

FOI Reference Number: FOI/042/1920

Date: 16 May 2019

Request:

1. Does your local authority have any funds that could be accessed to assist with the provision of broadband internet? If so please provide the name of the fund and either a description of it, or a link to its details.

2. Other than The Better Broadband Subsidy and Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme, is your authority aware of any other regional or national funds that could be accessed by your authority, communities, individuals, third sector groups or private companies to assist with the provision of broadband internet? If so please provide the name of the fund and either a description of it, or a link to its details.

Response:

Thank you for your information request which Mid and East Antrim Borough Council received on 01 May 2019.

Please find below Mid and East Antrim Borough Council's response to the information you requested in relation to broadband.

1. Does your local authority have any funds that could be accessed to assist with the provision of broadband internet? If so please provide the name of the fund and either a description of it, or a link to its details.

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council does not have any fund set up to assist residents or businesses with the provision of broadband internet.

2. Other than the Better Broadband Subsidy and Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme, is your authority aware of any other regional or national funds that could be accessed by your authority, communities, individuals, third sector groups or private companies to assist with the provision of broadband internet? If so please provide the name of the fund and either a description of it, or a link to its details.

In addition to the Better Broadband Subsidy and Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme we are aware of BT's "Community Fibre Partnerships" which provides management and support for communities seeking to bring fibre broadband to an area. BT have a team that help identify ways to co-fund fibre, and give communities advice. Further details can be found at <https://communityfibre.openreach.co.uk/>

Since 2007 the Department for Economy (DfC) in Northern Ireland has invested £77M into initiatives to encourage private sector upgrade to networks, primarily in rural areas. In addition, £150m funding has been made available under the Confidence and Supply Agreement for broadband improvements, now known as Project Stratum.

Project Stratum aims to improve broadband connectivity by extending Next Generation Access (NGA) broadband infrastructure so that the remaining 12% of premises who cannot access superfast broadband in Northern Ireland can access services of at least 30 Mbps.

To deliver this project, DfC will have to run a procurement process to get suppliers in place etc. DfC have indicated the intention is to be in a position to award contract(s) in the third quarter of 2019. Further information is available here: <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/consultations/extending-broadband-across-northern-ireland-project-stratum>

We have been further made aware that separately the UK Government is also introducing a Universal Service Obligation (USO), giving everyone in the UK access to speeds of at least 10 Mbps by 2020. Further details of this scheme can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/high-speed-broadband-to-become-a-legal-right>.

Finally Mid and East Antrim Borough Council are part of a consortium of 9 Councils in Northern Ireland - Full Fibre NI (FFNI) who are currently working together to secure funding from DCMS through the Local Full Fibre Networks Programme. This would be to secure funding for all 9 Councils to equip their eligible Public Sector buildings with full fibre connectivity. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/broadband-delivery-uk>

If you are dissatisfied with the handling of part of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review. Internal review requests should be submitted within two months of the date of receipt of the response to your original letter and should be addressed to the Chief Executive at the Braid Ballymena Town Hall, 1-29 Bridge Street, Ballymena, BT43 5EJ.

Please remember to quote the reference number FOI/042/1920 in any future communications.

If you are not content with the outcome of an internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

Please be advised that Mid and East Antrim Borough Council may release the response to this information request into the public domain via our website at <https://www.midandeantrim.gov.uk/>.

If we publish our response to your request, your personal data will be removed to protect your privacy.