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Rural Broadband Sltn - Statement re Voucher funding and gigabit broadband
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Rural Broadband Solutions PLC
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Rural Broadband Solutions Plc (the "Company" or "RBBS")

Voucher funding and progress on gigabit-capable broadband

Rural Broadband Solutions Plc (AQSE: RBBS), a significant provider of high-speed broadband to rural areas of Great Britain, is delighted to announce approval of more projects which are part of the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme ("the Scheme") and that it is in the final stages of work to be able connect their first rural villages and towns to gigabit-capable broadband.

Further funding

Secure Web Services Ltd ("SWS"), a wholly-owned subsidiary of RBBS, has recently had further projects approved by the Scheme to provide gigabit-capable fibre broadband services to rural areas of Shropshire, including villages and rural towns. The most recent approvals include three rural towns, which are already part of the Dark Fibre loop built by SWS around South Shropshire.

Up to 18th February, there have been in total 11 SWS projects approved for Government funding with vouchers available to a value of £2.5m. The number of "properties passed" covered by all approved projects so far is 4,896, of which 1,628 will be directly eligible for Scheme funding subject to connection requests.

The approved amount for these three towns is £1.8m of the total £2.5m. These three towns' projects will pass approximately 4,500 properties of the 4,896 total, with 1,357 being eligible under the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme.

Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme

The Government is investing up to £210m in the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme to support rural communities with the cost of installing new gigabit-capable connections.

The Scheme provides a micro-grant of up to £1,500 for residents and up to £3,500 for businesses towards the cost of installing gigabit-capable broadband.

It enables households and businesses to club together to increase the total subsidy of a project to cover most or all of the costs of installation in eligible areas. The vouchers will become payable once the individual premises are connected.

Progress made for connecting first villages to gigabit-capable broadband.

SWS has significantly progressed its work on connecting the first rural villages under the Scheme. As of December 2021, Fibre has now been hung between poles in Stiperstones and Woolston as part of the spine build. The spine build aggregates the connections from each of the premises, and takes them back to the backhaul/100Gbps (100,000Mbps) Dark Fibre network around Shropshire, which SWS completed in mid-2021 as a step towards delivery of fibre broadband services to properties in rural villages and towns.

RBBS now has over 2,750 premises connected to its network which is comprised of approximately 270 masts/relays and multiple fibre connections. The Company anticipates that it will extend its gigabit-capable reach to over 50,000 rural properties (total homes passed) within Shropshire alone by the end of 2024, with at least 15,000 connected (this excludes certain premises that will only ever be able to be supplied through a fixed wireless solution).

In addition to the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme, SWS is also eligible for further top up funding from Shropshire Council for those premises where voucher funding has been approved. Shropshire Council have registered under the new 'Project Gigabit' scheme to provide a top up to the basic national voucher value, bringing the fund up to a value of £4,000 per domestic households and £7,000 per business which lies within the county boundary.

Chris New, CEO of RBBS, commented: "We are delighted to see more projects approved by BDUK to enable deep rural communities to receive full fibre, gigabit capable connections in the shortest time possible."

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