



LJC Rural Broadband Update – October 2012

Introduction

The issue of broadband access touches virtually all aspects of people's lives in rural communities. Having poor access or no access to broadband services affects the ability and agility of local communities to engage, grow and be resilient. It stifles the ability for communities to innovate and develop business which is essential to harness the economic benefits in rural areas.

Access to broadband services in rural areas will open up a range of opportunities for local government, business, communities and individuals to do things in different ways. It is seen as a real opportunity for developing and supporting the rural economy.

Shropshire Council recognises the challenge facing rural communities for access to broadband and the gap that is currently not being filled by the commercial market installing either standard or Next Generation Access (NGA). The Connecting Shropshire project aims to work with BDUK (Broadband Delivery UK) to address this gap, by investing money, together with a technical partner to roll out broadband services across the whole of Shropshire.

The key project aims are to:

- Enable 100% of Shropshire's population to access standard broadband at a minimum of 2mbps by the end of 2015
- Provide as much superfast broadband delivered via fibre in Shropshire for the money available by the end of 2015
- Support Shropshire businesses and residents in using and embracing broadband as part of everyday life
- Create an open infrastructure to encourage competition in the market of broadband services
- Stimulate demand by delivering a programme to demonstrate the economic and social benefits that faster broadband brings.

Update on work completed so far

- We have secured £16.4 million public sector funding (BDUK and Shropshire Council).
- Our broadband plan has been approved by BDUK. The plan outlines aspirations for the delivery of broadband in Shropshire.



- Demand registration. To date we have received nearly 8000 responses from residents and businesses. Thank you to all of those who have been active and completed the process. We are continuing to ask communities to 'spread the word' and to evidence their commitment for broadband services. This process demonstrates to the private sector that there is a good reason for them to invest money in our project.
- Complied with BDUK governance audits and issued our revised State Aid consultation. State Aid consultation is an essential element to the project and is required where public money is used to stimulate the commercial market place. Before the project can be implemented and broadband rolled out State Aid clearance must be obtained from the European Commission. BDUK are projecting that State Aid clearance will be announced before the end of this year.
- We have now entered into supplier engagement with the BDUK Framework Suppliers who have expressed an interest to partner with Shropshire Council to deliver a broadband infrastructure. We are now working towards issuing an Invitation to Tender (ITT) which we are aiming to issue before the end of this year.
- We are working with our neighbouring authorities. Because some of the serving equipment is geographically in neighbour authority areas we need to work together to ensure we communicate, plan and deliver a seamless infrastructure which will deliver the best possible outcomes to bordering areas.
- We recently submitted an application for additional funding from the Rural Communities Broadband Fund. We have now been given endorsement of our Expression of Interest (EOI) and can now proceed to full application. We are one of the 52 EOIs to get through out of 83 bids submitted.

Keep updated

- We are aiming to update our website over the forthcoming months. We will refresh the information about the project, including timescales, together with evidence and demonstration of the benefits of having broadband in rural areas. Please visit **www.connectingshropshire.co.uk**
- We will continue to work with communities and businesses to demonstrate the benefits of broadband. Further details will be published shortly.

If you require further information please contact Chris Taylor on 01743 252205 or chris.taylor@shropshire.gov.uk

NOTE: BDUK - Broadband Delivery UK is a delivery vehicle for the Government's policies on broadband. BDUK is part of the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS). To date BDUK have allocated 530 million to stimulate commercial investment to roll out high speed broadband in rural communities