



PROJECT UPDATE

September 2013

Since our last update in June following our successful stakeholder launch event at Oulton Park, we've been busy mobilising an integrated project team with BT. We have now commenced the technical survey phase prior to announcing our first phase deployments later in the year. Read on for our latest news:

Technical Surveys

On behalf of Connecting Cheshire, BT Openreach's work on designing the fibre infrastructure is well under way. This includes surveying all the underground ducts serving homes and businesses in the area so that we can draw up a plan for where the fibre, new ducts, street cabinets and additional overground equipment goes. Openreach have now completed plans for where around 130 out of a total 538 new green cabinets will go that will link up homes and businesses to the high-speed fibre network. This included planning the most efficient and rapid deployment which will require around 1,400km of fibre to complete our deployment to around 80,000 premises by the summer of 2015.



A key element of this process is to try and pre-empt problems with the positioning of the new roadside cabinets that will be required to bring fibre connectivity to each community. Local Town and Parish Councils can play a part in this process by supporting planning decisions and approving any necessary planning or road closure notices that may be required to facilitate the roll-out. *Photo shows Openreach engineers surveying a cabinet in Holmes Chapel.*

First Phase Announcement

Once the survey phase is completed, we expect to be able to announce in early **December 2013** which areas will be included in the first stage of our roll-out with further phased announcements thereafter. We anticipate that homes and businesses in at least 20 telephone exchanges will see fibre upgrades as part of our first phase which will result in a 'ready for service' status (the time when consumers can switch to fibre broadband) by the end of March 2014. We intend to work closely with each locality to provide progress updates and to ensure everyone is ready to exploit the benefits of faster broadband.

With a programme of this size it's not possible to upgrade every area at the same time and sadly not all exchange areas will become live on the same date, so please bear with us. We fully understand your frustration and the huge importance of fibre broadband so we'll update you regularly as our plans evolve.

New Branding

As we made the transition to our delivery phase, we felt the time was right to develop new branding that is more flexible and impactful. Alongside the new brand we have a 'graphic' that uses circles and connecting lines to represent a hub of connectivity, while the colour gradient from dark green to light green signifies movement, and a rural focus. Our new look has been very well received and was designed by Vibe in Macclesfield, who recently were able to take-up a fibre broadband service – so the timing was perfect. See their case study feature on page 2.

Digital Inclusion

We are committed to help reduce digital exclusion; as recent data from the Office for National Statistics showed that there are still around 100,000 people offline across Cheshire. This equates to around 13% of the population and is heavily biased towards our older and less affluent residents. Working with a range of partners including other Council departments such as our library services, Lifelong Learning and the voluntary sector we are developing plans for a network of Community Digital Champions to help those either offline or lapsed internet users to gain the confidence and support to boost their digital literacy.



Many resources are already available, including a network of [UK Online Centres](#) that can provide access to free or low cost PCs and training. Recent research estimated that households can save over £500 per year by buying goods and services online – made up of everything from utilities to shopping and travel.

Rural Community Broadband Fund

In May this year we submitted applications for additional funding to help ‘hard to reach’ areas, referred to as the ‘final 10%’, gain faster broadband. This included a second round bid on behalf of Burleydam and Audlem and Expressions of Interest for the areas of Pulford and Poulton, Huxley, Arley, Wincle, Sutton and North Rode. This involved a huge community effort to help collate and demonstrate evidence of demand from both residents and businesses. We are pleased to report that our expressions of interest were approved and will be taken forward into a single full bid submission at the end of September. More information is available on our [website](#).

Superfast Business Support Service

Our Superfast Business service was launched at the beginning of September, to help small and medium sized businesses across Cheshire and Warrington to benefit from digital technology enabled by faster broadband. The new service will enable over 900 small and medium sized businesses to access 12 hours of free support and will help create over 400 jobs in the next two years, which is expected to boost the economy by nearly £20m. See the [website](#) or call 0300 123 1696.



The benefits of superfast broadband are already being experienced by companies across Cheshire who say it has ‘transformed’ their businesses. Vibe is a Macclesfield branding, digital and PR agency with 14 staff. They undertake design and marketing work for a wide range of clients including small, medium and large businesses in the UK and abroad.

Senior designer Isaac Allison explained some of the problems they faced prior to being able to access a fibre broadband service. He said: “Before we had fibre the internet would definitely slow down at peak times when everyone was online. We handle a lot of large files such as uploading websites onto servers so everything would noticeably slow down – which was far from ideal.”

Since being able to access a faster broadband service things have been much better, transforming the way the designers work and engage with clients. He added: “It’s been amazing how quickly files come down the line now and, likewise, when we need to send files to printers for example, this can be done in seconds. Even for practical things like backing up our work each day to a cloud-storage facility can now be completed in a quarter of the time it previously took.”

More case studies and an extensive knowledge hub are featured on the Superfast Business [website](#).