



Department for
Digital, Culture,
Media & Sport

Very Hard to Reach premises

Call for Evidence

(Discussion with the Rural Stakeholder Network)

10 May 2021



→ Coronavirus (COVID-19) | National lockdown: stay at home

→ Brexit | Check what you need to do

Home > Business and industry > Media and communications > Broadband investment

Open consultation

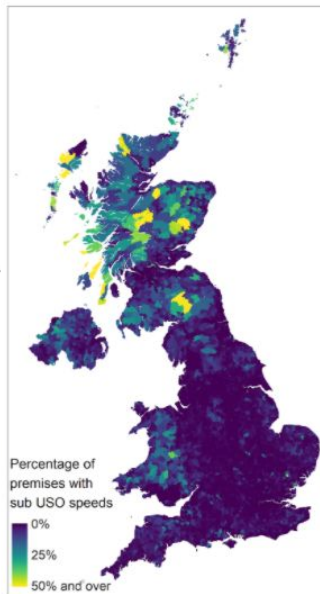
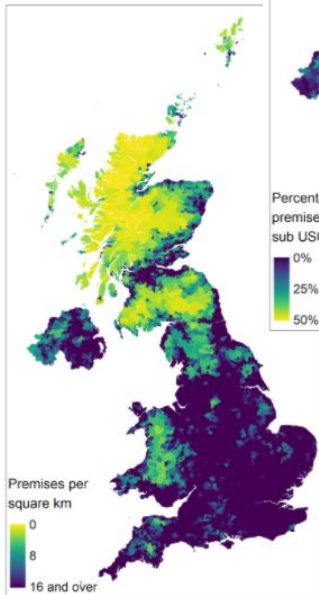
Improving broadband for Very Hard to Reach premises

From: Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport
Published: 19 March 2021
Last updated: 19 March 2021, see all updates

Summary

This is an open call for evidence on improving broadband for Very Hard to Reach premises in the UK.

This consultation closes at 11:45pm on 11 June 2021



Call for Evidence: Improving connectivity for Very Hard to Reach premises



<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/improving-broadband-for-very-hard-to-reach-premises>

Purpose of VHTR ‘call for evidence’

Key Purpose:

- To gather evidence to inform policy development for improving broadband for ‘Very Hard to Reach premises’
- To increase awareness of the potential reach of past spending commitments, as well as ongoing and future programmes now extending networks
- To further communicate the availability of current schemes (to specific parties)

Limits of Scope:

- This is a call for evidence, not a consultation
- We are not proposing policy
- We are not discussing how any future intervention is funded

What are we terming 'Very Hard to Reach'?

Presented in the call for evidence as:

- Not being delivered, or expected to be delivered, by the market
- Beyond the potential reach of the UK Gigabit Programme for Gigabit delivery at reasonable Value for Money using either supply side (gap funding) or demand side interventions (vouchers, hubs etc)
- Not in scope of ongoing procurements (Superfast and UKGP)
- Unlikely to be addressable by other programmes (ongoing USO delivery)

Typical characteristics

- Skewed to 'remote rural postcodes'
- Over-represented in Scotland and Wales
 - Northern Ireland substantially addressed by Project Stratum
 - Some parts of England also relevant for VHTR, particularly National Parks and AONBs

Overview of 'Call for Evidence' approach

Respondent Group	Type of Evidence Sought in VHTR Call for Evidence	Response Format
1. Rural Consumers	Connectivity needs (incl. future), quantifiable benefits, barriers encountered	Closed e-questionnaire responses
2. Rural Businesses	Connectivity needs (incl. future), quantifiable benefits, barriers encountered, costs of not delivering	Mixed format e-questionnaire (open and closed)
3. Suppliers / Vendors	Particular focus on barriers limiting delivery today, future expected service levels and prices/costs.	Semi-structured e-questionnaire, optional paper submissions.
4. Representative Organisations (Rural, Business, etc)	Collective policy positions on remote broadband services, reflecting engagement with large numbers of members	Open, and can be supported by papers or research studies

What help do we need from rural stakeholders?

Information sought from rural stakeholders

- Current service and future needs
- Nature of the barriers encountered specifically in remote rural areas
- Benefits that would arise from improving broadband to these locations, in particular:
 - Productivity, trading and employment benefits for agricultural businesses
 - Social and environmental benefits related to consumer adoption
- Experience with existing schemes

Benefits of responding

- Detailing needs help us to define new approaches
- Explaining benefits assist us in building the investment case for further interventions
- Respondents using the e-questionnaire are provided with direct feedback and links to available resources

Timing: Open for 12 weeks (until 11 June)

Specific inputs from operators and suppliers

Information sought from market participants (operators, vendors etc)

- Demand: see page 24
- Benefits: see page 31
- Barriers: see page 36
- Approaches: see page 50

Pre-discussion and presentations

- BSG (presented and responding)
- UK WISPA (presented)
- Select operators
- INCA (expecting collective response)

Mechanisms to engage

- Long form response: likely most appropriate for larger suppliers
- E-questionnaire and supporting document upload also available (mainly for smaller suppliers)
- Representative organisations also welcome (CBI, CPA, INCA)
- Official level discussions: able to engage re clarifications, etc



Materials and accessible versions

Call for evidence

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/improving-broadband-for-very-hard-to-reach-premises>

Online survey (via above, or)

https://dcms.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bEMHlvtH6oiYjc

Shareable media links

<https://twitter.com/DCMS/status/1374073399346135045>

<https://www.facebook.com/dcmsgovuk/photos/a.229476853734823/4497148206967645/>

Accessible versions

- Full PDF version (fully accessible) and 'lightweight PDF' version available
- Full HTML version of Call for Evidence also published
- Welsh language version published in April
- Online questionnaire works on Android, Apple, 6+ browsers, tested on sub 1Mbps connection

Online access and alternatives

Rationale for online engagement

- For direct consumer engagement, we require online responses because:
 - We need structured data responses, that is also geo-localised
 - We adapt the (otherwise 50 page) questionnaire to only present the questions relevant to the respondent. This allows a typical 12-15 minute completion time on a smartphone.
 - All our handling is electronic due to C-19 restrictions / office closures
- We have designed the approach to work on all devices and tested it on very slow connections in remote rural areas.

Alternatives (where one has no online access at all over the 12 week period)

- We recommend that respondents discuss with representative organisations to provide collective responses. We can provide further detailed question lists to such bodies, should they wish to support (email: vhtr@dcms.gov.uk)