Bringing faster broadband to our rural areas

Project Update June 2019

Please forward this PDF to your contacts – we need to spread the word!

If you would like a Word version of this newsletter please email: broadband@cswbroadband.org.uk

Sign up to receive this e-newsletter direct to your inbox and for information about progress on your cabinet or exchange-only line.

Over 69000 properties able to connect to the fibre network

Topics in this edition:
Your chance to win £100 in Amazon vouchers
CSW Broadband Project updates
Rural Gigabit Connectivity programme launched
Ofcom – End of contract alerts for UK broadband customers
Copy for your own website or newsletter
Questions and Answers

Your chance to win two prizes of £100 in Amazon vouchers

We’re giving you the chance to win two sets of Amazon Gift Vouchers both worth £100 each!

All we want you to do is submit a case study telling us how being able to connect to superfast broadband, thanks to the work of the CSW Broadband Project, has benefited your household or your business. It will only take you around 5 minutes of your time to complete.

Submitting a case study is really helpful for us when we are applying for additional funding to take the fibre network even further - allowing us to help those living in areas that are still waiting to experience the benefits of superfast broadband.

For your chance of winning one of the two prizes up for grabs – simply download the relevant case study template, fill it in and returned to us at broadband@cswbroadband.org.uk by 5pm on Friday 5th July 2019.
All entries received by that deadline will then be entered into a draw, which will take place during the week beginning 8th July and the lucky winners will be contacted by either email or phone.

**CSW Broadband Project updates**

We have seen a great deal of activity in recent weeks with over 60 new cabinets / structures going live since the last newsletter was sent out at the end of April.

**Communities benefiting from these upgrades included parts of:**

As a result, over 69,000 properties across Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire are now able to connect to the fibre network thanks to the work of the CSW Broadband Project.

As before, once we have received confirmation that a particular cabinet or structure upgrade is complete, we will email all affected residents whose details we have listed on our database.

Remember that once your property has been upgraded, you won’t get a superfast service automatically. You need to order the improved service with your chosen ISP (Internet Service Provider) to benefit from the upgrade.

To check on your property’s superfast status, enter your landline number or address into the [BT Broadband Availability Checker](https://www.bt.com/internet/broadband-availability-checker). Our [How to use the BT Broadband Availability Checker](https://www.bt.com/internet/broadband-availability-checker) webpage will help you make sense of the Broadband Checker results.

You might like to use a broadband comparison site such as [MoneySavingExpert.com](https://www.moneysavingexpert.com), [Broadband Choices](https://www.broadbandchoices.co.uk), [Broadband Genie](https://www.broadbandgenie.co.uk) or [uSwitch](https://www.uSwitch.com) to find a fibre broadband package to suit you and your family’s needs.

Finally, if your property has benefited from an FTTP upgrade, our [Fibre to the Premise webpage](https://www.cswwideband.co.uk/ftp) provides you with invaluable information on ordering an FTTP service and the subsequent installation process.

**Rural Gigabit Connectivity programme launched**

The Government has officially launched their new £200m [Rural Gigabit Connectivity (RGC)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-200m-rural-gigabit-connectivity-programme) programme, part of their “outside in” strategy, which will help fund full fibre broadband connections to some of the hardest to reach areas across the UK.

Currently, only around 7% of homes and businesses across the UK can access a Gigabit (1Gbps) speed capable “full fibre” (FTTP) broadband network. However, the Government wants to ensure that the country’s broadband infrastructure is fit for the future and has an ambitious target to “delivering a nationwide full-fibre to the premises network” by 2033 as outlined in last year’s [Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/future-telecoms-infrastructure-review-ftir) (FTIR).
Much of this will be delivered through competitive commercial investment across the UK but the FTIR also identified that around 10% of the country would need additional funding to ensure that the hardest to reach areas are not left behind and are connected at the same pace as the rest of the country. The Rural Gigabit Connectivity (RGC) programme is the first step in this process.

There are two approaches to delivering the RGC programme:

1) **Fostering Local Rural “Hub Sites”**. A hub site is really just a public sector building, which is deemed to be eligible for intervention and aligns with qualifying criteria set by the BDUK programme. Initially this will start by connecting primary schools to “gigabit-capable” connections.

Other public buildings will then be added throughout the course of the programme (e.g. health sites and community halls). The idea being that you not only help to connect those hub sites, but also bring the fibre deeper into a remote community and thus provide a network that other commercial ISPs can build upon in order to reach surrounding homes and businesses.

2) **Vouchers**. The new RGC vouchers will offer up to £3,500 for small businesses and up to £1,500 for residents. The increased value of the vouchers - compared to the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme (GBVS) - reflects the higher cost of deployment in these harder to reach areas. As with GBVS, it will still be possible to aggregate the vouchers in order to help tackle larger deployments.

The CSW Broadband Project will now be looking into both of these solutions as a means to take the fibre network into harder to reach areas within the CSW sub-region and we will update you on developments regarding this in due course.

**Ofcom – End of contract alerts for UK broadband customers**

Broadband, pay-TV, mobile phone and landline customers must be told when their contracts are about to end and also be informed of their providers’ best available deals under new rules announced by Ofcom last month.

At present it is a fairly common practice for major telecoms providers to try and attract new customers by offering big price discounts on their first minimum contract term (lasting up to 12-24 months).

However, not all ISPs are clear enough about how much customers will pay after this initial term has ended. Consumers who remain with their provider and don’t haggle for a better price after the minimum contract term has ended often end up paying more than new customers. Through the new system, Ofcom aims to help tackle this so-called “loyalty penalty” and help users avoid overpaying for such services.

Relevant companies have nine months to update their systems and must start sending out the notifications to existing subscribers from 15 February 2020.

Service providers will need to text, email or send a letter to their customers between 10 to 40 days before the end of their contract stating:

- the date their contract can be terminated without a penalty
- the price they have been paying
- any changes to the price or service that automatically come into effect after the date
- how much notice they need to give to cancel the deal
- the best alternative subscriptions on offer, including the prices charged to new customers

For those who are interested, the ISP Review’s ‘Ofcom Force End of Contract Notices for UK Broadband and Mobile’ article has further information regarding this.

**Copy for your own website or newsletter**

As always, we have a range of short articles of around 300 words that can be downloaded for use in your own newsletters / websites should you wish to use them.

**Questions and Answers**

Here are some of the Questions and Answers (Q&A’s) that residents have raised recently. Our website has a full set of Frequently Asked Questions, which are regularly updated.

**What sort of broadband speeds can I realistically expect if I’m upgraded as part of the CSW Broadband Project?**

If your property has benefited from a Fibre to the Cabinet (FTTC) upgrade, then you could achieve a final connection speed of up to 80Mbps (megabits per second). However, this may vary depending on a number of factors including: the distance from your property to the street cabinet it is connected to, the local geography, the local copper network and the condition of the wiring within your property.

The UK Government defines ‘superfast’ broadband as download speeds of over 24Mbps, while the EU defines it as 30Mbps.

If your property has benefited from a Fibre to the Premise (FTTP) upgrade, then you could achieve speeds of up to 330Mbps or even up to 1Gigabyte (1000 Megabytes) with some of the upgrades that have recently been deployed.

To find out what speeds you can currently achieve, either enter your landline number or address into the BT Broadband Availability Checker. Our How to use the BT Broadband Availability Checker webpage will help you make sense of the results.

**What is FTTP on Demand?**

We have had many enquiries recently where the BT Broadband Availability Checker suggests that a product called ‘Fibre on Demand’ is available to residents, offering speeds of up to 330Mbps.

This is NOT the same as the native Fibre to the Premise, (listed as WBC FTTP on the BT Broadband Availability Checker) that is being installed to many areas through the CSW Broadband Project. Although these two solutions function in identical ways, their cost, contract and deployment methods have tended to be very different.

With the WBC FTTP that we are installing, the fibre optic cable will have been installed outside your property (e.g. down your street), which makes it fairly cheap to get connected.
By comparison, Fibre on Demand is designed to be requested ‘on demand’, in Fibre to the Cabinet (FTTC) capable areas. Residents requesting this service will then pay for the installation of fibre from the cabinet to their property, which can prove to be extremely expensive.

Because of the high costs involved (and often the requirement for a much longer than standard contract), very few providers actually offer Fibre on Demand. Cerberus Networks and FluidOne are two that we are aware of but there may be others as well.

Fibre on Demand is therefore likely to remain a niche product for those who are prepared to pay the additional installation charges and a higher ongoing monthly cost.

You can find more frequently asked broadband questions on our website.

Help us to spread the word!
We need to reach as many people as we possibly can. You can help us by emailing this to all your local contacts and encouraging them to email it to all their contacts.

Why not join the CSW Broadband conversation on social media!
To keep up to date on what we’re doing and to have your say on how the project develops:

Follow us on Facebook
Follow us on Twitter
Join us on LinkedIn

Email us!
For newsletter enquiries, please use: broadbandnews@cswbroadband.org.uk

For all other enquiries, please use: broadband@cswbroadband.org.uk

So that you don’t miss out on any important news updates from the CSW Broadband team, please ensure that these are enabled in your firewall.

To find out more about the project, please visit the CSW Broadband website.

CSW Broadband is a partnership between Warwickshire County Council, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, Coventry City Council, BT and Department for Culture Media & Sport.