

Superfast broadband project almost completed

Nearly all households and businesses in southern Oxfordshire can now access superfast broadband, according to new figures announced by the Better Broadband for Oxfordshire partnership.

More than 96 per cent of premises located in Vale of White Horse District Council and just over 95 per cent in South Oxfordshire District Council can now access broadband speeds more than 24 Megabits per second - an essential for homes and businesses of all sizes across the region.

The latest communities to benefit from the upgrade have been in Wantage, Rowstock and Coleshill in the Vale and Russells Water, Maidensgrove and Stonor in South Oxfordshire.

Improving overall broadband services has been a long-term priority for both district councils who provided a total of £1.25 million contribution to the £10.68 million second phase of the plan. The rest of the funds came from BT, Oxfordshire County Council, local enterprise partnerships and government match funding.

The Better Broadband of Oxfordshire partnership programme achieved its target of 95 per cent coverage of superfast broadband across Oxfordshire in December 2017 and expects to achieve over 96 per cent coverage throughout the whole county by December 2018.

Councillor Mike Murray, cabinet member for regeneration and development at Vale of White Horse District Council, said: "Delivering this essential infrastructure is a great achievement and positively impacts our community. We are working with providers to explore using innovative technologies for business to make the most of the digital economy and communities to connect to the digital world".

Councillor David Nimmo-Smith, cabinet member for development and regeneration at South Oxfordshire District Council, said: "During our research last year, three quarters of business leaders told us that superfast broadband was one of the most important factors to their success. This is a significant part of our Business and Innovation Strategy Action Plan and we are on track to achieving our objective for all businesses and residents to have access to superfast broadband".

Small and medium businesses can also take advantage of the government's gigabit broadband voucher scheme, which can be worth up to £3,000 to upgrade their internet connection. Groups of residents can apply for a voucher of up to £500 for each domestic connection – as long as business users in the scheme are the main beneficiaries. Businesses and residents can check their eligibility via gigabitvoucher.culture.gov.uk