

PROJECT UPDATE

January 2014

Connecting Cheshire is a £31m council-led Partnership to bring fibre broadband to 96% of premises in Cheshire, Halton and Warrington. The project will bring fibre broadband to over 80,000 premises mainly in our outlying and rural areas by summer 2015.

“In today’s rapidly-moving world, fast and sophisticated communications are absolutely vital. They are an essential part of future success.”

Julian Cobley – Project Director Connecting Cheshire.

We are delighted to announce that more than 15,000 premises are set to benefit from the first phase of investment in brand new fibre broadband networks across Cheshire and on the 18th December 2013 we switched on our first new fibre enabled roadside cabinet in Holmes Chapel.



Super Switch-on Day’ in Holmes Chapel. Pictured from left to right Steve Ranger – Chairman Holmes Chapel Parish Council; Cllr Les Gilbert – Dane Valley Ward; Cllr David Brown – Deputy Leader Cheshire East Council; Julian Cobley – Project Director Connecting Cheshire.

Councillor David Brown, Deputy Leader of Cheshire East Council, on behalf of the Connecting Cheshire Partnership said: “This is an important step forward. High-speed access to the internet has never been more important whether you are a local businessperson wishing to build your company, a student taking advantage of online training and carrying out research or a householder making use of on-line shopping and entertainment.”

The further roll-out of fibre broadband in Holmes Chapel was welcomed by the Government’s communications minister Ed Vaizey, who said: “The switching on of more super-fast broadband in Holmes Chapel is great news for both local residents and businesses. Today’s announcement is just part of a transformation of broadband services happening throughout the UK. Broadband is an essential part of Cheshire’s present and future. It is vital that we embrace this latest generation of technology in order for our economy to remain competitive.”



Building the Network



The Connecting Cheshire broadband programme will be delivered by Openreach - BT's local network business - building on the existing fibre networks already provided by BT's commercial investment in the high speed broadband in the more urban areas of Cheshire. A team of over 100 planners and engineers are working to upgrade Cheshire's exchanges and networks including laying more than 875 miles of fibre-optic cable – more than the distance between Lands End and John O' Groats – by spring 2015.

Roadside Cabinets

A key element of our infrastructure deployment is the positioning and building of over 450 new, green roadside cabinets. These will house the necessary communications equipment which will provide high speed broadband connectivity to homes and businesses.

When choosing a location for these new cabinets, Openreach planners need to take into account existing utilities' underground infrastructure such as gas and water mains that cannot be moved, access to power (the new cabinets require electricity to power the new fibre-optic equipment inside), width of footpaths, ease of safe access for Openreach engineers and distance from existing cabinets.



Ideally the new cabinets will be positioned as close as possible to the existing cabinets and are of a similar size and shape. Wherever possible existing infrastructure will be used however some disruption may result, including digging up roads or pavements to bring power and fibre-optic cables to the new cabinet sites, but this will be kept to a minimum. Foundations will also need to be dug for the new cabinets but Openreach and their contractors will endeavour to make good any disturbance to the surrounding area.

Any delays in the commissioning of the new cabinets will put our accelerated roll-out plans at risk. The government has removed much of the 'red tape' related to the commissioning of these cabinets to assist in the rapid deployment of fibre networks across the country. We hope they will not result in any negative issues in your community, but if you require any further information please contact us at info@connectingcheshire.org.uk.



Principal Communities within Phase 1

During the first phase, faster fibre broadband will be available for the first time in the following communities from the end of March 2014 onwards, where the majority of homes and businesses will be able to contact their Internet Service Provider and order a switch to a fibre broadband service:

Cheshire East Council

Acton
Alderley Edge
Allostock
Aston
Brereton Green

Cranage
East of Crewe*
Holmes Chapel*
Hough
Nantwich*

Peover
Plumley
Twemlow Green
Warmingham
Wrenbury
Wybunbury

Cheshire West & Chester Council

Acton Bridge
Barton
Central Chester*
Christleton
Clutton

Davenham
Great Mollington
Guilden Sutton
Kelsall
Lach Dennis
Norley

Tarporley
Tarvin
Tattenhall
Weaverham
Wincham

Halton Council

Central Runcorn*
Hale Bank
Weston*

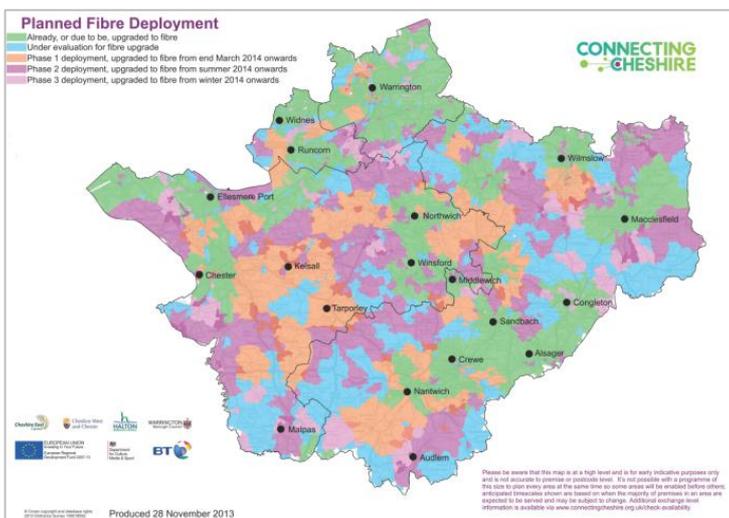
Warrington Council

Central Warrington*
Dallam
Great Sankey*

Penketh*
Westwood
Winwick

* These areas will also see additional fibre roll-out in phase one, building on BT's commercial coverage.

We will be working closely with local communities to ensure the whole community and local businesses can benefit from the arrival of fibre broadband. If you would like to help us in this process please register and join our growing database of over 100 Digital Champions and receive ongoing project updates. Contact us at info@connectingcheshire.org.uk



Additional information is now also available showing the proposed timescales for areas in the second and third phases of the programme, which are expected to see fibre availability from summer 2014 onwards for phase two, and from winter 2014 onwards for phase three.

You can check the coverage by visiting our website to find out more and download a high resolution PDF map.¹ www.connectingcheshire.org.uk/check-availability

¹ The information shown on the maps is subject to survey and may change; all information, including forecast dates, is indicative only. Forecast dates may move forwards as well as backwards; it is not necessarily the case that all premises within an area due to receive fibre broadband will receive it at the same time – different premises within that area may be served by different supporting infrastructure.

Some of our Frequently Asked Questions

How does the programme plan its roll-out?

The aim of the project is to achieve the best 'future-proof' broadband coverage for Cheshire. We're planning the rollout, working closely with our partners and participating organisations, taking into account many factors including local demographics and geography, planning requirements, the existing engineering infrastructure and the availability of suitable technologies to provide a service.

Unfortunately cost is also a significant factor; we need to balance our investment to reach the most premises against the costs of connecting more dispersed communities further away from the existing infrastructure. We also evaluate the potential speeds we can provide against the cost to ensure as many premises can benefit from an increase in speed as possible.

Why can't you tell me when my specific area is going live?

The Connecting Cheshire roll-out is a major engineering project and it's not possible with a programme of this size to plan every area at the same time so some areas will be enabled before others. We fully understand people's frustration and the huge importance of fibre broadband so we'll keep you updated regularly as plans evolve. We will strive to provide accurate information and 'ready for service' dates that can be met; as our overriding objective is to avoid making promises we can't deliver on.

When fibre broadband becomes available in my area, will my broadband simply get faster without me taking any action?

No; to get fibre broadband you'll need to place an order with an Internet Service Provider (ISP). This is because fibre broadband uses a different technology and an engineer may need to visit your premises to install the necessary equipment.

Once you've checked your line to confirm fibre broadband is available, it's much the same as ordering normal broadband. There are several ISPs offering the service in Cheshire, so you can shop around and choose the best deal for you.

Can I get involved?

Cheshire, Warrington and Halton Councils are keen that as many businesses and residents as possible are able to benefit from the faster broadband that is being provided as part of Connecting Cheshire. There may be scope for you to help in your local community by raising demand for broadband and helping those who have no experience with the internet to start using it. To discuss what you could do to help please email us at info@connectingcheshire.org.uk.

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