

# Connecting Devon and Somerset

Stakeholder Briefing March 11th, 2021



## Programme Update: Truespeed contracts

### Summary

- 15,172 homes and businesses earmarked for full fibre connections.
- Anticipated completion of contracts by December 2024
- Construction of first link for the primary connection (the “backhaul”) to the Internet for the new network has begun in various locations across the region. \*
- Anticipated first homes to be connected by Autumn 2021.
- Too soon to say which premises will be connected.

*\*See “Surveying” section for more detail.*

### Introduction

On December 23<sup>rd</sup> Connecting Devon and Somerset, with support from Government, signed contracts with Bath-based **Truespeed** to deliver full fibre broadband networks to **15,172** homes and businesses in earmarked areas of **Bath & North East Somerset, Mendip District, North Somerset and Sedgemoor District**. The new networks will require the construction of a significant infrastructure in almost every street in the coverage area. Delivery will be in phases **between 2021 and 2024**.

This programme update summarises what Truespeed and CDS are doing now in preparation for connecting the first premises later this year, and why that preparation is essential and takes time. It also explains why it is not possible to say with certainty which premises will be connected yet. It’s important to note that wherever possible work is undertaken concurrently.

Preparation includes mobilising resources, double-checking any commercial operations in the earmarked areas, and surveying. These last two will greatly determine which premises in which areas are finally to be connected. One other factor determining final connections is a cap on public subsidy per premise which is agreed by CDS with Building Digital UK (BDUK) and the contractor.

Although the contract seeks to connect as many homes and businesses without superfast\* broadband as possible not every premise can be included within the public funding available.

*\*Minimum 30Mbps download speed.*

The accompanying map shows current CDS and commercially-funded coverage and areas earmarked for coverage under the new CDS contracts. However, please note this does not mean all premises in these areas will be connected through this contract. The order by which work starts in each individual area is determined by most economical and effective way in which the programme is delivered.

## **Mobilisation**

December 2020 – May 2021

The first task in any new contract is assembling the additional resources – staff, materials and equipment – a company needs to do the job. This is known as the “mobilisation” period.

Whilst it is a “behind the scenes” activity, building the team resources and systems in good time is pivotal to the successful overall programme delivery and addresses all aspects required to guarantee timely and cost-effective delivery. It includes recruitment of key personnel in programme management, infrastructure planning, construction, and community engagement, and implementing contracts for all materials and equipment required. These mobilisation activities are well under way.

## **Open Market Review Refresh**

January 2021 – April 2021

Before the geography of the new network is finalised, CDS must complete a prudent double-check that all earmarked areas still require public subsidy. CDS conducts a detailed survey, an “Open Market Review”, before going out to tender and checks again after contract award. This is underway now and is known as the “Open Market Review Refresh”.

### **Why is this necessary?**

Sometimes during a procurement period an area previously earmarked by CDS as requiring public subsidy is covered by a commercially-funded roll-out or becomes the subject of definite plans to do so. If that happens CDS will look to redeploy public funding to another area still in need of subsidised coverage. Final decisions are taken with Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) on behalf of DCMS and in consultation with the contractor.

This process is essential to ensure that public money is spent where the need is greatest and over-building of existing networks is avoided as far as possible. Although rare, occasionally, some limited overbuilding is necessary because premises lie along the most cost-effective route for the new network and avoiding them would make new connections further along the route too expensive to complete.

## **Surveying**

The term “surveying” does not do justice to the full scale of activity that has to be completed before network construction can begin. Design and planning are also key elements and taken altogether they form the most crucial part of the pre-construction process, determining the build route, efficiency and timeline.

The work is an ongoing activity as the network is rolled out. It involves a physical check and examination of the geography of areas earmarked for the new network. It includes determination of cable and duct routes, the condition of poles where overhead cabling may be required, cabinet placements, street work and wayleave requirements, as well as ‘line of sight’ visibility to customer locations.

As hard to reach areas are amongst the most difficult and costly to deliver, on the ground surveys are essential to minimise construction risks and difficulties as much as possible.

Truespeed begin by planning the most efficient and cost-effective location to connect the new network with its existing infrastructure. This primary connection to the Internet, known as a “backhaul”, has begun in **Bath, Kingston Seymour, Wells, Saltford and Nunney** and it is planned to publish the detailed rollout plan during the summer. Truespeed anticipate that by autumn this year the first premises in each of the above areas will be connected.

## **Cost cap**

CDS agrees a cap on the amount of public subsidy per premise that can be invested in building a new network with BDUK and the contractor as part of the contract award process. The aim is to strike the best possible balance; sufficient subsidy to attract commercial providers whilst achieving the maximum number of premises covered. The subsidy plus a provider’s commercial investment in the contract is what pays for the construction of the new network.

Occasionally unexpected difficulties encountered during construction can increase the cost. If cost exceeds the cap, the contractor notifies CDS who, in consultation with BDUK, must then determine whether to authorise the build or switch the subsidy to other premises.

For all homes and businesses without superfast broadband which cannot be connected under this contract, CDS will work with BDUK and the commercial sector to find alternative solutions. Options may include the use of Rural Gigabit Vouchers to fund connections, securing additional Government funding or inclusion in the National Gigabit Programme, or attracting commercial investment.

## **Further information:**

[www.truespeed.com](http://www.truespeed.com)

Connecting Devon and Somerset

Matt Barrow,

[Matt.barrow@devon.gov.uk](mailto:Matt.barrow@devon.gov.uk)

[connectingdevonandsomerset.co.uk](http://connectingdevonandsomerset.co.uk)

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