

<b>Report to</b>	Conwy and Denbighshire Public Service Board
<b>Date of meeting</b>	21st September 2020
<b>Lead Member / Officer</b>	Judith Greenhalgh, Denbighshire County Council
<b>Report author</b>	Shannon Richardson & Nicola Kneale, Denbighshire County Council
<b>Title</b>	Community Resilience - Digital Exclusion

## **1. What is the report about?**

1.1. The opportunities for improving digital infrastructure in Conwy and Denbighshire.

## **2. What is the reason for making this report?**

2.1. At the PSB meeting in July, considerations were given to the problems proposed and members agreed a focus was needed on digital exclusion and digital skills.

## **3. What are the Recommendations?**

3.1. That members note the current position in relation to Digital Connectivity (Appendix 1), along with analysis of Strengths, Limitations, Weaknesses and Threats for each topic, and consider the following. Please note that a report on Digital Skills is proposed for deferment until the November meeting, in order to enable us to present a comprehensive assessment of the digital skills situation.

3.2. PSB to work with WG to agree a definition of 'rural communities' with BT, so that we ensure communities that are most lacking in connectivity are prioritised for upgrades.

3.3. PSB to consider longer-term funding for the Digital Officer posts. This would increase the chances of addressing a higher proportion of white spots in the counties, which would benefit our residents and also support our own rural-based

staff to work from home.

3.4. There are a number of “white” premises on the border of Conwy and Denbighshire which could benefit from a joint working approach between the two counties.

## **4. Report details**

4.1. To provide information to PSB about the support in place for improving digital infrastructure in Conwy and Denbighshire. Please see Appendix 1 for full details. The pertinent information on which we’ve based our recommendations is below.

4.2. Funding is available via the Rural Gigabit Voucher scheme, which with the Welsh Government top up are worth £3000 for a residential premise and £7000 if a business (including sole traders) are being run from there.

4.3. LLFN rollout focuses on enhancing digital connectivity in rural areas. In Denbighshire, this has included Rhyl, Prestatyn and Denbigh, which may not be consistent with PSB’s perception of rural communities. BT’s rationale is that our urban areas are rural when compared with, for example, Manchester.

4.4. In Denbighshire, enabling everyone to have access to good broadband is a corporate priority, so they have invested in a Digital Officer post (from February 2020 to March 2021 at present).

4.5. Conwy have been looking to appoint a Digital Officer as part of their rural development team but this has been delayed due to Covid-19. It is hoped that Conwy will have recruited an officer in place from January 2021 to December 2021.

4.6. There are a number of “white” premises on the border of Conwy and Denbighshire which could benefit from a joint working approach between the two counties (see map in paragraph 1.1. Appendix 1).

## **5. How does the decision contribute to the Priorities?**

5.1. This project is part of the Community Resilience priority for the PSB.

## **6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?**

6.1. It's estimated that two Digital Officers would cost approximately £60k with on-costs.

## **7. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?**

7.1. Presently each county is taking a slightly different approach in addressing issues associated with digital infrastructure. Each approach will have its merits and drawbacks. Digital officers should communicate frequently to ensure sharing of good practise and mitigation of any issues.