# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **Update on Digital Connectivity in Wales** |
| **DATE** | **20 July 2020** |
| **BY** | **Lee Waters MS, Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport** |

As we all recognise, the current situation has brought the importance of digital connectivity into sharp relief, whether that is for home learning, staying in touch with loved ones or working from home. Our Superfast Cymru programme, which provided superfast broadband access to over 733,000 properties, has proved to be a vital investment in supporting Wales through the pandemic and beyond as we focus on recovery. However, there is still more work to do.

Last month I updated Members on a number of developments in our efforts to ensure that homes and businesses in Wales can benefit from access to fast and reliable broadband including the Welsh top-up to the Rural Gigabit Connectivity Vouchers and the latest open market review results.

I am now in a position to provide a further update on plans to extend our fibre broadband roll-out with Openreach and the key role that the PSBA network is playing in our response to Covid 19.

Through our agreement with Openreach we are increasing the number of properties that will benefit through the project from 26,000 to 39,000. This extension to the project will target local authority areas with less than 90% superfast broadband coverage. This will help strike a better balance of coverage across the local authorities in Wales and provide these additional properties with access to some of the fastest broadband speeds available. In addition, further modelling and planning work identified that around 4,300 of the premises that were planned as part of the first phase of the project either already have access or are due to get access to superfast broadband.  These largely more urban properties have been removed from the project and replaced.

The amount of funding for the project will increase to £56 million. This is made up predominantly from Welsh Government and EU funds with some additional funding from the UK Government. The project is scheduled to be completed by June 2022. All of the properties will be able to access a future proofed fibre to the premises solution enabling gigabit broadband speeds to be achieved. A breakdown of numbers of properties by local authority is attached.

At the end of March 2020, the initial phase of the project had enabled access to gigabit capable, full fibre broadband for 8,283 properties. A further update on these figures will be provided to Members in August.

The roll-out is just one of a suite of interventions to improve connectivity that include the Access Broadband Cymru scheme, the Local Broadband Fund and the Welsh top-up to the UK Government Rural Gigabit Voucher scheme.

The PSBA network has played an important role during the initial phases of the Covid 19 response providing high speed connectivity to the Red Dragon hospitals quickly and efficiently.  The current situation has highlighted the importance and potential of homeworking across the public sector. It has also underlined that some public sector homeworkers need a fast business grade connection to undertake their roles. In response PSBA has introduced a new product for recipient bodies that will allow business grade connections to be routinely provided to homes of public sector workers where it is necessary. This could, for example, allow radiologists to receive and view X-Ray and other medical images at home securely and reliably.

This update demonstrates our continued commitment to intervene in a non-devolved area to improve connectivity across Wales and to innovate to support our public services.

I will continue to keep Members updated.

This statement is being issued during recess in order to keep members informed. Should members wish me to make a further statement or to answer questions on this when the Senedd returns I would be happy to do so.

**Breakdown of premises by local authority and lot**

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| **Lot and Local Authority** | **Premises** |
| **1** | **11,224** |
| CEREDIGION | 2,592 |
| CONWY | 1,608 |
| DENBIGHSHIRE | 1,862 |
| GWYNEDD | 3,974 |
| ISLE OF ANGLESEY | 1,188 |
| **2** | **12,584** |
| CARDIFF | 908 |
| CHESHIRE WEST AND CHESTER\* | 4 |
| FLINTSHIRE | 2,027 |
| MONMOUTHSHIRE | 2,163 |
| NEWPORT | 304 |
| POWYS | 3,516 |
| SHROPSHIRE\* | 2 |
| VALE OF GLAMORGAN | 1,117 |
| WREXHAM | 2,543 |
| **3** | **15,308** |
| BLAENAU GWENT |  |
| BRIDGEND | 1,267 |
| CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH | 2,831 |
| CARMARTHENSHIRE | 3,185 |
| MERTHYR TYDFIL | 474 |
| NEATH PORT TALBOT | 812 |
| PEMBROKESHIRE | 4,128 |
| RHONDDA CYNON TAFF | 1,507 |
| SWANSEA | 483 |
| TORFAEN | 621 |
| **Grand Total** | **39,116** |

\* These premises are physically within Wales but are categorised by Address Base Premium as being associated with an English Local Authority.