

CSW Broadband Update

As you will already have read, the CSW broadband project entered into a £14.57m contract with BT in June this year. The money will be spent on bringing improved broadband to those areas that will not be uplifted through the commercial plans of BT and other providers. The targets for the project are 100% coverage at the Universal Service Commitment (a minimum of 2Mbps, which could in practice be up to 23 Mbps), and 90% coverage at Superfast speeds, which is over 24Mbps. Some areas will get considerably more than 24Mbps, and the actual speed achieved depends on a number of factors such as geography, topography, current infrastructure etc

This project is a stepping stone, as the EU has even more demanding targets for 2020: 100% at 30Mbps and 50% connected to and using 100Mbps, and it will be noted that the lower EU threshold is higher than the upper UK 2015 target! Therefore it is essential that any money spent under the current project will contribute to meeting the 2020 targets, and the only way to do that is to get fibre as far as possible. We will achieve fibre to 93% of our area under the current project and are awaiting additional funding to take it further

From the start of the project we have taken a pro-active approach to keeping people informed and to engaging with both residents and businesses, and our communications strategy has been held up as national best practice by BDUK, the government body charged with delivering the rural broadband programme.

As soon as the contract was signed we published maps giving indicative locations for the rollout of superfast broadband under the current funding, although it is not possible at this stage to be specific as there is a considerable amount of work taking place to determine what will be possible on the ground. This work involves looking at the existing network, which has grown up in a piecemeal fashion over a number of years. In some cases, therefore, it is likely that the fibre will follow a different route from the existing copper network. This will not affect telephone/voice services.

Some properties within our area are fed from exchanges or cabinets in other counties/project areas, and these are also being investigated to ensure that the best solution is provided that will help to ensure that we can achieve the 2020 targets.

Once the re-alignment planning work is complete we will be publishing a 12-month rolling programme of works, which will be updated on a quarterly basis, and which will show which exchanges, cabinets and other infrastructure are to be upgraded next. All information is available through the project website <http://www.cswbroadband.org.uk/> and the website itself is currently undergoing considerable work to make it even easier to find the huge amount of information that is there.