

Cabinet

17 November 2021

Digital Durham Programme Update



Report of Corporate Management Team

Paul Darby Corporate Director of Resources

Cllr Susan McDonnell, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Digital and Customer Services

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide an update on the work being delivered as part of the Digital Durham Programme to support enhanced digital connectivity across County Durham.
- 2 To provide an overview of the expanding portfolio of projects that underpin the digital community theme of the Council's Digital Strategy, which sets out the digital ambitions for the county including improving and enhancing digital inclusion.

Executive summary

- 3 The provision of county-wide, fast and reliable broadband connectivity underpins Council Plan ambitions for economic growth, increasing employment opportunities and creating the right environment to build thriving, connected communities that will help residents to live long and independent lives.
- 4 In addition, better access in the typically harder-to-reach rural areas will help address digital exclusion and support the levelling-up of rural business, farming, tourism as well as the broader rural community in terms of education, access to jobs and social inclusion.
- 5 In 2013, Durham County Council (DCC) launched the Digital Durham Programme aimed at extending superfast broadband coverage across the county, working in partnership with Building Digital UK (BDUK) and appointed supplier Openreach.

- 6 Delivery under the superfast programme, expected to be completed by 31 December 2021, will have resulted in the delivery of superfast broadband coverage to an additional 64,000 properties in County Durham and 114,000 across the North East region.
- 7 At the start of the programme, superfast coverage in the county was 65%. This now stands at ¹97%, in line with the UK average. The increase is largely down to the interventions under the Digital Durham programme.
- 8 There has been an increasing reliance on connectivity and devices in recent years, with the Covid-19 pandemic further emphasising the need for faster, more reliable broadband access, particularly in rural areas.
- 9 The pandemic has amplified that not being connected to the Internet, increasingly means missing out on access to employment opportunities, education, health care, and public services.
- 10 Whilst superfast connectivity has increased and enhanced access, technology is evolving, as the demand for faster, more robust connectivity increases.
- 11 In November 2019, the Government made a manifesto commitment to provide gigabit-capable broadband to all homes and businesses in the UK by 2025. This target was reduced to a minimum of 85% in November 2020 as feedback from the market indicated full coverage could not be achieved by the 2025 timescale. The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) will try to accelerate delivery to reach as close to 100% as possible by the deadline. Deployment is expected to continue beyond that.
- 12 One gigabit is equal to 1,000 Megabits per second (Mbps). By comparison, the definition of Superfast is just 30 Mbps. Gigabit-capable coverage has increased from ²12% of properties to 40% in the last 12 months, and coverage is expected to improve significantly between now and the end of 2025.
- 13 This change in Government strategy has resulted in suppliers aligning resources to secure market share under commercial plans and to engage with public funded opportunities as part of Project Gigabit to extend coverage to rural areas.

¹ Data source: thinkbroadband.com (7 October 2021)

² Data source: thinkbroadband.com (7 October 2021)

- 14 [Project Gigabit](#) aims to maximise coverage to the 20% of the UK that are the hardest-to-reach, and therefore fall outside of any commercial plans.
- 15 BDUK plan to deliver Project Gigabit under three elements: procurement, voucher schemes and a hub model approach, and County Durham is set to benefit from each of these elements.
- 16 DCMS made a call for evidence on delivering improved broadband to [Very Hard to Reach premises](#), as the cost of delivering broadband to these properties is expected to rise exponentially. DCMS are now considering the evidence submitted and will assess the options available for delivering improved connectivity to areas where the costs of delivering better digital infrastructure have so far proven to be a barrier to deployment.
- 17 In line with the wider strategic shift being seen from suppliers, BT has also taken the decision to retire the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) by December 2025.
- 18 PSTN is the technology currently used to support landline phone calls and the future approach will see landline calls delivered over digital technology called Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), which uses a broadband connection to support the service. This will see the replacement of copper phone lines into premises
- 19 Since July 2020, Digital Durham have been working closely with BDUK and commercial suppliers to put County Durham in the best possible position in terms of gigabit-capable coverage, which will replace the PSTN. Communications and engagement plans are being refreshed to support wider market communications.
- 20 The adoption of a supplier engagement strategy is critical to building understanding and encouraging future investment plans for the county in terms of both commercial activities and public funded opportunities.
- 21 While the availability of gigabit-capable connectivity is steadily increasing and superfast broadband coverage is extensive, a small gap in provision still remains.
- 22 The Digital Durham Programme continues to support residents and business owners that continue to be impacted by poor broadband speeds, including consideration of alternative technologies to fixed line broadband.
- 23 Digital Communities (DC) is a key theme of Durham County Council's Digital Strategy and sets out DCC's digital ambitions for the county

including improving and enhancing how people can become more digitally included.

- 24 In addition to a range of existing programmes to support the digital inclusion agenda, a baselining exercise is currently underway to identify the existing and planned digital inclusion related initiatives available. An analysis will be conducted to identify any gaps where future projects may need to be considered and developed.

Recommendation(s)

- 25 Cabinet is recommended to note the content of the report.

Background

- 26 The provision of county-wide, fast and reliable broadband connectivity underpins Council Plan ambitions to enhance economic growth, increase employment opportunities, and to create the right environment to build thriving, connected communities that will help residents to live long and independent lives.
- 27 Better access in the typically harder-to-reach rural areas will help address digital exclusion in particular and benefit farming, wider rural businesses, tourism as well as the broader rural community in terms of education, access to jobs and social inclusion.
- 28 In 2013, the Digital Durham Programme was launched aimed at extending superfast broadband coverage across the county, working in partnership with Building Digital UK (BDUK), which forms part of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), and the appointed supplier BT Openreach.
- 29 Neighbouring local authorities were also invited to invest in the programme, creating efficiencies that enabled a greater amount of public subsidy to be spent on increasing coverage through reductions in project management costs.
- 30 The superfast programme is expected to complete by 31 December 2021 and has resulted in the delivery of superfast broadband coverage to almost 64,000 additional properties in County Durham and 114,000 across the wider North East region.
- 31 At the start of the programme, superfast coverage in the county was 65%. This now stands at ³97%, in line with the UK average. The increase is largely down to the interventions under the Digital Durham Programme.
- 32 There has been an increasing reliance on connectivity and devices in recent years, with the Covid-19 pandemic further emphasising the need for faster, more reliable broadband access, particularly in rural areas.
- 33 The pandemic has amplified that not being connected to the Internet, increasingly means missing out on access to employment opportunities, education, health and social care and public services.
- 34 While superfast has paved the way for increased access to enhanced broadband, technology is evolving, as the demand for faster, more robust connectivity increases.

³ Data source: thinkbroadband.com (7 October 2021)

- 35 In November 2019, Government made a manifesto commitment to provide gigabit-capable broadband to all homes and businesses in the UK by 2025. One gigabit is equal to 1,000 Megabits per second (Mbps). By comparison, the definition of superfast is just 30 Mbps.
- 36 This target was reduced to a minimum of 85% in November 2020 as feedback from the market indicated full coverage could not be achieved by the 2025 timescale. DCMS will try to accelerate delivery to reach as close to 100% as possible by the deadline. Deployment is expected to continue beyond that.
- 37 This commitment resulted in suppliers making a strategic shift to align resources to secure market share under commercial plans and engage with public funded opportunities as part of Project Gigabit to extend coverage to rural areas.

Project Gigabit

- 38 [Project Gigabit](#) aims to maximise coverage to the 20% of the UK that are the hardest-to-reach, and therefore fall outside of any commercial plans.
- 39 The Government has committed £5bn of funding to Project Gigabit to ensure that all areas of the UK can benefit equally, however, the market has indicated that only an estimated £1.2bn of investment can be spent by 2025.
- 40 The move to deliver a UK-wide digital network is a significant undertaking and feedback from the market indicates that resourcing limitations has impact on spending timelines. Government will accelerate this investment if industry can demonstrate the capacity to delivery further and faster.
- 41 BDUK plan to deliver Project Gigabit under three elements: procurement, voucher schemes and a hub model approach, and County Durham is set to benefit from each of them.

Procurement

- 42 County Durham and the broader North East region (excluding Newcastle and North Tyneside) will be some of the first areas in the UK to benefit from the initial phase of procurements.
- 43 Digital Durham have undertaken a lead role in the co-ordination of the Open Market Review (OMR) and Public Review (PR) process with suppliers which forms the pre-cursor to an Invitation to Tender (ITT).

- 44 The OMR and PR process involved consulting with 21 broadband infrastructure providers on more than 1.3m unique property reference numbers (UPRNs) to request data on existing gigabit-capable coverage and as well as future provision plans for the next three years. Areas outside of these plans form the 'Intervention Area' where public subsidy can potentially be used.
- 45 The supplied data is subject to an extensive assurance process by BDUK to confirm the viability of future plans and the speed capabilities of the technology deployed, as well consideration of comments submitted as part of the review.
- 46 The [Public Review Closure Notice](#) detailing the finalised intervention area data and maps was made available via the Gov.uk website on 5 November 2021. A link to the report will also be made publicly available via the DCC and other North East local authority websites during November 2021.
- 47 More detailed information of 'where and when' gigabit-capable broadband deployment will be planned will not be known until the procurement process is complete and a supplier appointed. Delivery is estimated to begin in Q3 next financial year (i.e., by 31 December 2022).

Vouchers

- 48 DCMS committed £210m to the latest phase of the [Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme](#) (GBVS) which offers rural premises experiencing download speeds below 100 Megabits per second (Mbps), up to £3,500 per small and medium-sized business (SME) and up to £1,500 per resident, to support the cost of installing a gigabit-capable connection (subject to eligibility rules).
- 49 The Council launched a £500k top-up to the GBVS in September 2020 to help rural communities which are typically expensive to deliver to. An additional £1m top-up was committed in June 2021, subject to Cabinet approval, following high levels of interest and uptake.
- 50 The top-up is only available to rural properties within County Durham that have download speeds of less than 30 Megabits per second (Mbps). It effectively doubles the funding amount currently available under the GBVS for eligible applicants. For homes, the maximum funding per voucher is £3,000, while SMEs can claim up to £7,000.
- 51 Prior to the introduction of the top-up fund, some communities had been deterred from advancing with the GBVS due to the funding gap or even because of the potential for one.

- 52 There are currently twenty BDUK approved intervention projects across County Durham (Appendix 2) and twelve of these have vouchers claimed against them. It is important to note that whilst approved, project delivery is not guaranteed until sufficient voucher funding is secured through residents committing to take up a service once available.
- 53 At the end of August 2021, suppliers have collectively requested £524k worth of DCC top-up funding. This funding is ring-fenced for twelve months from date of approval until a gigabit-capable broadband service is delivered. £11k has been paid to suppliers to date and £965k of top-up funding is still available to suppliers under the GBVS.
- 54 The GBVS paused on 24 September 2021. The pause is required to allow BDUK to establish a stable Intervention Area (IA) that details the properties eligible for funding under the procurement. This is required as suppliers need static data to develop a delivery proposal and comprehensive financial model as part of the bid process.
- 55 The pause has meant that some proposed community projects are unable to progress at this time. Some of these communities may receive gigabit-capable delivery under the procurement route instead, removing the need to pledge a voucher.
- 56 Where there is evidence that an existing voucher project has clear and firm project plans, and a strong likelihood of delivering earlier coverage than the procurement and will support good value for money, the premises that are part of that project will be designated as a Voucher Priority Area (VPA).
- 57 Suppliers will be able to continue to obtain voucher pledges from residents for VPAs during the procurement period resulting in the benefit of early gigabit-capable coverage to some communities.
- 58 Not all planned voucher projects get off the ground and result in the intended coverage. BDUK are trying to avoid communities being left in the position where they are ineligible for delivery under the contract resulting from their procurement, should a voucher project fail to deliver.
- 59 Properties in a VPA will not be considered for delivery under the procurement but could potentially be if they are not delivered to. This is a positive position for the communities involved as it provides contingency.
- 60 BDUK are currently in the process of identifying which projects will be designated as a VPA.

- 61 Once the voucher scheme fully reopens, a review will be completed to identify properties outside of any delivery plans with a view to working with communities and GBVS registered suppliers to re-open or develop new projects.

Hub Model Approach

- 62 The Hub Model Approach (HMA) has £110m funding aligned to provision rural public sector buildings, which meet qualifying criteria set by BDUK, with gigabit-capable connectivity. The benefit of this approach is two-fold:
- i. It provides a connection to a public building to enhance a public service.
 - ii. The surrounding community may become increasingly viable for commercial intervention.
- 63 The HMA has started with primary schools and 30 County Durham schools were identified as eligible by BDUK. This reduced to 28 as two schools received a full-fibre connection under an unexpected commercial delivery. See Appendix 3.
- 64 Digital Durham and the DCC Telecommunications Team are supporting these schools through the process from application to delivery and more than £600k of Government funding will be invested into County Durham as a result of this scheme.

Very Hard to Reach Premises

- 65 On 19 March 2021, DCMS made a call for evidence on delivering improved broadband to [Very Hard to Reach premises](#), i.e. the most rural and remote premises within the hardest to reach areas of the country. The consultation closed on 25 June 2021 and DCMS are now considering the evidence submitted. Digital Durham participated in the consultation.
- 66 The cost of delivering broadband to these properties is expected to rise exponentially, and the evidence gathered will enable DCMS to understand the challenges and assess the options available for delivering improved connectivity to areas where the costs of delivering better digital infrastructure has so far proven to be a barrier to deployment.

Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) retirement

- 67 In line with a wider strategic shift being seen from suppliers, BT has also taken the decision to retire the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) by December 2025.
- 68 PSTN is the technology currently used to support landline phone calls and the future approach will see landline calls delivered over digital technology called Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), which uses a broadband connection to support the service.
- 69 The equipment used in the PSTN was developed and installed in the UK in the 1980s and is becoming harder and more expensive to maintain. At the same time, telecoms providers are investing in new systems and networks such as full-fibre technology.
- 70 As a result, broadband and phone companies have decided to switch off the old network with a forward view of delivering services over new digital technology. This will see the replacement of copper phone lines into premises.
- 71 Ofcom and DCMS have indicated that the industry will lead on communicating developments; and providers will contact customers in the lead up to any change. Further information is available at the [Future of Voice](#) website. [Ofcom](#) also plan to publish more information as the situation develops.
- 72 Once a home phone service is moved from PSTN to VoIP, the phone will generally work in the same way as it always has but will need to be plugged into a broadband router instead of a phone socket.
- 73 This change will affect other devices that rely on a phone line, such as some fire and burglar alarm systems and telecare devices. Devices may need to be replaced or reconfigured to continue working and providers may provide a battery back-up so the landline will continue to work if there is a power cut. Unlike traditional phones, a phone connected to a broadband router will not work in a power cut, as the router gets its power from the mains.
- 74 Since July 2020, Digital Durham have been working closely with BDUK and commercial suppliers to help put County Durham in the best possible position in terms of gigabit-capable coverage which will replace the PSTN, and current communications and engagement plans are being refreshed to support wider market communications.

Supplier engagement

- 75 The adoption of a supplier engagement strategy is critical to building understanding and encouraging future investment plans for the county in terms of both commercial activities and public funded opportunities.
- 76 Collaborative working across the council has helped to develop and deliver a comprehensive approach to supplier engagement and facilitate enhanced rollout activity.
- 77 Suppliers currently operating in the county include:
- Alcom
 - B4RN
 - City Fibre
 - Factco
 - Netomnia
 - Openreach
 - Rymote
 - Virgin Media
 - Voneus
- 78 Feedback from several suppliers has indicated they are more likely to operate in local authority areas that adopt higher levels of support and interaction.
- 79 Suppliers are pro-actively encouraged to develop a sound communication and engagement plan to a broad range of stakeholders in areas with planned broadband deployment, and Digital Durham offer to make introductions to the relevant members.
- 80 This engagement will continue as supplier plans change and develop in the run up to 2025.

Current coverage levels

- 81 Gigabit-capable coverage has increased from ⁴12% to 40% in the last 12 months, and this figure is expected to improve significantly between now and the end of 2025.
- 82 An estimated overall coverage figure at 31 December 2025 cannot be provided at this stage due to the various workstreams that are currently in progress, however this developing picture will be monitored and reported on as the programme continues.

Alternative technologies and funding

- 83 While the availability of gigabit-capable connectivity is steadily increasing and superfast broadband coverage is extensive at 97%, a small gap still remains.
- 84 The Digital Durham Programme supports residents and business owners that continue to be impacted by poor broadband speeds to consider alternative technologies to fixed line broadband.
- 85 These alternatives include:
- (i) The latest satellite service capable of delivering download speeds of 50 Mbps to 150 Mbps.
 - (ii) 4G home broadband services, with average speeds of 25 Mbps. These typically involve the use of a router that devices connect to, just like with conventional broadband. Where internal 4G coverage is poor, providing outdoor coverage is good, an antenna which connects to the router can also be installed to a property to pick up a signal more readily.
- 86 While the availability of gigabit-capable connectivity is steadily increasing, from March 2020, under the [Broadband Universal Service Obligation](#) (USO), every resident and business in the UK has the legal right to request a decent, affordable broadband connection.
- 87 Properties in County Durham with download speeds of less than 10 Mbps and upload speeds of 1 Mbps, can request an upgraded connection through [BT](#).
- 88 A 4G router is offered where a 4G connection is available. Where it is not, £3,400 per property is available to fund the provision of a full fibre broadband connection and funding can be pooled to provision a solution to a community. Areas without access to 4G are likely to be some of the most rural, and therefore an installation to eligible properties may be

⁴ Data source: thinkbroadband.com (7 October 2021)

expensive. Any gap between the available funding and installation costs are expected to be covered by the recipients which will be prohibitive in some cases.

Mobile coverage

- 89 In early 2021 a successful funding bid was made to the Local Government Agency (LGA), as part of the Digital Connectivity Programme, to facilitate a project to independently benchmark mobile coverage.
- 90 Digital Durham is currently working with a third party to develop a device that can be housed in council fleet vehicles, to capture qualitative, real-time data, to identify gaps in mobile coverage.
- 91 This mobile data can potentially be overlaid with fixed line coverage information to gauge an overall picture of connectivity across County Durham. Further information on the outcome of the pilot is expected by 30 June 2022.
- 92 The [Shared Rural Network](#) (SRN) is a £1 billion mobile connectivity programme agreed between the UK government and Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) EE, O2, Three and Vodafone.
- 93 The agreement will see these MNOs share a network of new and existing phone masts to boost mobile signals.
- 94 The deployment is expected to provide coverage to an extra 280k premises and an additional 16,000 km of UK roads.
- 95 Geographic coverage is expected to rise to 95% and 98% of the UK (maps provided in Appendix 4) and England respectively from at least one operator by the end of 2025, broadening consumer choice for mobile services in rural areas. A breakdown of these figures for County Durham is not currently available. Ofcom will measure progress against these targets.

Digital Inclusion

- 96 Digital Communities (DC) is a key theme of Durham County Council's Digital Strategy and sets out the Council's digital ambitions for the county, including improving and enhancing how people can become more digitally included.
- 97 A lack of digital skills and access to connectivity, due to not having access to a device or the internet, can have a significant impact on local residents and local businesses.

- 98 In respect of residents, it can lead to a reduced access to jobs and education, poorer health outcomes and a lower life expectancy, as well as increased loneliness and social isolation.
- 99 It can also lead to financial exclusion and an increased risk of experiencing poverty through paying more for essentials. People who are digitally excluded may also lack visibility in the modern world, as public services and democracy increasingly move online.
- 100 The Councils Adult Learning and Skills Service offer a variety of [Information Technology](#) (IT) courses which includes digital skills training for anyone who is either in or searching for employment and wish to develop their digital skills.
- 101 Digital transformation and the adoption of digital technology to improve business processes, value for customers and innovation is an increasing necessity for many businesses to allow them to operate effectively or to compete in an increasingly global market.
- 102 [Digital Drive](#) is a £4m initiative to underpin this need. It aims to help SMEs in County Durham to maximise their growth potential and sustainability through digital technology, offering support such as 121 advice, masterclasses, and funding for digital related projects.
- 103 The programme is funded by the European Regional Development Fund, Business Durham and private investment. It forms part of the wider Digital Durham initiative to improve broadband speeds for residents and businesses across the North East.
- 104 The Council has partnered with Protech City to offer low-cost computer equipment to County Durham based registered charities and social enterprises under the Digital Durham [Reboot](#) scheme.
- 105 Council owned desktops and laptops are replaced periodically to ensure they are technically up to date and perform well. Some of these devices are suitable for reuse and are being offered through this scheme.
- 106 County Durham based registered charities and registered social enterprises are eligible for the scheme if they use the equipment to do one of the following:
- (i) Help residents get online by providing free internet access
 - (ii) Provide support to residents to improve their skills – this could be digital skills
 - (iii) Assist the organisation to run more effectively

- 107 A baselining exercise is currently underway to identify the existing and planned digital inclusion related initiatives that are available and an analysis will be conducted to identify any gaps where future projects may need to be considered and developed.

Conclusion

- 108 The provision of county-wide, fast and reliable broadband connectivity and support of the digital inclusion agenda underpins Council Plan ambitions for economic growth, increasing employment opportunities and creating the right environment to build thriving, connected communities that will help residents to live long and independent lives.
- 109 In addition, better access in the typically harder-to-reach rural areas will help address digital exclusion and support the levelling-up of rural business, farming, tourism as well as the broader rural community in terms of education, access to jobs and social inclusion.
- 110 A long standing and expanding portfolio of work is driving improvements in superfast and gigabit broadband coverage in County Durham as well as broader digital accessibility.
- 111 The adoption of a collaborative supplier engagement strategy has been critical to building understanding and encouraging future investment plans for the county in terms of both commercial activities and public funded opportunities as well as facilitating enhanced rollout activity.
- 112 In addition to this report and as a result of recent industry developments and strategic re-alignment, a refreshed communication plan is currently in development to further support stakeholders. This includes a forward plan of resident and member engagement and redevelopment of the Digital Durham website.

Background papers

- None

Other useful documents

- Council Plan
- Digital Strategy
- Digital Durham website

Author(s)

Alli Walker
Steve Hodgson

Tel: 07824 460 538
Tel: 07946 483 564

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

None

Finance

£1.5m invested by Durham County Council as a top-up fund to the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme.

£20k Local Government Agency grant funding which was match funded by DCC to explore a mobile connectivity project.

Consultation

As a result of industry developments, a refreshed communication plan is currently in development to further support stakeholders. This includes a forward plan of resident and member engagement and redevelopment of the Digital Durham website.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Better connectivity underpins the Council's ambitions detailed in the County Durham Vision and Plan such as increased employment opportunities, better connected communities and helping residents to live long and independent lives. Increased broadband availability enables improved access to services that are provided digitally.

Human Rights

Not applicable

Climate Change

Not applicable

Crime and Disorder

Not applicable

Staffing

The Digital Durham Programme is supported by five FTE.

Accommodation

Not applicable

Risk

GBVS

Without the GBVS top-up funding, most projects would fail and not be delivered. Suppliers have indicated that some projects may progress with a reduced number of properties in delivery plans.

There is a possible reputational risk where Digital Durham has been working with communities and suppliers in relation to the GBVS. Whilst we have been transparent that limited funding is available on a first come, first served basis, this engagement naturally sets an expectation with rural communities desperate for faster broadband services.

Suppliers may look for other enhanced funding opportunities elsewhere in the UK which are more viable for delivery.

PSTN switch off

BT has taken the decision to retire the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) by December 2025.

PSTN is the technology currently used to support landline phone calls and the future approach will see landline calls delivered over digital technology called Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), which uses a broadband connection to support the service. This will see the replacement of copper phone lines into premises

While the availability of gigabit-capable connectivity is steadily increasing, there may be a gap in provision when the PSTN is retired.

The adoption of a supplier engagement strategy is critical to building understanding and encouraging future investment plans for the county in terms of both commercial activities and public funded opportunities.

Since July 2020, Digital Durham have been working closely with BDUK and commercial suppliers to put County Durham in the best possible position in terms of gigabit-capable coverage, which will replace the PSTN.

Alternative technologies to fixed line broadband are available. The Digital Durham Programme will continue to support residents and business owners in terms of the potential options.

Communications and engagement plans are being refreshed to support wider market communications around this.

Procurement

The Government wants to have nationwide gigabit-capable broadband as soon as possible, and recognises it needs to help in the parts of the country that are not commercially viable.

£5bn was committed in the 2020 budget to ensure that all areas of the UK can benefit equally. The funding will be spent under a range of projects known collectively as Project Gigabit. The Spending Review in November 2020 set out the timeline for the first £1.2bn of funding to be made available to industry over the next 4 years. Government will accelerate this investment if industry can demonstrate the capacity to delivery further and faster.

As part of this, DCMS will fund contracts for suppliers to deliver gigabit-capable wholesale infrastructure to the hardest-to-reach areas, which is anticipated to be 20% of properties in the UK. Local Authorities are not being asked to make a financial contribution.

Almost all of the North East of England, excluding Newcastle and North Tyneside, are being considered in the first wave of procurements under [phase 1A](#).

| Phase 1a | Procurement start date (estimated) | Contract commencement date (estimated) |
|---|------------------------------------|--|
| County Durham, Gateshead, Sunderland and Tees Valley Combined Authority (Lot 4) | January 2022 | November 2022 |
| Northumberland (Lot 34) | January 2022 | November 2022 |

Following engagement with market and other stakeholders, BDUK have proposed three lots for the region:

- Procurement Type A (a Local Supplier Contract) in Lot 4,
- Procurement Type A (a Local Supplier Contract) in Lot 34,
- and a joint Procurement Type B (a Regional Supplier Contract) which is a large sized lot that encompasses all North East local authorities involved in Phase 1a.

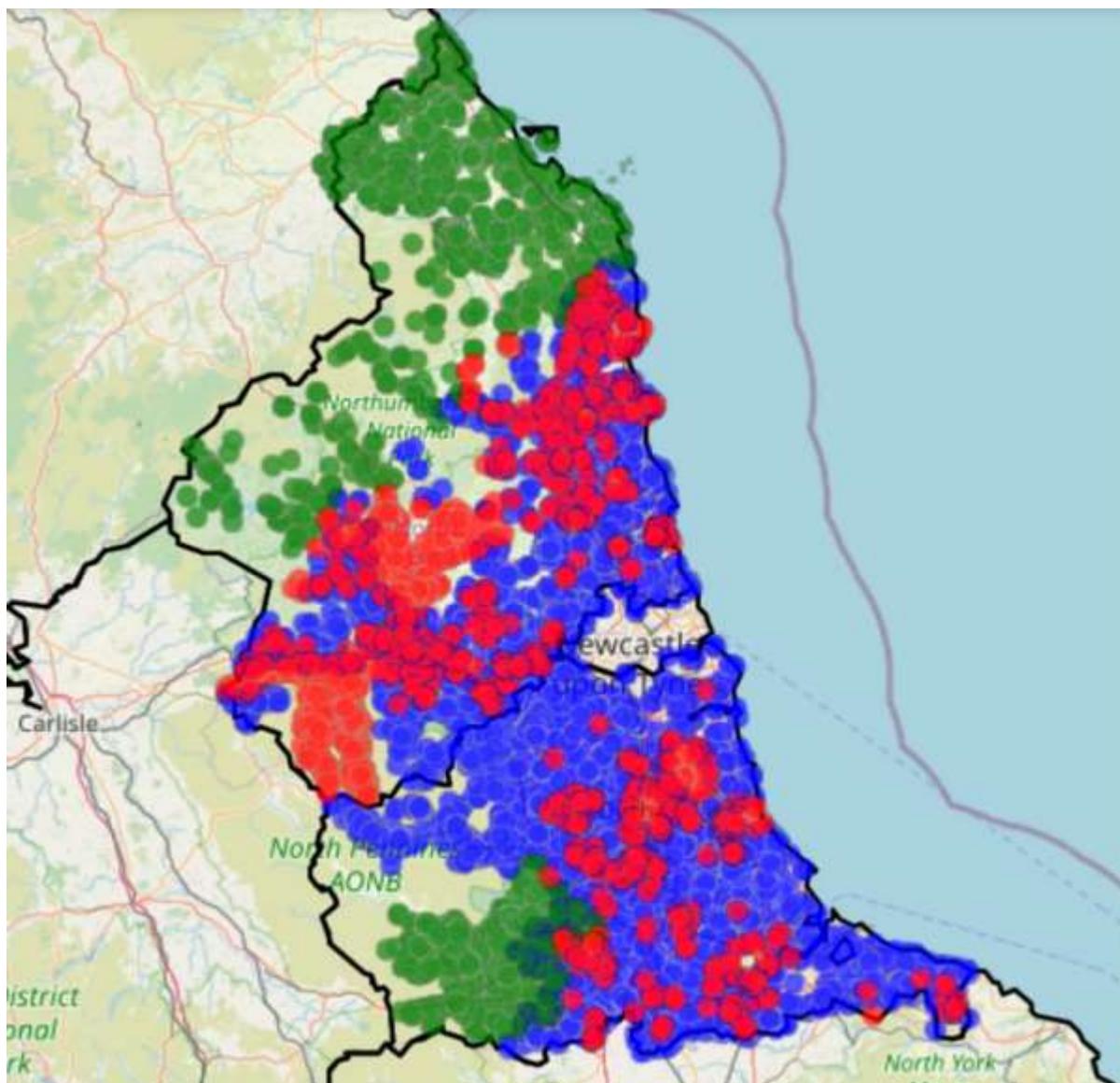
A Type A lot has between 1,000 – 10,000 properties.

A premise-level map (shown below) detailing these proposed Intervention Areas can be found in Annex B of the [Public Review Closure Notice](#) on the

Gov.uk website. It is important to note that these proposals are subject to change.

The key below provides an overview of how to interpret the map:

- Green dots - Represent where the Type A procurement areas in Lot 4 and Lot 34 are located.
- Blue dots – Represent the combined Type B procurement area for Lots 4 and 34 (initial scope). These areas will be considered during the initial procurement.
- Red dots – Represent the combined Type B procurement area for Lots 4 and 34 Type B (deferred scope). These areas will be considered only if future market review show that delivery plans are no longer taking place.



Newcastle and North Tyneside will be included later in the programme under phase 3.

The procurements and contracts will be managed by DCMS. Local authorities are being asked to input into the social value aspect of the procurement.

DCMS are estimated to launch the Invitation to Tender (ITT) in January 2022. On the provision of the successful appointment of a supplier(s), the contract is estimated to commence November 2022.

Appendix 2: GBVS approved project list

- Bolam
- Boldron
- Castleside
- Chester Moor
- Cornsay, Esh
- Crook (small community)
- Fir Tree
- Frosterley
- Hamsterley, South Bedburn
- Langton Lea (High Shincliffe)
- Low & High Pittington
- Mordon
- Shadforth, Littleton
- Sherburn Hill
- Sherburn Village
- Startforth (two projects)
- Station Town
- Upper Teesdale
- Waldrige

Appendix 3: Primary School List

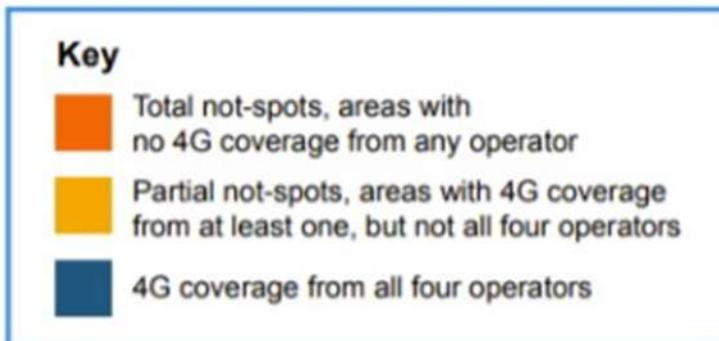
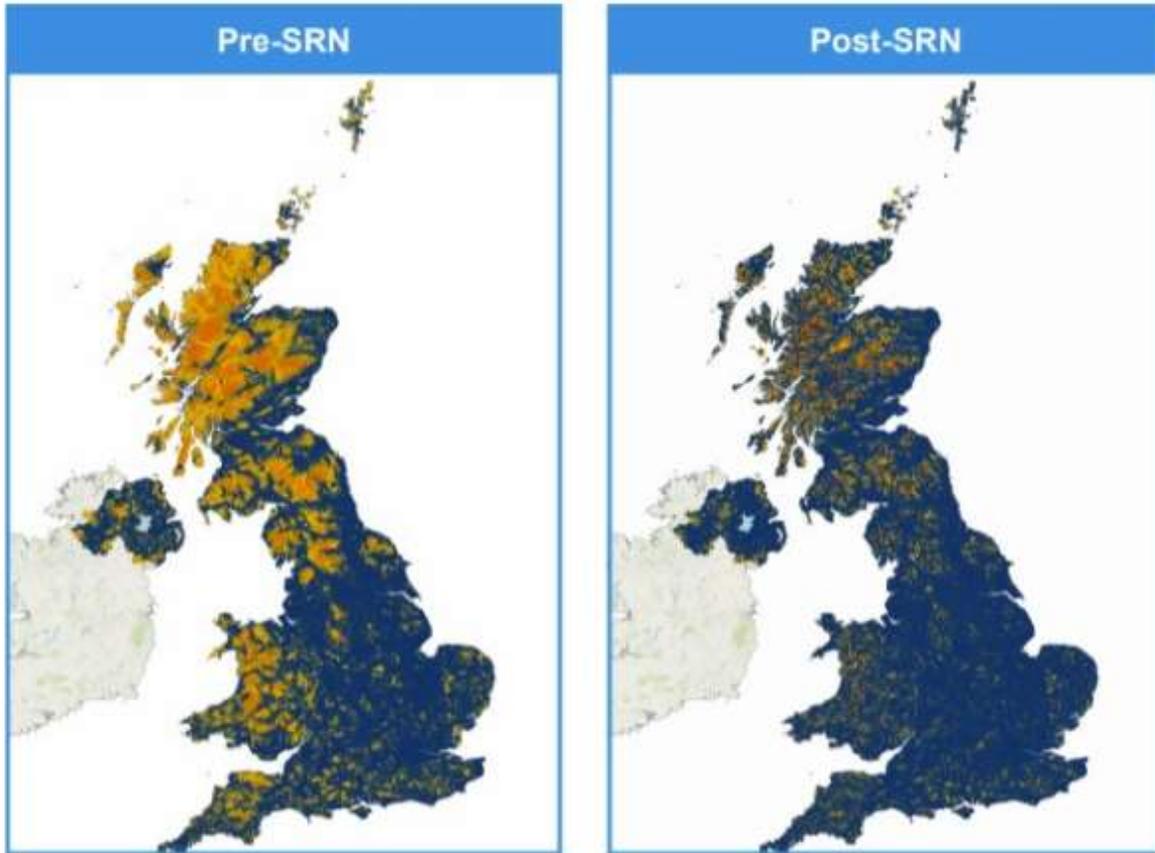
The table below details a list of rural primary schools that were successful for funding to provision a full fibre broadband solution to the school as part of the Hub Model Approach under Project Gigabit.

Primary schools had the option to go with a supplier of their choice. Blue cells indicate schools where DCC Telecoms are managing the deployment. Orange is an external provider.

| Primary School |
|--|
| Bearpark Primary School |
| Brandon Primary School |
| Butterknowle Primary School |
| Byers Green Primary School |
| Cassop Primary School |
| Escomb Primary School |
| Esh Winning Primary School |
| Ferryhill Station Primary School |
| Greenland Community Primary School |
| Hamsterley Primary School |
| Hesledon Primary School |
| Hunwick Primary School |
| Ingleton CofE Primary School |
| Lumley Junior School |
| Middleton in Teesdale Nursery and Primary School |

| Primary School |
|--|
| Nettlesworth Primary School |
| New Brancepeth Primary School |
| Rookhope Primary School |
| Sedgefield Hardwick Primary School |
| Shincliffe C of E Primary School |
| St Johns Chapel Primary School |
| St Michael's RC VA Primary School |
| St Patrick's RC VA Primary School |
| St William's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School |
| Stanhope Barrington CofE Primary School |
| Thornhill Primary School |
| Wearhead Primary School |
| West Rainton Primary School |

Appendix 4: Shared Rural Network (SRN) maps



Notes

Forecast improvements subject to availability of EAS sites.

Coverage improvements subject to finding suitable sites, obtaining power supply and backhaul and securing the necessary permissions through the planning system.