000 properties which originally had EO lines. [Find out more about 'exchange only' lines here](#)