

SUBJECT:	DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE ACTION PLAN UPDATE
MEETING:	CABINET
DATE:	29TH JULY 2020
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	ALL

1. PURPOSE:

To provide an update on activity following approval of the Digital Infrastructure Action Plan (Appendix A) in September 2019.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 Cabinet to receive the update and acknowledge the significant activity and progress that has been made in less than a year and to support the future plans for the deployment of broadband infrastructure across the County, to reduce the deficiencies in digital infrastructure that are seen across the County.
- 2.2 Following the very recent announcement by Welsh Government of additional funding for Openreach via the Superfast programme. Cabinet to approve Officers engagement in further dialogue with Welsh Government, to optimise the additional investment, in order to maximise the spread of connectivity across the County and alongside other digital infrastructure investment as outlined in the report.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 In [September 2019](#) Cabinet approved the Digital Infrastructure Action Plan setting out how the Council wished to capitalise on the provision of a high speed, first class digital infrastructure, in order to deliver economic growth, wealth creation and increased productivity and GVA for the county and the country.
- 3.2 Less than 12 months later, the need for a robust digital infrastructure has become even more pronounced. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the increase and impact of on-line, digital activity has been phenomenal from a wider societal and economic perspective, with the unprecedented increase in home working, acceleration of people doing on line shopping and wider digital social interactions with families and friends. All this has led to the amplified need for good quality digital infrastructure and connectivity, particularly for the Council, with many of the Council's services moving to an on-line digital platform.
- 3.3 It is therefore pleasing to be in a position to report that although the digital deprivation rates remain the highest in the Cardiff Capital Region 12.5% (approximately 8,000 premises) in Monmouthshire, in comparison to 3-4% in other CCR local authority areas, things are set to change.
- 3.4 This report seeks to highlight the scale of planned investment in broadband connectivity in the County and the activity that is set to take place over the coming months by commercial Altnets (Altnets are Network Service Providers other than BT). In addition, on the 20th July, Welsh Government announced that they had increased their agreement with Openreach, to increase the number of properties that will benefit through the project from 26,000 to 39,000 in local authority areas with less than 90% superfast broadband coverage. Officers will analyse the list of additional properties that will benefit from this

coverage and seek to engage with Welsh Government, to ensure investment is made in the right postcodes in order to maximise broadband connectivity in the County.

3.5 Current Situational Analysis

- 3.5.1 Unfortunately due to the COVID 19 situation and the preceding flooding that took place in November 2019 and February 2020, digital infrastructure works have been slow to move forward in the county.
- 3.5.2 Monmouthshire still has 8,000 premises in the county with poor broadband. Of these 5,600 are under review with the possibility of Altnets supplying services. 2400 premises are still considered with 'no potential suppliers available'.
- 3.5.3 Following the very recent announcement by Welsh Government of the additional funding for FTTP (Full Fibre to the Premise) by Openreach, the number of connected premises is likely to increase from 1581 to 2163, however further analysis will need to take place to identify where this investment is going and how it can maximise other planned activity in the County. Once complete all the premises receiving FTTP will be mapped under a broadband layer on Mon Maps to enable Officers to identify those who may still require connections following current planned interventions. This information will then be used to inform a funding application that will be made by Officers to Welsh Government's recently announced £10M Local Broadband Fund.

3.6 Progress following the Recommendations:

- 3.6.1 Table One below details the progress in relation to the recommendations made to Cabinet in September 2019:

Table One: Progress to Date

Recommendation	Progress to Date
Establish a Strategic Broadband Working Group	An initial meeting of the Group has been held, where the principal of working at pace to ensure all necessary internal Council processes are expedited to enable broadband providers to move at speed has been established.
Consider commercial loans to companies wishing to progress digital infrastructure projects within the county that will address digital deprivation issues.	On 18 th March 2020, the Council's Investment Committee agreed to provide providing loan funding to Broadway Partners through a Special Purpose Vehicle, Monmouthshire Broadband Ltd. The purpose of the loan is to build digital infrastructure across Monmouthshire that would rapidly accelerate and benefit digital connectivity to rural businesses and residents in the County.
Fully consider any opportunities to engage with funding opportunities to install 5G and Lora WAN infrastructure within the County where there is a basis of evidence of need, opening up the	On 20 th February 2020, the Council received notice of the approval of CoCoRE, a 5G testbed in South East Wales to connect rural communities across Monmouthshire and semi-urban communities in Blaenau Gwent, subsequently a report was presented to Cabinet on the 4 th March 2020. As a partner, the Council will be involved in developing test cases for the use of 5G in:

<p>County as a regional testbed and pathfinder for the variety of applications likely to be developed as a result.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism: Scalable AR Experience for a Sensitive Site and Preservation & Safety specifically at Raglan Castle; and • Diverse Rural Economy: Farms Security & Safety and Farmer Mental Wellbeing & Isolation <p>Through the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, funding has been secured to trial a project “IoT and Independent Living”. An MCC occupational therapist has been seconded to the project for 18 months until March 2021. The project focusses on three demographics, mild dementia, hospital re-enablement and social isolation. The team considered IoT sensors, operating in homes within a Lora WAN network and engaged Cardiff University to develop solutions around our concepts. The product was trialled with 2 users in Monmouthshire with good results, however the Covid 19 pandemic has interrupted the trials.</p> <p>A further funding application is currently being developed via the Local Government Digital Transformation Fund to extend the project across the wider Gwent region.</p>
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3.7 Planned Activity

3.7.1 An update from two Altnets has been provided for this report which is detailed in Table Two. In addition there will be the recently announced Superfast rollout and potential further updates from other Altnets working in the County.

Table Two: Planned Digital Infrastructure Activity

Altnet	Rollout Plans
<p>Broadway Partners</p>	<p>Build out of FTTP from September 2020 to be focussed initially on Llandenny, Llansoy, Llangwm, King Coed, Llanarth and the Pitt, Great Oak, Penrhos and Tregare, Llangovan and Cross Ash (together comprising ca. 1,000 premises), with a further 4,500 rural premises planned to be upgraded to FTTP as demand justifies and where commercially viable. This in addition to existing and continuing Fixed Wireless broadband operations. Ambition is for the Gigabit overlay network that is the subject of the commercial loan from the Council, to be 5G carrier grade to enable the deployment of 5G connectivity in rural areas. An additional bid will be</p>

	made to WG to secure funding to enable this upgrade to happen.
Spectrum	<p>Spectrum has significant plans for Monmouthshire which form part of an initial £200M investment in South Wales supported by one of the largest telecommunications infrastructure investment companies in the UK.</p> <p>Full-fibre infrastructure in the main towns in Monmouthshire to include Monmouth, Abergavenny, Chepstow, Caldicot and Usk. The higher density areas of Raglan, Magor and Undy will also be covered.</p> <p>Additional activity also to include the deployment of dark fibre (As yet unused optical fibre, available for use in fibre-optic communication which can be leased from a network service provider) along the county's main trunk roads to be used primarily to provide full fibre connections. This fibre will be available to community projects and other Internet Service Providers as well as Spectrum and will be very useful to 5G deployment in the County.</p>

3.7.2 As it is the Council's ambition to be in the vanguard of rural broadband connectivity in Wales, the Council is keen to maintain its policy position to 'proactively encourage broadband providers to install full fibre broadband infrastructure in the County' and seek to support other Altnets wishing to invest in the County.

4. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

4.1 The Assessment (Appendix B) demonstrates that the detail contained in the draft Digital Infrastructure Action Plan demonstrates compliance with the well-being five ways of working, supports the well-being goals and associated activities are expected to have a positive impact on all groups and people with protected characteristics.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

5.1 Below is an updated analysis of current strategic opportunities, impacts, resource requirements and risks to the Council. In summary these can be assessed as follows:

- Local Full Fibre Network funding via a joint WG/CCR bid to upgrade 22 sites in Monmouthshire to 1 gig capability, with the potential to run spurs to unconnected premises utilising the Gigabit Voucher Scheme;
- The Trunk Road concession option held by Spectrum/Net Support UK has an ability to connect communities off the A465, A449/A40, M4 and A4042;

- Rural Gigabit Connectivity Programme - £200M funding pot from DCMS to adopt a new "outside-in" approach trialling models for local hubs in rural areas, starting with primary schools, alongside a voucher scheme for funding full fibre connectivity to nearby premises, providing full fibre connectivity to homes and businesses. Council Officers are currently awaiting information regarding application process and next steps.
- Rural Connected Communities - Monmouthshire is a part of a partnership in the 5G rural mobile connectivity programme to:
 - Identify and test demand-led coverage models;
 - Test a range of innovative technical solutions and commercial approaches; and
 - Build and prove demand through new 5G use cases.
- Commercial Loans to alternative broadband providers or 'Altnets' – BT's involvement in the roll out of further broadband infrastructure in the County other than SFC2 is likely to be minimal. Therefore as the commercial viability of broadband infrastructure is more limited than in an urban environment, due to reduced take up rates and more complex civil engineering requirements to install the infrastructure, it is likely that the Council will be approached for commercial loans to provide seed corn funding for the installation programmes as evidenced by the Council's recent commercial loan to Broadway Partners.
- Investigate additional funding opportunities e.g. Welsh Government's recently announced £10M Local Broadband Fund

6. REASONS

- 6.1 The digital deprivation in Monmouthshire is unacceptable particularly in this current Covid 19 climate. It puts our communities, businesses and indeed Wales at a severe disadvantage, particularly given Monmouthshire's proximity to the economic powerhouses of the South West, Gloucestershire and Herefordshire. Therefore there is a strategic imperative to ensure that Monmouthshire has sufficient NGA connectivity to maximise our economic growth and wealth creation capability, and increase our productivity in order to increase the GVA for the county and the country.

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no resource implications for the Council although there is a commercial risk to the Council associated with the commercial loan to Broadway Partners as referenced in the report to the Investment Committee, recommending the approval of the loan. Future infrastructure interventions will either happen due to their commercial viability or will need to be supplemented with public funding from WG or DCMS as appropriate.

8. CONSULTEES

- Monmouthshire communities;
- Senior Leadership Team
- Economy and Development Select Committee – 10th April 2019. Full minutes from the meeting can be found [here](#) however conclusions drawn from the meeting are detailed here as follows:
 - It is clear that Monmouthshire is lagging behind with regard to Superfast Cymru broadband provision;
 - There is an issue of deprivation within the County;

- It is critical for our economic future and the broadband provision gap needs to be closed as quickly as possible;
- Monmouthshire needs to be enabled. Superfast Cymru 2 is not going to realise remaining capacity. Therefore other options need to be investigated. Monmouthshire County Council needs to be an enabler to provide this service.
- The need for a dedicated staff resource has been identified to bring this to fruition.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix A: Revised Digital Infrastructure Action Plan

Appendix B: Future Generations Evaluation

10. AUTHOR:

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Appendix B



Future Generations Evaluation (includes Equalities and Sustainability Impact)

Name of the Officer Cath Fallon Phone no: 07557 190969 E-mail: cathfallon@monmouthshire.gov.uk	Draft Digital Infrastructure Action Plan
Name of Service: Enterprise	Date: Future Generations Evaluation 10 th July 2020

NB. Key strategies and documents that may help you identify your contribution to the wellbeing goals and sustainable development principles include: Single Integrated Plan, Continuance Agreement, Improvement Plan, Local Development Plan, People Strategy, Asset Management Plan, Green Infrastructure SPG, Welsh Language Standards, etc.




1. Does your proposal deliver any of the well-being goals below?



Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
A prosperous Wales Efficient use of resources, skilled, educated people, generates wealth, provides jobs	Improved broadband infrastructure improves opportunities for education and training via access to on line resources, universities and training courses.	There is a strategic imperative to ensure that Monmouthshire has sufficient NGA connectivity to maximise our economic growth and wealth creation capability, and increase our productivity in order to increase the GVA for the county and the country.

Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
<p>A resilient Wales Maintain and enhance biodiversity and ecosystems that support resilience and can adapt to change (e.g. climate change)</p>	<p>Improved broadband infrastructure can raise awareness of biodiversity and climate change issues and encourage positive participation.</p>	<p>Improved broadband infrastructure can also enable citizens to work from home thus reducing carbon emissions.</p>
<p>A healthier Wales People's physical and mental wellbeing is maximized and health impacts are understood</p>	<p>Given the move towards tele health care improvements to digital infrastructure presents opportunities for digital healthcare delivery and helps raises awareness of the benefits of physical activity.</p>	<p>Improved digital infrastructure can provide the opportunity to raise awareness of the benefits of physical activity, classes for which can be delivered direct to citizen's homes via the Internet.</p>
<p>A Wales of cohesive communities Communities are attractive, viable, safe and well connected</p>	<p>Improved broadband access is proven to reduce social isolation and promote independence.</p>	<p>Improved broadband infrastructure is also proven to encourage wider participation in community and voluntary work.</p>
<p>A globally responsible Wales Taking account of impact on global well-being when considering local social, economic and environmental wellbeing</p>	<p>Improved broadband access can raise awareness of these issues and promote positive activity.</p>	
<p>A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language Culture, heritage and Welsh language are promoted and protected. People are encouraged to do sport, art and recreation</p>	<p>Improved broadband access can raise awareness of culture, heritage and the Welsh language and encourage positive participation.</p>	

Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
A more equal Wales People can fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances	Improved broadband access can enable access to on line learning resources to enable them to fulfill their potential, whatever their background.	

2. How has your proposal embedded and prioritised the sustainable governance principles in its development?

Sustainable Development Principle	Does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not explain why.	Are there any additional actions to be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
 <p>Long Term</p> <p>Balancing short term need with long term and planning for the future</p>	<p>The technologies deployed in some circumstances will provide a short term fix e.g. wireless until a longer term solution e.g. Fibre to the Premise can be deployed.</p>	<p>Improved broadband access will ensure that Monmouthshire citizens are able to embrace future technologies and opportunities.</p>
 <p>Collaboration</p> <p>Working together with other partners to deliver objectives</p>	<p>A partnership approach will be undertaken to ensure the best solution for communities can be found. This is likely to be with Welsh Government and a range of private sector network providers.</p>	
 <p>Involvement</p> <p>Involving those with an interest and seeking their views</p>	<p>Citizens are invited to get involved by participating in local meetings with potential broadband providers or by contacting Monmouthshire Enterprise directly.</p>	<p>Further information can be found here: http://monmouthshire.biz/digital-monmouthshire/for-residents/</p>

Sustainable Development Principle	Does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not explain why.	Are there any additional actions to be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
 <p>Putting resources into preventing problems occurring or getting worse</p>	<p>A situational analysis of Superfast Broadband Next Generation Access (NGA) coverage in the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR), based on the OMR/SAPC undertaken prior to the Superfast Cymru Phase 2 (SFC2) Procurement has been undertaken. This paints a stark picture in terms of the current lack of coverage in Monmouthshire, in comparison to our other nine Local Authority partner.</p>	<p>Additional resources will be deployed to produce a dynamic model indicating current proposed interventions, timescales and premises targeted, leaving those requiring further interventions. Following receipt of the model, potential solutions can be costed and brought forward to the Council's Investment Committee for consideration.</p>
 <p>Considering impact on all wellbeing goals together and on other bodies</p>	<p>Access to broadband can reduce carbon emissions, rural isolation and rural poverty. It can also provide access to learning which can increase skills and subsequently wealth and overall well-being.</p>	

3. Are your proposals going to affect any people or groups of people with protected characteristics? Please explain the impact, the evidence you have used and any action you are taking below. For more detailed information on the protected characteristics, the Equality Act 2010 and the Welsh Language Standards that apply to Monmouthshire Council please follow this link: <http://hub/corporatedocs/Equalities/Forms/AllItems.aspx> or contact Alan Burkitt on 01633 644010 or alanburkitt@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Age	Improved broadband access reduces the barriers to access for people with protected characteristics.	Any negative impacts can be reduced if suitable safeguarding strategies are put in place.	Affordable and accessible broadband solutions will be identified to maximize opportunities for all.

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Disability	As per Age Line Above	As per Age Line above	As per Age Line Above. In addition, the proposals will take the needs of the disabled population into consideration during the development phase.
Gender reassignment	As per Age Line Above	As per Age Line above	As per Age Line Above
Marriage or civil partnership	As per Age Line Above	As per Age Line above	As per Age Line Above
Pregnancy or maternity	As per Age Line Above	As per Age Line above	As per Age Line Above
Race	As per Age Line Above	As per Age Line above	As per Age Line Above
Religion or Belief	As per Age Line Above	As per Age Line above	As per Age Line Above
Sex	As per Age Line Above	As per Age Line above	As per Age Line Above
Sexual Orientation	As per Age Line Above	As per Age Line above	As per Age Line Above
Welsh Language	As per Age Line Above	As per Age Line above	In addition, all signage will be compliant with the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 as specified in the Standards applied to Monmouthshire

4. Council has agreed the need to consider the impact its decisions has on important responsibilities of Corporate Parenting and safeguarding. Are your proposals going to affect either of these responsibilities? For more information please see the guidance

<http://hub/corporatedocs/Democratic%20Services/Safeguarding%20Guidance.docx> and for more on Monmouthshire’s Corporate Parenting Strategy see <http://hub/corporatedocs/SitePages/Corporate%20Parenting%20Strategy.aspx>

	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on safeguarding and corporate parenting	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on safeguarding and corporate parenting	What will you do/ have you done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Safeguarding	<i>During the delivery of the programme of activities, safeguarding will be at the forefront to ensure that any future service delivery promotes the well-being of children and vulnerable adults, preventing them from being harmed and protecting those who are at risk of abuse and neglect.</i>	As above	As above
Corporate Parenting	<i>During the delivery of this programme of activities the needs of any 'looked after' children will be considered to ensure any future service delivery protects their welfare.</i>	As above	As above

5. What evidence and data has informed the development of your proposal?

<p>The CCR Regeneration Plan along with the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act; • The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act; • Prosperity for All; • Welsh Government - Digital Wales; • Growth & Competitiveness Commission Report Review and Recommendations; • Cardiff Capital Region “Powering the Welsh Economy”; • Equality Act 2010; and • Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011

6. SUMMARY: As a result of completing this form, what are the main positive and negative impacts of your proposal, how have they informed/changed the development of the proposal so far and what will you be doing in future?

The Assessment demonstrates that the detail contained in the updated Digital Deprivation Action Plan demonstrates compliance with the well-being five ways of working, supports the well-being goals and associated activities are expected to have a positive impact on all groups and people with protected characteristics.

7. ACTIONS: As a result of completing this form are there any further actions you will be undertaking? Please detail them below, if applicable.

What are you going to do	When are you going to do it?	Who is responsible	Progress

8. MONITORING: The impacts of this proposal will need to be monitored and reviewed. Please specify the date at which you will evaluate the impact, and where you will report the results of the review.

The impacts of this proposal will be evaluated on:	Six monthly via Economy and Development Select Committee
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9. VERSION CONTROL: The Future Generations Evaluation should be used at the earliest stages of decision making, and then honed and refined throughout the decision making process. It is important to keep a record of this process so that we can demonstrate how we have considered and built in sustainable development wherever possible.

Version No.	Decision making stage	Date considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consideration
1	Scrutiny – Economy and Development Select Committee	10 th April 2019	Action Plan reviewed, updated and renamed Digital Infrastructure Action Plan
2	Cabinet	4 th September 2019	Draft Action Plan approved
3	Cabinet	29 th July 2020	Updated Action Plan presented