



# PROJECT UPDATE

March 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.

## Additional Funding Award

Cheshire has received a £2.12m allocation out of an additional £250m fund created by the Government to extend the coverage of superfast broadband in rural areas from 2015. The funding will require a match from council, European or other public sector funding sources. We are currently looking at how best to leverage match funding so that we can continue with the Connecting Cheshire programme and reach more premises. We will provide an early update on the additional number of premises this funding will enable us to reach, once we have completed the planning and submission process with Broadband Delivery UK, part of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. In addition, we are hopeful that other funding applications including our current Rural Community Broadband Fund application will enable us to work towards further fibre coverage across Cheshire.

## Phase One Progress

By the end of February, over 160 new roadside cabinets were installed across Cheshire with many expected to be ready for service from the end of March, out of almost 500 expected during the life of the project. These new cabinets are the essential building blocks of the new 'root and branch' fibre networks and house the necessary fibre broadband equipment required for each locality. Combined with the 900 miles of fibre-optic cable that will be laid, they constitute a significant engineering challenge for BT, set against a very challenging timescale making the Cheshire roll-out the fastest currently underway in the UK.

Over 100 BT engineers and planners are involved in the Cheshire roll-out, plus a number of additional local sub-contractors. A key success of the project to date has been the partnership working between BT and the council's Planning and Highways departments to facilitate the road works and approvals required to deploy the fibre infrastructure speedily whilst minimising disruption to the road network and communities. For more details on our roll-out see: [www.connectingcheshire.org.uk/check-availability](http://www.connectingcheshire.org.uk/check-availability)



## Briefing Events

During January and February 5 drop-in events were held in Chester, Tarporley, Alderley Edge, Sandbach and Wrenbury to brief the public and Councillors on the arrival of fibre; these were very well received with over 600 attending, demonstrating the high anticipation and awareness of the programme. Thank you to everyone for braving the wild weather to attend and to BT for loan of their Fibre Showcase vehicle, which was very popular with attendees. Two forthcoming events will take place on:

- **Monday 17 March - Orford Jubilee Park, Warrington WA2 8HE between 4.30pm to 8pm**
- **Tuesday 18 March - Select Security Stadium, Widnes WA8 7DZ between 5pm until 7pm**



Experts from BT Openreach will be on hand to explain the technical and logistical challenges, plus there will be information and maps showing where and when the new services will be arriving. Information on the free Superfast Business support programme will also be available. We will be holding further community events over the next 12 months to celebrate the arrival of fibre and will also be attending the Cheshire and Nantwich Shows. Our aim is to work closely with you to ensure the whole community and businesses can benefit from 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](mailto:info@connectingcheshire.org.uk)

*Steve Robinson, left, – Chief Executive of Cheshire West and Chester visited the Fibre Showcase vehicle*

## Social Media Updates

In December Jenny Westwood joined the project from BT to support our Marketing team and in January we welcomed Dean Burrows into the team as our Social Media Apprentice. Dean will be ensuring we continue to provide an effective social media presence and on our website. You are encouraged to visit our website [www.connectingcheshire.org.uk](http://www.connectingcheshire.org.uk) for all our latest project news and regular updates to our question and answer section in response to the growing number of enquiries we receive. Registrations of interest also continue to grow on our website and are currently totalling over 15,000. Please follow us on Twitter and register on our website to receive notification of when fibre will be arriving in your area.

## And Finally...

As part of the roll-out, BT's contractor Carillion Telent found a human bone whilst digging the foundations for a new cabinet in Chester. It has been passed to their archaeological experts for further research and dating – we'll keep you posted on developments! We also had some good news for the project when we were shortlisted for a Transforming Local Services award in the Government's Improvement & Efficiency Awards which will be announced in early March.



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