

Statement from Connecting Devon & Somerset

(project managed by SCC)

As you are aware Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS) announced in September its decision to end Gigaclear's five contracts to deliver full-fibre broadband in Devon and Somerset. CDS and the Government's Building Digital UK (BDUK) agency have been unable to agree an acceptable recovery plan with Gigaclear following the significant delays incurred by the company in its roll-out of full-fibre broadband. Further information relating to the decision and its implications can be found

at <https://www.connectingdevonandsomerset.co.uk/gigaclear-termination-fags/>

Following termination of the CDS contracts, Gigaclear has confirmed it will continue to serve existing customers in the Connecting Devon and Somerset area. The company says it is currently evaluating its commercial build plans for the region, while focussing on completing works currently in progress. Residents and businesses in areas previously covered by Gigaclear's CDS contracts, are advised to contact the company for information about Gigaclear's current or future commercial network build activity, contact details can be found at <https://www.gigaclear.com/devon-and-somerset>

DS welcomes the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport's (DCMS) expressed commitment to ensuring that our residents will benefit from world-class broadband infrastructure in line with the ambitions for nationwide full-fibre coverage. We have already been working closely with BDUK on a new procurement process for launch in the near future, commencing a tender process to identify new provider(s) of these services.

CDS has also already held productive meetings over the summer with a number of companies interested in building full-fibre networks in Devon and Somerset. These meetings will continue and progress into an estimated 12-month tender process to identify new provider(s) of these services. In parallel we will also continue reviews to identify which companies are building broadband commercially in our areas and what they are planning to do over the next few years. With an up to date picture of what's happening, this will enable CDS have a more accurate view of the areas that will continue to need public subsidy.

That knowledge will be used to inform the Invitation To Tender (ITT) process, which CDS aims to launch in the near future. We anticipate receiving tenders by late Spring and we'll begin the process, with BDUK, of evaluating the tenders through into the summer. We

propose to have a preferred bidder(s) by 4th quarter of the year, then all parties will complete their due diligence from which we'd expect to be able to award a contract(s) by the end of 2020.

We are also advancing to a contract with BT to extend coverage in rural areas.

Further detail on these developments will be made available on the CDS website.

In the interim, communities within your division have a number of other options that I would draw your attention to: This year BDUK launched a "Gigabit capable" broadband voucher scheme. These are available to residents and suppliers in the CDS region, to enable communities to work with suppliers to fund gigabit broadband for whole communities.

CDS is keen to support residents and communities interested in applying for vouchers to approach registered suppliers and get their community scheme initiated. For more information the website link is as follows: <https://gigabitvoucher.culture.gov.uk/>

In addition, the CDS Community Challenge Fund will be further developed later this year, following successful pilots in Devon and Somerset, enabling more local communities to have a real hands-on say in new networks for their areas. In some instances, these latter two initiatives can be combined to attempt to deliver whole-community solutions.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss these options with you in more detail and am very happy to meet with communities and parishes in your patch to explain and, where appropriate, help advise on options. If either you or your communities would find this useful, please don't hesitate to get in touch.