

Monmouthshire Broadband - Monmouthshire County Council Update September 2019

What has happened to date?

Superfast Cymru One was Welsh Government's broadband infrastructure delivery programme. Through the programme, Welsh Government (WG) installed Next Generation Access (NGA) broadband to areas in Wales that were uneconomically viable for the private sector's own commercial programmes. BT delivered this contract on behalf of WG, utilising funding from WG, the UK Government, the European Union and BT. Since the project began in 2013, the availability of Superfast broadband across Wales has more than doubled from 44% to 95%, however there are still areas where little or no broadband exists.

In 2018, WG launched Superfast Cymru 2 (SFC2) to address the remaining areas which currently have no broadband access or where there are no commercial plans to deliver broadband in the next three years. Monmouthshire has a distinct lack of coverage when compared with the other nine Local Authority partners in the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR), with 12.56% of premises (approximately 8,000) still requiring a connection in comparison to 3-4% of premises in the other CCR local authority areas. The current data is based on an Open Market Review exercise undertaken by Welsh Government in 2017, to inform the SFC2 procurement. However figures may change following the current Open Market Review which completed in August, following which the market will be in a position to respond to more accurate and up to date information. Under SFC2, WG appointed BT in March 2019, to deliver NGA broadband to approximately 1600 premises in Monmouthshire. Details of when and where the rollout will take place are still being confirmed.

How do you find out if Superfast Cymru 2 is coming to you?

Welsh Government has launched a website which provides an overview of the SFC2 programme and the options that are available. If you wish to check if your property will be receiving NGA broadband via SFC 2 please enter your postcode and address into this area of the website: <https://gov.wales/go-superfast/what-are-my-options>

What are the options if Superfast Cymru is not coming to you?

Whilst Monmouthshire is a beautiful county, the sparsity of the population, the rurality of the landscape and its topography does not lend itself to well to the installation of broadband infrastructure. Monmouthshire County Council is therefore proactively working with WG and other commercial broadband providers, to identify solutions to bring broadband to more isolated premises and communities, outside of the SFC 2 programme. The Council recently approved its Digital Infrastructure Action Plan to expedite this process.

As new opportunities become available the County Council will inform communities accordingly. In the interim, grants are available via WG's Access Broadband Cymru scheme for individuals to fund (or part-fund) the installation costs of new broadband connections to their homes and businesses. The amount of funding you can receive depends on the speed of the new connection: £400 for 10Mbps and above and £800 for 30Mbps and above. For further information visit: <https://gov.wales/go-superfast/boost-your-broadband>.

For businesses wishing to upgrade to a gigabit-capable broadband connection, there is additional funding available whereby businesses can claim £2500 against the cost of the connection, individually or as part of a group project. Residents can claim a voucher worth £500 as part of a group project with a business. However, for group projects, WG will pay up to an additional £3,000 per small to medium-sized business (SME) and an additional £300 per residential property. This means that for group projects in Wales up to £5,500 is available per business and up to £800 is available per residential property. For more information visit <https://gigabitvoucher.culture.gov.uk/wales/>.