

Launch of the new Rural Gigabit Connectivity scheme. 20/05/2019

Rural Gigabit Connectivity Voucher Scheme

From 20/05/2019 the nationwide Rural Gigabit Connectivity scheme (RGC) will support defined rural areas (by postcode in all parts of the UK) with existing speeds of less than 30Mbps.

Vouchers will be worth up to £3,500 for a small or medium sized business or up to £1,500 for residents to help with the costs of connecting to full fibre broadband.

Unlike previous schemes, there is no ratio between SME and residential vouchers. This scheme will run in conjunction with the current Gigabit Voucher Scheme (GBVS-GB100).

Funding for these vouchers forms part of the Rural Gigabit Connectivity (RGC) Programme which is a two year, £200 million UK-wide Government programme focused on rural areas in the UK.

How it works

Businesses and residents can only get vouchers from suppliers who are registered with the scheme. Suppliers can offer vouchers to both new and existing customers. Openreach is a registered supplier, and we have competition in securing these vouchers.

There is no ratio between SME and Residential vouchers, unlike previous schemes, so a group of residents can benefit from this voucher scheme without the inclusion of an SME, should they wish.

Residents and businesses must participate in a group scheme, 2 or more, and are able to join together to pool the value of their vouchers, which works perfectly to the CFP model. In some cases, the value of the aggregated vouchers could be more than the price we quote for an FTTP solution so vouchers to cover the cost of the CFP need only be claimed.

Businesses and local community groups interested in requesting a voucher will be able to find full details of the scheme on the DCMS website: <https://gigabitvoucher.culture.gov.uk/>

Qualifying businesses and residents must be located in rural categories as defined in the DEFRA (or equivalent) rurality data. The qualifying rural postcodes are identified here: <https://gigabitvoucher.culture.gov.uk/rural/>

Qualifying businesses and residents will have a current connection speed of below 30Mbps.

Qualifying businesses and residents must upgrade to a service of greater than 30Mbps to redeem their vouchers, once the full fibre infrastructure is in place.

Connectivity requirements

The formal definition of the Scheme's connectivity requirements to qualify for a voucher is set out in Schedule 7 of the Supplier Registration Document. Key points to note are:

■ **Capability** - the new service must be capable of delivering a new connection at a speed of at least 1Gbps in either direction - up or down. Any premises that is capable of receiving a speed of greater than 30Mbps is not eligible for a Rural Gigabit Connectivity Voucher.

■ **Consumption** - the customer must take a service with a speed greater than 30Mbps. This is sometimes described as the step-change requirement. At the time of CFP qualification for communities that may be eligible, the current speed of any proposed voucher customer's connection must be verified using an online checker, and captured.

Process

Qualifying leads and scoping a proposed solution for a community takes time. We can't register vouchers until we have a final priced solution, so as a business we need to respond to leads efficiently and produce pricing promptly. Having a cost is fundamental to calculating the vouchers for any community.

The key steps (which apply to aggregated vouchers) are:

1. A community or SME registers interest at <https://www.openreach.com/fibre-broadband/community-fibre-partnerships>.
2. We qualify and define the scope of the community – to include eligible SMEs/Residents. (CFMs / CLMs must ensure the voucher pro-forma (Form 4) is completed and send it to communities in advance for information while they're sourcing the price, just to make them aware we'll be asking for this information)
3. We build a price and proposal, then confirm the volume of premises in the community that are eligible for vouchers with the community lead.
4. We submit Pre-Registered Package proposals (PRPs) to DCMS for review along with a draft contract.
5. Once PRPs are agreed with DCMS, we are issued with a PRP reference.
6. We send out the CFP contract for signature.
7. Delivery begins.
8. We then use the PRP ref to register the vouchers at: <https://gigabitvoucher.culture.gov.uk/>
9. DCMS and Local Bodies carry out initial checks.
10. DCMS email the SME/Resident to confirm they understand and accept the eligibility, by clicking on a link to acknowledge.
11. SME/Resident clicks to accept conditions
12. Local Bodies carry out agreed checks then. **Approve vouchers.** (10 day minimum wait)
13. DCMS update the voucher status (Issue: Local Body Approved and Issue: Customer Approved) on <https://gigabitvoucher.culture.gov.uk/>
14. We deliver the service and report completion to DCMS through the Scheme portal
15. Local Bodies carry out further agreed checks. **Approve payment.**
16. DCMS makes **payment** (through Historic England)
17. Beneficiary receives **confirmation of benefit** from portal (De-Minimis aid).

Further Information

- Government Press Briefing: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/200-million-rollout-of-full-fibre-broadband-be-gins>
- For all RGC-related material: <https://gigabitvoucher.culture.gov.uk/>
- For PRP, CFP RGC Contract templates and 'Form 4' (Address Template) please email the CFP Desk: communityfibre@openreach.co.uk