

Superfast Cymru delivers to almost 733,000 homes and businesses

Superfast Cymru has provided almost 733,000 premises across Wales with access to fast fibre broadband, Leader of the House with responsibility for digital Julie James announced today.

Of these 717,000 can achieve speeds of at least 30Mbps with the remainder achieving speeds of at least 24Mbps.

Wales has also been at the forefront of deploying fibre to the premises technology with nearly 48,700 of the total number of premises given access this way, all of which are now capable of receiving speeds of over 100Mbps.

None of the almost 733,000 premises would have received access to fast fibre broadband without the intervention of Superfast Cymru, a partnership between the Welsh Government, Openreach, European Regional Development Fund and UK Government.

Over half of all homes and businesses across Wales now with access to fast fibre broadband have it as a direct result of Superfast Cymru which could only go where commercial companies had no plans to do so. When combined with commercial rollout the vast majority of premises in Wales can now access the technology.

Julie James said:

“Superfast Cymru has undoubtedly been a success and has delivered a real step change in the availability of superfast broadband across the whole country. Of all those with access in Wales over half are as a result of our intervention – that in itself shows the positive impact this programme has had.

“Whole local authority areas would have been untouched by superfast broadband rollout without Superfast Cymru – now there is not one local authority area without access. Wales has some of the highest speeds in the UK in remote areas with the use of Fibre to the Premises.

“Deploying broadband at this scale and pace in the Welsh landscape, particularly rural areas, has proved extremely challenging and innovative solutions have had to be used at times such as drones.

“While the programme has successfully changed the digital landscape in Wales, I am very aware that there remain premises without access and we are now working on how to reach these.”

Kim Mears, managing director for Openreach, said:

"We're very proud of what we've delivered in Wales.

"Superfast Cymru was an enormous engineering project with a complex set of challenges, but our engineers have risen to the task, delivering one of the outstanding digital network roll-outs in Europe.

"Building fast and reliable broadband infrastructure is another step towards Wales becoming a truly united and connected nation. Thanks to this project, homes and businesses in some of the most rural parts of Wales now have fast and reliable connections that will support all manner of data-hungry services and applications, such as telehealth, virtual and augmented reality and smart home devices, for decades into the future.

"Fibre broadband coverage has more than doubled as a result of our roll-out, and Wales now has the largest full fibre to the home footprint in Britain.

"Wales can confidently claim to having better superfast broadband coverage than Germany, France, Spain and Italy, but we're also mindful that some communities are still waiting to gain access to better connections. We're more determined than any other business to reach these remaining areas and we'll continue to offer a solution through our Community Fibre Partnership programme. We're also committed to exploring the alternatives with Welsh Government to make decent broadband a reality for all."

Economic Action Plan delivering for North East Wales

Plans for a new major Transport and Business Hub for Wrexham, the establishment of a new north Wales business unit for Transport for Wales, the Business Wales Entrepreneurship Hub, and the opening of a new headquarters building for the Development Bank for Wales, are among the benefits for the region resulting from the new approaches of the Economic Action Plan.

Speaking ahead of a keynote speech on progress of the Economic Action Plan to a business audience at the Moneypenny offices in Wrexham, the Economy Secretary said:

"Our Economic Action Plan is clear about our focus on public investment with a social purpose, about the value of a partnership approach and about our absolute commitment to developing the

economic strengths of our regions.

“With that in mind I am delighted to announce the Welsh Government will be working with Transport for Wales, Wrexham Council and Glyndwr University on plans to develop a new Transport and Business Hub to totally regenerate the area around Wrexham General Station.

“Together, and under a new partnership agreement, all parties will work to develop a masterplan that enhances and integrates transport links in and around the station and opens up new and exciting opportunities for jobs and commercial growth.

“With the first meeting of the partnership set to happen in September, I hope to report progress on this exciting work very soon.

“I am also pleased to confirm that Transport for Wales will establish a North Wales business unit in Wrexham, creating 30 new jobs by the end of 2019.

“And with the Business Wales Entrepreneurship Hub opening last month and the Development Bank opening its Wrexham headquarters in the Autumn and bringing with it 50 high quality jobs, and there is indisputable proof of our economic policies delivering for Wrexham.”

Speaking about the plans for Wrexham General, Councillor Mark Pritchard, Leader of Wrexham Council, said:

“This is a potential game-changer for Wrexham, and will have a massive impact on our economic future.

“Good transport links are a vital part of a healthy economy, helping businesses connect with suppliers, clients and employees, and creating more job options for people by allowing them to commute and travel to work.

“This is a tremendous opportunity for the county borough, and a great example of the council, Welsh Government, Glyndwr University and other organisations working together to benefit the people of Wrexham and North Wales.”

Wrexham Glyndwr University Vice-Chancellor, Professor Maria Hinfelaar said:

“These proposals are very exciting and come at a crucial time for Wrexham. As a University, we have just unveiled our £60 million Campus 2025 strategy, which is designed to provide a fit for purpose and attractive learning environment for our students – and to provide a wider benefit for the whole area.

“It is great news for Wrexham that our proposals will dovetail with the Welsh Government’s plans for investment and infrastructure improvements set out today. We are delighted to be working with them, Wrexham Council and Transport for Wales to help drive our town, and our region, forward. In a few years’ time, Wrexham will be transformed.”

The Economy Secretary also announced that the work of the Deeside Enterprise Zone, is being extended to ensure continuity of delivery and enable a seamless transition to a broader means of supporting economic development in Flintshire and Wrexham, mirroring the merger of the two Enterprise Zones in the North West of Wales next year.

Launch of Vision for Sport in Wales and Healthy and Active Fund

But needs the support of everyone in Wales to ensure its success; from those directly involved in physical activity to others helping deliver public services such as health, education, natural resources and economic development.

- Enjoyment key factor for active nation
- New £5m fund to encourage and share ideas for helping people live healthy and active lives

Taking forward the collective approach, a new Healthy and Active Fund (HAF) – a partnership between Welsh Government, Sport Wales and Public Health Wales – will be announced to encourage and share innovative ideas that support people to build physical activity into their lives and improve their physical and mental wellbeing.

The first phase investment of £5m over three years will focus on improving physical activity levels, encouraging solutions to take advantage of collaboration, existing community assets such as clubs, schools and workplaces, and new technology. Full details of the HAF application process will be announced in the Autumn.

In addition, Sport Wales will be launching the new Vision for Sport in Wales, at the core of which is a focus on encouraging an active lifestyle and a lifelong participation in sport through a wider range of enjoyable and accessible experiences

The Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport, Lord Elis-Thomas said:

"I've been very clear that one of my primary priorities as Minister is to improve accessibility across all aspects of my portfolio. Nowhere is this more important than in sport, where making it as easy as possible for people from across Wales to enjoy the benefits of physical activity comes with enormous, cross cutting benefits.

"I've been fortunate enough to recently witness some outstanding projects which are seeing individuals from all backgrounds get more involved with sport, some for the first time. Through continuing to work together towards a common goal of making sport as accessible and enjoyable as possible I'm optimistic that we can build on these successes and further increase participation.

"This new fund, alongside a refreshed vision for the future, will look to facilitate just that and I very much look forward to seeing it help deliver a healthier, more active Wales for us all."

Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services, Vaughan Gething said:

"Becoming healthy and active should not feel like an ordeal or something to be apprehensive about. It should be something that is fun, open to everyone and a way for people, families and communities to come together. I look forward to the first projects supported by the Fund being up and running early next year, delivering innovative solutions and making a real contribution to the health and well-being of people across Wales."

After a Wales-wide public conversation, the need for enjoyable experiences to be central to getting people active was a resounding message.

Ensuring people have a lifelong participation is another core theme of turning Wales into a more active nation, which will influence a new collective approach to sport in Wales.

Chair of Sport Wales, Lawrence Conway said:

"It was refreshing to speak to so many people across Wales about their views on sport, being active and how they are inspired by the success of those competing at the highest levels.

"A consistent message was that the people's experience of sporting activity was vitally important – the fun and enjoyment aspects being central to whether people would want to come back or carry on being active. The sporting offer needs to be engaging and varied, with the informal and less competitive versions being important for those who may not see themselves as sporty.

"The collective approach to getting people participating will also be vital and the partnership we've developed with Public Health

Wales is a positive step in bringing this vision to life.”

Dr Chrissie Pickin, Executive Director for Health and Wellbeing at Public Health Wales said:

“In many of our communities too many people are living in poor health as a result of conditions such as cancer, heart disease and bone and joint problems.

“Being inactive is a risk factor for all of these conditions. Helping us incorporate physical activity into our daily lives is one of the best ways we can both prevent and improve some of these conditions, as well as helping us feel good.

“The Healthy and Active Fund is a welcome boost to help our communities become more active, no matter what activity you choose, where you live or how much money you have.”

For more on the Vision for Sport in Wales visit www.visionforsport.wales.

£1.2m to improve and expand renal services in Cardiff

During a visit to the unit today (Thursday, 19 July), Mr Gething saw how the money will be used to upgrade the unit to deal with patients in a more clinically appropriate environment and improve their experience.

He said:

“Chronic kidney disease is estimated to affect 6-8% of the general population. With many of the contributing factors, age, obesity-related diabetes and coronary heart disease, expected to increase, the demand for renal services is set to grow.

Our renal services delivery plan recognises the need to expand services in the south east Wales region. This investment will allow the unit to see more patients and better deal with those patients with more complex needs.”

The new design has been clinically led to produce a unit designed to meet the specific demands of about 20 – 25 highly complex patients who not only require regular dialysis, but who also need key multidisciplinary input from

the many specialties that are based within UHW.

The development together with the Renal Ward (B5) and the Transplant unit in UHW will enable the health board to deliver more efficient treatment of patients with severe acute kidney injury, as well as other patients within UHW that require regular dialysis as inpatients.

Catherine Wood, Directorate Manager for Nephrology at Cardiff and Vale University Health Board said:

“We are extremely pleased to receive this investment in our services.

“Suite 19 is the main renal unit within the UHW hub and treats patients with a broad range of needs including those with complex medical or nursing needs.

“The investment will mean that we are able to deal renal conditions in a more suitable environment which is tailored to the needs of the patient, enabling staff to deliver the best care possible.”

[Work gets underway on a successor Food and Drink Action Plan](#)

Speaking at the National Assembly’s Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee, the Cabinet Secretary confirmed that the new plan will build on the success of ‘Towards Sustainable Growth’, which ends in December 2019.

The Cabinet Secretary urged everyone with an interest in the future of the sector to get involved and share their views on how the sector needs to develop and where it needs to be through to 2025.

Since the introduction of the original action Plan in 2014, there has been considerable growth in the turnover value of the food and farming sector, with exports also growing strongly and passing the half billion mark for the first time in 2017.

The food and drinks industry is a globally renowned sector, with 165 Great Taste Winners in 2017 and 15 products now holding EU protected food name status.

Cabinet Secretary said:

“Food and Drink is a foundation sector for Wales and now more than ever, it

is important that we ensure the industry is strong and robust to thrive in a post-Brexit world. It is also important that businesses have the capacity, support and resources in place to make the most of their opportunities to grow.

“That is why we have already begun work on a successor Food and Drink Action plan, working collaboratively with the Board. I would encourage anyone with an interest in the future of the sector to share their views with us over the coming months as we develop our proposals further.”

Andy Richardson, Chair of the Food and Drink Wales Industry Board said:

“The board is committed to engaging with Welsh food and drink businesses, with a strong focus on growth, innovation and adding value.” “We are looking to refresh our activities in order they remain relevant and flexible to respond to the new challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. Above all we want to drive the continued growth of the sector and reinforce Wales’ position as a leading provider of healthy, nutritious and exciting food and drink.”