

Report to	Performance Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting	6 May 2025
Lead Member / Officer	Cllr. Emrys Wynne, Lead Member for Broadband and Digital Strategy
Head of Service	Liz Grieve, Head of Housing and Communities Service
Report author	Philip Burrows, Digital Officer
Title	Poor Internet Connectivity in Denbighshire

1. What is the report about?

1.1. The internet connectivity status of properties in Denbighshire.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

2.1. To provide information regarding the internet and telephony status in Denbighshire.

3. What are the Recommendations?

That the Committee:

3.1. reviews and understands the information provided regarding the current situation of internet and telephony connectivity in Denbighshire; and

3.2. determines whether further scrutiny of specific connectivity issues is required.

4. Report details

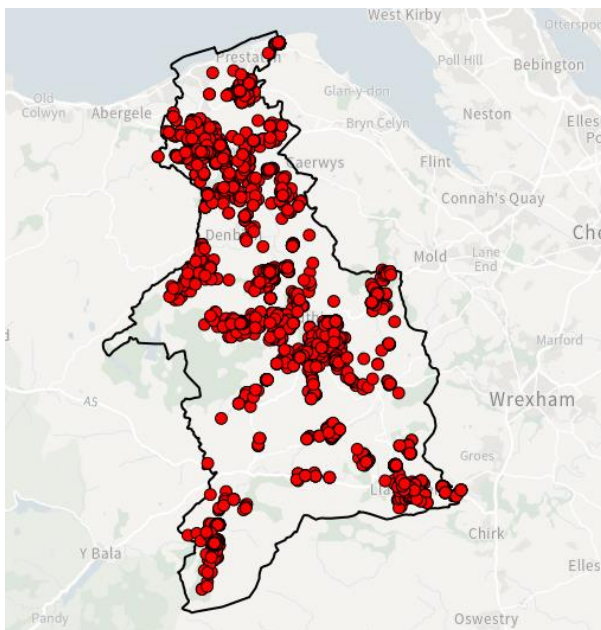
4.1. Out of the total **50,725** premises in Denbighshire, **2,580** premises receive internet speeds lower than 30Mbps and **1,074** premises receive internet speeds lower than 10Mbps. (OFCOM figures, See Appendix A for more detail.)

4.2. 'Helping residents to understand options and solutions for improved internet connectivity' is an aim within our Corporate Plan and Denbighshire County Council (DCC) have invested in a Digital Officer post (from February 2020 to November 2025 – extended from May, due to obtaining funding) to advise individuals, businesses, and communities on this.

4.3. The Digital Officer works closely with Members and City, Town and Community Councils when advising communities.

4.4. This is important because the connectivity landscape and options for improvement are complex to navigate, owing to the following factors:

- i) There is no legal obligation on Openreach to connect every property with fibre.
- ii) Openreach are the only fibre provider who are actively upgrading the rural areas.
- iii) Denbighshire County Council, the Welsh Government and UK Government, have no power to influence how a private company (Openreach) runs its business. We can only encourage them to install more fibre into our county by supporting residents to access UK Government 'Gigabit Voucher' scheme.
- iv) The UK Government and Openreach have signed a deal to upgrade 3,667 premises in Denbighshire via the 'Project Gigabit' scheme. It must be noted that the property list did not specifically target the hard to reach premises that suffer with less than 30mbps speeds. Some properties may not be upgraded to full fibre until the scheme ends in September 2030.**



- v) The UK Government 'Gigabit Voucher' scheme can only be accessed if numerous eligibility criteria are met, and often requires residents to work as a collective to pool their vouchers together for the value to cover the cost of install through the formation of a 'Fibre Community Partnership'. However, this is a time-consuming process and sometimes still is not enough to meet the cost.
- vi) The UK Government 'Gigabit Voucher' Scheme is currently inaccessible for most of Denbighshire (and the rest of the UK), it is hoped it will return in the near future.**
- vii) Small areas were enabled for Gigabit Vouchers last year and four Openreach lead Fibre Partnership schemes containing 805 premises are nearing completion.**
- viii) Alternative technologies such as wireless connections, satellite and 4G are available but are not always the best solution for residents.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027: The Denbighshire We Want?

- 5.1. This work relates to the 'A Better Connected Denbighshire' priority, specifically the aim about 'Helping residents to understand options and solutions for improved internet connectivity, including through Fibre Community Partnerships.'

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

- 6.1. There are no costs associated with the production of this report.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

- 7.1. Not required for this report.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

- 8.1. A similar report was submitted to Scrutiny in 2024

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

- 9.1. Not required.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

- 10.1. If the UK Government 'Gigabit Voucher' Scheme is not renewed for Denbighshire, we will not be able for pay for fibre to be brought in to the rural areas via Openreach's Fibre Community Partnership.
- 10.2. UK Government has stated that some very hard to reach premises will be too expensive to connect via fibre.
- 10.3. The Welsh Government are planning a new connectivity programme called 'Extending High Speed Broadband Reach in Wales'. This will provide a connection of 30mbps to some very hard to reach premises.
- 10.4. The Openreach Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) also known as the copper-based exchanges, will be turned off by **January 2027, previously the proposed cut-off date was December 2025**. Premises using the fibre-based VoIP system should know they will lose emergency landline phone use in the event of a power cut. If their modem and phone do not have electricity, they cannot make a phone call. On the old copper-line based system, the small amount of electricity carried over copper-lines powered the phone. This is more problematic in areas with no 4g signal. The Digital Officer will work to inform communities of this risk and seek to find other solutions where possible.

11. Power to make the decision

- 11.1. Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000.
- 11.2. Section 7.2.3 stipulates that Scrutiny can consider any matter which affects the Council's area or its inhabitants.