



Cheshire East Council
PUTTING RESIDENTS FIRST



The local government revolution starts here

How Cheshire East plans to put people first and change the way the authority works

The rolling hills of Cheshire might not be sort of place you would expect to find a revolution, but the council's ambitious plans to becoming a strategic commissioning authority could well change the face of local government forever.

Formed in 2009, under the last round of local government reorganisation, the unitary authority is on a journey which will not only transform the way it works, but could prove to be a real 'game changer' for other local authorities as they adapt to the new financial landscape.

From plans to harness geothermal energy in Crewe to transferring services to new arm's length organisations, Cheshire East Council is leading the charge.

'We are, by any measure, the best place to live and work in the North West,' says council leader, Cllr Michael Jones. 'And that is a statistical fact. We are also a very happy place and we have a beautiful heritage and landscape, which we have to preserve.'



Cllr Michael Jones, Cheshire East Council Leader.

'We are a very large area and we're a big unitary, so we have space for all, and we have some of the best-paid private sector jobs in the country. What we offer you is a way of life that is different. We're getting broadband to 99% of all our homes and businesses, which means people can work from home. We went from nowhere to the top three provider of superfast broadband in the country, because we met with BT and worked hard to get the funding.'

Cheshire East Council's chief executive, Mike Suarez, adds that with more than 18,000 businesses based in their

boundaries, they also have a strong 'entrepreneurial core.'

'It's actually the 12th largest unitary in the country in terms of population,' adds Mr Suarez. 'It's roughly the same size as London and has a population in the top three of the North West.'

Cheshire East contributes 6.6% of the region's economic output and last year saw its unemployment rate drop from 2.5% to 1.9%, which is the lowest such figure in the North West. The council has also attracted new investment into the borough, including £1.1bn by Bentley Motors in Crewe and helped secure a long-term future for Alderley Park, by transforming the site into a leading European life sciences and medical science park.

The council is also calling for a new HS2 railway station to be built in Crewe, which it hopes will create £1.5bn of investment and up to 60,000 new jobs.

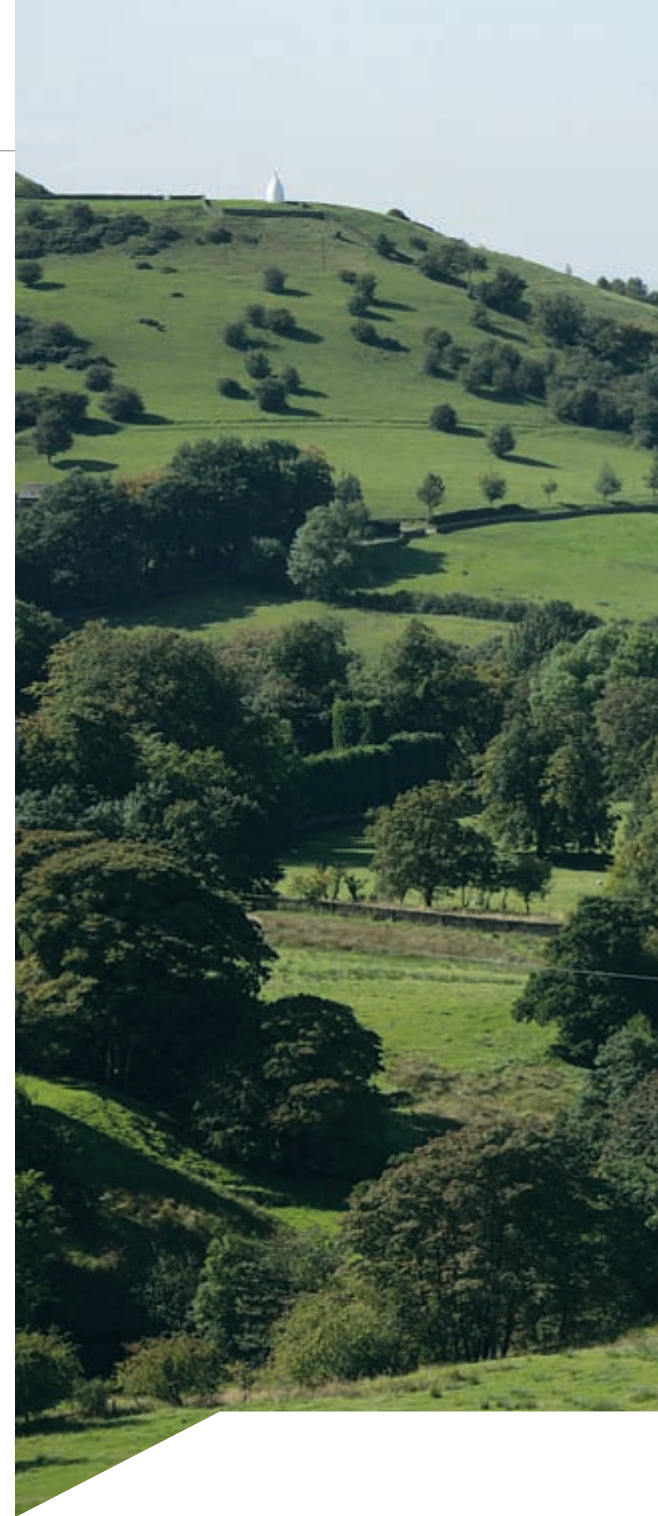
Added to that, the council has also helped secure



Mr Suarez, Cheshire East Council's chief executive.

new investment for the AstraZeneca site in Hurdfield in Macclesfield and the development of the Waters Corporation site in Wilmslow.

Mr Suarez says the sheer number of businesses based in Cheshire East, including car manufacturer Bentleys and Siemens, is one of the area's key strengths. Cheshire East can also claim close proximity to Manchester, Birmingham and Merseyside, not to mention excellent transport links to London and the rest of the world through three close-by airports.



'One of the key achievements at Cheshire East has been dealing with the downturn by re-focussing the council into a commissioning council,' adds Mr Suarez.


'As we have done this, we've worked in partnership with other regional local authorities and public sector bodies. We have really embraced change. As our resources from central government have been reduced, we've recognised that and we've accelerated the pace of change, so we're putting residents first.'

'We've created a number of alternative service delivery vehicles. It's a different way of doing business. We're having a harder split between strategic commissioning and the provision of services. We believe the provider can innovate and be closer to the residents.'

'What we've said as an organisation is we are happy to for a 'best fit' approach, whether it's a wholly-owned company, a charitable trust or a joint venture with another council. We are prepared to look at all these things in terms of the residents and the best outcomes,' adds Mr Suarez.

To this end, the council has set up a series of arm's length companies. In May, the council's leisure service was re-launched as an independent trust, called Everybody Sport and Recreation. This follows the creation of two other arm's length companies in April, one which will run waste and street scene services called Ansa, and another to run bereavement services called Orbitas.

'A number of organisations have been looking at strategic commissioning,' says Mr Suarez. 'What we've done is really embrace change. The pace of change has probably distinguished us. It's a massive compliment to the staff and the administration here that people have embraced it and



‘One of the key achievements at Cheshire East has been dealing with the downturn by re-focussing the council into a commissioning council.’

Mr Suarez, Cheshire East Council's chief executive.

are willing to transform.’ Another key issue for the council is Cheshire East’s ageing population. Cllr Jones says more than half the population in the county are of retirement age. This has led the local authority to look at how it provides services for older people, particularly those with dementia.

‘We could go forward to commission respite care and beds, and put a lot of money into that,’ says Cllr Jones. ‘Actually, that is defeating the issue. What we really want to do is get in at stage one dementia, find out how progressive it is and work to mitigate it if we can. If we get in sooner, we could save the NHS a huge cost and also save us a huge cost. And we could help people stay at home, by understanding their needs.’

Cllr Jones adds the council is planning to make a major policy announcement around education in the summer in order to provide support and training for young people.

‘We want to ensure 95-98% of all children coming out of school are either in apprenticeships, further education or jobs. We’re being very aggressive here. We also have a university technical college bid coming through, which is incredibly strong.’

Mr Suarez adds: ‘We want to raise aspirations for our communities, which our communities want. We think if we have an end-to-end process, which looks at skills development and the best possible start in life, then that will set us on the road to sustained economic prosperity.’

‘We’ve also recently agreed to additional investment to bring high-speed broadband coverage up to 99%. One of the things we’re very proud of here is that we have the fastest broadband rollout in the country. Not only is that

great for business, but it’s great for communities who connect with each other. It’s very important, so that’s why we are investing in this area,’ says the chief executive.

‘We will work with everybody, because we want to get it right and we will learn from anybody,’ adds Cllr Jones. ‘That’s why we are one of the most progressive councils around and our door is always open.’

And despite the bigger picture of public sector spending cuts, Cllr Jones says Cheshire East has not shut any libraries or leisure centres and for the second year in a row has made a surplus of £0.9m, which will be passed back to the community.

‘I think we’ll be the number one council’ he says. ‘I want us to be a council that delivers on the problems that people sweep under the carpet, like domestic violence. The people know they have a council that’s fighting for them.’

To this end, the council has also resurfaced or dressed more than 160km of roads in the area and repaired over 56,000 potholes since January 2014.

Other achievements include Cheshire East adoption services, in collaboration with Stockport, Tameside and Trafford councils, winning the British Association for Adoption and Fostering 2013 Adoption Service of the Year Award.

And by putting more emphasis on preventative activity, the council has helped reduce the number of children in care by 10%.

More than 200,000 bins are emptied every week in Cheshire East and a recent survey showed that 94% of residents were satisfied with their collections.

The council’s recycling rates exceed 50% of all waste,

making them one of the best in the North West of England.

For Mr Suarez, the future lies in the council adopting more sustainable models and developing more community-based services, particularly around public health.

‘If we have economic prosperity in Cheshire East, it gives people a future where they can be less reliant on public services,’ explains the chief executive. ‘In 10 year’s time, I think we will be an organisation that spends far more on prevention than on meeting demand.’

‘A number of organisations have looked at the balance between public sector spending and wealth creation,’ says Mr Suarez. ‘We’ve seen access to economic prosperity is a fundamental tenet of a local authority. We ensure people have access to jobs, they have access to housing and prosperity. And that helps everything from mental health to work/life balances.’

So the council is looking at infrastructure, planning and housing. In the next five years, more than 3,000 new homes will be built with plans for 27,000 by 2030. The Government has also committed to invest £800m in major new highway projects to make improvements across the borough, including the M6 junctions 16 and 17 and the A500.

Cllr Jones says he is here to make ‘the council the best it can be for its residents.’

‘I find it amazing when other councils moan about cuts,’ he adds. ‘I think councils should look to themselves and not to the Government for handouts. You can bid for money and growth, but people want delivery.’

‘I believe in my staff,’ adds Cllr Jones. ‘I believe in my residents. I believe in Cheshire East.’

Bringing high-speed rail home

Cheshire East is lobbying government to build a new HS2 station in Crewe.

As part of Cheshire East Council's commitment to drive economic growth in the county, it is working to pursue a 'once in a century' opportunity to get a new HS2 station built in Crewe.

The local authority has been campaigning with the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership and the Local Transport Body for a new hub station and track layout to be built in the railway town, which it believes could easily accommodate an extra stop for the proposed high-speed train line.

A decision by the transport secretary on the proposals is expected in the autumn.

The council estimates that a new HS2 station could help boost the local economy by £1bn and create up to 20,000 new jobs.

According to the council's analysis, it could also add an additional £1.8bn to the UK economy by 2030 and help build on Crewe's existing rail heritage and existing skills base.

The proposed HS2 line will carry services between London, Manchester and Birmingham and, at present, looks set to run under Crewe, without stopping there.

However, Crewe will benefit in that the existing West Coast Main Line will take two high speed trains to and from Crewe station each hour, with a connection to the HS2 line just south of Crewe.

An HS2 hub in Crewe could allow high-speed rail services to run between London and Crewe in under an hour.

It could also help transform public transport around Crewe and the council has recommended turning the existing train station into a tram station, which could help ease the growing levels of congestion in the town.

The council is also planning to launch a university technical college (UTC) in Crewe in 2015, which will cater for young people who want to pursue careers in engineering and high-skill manufacturing.

'HS2 is a once in a century opportunity and just as Crewe was the original railway town, so we will be again if these proposals are accepted,' says council leader, Cllr Michael Jones.

'Given Crewe's unique 360-degree connectivity, there is a compelling case for a new hub station, allowing us to fully maximise the benefits of HS2, as well as provide more capacity for local passenger services and extra freight, freeing-up space on our roads.

'We have been in detailed talks with Network Rail and other partners about this to make sure the proposals are costed and robust, and I am pleased that they are,' added Cllr Jones. 'We have now written to the Transport Secretary setting out our vision and backing it up with our detailed analysis.'



Bentley jobs boost is good news too

Cheshire East has also welcomed the news that car manufacturer Bentley is set to create 140 jobs at its base in Crewe.

The firm plans to recruit 90 skilled engineers and 51 new apprentices as they gear up for the introduction of the Bentley SUV in 2016.

'This is a tremendous vote of confidence in Crewe,' says Cllr Jones. 'It is a welcome boost for the local economy and further proof that Crewe is a town with huge potential.'

'Cheshire East will continue to work in partnership with Bentley and other employers – large and small – to ensure we have the right infrastructure and skills that will help bring skilled jobs and investment to the people of Crewe.'



The appliance of bio-science

'This is a vindication of a year of coordinated, cross-boundary, task force-led, MP-supported innovative action with AstraZeneca to save Alderley Park and jobs.'

Cllr Michael Jones.

Cheshire East Council has played a key role in the consortium that recently bought AstraZeneca's former base at Alderley Park, near Macclesfield.

Last year, the pharmaceutical giant announced it was moving its research and development (R&D) facilities from the 400-acre park to Cambridge.

The local authority was involved in a task force, which persuaded AstraZeneca to keep 700 jobs on the site.

And as part of its commitment to the area, Cheshire East Council recently bought a 10% stake in the park and a 3% share in Manchester Science Parks (MSP), which formally took over the facilities last month.

'This is a vindication of a year of coordinated, cross-boundary, task force-led, MP-supported innovative action with AstraZeneca to save Alderley Park and jobs,' says Cllr Jones.

Last March, AstraZeneca announced it was moving its UK-based R&D and world headquarters to a new site in Cambridge and removing some 2,300 jobs from its nearly 3,000-strong workforce from Alderley Park, with 700 staying at the site.

'Since then the council and the AstraZeneca bio-hub team, working with local partners have developed the hub to entice 20 companies into the site, bringing about 500 jobs on board – and a further 1,000 jobs in the pipeline.

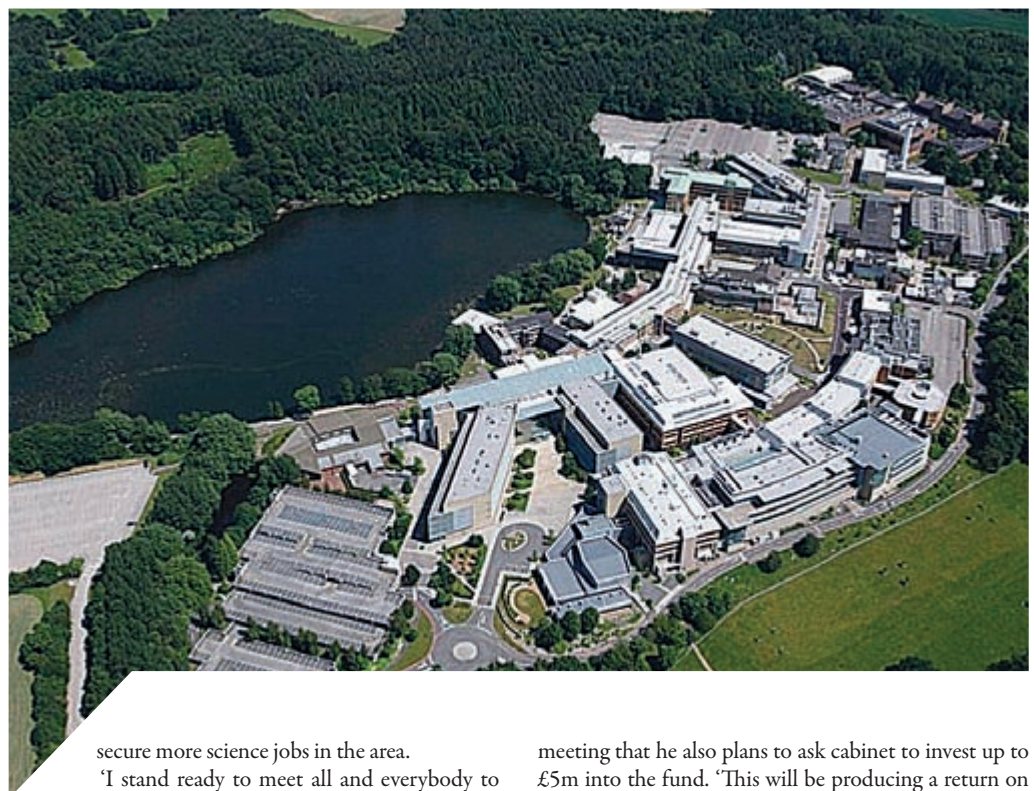
'What is unique about this opportunity is that it's not only a centre with vast facilities but also a centre with significant hi-tech equipment in place, unique infrastructure and a ready supply of highly-skilled workers.

'This is a national centre, if not a European centre, for bio-sciences and I am delighted that the new owners are fully engaged with the vision for the bio-hub and Alderley Park,' he adds.

'By investing alongside key public sector partners, such as Manchester City Council and the Manchester universities, Cheshire East Council is sending out a clear message to the Government that it fully supports Alderley Park and puts working innovatively and collaboratively at the heart of its economic policies to deliver increasing prosperity for all the people of Cheshire East – and value for money for our local taxpayers,' adds Cllr Jones.

The task force is currently working closely with the Government to identify public sector investment opportunities and has recently supported a Regional Growth Fund bid to secure funding.

Cllr Jones has also written to prime minister David Cameron, asking for ongoing support in order to help



secure more science jobs in the area.

'I stand ready to meet all and everybody to preserve jobs and we are pleased that comments have been made pledging job security at Hurdsfield [where AstraZeneca has another site],' says Cllr Jones.

'It should not be forgotten that drugs packaging originally came to Macclesfield due to the dexterity of silk workers, who were used to dealing with small, precise instruments – a perfect match!'

'Let no-one be in any doubt that MP for Macclesfield David Rutley and I are fully aware of all implications – both positive and negative – and this is why we moved in the summer rapidly to find a new owner, because we saw the potential for a bid for AstraZeneca was there.

'We are absolutely committed to protecting and growing jobs in our science corridor and Hurdsfield is essential to that,' he adds.

'The people of Macclesfield, who will always fight hard for jobs, can be comforted by the fact that we have had discussions with AstraZeneca on enhancing the Hurdsfield site for future growth.'

AstraZeneca has also pledged a £5m contribution to the 'Alderley Park Springboard Fund' that will be used to support new businesses starting up at the Park. MSP will also contribute £5m to the new Fund. Last month, Cllr Jones announced as part of the council's annual

meeting that he also plans to ask cabinet to invest up to £5m into the fund. 'This will be producing a return on the investment but more importantly it will bring new science to the UK, to Cheshire and radical treatments of cancer for our residents,' he says. 'I have asked for a detailed business case to be brought forward for my Cabinet colleague, Cllr Peter Raynes to rigorously appraise over the coming weeks and months.'

'Alderley Park was a global centre for cancer research and bio-sciences and is of paramount importance to the local and regional economy – contributing some £315m a year to the economy of Cheshire East, supporting directly more than 3,000 highly-skilled jobs at its peak and contributing about £4m in business rates alone,' explains Cllr Jones.

'The significance of Alderley Park to both the local and regional economy cannot be overstated and, as a council, we are committed and determined to work with our partners to help secure its future in order that it continues to be a world-class centre for bio-science business and jobs,' he adds.

'We now look forward to working with MSP to ensure the Alderley Park bio-science hub becomes a powerhouse that leads the way, not just in Britain but globally – and delivers future-proof jobs, growth and innovative technologies for the North West and UK plc.'

‘We’re taking the financial challenge head-on,’ explains council leader,

Cllr Michael Jones.



The commissioning council

Cheshire East Council plans to revolutionise local services by setting up a range of trading companies



As part of its commitment to deliver better services, Cheshire East Council has launched a series of arm’s length organisations to run key services.

In May, the council’s leisure service was re-launched as an independent trust, called Everybody Sport and Recreation. This follows the creation of two arm’s length companies in April, one which will run waste and street scene services called Ansa, and another to run bereavement services called Orbitas.

The council is also a partner in a shared back office services company with neighbouring Cheshire West and Chester Council, which is called CoSocius, and handles the two local authorities’ human resources and IT support.

It has also established a development company, East Cheshire Engine of the North, to maximise value from the council’s land and buildings and last year it created Tatton Park Enterprises (to deliver catering services at Tatton Park).

In July, the council is planning to launch a new alternative service delivery vehicle (ASDV) to cover public transport.

‘We’re taking the financial challenge head-on,’ explains council leader, Cllr Michael Jones. ‘We’re working with trade unions and staff to provide a new way of running a council, unleashing innovation and entrepreneurialism, managing costs and improving our offer to customers and service users.

‘As part of the council’s commitment to healthier living for residents, we are also investing in the innovative creation of a new lifestyle centre in Crewe, which has just

been granted planning permission.’ The site will realise a bold vision to combat alarming health inequalities in areas of Crewe, which mean many people actually die a decade earlier compared to other areas in the borough.

The council held a series of public engagement workshops on the lifestyle centre to allow members of the public to have their say on the proposals before planning permission was sought.

It will house an eight -lane 25metre pool, plus a large teaching pool, sports courts, state-of-the-art fitness suites, new library facilities, and children and adult social care services.

Everybody Sport and Recreation is now responsible for running the 15 leisure centres and swimming pools across Cheshire East, as well as other partnership services.

‘We’re looking forward to creating many opportunities to improve the health and wellbeing of all Cheshire residents and to do so with more efficient and exciting ways of working with the leisure services team,’ says Everybody Sport and Recreation chairman, Cllr Andrew Kolker.

‘This new trust model means profits will be reinvested directly in to the provision of leisure services for Cheshire East residents,’ he adds.

Both Ansa and Orbitas will remain wholly-owned by Cheshire East, but will be run on a day-to-day basis by their own boards and management teams.

CoSocius was formally launched in April and more than 300 members of staff from both Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester councils transferred over to the new company on 1 May.

The new company is expected to generate savings in

excess of £5m after the first five years, rising to £1.6m annually. It will also be able to sell services to other local authorities in order to improve productivity and reduce running costs.

The deputy leaders of both councils, along with Cheshire East chief executive, Mike Suarez, and Cheshire West and Chester’s director of resources, Julie Gill, will serve on its transitional board to oversee the company’s operations.

An independent chairman will be appointed at a later stage.

The deputy leader of Cheshire East Council and board member, Cllr David Brown, says: ‘The purpose of forming these companies is to ensure that productivity is increased and will attract further customers and/or partners to provide the best service for our local residents and businesses.’

In the future it will seek to create an innovative, sustainable and highly competitive business able to trade profitably with other organisations, in addition to providing council services.

CoSocius will also play its part in an ongoing process designed to cut costs by eliminating waste and improving efficiency – a process which has enabled this authority to save £133m in five years.

Cllr Jones adds: ‘In future, no two councils will look exactly the same and seeking out new, innovative ways of providing services is now an essential feature of local government.

‘This is certainly our view as we continue to deliver our Cheshire East revolution – which is about putting residents’ first.’



Bridging Cheshire's digital divide

Homes and businesses across Cheshire East will be able to access the latest superfast fibre broadband, thanks to a council-backed project.

The Connecting Cheshire Partnership, which was formed in April 2013, brings together Cheshire East Council and communications giant BT, along with neighbouring authorities Cheshire West and Chester Council, Halton BC and Warrington BC.

It aims to provide additional fibre broadband to more than 80,000 premises, so that 96% of Cheshire homes and firms will have access to speeds of up to 80Mbps by the end of 2015.

The £28.5m project consists of £9m from BT, whilst the Partnership is contributing £1.85m, with a further £4m coming from the Government's Broadband Delivery (BDUK) funds and £13.6m from European Development Funds (ERDF).

The first phase of the rollout started last month (May) to around 15,000 homes and businesses. These include more than 2,600 premises in Alderley Edge, who are now able to upgrade to superfast fibre broadband.

Reaching the first 15,000 homes and businesses was marked with May Day celebrations in Alderley Edge, Weaverham and Westwood in Warrington as the first exchanges were switched onto fibre.

A team of more than 100 engineers and planners from Openreach, BT's local network business, has taken on the challenge of bringing fibre to Cheshire. They will upgrade exchanges and networks with more than 875 miles of fibre-optic cable.

More than 400 new roadside cabinets will be installed as part of the project

Cheshire East Council's cabinet member for strategic communities, Cllr David Brown, says the network would boost the local economy, helping to create and protect

How Cheshire East is working with private and public sector partners to ensure residents have access to the latest technology.

local jobs. 'Access to high-speed access to the internet has never been more important, whether you are a small business wishing to build your company, a student taking advantage of online learning resources, an elderly person living on their own or a family making use of online shopping and entertainment or just keeping in touch with friends and family,' says Cllr Brown.

'In today's rapidly-moving world, fast and sophisticated communications are absolutely vital,' he adds.

A recent study for Cheshire, Warrington and Halton estimated full coverage of superfast broadband would generate a gross impact of £13bn in gross value-added over 15-years and create 11,500 jobs, with a further £330m of economic benefits to households.

BT's North West regional director, Mike Blackburn, says the completion of the first phase of the partnership's work within 12 months was an engineering triumph.

'The BT team are working flat out to bring high-speed broadband to Cheshire, Halton and Warrington. This is a complex engineering task that will ensure people and businesses across Cheshire can have fibre broadband as part of their everyday lives and work,' adds Mr Blackburn.

The Government awarded an extra £643,000 to Connecting Cheshire in April to reach around 1,000 additional rural premises with superfast fibre broadband.

The funding has been provided to cover premises in four 'hard to reach' areas:

- Burleydam & Audlem
- Arley & Antrobus
- Huxley
- Gawsworth, North Rode and Wincle

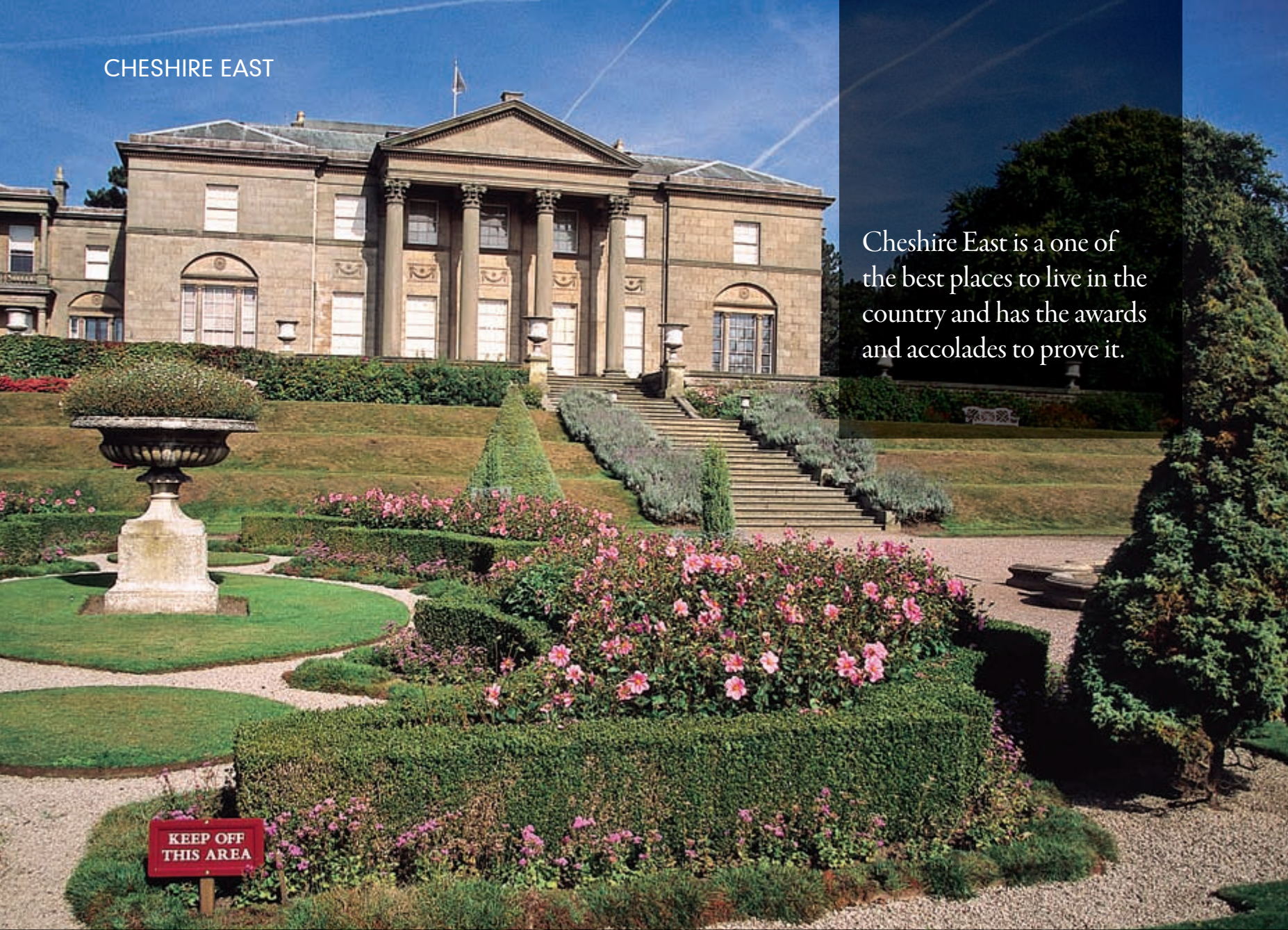
The additional coverage will be provided under an extension to the current Connecting Cheshire programme. The additional coverage will provide a significant boost to the viability of some of Cheshire's most rural communities.

Speaking on behalf of the Connecting Cheshire Partnership, Cheshire East's Cllr David Brown says: 'This is great news for the project and a real boost to these communities who have campaigned tirelessly to make the case for faster broadband.'

'With their help we were able to convince the Government that fibre broadband is now essential for the social and economic sustainability of these communities. I would especially like to thank all those who helped us demonstrate high levels of support for this application by securing hundreds of demand registrations across their communities.'

Sir Howard Bernstein, vice chair of the North West European Regional Development Fund local management committee, adds: 'This programme will help local businesses make the most of superfast broadband, improving performance and helping to create and safeguard jobs.'

'It will provide a major boost to the Cheshire economy and the North West European Regional Development Fund programme is pleased to be supporting it financially.'



Cheshire East is a one of the best places to live in the country and has the awards and accolades to prove it.

Award-winning attractions

Not only has Cheshire East been named as the best place to live in the North West, according to the annual Halifax Quality of Life Survey, but one of its most celebrated tourist destinations – Tatton Park – has been named as the best large visitor attraction in the country.

Tatton Park is managed and financed by Cheshire East Council on behalf of the National Trust and won the best large visitor attraction category at last month's Visit England Awards, which were held at Cheltenham Racecourse.

The Park pulls in more than 800,000 visitors a year and was one of more than 300 attractions were in the running for the various categories. It also beat neighbouring Trentham Estate, in Stoke-on-Trent, for the top spot.

'This is a proud day for Cheshire East and just goes to show that the council is doing a great job in terms of offering a designation that attracts visitors from far and wide,' says council leader, Cllr Michael Jones.

'The Tatton Vision, an all encompassing forward-looking strategic document, has provided a compelling overview of what Tatton Park is capable of achieving and judges were incredibly impressed by this.

'We have a real "jewel in the crown" with Tatton Park and this is testimony to all the hard work from staff over the years. Well done!

'Tourism for Cheshire East is booming – with visitor numbers swelling to 13.9 million last year and the Borough's visitor economy worth a record £737m. This

is great news for boosting jobs and businesses across Cheshire East,' adds Cllr Jones. 'At the same time, we are investing in infrastructure to make our towns and country parks even more appealing to visitors – and to improve the quality of life for Cheshire East residents.'

A year ago, Tatton Park embarked on a five-year plan to substantially develop its visitor experiences by increasing the attractions and activities on offer.

By 2016/17 it is expected that one million visitors a year will visit Tatton Park and enjoy these experiences.

It is home to a Tudor old hall, a neo-classical mansion, 50 acres of landscaped gardens, a rare-breed farm and 1,000 acres of deer park.

The old hall was the estate manor house until the late 17th century, when work commenced on a new house, today known as the neo-classical mansion. It is celebrated for its Gillows furniture and collection of ceramics, paintings, music, books and the library collection is considered one of the finest in the National Trust.

Herds of red and fallow deer roam freely in 1,000 acres of parkland. The meres, woodlands and rough grassland provide a perfect habitat for wildlife and the parkland is a stunning setting for a leisurely stroll or high-octane cycle.

Tatton hosts over 100 events a year including the prestigious RHS Flower Show, concerts, car shows, wedding shows, antiques fairs and much more.

For nearly 400 years the estate was the property of the Egerton family until it was bequeathed to the National

Trust in 1958, but today it is financed and maintained by Cheshire East Council. The Halifax named Cheshire East as the local authority district with the best quality of life in the North West region in its 2013 annual survey, which was published last December.

And the accolades for Cheshire East continued last month (May) when the historic market town of Congleton was chosen as to host a leg of the Queen's Baton Relay, ahead of the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow in July.

Cheshire East Council worked with Congleton Town Council, local sports clubs and community groups to build the event into a showcase of the town's sporting talent and heritage.

Congleton is the only non-city announced as a host for the prestigious event. The English leg of the relay started in Manchester on the morning of May 31, before arriving in Congleton for noon.

Cheshire East Council's deputy leader, Cllr David Brown, says: 'This is fantastic recognition for the town and allowed us the chance to showcase Congleton's sporting heritage as well as involve local sports clubs and community groups in the celebration.

'As a former mayor of Congleton, I am particularly proud that we have been selected,' adds Cllr Brown. 'It was down to our leisure team's excellent application to the games authorities. We saw with the turnout that greeted the Olympic torch relay that the people of Congleton can be relied on to come out and do the town proud.'