Welcome to the autumn edition of our Superfast Worcestershire newsletter

“Before upgrading to fibre broadband our internet speeds were painfully slow. Now we wouldn’t look back. As internet based screen printing suppliers a fast, reliable fibre broadband connection is essential for business development. The business is growing and we’re branching out further into European markets.”

Dave Roper – Dave Roper Ltd

As the nights draw in and the first chill of autumn is in the air, it’s time to make the most of your faster fibre broadband connection.

Around 245,000 premises in Worcestershire are able to connect to fibre broadband. Of these, over 66,500 premises are able to connect as a result of the Superfast Worcestershire Broadband Programme, and the number continues to rise.

In this edition of our newsletter, find out:

- How our £3.7 million expansion is progressing
- How we’re branching out despite the challenges of overgrown trees
- How we made a splash for Worcester-based charity Onside Advocacy ...and much more!
Update on our £3.7 million expansion

In March 2017, we announced a major £3.7 million expansion that will enable over 3,000 more households and businesses to access superfast broadband for the first time.

Following initial planning, we have added a number of new structures to our programme as a result of this expansion. Work will begin in autumn 2017 and benefit additional communities across all six districts in Worcestershire. These structures are expected to be live for orders by December 2018. Not all structures to be built will be listed straight away – keep an eye on our Cabinet Status page for updates.

The majority of our future work involves rearranging the current network and using Fibre to the Premises technology, so how you are currently connected to the network could change as future networks are built. Keep an eye on our website for updates, as we may be re-visiting your area as part of this plan.

Connecting Worcestershire Phase 3

The broadband team at Worcestershire County Council have been busy evaluating the bids for Phase 3 – their next contract and the next phase of their roll-out. In the coming weeks the team will be in a position to announce the preferred supplier and details about the future delivery.

Broadband voucher scheme for Worcestershire businesses

If you run a business and aren’t able to benefit from superfast broadband, our upcoming voucher scheme could help you get connected. Vouchers up to the value of £1,500 will be allocated to eligible businesses that aren’t in our (or commercial) roll-out plans, and want to upgrade to fibre broadband. Once the scheme is up and running, we will be in touch with businesses that have completed our past surveys. If you are not sure if you are on our list please get in touch: superfast@worcestershire.gov.uk.
Kidderminster screen print suppliers branching out further into European markets thanks to superfast broadband

Screen Printing Specialists Dave Roper Ltd, based at Foley Business Park in Kidderminster, have over fifty years of hands-on experience in screen printing supplies and equipment.

The business upgraded to fibre broadband when the service became available to the business park just over a year ago thanks to the Superfast Worcestershire programme.

Dave opted for a service which gives the business download speeds of 65Mbps and upload speeds of 18Mbps. These much faster upload speeds really matter to the business which sells screen printing machinery and offers online training to customers. With an improved connection 10 per cent of customers are overseas and the business hopes to grow this number.

Dave explains:

“Superfast broadband has transformed our business as we can now upload training videos of our products in a fraction of the time it used to take before upgrading. We also use online calling to communicate with customers all over the world. Services such as Skype weren’t available to us before.

“Before upgrading our speeds were all over the place and we would notice a particular dip in speeds at around 3pm when kids arrived home from school. With superfast broadband we can communicate with customers quickly and efficiently. Since upgrading we have re-built our website and are able to send large files in an instant. Our social media presence is also growing. All of these things and more all help to build brand confidence and brand loyalty worldwide.”
What is Fibre to the Premises technology?

As we connect more technologically challenging areas, we are increasingly using Fibre to the Premises technology. FTTP is a fibre-optic cable connection running from the telephone exchange to your home or business.

If you’re in an FTTP enabled area, you can benefit from download speeds of up to 1Gbps. However, not all service providers currently offer the service so you might not be informed by your Internet Service Provider (ISP) that it is available and may need to consider changing providers. If you don’t need FTTP speeds you can still buy an FTTC (Fibre to the Cabinet) product offering speeds up to 80Mbps.

As not every service provider offers FTTP at the moment, it is important that you investigate which suppliers can provide the service.

Branching out despite the challenges of overgrown trees

Bringing fibre cabling to rural properties has its challenges. People living and working in Oddingley, a village 5 miles north-east of Worcester, are getting access to ultrafast fibre broadband for the first time. The technology we’re deploying in this particular area of the county is Fibre to the Premises technology.

There are lots of different challenges that we face as part of our drive to bring fibre broadband to some of the county’s more remote communities. Over-hanging trees is one of the more sensitive issues that Openreach - our network provider - has to deal with whilst working to bring the technology to Oddingley, working with their contractor Carillion Telent.

First of all they need to undertake surveys to evaluate what, if any, trees need to be trimmed. As you can see this won’t be an easy task for Carillion Telent project manager, Jon Linnane (pictured) - clearly, any pruning or lopping requires the full permission of the landowner before any work can go ahead.

Other considerations when rolling out the technology include: possible access to private land, co-ordinating engineering work with key harvesting and planting periods, and, increasingly, working in narrow rural roads, which might require road closures to get the job done.

The work currently being undertaken in Oddingley will enable households and businesses served by structure V35 on Droitwich telephone exchange to access ultrafast fibre broadband.
Rolling out superfast fibre broadband in agricultural areas to enable more communities to harvest the benefits of this new technology

Kempsey, a village three miles south of Worcester in the Malvern Hills District, is one of the communities benefitting from our roll-out.

Due to the lie of the land and the existing communications infrastructure, we’re using a mixture of engineering techniques and technical solutions in order to make superfast fibre broadband more widely available here and in other difficult to reach, less populated parts of the county. The work might include engineers ‘rearranging’ the current copper network, installing new fibre broadband road-side cabinets or fitting ‘all-in-one’ cabinets which house copper and fibre cabling to connect local premises onto the fibre network.

As our roll-out extends into some of the most rural parts of the county, Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) technology is increasingly deployed, which enables people opting for an upgrade to access ‘ultrafast’ broadband. However, this can involve extensive and sometimes complex civil engineering work – from clearing underground blockages and installing new ducting, to putting up new telephone poles – in order to deploy ultrafast fibre broadband direct to someone’s home or business.

Our project team is committed to finding the most cost-effective solutions to providing superfast fibre broadband – and with the minimum of disruption to local residents, businesses and motorists.

We’re often asked how we decide whether to deploy fibre cabling above or below ground on a combination of roadway, verges and, where necessary, on privately-owned or agricultural land. Each option presents its own mix of benefits and challenges.

Some of our many considerations when rolling out the technology include restricted access to private land, working around the farming community and crop planting/harvesting periods, and increasingly working in narrow rural roads, that sometimes require road closures to progress works.

Nine structures in the Kempsey area are already live and taking orders for fibre broadband. If you live in Kempsey and do not yet have access to fibre broadband, we’re currently working to deliver three new structures (15, 16 and 17) on Kempsey telephone exchange to allow more people in the village to get access to superfast fibre broadband.
Charity splash for cash on the Severn in Worcester’s Race the Dragon

Members of the Superfast Worcestershire team and partners took time out from delivering high-speed fibre broadband across Worcestershire to tackle Worcester Dragon Boat Racing Club’s annual charity regatta – Race the Dragon.

The race, involving 25 teams, took place on Sunday 2nd July by Worcester Racecourse. The Superfast Worcestershire crew included employees from Worcestershire County Council, Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership, BT and Openreach, all of whom are involved in the programme to make fibre broadband available to more than 95 per cent of Worcestershire homes and businesses.

The 17-strong crew were keen to remind local people about the benefits of the new technology whilst raising money for Worcester-based Onside Advocacy. Onside Advocacy provides advocacy and other support services to ensure fairness and equality for adults who may be vulnerable, disadvantaged or discriminated against.

Onside makes a difference to the lives of approximately 2000 individuals a year through their dedicated team of experienced staff and volunteers. To find out more visit: www.onside-advocacy.org.uk.
See at a glance which parts of Worcestershire have already been enabled for superfast fibre broadband, and check whether you can get it yet! Thousands of people across Worcestershire are now able to order the faster service. Our Interactive Map is a fantastic tool that has just been updated to show the areas covered as part of our ‘Gainshare’ expansion.

Please encourage friends and family to find out if they can upgrade to fibre by visiting our website and contacting an Internet Service Provider. Anyone who can’t yet upgrade can register their interest in fibre broadband via our website.

How to obtain a better service if superfast broadband isn’t available to you

Despite significant investment some areas of Worcestershire aren’t currently included in commercial or Superfast Worcestershire’s roll-out plans. Please be assured that we are doing all we can to ensure Worcestershire’s residents and businesses benefit from superfast speeds. Our aim is to ensure 95% superfast coverage by the end of 2018.

If you aren’t able to upgrade to superfast broadband and currently receive speeds of less than 2Mbps, and if you aren’t going to benefit from our £3.7 million expansion, we have updated our guide to alternative solutions which outlines options to obtaining a better service. To find out what options are available to you, click here to read the updated guide.