

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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*For immediate release*

**Region welcomes ultra-fast broadband announcement**

Manawatū-Whanganui regional leaders have welcomed the government's latest announcement of the roll out of ultra-fast broadband.

Improving digital connectivity is a key enabler in the Manawatū-Whanganui Economic Action Plan which is being implemented through Accelerate25. Areas set to benefit from new ultra-fast fibre services include parts of Palmerston North, Feilding, and a host of rural towns including Ashhurst, Foxton, Shannon, Bulls, Marton, Taihape, Ohakune, Raetihi, Taumarunui, Dannevirke, Pahiatua and Woodville.

Regional Council Chair and Accelerate 25 Lead Team member Bruce Gordon says working with central government to enable digital services to the region has been a key part of Accelerate25.

“Adding so many rural towns to the network will help numerous businesses involved in some of the region's key sectors, such as agriculture and tourism. It’s a great first step as it not only benefits those in the upgrade zones, but also unlocks potential for greater coverage in low speed or blackspot areas.

“Roll out will compliment the impressive digital connections already made in places like Whanganui,” he says.

Collectively, the Region’s mayors are extremely pleased to finally see the acknowledgement and support from Government into our growing business sectors and cannot wait to have the fibre installed.

Rangitikei Mayor Andy Watson says of the planned installation, “As we identified in the Regional Growth Study the issue of the lack of high speed broadband is a barrier for our farming and business community. Having ultra-fast broadband going into all our main towns removes this barrier for all aspects of our communities.”

The government investment in ultra fast broadband rollout is nearly $32 million dollars, amongst the highest of regions in the country. The programme will roll out between now and 2024.

Government is also working on a programme to improve rural connectivity and cell phone blackspots which was identified as another key enabler in the Regional Economic Action Plan. Regional leaders continue to push for improved rural connectivity ahead of any government announcements.

**ENDS.**

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