

PARISHES LIAISON MEETING – 20TH JUNE 2012

Members Briefing: Connecting Devon and Somerset

June 1st 2012

Progress update: 1st June

Progress on the **Connecting Devon and Somerset Programme** since last month's update, has focused on the procurement of a framework of suppliers who will deliver the 'Demand Stimulation' part of the programme. The successful suppliers will be announced soon. They will be putting together 'on the ground' events, workshops and community liaison work to promote how superfast broadband can change the way we use the internet.

National Framework: At a national level, ongoing negotiations between BDUK and potential broadband suppliers are close to completion, and preparations are being made to enable them to sign up to the National Framework. Once this has happened, Connecting Devon and Somerset will be able to formally launch its own local procurement process issuing an Invitation to Tender (ITT).

State Aid: In parallel with the work with bidders, BDUK has also been following a process to notify an umbrella State Aid scheme with the European Commission. This will enable all national projects to be State Aid compliant and save a lot of time at a local level. Complete agreement has not yet been achieved on some aspects of the scheme and BDUK is still working with the Commission to finalise these remaining aspects.

To compensate for the additional time taken up at European levels, BDUK is working to streamline and optimise the procurement process for regional programmes, including Connecting Devon and Somerset. In addition, it is working with the programme team to ensure we are fully ready to begin procurement as soon as the State Aid announcement is made, and are prepared for project approval by the UK's State Aid competency centre.

At present the CDS programme team do not anticipate any change to the overall timetable for procurement of a supplier. Despite the delays at the national level, a lot of work has gone on behind the scenes to ensure the procurement process can be condensed into a short time frame. This means the programme is still on track to sign up its broadband supplier by October 2012.

DCMS: You may have seen in the press that a further £1.7 million has been awarded to Devon by DCMS for superfast broadband. The proposal is to provide extra funding related to exchange only lines. The Connecting Devon and Somerset Programme Board will be reviewing the proposal and business case, as there are many fine details that need to be assessed. We will send out a further briefing on this issue when more details are available.

Please continue to do all you can to raise awareness about the aims of this project and to encourage constituents to have their say on this significant service.

Anyone can register: please encourage individuals, businesses and groups in your networks to either call 0844 4636887 or visit www.connectingdevonandsomerset.co.uk to take part. We have posters, leaflets and paper questionnaires. Should you wish to order any, please contact Chibugo Okorie on

01392 382094 (chibugo.okorie@devon.gov.uk).

Background

'Connecting Devon and Somerset' is a project led by Devon County Council and Somerset County Council in partnership with Plymouth, Torbay, North Somerset and Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES) Councils to roll out improved broadband infrastructure to those parts of our counties not covered by the private sector. The partnership has secured £32m Government funding from BDUK. Somerset and Devon County Councils will also be putting in up to £10 million each, with contributions from other partners bringing the public sector investment to a total of £53 million.

About State Aid

State Aid regulation is a mechanism to ensure that market competition is not distorted through the use of public money. In terms of CDS this means that the programme team must show that there is no planned deployment of basic or superfast broadband by the private sector in the areas where we are using public money within 3 years of the state aid application. It also requires the terms of the contract to ensure appropriate access to other operators.

Contact details for all media enquiries:

Coast Communications Office: 01752 847135 Email: info@coastmarcoms.co.uk