

Press release: £95 million for local full-fibre broadband projects

Thirteen areas across the UK are set to benefit from the first wave of funding from the Government's £190 million Local Full Fibre Network (LFFN), the Chancellor has announced in today's Spring Statement.

Armagh City, (including Banbridge & Craigavon), Belfast, Blackpool, Cambridgeshire, Cardiff, Coventry (including Solihull & Warwickshire), The Highlands, London, Manchester, Mid Sussex, North Yorkshire, Portsmouth, and Wolverhampton have been announced as the successful bidders for the £95 million allocated to successful projects.

Whilst 95% of UK premises can now get superfast broadband, only 3% have access to gigabit-capable full fibre infrastructure. With the need for faster connectivity expected to dramatically increase over the coming years, the LFFN programme aims to leverage local and commercial investment in full fibre across the whole of the UK landscape. It will do this through funding a series of projects that seek to stimulate the market by making the deployment of gigabit-capable full fibre infrastructure more commercially viable.

The successful projects include:

- Using hospitals, health centres and GP surgeries as "anchor tenants" – providing a full-fibre "hub" which surrounding homes and businesses can then also be connected to.
- Upgrading schools, libraries and emergency response buildings to gigabit-capable full fibre connections.
- Strategic re-purposing of existing infrastructure, allowing full fibre to be rolled out at a fraction of what it would otherwise cost.

Creating "fibre spines" along major transport routes and public building networks. These extend a supplier's fibre footprint, making full fibre connections more available to surrounding homes and businesses.

The LFFN programme is part of the government's £31 billion National Productivity Investment Fund aimed at improving productivity, which is key to raising living standards. A main focus of the government's Industrial Strategy is ensuring the right connectivity is in place for the for the UK's digital economy to thrive, and the LFFN programme forms a vital part of this work.

Notes to Editors

- The LFFN Challenge Fund is a £190 million government capital grant programme that aims to help deliver the fastest and most reliable digital communications network available. Funding will be allocated in successive competitive waves, and bidding is open to local bodies. The aim is for local bodies to harness public sector connectivity and aggregate private sector demand to stimulate the market to build new and extend existing fibre networks in their local areas.
- The first wave of the Challenge Fund closed on January 26th 2018.
- We anticipate that the next wave of the Challenge Fund will open in Summer 2018.
- The amount of funding requested by each bid is as follows. Please note these are the amounts of funding bid for, not the final amount that will be awarded – all successful bids will be subject to a due diligence before their final funding amount is confirmed. If you are referring to these figures in a story please refer to each bid as being awarded 'up to' the specified amount of funding.

Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon – £2.4m

Belfast – £11.5m

Blackpool – £3.0m

Cambridgeshire – £4.0m

Cardiff – £6.0m

Coventry, Solihull & Warwick – £5.7m

Highlands – £4.5m

London – £8.5m

Manchester – £23.8m

Mid Sussex – £2.2m

North Yorkshire (NYNet) – £15.1m

Portsmouth – £3.9m

Wolverhampton – £4.9m