

Berkshire's superfast broadband coverage

I have received this news release from West Berkshire Council regarding Berkshire superfast broadband coverage:

Superfast Berkshire, a multi-million pound programme to deliver access to high speed broadband throughout Berkshire has entered its final phase.

The programme initiative was started in 2011, under the umbrella of the Government's (Broadband Delivery UK) national programme, set out to deliver superfast broadband to areas not serviced by the commercial plans of the private sector. Over the past five years the programme has driven superfast broadband coverage across the county from 87% to 95% under Phases 1 & 2. Contracts have just been awarded to BT and Gigaclear under a third phase which is now under way and will see superfast coverage extended to more than 99.5% over the next 2 years. This will make Berkshire one of the best served counties for superfast broadband across the UK, benefiting residents and businesses alike.

Contracts for the third phase have been signed with BT to extend coverage to 7,400 urban premises and Gigaclear to extend coverage to 6,100 rural premises. Not only is this good news at a county level, each of the 6 Berkshire districts will also achieve coverage of over 99%, providing much more equitable access for all areas of the county, a key objective of the phase 3 procurement. However, the work doesn't stop there as Superfast Berkshire working with BT, Gigaclear and other suppliers under their commercial plans strive to hit the magic 100% target of total coverage for Berkshire.

In total more than £40m will have been invested in the Superfast Berkshire programme by both the private and public sector to deliver superfast broadband. This includes around £29.3m from partners BT, Gigaclear and Call Flow Solutions, £5.5m from Berkshire local authorities & Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership and £5.2m from national government (BDUK).

Superfast Berkshire has also actively engaged with broadband market providers since the start of the programme to encourage expansion of their commercial plans, allowing public sector funds to be used where they are most needed. This has also given consumers more choice where superfast provision already existed or overlaps.

Berkshire has seen the demand for faster and faster broadband speeds with more and more businesses, people working from home and normal family activity all with increasing numbers of applications relying on fast internet access. Take-up of superfast broadband products delivered under phase one has risen to over 47% so far (the third highest across the UK) and take-up under phase two is also starting to climb.