

Britain gets first 4G mobile services

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Britain's first super-fast 4G mobile Internet service was launched in 11 cities on Tuesday, allowing the kingdom to catch up with the global roll-out.

Telecoms firm EE—formed by the merger of the Orange and T-Mobile networks in Britain—went live with the service, meaning millions of [mobile phone users](#) across the country will be able to access 4G for the first time.

The network was rolled out in London, Bristol, Birmingham, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield and Southampton.

Other mobile networks will not be able to offer 4G until next year.

4G, which operates five times faster than the current [3G network](#), allows users to download large e-mail attachments quickly, watch live television without buffering, make high-quality video calls and play live games on the go.

The service is available on Apple's [iPhone 5](#) and [4G phones](#) from HTC, Samsung, Nokia and Huawei.

Britain lags behind the global roll-out of 4G, with about 45 countries—including the United States, Germany and parts of Asia—already offering the super-fast service to businesses and consumers.

"Today is a landmark day for our company, the UK mobile industry and, most importantly, the country's businesses and consumers," EE chief executive Olaf Swantee said in a statement.

EE plans to extend its 4G network by 2,000 square miles (5,000 square kilometres) each month. It aims to provide coverage for 70 percent of Britain's population next year and hit 98-percent coverage in 2014.

EE was controversially given a six-month head start over rivals by regulator Ofcom, triggering protests from Vodafone, 3 and O2.

Orange, owned by [France Telecom](#), and [Deutsche Telekom](#)'s T-Mobile merged their British operations two years ago.

The cheapest EE tariff, £36 (\$58, 45 euros) per month, comes with 500 megabytes of monthly downloads, while the highest tariff is set at £56 for 8 gigabytes a month.

Steven Hartley of business analysts Ovum said: "The pricing positions the brand very much at the high-end of the customer spectrum but the premium to legacy services isn't as high as those seen elsewhere.

"This suggests that aggressive targeting of its rivals' most valuable customers awaits."

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