

## Universal broadband delay will result in little more than dial-up speeds

Experts criticise the three-year delay

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2Mbit/s means not being able to get most productive services

Industry experts have heavily criticised the decision to delay the rollout of universal broadband by three years, likening it to giving the UK no more than dial-up technology compared with its global competitors.

This is the view of industry experts following the announcement last week that the government has pushed back the date by which it will deliver universal broadband to 2015 from the 2012 deadline originally proposed in the *Digital Britain* report.

David Palmer, senior product manager at cloud services provider [Star](#), said: "If the government presses ahead with a 2Mbit/s target then by 2015, telling someone they can get 2Mbit/s will be like telling someone today they can now get dial-up."

Hartwig Tauber, director general of [Fibre-to-the-home \(FTTH\) Council Europe](#), which works to accelerate high-speed broadband rollout, agreed: "In 2015 a bandwidth of 2Mbit/s will be equivalent to a dial-up [connection](#)."

Tauber said that although a 2Mbit/s bandwidth would connect users to the [internet](#), "they'll not be able to benefit from the most interesting and productive services – some smartphones have a faster connection today."

Ovum senior analyst Matthew Howett said he was surprised at the government putting back the Universal Service Commitment (USC) rollout to 2015 given its earlier criticisms of the original plans.

He said it was surprising "particularly given what the Conservatives said about the lack of ambition in the USC when it was originally announced in the 2009 *Digital Britain* report."

"This makes the situation a bit farcical [but] it does give time to find a real solution to the problem, rather than just a temporary one, which 2Mbit/s seems to be," he said.

"We don't seem to be closer to finding a government [public sector] solution to this, so it makes sense to look for one in the private sector," said Howett.

A potential solution to rolling out the USC to rural areas is [mobile](#) broadband, an area Howett said was little in evidence in Lord Carter's original *Digital Britain* report.

"I think mobile broadband could be an important component, especially in rural areas," said Howett.

The auction of the best spectrum for mobile broadband – the 800MHz radio band to be made available when the digital TV switchover occurs – is expected in mid-2011 but not confirmed.

Getting the winners of any spectrum auction to sign up to a guaranteed rollout for the USC in rural areas would be the optimal solution, said Howett.

To date the focus has been on broadband download speeds.

FTTH Council Europe's Tauber said that although the download speeds had been clarified, the upload speed is important in the country's broadband plans.

"In a world where users want to work from home, participate in social networks and want to share multimedia content, we need high-speed [upload] tracks to the internet as well," said Tauber.