



Open Report on behalf of Andrew Crookham, Executive Director - Resources

Report to:	Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee
Date:	11 July 2023
Subject:	Broadband Programme – Interim Update

Summary:

The purpose of this paper is to provide summary information to members of the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee on the current work of the Council's Broadband Programme.

Actions Required:

The Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee is invited to review and comment on the contents of the report.

1. Background

What follows is a summary and overview of the Council's Broadband Programme current work streams; this update report was requested by Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee in January 2023.

1.1 – Contract 3 – Quickline

- The contract between Lincolnshire County Council (LCC), Building Digital UK (BDUK) and Quickline to deliver 8K premises to Ultrafast broadband in rural areas prefixed by postcodes LN & DN. Currently 4.9K premises upgraded to download speeds > 100Mb/s. Completion due between December 2023 and 31st March 2024.
- Discussion is ongoing regarding the addition of further available funding under an agreed contractual Change Control. This Change Control will be utilised to 'infill' areas that Project Gigabit will not cover, and any such deployment will run in tandem with Lots 10 & 23 of Project Gigabit (see following). It is expected that data down to property level will be available towards the end of 2023.

1.2 – Project Gigabit

- The Government’s BDUK project to deliver gigabit capable broadband to rural areas that are deemed to be non-commercially viable to existing providers. Where Lincolnshire is concerned, the county has been broken down to 2 ‘Lots’, Lots 10 & 23.
- Lot 10 will go to Tender in May 2023. The eligible premises count for Lincolnshire Lot 10 is 13.6K.
- Lot 23 is still being finalised in terms of eligible premises and at the time of writing this report, ‘Supplier Engagement’ concluded at the end of April, and we are awaiting details of interested suppliers from BDUK, although at this point, we are aware of two interested suppliers. Currently, the eligible premises count for Lincolnshire Lot 23 is 75.3K.
- The Broadband Team will work in a partnership agreement with BDUK to deliver both contracts.

1.3 - Commercial Investment

- Commercial investment is moving rapidly and well above what we would have envisaged two years ago.
- Full Fibre (FTTP) is now 39.5%, Ultrafast (>100Mb/s) = 56.7%, Gigabit capable = 56% up from 50% in January and 38.7% in March 2022.
- We expect in excess of 220 thousand premises to be upgraded by commercial investment by the end of 2025, but we are starting to see slightly concerning trends where operators are downsizing staff.
- Some ongoing planning difficulties are being experienced, but work is continuing with District colleagues, Lincolnshire County Council and commercial providers to resolve them.
- BT/Openreach has just announced a technology enhancement that will trial in one area of rural Lincolnshire.

1.4 – Project Gigahub

- A BDUK funded project to deliver full fibre connectivity to publicly owned rural buildings such as schools, doctor’s surgeries, blue light stations etc. From this ‘Hub site’ commercial providers would be encouraged to upgrade adjacent communities. The Broadband Team had identified 185 sites across Greater Lincolnshire and their Tender documents had been approved by BDUK for a procurement. However, BDUK has since reduced the site numbers to 62 on the basis that those sites removed were likely to be picked up under Project Gigabit. We have raised the point that Project

Gigahub would both deliver in a timelier manner than Project Gigabit and would guarantee delivery to the chosen sites.

- Other Local Bodies across the region are experiencing similar issues and BDUK has now pushed all eligible East Midlands premises into a single Tender.

1.5 – Rural Gigabit Voucher Schemes

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- Other Local Bodies across the region are experiencing similar issues and BDUK has now pushed all eligible East Midlands premises into a single Tender.

2. Conclusion

An overview of the current Broadband Programme is being presented to the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee. The Committee is invited to review and comment on the content of this report.

3. Consultation

a) Risk and Impact Analysis

N/A

4. Appendices

N/A

5. Background Papers

No background papers within section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Stephen Brookes, Broadband Programme Manager who can be contacted via email on stephen.brookes@lincolnshire.gov.uk

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