

Next Faster Broadband steps outlined

The Welsh Government's Superfast Cymru programme has already transformed the digital landscape of Wales with the vast majority of premises, more than nine out of ten, now able to access superfast broadband compared with just over half when the programme began. It has provided almost 733,000 premises in all parts of Wales with access to fast fibre broadband.

As one part of a suite of measures for the remaining premises a grant agreement has now been signed with BT. This will be delivered by Openreach and will initially provide access to fast broadband to almost 16,000 premises by March 2021, utilising just over £13m of Welsh Government and EU funding.

These premises are in North Wales and the South West and the Valleys. Evaluation of tenders for the area covering East Wales is ongoing and a further announcement will be made once that work is complete.

The successor scheme to Superfast Cymru will form one part of a suite of interventions. The other elements are individual support through our ABC and ultrafast connectivity voucher schemes, and support for communities through our vouchers schemes and community led interventions.

Julie James said:

"The broadband market in Wales has seen a rapid change over the last five years. Superfast Cymru has transformed the digital landscape of Wales with the vast majority of premises across the country able to access superfast broadband.

"But there is more to do to reach the remaining premises. Given the scale of the task in providing fast reliable broadband to those premises currently unable to access it we are going to need a range of interventions in future. There is no one size fits all solution.

"This will include publicly funded roll-outs as announced today, our ABC and ultrafast voucher schemes and support for community projects through our voucher schemes. For many a community based scheme is going to be the best route to fast broadband connectivity. We will work with communities and local authorities to provide advice and funding to bring fast broadband where it's needed."

Kim Mears, Openreach's managing director for strategic infrastructure development, said:

"We're delighted to be partnering with the Welsh Government once

again on the continued roll out of fibre broadband across Wales.

“After the successful delivery of Superfast Cymru to date, to be awarded the first lots of this next phase confirms that Openreach is at the very forefront of building infrastructure that’s fit for the future.

“While the vast majority of the country – both urban and rural – can already access superfast broadband thanks to the work Openreach engineers have already completed in Wales we appreciate that there is still more to do.

“This is the next step in the process of making decent broadband available for all across Wales on an open network with a choice of providers.”