



**FOREST**

ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

Delivering a thriving economy

# Forest Economic Partnership Digital Connectivity Projects Update June 2020

# Bridging the Gap – A Case Study (DC)

- Project was setup to assist Hewelsfield and Bigsweir area to improve broadband speeds
- Hewelsfield Broadband Group unhappy with BT and Fastershire over cost / timeframe
- FEP contacted by Hewelsfield BG to see if we could help
- FEP Identified a potential solution provider
- Initiated a feasibility review by the provider



# Bridging the Gap – A Case Study (DC)

- A number of challenges were found even before a feasibility study;
  - **Local Geography:** Density of Housing, Distance between Properties
  - **Existing Network Infrastructure:** Existing infrastructure could not support faster broadband
  - **What Network Infrastructure Exists:** Even when newer infrastructure exists, Openreach may not have fully implemented it, or where it has, updated its records
- Failure of the Feasibility Study
  - Lack of available information resulted in no confidence in providing an effective costing
  - Excessive time required to deliver the feasibility study for smaller organisations

# Bridging the Gap – Case Study Summary

- Cost of Solutions
  - BT quotes to communities for the provision of services are excessively expensive compared to other providers.
  - All solutions would cost more than available Gigabit Voucher scheme values.
- Network Information
  - Openreach does not have accurate information on rural infrastructure provisioning.
  - Openreach are challenging to work with both to get information and the time it takes.
- Fair and Open Markets
  - Criticism has been levelled at BT Openreach, that following installation quotes can vary substantially between initial quotes and later revisions following 3<sup>rd</sup> party feasibility planning and costing activity (undermining third party work to support communities).
- Funding Solutions
  - Schemes such as Gigabit Vouchers are not adequate to fund the cost of installation
  - Alternative programmes are needed (e.g. mg broadband scheme, Fastershire) to fund effective solutions.
- Sustainable Solutions
  - Connections have to be commercially viable; this includes maintenance and upgrades of the infrastructure into the future. A few houses do not provide enough revenue to maintain long rural connections.

# Bridging the Gap Project Close Out

- This draws to an end of the Bridging the Gap project.
- Our aim for the project was to create a Case Study of delivering broadband in rural communities.
- We have created the Case Study and identified the barriers to communities to deliver their own community broadband solutions.
- This project will allow us to provide feedback on the viability of community broadband projects as a tool for delivering the UK's digital future.

# How Fast How Good

Following the groups successful project in the Summer of 2019 to review the perception of broadband speed in the Forest of Dean we will be progressing with further surveys (delayed by COVID-19) in 2020

The findings from that survey were

- Properties who can afford / have access to FTTC or better connections generally satisfied
- Properties on older Fast Broadband (ADSL2+) generally dis-satisfied

# How Fast How Good – Part 2

## HFHG 2

- Reviewing the performance of broadband overtime within the district.

## Purpose

- Is the perception of slowdown a real issue?
- Does “slowdown” disproportionately effect different user groups?

## Methodology

- Sample of 100 local broadband users to review broadband speed over time
- Use of surveymonkey to gather and manage data

## Timeframe

- Summer 2020 – Survey
- Summer / Autumn 2020 – Analysis and Reporting

# Mobility as a Service (Smart Travel)

- Mobility as a Service or Smart Travel
  - The integration of Data and Travel Planning
  - Solutions are on demand (Uber or Lyft) and cost effective (i.e. full public transport)
- FEP wants to create a local collaboration between key groups to work towards a rural smart travel solution
- We need participation from
  - Stagecoach
  - Gloucestershire County Council
  - Forest of Dean Council
  - Technology Partners
- Stage 1: Agree a collaboration in principle to pursue funding opportunities
- Stage 2: Successfully Access Funding
- Stage 3: Deliver a Funding and MaaS friendly project
- Stage 4: Repeat Stages 2 and 3 until the project is self funding

# Mobility as a Service (Smart Travel) Risks

- Who are the Project Sponsors
  - Need to work with public sector transport co-ordinators to define a MaaS Strategy, or as a minimum a memorandum of understanding.
  - Define what do they want to achieve in what timeframe.
- Set up partnership agreement to pursue any funding opportunities
  1. Agree who is in the partnership
  2. Agreement in principle from partners to target funding (project costing etc)
  3. Agreement in what the partnership aims, and goals are?
- Develop a Project Plan
  - Develop a high level project plan, including time, costs, resources etc as would be expected
  - Use data from existing sources, GCC and FEP Transport Survey's to form new ideas and thinking.
- Proactive Application to Funding Sources
  - At least 2 funding rounds have passed by that could have been used to deliver benefits to the area due to no overarching plan having been adopted.
    1. 5G Rural Funding from Department of Culture, Media and Sports
    2. Rural Mobility Fund from Department of Transport
    3. Identify and target of funding in the knowledge of the overarching plan