

How is the broadband network being extended?

CSW Broadband is a partnership of 8 Local Authorities, led by Warwickshire County Council, that is rolling out superfast broadband to those areas where it would not be commercially viable to extend the network. These tend to be rural and more remote areas.

The project has now successfully procured additional coverage under 3 separate contracts, each of which has been won by BT (now known as Openreach), after a rigorous evaluation. Before we can go out to tender it is necessary to carry out what is known as an Open Market Review (OMR) and Public Consultation.

The aim is to discover where any commercial broadband provider intends to offer superfast broadband within the next 3 years. The last OMR was carried out in 2016, and covers the period to the end of 2019. We do this because we don't want to spend public money in an area which is to be upgraded anyway, and we also cannot build across a commercial provision.

Where possible, the upgrades to superfast speeds are achieved by what is known as Fibre to the Cabinet technology. This is a hybrid solution, which brings the fibre network as close as possible to properties, with the final delivery being over the existing telephone network. This is a cost-efficient way for upgrading fibre, for most areas. The difficulty is that broadband speeds degrade quite quickly over the copper network, hence the need to get the fibre out as far as possible.

The existing telephone network is set up to take the lines from the exchange to (in most cases) a green cabinet which stands by the side of the road. A new cabinet is erected close to the existing one, and this is fed by fibre and requires an electrical connection. The broadband signal comes to the new cabinet over the fibre network, then the new cabinet is connected to the original cabinet, and the final delivery is over the copper/aluminium telephone network.

We are increasingly seeing a different type of intervention, known as Fibre to the Premise (FTTP). This means that rather than erecting a new cabinet, a fibre connection is taken right along the road and connection points are made available to each property. There is an installation charge to pay to bring the fibre right up to the property, but speeds of up to 1Gb are achievable using this technology. Clearly, if you do not need these ultrafast speeds then you can buy a broadband package from your chosen ISP which offers what you need at a price that you can afford.

The project aims to take the fibre network as far as possible, and to make a choice of broadband providers available to as many properties as we can. For more information about your line, and to check the status of your property, visit www.cswbroadband.org.uk