

Community Fibre Partnerships



Fibre helps commercial districts flourish

Faster broadband underpins UK BIDs

For more than a decade now, Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) have been working to achieve growth and prosperity for city centres and other commercial or industrial areas up and down the UK.

A BID is an arrangement where businesses operating in a defined area get together to fund and run projects that improve their environment.

The nature of these projects varies. However, many BIDs are recognising how a faster broadband connection can underpin their growth strategies.

A good example is the BID established for Sutton Coldfield in the Midlands. Parts the town centre weren't covered in the national, commercially-driven rollout of fibre broadband, nor included in plans to benefit from the government's BDUK programme.

However, the BID recognised that local businesses in parts of the town that had poor broadband needed to be able to access to fast fibre technology to stay competitive. Unless the BID took action, town centre businesses would be hampered by an inability to work efficiently and effectively.

The action Sutton Coldfield took was to begin working closely with Openreach through its Community Fibre Partnerships programme. The partnership was successful in creating a superfast network to benefit the whole community.

Jack Adkins of local firm Adkins Research Group was one of the first small businesses to upgrade to superfast. He said: "What has really helped boost my business is that the BID committee persuaded Openreach to install fibre. Our fast broadband connection has really helped with our day-to-day business."

Recognising how vital it is to have high quality connectivity, Sutton Coldfield BID went on to work with Openreach to install fibre across the town centre.



Meanwhile Cardiff BID's strategy of building a stronger profile for the city, attracting visitors, increasing footfall and directly supporting businesses, is being underpinned by superfast broadband.

Cardiff's shopping centre, Castle Quarter, is in the heart of the Cardiff BID area. However, many Castle Quarter businesses had been at the mercy of slow broadband speeds – a situation that was all at sea with the city centre's plans to become a more vibrant and attractive place for shoppers.

Openreach, through its Community Fibre partnership programme worked with the Cardiff BID committee to create a business case to invest in fibre installation.

The committee quickly became clear about the benefits that fibre connectivity would bring to the shopping centre and how it would support the BID's major ambitions for Cardiff.

Adrian Field, Executive Director for Cardiff, said: "We have committed £42,000 to this project in order to help retain existing businesses as well as attract new ones to the Castle Quarter area. The feedback from businesses who have already taken advantage has been excellent. It was a project in our 5 year business plan that we were eager to deliver quickly and we are delighted that this has gone to schedule."

Please visit communityfibre.openreach.co.uk/gigabit

We'll get in touch about bringing ultrafast broadband to you and other firms locally. You'll see an option on the form on the web page to indicate if you represent a BID – or to tell us if your business is in a BID.

Selecting this helps us to quickly identify your enquiry, as we're keen to help you, and nearby businesses, access Government funding to get a full fibre connection.

Stephen Afia, general manager of Shop Rugby who are based opposite Cardiff Castle, said: "We've been waiting for superfast broadband to be available to us for years and it's made such a massive difference already."

"Now we have enough bandwidth to manage our website from the property, our upload speed is 20 times faster and it's much easier for us to move things to the cloud to back up off site. We're absolutely delighted with the results."



Businesses – get in touch with your local BID

If there's a Business Improvement District initiative under way in your town or city then contact your local BID committee and talk to them about getting ultrafast broadband. And if you represent a BID, have you considered ultrafast broadband as an additional service for your local businesses?

You can get £3,000 funding through the Government's Gigabit Voucher Scheme that's been set up to provide grants for small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) to support the capital costs of getting new gigabit capable connections. These vouchers can be used toward a Community Fibre Partnership with Openreach to bring fibre-to-the-premises (FTTP) to your business.

You, and other local businesses, can get FTTP so you can enjoy ultrafast speeds by pooling these vouchers to minimise costs.

communityfibre.openreach.co.uk

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