

# North Yorkshire Council

## Thirsk and Malton Area Committee

29 November 2024

### Rural Connectivity

#### Report of the NYC Transformation Lead Cath Ritchie and NYnet CEO Alastair Taylor

#### 1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The report sets out to update the progress of digital connectivity across North Yorkshire

#### 2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 North Yorkshire Council and its predecessors have been working with the UK Government to address the lack of digital connectivity across rural areas. BDUK (Building Digital UK) the delivery arm for the Department of Science, Innovation, and Technology has the overall mandate for the delivery of national targets.

#### 3.0 Connectivity Update

3.1 NYnet the North Yorkshire owned telecoms company has delivered four phases of Superfast North Yorkshire contracts in conjunction with BDUK. In 2009 superfast coverage across North Yorkshire was at approx. 41%, Phase 1 was awarded in 2011/12 to BT with a contract value of £26.5m, further contracts were let to BT in 2015 and 2017 totalling circa £28m which saw coverage climb to 94% by 2020. To tackle the final 6% a wireless contract was awarded to Quickline in 2020 resulting in coverage of approximately 97%.

3.2 North Yorkshire Council offers a free WIFI service in 21 market towns across the geography, the service which started in 2021 with support from a Government grant to combat the impact of COVID. The former Ryedale District Council network in Malton has now been replaced with the North Yorkshire Council service. Work is ongoing in Helmsley however this is taking longer than planned due to issues with listed buildings.

3.3 Whilst the Superfast Programme was delegated to Local Bodies with overall supervision by BDUK, the new Project Gigabit is run directly by BDUK. The UK has been split into multiple lots for Project Gigabit. The majority of North Yorkshire's premises are in Lots 8 and 31. Lot 8 is primarily West Yorkshire however it includes Selby District and Skipton. This was designed as they are both better built from West Yorkshire and will likely lead to a better outcome for these two areas.

3.4 Both Lots 8 and 31 were awarded to Quickline. Build has commenced in both areas. would like information on their own premises, they can contact DSIT at [enquiries@dsit.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@dsit.gov.uk)

#### 4.0 Project Gigabit Update

4.1 The Shared Rural Network (SRN) is a project developed by the UK's four mobile network operators (MNOs) with support from the government. The programme aims to make 4G mobile broadband available to 95% of the UK, improving 4G coverage in the areas that

need it most and addressing the digital divide. The SRN is a deal with EE, O2, Three and Vodafone investing in a network of new and existing phone masts, overseen by a jointly owned company called Digital Mobile Spectrum Limited. The project is in two phases, the MNOs are to improve coverage in areas called partial not spots (PNS) whilst the government will use the new mast built for the Emergency Services Network (ESN) to provide mobile coverage from all the operators.

- 4.2 What this has meant for North Yorkshire is that EE has improved 4G connectivity in parts of rural North Yorkshire, in places like Chapel-le-Dale, Rievaulx, Blubberhouses, Danby Wiske and Terrington as well as along transport routes including the A59, A167, and B1257 over recent years. The other three operators (O2, Vodafone and Three) have improved coverage in Garesdale, Bainbridge and Sherburn in Elmet currently with a further seven sites planned.
- 4.3 Within England the ESN are building 56 new masts 24 of which are in North Yorkshire mainly in the North Yorkshire Moors and Yorkshire Dales National Parks. There are currently twenty of these sites built with 9 partially active with just EE services operating.
- 4.4 2025/2026 will see most of the sites become fully active with all the operators which will increase the 4G coverage in North Yorkshire to around 92% from at least one MNO. The difficult part comes in taking the coverage up to 100% and tackling the small areas where there is currently no or poor signal.
- 4.5 In addition to this, MNOs are introducing 5G as they upgrade their current infrastructure. This is mainly in the urban areas where the benefits can be seen as they use 5G to increase the capacity.

## **5.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

5.1 N/A

## **6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 N/A

## **7.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 N/A

## **8.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 N/A

## **9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 N/A

## **10.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

10.1 Information paper to update members as to the progress of digital connectivity

**11.0 RECOMMENDATION**

- i) Councillors to note progress

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Note: Members are invited to contact the author in advance of the meeting with any detailed queries or questions.