



# Transport & Infrastructure Committee

**18 September 2024**

Title:	Connecting Cambridgeshire Digital Connectivity Strategy 2021-25 Progress Update and overview of the proposed 2025-29 Digital Connectivity Strategy
Report of:	Ceren Clulow, Programme Director – Connecting Cambridgeshire
Lead Member:	Cllr Anna Smith, Chair of Transport and Infrastructure Committee
Public Report:	Yes
Key Decision:	Yes
Voting Arrangements:	Recommendation A: No vote required Recommendation B: A simple majority.

## Recommendations:

A	Note the content of this report and Appendix A.
B	Recommend to the Combined Authority Board to approve the new Digital Connectivity Strategy 2025-2029.

## Strategic Objective(s):

The proposals within this report fit under the following strategic objective(s):

X	Increased connectivity – the <i>Connecting Cambridgeshire Digital Connectivity Strategy</i> will significantly enhance connectivity by expanding high-speed broadband across the region. This increased digital access will support economic growth, improve access to essential services, and enable smarter, more efficient urban and rural communities
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Digital connectivity supports communities by allowing people to easily stay in touch, share information, and work together online. This helps build stronger and more connected communities by making it simpler to support each other and collaborate.

[Digital-Connectivity-Infrastructure-Strategy-2021-2025-Nov-2021.pdf \(connectingcambridgeshire.co.uk\)](#)

## 1. Purpose

1.1	This report provides an update on the progress of the current Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Digital Connectivity Strategy delivery between April 2023 and March 2024 and seeks approval of the revised Digital Connectivity Strategy covering the period from 2025 to 2029.
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## 2. Proposal

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| 2.1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To note current progress on the <i>Digital Connectivity Strategy</i> delivery.</li><li>To approve the new <i>Digital Connectivity Strategy 2025-2029</i>.</li></ul> |
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## 3. Background

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| 3.1 | <p>Digital connectivity is vital for meeting some of the key challenges of the region - from sustainable growth, climate change mitigation and the management of scarce resources including water and energy to improving people's life opportunities through the provision of access to retail, leisure, education, and health facilities.</p> <p>This pivotal role is reflected in the Combined Authority's Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) of which the <i>Digital Connectivity Strategy</i> is an integral part.</p>   |
| 3.2 | <p>The report (appendix A) provides an update on all four workstreams and progress on the identified targets. This highlights the inward investment and digital connectivity improvements that were realised in the financial year 2023-24.</p>   |
| 3.3 | <p>2024/25 is the final year of the existing <i>Digital Connectivity Strategy</i> funded by the Combined Authority and delivered by the Connecting Cambridgeshire programme.</p> <p>A new digital connectivity strategy has been developed for implementation over the next 4 years. The 2025-2029 strategy (appendix B) enhances and extends the groundwork laid by the programme, which the Combined Authority has led since 2017.</p>  |
| 3.4 | <p>The Digital Connectivity Strategy 2025-29 details the future direction the CPCA region should follow to maximise inward investment and to ensure that the region continues to be considered a priority for commercial and government investment.</p> <p>The Strategy additionally details the investment required to ensure that all of the regions' residents and businesses are digitally included and have the devices, skills and confidence to maximise the opportunities provided by digital connectivity.</p>   |
| 3.5 | <p>The implementation of this four-year strategy will ensure that the Combined Authority achieves its goal of exceptional and essential digital connectivity, and ensures our region not only meets but exceeds the ambitious targets set by central government for digital accessibility across the UK. This supports efficient public service delivery, thriving communities and sustainable business growth.</p>   |
| 3.6 | <p>A concept paper was submitted to the Investment Committee on 29 August 2024, seeking concept approval to develop a Business Case for the first year of funding for the <i>Digital Connectivity Strategy 2025-29</i> and to present it to the Combined Authority Board. This request was approved.</p> <p>Pending Transport and Infrastructure Committee approval of the Strategy, a business case will be presented to the Combined Authority Board on 13 November 2024 to request the necessary funding. Funding requests for years 2 to 4 of the strategy will be incorporated into future versions of the Medium-Term Financial Plan.</p> |

## 4. Appendices

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| 4.1 | Appendix A - Connecting Cambridgeshire Digital Connectivity Progress Update 2024 |
| 4.2 | Appendix B - Digital Connectivity Strategy 2025-2029                             |

## 5. Implications

### Financial Implications

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| 5.1 | None |
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### Legal Implications

5.2	None
Public Health Implications	
5.3	<p>Improving digital connectivity can have public health benefits by expanding access to healthcare services, especially in underserved or rural areas. Enhanced connectivity enables telemedicine, allowing patients to consult healthcare professionals remotely, reducing barriers such as distance, cost, and mobility issues. It also supports the dissemination of health information, improving awareness and education about preventive care, mental health, and wellness practices. Furthermore, better digital infrastructure can facilitate the use of data-driven health technologies, such as wearable devices and apps, which can monitor chronic conditions and promote healthier lifestyles. Ultimately, improved digital connectivity empowers individuals to take control of their health and fosters a more responsive and inclusive healthcare system.</p>
Environmental & Climate Change Implications	
5.4	<p>Enhanced connectivity can support the transition to more sustainable practices by enabling smart technologies, such as energy-efficient buildings, transportation systems, and industrial processes. Digital tools can optimise resource use, reduce energy consumption, and lower emissions by enabling remote work, reducing the need for commuting, and supporting teleconferencing instead of travel.</p> <p>However, the expansion of digital infrastructure also comes with challenges. Increased data usage can lead to higher energy consumption, which, if powered by non-renewable sources, could contribute to greenhouse gas emissions. To mitigate these risks, it will be essential that digital growth is accompanied by investments in renewable energy and energy-efficient technologies to ensure that the environmental benefits of enhanced connectivity outweigh the potential drawbacks.</p>
Other Significant Implications	
5.5	None
Background Papers	
5.6	None