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# Summer 2018 News

## Welcome to the Summer edition of our Superfast Worcestershire newsletter

Welcome to the latest edition of our Superfast Worcestershire newsletter. With summer nearly upon us, we're delighted to announce that our programme continues to roll out fibre infrastructure across Worcestershire. At the end of last year, we announced that we are expanding in order to connect an additional 5,300 premises, which, together with the recently announced **supplementary schemes, that are proving to be very popular**, demonstrate that we are determined to be one of the best connected counties in the UK.

## To keep hearing from us you must take action!

Whilst we have already welcomed you to the latest edition of our newsletter, we hope it won't be your last as you wave goodbye. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is a big change to the data protection law and comes into force on 25 May 2018. This means that we'll only be able to contact you with emails about the latest developments in broadband and digital connectivity in our county after that date if you tell us you're happy for us to do so.

We are also striving to make our data more accurate to ensure we can keep you better informed when improved services are rolled out.

We realise you have already registered your interest in the past however for us to continue to keep you up-to-date, you will need to actively give us your consent once more. To do so, please [click this link](#) and follow the instructions on our web page. You'll be able to choose how we contact you and you'll be able to opt-out or change your contact preferences at any time.

### In this edition of our newsletter, find out about:

- Multi-million pound Superfast Worcestershire Partnership achievement
- Voucher Schemes
- Universal Service Obligation (USO) for broadband update
- Broadband Subsidy Scheme

**...and much more!**



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## Multi-million pound Superfast Worcestershire Partnership celebrates a major achievement

95% of Worcestershire's households and businesses can now get superfast broadband services, in line with the Government's key millstone for the rest of the UK. Successful deployment of the Superfast Worcestershire and Superfast Extension programmes has seen Worcestershire's access to superfast speeds improve from c.69% in 2013. Business connectivity has also increased from below 44% in 2013. This equates to over 65,000 premises benefitting from superfast speeds (24Mbps and above) as a result of the Superfast Worcestershire deployment. Since our first cabinet was deployed at the end of May 2014, we have built and commissioned over 510 structures.

Whilst progress is significant we are not stopping there with plans already in place to exceed 96% and hopefully more next year.



At the same time, we are also exploring solutions to follow the completion of the current programmes and go even further. Worcestershire County Council is already seeking additional funding from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. The Council is committed to taking coverage further by also investing any elements of underspend or other funds arising from earlier contracts to extend superfast broadband infrastructure further into Worcestershire.

Cllr Ken Pollock, Cabinet Member responsible for Economy and Infrastructure said: "Reaching this important milestone is a terrific achievement and shows our commitment to make this important technology available to as many parts of Worcestershire as quickly as possible. Our partnership with BT, as well as the newly announced co-funding solutions will ensure that even the smallest, most remote parts of our county will be able to benefit from this essential technology, as increasingly high-speed broadband is no longer a 'nice to have' – it is a 'must have'".



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## ERDF Business Vouchers - WEBB Voucher scheme

If you run a business and aren't able to benefit from superfast broadband, then the recently announced voucher scheme could help you get connected. Vouchers will be allocated to eligible businesses that aren't in our (or commercial) roll-out plans and want to upgrade to at least superfast speeds. The scheme is now up and running, so please visit our [website](#) for full details and eligibility criteria. Please keep a close eye on the scheme as we are currently reviewing the eligibility criteria with the funder.

## Gigabit Voucher Scheme

Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) has recently extended the Gigabit voucher scheme to cover Worcestershire premises. The Gigabit Voucher Scheme can be used by small businesses and the local communities surrounding them to contribute to the installation cost of a gigabit capable connection. Businesses can claim up to £3,000 against the cost of connection either individually or as part of a group project. Residents can benefit from the scheme as part of a group project which also includes businesses, and can claim a voucher of up to £500.

More details about the scheme including the supplier list and eligibility criteria can be found [here](#).

The project team is investigating whether vouchers from a number of schemes can be used at the same time and will update you as soon as possible. For example, we currently understand the Gigabit Voucher can be used as part of a Community Fibre Partnership, but cannot be used in conjunction with the Local Body Partnership scheme as well.

## Local Body Partnership Scheme

The Local Body Partnership Scheme is another initiative aimed at supporting communities who wish to support themselves in obtaining superfast broadband services by contributing to a traditional 'Community Fibre Partnership' (CFP) scheme. The scheme is already proving very popular, with a number of projects already on their way to become superfast. Please visit our [website](#) for full details and to check the eligibility criteria. Please act fast, as the initial £500,000 fund will not last long and will be allocated on a 'first come, first served' basis.

**GIGABIT BROADBAND VOUCHER SCHEME**

**ARE YOU READY?**  
PART OF THE LOCAL FULL FIBRE NETWORKS PROGRAMME



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## Universal Service Obligation (USO) for broadband - UPDATE

Source: [House of Commons Library briefing](#)

### What is the broadband USO?

The UK Government is introducing a Universal Service Obligation (USO) for broadband as part of its commitment in the UK Digital Strategy (March 2017) to ensure that the UK has world-class digital connectivity and inclusion.

The new USO is a UK-wide measure, intended to fill the gap left by the UK Government's existing broadband roll-out programs, to deliver broadband connections to the hardest to reach premises in the UK. Ofcom reported that as of May 2017, 1.1 million premises (4%) in the UK would qualify for the USO.

### How will it be implemented?

The UK Government considered two options for the delivery of its aim for universal access to broadband connections with at least 10 Mbps download speeds by 2020:

1. a regulatory approach implemented by secondary legislation; and
2. a proposal by BT to deliver the service voluntarily.

The Government announced in December 2017 that it would adopt the first option – the regulatory approach. Under this framework, the USO will be demand-led. This means that consumers will have a right to request a connection and a universal service provider will be obliged to build all reasonable requests up to cost threshold (£3,400 proposed).

### When will the USO be implemented?

The Government is aiming for the USO to be in place by 2020 at the latest. Secondary legislation is expected to be laid before Parliament during 2018. Responsibility will then fall to Ofcom to implement the USO using a mix of technologies that meet the minimum specifications. Satellite connections are unlikely to fulfil the additional quality parameters, but will probably be the only option for some consumers (approx. 0.2%).

As Worcestershire County Council continues to extend superfast broadband service to as many Worcestershire premises, the proposed USO will not impact on the programme's current and future aspirations of becoming a 'Connected County'. It will, however provide a safety net for those outside of the current scope.



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# Better Broadband Subsidy Scheme - extended

**The Better Broadband Subsidy Scheme** provides support towards the cost of the installation of a broadband connection. This national Scheme was established and is funded by Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) and is administered by Worcestershire County Council.

Although the Scheme was initially due to end in December 2017, the government has confirmed that it will continue through 2018. This means that people unable to access download speeds of more than 2Mbps can still apply for an alternative solution. Please note, the 4G, satellite, as well as fibre providers can be accessed through the scheme. It is also worth noting that although some users may not be able to obtain 4G signal on their phones, it does not necessarily mean that 4G signal cannot be reached with a small booster antenna.

## Key Facts - How to upgrade / get the most out of your new connection

In order to obtain better speeds - you will have to upgrade your current 'basic' broadband and request a 'fibre' package. We are installing a wholesale network, which means that once your cabinet or fibre to the premises structure has gone live, any Internet Service Provider (ISP) can offer you high speed broadband (subject to availability). There are a wide range of packages available. Please look at comparison websites as there are many good offers around.

Fibre packages can often cost less than your existing service and can be bundled together with different products, such as films, sport etc., so it's best to shop around. Do check when your existing contract expires

before changing supplier though, as you may have to upgrade with your current supplier in the first instance to avoid contract cancellation charges.

We recommend that you check out broadband packages carefully to get the one that is right for you. For advice, you may want to visit comparison sites such as **Money Saving Expert**, [www.cable.co.uk](http://www.cable.co.uk) or [www.uswitch.com](http://www.uswitch.com).

Do check that you are able to actually achieve the speeds that are advertised. You can check whether you can already upgrade to a fibre package by visiting our **website**. If you cannot, please **check** whether your area is scheduled to be upgraded in the near future.

## Demand for High-Speed Fibre Broadband continues to soar across Worcestershire

The number of people connecting to high-speed broadband has reached a new milestone. Figures announced recently show that for those who are able to access such a service the average number of homeowners and businesses choosing faster fibre connections across Worcestershire has now exceeded 53%.

Contractual arrangements in place with BT Openreach mean that higher take-up of Superfast Broadband in the County will lead to the availability of additional funds for re-investment into the county.

Thank you for registering your interest in the Superfast Worcestershire Broadband Programme. If you want to unsubscribe from this newsletter, please **[click here](#)**.

Do you have a story about how superfast broadband has helped transform your lifestyle or business for the better? Share it with the Superfast Worcestershire team at:

**[www.superfastworcestershire.com](http://www.superfastworcestershire.com)**



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