

# Access to new technologies and digital communications

The government has an ambitious target for all parts of the country to have full fibre broadband coverage by 2033 and for the majority of the population to have 5G coverage by 2027. Digital connectivity such as broadband and mobile phone coverage that allows a wireless internet access provides a vital platform for social interaction and well-being.

Digital infrastructure will be key to help economic growth and prosperity, supporting employment, education and social opportunities. Poor broadband or wireless internet access can be a significant barrier to growth for businesses, and the future competitiveness of Mid Devon and its towns and villages will be influenced by the quality and capacity of digital infrastructure.

A key consideration in future proofing development will be to make sure ducting is provided, which is open access (open to all providers of a broadband service) and is suitable for and includes full fibre connections to each building. This ducting should have capacity for multi-operator fibre to encourage competition, and give choice for consumers. Other considerations include coordinating the provision of digital infrastructure with development, and with highway and utilities improvements (i.e. 'dig once'), and the speed of digital connectivity.

The COVID-19 pandemic has, for many, meant an increased reliance on digital connectivity through working from home, on-line shopping and connecting with friends and family where physical contact is not possible. This has brought to the foreground the importance of digital communications but also highlighted the inequalities faced by some communities in accessing digital connectivity.

Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS), a Government funded and local government-led partnership programme has helped with broadband rollout across Mid Devon, which has a goal of bring connectivity and opportunities to more isolated homes, businesses and communities.

However Mid Devon still has some of the most digitally isolated areas in the whole of the UK in terms of broadband speeds and coverage, which is mostly due to the highly rural nature of the area. In comparison to other local authority areas in Devon, Mid Devon has 20.8% of connections less than 30MB, the highest percentage in the CDS areas, in comparison to 10.16% in East Devon, 10.9% in Teignbridge and 3.6% in Exeter City.

Plan Mid Devon will provide an opportunity to make sure that new development is supported through new technologies and digital communications. This will form an important part of helping to reduce the need to travel, moving to net-zero and addressing climate change.



% of premises within Mid Devon parishes with <10 Mbits/s internet speed (2019)

