

Alternative and additional approaches to the CDS Programme

Do nothing

Teignbridge was the only Devon district to contribute to the Phase 2 programme. The commitment to contribute was made to provide additionality to both the programme and to Teignbridge residents, as the contribution was match funded by the Government.

If the Council decides to take the same position as the other Devon authorities there will still be coverage within the district. Until the programme is successfully tendered we won't be able to say what the coverage will be, with or without a TDC contribution.

However, as noted in the main report, Teignbridge lagged behind the national coverage at the beginning of Phase 1 and while the programme was very successful it still lags behind the national target for coverage. The risk therefore remains that it will remain below target, to the detriment of the local economy and local businesses.

National initiatives

Universal Service Obligation (USO)

In March 2018, the Government introduced legislation for a broadband 'universal service obligation' (USO), to give homes and businesses the right to request a decent and affordable broadband connection.

For Teignbridge the Universal Service Provider is BT. They will be responsible for taking requests for USO connections and building the necessary infrastructure to deliver them within a reasonable timeframe.

People who cannot access a decent, affordable broadband service, can request a USO connection. A 'decent' connection is currently defined by the Government as capable of delivering download speeds of at least 10Mbit/s and upload speeds of at least 1Mbit/s.

Universal Service Providers will have 30 days to check and confirm whether someone is eligible. To do this, they will check that the consumer's location:

- Is a home or business;
- Has no access to existing decent, affordable broadband;
- Will not be covered by a public scheme in the next 12 months; and
- Will not cost more than £3,400 to connect (as set in the legislation). Where the cost is more than £3,400, people will have the choice to pay the excess costs of installing a USO connection or use an alternative technology, such as satellite, outside the USO scheme.

- People who only have access to a service priced over £45 per month will also have the right to request a USO connection.

Universal Service Providers will be subject to challenging network build targets. BT must deliver every USO connection as quickly as possible and deliver at least 80% of connections within 12 months, 95% within 18 months, and 99% within 24 months of the confirmed USO order.

USO customers will pay the same prices as the rest of the UK. Universal Service Providers must offer connections and services at the same prices as equivalent services they offer to non-USO customers. BT has also committed to offering at least one broadband connection and service that meets the USO specification at no more than £45 per month. This provides a further affordability safeguard for BT customers, including those with broadband via a fixed wireless access service.

USO customers will receive the same quality of service as non-USO customers. The Universal Service Providers must establish a USO complaints handling procedure and USO customers will have free access to an Ofcom-approved Alternative Dispute Resolution scheme.

Universal Service Providers must report on performance and keep records. This is to help monitor compliance with the conditions, and to allow any claim for funds to be properly audited.

People will be able to request a USO connection from 20 March 2020. This is to allow Universal Service Providers to make changes to their systems and processes and prepare for building connections.

Better Broadband Voucher Scheme¹

All homes and businesses in the region with broadband speeds of less than two Megabits per second (Mbps), without a published delivery date for superfast broadband within the next 12 months, are now eligible to apply for an interim solution under The Better Broadband Voucher Scheme. Vouchers worth up to £350 would contribute towards the cost of equipment and installation of a 4G, Fixed Wireless or Satellite solution.

The Better Broadband Voucher Scheme, administered by BDUK, helps provide access to a broadband service offering download speeds of at least 10 Mbps.

The scheme runs up until the end of 2019 and is open to residential and business premises. Any premises benefiting from a voucher will not be removed from future superfast delivery plans. This includes premises within current planned superfast delivery through CDS's current contracts.

Applications need to be made through registered suppliers on the approved supplier list, available on the DCMS website.

¹ <https://www.connectingdevonandsomerset.co.uk/cds-now-offering-better-broadband-scheme-vouchers/>

Community led solutions

For communities that are outside the Phase 2 area or for communities who want to take more control by bringing forward delivery of this service, then a community led initiative, procured & funded by subscribers, may be an option. In all instances, a bespoke approach would be required with its own business case to assess the issues and costs of taking the technology to those places. Initiating this work will require an intensive amount of resource and would need to ensure that it did not fall within the current CDS delivery or planned Phase 2.

There are many examples of “pioneer” communities who have decided to be proactive and deliver their own solutions. This solution is not mutually exclusive with the other options but would offer another method for remote communities who want to get connected. There are currently service providers working with communities to deliver Superfast Broadband through 3G telecommunication, but this route can restrict choice in a community to a single provider.

Community Fibre Partnerships

Led by Openreach, Community Fibre Partnerships work with your local community to build a customised fibre solution to bring fibre broadband to homes and businesses.

A joint funding arrangement is put in place, which means Openreach contribute some of the costs and the community funds the rest. Openreach then build the most affordable solution we can to meet the community’s needs. They also advise on any grants the community might be able to get to help pay for their part e.g. from local authorities or the Government.

More information can be found at <https://www.openreach.com/fibre-broadband/community-fibre-partnerships>

Rural Broadband options

Community broadband projects have worked with small Internet Service Providers (ISPs, or ‘altnets’) to bypass the system rather than working within it or lobbying established providers for access in order to bring better internet access to whole villages.

Some villages have chosen to bypass BT altogether and ask a private company to install a local network. That can take the form of a high-speed wi-fi network - so the company will lay a fibre line to a transmitter on a high point like a public building and then subscribers in the local area buy their own aerials to pick up the signal - or a fixed line fibre network. In Ashby de la Launde, Lincolnshire, for example, wi-fi has provided up to 70Mb broadband speeds and the Broadband for Rural North (B4RN) fibre project has bought 1Gb speeds to several villages in rural Lancashire.

Case studies

The following case studies are examples of Councils that have taken an alternative option to receiving superfast broadband in their area. By exploring alternatives, TDC can make a more informed decision about their own options for superfast broadband. This list was originally produced in 2016 to inform the discussion that led to the Council agreeing to contribute to the CDS programme, with updates where available.

West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC)

Initially a public/private partnership agreement was set up between WODC and Cotswold Broadband (now part of the Voneus group) through a £1.5 million fund that was to be matched by BDUK. The Council are currently delivering this programme with Gigaclear, and rollout is due to be complete by the end of 2019.

Eastbourne Borough Council

Eastbourne is now benefitting from a high speed fibre optic broadband network along its coastal edge. This has been provided via a special arrangement involving Eastbourne Borough Council which invested £367,000 in a broadband infrastructure supply company, CloudConnX, which has developed the town's new broadband network. The investment in CloudConnX also stands to provide the local authority with a future return over the next five years over and above the £367,000 originally laid down.

Eden Valley – Cumbria

Lonsdale NET was formed with the aim of improving broadband speeds, mainly in rural areas, starting within the Eden Valley in Cumbria. After speaking with the Technical Director it was established that the set up costs for the area was in the region of £400,000. The Technical Director did say that cost is heavily dependent on terrain and size of area.

How does it work?

Lonsdale NET's service is connected to multiple providers at a major internet "hub" in Manchester (one of two major internet backbone locations in the country), a fibre optic cable, dedicated to their use, connects a number of our core wireless transmission sites to the world wide web at speeds of 1Gbps (1,000Mbps). These sites either serve customers directly or provide microwave links to repeater sites allowing us to expand our network coverage.

The information below is taken from BT's live website and provides information to rural communities on possible options they can take to receive superfast broadband. The BT website also advises communities interested in gap funding that before they enquire they should check if the community is scheduled to get superfast fibre broadband as part of the national rollout, or under the government's BDUK initiative. BT directs visitors to the postcode checker at www.superfast-openreach.co.uk. Only then, if the community is not recognised on either list do they suggest emailing them so they can come and speak to them.

Claverton Parish and CDS

Claverton Parish Council is a particularly interesting case study because they are within the District of Bath and North East Somerset which means they are within the boundaries of the CDS programme. Not all areas in Devon and Somerset are included in the rollout scheme because of their rural location. This Parish Council were able to find out after a great deal of time and effort that they were not included in the scheme and pursued their own solution to a recent news story about a project led by Dr Rodger Sykes (CEO of a technology company in Claverton) has raised interest in alternative ways of receiving broadband in villages and rural areas. The Parish privately co-funded a local fibre network with BT Open Reach and the project took three years to complete (2012-2015). They knew as an area that they would have to wait for BT to roll out their scheme to them so they worked with BT to solve the problem and 'jump the queue'. Claverton was outside the original footprint for superfast broadband (CDS planned 90-95% coverage). In 2012 a state aid application was made and if an area was planned to be commercially covered then CDS were not allowed to invest in this area under European Commission state aid regulations. Claverton discovered it was not included in the BT rollout plans so decided to fund a new cabinet rather than wait to be included in a future scheme as this could have taken several years. BT proposed a cofunded model and the community raised the necessary monies that BT defined.

In regards to how much money they had to invest as a community, a statement from Claverton Parish Council in 2013 states:

Cllr Sykes updated the Parish Council that the Claverton Broadband working group have now received the draft engagement offer from BT Openreach for the installation of the necessary cabinet equipment to enable the upgrading of the Broadband service to the village to Infinity (superfast broadband). The required community contribution cost is £40,081 exclusive of VAT. VAT at 20% will add a further £8,016 to the cost. The total cost including VAT is £48,097.20. This is a fixed price contract, providing it is accepted within a 60 day period. If the contract is signed by the end of August BT will also commit to the project being completed by May 2014.

It's worth pointing out that the final cost may have changed since then, not least because Openreach was in discussion with HMRC as to the necessity of charging VAT on projects of this type.

Below is a table of rural communities that have discovered that they are not covered under BT's rollout scheme or BDUK. There is no information online of how these communities found out that they were not included in any scheme and were eligible to apply for alternative funding.

Communities that have taken different approaches to achieving superfast broadband in their area

Community	Approach	Achievement
Village of Ashley, Northamptonshire	Ashley Broadband Funding Campaign:	Guaranteed access to fibre broadband by Spring

	<p>raised £15k to close the funding gap (50% each). This offer price was only available if they committed to being part of the work schedule for the 2nd quarter or 2015. At a later date it would have cost £47k.</p>	<p>2015. Download speeds from 30 Mbps to 80Mbps. Customer service speeds depend on the product, distance from cabinet and internal wiring in their property.</p>
<p>Lancaster Way Business Park, Ely</p>	<p>Discovered business park was not included in the Cambridgeshire rollout programme, met with Annette Thorpe (BT Regional Partnership Director for East of England) and agreed to privately fund a cabinet for the Park's residents. No figure provided for cost.</p>	<p>Tenants can receive download speeds of just under 60Mbps and upload speeds of around 20 Mbps.</p>
<p>Binfield Heath, Oxfordshire</p>	<p>Discovered they were not to be included in BT's commercial fibre rollout plans because the economics of delivering fibre broadband were too challenging. Caversham local exchange already upgraded so residents raised £56k to contribute towards the cost of upgrading and rearranging the broadband network serving the village. They had 2 new cabinets installed and a fibre link back to Caversham exchange.</p>	<p>Residents and businesses have access to broadband speeds of up to 80Mbps.</p>
<p>Fell End, Cumbria</p>	<p>There are 58 properties spread over a remote 11k area. The project cost more than £100k and was a partnership between the local community, Rural Community Broadband Fund, the Prince's Countryside Fund, the</p>	<p>Use an innovative engineering solution: the ducting that houses fibre optic cable is being laid using a technique known as mole ploughing (mini diggers). Residents able to get FTTP download speed of 300Mbps</p>

	Holhird Trust, TalkTalk Digital Heroes and BT.	
Islip village, Oxfordshire	Not included in BT's commercial fibre roll-out plans. Nearby Kidlington, the local exchange was already fibre enabled. Residents joined a partnership with BT and raised £11k towards the cost of laying a new fibre network to the village.	Households and businesses can receive broadband speeds of more than 30Mbps
Little Wenlock, Shropshire	Discovered they were unlikely to get superfast fibre broadband through a commercial rollout or local authority upgrade they joined into partnership with BT and raised more than £30k from UK Coal's Community Fund with additional funds from OpenReach. Nearby telephone exchange Dawley already upgraded to fibre broadband.	Residents now receive download speeds of up to 80Mbps and upload speeds of up to 20Mbps.
Preston Village, Hertfordshire	The village committee wrote to the CEO of BT asking for help to increase their original band width (.25Mbps). BT claimed it was not commercially viable to connect them to their own cabinet and they were 5.5km from the exchange. The committee raised the money needed for BT to provide the cabinet.	Residents can now receive download speeds averaging 55Mbps
Frilford, Oxfordshire	Discovered they were not included in the Oxfordshire rollout programme so they teamed up with Gigaclear who provided residents with fibre broadband for £100 per connection plus a monthly fee starting at £37 depending on speed required. Residents can	Superfast broadband speed of up to 1000Mbps delivered by Gigaclear

	also choose to lay a fibre cable from the boundary of their property to their home themselves or pay for an installer to lay the cable for around £85 for a 25m installation.	
Hambleden, Buckinghamshire	Area was a complete broadband notspot until March, 2010. Residents raised £25k and received £5k from local council to establish a wireless broadband network for the village. Cost £49.50 for installation per household and £29.50 a month with small businesses able to get faster speeds for £50 a month. Village Networks4 carried out installation at £222 per property without the funding subsidy.	6Mbps available for residents and 10Mbps for small businesses delivered by Village Networks, Wimax
Forest of Bowland and the Lune Valley, Lancashire	Residents of 8 parishes in Lancashire dug channels across fields and lay their own fibre cables. Project began in 2012 when local residents formed a community led company, Broadband for the Rural North (B4RN). BT estimate connections to property in the area around £10k, laying the cables themselves reduced this to £1k per property. Residents then pay £30pm	Residents receive broadband speeds of 1000Mbps at £30 per month after self-installation