



July 2017 update



Boost for thousands more homes and businesses as Connecting Shropshire announces £11.2m contract

Connecting Shropshire has announced that Airband Community Internet Ltd will be the delivery partner for the next phase of Shropshire Council's superfast broadband programme.

Since 2002, Airband has been providing high-speed wireless broadband access to rural areas. The Worcester-based company will be responsible for delivering superfast broadband to over 14,000 homes and businesses in the Shropshire Council area over the next three years.

Airband will be deploying wireless broadband, which works by sending a signal from a transmitter on a mast, to a receiver attached to the property. A cable is then run into the building allowing the end-user to access the internet in the same way as any other broadband connection.

Councillor Nic Laurens, Shropshire Council cabinet member with responsibility for broadband, said: "I am delighted that we have secured a technology partner that can deliver superfast broadband to some of the most rural parts of the county. When this contract is completed, we expect 98% of premises in the Council area to have access to superfast broadband. This means that even more people living, working and visiting Shropshire will be able to benefit from access to faster internet connection speeds, enhancing their quality of life. The Connecting Shropshire programme runs till 2020 and will continue to work towards providing superfast broadband to all premises without access to it and we remain confident in being able to achieve this aspiration."

Graham Wynn OBE, Chairman of the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) said: "Slow internet speeds are a significant barrier to business growth, which is why we secured just over £5m in our Growth Deal with Government to help us address the issue working with our partner, Shropshire Council. As well as connecting up thousands of businesses with superfast broadband, this investment is also expected to boost our regional economy by around £220m."

Redmond Peel, Managing Director of Airband, commented: "We are delighted to have won the contract to deploy our fixed wireless network in Shropshire. Knowing how essential high-speed broadband is, we are looking forward to working with local residents and businesses to provide fast and reliable internet connections."



"Our experience of building masts to deploy wireless broadband services in the Midlands, Wales, Dartmoor and Exmoor has given us extensive insight into dealing with the geographical challenges that we will come across in Shropshire. Our solution uses state-of-the-art radio technology, ensuring high-speed connections where fibre broadband is not available. Using wireless overcomes many of the speed and reliability issues that are experienced with long copper cable lengths, meaning that many who have long suffered from poor broadband due to their locality will soon be able to access speeds comparable to those of their urban counterparts."

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Why is this a good outcome for Shropshire?

A. An extra 14,170 premises will get a superfast broadband connection from this contract. This is 88% of gap areas we included in the procurement.

Q. What about the gaps. When will you resolve these?

A. We have a balance of funding and will look at seeking a solution to provide superfast broadband for the remaining gap areas now this procurement is complete. We remain confident that we can provide a superfast solution to all our premises by 2020.

Q. Why have you decided to award the contract to Airband?

A. A primary requirement for the Council was to procure a solution that provided inclusive coverage in our most rural areas. Airband have demonstrated that they have a technical solution for the Shropshire geography, which will provide the best coverage outcome within the budget that was available.

Q. When will the contract start?

A. Immediately from July. Some sites can be enabled relatively quickly with 7,000 being within reach of a connection by the end of winter 2017.

Q. When will the Airband contract finish?

A. Winter 2019/Spring 2020

Q. Why's it taken so long to conclude the procurement, which was launched back in November?

A. Spending public money (State Aid) on telecommunication solutions is a complicated procedure. As a result a number of assurances and processes have had to be undertaken by ourselves and partners to meet strict EU legislation. The verification and evaluation of the bids needed to be rigorous to ensure the Council made the right choice and was not open to challenge.

Q. How much is the Airband contract worth and how much is Airband contributing?

A. The contract is valued £11.2m. Airband are contributing £1.4m capital. In addition Airband are contributing £19m operational expenditure.

Q. How much money has Shropshire Council committed to the Airband contract?

A. Shropshire - £2.24m

Q. Where has the other funding come from?

A. Broadband Delivery UK and Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

BDUK - £5.29m LEP - £2.27m

Q. Is wireless an inferior technology to a fibre optic (wired) solution?

A. Wireless technologies have continued to evolve and now provide the same broadband speed capabilities as a fibre optic solution with the same resilience. The technology has been approved as a compliant technology.

Q. How will you mitigate the adverse visual impact of masts on the Shropshire countryside?

A. Airband has recently completed deployment of a new wireless network across the National Parks of Exmoor and Dartmoor. They have excellent experience of working with stakeholders with interests in sensitive landscapes.

Connecting Shropshire will work closely with Airband, Shropshire Council's planning department and other key stakeholders to ensure this contract is deployed to the benefit of all our communities. Mitigations of visual impacts include: re-using existing infrastructure, locating below the skyline, planting, painting etc.

Q. How high will the masts be and where will they be?

A. Existing commercial masts and buildings will be used wherever possible. Some new masts will need to be built. In many cases, new masts will resemble telegraph poles. Airband will work within the Planning guidance process which has purposely been relaxed by the Government to encourage the roll-out of Telecommunications equipment to address the frustrations of communities. Where required, full consultation processes will be undertaken and in all cases we will work with communities to ensure information is shared prior to construction.

Q. Is wireless broadband more expensive for customers than fibre broadband?

A. Generally speaking, similar wireless and fibre packages have comparable costs.

Q. Is there a choice of internet service providers off the Airband network?

A. Yes, Airband build the infrastructure and provide a service to the customer, but they also wholesale their network out to other Internet Service Providers (ISPs).

Q. Am I in plan to benefit?

A. For an interactive map with a view of the planned/current NGA coverage in the Shropshire Council area up to 2020, go to:

<https://shropshire.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=ddc8d72666934ca4ab4f938050be4ee4>.

Please be aware that the map is indicative and actual coverage may change depending on where the infrastructure is located. NGA infrastructure is capable of delivering 30mbps. To check availability, go to the Airband website and enter your postcode: <https://home.airband.co.uk/coverage/>. You will then be able to register your interest in the project and be kept up to date on progress.

Q. When will I get access?

A. The build is split into phases, with phase 1 due for completion at the end of winter 2017. Further information will be added to the Connecting Shropshire website as the first phase progresses.

Q. How does the system work?

A. Airband technology relies on 'Line of Sight', which means that the receiver on your property needs to have a clear view of one of the Airband transmitters. In the design and planning phase of the project, Airband use advanced software to map each property and establish where a connection can be achieved, without the need to complete an onsite survey for each property.

Q. What does the Airband equipment look like?

A. The receiver that will be installed to your property is a small, lightweight piece of equipment – about the size of a 2-pint milk carton. Where your property is a bit further away from our transmitter, the receiver will have a round, mini dish-like attachment.


Q. Will it cost more?

A. There will be a number of different providers and monthly packages available depending on the speed you require.

Contact Details

 www.connectingshropshire.co.uk

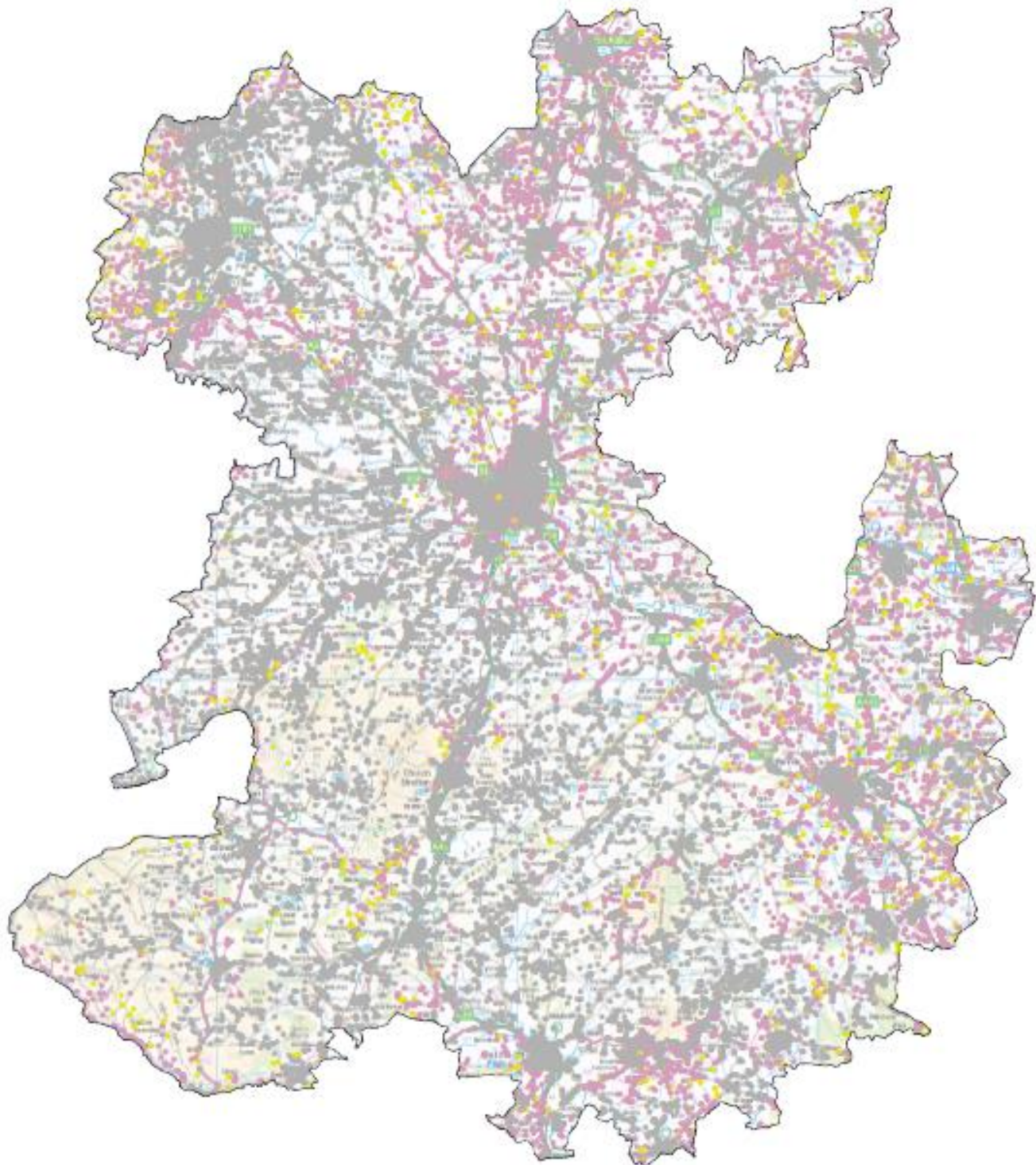
 connecting.shropshire@shropshire.gov.uk

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NGA Broadband Coverage, July 2017

(NGA infrastructure is capable of delivering 30mbps)



- Planned Airband NGA Coverage (14,170 premises)
- Other planned/current NGA coverage - Connecting Shropshire or commercial (128,645 premises)
- No planned NGA coverage - exploring solutions (1,845 premises)