

Blackdown Hills Parish Network

Devon and Somerset residents and businesses let down again

Devon & Somerset have been omitted from a new £5B government funded programme to get ultrafast broadband to properties across the two counties by 2025, focussing on those currently having the worst connectivity.

Our neighbouring counties of Cornwall, Dorset, Wiltshire have all been successful in getting “Project Gigabit” before 2025 but Devon & Somerset County Councils have said they don’t want it before 2025. In fact they say that Project Gigabit would ‘destabilise’ their existing Superfast contracts.

If we all act now we may get Devon & Somerset County Councils to go back to Government to be included in this round of funding for Project Gigabit - and the potential to add more than £1bn to the local economy.

Heather Stallard , who represents 39 parishes in the Blackdown Hills Parish Network said: ‘ This is unbelievable. Who turns down government investment for something as critical as this? Young and old, farmers and schoolchildren, doctors and teachers all need good internet. If existing contracts are going to be ‘destabilised’ or in some way upset by government money then they can’t be very good contracts in the first place. This doesn’t seem to worry other counties’

Devon & Somerset County Councils say there is a lot going on. They are promoting the ‘DIY’ BT voucher scheme which requires householders and/or businesses to pool their vouchers and find their own contractor as well as the funds to complete the job! They’ve talked of ‘rollouts’, ‘plans’ and ‘goals’ to get better coverage since 2012. Where are the results? The truth is that we are way behind most other counties in England because of their repeated contract failures. They seem content to settle for possible completion of their current Phase 2 programme by 2025 while throwing away the opportunity for extra funding to extend provision to its residents, who surely need it.

Good quality, reliable fast broadband access is absolutely vital for everyone

Local democracy and representation have relied on good internet to keep going throughout pandemic stricken 2020. It is critically important for vulnerable people, schoolchildren and for those working from home, keeping them in paid work. Poor internet damages the economy, sets back education and makes doing basic things really hard for anyone and everyone. That’s why we think of it as a utility just like water and electricity. Many other rural communities like that of the Blackdowns have been let down too. It should be available equally to all and it should be as available in Devon and Somerset as in every other part of the United Kingdom.

We invite you to a Zoom conference on FRIDAY 14th May at 11am to hear more.

Book your free place at [TicketSource](#)

Instructions to join the meeting will be on your e-ticket

Circulated to Devon and Somerset parishes, Local Authority councillors, media