

PARISHES LIAISON MEETING 25th February 2015

BROADBAND UPDATE

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Council is part of the Connecting Devon & Somerset (CDS) Partnership which is working to improve rural broadband services.
- 1.2 The programme is restricted by State Aid rules to areas which are served by non-commercial single provider telephone exchanges.
- 1.3 This paper provides an update on the current position regarding the work of the CDS Partnership and the roll-out of superfast broadband to the rural areas of B&NES. It also covers the support which is now available specifically to businesses and organisations within B&NES.

2. CDS - CURRENT POSITION

- 2.1 The current Programme is gathering significant momentum with over 400 live cabinets across the CDS geography. This is equivalent to nearly 100,000 homes and businesses able to access a fibre broadband service.
- 2.2 The first cabinet in B&NES went 'live' on the 23rd of January 2015 in Batheaston (Corner of Barnfield Way and Bannerdown Rd, BA1 7PW).
- 2.3 We have included a map that indicates where cabinets in the B&NES area will be going live soon. The exact dates are not available from BDUK. To assist with the information, the CDS website <http://www.connectingdevonandsomerset.co.uk/> now provides a postcode search facility which is updated on a monthly basis. By using this facility residents can determine whether they are included in the rural broadband roll-out programme as well as see the current schedule for survey work in the area and the areas that are covered in the BT commercial roll out. This information is made available in a map format with colours explaining the status of a specific postal code.

2.4 CDS EXTENSION

Connecting Devon & Somerset (CDS) has announced that it will be publishing the tender for the second stage of the superfast broadband programme across the region in February.

Connecting Devon and Somerset will be using the Government's national procurement framework for its delivery partner for most of the area. However, the CDS partnership is keen to open up this second stage to other potential providers. It will therefore be running an open procurement process in Dartmoor

and Exmoor National Parks allowing bids from other suppliers. The Parks represent some of the most challenging terrain for connecting remote rural communities to superfast broadband. Two areas in Exmoor are already being connected with the support of CDS by an innovative Yeovil-based firm, using a combination of satellite and Wi-Fi technology.

The second stage of the roll out will involve an investment of at least £38m – the largest amount of any superfast broadband project in the UK which was secured by CDS and its partners in August 2014. This funding will be spent on increasing superfast coverage and CDS are on track to reach their ambition of 100% superfast broadband coverage by 2020.

3. BUSINESS BROADBAND

- 3.1 Government announced on the 10th of February 2015 that the Connection Voucher Scheme, under which businesses are eligible to apply for a voucher worth up to £3,000, has been extended beyond the Bristol and the 5 mile radius area to include all postcodes for businesses in B&NES.
- 3.2 The Connection Vouchers Scheme now includes a total of 6654 registered businesses.
- 3.3 You can input the postcode for a specific property into the online checker at <https://www.connectionvouchers.co.uk/> to confirm that the premises are eligible.
- 3.4 Questions about the Connection Vouchers Scheme should be addressed to Bristol City Council who is administering the scheme. The Council can be contacted by email at <mailto:connection.vouchers@bristol.gov.uk> or by phoning 0117 357 4445.
- 3.5 This arrangement is temporary and all voucher applications must be submitted by the end of March 2015. Partners in the West of England are continuing to lobby Government to have the scheme extended across the whole of the sub-region on an ongoing basis.

4. BROADBAND POSITION

4.1 B&NES, in conjunction with North Somerset Council, appointed Thys van Tonder as the new principal Broadband Development Officer at the end of November 2014. Since then Thys has been contributing immensely, using his commercial knowledge, towards the CDS program, Voucher Connection Scheme, North Somerset Broadband development and he has also submitted a business plan to turn Bath into a Smart City. This business proposal could provide a platform and solution not only to the broadband challenges in Bath but could bring relieve to the existing broadband challenges in the surrounding 'rural areas'.