

Housing and Infrastructure Board

29 June 2022

Digital Infrastructure and Connected by Water Updates

Is the paper exempt from the press and public?	No
Reason why exempt:	Not applicable
Purpose of this report:	Discussion
Is this a Key Decision?	No
Has it been included on the Forward Plan?	Not a Key Decision

Director Approving Submission of the Report:

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Executive Summary

Following the launches of both the South Yorkshire Digital Infrastructure Strategy and the South Yorkshire Connected by Water Plan, the Board requested regular updates regarding their implementation. Board Members are asked to note the progress reports provided at Appendices A and B regarding delivery of these two strategies.

What does this mean for businesses, people and places in South Yorkshire?

The Digital Infrastructure Strategy aims to help improve business productivity and competitiveness, address digital exclusion and digital poverty, and make South Yorkshire more attractive to inward investors as a digitally enabled place to live, work and invest. The Connected by Water Plan aims to help develop our response to climate change and flood risk at a catchment scale, identifying and securing additional funding and investment to reduce flood risk.

Recommendations

The Board is asked to:

- Note and comment on the Digital Infrastructure Strategy progress report at Appendix A.
- Note and comment on the Connected by Water Plan progress report at Appendix B.

Consideration by any other Board, Committee, Assurance or Advisory Panel

N/A

1. Background

- 1.1 The South Yorkshire Digital Infrastructure Strategy (September 2021) and accompanying Delivery Plan (March 2022) set out our approach to accelerating the development of 'gigabit capable' digital infrastructure and 5G networks across the whole of South Yorkshire. They also include proposals for public interventions to help achieve this strategic ambition.
- 1.2 The Connected by Water Plan, launched in January 2022, is part of our region's catchment scale response to flood risk and the climate emergency in South Yorkshire. It sets out a strong regional ambition to reduce flood risk and build climate resilience so that people can live, work and thrive in South Yorkshire in the face of a changing climate.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 The Digital Infrastructure Strategy Plan update (Appendix A) highlights progress which has been made since its publication, including:
 - Securing funding for the Superfast South Yorkshire team from the MCA for the next three years. Funding for the team and the digital agenda is being provided from 'clawback' funding from the Superfast South Yorkshire broadband programme.
 - The team have provided support to progress Project Gigabit, which represents a £61m - 103m investment by Government in South Yorkshire to help fill gaps in gigabit capable digital infrastructure coverage over the next three years, and which could connect up to 57,000 additional premises to gigabit broadband services.
 - Yorkshire Water, with a consortium of partners, has secured up to £3.2m of Government funding to pilot an innovative Fibre in Water scheme, delivering advanced broadband and mobile services via drinking water mains in Barnsley district. This is the first such pilot scheme in the UK.
- 2.2 The Connected by Water Plan update (Appendix B) highlights progress which has been made, including:
 - Establishing a broad working structure, including a high-level Steering Group, a Delivery Group, and Working Groups to take forward actions across each of the four Plan themes.

- Ongoing work to identify and secure the resources required to implement the Plan.
- Monitoring of confidence in the delivery of actions within the Plan by their identified deadlines.
- Development of a political engagement plan which will set out a framework for engaging with stakeholders.
- Promotion of the Connected by Water Plan at the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Flood event on the 14 June 2022.

2.3 As is noted above and in the attached appendices, preliminary progress has been made in both embedding the strategies and plans with partners and stakeholders, building ownership and commitment to delivery of the actions, as well as progressing key areas of activity such as the Project Gigabit procurement process. Further progress updates will be provided at future Board meetings.

3. Options Considered and Recommended Proposal

This report and the progress updates at Appendices A and B are presented for information and discussion. No options are identified for consideration.

4. Consultation on Proposal

The Environment Agency and Superfast South Yorkshire team have been consulted and have provided input into these progress updates.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

This report and the progress updates at Appendices A and B are presented for information and discussion.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications and Advice

There are no financial or procurement issues directly arising from this report

7. Legal Implications and Advice

There are no legal issues directly arising from this report.

8. Human Resources Implications and Advice

There are no human resources implications directly arising from this report.

9. Equality and Diversity Implications and Advice

There are no equality and diversity implications directly arising from this report.

10. Climate Change Implications and Advice

The Connected by Water Plan captures the actions of partners to reduce flood risk and build climate resilience across South Yorkshire, improving information and evidence to support decision making, and support investment decisions and delivery. Improved digital infrastructure / connectivity could be an important contributor to meeting net zero reduction targets related to transport due to the shift towards hybrid working models post-Covid 19.

11. Information and Communication Technology Implications and Advice

There are no IT issues as a direct result of this report.

12. Communications and Marketing Implications and Advice.

There are no direct communications or marketing implications arising from this report. There may be media communication opportunities when the interventions set out in the Connected by Water Plan and the Digital Infrastructure Strategy Delivery Plan are delivered.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix A - Digital Infrastructure Strategy progress report

Appendix B – Connected by Water Plan progress report

Background Papers

[Connected By Water Plan](#)

[Digital Infrastructure Strategy and accompanying Delivery Plan](#)