

Update on Fastershire delivery

Briefing Note – February 2022

For: Ward Members of Birch, Dinedor Hill, Golden Valley North, Golden Valley South, Kerne Bridge, Ledbury South, Ledbury West, Llangarron, Old Gore, Penyard, Ross North, Stoney Street, Wormside.

Introduction

This briefing note is for ward members whose areas have been affected by the [decision](#) of 18 November 2021 to alter the broadband delivery due to Gigaclear's withdrawal from the south of the county areas and the opportunity presented by the national government regarding the Project Gigabit programme.

Following previous updates, this briefing adds information on the delivery of the Business Grant, Community Stage Five Grant and the new Digital Household Grant.

This note can be shared with parish councils to support communications.

The total number of premises adversely affected in Herefordshire is 2,324 (though this number is reducing as we find that BT is reaching some new premises after investing in the replacement of end of life technology).

Digital Household Grant

As outlined in the report's recommendations, the council agreed to introduce the Digital Household Grant that will be made available to the 2,324 premises in the south of the county descoped by Gigaclear and have a broadband connection of less than 30Mbps.

The Fastershire [webpage](#) is now ready to receive expressions of interest to the Digital Household Grant scheme. The grant will cover the installation cost of a 4G LTE connection using external directional antennas with a theoretical speed of 150Mbps, although most properties will realistically benefit from speeds of 10–45Mbps. A low earth orbit satellite solution will be explored with the resident for properties that qualify for the Digital Household Grant where a 4G signal is not available.

Business Grant

The Fastershire Business Grant project has reached the final part of the development stage. The website based application portal is being built, and the grant process and eligibility criteria have been agreed. Businesses can register via the postcode checker at <http://www.fastershire.com>.

The new scheme increases the range of businesses that can apply for a grant to part-fund the installation of fibre or alternative faster broadband connections. The Business grant will allocate up to £20k per premise with a 20% contribution from the business.

Community Broadband

Since 2020 Fastershire has operated a community broadband scheme. The scheme aims to connect clusters of premises that the existing or planned delivery has not covered.

The grant has contracted suppliers to deliver broadband to 11 communities, 538 grant funded premises that will all benefit from a gigabit-capable connection. We are engaging with a further 12 communities, which are at various stages in the grant process.

Project Gigabit

Fastershire will keep ward members updated about the upcoming public review as part of a new procurement process to be led by BDUK (Building Digital United Kingdom - part of the Department for Media, Digital, Culture and Sport).

The future of Fastershire

93.7% of premises across Herefordshire can currently access superfast broadband (independent figures from [Thinkbroadband](#)). The Fastershire team focuses on the end of the current contracts with suppliers and bespoke solutions for communities and businesses as outlined above, whilst the new Project Gigabit will run nationally. The Fastershire Digital Inclusion programme is continuing to help beginners to 'Get Online', and a communication and marketing initiative is raising awareness of faster broadband and encouraging people to take up a fibre service.

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