

## **ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1 APRIL 2021**

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### **BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE IN DARLINGTON – UPDATE**

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#### **Current Broadband Infrastructure rollout and upgrades**

1. Current Broadband Infrastructure Rollout and Upgrades to gigabit enabled speeds on a Fibre to the premise (FTTP) basis in Darlington are taking place on three different routes.
  - (a) Commercial Rollout by Broadband Infrastructure Providers (Virgin Media / Openreach) based on new built residential Estates
  - (b) Publicly Funded via Dept Media Culture and Sport (DCMS) through Building Digital UK (BDUK) and TVCA funding via Digital Durham / Openreach in the Digital Durham Phase 2 programme for premises identified by Openreach by June 2021
  - (c) For the rural western villages of Darlington via the current Rural Gigabit Voucher Scheme of BDUK (until March 21) through provider Quickline by Summer 2021 covering Killerby, Summerhouse, and Denton via Fibre to the Premise and surrounding areas via gigabit enabled mobile technology.

#### **Future enablement and upgrades of Broadband:**

##### **Project Gigabit**

2. Future Broadband enablement projects are currently under consultation with partners such as TVCA & Digital Durham and the Government for the Project Gigabit Programme of BDUKt which offers 5bn investment for the most marginal rural areas in England.
3. Currently an Open Market Review by Digital Durham is taking place which is also on the Darlington BC website [www.darlington.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.darlington.gov.uk/consultations) to identify the areas of most need and where infrastructure is planned by the broadband infrastructure providers.
4. The Digital Durham led procurement area for the new Project Gigabit programme which includes Northumberland, County Durham, Gateshead, Sunderland, South Tyneside and the Tees Valley Local Authorities including Darlington BC has been announced 19<sup>th</sup> March 2021 as a 1<sup>st</sup> rollout area for the new BDUK programme.
5. That means the procurement process led by Digital Durham will start May 2021 this year and could deliver first upgrades in mostly rural areas of the procurement region by 2022.

### **New Rural Gigabit Vouchers Scheme 2021**

6. The Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme has also being relaunched in April 2021 with up to £210 million to give people in eligible rural areas immediate financial help to get gigabit speeds. Darlington BC has been in contact with numerous commercial rural providers such as Voneus Netomnia and Quickline to evaluate how further rural gaps can be closed in Darlington via this scheme.

### **Commercial rollout and retrofitting by broadband providers:**

7. Providers will be providing upgrades in the next years to their current infrastructure and are eager to retrofit areas which have had in the last decade speed under 100mb per second installed. UK Government now wants commercial infrastructure provider to reach gibabit enabled infrastructure in the UK by end of the decade.
8. The areas are chosen by the providers themselves on a commercial basis and local authorities can only lobby with those providers to be included in future.
9. The Council has opened up in recent months conversations with a third large gigabit infrastructure provider - Cityfibre.
10. Further work with TVCA is continuing to upgrade digital infrastructure for its residents and businesses to the highest standard.

**Ian Williams**

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