

Digital landscape overhaul needed to boost connectivity and drive growth, MPs and peers warn

Britain risks falling further behind global competitors unless persistent gaps in mobile and broadband coverage are tackled and the digital landscape overhauled, parliamentarians warn today in a new report.

The Digital Communities All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) warns that an ongoing lack of mobile and broadband coverage in parts of the country – urban, rural and coastal – are undermining national ambitions for economic renewal, social inclusion, and technological leadership.

Its latest report calls on government to commission an urgent, independent review of the UK's digital connectivity landscape, alongside stronger regulatory scrutiny by Ofcom, more strategic investment in connectivity as a driver of economic growth, and decisive action to foster competition and innovation.

The report, *Reconnecting Britain: Restoring Trust, Connecting Communities and Driving Inclusive Growth*, says that despite progress in expanding digital infrastructure, the UK risks falling behind other countries unless more is done to boost adoption of high-speed broadband and 5G networks.

Digital connectivity underpins everything from economic productivity and public services to education and healthcare. The APPG's inquiry reveals several systemic weaknesses which a future review needs to address:

- Transparency and accountability: Current coverage data relies heavily on operator-supplied modelling, which often fails to reflect real-world experiences. This disconnect has led to policy decisions and investment strategies that do not align with actual need. The report calls for Ofcom to adopt a more robust, independent approach to data collection and regulatory scrutiny.
- Market structure and competition: The UK's digital infrastructure remains dominated by a handful of major operators, limiting competition and slowing progress. Structural barriers—including inefficient planning processes and outdated legal frameworks—continue to stifle innovation. Breaking down monopolies and fostering a level playing field is critical to accelerating rollout.
- Economic imperative: Delays in infrastructure deployment could cost the UK tens of billions in lost productivity. Conversely, successful adoption of 5G and full fibre could deliver gains worth over £200 billion by 2035. Closing the digital divide is not just a social imperative—it is an economic necessity.

The UK currently ranks behind many international peers in 5G performance and infrastructure density. Without urgent action, the country risks missing its target of high-quality 5G coverage in all populated areas by 2030. Furthermore, rural and coastal communities continue to face persistent connectivity gaps, deepening social and economic inequalities.

The report draws on several sector publications to highlight the scale of opportunity available to the UK if investment in digital connectivity is accelerated:

- £159 billion productivity boost by 2035 from widespread 5G adoption—worth more than £500 per person.

- £73 billion potential uplift to UK productivity by 2034 through nationwide Full Fibre rollout.
- Every £1 invested in digital inclusion returns £9.48 to the economy.
- Closing rural connectivity gaps could add £19 billion in annual tax receipts.

Evidence also warns that:

- Delays to 5G could cost £41 billion in lost economic output.
- Gigabit-capable coverage reaches 87 per cent of premises nationwide, but only 62 per cent in rural areas.

The APPG stresses that only through sustained, coordinated action—combining strategic investment, regulatory reform, and stronger local-national partnerships—can the UK close its digital divide and reclaim its position as a global leader in connectivity.

Helen Morgan MP, Chair of the Digital Communities APPG, said:

“Digital connectivity is the backbone of modern Britain and is an essential lifeline – a piece of critical national infrastructure – for communities and businesses.

“People in areas with persistently poor broadband or mobile coverage are left at a digital, social and economic disadvantage and risk losing out on opportunities for skills development, employment, and community engagement.

“Without reliable access to high-speed services, the UK cannot achieve its economic ambitions or deliver inclusive growth. An urgent, independent review of the nation’s digital landscape is essential to restore trust, ensure transparency, and unlock the full potential of our economy.”

Notes to Editors

The report will be made available on the APPG’s website: [Homepage | Digital Communities](#)

The Local Government Association (LGA) provides secretariat to the Digital Communities APPG.

About the APPG

The Digital Communities APPG is a cross-party group of parliamentarians, with the aim to promote the delivery of digitally equipped places that support and foster a connected, healthy, and productive community. This includes the creation and maintenance of sustainable digital infrastructure, as well as providing residents with equal opportunity to thrive in a digital world. The Local Government Association (LGA) provides the secretariat to the APPG.

About the LGA

The LGA is the national voice of local government. We are a politically led, cross party membership organisation, representing councils from England and Wales. Our role is to support, promote and improve local government, and raise national awareness of the work of councils.

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