

Universal Full Fibre

Scottish Conservative
& Unionist Party

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Foreword

We would legislate so that every new home must be built with full fibre broadband. We would ensure that every home and business premise in Scotland has a full fibre connection by the end of 2027.

Coronavirus and the restrictions that we have put in place to control it have changed how we live our lives. While many people will be glad to get back into the office again many others have realised that they can now work more from home.

That is why the Scottish Conservatives are committing to connecting every single home in Scotland to full fibre broadband by 2027. To fulfil this, we will also bring forward legislation requiring every new home to be built with a full fibre connection.

The SNP's rollout of our digital infrastructure has been marked by dither and delay while they have been focused on another independence referendum. We will focus on rebuilding our communities from this pandemic by ensuring that no one is barred from working and doing business remotely by poor connections.

Background

- **Only 13 per cent of Scots have access to full fibre broadband according to Ofcom.** This is in line with other parts of the UK apart from Northern Ireland which has much better access (49 per cent). Full fibre is where glass fibre replaces copper wiring throughout the broadband connection. This allows us to reach much faster download speeds than the use of copper wiring or through a wireless system. This effectively future proofs connections as download speeds are then limited by signals rather than what can be passed through the connection. (Ofcom, Connected Nations Update: Summer 2020, [link](#))
- **Scotland is lagging behind the rest of the UK for internet connectivity.** The most recent data suggests that just 94 per cent of premises in Scotland have access to Superfast broadband (30mbps or faster), compared to the UK average of 97 per cent. An Ofcom report has found that an estimated 12,300 premises in Scotland cannot access either a good standard of fixed broadband service or receive 4G coverage indoors from any operator. (Think Broadband, accessed on 18 November 2020, [link](#); Ofcom, Connected Nations 2019 Scotland Report, p.2, 20 December 2019, [link](#))
- **The SNP Government through R100 committed to providing superfast broadband (30mbps) by the end of 2021.**

They are investing £579 million to do this, with UK Government investment of £21 million to date. (Scottish Government, R100, 12 August 2019, [link](#))

- **R100, was split into three LOTs (1: North Scotland and the Highlands, 2: Central, 3: Southern) and tendered as three separate contracts.** BT won the contract for LOT 2 and 3 and is expected to also win the contract for 1 as well. 1 was delayed as a result of legal action.
 - **At the start of this year, Paul Wheelhouse announced that R100 would only be completed for the “majority” of premises in Central and Southern by 2023.** With LOT 1 not expected to be completed until 2025/6. (Scottish Government, 9 January 2020, [link](#))
 - **In summary the SNP failed to meet their target of making superfast broadband available in 100 per cent of premises across Scotland by 2021, admitting that work on the required network will continue until 2023.** (BBC News, 9 January 2020, [link](#); SNP, Election Manifesto 2016, [link](#))
- **The independent Infrastructure Commission for Scotland has said that it should be a ‘priority’ for the whole of Scotland to have access to full fibre by**



2027. Priority should be given to investment in full fibre fixed network infrastructure for the whole of Scotland by 2027. As this is principally a reserved matter it will require strong leadership from Scottish and UK Governments, and Ofcom, supported by the regulatory recommendations highlighted previously. (Infrastructure Commission for Scotland, A Blueprint for Scotland, January 2020, p115, [link](#))

Our Solution

- **We would amend planning laws so that every new home in Scotland must be built with full fibre broadband.** Developers would have to contract a broadband company to ensure full fibre connectivity in every single new build home, regardless of the size of the development.
- **We would work with the UK Government on a joint programme of full fibre broadband delivery in Scotland to complete the rollout by 2027.** This would be a programme of public investment as a successor to R100 targeting those areas that would not see a rollout of full fibre as a result of commercial activity.
- **Our programme would prioritise rural and remote parts of Scotland.** We would switch the final part of R100 (LOT 1: North Scotland and the Highlands) to be the first part of our new full fibre programme, ensuring that areas that get left behind are the first to receive support.

