

BORDERS BROADBAND – RESPONSE TO NATIONAL STORY

The Borders Broadband project, as one of the UK pilots to bring high-speed broadband to rural areas, is making good progress in Gloucestershire and Herefordshire.

Despite claims made today that plans to bring fast broadband to rural areas have 'stalled', plans for the two counties are progressing well and are on target.

The procurement process is well underway to attract a commercial telecoms supplier to provide the new high-speed broadband infrastructure.

A contract is expected to be awarded in late Spring 2012, and work is due to start soon afterwards, initially in the Forest of Dean and south Herefordshire before extending to other areas in both counties.

In addition, surveys are underway in both counties to gauge demand for high-speed broadband among households and businesses.

"The suggestion that plans to bring fast broadband to rural Gloucestershire and Herefordshire have 'stalled' is simply untrue," said Natalia Silver, Project Director for the Borders Broadband Project.

"This is an extremely complex procurement process whereby we have been given public funding to attract investment in a fast broadband infrastructure for rural areas which the private sector has not seen as being commercially viable.

"A competitive dialogue process is being used to explore the supplier's most viable technology solutions before the final contract is issued. And there are strict protocols that we must adhere to in line with EU Procurement Directives including statutory timescales to ensure an open and fair process is undertaken and the right supplier chosen."

Ends

For further information contact Angela Presdee, Investment Manager, GFirst 01452 328309, mobile: 07971 121695, e-mail Angela.Presdee@glosfirst.co.uk

See also www.gfirst.co.uk/broadband

Notes to editors

The Borders Broadband project is being managed by a partnership of Gloucestershire's Local Enterprise Partnership GFirst, Gloucestershire County Council, Herefordshire Council and BDUK.

The Gloucestershire/Herefordshire border area was among the first areas in England to receive funding from Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) to pilot the next generation of high-speed broadband in rural areas.

GFirst, the place promotion agency for Gloucestershire, is a Local Enterprise Partnership working for business, investors, tourism and skills. www.gfirst.co.uk

BDUK was set up by the Government to implement its policy of increasing access to broadband for households, business and communities in poorly served areas across the UK. <http://discuss.bis.gov.uk/bduk/>