# WRITTEN STATEMENT

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# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Superfast Cymru** |
| **DATE**  | **10 December 2018** |
| **BY**  | **Julie James AM, Leader of the House and Chief Whip** |

As we approach the end of the current Assembly term and year, I would like to take this opportunity to underline the success of the Superfast Cymru project in improving fast fibre connectivity throughout Wales.

The broadband landscape throughout Wales has seen dramatic changes over the past five years. Wales now enjoys over 95% broadband access coverage to homes and businesses, an almost 100% increase in access to superfast services since Superfast Cymru began in 2012, putting Wales firmly on par with the rest of the UK. Public sector investment complementing private sector investment has been integral to this transformation.

The Superfast Cymru project has made an enormous difference to fast fibre broadband provision across the whole of Wales, providing connectivity to homes, businesses and communities that would not have received it under market led commercial deployment.

The Superafst Cymru project has been a huge undertaking, siting over 3,500 roadside fibre cabinets, erecting over 5,000 new telegraph poles and laying millions of metres of fibre cabling in some of the most challenging geographical areas. It has been delivered by over 1,000 Openreach engineers and has supported 100 new apprenticeships. This mammoth civil and engineering task has seen the Welsh Government invest over £200million in providing access to superfast broadband to over 733,000 business and residential premises

Of these 733,000 premises, over 717,000 are now able to achieve speeds of at least 30Mbps with the remainder achieving speeds of over 24 Mbps. These are premises that simply would not have been able to access fast fibre broadband connectivity without our intervention.

The Superfast Cymru project has also placed Wales at the forefront of Openreach’s deployment of Fibre to the Premises solutions with over 49,000 of the total number of premises given access by the scheme now capable of receiving speeds of over 100Mbps today and gigabit tomorrow. When combined with commercially driven deployments, this means that the vast majority of premises in every one of our 22 local authorities can now access fast fibre broadband.

We should not underestimate the scale of what has been achieved over the past five years through Superfast Cymru. Premises across all constituencies in Wales, some covering some of the most rural parts of Wales, have been given access to fast fibre broadband as a result of this project. However, I do acknowledge that this large scale deployment of fast-fibre broadband across Wales, particularly to rural areas, has proved to be extremely challenging and, in some instances, frustrating for members and their constituents. I remain committed to understanding the underlying issues and to work with Members to learn lessons, resolve issues and meet with communities.

Ultimately, the key measure of the project’s success will derive from the people and businesses that adopt it and use it to access the services they need to benefit socially and economically. Our targeted marketing campaign has contributed to take up of broadband services from Superfast Cymru infrastructure reaching 49%, a remarkable achievement given our published aim of reaching 50% take-up by 2023.

But there do remain homes and businesses that are still unable to access superfast speeds which is why I have set out a suite of measures to address ongoing market failure. The successor project to Superfast Cymru, beginning in early 2019, will provide a means to support the connection of premises not met under Superfast Cymru. The first premises are forecast to be connected by the end of 2019, with the vast majority of being served by a full fibre connection. We will also continue to support access to superfast broadband connectivity through our voucher schemes.