# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **Completion of the Welsh Government’s latest broadband delivery scheme** |
| **DATE** | **06 December 2023** |
| **BY** | **Vaughan Gething MS, Minister for Economy** |

The Covid 19 pandemic brought into sharp the relief the importance of good digital connectivity, both at work and at home. It allowed people to work remotely, it enabled businesses to adapt to changing circumstances and it supported our children as they were being educated at home. That drive towards an increasingly digital life and digital workplace has continued at pace beyond the restrictions imposed on us all by the pandemic. This societal and economic reliance on digital connectivity that we are witnessing exacerbates the impact on those premises that continue struggle with connectivity issues.

The responsibility for addressing telecommunications issues in Wales is not devolved to Welsh Ministers. That responsibility rests firmly with the UK Government, with the telecommunications industry and with Ofcom. We do, however, continue to step in where we can, ensuring that homes and businesses across Wales are able to access fast and reliable broadband as quickly as possible. I want to provide Members with a further update on the progress of our deployment of full fibre broadband with Openreach.

I am pleased to report that the delivery phase of the project is now complete. Through this three-year broadband delivery project, access to full fibre connectivity has been provided to 38,011 premises that were included in the agreed intervention area. In addition to this, a further 6,042 premises have been addressed as a direct consequence of our public funded roll out despite not being targeted by the project. The Welsh Government does not fund these consequential premises and so we warmly welcome their completion. Therefore, in total, 44,053 premises now have access to full fibre connectivity, surpassing our targets for the project. This intervention targeted premises where the market had no plans to deploy high speed broadband services. A breakdown of the premises connected in the agreed intervention area by Local Authority area is provided below.

The total costs of the project are still being finalised through a verification process that will take several months to complete; however, current indications are that the project will have cost circa £50 million against an original forecast budget of £57 million.

While this project has delivered more premises than anticipated and at a cost lower than forecast, we are acutely aware that there are homes and businesses across Wales that continue to struggle with connectivity issues. For those homes and businesses, our Access Broadband Cymru grant scheme remains in place to help fund the installation costs of new broadband connections and we have introduced a new online application process that makes it easier and quicker to apply for support.

Our most recent Open Market Review confirms that there are premises across Wales that continue to fall beyond the reach of planned market investment. We have, therefore been consulting the market on our plans to design and implement additional interventions that target such premises and further extend the reach of high-speed broadband connectivity using funding clawed back from previous delivery schemes. We are working closely with the UK Government’s Building Digital UK delivery agency throughout this process to make sure that any interventions we make complement UK Government activity in Wales. The business case for this work is nearing completion and I will provide Members with a separate update on that work in due course.

**Table 1: Breakdown of the premises connected between September 2019 and December 2023 in the agreed intervention area by Local Authority area**

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| Local Authority | Premises |
| Bridgend | 1299 |
| Caerphilly | 2943 |
| Cardiff | 870 |
| Carmarthenshire | 3179 |
| Ceredigion | 2503 |
| Conwy | 1665 |
| Denbighshire | 1694 |
| Flintshire | 2144 |
| Gwynedd | 4016 |
| Isle of Anglesey | 1099 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 468 |
| Monmouthshire | 1817 |
| Neath Port Talbot | 780 |
| Newport | 292 |
| Pembrokeshire | 3509 |
| Powys | 3444 |
| Rhondda Cynon Taf | 1642 |
| Swansea | 469 |
| Torfaen | 620 |
| Vale of Glamorgan | 1027 |
| Wrexham | 2531 |
| **TOTAL** | **38011** |

Note: The additional 6,042 consequential premises are mapped by Openreach using a different system so cannot be included in the above table.