Windows 8.1: Microsoft targets the enterprise with new Start button

Microsoft has brought back the Start button with the general availability of Windows 8.1.

The free update to the Windows 8 operating system (OS) can be downloaded via the online Windows Store.

Windows 8.1 will also be available on new devices and as boxed software from 18 October at retail locations around the world.

In a blog post on the latest OS, Brandon LeBlanc, group programme manager for Internet Explorer (IE) at Microsoft, wrote: “Together with the Start screen team in Windows, we designed the live tile support for sites to enable all the same tile sizes and layouts that apps enjoy.

"We set out to make it as easy as possible for developers to build live tile notifications using the existing RSS feeds for their sites, and we built BuildMyPinnedsite.com to help developers to create beautiful tiles and live notification support with just a few clicks.”

He said IE11, which ships with Windows 8.1, improves mouse access to the app bar: “We added a 'peek' for easier access to the address bar in IE by keeping a minimal 15-pixel bar at the bottom of the screen that you can always click on to bring up the address bar.”

According to Microsoft, more than 100 million Windows 8 licences have shipped. But the software has still not had a major impact within the enterprise.

The company is pinning its hopes on its newly released Surface 2 device and the availability of low-cost Intel Atom-powered tablets, which will bring the price of Windows 8.1-powered tablets in line with mid and high-end Android tablets.