

Appendix A: South Yorkshire Digital Infrastructure Strategy Delivery Progress Update

December 2022



BACKGROUND

The South Yorkshire Digital Infrastructure Strategy¹ and accompanying Delivery Plan set out our approach to accelerating the development of 'gigabit capable' digital infrastructure and 5G networks across the whole of South Yorkshire and include proposals for public intervention support to achieve this strategic ambition.

SUPERFAST SOUTH YORKSHIRE PROGRAMME

The Superfast South Yorkshire team are being funded by SYMCA. Funding for the team and the digital agenda is being provided from 'clawback' funding from the Superfast South Yorkshire broadband programme. The team are closing out the existing broadband programme contracts whilst supporting Building Digital UK (BDUK) on Project Gigabit². The team will also help deliver various elements of the Digital Infrastructure Strategy.

PHASE 3 SUPERFAST CONTRACT

The final digital infrastructure structures are due to be completed in November 2022 allowing contract closure activities to commence. The final contract volumes are subject to a change control process, removing premises that have been covered by the commercial broadband rollout that are not eligible for subsidy. Together with the previous contract with Openreach, the partnership between the four South Yorkshire local authorities, SYMCA, UK Government and Openreach, has invested more than £35 million so far to raise the availability of Superfast broadband to circa 99% of premises in South Yorkshire.

PROJECT GIGABIT

The Government wants to have nationwide gigabit capable broadband as soon as possible, and recognises it needs to help in the parts of the country that are not commercially viable. £5bn was committed in the 2020 Budget to ensure that all areas of the UK can benefit equally. The funding will be spent on a range of projects known collectively as Project Gigabit. The supply side of the Project Gigabit programme will target properties with the slowest speeds that would have otherwise been left behind by commercial plans by using government funding to install gigabit capable infrastructure.

BDUK has recently published useful guidance on Project Gigabit for councillors³ including answers to frequently asked questions. It outlines how councillors can use their unique local role to support the deployment of gigabit-capable broadband in their area.

Current gigabit coverage in South Yorkshire is 69.32%⁴ which is 2.44% behind the national average.

The SFSY team on behalf of the partnership has undertaken a lead role locally in the co-ordination of the Open Market Review (OMR) and Public Review (PR) process with suppliers, which forms the pre-cursor to an Invitation to Tender (ITT).

¹ Read more on the [Digital 'Infrastructure' Strategy \(DIS\)](#)

² <https://projectgigabit.campaign.gov.uk/>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/a-councillors-guide-to-project-gigabit>

⁴ [South Yorkshire Broadband Statistics - https://labs.thinkbroadband.com/local/south-yorkshire](https://labs.thinkbroadband.com/local/south-yorkshire)

The OMR and PR processes involved consulting with broadband infrastructure providers on more than 700,000 unique property reference numbers (UPRNs) to request data on existing gigabit-capable coverage as well as future provision plans for the next three years. Areas outside of these plans form the 'Intervention Area' where public subsidy can potentially be used. The Intervention Area of South Yorkshire is referred to as Lot 20. The supplied data is subject to an extensive assurance process by BDUK to confirm the viability of future provision and speed capabilities of the technology deployed, as well consideration of comments submitted as part of the Review.

The PR closed in July 2022⁵, and in total, 14 supplier responses were received.

- 5 'local' suppliers
- 9 'national' suppliers although specific Lot 20 PR responses were not provided
- The outcomes of the OMR & PR are summarised in terms of 'White', 'Grey', 'Black' and 'Under Review' premises below
- As can be seen in the table below, there was a reduction of 10,467 'white' premises following the PR process which is mainly attributable to more planned coverage by the market.

	Gigabit Black	Gigabit Grey	Gigabit Under Review	Gigabit White	Total
OMR	118,404	280,879	263,842	91,244	754,369
PR	143,287	291,710	240,010	80,777	755,784

- We expect the number of premises eligible for intervention (gigabit white premises - 80,777) to be reduced by data treatment as part of the Intervention Area (IA) design
- BDUK will "deprioritise" intervention in White or Under Review premises which are very close to Grey, Black or Under Review premises with commercial delivery plans
- The local approach to the social value element (10% of scoring) has been drafted by mapping Themes, Outcomes and Measures (TOMs) common across Local Authorities in South Yorkshire

Next steps

- Pre-Procurement Market Engagement (PPME) will commence in December 2022.
- BDUK incorporates any comments from SFSY from the final PR meeting into IA design, including caravan UPRN review and general overview
- Develop the social value element of the Invitation to Tender (ITT), social value questions submitted 30/6/22, awaiting BDUK feedback
- Begin procurement tender process for Lot 20 in early 2023 with a view to appoint a preferred gigabit capable infrastructure provider by the end of 2023.

GIGABIT VOUCHER SCHEME

The Gigabit Voucher Scheme (GBVS) currently offers vouchers worth up to £1,500 for homes or £3,500 for businesses to help them get a gigabit capable broadband. It is available to rural areas with broadband speeds of less than 100Mbps within Ofcom Area 3⁶. Though the scheme is currently paused in South Yorkshire to allow a stable procurement area.

The Board will recall that approval was given by the Board at its previous meeting to work up a business case for a SYMCA 'Top Up' to the Gigabit Voucher programme in South Yorkshire. Since then, it is understood that the maximum voucher values are set to increase in December 2022 pending approval from HM Treasury. Eligibility is likely to be aligned to target BDUK White premises⁷. When the details are known, these will inform the development of the business case currently underway, to increase the funding available per property incentivising suppliers to target very hard to reach premises that will not benefit from the Project Gigabit procurement.

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/uk-gigabit-programme-south-yorkshire-public-review/outcome/south-yorkshire-public-review-closure-notice>

⁶ Where there is unlikely to be material commercial deployment by rival networks to Openreach

⁷ Premises with no gigabit network infrastructure, and none is likely to be developed within three years

CHANGES TO BUILDING REGULATIONS

As of 26/12/2022 the Building Regulations 2010⁸ (Infrastructure for Electronic Communications) will be changing to compel gigabit capable connections in new build residential dwellings. This will ensure all new build residential dwellings have sufficient digital connectivity for the future. SFSY team responded to the Government consultation on the proposed changes on behalf of the Partnership. Since 2019 SFSY has worked with Local Planning Authorities as a consultant on planning applications for electronic communications in both commercial and residential developments, conditioning all major and adding informative notes to minor planning applications to ensure gigabit capable infrastructure. To date SFSY have been consulted on 443 planning applications containing 22,700 units. Moving forward SFSY will continue to work to ensure the changes to the building regulations are adhered to. These changes do not apply to planning applications relating to commercial developments.

DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY DELIVERY PLAN

The table below summarises progress in implementing those overarching, short-term and medium-term actions which are identified to be taken forward over the next two years.

Action	Update
Overarching actions	
The SYMCA and Local Authorities to form successful and productive relationships with all key digital infrastructure providers to seek to ensure as much gigabit capable coverage as possible by 2025. Specifically, prioritising additional actions and interventions to address the gigabit capable coverage gap	Working with providers is in progress – meetings are taking place as and when required, and a log of meetings is kept. Actions to address coverage gaps, beyond those covered in actions below, are still to be determined.
Develop an ongoing communications plan about the development and delivery of the South Yorkshire Digital Infrastructure Strategy and associated activities.	Links with SYMCA communications team to be established and draft content has been provided for the digital infrastructure element of the SYMCA website. Consideration then to be given to the role and requirements of the Communications Plan.
Goal 1	
Short Term (2 years)	
Provide complementary interventions where appropriate to incentivise or encourage industry to accelerate delivery of gigabit-capable broadband	Projects to be identified and developed.
Map the digital infrastructure industry providers, including smaller providers, and develop a holistic and continuous engagement programme.	Tied into first overarching action - part of ongoing work for team
Enhance ongoing dialogue / relationships with both major and smaller local digital infrastructure suppliers, and identify and oversee consistent 'barrier busting' measures being put in place to support the industry infrastructure roll-out	As above. Barrier busting measures to be developed. A log of meetings is kept.
Identify support requirements and secure the necessary officer resources to support the DCMS Project Gigabit (£61m - £103m) Programme in South Yorkshire.	Supporting Project Gigabit is a priority action for the team. See separate update above.
1. Mapping of premises not scheduled for gigabit connectivity by 2025 to identify potential 'anchors' and utilise enabling public assets to support industry gigabit connectivity rollouts. 2. Mapping of buildings and street furniture, to support further 4G and 5G coverage.	Part 1 will be covered / informed by Project Gigabit – which identify intervention area where further work could be undertaken regarding public sector assets. Part 2 is being informed by the 8 national digital connectivity pilots, SFSY have met with several platform providers
Close and monitor the SFSY Programme contracts.	Ongoing. Expected to be around 6 months of work from the full-service commencement date.
Medium Term (3-5 years)	
Consider a 'drive by' rural mobile survey across South Yorkshire to map the true state of rural mobile coverage, identify gaps, and seek industry resolutions.	Further exploration required; however, this could be taken forward in the short term. Consideration on how the data will be collected and utilised is required. Costs are likely to have increased significantly since the strategy was adopted.
Goal 2	
Short Term (2 years)	
Design and develop a demand stimulation programme for existing SME businesses and new start-ups aligned with and supporting gigabit connectivity roll-outs. Includes exploring funding a "top up" of the Gigabit broadband voucher system to further incentivise rural deployment.	Progression with a local Gigabit voucher top up scheme (which would require a minimum £500,000 funding commitment) is paused until December 22 when the revised scheme is announced.
Continue to provide advice on connectivity for residents and businesses across South Yorkshire	This is continuing ongoing work.
Establish a Digital Forum comprising representatives from the public sector, local businesses and digital infrastructure providers	This will be taken forward as part of the wider MCA digital agenda and cover digital infrastructure, digital skills, and digital innovation and business support activities.
Goal 3	
Short Term (2 years)	
Commission research to fill the information gap relating to the real extent of digital poverty in South Yorkshire, and the actions to address this.	Ongoing. This research has been commissioned via the SYMCA policy team.
Goal 4	
Short Term (2 years)	

⁸ Detailed information on the changes to building regulations can be found within section 1 (page 2) of "[Approved Document R Volume1: Physical infrastructure and network connection for new dwellings](#)".

Action	Update
Commission and utilise consistent data sources to inform policy, delivery, and funding bids and programmes'	Annual licence for Point Topic data obtained by the SYMCA and provides quarterly updates of coverage. Project Gigabit Open Market Review data will assist in validating this information.
Adopt consistent 'best practice' planning policies and 'barrier busting' approaches/measures across South Yorkshire to support and accelerate industry roll-outs.	A consistent approach to planning conditions has been put in place. Local Planning Authorities have been briefed on the changes to Building Regulations.
Continue to provide consistent expert strategic advice and support to Local Planning Authorities and developers on digital infrastructure requirements within new developments as well as mobile telecommunications requirements and discharge of planning conditions.	
Goal 5	
Short Term (2 years)	
Proactively work with the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) on future digital initiatives to capture funding and delivery opportunities for South Yorkshire, including demonstration pilots.'	This will be dependent on opportunities coming forward via DCMS, and the ability to develop bids in a timely manner.
Identify 'Lighthouse projects' which can help deliver new local job opportunities and encourage and support new innovations / projects (Also identified as a medium-term action in relation to delivering projects)	Further work required to identify projects, as well as ability to be reactive to funding opportunities. Yorkshire Water led Fibre in Water scheme has secured Government funding and is in the initial design stage of delivery.
Explore the opportunities for rolling-out of the pilot digital flood warning system to the whole of the South Yorkshire flood catchment.	Further discussion with DMBC and Environment Agency is required.
Capture relevant recommendations for Gigabit and 5G infrastructure in Economic Blueprints prepared for key growth areas identified in the SEP	To be taken forward as part of further work to develop the SEP Major Growth Area Economic Blueprints.