



DORSET
Local Enterprise Partnership

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Fibre Hub Connectivity in Rural Dorset
End of Project Report

Getting Building Fund (GBF)

PROJECT SUMMARY

The FHCiRD project intended to increase the number of Council owned premises with the ability to access full fibre connectivity with consequential access to fibre for wider residential and commercial premises via open access delivery, including via voucher subsidy. It aimed to improve economic activity and productivity through addressing areas of poor fibre connectivity across Dorset.

The project capital works delivered a 61 site hub infrastructure to provide full fibre benefits directly to Council owned premises and via DCMS and DC capital contributions, provide opportunity to over 14,000 wider residential and commercial premises to access fibre connectivity through wider build.

Dorset Council committed to providing Top Up funding to run alongside DCMS's national voucher intervention programme. The Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme has been running since May 2018 and is currently in its third iteration. When Dorset Council began offering Top Up funding (August 2020), the voucher scheme was in its second iteration (Rural Gigabit Connectivity – RGC). This second iteration closed for applications in February 2021. The current voucher offering from DCMS was launched in April 2021 (with adjusted eligibility criteria that reduced the number of eligible premises in Dorset). The scheme was paused in Dorset, while the Project Gigabit Public Review took place last autumn. Changes in eligibility and uncertainty of Project Gigabit coverage reduced supplier appetite throughout 2021 and 2022. However over 400 properties have been connected with Dorset Top Up funding.

Premises	UK Government's UKGV Scheme	Dorset top-up available	Total funding available for installation
Residential	Up to £1,500	Up to £1,000	Up to £2,500
SMEs	Up to £3,500	Up to £2,500	Up to £6,000

The project was developed and implemented in line with national and sub-regional policy and strategy on broadband, digital connectivity and digital inclusion, for example the Local Full Fibre Network Programme and Building Digital UK Strategy. The scheme also aligns with Dorset LEP's draft Local Industrial Strategy and Dorset's Economic Growth Strategy.

The project aimed to deliver full fibre capabilities to uncommercial (in market terms) areas in direct response to the Covid19 pandemic and the legacy of this. The business case presented the need for Dorset LEP funding through evidencing that investment from other sources will not be possible in the coming years as fibre optic network construction is characterised by high fixed costs and economies of scale that make their deployment unprofitable in rural areas such as large parts of Dorset.

Project start date	10 th December 2020
Project construction start date	23 rd April 2021
Original Project completion date	31 st March 2022
Project extension completion date	30 th September 2022

CHANGE REQUEST

Change request submitted and approved in December 2021 and addendum signed in March 2022.

OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES:

The following table sets out the agreed outputs by September 2022 for the Project:

Preliminary Outputs
Deliver full fibre gigabit connectivity to 61 hub sites
Bringing access to full fibre connectivity through demand-led opportunity to 14,106 premises, consisting of, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 8593 Premises with potential to benefit from commercial access to gigabit broadband but are not voucher eligible. ○ 5513 residents and businesses provided the opportunity to move to gigabit-capable services where not previously available. ○ 78 (subset of 5,513) Provide opportunity to residents and businesses with the opportunity to move to gigabit-capable services from broadband below 30mb

The following table sets out the agreed outcomes by March 2025 for the Project

Ref.	Outcomes
1.	See a 2% reduction in premises with no gigabit connectivity as reported by Ofcom with sub-superfast speeds
2.	122 New jobs created
3.	488 Business and institutions assisted

Outcomes will be reported by all Getting Building Fund projects until 2025, as per funding requirements.

BENEFITS REALISED TO DATE

Dorset Council used DCMS and BDUK available data to estimate the benefits that would be realised from the scheme.

- In areas where fibre broadband is deployed there is a 0.8% increase in employment and a 1.2% increase in turnover in areas of intervention for superfast connectivity showing economic impacts of broadband increase substantially with faster speeds.
- the long-term subjective well-being value of upgraded households is estimated to be £553.63 per year, citing benefits of:
 - Greater role for telemedicine
 - Increased potential for teleworking
 - Improved access to public services
 - Increased personal and community well-being.

DCMS' analysis also modelled the value of very significant uplifts, for example turnover increased significantly in postcodes with businesses seeing higher speed rises.

- Annual turnover increased by 1.2% where available download speeds rose by 100 to 200 Mbps, compared with a 5.8% increase in annual turnover where available download speeds rose by more than 500 Mbps.
- On a per-worker basis, the 100 to 200 Mbps rise led to a turnover increase in 1.2% per annum, and a 3.8% increase for areas with larger changes.

The benefits have also been calculated based on considerations from results DCMS have shown from the impact of their existing voucher scheme:

- £8 benefit to every £1 spent, 1 in 4 firms employed an extra 1FTE staff member increasing annual profits by an average £1,300
- Annual well-being value of upgrades to households - £533.83

The physical build aspect of this project directly delivered,

- 1.6 km of duct and 39 km of soft dig installation across rural Dorset
- 61 hub sites provided with full fibre connectivity (total premises passed will be additional to this, via onward commercial or government subsidised network utilisation e.g. Gigabit voucher schemes)
- 37 hub sites have taken a service to date

FINANCES

The Fibre Hub project utilised £1.5m of Getting Building Fund budget.

SUCCESS STORY

- Utilising Dorset LEP Getting Building Fund post COVID recovery funding this project procured the build of a hub and spoke gigabit capable broadband network to 61 council owned hubs within Dorset.

- Those 61 Council sites consisted of libraries, schools, offices, depots and farms, community buildings (village halls) and traveller sites all connected to a fibre broadband network up to 5 years ahead of any potential commercial build.
- Schools in the project have already reaped the benefits of faster, more reliable internet speeds thanks to the council partnering with broadband suppliers.
- Through this project the authority was able to build fibre optic gigabit broadband to 'hubs', with suppliers then being able to offer gigabit internet connection from the installed network to residents and business either at minimal install cost or through subsidy under the gigabit voucher scheme.
- As a direct result of this intervention very rural Dorset Council owned farms and neighbouring communities have been able to access ultrafast gigabit internet.
- 37 of the 61 sites have taken a service with community centres being offered an incentive of £1/100mb/per month broadband service (via Wessex Internet) to promote the benefits of fibre broadband within the rural community.

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