

KEVIN HOLLINRAKE MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP
Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport
100 Parliament Street
London SW1A 2BQ

4th June 2018

Dear Matt,

We represent many of the constituencies where superfast (30 Mbps) broadband coverage is still below 85 per cent. Although the BDUK Superfast Broadband Programme has made great progress, it is estimated that coverage in some of the areas we represent will continue to lag behind the average and communities in the hardest-to-reach areas will not be connected to superfast broadband in the foreseeable future.

We welcome the Government's extension of the 2020 national coverage target to 98 per cent, the push for future-proofed full-fibre investment and the proposed 10 Mbps broadband USO. However, two years is too long to wait for many businesses and homes who already suffer from poor broadband connections; even then, the solutions provided will offer service limitations, for example, sub-superfast speeds, latency issues with satellite and data caps for 4G services.

We believe it is critical that Government policy delivers solutions, wherever possible, today. One cost-effective solution is fixed wireless broadband, which has not typically been widely supported by Government funding. Wireless is a proven technology, is much more readily deliverable and can deliver ultrafast speeds without any data restrictions at competitive rates. Some areas, such as Thirsk and Malton and Penrith and the Borders have seen successful commercial and community-led delivery by third party providers.

We attach a broad-based report, *Solutions for the fifteen per cent*, on these themes, which uses the situations in North Yorkshire and Cumbria as pertinent examples. Our report makes four key recommendations, which are:

1. Openreach should develop a fixed wireless strategy for rural areas
2. Openreach could work with third party suppliers to deliver holistic solutions
3. DCMS should consider providing national funds for fixed wireless as an alternative to fibre
4. The Gigabit Voucher Scheme should also be applied to fixed wireless solutions

The report helps to highlight that fixed wireless can often be the most cost-effective delivery method when funding is insufficient for universal fibre-based rollout. This could also be recognised by a requirement for those in receipt of public funds to deliver broadband in remote areas, usually Openreach, to utilise this technology, where it is proven to be appropriate and cost-effective, and in the design of future procurement approaches, including the use of voucher-based schemes, such as the Gigabit Voucher Scheme.

We would very much welcome your support for this initiative and look forward to working with DCMS to ensure that we deliver superfast broadband that works for everyone.

Kind regards,

Kevin Hollinrake MP
Antoinette Sandbach MP
Julian Sturdy MP

Colin Clark MP
Neil Parish MP
Simon Hart MP

Dr Dan Poulter MP
Philip Dunne MP
James Heapey MP