

## Broadband

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 9 Ionawr 2018

Petitions Committee | 9 January 2018

### Research Briefing:

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**Petition number:** P-05-793

**Petition title:** High Speed Broadband to Llangenny village

**Text of petition:**

We, the residents of Llangenny village in Powys call upon the National Assembly for Wales to ensure that Welsh Government manage their contract for hi speed broadband in Wales with BT in such a way that Llangenny village is connected to hi speed by 31st December 2017.

At present residents in our village experience regular loss of service or speeds as low as 0.01Mb/s. Several residents run businesses or voluntary organisations from home and need hi speed broadband. The current service is completely unacceptable.

### Background

There are a number of UK and Welsh Government backed initiatives that seek to both extend broadband provision, and increase access to high-speed broadband.

Latest [research from Ofcom](#) shows that in 2017, more than 84% of households in Wales have access to the internet and almost eight in 10 households (78%) have access to fixed broadband at home.

### Action by the Welsh Government

[Taking Wales Forward](#), the Programme for Government, includes a commitment to:

Bring people together digitally by offering fast reliable broadband to every property in Wales.

Superfast Cymru is the Welsh Government's scheme to roll out superfast broadband (typically speeds of 24 megabits per second or more) to about 96 per cent of Wales by the end of December 2017. This scheme is only active in areas that the Welsh Government has assessed would not otherwise be covered by market-driven rollout of broadband infrastructure. BT is delivering this scheme, using funding from the Welsh Government, the EU and the UK Government, alongside its own investment.

The project was originally working to a deadline of June 2016, but this was extended to June 2017 to enable BT to include a greater number of premises. BT then had a 6-month window to finish off any outstanding work before the contract's "drop-dead date" of 31 December 2017. The agreement with BT to deliver the Superfast Cymru project dictated that they provide access to superfast broadband to 690,000 premises by the end of December 2017. BT is giving evidence to the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee on 11 January 2018 to discuss progress it has made in meeting the contractual requirements of Superfast Cymru. A successor project to Superfast Cymru is being developed.

The Welsh Government runs two other schemes to improve broadband availability:

- [Access Broadband Cymru](#): grants of up to £800 are available where premises cannot currently access fast broadband;
- [Ultrafast Connectivity Voucher](#): grants of up to £10,000 are available to fund (or part-fund) the installation costs of new ultrafast connections for businesses in Wales.

Further detail is provided in the letter to the Chair from the Welsh Government.

## Action by the UK Government

There will be some interaction between Welsh Government and UK Government initiatives in this policy area. In November 2015, the UK Government set out its intention to introduce a broadband universal service obligation (USO), which would give everyone in the UK a legal right to a fast (expected to be 10 Mbps) broadband connection on request, subject to a limitation on the cost to the provider of providing the service (similar to that which applies to the right to have a landline telephone). Enabling powers for a broadband USO were subsequently included in the *Digital Economy Act 2017* which received Royal Assent on 27 April 2017.

On 30 July 2017, the UK Government launched a consultation on the specification for a new broadband USO that would be set in secondary legislation. On the same day, it was announced that BT had made a detailed voluntary proposal for delivering universal broadband of at least 10Mbps to premises across the UK. The UK Government welcomed this proposal, as it had the potential to deliver better connections to people more quickly than under a regulatory route.

However, on 20 December 2017, [the UK Government confirmed](#) that it will not enter into a voluntary agreement with BT and the whole of the UK, subject to certain caveats, would have access to speeds of at least 10 Mbps by 2020.

## National Assembly for Wales action

In its report into [Digital Infrastructure in Wales](#), published in September 2017, the Assembly's Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee called on the Welsh

Government to consider innovative ways to connect those areas of Wales without high-speed broadband access.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.