

## Alternative solutions will support our quest for gigabit-capable connectivity

As we have reported before, the government has ambitious plans to provide 'gigabit capable' broadband speeds of up to 1000Mbps to at least 85% of UK properties by December 2025 and to at least 99% by 2030.

The intention is to build a long-lasting network across the UK that will increase our competitiveness, boost productivity and meet the future demands of consumers and businesses for decades to come.

At least 80% of this coverage is expected to be achieved by the full fibre roll-out plans of commercial providers such as Openreach, Virgin Media, CityFibre and an array of smaller network builders, collectively known as AltNets.

The purpose of the government's £5 billion Project Gigabit programme is to enable 'harder to reach' communities to access lightning-fast gigabit-capable broadband in areas where network providers don't have any plans to upgrade commercially.

CSW will oversee this work in our area through the full fibre deployment contract that is due to be awarded later this year by Building Digital UK (BDUK), the government agency who oversee projects like ours.

While the aim is to take full fibre to as many eligible premises as possible with the funds that will be made available, it is unrealistic to expect all of these eligible properties to benefit from a full fibre connection due to the costs involved with laying fibre to the more remote locations in our region.

BDUK recognise that this will be an issue across the nation and so a number of alternative, potentially more affordable gigabit-capable solutions are currently being investigated.

At a more local level, the CSW Broadband Project is also looking into what we can do over the coming years to try and ensure that no one misses out on the benefits of better connectivity.

Such solutions will include provision for better 4G and 5G mobile connectivity and possible hybrid solutions (e.g. a combination of fibre deployment and perhaps fixed wireless access to ensure connectivity for the more expensive, harder to reach areas of that community).

Another potential solution could be via low earth orbit (LEO) satellite constellations such as Starlink\* or OneWeb. [The UK Government's Alpha Trials programme is currently supporting research](#) into whether this could provide an effective and economically viable solution for hard to reach areas.

While this is still currently a relatively pricey solution for consumers in terms of the hardware and monthly service charges, costs are likely to come down in the near future as more and more companies – including Amazon and Facebook – enter the new race for space, all vying for a piece of the mega constellation pie.

So, while full fibre is still the preferred option, we are looking at potential alternatives for where full fibre is unlikely to be an economically viable solution to try and ensure that we can all benefit from lightning-fast connectivity in the coming years.

\*If you know of anyone who is currently using a low earth orbit satellite solution – such as Starlink – in the Warwickshire / Solihull area, please encourage them to share their experiences / opinions of using this system by emailing us at [broadband@cswbroadband.org.uk](mailto:broadband@cswbroadband.org.uk)