

Note of discussion with Esther McVey 24/6/2022

Present: Nicola Dunbar, Roy Newton and Esther McVey MP

About the Board

- Board was established late last year and has been establishing how we 'fit' with the work being done by the three local authorities and Connecting Cheshire.
- We have an "influencing role" to help build confidence for better and faster digital transformation – both through connectivity and skills.
- Charles Jarvis, Chair of Connecting Cheshire, is on the Board.
- The pandemic has really emphasised the importance of connectivity which needs to be recognised as a utility. The LEP and DCB "get it".

What we are focusing on

- Identifying and prioritising needs (for connectivity and skills).
- Convening business and local opinion to influence delivery.
- Looking at new developments from commercial operators (Starlink/OneWeb etc) to add into the mix of solutions.
- Levelling up those pockets of our community currently experiencing digital deprivation.

Possible next steps/assistance (as discussed)

- Levelling Up debate (involving MPs from sub-region) with a clear focus on Digital Connectivity.
- Meeting DCMS to better understand BDUKs strategy and timetable for 4G/5G access, especially in rural (filling the white spaces between the towns and villages).
- Promote Cheshire as a location to identify and run a pilot project for rural connectivity (e.g. satellite).
- Additional LEP funding to specifically focus on digital transformation.