

Gigabit Voucher Scheme – helping to bridge the Digital Divide in Dorset

An information sheet for stakeholders in Thorncombe

Introduction

Dorset Council's vision is to become a digital organisation in a digital place, putting people and their needs first using design and modern technology to improve everyone's lives.

The Government has also set out its ambition that every household has access to full fibre broadband by 2025.

Through our Superfast Dorset initiatives and upgrades brought in by service providers, 95% of homes and businesses can already get superfast broadband but for some rural businesses and people this is not enough. And some can't even get superfast speeds.

We are aiming to help many of those remaining properties with no access to superfast broadband up to speed and into the 21st century.

One avenue of help available that's available right now is the government's Gigabit Voucher Scheme – which is supplemented by Dorset Council's top-up funding.

The vouchers can help people in rural areas get new broadband technology offering speeds far greater than superfast.

Voucher funding is available until 31st March 2021 and from now and until then we will target the most in need areas who our data shows have enough properties and infrastructure in place to make a scheme potentially viable. Thorncombe is one of those areas we have identified.

As key stakeholders we are hoping you can help spread the message that residents and businesses could apply for vouchers to fund faster broadband.

This information sheet is to give you some more information on the voucher scheme, explain who is eligible and how it works.

What is the Gigabit Voucher scheme?

The Government's Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) has a Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme available to increase gigabit-capable connectivity in rural areas.

It aims to help small and medium sized businesses and residential homes that are not currently due to receive a future-proof full fibre broadband connection.

There's good news for qualifying premises in Dorset. People in these areas can come together and claim for the government voucher scheme (up to £3,500 per business and £1,500 per home) – the Dorset Council's top up scheme can also be applied when needed and still available, which provides a further £1,000 per home and £2,500 per business. This top-up potentially makes the scheme more viable in smaller communities.

Dorset's top-up will be available on a first come, first served basis.

The vouchers will go towards providing a gigabit-capable (1,000 megabits per second) broadband connection.

Both funding streams are available only until 31st March 2021, which means the money will have to be allocated by then (a scheme can still be built after this date as long as the money has already been allocated).

Who is eligible for vouchers?

Households/businesses will be eligible under the scheme if they are in a rural postcode (as defined by the Office for National Statistics) and their broadband speed is less than 100 megabits per second (mbps). They will qualify irrespective of what type of connection they currently have.

How do people apply?

In the first instance a household or business must register their interest with a chosen supplier and check if the scheme is suited to them and their neighbours. Lists of registered suppliers that work in your area can be found on the government's <https://gigabitvoucher.culture.gov.uk/>

How does the funding work?

Residents and businesses do not need to apply separately for the government voucher scheme and the Dorset Council top-up. If a home or business is eligible, both sets of funding are released to a registered supplier at the same time.

In all cases, the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme funding will be allocated before top-up funding is applied.

Individuals cannot get faster broadband on their own. People must apply as a group of residents/businesses (a group in this instance is at least two sets of households/businesses).

The supplier will need a minimum number of vouchers to cover the cost of bringing faster broadband to a community.

What is the process from application to installation?

The step-by-step process to get a voucher towards full fibre connection is:

1. Find a registered supplier and contact them to request a gigabit-capable connection under the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme
2. A supplier requests the vouchers from government. They check applicants are happy to go ahead by email.
3. The supplier gets to work to deliver the new connection.
4. Connected! The supplier lets the government know the work is done.
5. Government checks with residents/businesses by email that the service is live and working.
6. Government will sometimes make further checks before paying the supplier.
7. The government and Dorset Council pays the voucher and top-up funding directly to the supplier.

Will vouchers ensure that there is no cost to residents and businesses?

For most schemes – especially if there are a good number of voucher applicants and there is already good infrastructure in place – the voucher funding and Dorset top-up should cover the cost of the installation. However, there may be some areas that are more expensive than others, due to infrastructure, small number of properties and location constraints, which mean the vouchers and Dorset top-up alone might not cover the total cost. This can only be advised once a supplier has provided a quote for the installation.

People are not committing to a scheme just by registering their interest in the voucher scheme. Registering their interest, however, is the only way for a scheme to be looked into and costed by a supplier.

If the final cost of the scheme cannot be covered by voucher/Dorset top-up funding alone the supplier will advise the community and ask if they would still like to go-ahead.

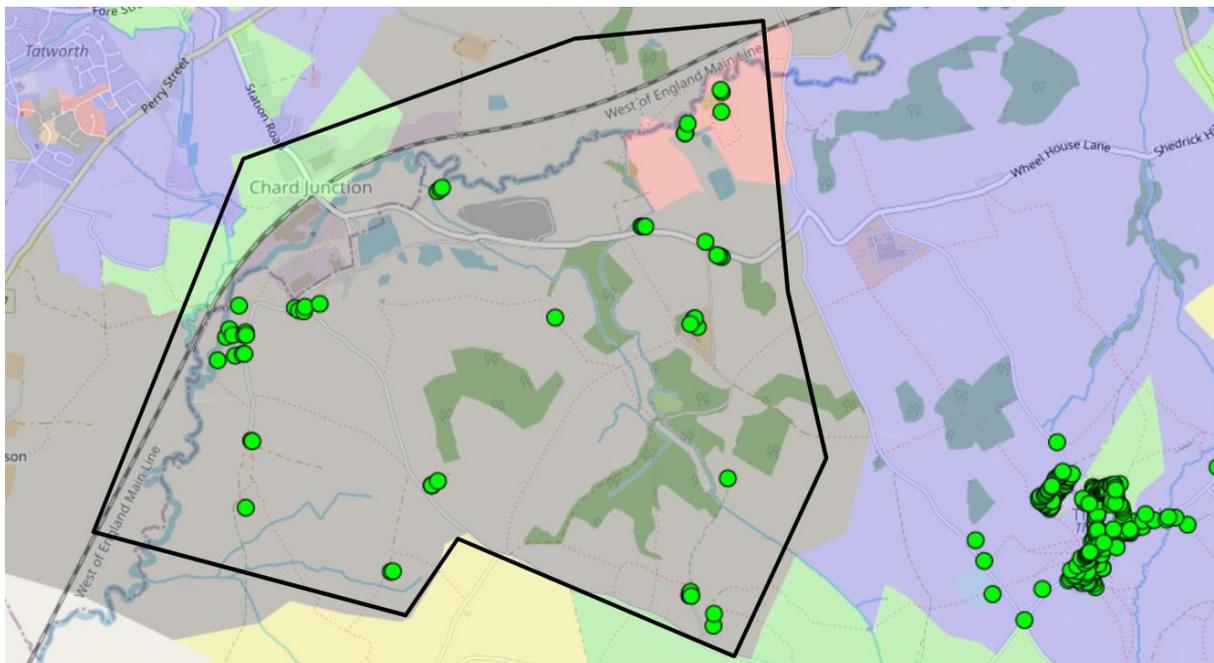
Will I have to commit to an expensive broadband service under this scheme?

Under this scheme you do have to agree to take a 12 month internet service of at least 30 megabits per second (Mbps); or if you already receive 30Mbps or above a service that is double your current speed. The areas we are targeting all receive speeds lower than 30Mbps and the cost of receiving a 30Mbps speed is in line with a standard broadband service.

How long does it take from applying for a voucher to getting faster broadband?

The time taken to get to completion depends on each scheme (some will be more complex than others) and how long it takes for a community to rally enough interest to make the scheme viable. It can take up to a year from the application stage.

Why are you targeting Throncombe?



Note that the green dots in the image above indicate premises that should be eligible for a Gigabit Voucher/ Dorset Top Up. This means that the premises are classed as rural (by the Office of National Statistics), currently receive less than 100Mbps and are not in any plans to receive FTTP through state aid funded plans.

The image above shows the group of premises that we would recommend pursue a Gigabit Voucher scheme to improve their existing broadband connection. When identifying areas we have looked at three main factors:

- Current poor broadband speeds (the map image shows that areas shaded in black, red and yellow currently have poor broadband).
- A good number of properties to potentially make a scheme cost viable.
- Location and existing infrastructure.

Although this is a broad geographical area the connectivity in this area is poor and therefore, we would expect there to be good levels of Gigabit Voucher take up in the community. There is also FTTP to the premises in the south and east of this area which may mean that existing infrastructure could be used in the scheme. You can find a list of the properties we suggest consider a voucher scheme at the end of this document.

What classifies as a rural property?

The government is using the Official National Statistics standard method of classifying rural areas. You can check if your household/business qualifies by using the government postcode checker <https://gigabitvoucher.culture.gov.uk/> We are targeting your area as we already know it qualifies.

What is the criteria for qualifying as a business?

A business in the voucher scheme is a small and medium enterprise – this can be farms, bed and breakfasts, restaurants, shops etc to people who run their business from their home.

To qualify you will need to self-certify that you meet the European Commission criteria of a SME (small medium enterprise):

- You employ no more than 249 people and your turnover is no greater than 50m Euros and/or a balance sheet of no more than 43m Euros.
- You will also have to self-certify that you have not received more than 200,000 Euros in public grants in the last three years.
- If required to do so you must provide evidence of your status as a SME or sole trader. Documentation that will be accepted includes: VAT registration; Charity Registration; HMRC notification; sole trader UTR number; certification of incorporation (limited companies); business bank account statement issued within the last three months; non-domestic rates reference. Other documentation, such as business-related utility bills, may be acceptable in certain circumstances if combined with other documentation.

Do we deal with Dorset Council or the broadband supplier?

The council, like the government, is providing the funding for this but it will be a broadband supplier that will deliver the work. The council can help promote the scheme to communities and advise residents/businesses of suppliers in their area but for the actual scheme itself, the community will deal directly with a supplier.

How do the suppliers cost the scheme and communicate to us?

Once you contact your chosen supplier they will explain the costing process. Each supplier is slightly different, however they will explain the process.

Are we financially/legally liable for the voucher scheme?

We would advise everyone in a community voucher scheme to read the full terms and conditions of the broadband supplier before signing up to a scheme. Each supplier will have its own terms.

Do we have to sign a contract?

It will depend on the supplier you choose to use and the method they chose to fund the deployment. However, as explained above, whichever company supplies the infrastructure you will need to take a contract with an internet service provider to take a 30Mbps (or double existing speed) service for 12 months as a condition of receiving a Gigabit Voucher.

We cannot get enough people in our community to apply for vouchers – what other avenues can we explore?

If you get less than 10Mbps look at Ofcom’s Universal Service Obligation (USO) run by BT. The USO has to offer a solution to people who receive less than 10Mbps and in most cases the solution offered would be a Home 4G Hub. You may want to consider a home broadband 4G solution even if you receive more than 10Mbps. You can approach a supplier and request a quote for your area and may need to provide a private financial contribution.

As a key stakeholder, how can I help?

We need influential people like yourselves to spread the word in rural communities that households and businesses could benefit from this scheme. Your support would be gratefully received.

We are also looking for local people on the ground who are happy to act as voucher champions and liaise with suppliers on behalf of the community.

More information is available on both the Dorset Council and DCMS websites:

<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/business-consumers-licences/superfast-dorset/funding-for-full-fibre-broadband-connections.aspx>

<https://gigabitvoucher.culture.gov.uk/>

If you would like to find out more about the scheme and how you can help promote it in your area please contact Rachel.baker@dorsetcc.gov.uk

Premises List

- This is a list of premises that we think may be suitable for a scheme. It is not an exhaustive nor discriminatory list and should be used as guide when considering a community scheme.

CONCATENATED_ADDRESS	POSTCODE
Chantry Cottage, Chard Junction, Chard, TA20 4LN	TA20 4LN
Hodgeditch Farm Cottage, Chard Junction, Chard, TA20 4LN	TA20 4LN
Hodgeditch Farm, Chard Junction, Chard, TA20 4LN	TA20 4LN
Westlears Farm, Chard Junction, Chard, TA20 4LN	TA20 4LN
1 Forde Abbey Farm Cottages, Forde Abbey, Chard, TA20 4LP	TA20 4LP
2 Forde Abbey Farm Cottages, Forde Abbey, Chard, TA20 4LP	TA20 4LP
Forde Abbey Farm House, Forde Abbey, Chard, TA20 4LP	TA20 4LP

King Lears, Home Farm, Forde Abbey, Chard, TA20 4LP	TA20 4LP
1 Wingfield Cottages, Forde Abbey, Chard, TA20 4LR	TA20 4LR
2 Wingfield Cottages, Forde Abbey, Chard, TA20 4LR	TA20 4LR
3 Wingfield Cottages, Forde Abbey, Chard, TA20 4LR	TA20 4LR
Forde Abbey Lodge, Forde Abbey, Chard, TA20 4LS	TA20 4LS
1 The Old Saw Mills, Access To Forde Abbey, Forde Abbey, TA20 4LT	TA20 4LT
2 The Old Saw Mills, Forde Abbey, Chard, TA20 4LT	TA20 4LT
Gallop Guru, 3 The Old Saw Mills, Forde Abbey, Chard, TA20 4LT	TA20 4LT
Chauffeurs Cottage, Forde Abbey, Chard, TA20 4LU	TA20 4LU
Dwelling, Forde Abbey, Access To Forde Abbey, Forde Abbey, TA20 4LU	TA20 4LU
North Gardens Cottage, Forde Abbey, Chard, TA20 4LU	TA20 4LU
Sawmills Cottage, Forde Abbey, Chard, TA20 4LU	TA20 4LU
1 Westmill Cottages, Forde Abbey, Chard, TA20 4LW	TA20 4LW
2 Westmill Cottages, Forde Abbey, Chard, TA20 4LW	TA20 4LW
3 Westmill Cottages, Forde Abbey, Chard, TA20 4LW	TA20 4LW
James Lears, Headstock Road, Holditch, Chard, TA20 4NH	TA20 4NH
Little Barn, Headstock Road, Holditch, Chard, TA20 4NH	TA20 4NH
Garden Cottage, Herridge Farm, Headstock Road, Holditch, Chard, TA20 4NJ	TA20 4NJ
Herridge Farm, Headstock Road, Holditch, Chard, TA20 4NJ	TA20 4NJ
The Attic Flat, Herridge Farm, Headstock Road, Holditch, TA20 4NJ	TA20 4NJ
The Granary Flat, Herridge Farm, Headstock Road, Holditch, TA20 4NJ	TA20 4NJ
16 Hewood, Chard, TA20 4NR	TA20 4NR
3 Hewood, Chard, TA20 4NR	TA20 4NR
4 Hewood, Chard, TA20 4NR	TA20 4NR
5 Hewood, Chard, TA20 4NR	TA20 4NR
6 Hewood Farm Access Road, Hewood, TA20 4NR	TA20 4NR
Annexe, Lower Hewood Farm, Hewood Farm Access Road, Hewood, TA20 4NR	TA20 4NR
Wood Cottage, Hewood, Chard, TA20 4NR	TA20 4NR
Batehams Farm, Chard Junction, Chard, TA20 4QR	TA20 4QR
The Dairy, Batehams Farm, Green Lane Junction Westford Park Road To Broadbridge Farm Junction, Chard Junction, TA20 4QR	TA20 4QR
The Piggery, Batehams Farm, Green Lane Junction Westford Park Road To Broadbridge Farm Junction, Chard Junction, TA20 4QR	TA20 4QR
The Stables, Batehams Farm, Green Lane Junction Westford Park Road To Broadbridge Farm Junction, Chard Junction, TA20 4QR	TA20 4QR
Aggregate Industries Uk Ltd, Chard Junction Quarry, South Chard, Chard, TA20 4QS	TA20 4QS
Valley View, South Chard, Chard, TA20 4QS	TA20 4QS
1 Westford Cottages, Chard Junction, Chard, TA20 4QT	TA20 4QT
2 Westford Cottages, Chard Junction, Chard, TA20 4QT	TA20 4QT
M W Vehicle Repairs & Servicing, Unit 5, Westford Trading Estate, Chard Junction, Chard, TA20 4QT	TA20 4QT
Rhino Trikes, Unit 3c, Westford Trading Estate, Chard Junction, Chard, TA20 4QT	TA20 4QT
Riverside Repairs, Unit 2, Westford Trading Estate, Chard Junction, Chard, TA20 4QT	TA20 4QT
S & D Services, Unit 1, Westford Trading Estate, Chard Junction, Chard, TA20 4QT	TA20 4QT
The Cabin, Westford Mill, Westford Park Road, Chard Junction, TA20 4QT	TA20 4QT
The Grange, Chard Junction, Chard, TA20 4QT	TA20 4QT
Unit 4, Westford Trading Estate, Chard Junction, Chard, TA20 4QT	TA20 4QT
Westford Mill, Westford Park Road, Chard Junction, TA20 4QT	TA20 4QT

1 Westford Park Cottages, South Chard, Chard, TA20 4QU	TA20 4QU
2 Westford Park Cottages, South Chard, Chard, TA20 4QU	TA20 4QU
Westford Park Farm, South Chard, Chard, TA20 4QU	TA20 4QU