

# Borders Broadband

## Herefordshire and Gloucestershire

### BORDERS BROADBAND – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

[What is this project about?](#)

[Who is behind it?](#)

[Why was this area chosen?](#)

[How much will the project cost?](#)

[Who will get improved broadband?](#)

[When will it all happen?](#)

[What will improved broadband service levels be like?](#)

[What will I have to pay for improved broadband?](#)

[Will high-speed broadband use my existing broadband connection?](#)

[What technologies will be used to deliver high-speed broadband?](#)

[What will high-speed broadband mean for local businesses?](#)

[What will high-speed broadband mean for local people?](#)

[What will high-speed broadband mean for local communities?](#)

[How can I find out more?](#)

### **What is this project about?**

This project aims to find the most effective and sustainable way to provide faster and better broadband services to parts of rural Gloucestershire and Herefordshire which wouldn't otherwise get an improved service from commercial telecomms companies because of the costs involved.

[back to menu](#)

### **Who is behind it?**

The high-speed broadband pilot is being managed by a partnership of Herefordshire Council, Gloucestershire's Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) GFirst, Gloucestershire County Council, and Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK), the government's agency for introducing high-speed broadband.

[back to menu](#)

### **Why was this area chosen?**

The Forest of Dean/Herefordshire border area was one of four areas announced in Autumn 2010 to receive Government funding to pilot the next generation of high-speed broadband in rural areas. Other pilot areas are Cumbria, North Yorkshire, and the Highlands and Islands in Scotland.

This area was chosen because without significant public investment, its rural communities are unlikely to get significant improvement to their currently poor internet service. This project is extremely complex and challenging. Part of the remit is to identify new ways of providing an enhanced broadband service across rural areas which the telecomms sector would not normally consider commercially viable.

[back to menu](#)

### **How much will the project cost?**

The total cost of superfast broadband provision for the two counties is an estimated £50m, making the project one of the area's biggest infrastructure investments over the next seven years.

It will be paid for by public and private funds, with private investment providing most of the money. The public subsidy will be used to top up private funding, and ensure that the most rural parts of the two counties are included. This project's task is to ensure that our area gets the very best deal, putting the right infrastructure in place to support enhanced broadband across as wide an area as possible.

[back to menu](#)

### **Who will get improved broadband?**

Phase 1 of the project covers a large area of the Forest of Dean and south Herefordshire (click [here](#) to see a map). The exact areas will not be finally confirmed until the procurement process has been completed. The aim is for rural areas in the rest of Gloucestershire and Herefordshire not included in the first phase to be included in Phase 2.

[back to menu](#)

### **When will it all happen?**

The procurement process started at the beginning of June 2011. The long and complex process stipulated by UK and European rules will result in a contract being awarded to the successful supplier early in 2012.

The timescales are long to allow detailed discussions with several suppliers during a 'competitive dialogue' process as part of an EU-wide procurement. We anticipate that work on the physical infrastructure/s proposed in the winning contract will begin from summer 2012.

[back to menu](#)

### **What will improved broadband service levels be like?**

Many parts of rural Gloucestershire and Herefordshire don't even have access to an adequate broadband service yet, let alone high-speed broadband. Currently the Government's minimum level of acceptable broadband service, at speeds of 2 Megabits per second, is not available to around 42% of the Phase 1 area's premises. This project aims to remedy that.

The successful company will be expected to provide:

- 100% access of 2Mbps in the Forest of Dean/South Herefordshire (Phase 1) area during 2013 and in the rest of rural Gloucestershire and Herefordshire (Phase 2) during 2015
- 100% access to superfast broadband of 30Mbps in the Phase 1 area during 2015 and in the Phase 2 area during 2018

The aim is to make the superfast services available to everyone who wants them within seven years of awarding the contract. However, speed is not the only criteria - we will be looking for a reliable service where the speed does not drop too severely during busy periods and which is capable of supporting everyone who wants a fast service.

[back to menu](#)

### **What will I have to pay for improved broadband?**

We don't know yet. The new improved service will enable a range of Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to compete for business and residential customers. Each ISP will therefore have a menu of services and packages, with a range of prices from basic to high speed to meet customer needs.

We anticipate charges will be at industry standard prices. Although this project is publicly funded, the broadband services provided will not be subsidised - therefore the charges to customers will need to make the service sustainable in the longer term. Charges for connection to your home, business or community building will depend on the technology used and will be subject to discussion during the procurement of the supplier.

[back to menu](#)

### **Will high-speed broadband use my existing broadband connection?**

Most people in the areas concerned have their broadband service over their phone lines, with the infrastructure maintained by BT Openreach. It is possible that this will continue to be the case, but the project is undertaking an open procurement where any provider may propose a solution.

[back to menu](#)

### **What technologies will be used to deliver high-speed broadband?**

Broadband can be delivered through a range of technologies such as fibre optic, wireless and satellite. Each has its strengths and weaknesses. The exact technologies eventually used to bring enhanced broadband to the pilot area will be decided during the procurement process, although we anticipate there may be a need for a mix of the very latest telecommunications technologies.

The eventual mix will deliver the best value service and ensure that the greatest access to the highest speeds is achieved.

[back to menu](#)

### **What will high-speed broadband mean for local businesses?**

Businesses are increasingly dependent on the internet. Therefore, faster broadband speeds are imperative to help local businesses to compete in national and global markets.

Fast and efficient internet connections bring a host of benefits to businesses from on-line selling (e-commerce), to transferring large documents to accessing emerging "cloud computing" services that can save costs and increase efficiency. Good communications are key for business development and demand for faster upload and download speeds is expected to grow substantially in the coming years. Increasingly, hundreds of rural businesses reliant on visitors from home and abroad are expected to have an efficient online presence with online booking and information.

Access to superfast broadband will open up massive new opportunities for rural businesses. It will help firms develop more productive and efficient ways of working, making it quicker, cheaper and easier to communicate with suppliers and customers. Businesses can make cost savings by introducing 'Voice over IP' (VOIP) for phone calls over the internet, removing paper transactions and introducing more electronic processes, such as online invoicing.

The availability of two-way video conferencing allows firms to make more use of home working for employees, improving their work-life balance and increasing skills and staff retention. Online training reduces staff downtime and faster broadband services can foster business innovation, helping spread new ideas and knowledge and encouraging the development of new online services and applications. And for small businesses, broadband opens up new national and international markets exploiting the rapid growth of e-commerce.

[back to menu](#)

## **What will high-speed broadband mean for local people?**

While many people are content with low broadband speeds for dealing with day-to-day emails, increasingly broadband is used for video-conferencing with family and friends across the world via free services such as Skype.

Increasingly, national and local government are using websites and other online services to provide vital information, while internet shopping often gives consumers access to the best deals – particularly those living in rural areas with limited access to a wide range of retail opportunities.

Advances in technology open up a range of new services, such as telemedicine – allowing people to make direct contact with care professionals in their own homes, via the internet, making rural healthcare services faster and more efficient. And with the growth in elderly populations, fast broadband offers the potential for assisted living technologies, such as improved emergency communications or monitoring of clinical conditions.

People also want to look at photos, watch films, listen to and download music and play games on the internet, and access to i-Player type services is becoming easier with 'smart' televisions.

But with more people in the home using a range of broadband services at the same time, existing internet speeds can be frustratingly slow.

[back to menu](#)

## **What will high-speed broadband mean for local communities?**

For local communities, faster broadband opens up the opportunity for the creation of localised content such as community TV, or online streaming of local events. And forward-thinking parish and town councils seeking to engage more fully with their communities are looking to online messaging and social networking opportunities.

Superfast broadband also has immense potential in education and training, with increasing opportunities for students to access and submit work online, and to enrich their studies. The pressure of university fees is also increasing demand for distance learning among young people entering higher education, while online training offers a cost effective alternative to rural businesses, reducing employees' 'downtime' while increasing skills.

The availability of high-speed broadband will also boost the local economy, helping attract new businesses and provide more jobs in rural areas, reducing the need for local people to commute to work elsewhere, and increasing local job opportunities for young people.

Evidence shows the absence of fast broadband services puts businesses off locating to a particular area and increasingly estate agents are reporting that house hunters are stipulating fast broadband access as a 'must have'.

This project will work very closely with local communities – we envisage them playing a major role in establishing and stimulating demand, supporting those people who will be new to computers and the internet, and possibly in delivering the fastest service to more remote homes, farms and local businesses. If you would like to get involved, see below for contacts.

[back to menu](#)

## How can I find out more?

For Herefordshire contact **Natalia Silver**, Herefordshire Council, 01432 260732, [nsilver@herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:nsilver@herefordshire.gov.uk)

For Gloucestershire contact **Angela Presdee**, GFirst, 01452 328309, [Angela.Presdee@glosfirst.co.uk](mailto:Angela.Presdee@glosfirst.co.uk)

For any interested parties wishing to express an interest in procurement, please contact **Bob Gennard**, 01432 261617 [rgennard@herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:rgennard@herefordshire.gov.uk)

[\*back to menu\*](#)