

# Broadcast

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Personal & Business Taxation – Audit & Assurance – Accounting & Business Services



## UK businesses impeded by mobile 'not-spots', BCC reveals

**Businesses across the UK are being impeded by mobile coverage 'not-spots', according to a survey carried out by the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC).**

The BCC quizzed over 1,400 businesses and discovered that 70% of firms often experience mobile coverage 'not-spots'. Many have been impeded by a complete lack of mobile coverage, and some experience 'partial not-spots', in which coverage is available from only a handful of networks.

Those businesses situated in rural areas were found to be more likely to experience 'not-spots' as opposed to those within inner city locations. 54% of businesses in rural areas and 29% of firms in cities reported that they have unreliable mobile internet connections.

Commenting on the findings, Dr Adam Marshall, Director General of the BCC, said: 'All across the country businesspeople complain about patchy mobile coverage and unreliable internet connections in their local areas.

'Rural businesses are particularly affected by poor mobile coverage and connectivity, but our research shows that 'not-spots' are prevalent across the UK. Some of the solutions are obvious. Relaxing planning laws to allow for taller masts would be a quick win for the next government to help improve mobile coverage.'

In response to the BCC's survey, communications regulator Ofcom stated that almost all UK businesses 'must receive a 4G signal by the end of 2017'.

A spokesperson for Ofcom commented: 'We agree that mobile coverage must improve and understand the importance of having reliable mobile broadband, wherever people live and work.

'We're also making available valuable new airwaves to boost mobile broadband, and have challenged mobile operators to explore how to reach all remote areas and transport lines.'

Meanwhile, data published separately by consumer group Which? found that individuals across the UK are experiencing a variety of download speeds and 4G access. According to the research, the average overall 4G availability across the country is 65%, meaning that 4G users are only able to access networks two-thirds of the time.

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## Business groups publish election manifestos

With the General Election looming, the UK's leading business groups have published their own election manifestos, outlining their priorities for businesses.

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) and the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) have emphasised that in the run-up to the election, political parties should not focus solely on Brexit, highlighting other key domestic issues including boosting UK competitiveness and tackling the problem of late payments.

Dr Adam Marshall, Director General of the BCC, said: 'While businesses all across the UK want a good Brexit deal, they are very clear that decisions taken here at home matter as much - if not more - to our future growth prospects.

'The best possible Brexit deal won't be worth the paper it's written on if firms cannot recruit and train the right people, get decent digital connectivity, or get their goods to their market.'

Mike Cherry, National Chairman of the FSB, echoed the BCC's warning, commenting: 'Brexit is clearly going to feature heavily in the election campaign, and rightly so. But it must not dominate debate at the expense of other important domestic issues for small businesses.'

'Our manifesto sets out what small businesses want to see from all major parties and candidates standing on 8 June. Millions of votes are at stake.'

The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) has urged the next government to provide 'as much certainty as possible' to support businesses in making appropriate investment decisions for the UK's future prosperity. The business group also called for the creation of an 'ambitious' Industrial Strategy that takes a long-term approach to skills, infrastructure, trade and innovation.

Meanwhile, considering the UK's digital outlook and infrastructure, the Institute of Directors (IoD) has called for the introduction of 'ultrafast broadband and 4G', which it suggests would allow businesses to 'employ more people, be more productive and profitable and enable home working'.

With the main political parties having made some significant pledges relating to business and personal taxation, businesses and individuals will be eagerly awaiting the results of the General Election.

## ESSENTIAL TAX DATES FOR JUNE

### 1 June

New Advisory Fuel Rates (AFR) for company car users apply from today.

### 19 June

PAYE, Student loan and CIS deductions are due for the month to 5 June 2017.

### 30 June

End of CT61 quarterly period.

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

'It's encouraging to see that confidence is starting to rise after a sustained period of decline.'

*Stephen Ibbotson, Director of Business at the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW).*

## Other news in brief

### Businesses urged to create 'more inclusive workplaces'

The Confederation of British Industry has urged UK businesses to create 'more inclusive' workplaces.

### 'Brexit funding gap' poses threat to small businesses, report warns

A new report has warned that 'billions of pounds in EU funding' will need to be replaced following the UK's departure from the EU, to avoid creating a 'business support black hole' for small firms.

### UK workers set to experience fall in real wages, analysis suggests

UK workers are set to experience a fall in real wages in 2017 and 2018, according to an analysis published by the Trades Union Congress.