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Digital Enterprise

New SME funding up for grabs to boost Yorkshire business broadband speeds



Businesses in the Leeds City Region are being urged to apply for new vouchers worth £1,000 towards the costs of upgrading their broadband connection.

The new Connectivity Vouchers will be available to SMEs under the Digital Enterprise programme, which this year has invested £1.7m in digital projects that are set to deliver a £5m boost to the regional economy. The vouchers are the newest initiative to be offered by the publicly funded programme, which was set up in September 2016 to help businesses in the region grow by improving their connectivity and digital infrastructure. More than 1,200 jobs are expected to be generated by Digital Enterprise funding that has been delivered to businesses in the region so far this year.

“Connectivity Vouchers are a really convincing offer to smaller businesses. They represent a straightforward one-off £1,000 contribution towards the cost of installing faster broadband,” said Digital Exchange programme manager, Muz Mumtaz.

“A growing number of broadband suppliers are now on board and the funding can also be used towards expenses such as construction costs, if a road or pavement needs to be dug up, as well as hardware such as a new router or firewall.”

SMEs in the Leeds City Region, which includes West Yorkshire, York and Harrogate, Craven and Selby in North Yorkshire, are eligible for the vouchers. Businesses should first check their eligibility via the Digital

Enterprise website, www.digitalenterprise.co.uk , where they can also find out more information about the voucher scheme.

Mr Mumtaz said: “A rapid internet connection is a basic requirement for almost any business to succeed and grow these days. Superfast connectivity opens the door to a world of cloud-based resources which can be transformational, particularly to a small business, and Connectivity Vouchers are designed to provide that vital help many smaller firms need to progress their digital upgrade.”

Funded by the Leeds City Region Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), its nine local authorities and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), Connectivity Vouchers are aimed at small businesses whose current download speeds are less than 30 mbps; firms in areas with poor network coverage; as well as those involved in high levels of data transfer with a defined business need for improved upload and download transfer speeds.

“Since Digital Enterprise launched in February we have worked with some fantastic businesses across the Leeds City Region who have seen efficiency and growth take off as a result of some savvy investment in digital technology,” added Mr Mumtaz.

“A fast broadband connection is essential to harnessing the potential of technology and, with no matched funding required from the business, the new Connectivity Vouchers are a fantastic no-cost opportunity to boost long-term productivity and growth.”