



Digital Economy Bill

Factsheet – Bill Overview

What are we going to do?

- empower consumers and provide better connectivity so that everyone has access to broadband wherever they live
- build a better infrastructure fit for the digital future
- enable better public services using digital technologies
- provide important protections for citizens from spam email and nuisance calls and protect children from online pornography

Culture Secretary, John Whittingdale said:

"We want to make the UK a world leader in digital provision - a place where technology continually transforms the economy, society and government."

"The Digital Economy Bill will put in place the foundations for the digital future and help us meet this ambition."

How are we going to do it?

- give every household a legal right to request fast broadband connection
- give consumers and businesses better information about communication services, easier switching and compensation if things go wrong
- cut the costs for new infrastructure and simplify planning rules
- stronger enforcement of direct marketing laws, and civil penalties for online pornographers who do not verify the age of their customers
- remove legal barriers to digital government while reinforcing data protection laws

Background

The Digital Economy Bill was announced in the Queen's Speech on 18 May 2016. It will implement a number of government commitments on the digital economy made in the Conservative Party Manifesto. The UK is a well connected nation with over nine out of ten homes and businesses able to access superfast broadband, however if the UK is to remain ahead and be a world leader in the digital economy we need to continue to raise our ambition and the Digital Economy Bill includes a range of measures in support of this.



The main elements of the bill are:-

Fast Broadband and support for consumers

- new Broadband Universal Service Obligation (USO) for the United Kingdom - giving all citizens the legal right to request a 10Mbps broadband connection
- new powers for Ofcom to help consumers access better information and enable consumers to act on that information through easier switching
- new provisions to ensure that consumers are automatically compensated if things go wrong with their broadband service

Enabling digital infrastructure

- new Electronic Communications Code to cut the cost and simplify the building of mobile and superfast broadband infrastructure
- new and simpler planning rules for building broadband infrastructure
- new measures to manage radio spectrum to increase the capacity of mobile broadband

Protecting intellectual property

- further supporting digital industries equalising penalties for online copyright infringement with laws on physical copyright infringement
- new online design registration system – known as webmarking, to protect valuable rights

Government digital services

- enabling government to deliver better public services and produce world leading research and statistics
- enabling technology to manage information by allowing public authorities to connect where the objective has a public benefit
- new powers for public authorities to share information to combat the public sector fraud which costs the country billions
- help citizens manage their debt more effectively and reduce the billions of overdue debt owed to government
- tough safeguards of personal data, reinforcing the Data Protection Act with new offences for unlawful disclosure

Protecting citizens in the digital economy



- a new statutory code of practice for direct marketing, ensuring the Information Commissioner can better enforce sanctions against nuisance callers and spammers, ensuring that consent is obtained from consumers
- protecting children from online pornography by requiring age verification for access to all sites and applications containing pornographic material

Factsheets covering these measures will be published alongside the bill
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/digital-economy-bill>

Key Questions and Answers

- **Why do we need a bill?**

The bill is important for the UK economy, for businesses and for consumers. We want to make sure that the UK maintains its position as a world leader in the digital economy and in the development and use of cutting-edge technology. The bill will enable the building of a world-class digital infrastructure, empower consumers to connect and strengthen protections for citizens online.

- **How is government investing in infrastructure to support this?**

The government is already investing £1.7 billion in broadband roll-out and is on track to achieve its manifesto commitment to deliver access to superfast broadband to at least 95% of the UK by the end of 2017. The measures in this bill will drive investment in digital infrastructure by giving communications providers the ability to install and update equipment at less cost and with fewer regulatory hurdles.

- **How will these measures actually help and protect citizens?**

In recent years many public services have become available online on GOV.UK. To deliver more and better services we need a legal framework that enables information to be used and processed for the public benefit. We also have a responsibility as government to protect citizens and the bill contains a number of new provisions that will prevent spam email and nuisance calls unless you have given consent; age verification measures to protect children from viewing online pornography; give new powers for Ofcom in respect of information provision allowing for greater access to the information that matters to consumers.