

Pioneering project delivers Ultrafast broadband for Welsh rural community

With internet speeds averaging 4Mbps villagers in Michaelston y Fedw, west of Newport, decided to form a Community Interest Company to bring ultrafast Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) broadband to residents and businesses with an upload and download speed of 1Gbps or 1000Mbps.

The community project has employed contractors to do some of the work, while teams of volunteers have taken part in activities such as digging chambers, fibre splicing, laying out ducts and fitting out the village's communications hub.

Villagers raised the money required to build the network in the knowledge that once built, the connections would be eligible to be funded by the Welsh Government's Access Broadband Cymru scheme or Ultrafast Connectivity Voucher once the speeds had been reached. Both schemes are available for premises which cannot currently access superfast broadband.

The village pub, community hall and church are already connected to the ultrafast broadband and work is underway to connect over 175 premises in total in the community.

Leader of the House with responsibility for digital Julie James called into Michaelston y Fedw to see how the villagers pulled together and used the Welsh Government's voucher schemes.

Julie James said:

"While our programme Superfast Cymru has transformed the digital landscape in Wales, with over nine out of ten premises now able to access superfast broadband as a result compared with just over half when we began, we know there are communities which are not able to access it.

"It's great to see how the community of Michaelston-y-Fedw have spotted an opportunity to use the Welsh Government's voucher scheme along with real community spirit to achieve an increase in broadband speed which is a real game-changer. They are now able to benefit from some of the fastest internet speeds in the UK, which is a credit to all those involved in this project.

"Earlier this year I announced proposals to bring faster internet to communities in Wales which were not part of the Superfast Cymru or commercial rollouts, and this includes looking at what communities can do together. I'm pleased to see what has been achieved here, which shows that community power coupled with government support can really make a difference."

David Schofield a director of the Michaelston y Fedw Internet Community Interest Company said:

“Ultrafast internet is now a reality in Michaelston y Fedw. This has been achieved through a huge amount of effort by local volunteers who have turned out in all weathers to help build our network. Without them, the support of landowners, the village hall, local investors and the Welsh Government grant schemes this would never have got off the ground. We now have internet speeds that are world class, and this makes all the effort worthwhile.”

Caroline Hill and Ben Longman of the Cefn Mably Arms pub said:

“As proprietors of the Cefn Mably Arms public house, we are proud and grateful for the connection to the newly created Michaelston y Fedw Ultrafast Broadband. As a very busy country pub in an era of doing business by the internet, we can spend less time with behind the scenes operational matters such as working with suppliers, banks, marketing etc. With fast upload and download speeds we can spend more time overseeing what really matters about our business, which is being with our customers and staff, ensuring we give the highest standards of service for all our patrons. Similarly, our patrons will enjoy the free high-speed Wi-Fi for all aspects of modern communications whilst enjoying a visit to our pub and village.”