



Department for
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Claire Baker MSP

economyandfairwork.committee@parliament.scot

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Dear Claire,

Thank you for your correspondence of 24 November, in your capacity as Convenor of the Economy and Fair Work Committee in the Scottish Parliament.

You asked for more detail about the funding cap for Project Gigabit, referred to by Kate Forbes MSP. This relates to the limit on subsidy per premises passed, set through the programme business case. While there needs to be a cap on UK Government investment, we are willing for co-funding to be used from other funding sources to reach higher cost premises with gigabit capable technologies, and indeed we have already taken this step through the additional £28 million that the UK Government has added to the R100 contracts to increase gigabit coverage in Scotland. In addition, we have also just announced an increase in the funding available through the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme, now allowing funding of up to £4,500 per voucher, compared with the previous limits of £1,500 for residential premises and £3,500 for SMEs. This is a step-change in the programme and will help us deliver more targeted support to hard-to-reach areas.

You have asked for an update on activity with regards to very hard to reach premises. DCMS recently announced that it has launched a small number of Alpha Trials across the UK. The first four of these are in national parks across Wales and England. We are in discussions with sites across Scotland to deploy satellite technology as part of this trial to some of the most remote locations, including some islands unlikely to benefit from either Project Gigabit or R100. The trials have been launched to see the extent to which satellites can be used to deliver high-speed connectivity to sites in the most extreme locations such as mountainous areas or small islands, which are too difficult to upgrade via gigabit-capable technologies. Following the trials, the Government will then consider the viability of using satellite connectivity to connect homes and businesses across the UK that are very hard to reach. The initial wave of satellite connections has been delivered using Space X's Starlink Low Earth Orbit (LEO) as a result of its readiness and availability. However, DCMS is also in discussions about the capability of other solutions and services with suppliers, including the use of other providers such as OneWeb at more complex sites, which may include sites on Scottish Islands.

We will continue to work with the Scottish Government to deliver our shared digital connectivity ambitions for Scotland.

I hope that this information is helpful and reassures you about the Government's commitment to connect hard to reach properties.

With best wishes,

Julia Lopez MP
Minister of State
Minister for Media, Data and Digital Infrastructure

