

Have a Merry 'Superfast' Christmas

**More people can enjoy
superfast broadband this
Christmas as the first Stage of
Superfast Northamptonshire
completes early.**

Superfast Northamptonshire has completed its Stage 1 milestone this December, three months ahead of schedule. The County Council's first contract with BT to deliver superfast broadband (access line speeds above 24Mbps) was due to complete in March 2016 but this month, BT exceeded its contracted 61,000 premises passed figure, and importantly, its 53,400 target for superfast broadband coverage.

BT estimate that around **54,000** additional premises in the county can now access superfast broadband following the completion of stage 1. Without the injection of £9m in public funding, these premises would not have been served.

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DEAR READER

This is a **PLAIN TEXT VERSION** of our Newsletter. There are no photographs, illustrations, maps or graphics within it – it just contains the latest news in a simple format for anyone who has trouble downloading or printing our **FULL PUBLICATION VERSION** and for those Readers who may have difficulty reading text in colour. There may be some variances in content between both editions.

The early completion of the first stage is also good news for the many more people set to benefit from Stage 2 of the project which is also being delivered by BT. This is now getting underway sooner than contracted. This will see a further **20,465** premises be able to take up superfast broadband by the end of December 2017.

Have you checked if superfast fibre broadband is available in your area? If it is, then why not contact your internet service provider and ask about a fibre upgrade or shop around for the best deal for you - [Get Connected](#) and start seeing the benefits of superfast broadband for your [business](#) or family at [home](#). You won't get faster speeds automatically.

BT's local network business, Openreach, has had to manage a number of challenges over the last 2 years to get the fibre in the ground in order to serve tens of thousands of homes and businesses in the county and to keep the programme as a whole on track.

This has included a whole host of things such as traversing a narrow bridge in Towcester where existing ducting was already at capacity; unblocking underground ducts which house the fibre cable or rebuilding ducts where these have collapsed (sometimes in several places along one run); negotiating with land owners to get permission to lay fibre over private land (with some more happy to oblige than others); working with the Highways Authority to meet road closure requirements to enable work on some of the county's busiest roads; getting power to the new roadside fibre cabinet structures which can sometimes be difficult and costly; finding solutions to different network challenges such as the T-PON¹ issue at Grange Park; and even having to undertake archaeological digs before new ducting can be laid underground.

1 Telephony Over Passive Optical Network - this technology is not compatible with a Fibre to the Cabinet solution

These challenges have meant that a few communities have been served a little later than expected as Openreach engineers worked to resolve unforeseen issues, whilst other communities were brought forward in plans to ensure the programme overall remained on track and people were excited to see plans come forward more quickly. This flexible and pragmatic approach to managing phases of the build has ensured that Northamptonshire has secured its place as one of the top performing projects in the country, consistently meeting its coverage targets.

By the end of December 2015, around 90% of premises in Northamptonshire are expected to have access to superfast broadband.

In completing the network build for this first stage, more than 300 green roadside fibre cabinets and structures have been installed across Northamptonshire and around 490 kilometres of fibre cables have been laid underground – a significant civil engineering undertaking in the timescales achieved.

Cllr Andre Gonzalez De Savage, county council cabinet member for economic growth and strategic infrastructure, said: *"The scale of the coverage delivered in the last 2 years has been considerable and to see the contract deliver early is fantastic for those local people and businesses who can now take advantage of the benefits that superfast broadband can bring and I urge people to get connected."*

"We still have some way to go to achieve our full coverage targets and for those communities who are still waiting, the progress to date may seem of little comfort. However, delivering early on Stage 1 means we are getting the next stage away earlier than expected and, along side this, the County Council is already bringing forward its Stage 3 plans. We'd like to see everyone able to benefit from the digital revolution."

I wish you all a Merry Christmas."

Steve Henderson, BT's Regional Director for Next Generation Access, said:
"We are delighted to have delivered this first contract early. It shows just how well BT and Northamptonshire County Council are working together, which puts us in a really good place to deliver the next stage of the programme. When you also take into account BT's own commercial fibre broadband roll out programme, it means more than 245,000 Northamptonshire homes and businesses are able to do so much more online thanks to fibre broadband."

How are plans decided?

The approach taken by the County Council aims to see as many premises as possible able to access superfast broadband as soon as possible - activity is focused in areas not due to be served commercially. Everyone can't be served at once because laying fibre network on this scale is a major civil engineering exercise - it takes time to roll out and therefore communities will be served at different times through a rolling programme.

All communities are important and to ensure that public funding goes as far as possible towards meeting our target, the roll out has been designed around the most economically engineered solutions. This is determined by the telecoms supplier who has the expert knowledge of the network, the technology available, and how best to extend the reach to as many people as possible as early as possible, at the earliest opportunity.

This can lead to some quirky outcomes in some cases with some communities left partially served. These 'holes' in coverage are the target for Stage 3 of the project along with those communities affected by long copper lines in areas where Fibre to the Cabinet technology has been deployed. Stage 3 will also seek solutions for those more remote rural communities and more difficult holes in urban areas where solutions are still needed. The rural areas will be a priority.

Superfast Northamptonshire is a multi-million pound project. The County Council has contracted with BT to deliver the first two stages of the project involving a £16.2 million investment by the County Council, Government², and local partners and a £6.9m investment by BT.

Stage 3 proposals underway

Current analysis suggests that there are around 13,000 premises in the county where superfast broadband plans have yet to be secured. This figure will be refined once the County Council has completed the latest Open Market Review (OMR). This will tell us more about the combined extent of existing commercial coverage in the county and commercial plans looking ahead 3 years. We can then identify those remaining areas which are not part of commercial plans and are not already due to be served by the first two stages of the Superfast Northamptonshire project. These will then be our focus for Stage 3.

The County Council is progressing three routes to market for this next stage which will extend plans towards full coverage. The approach was agreed by Cabinet on 6th October 2015 and involves:

- Continued promotion of Northamptonshire as a great place for commercial investment by telecoms providers with a view to maximising commercial coverage (no public funding requirement).
- Exploring what more BT may be able to deliver for us through our existing contracts, with additional public sector investment.
- Launching a further public procurement to secure private sector co-investment and solutions from the telecoms market to deliver alongside existing plans.

2 Department for Culture Media and Sport and the Department for Business Innovation and Skills

The OMR is the first step of preparations for the proposed procurement which we expect to launch in 2016. The timing of the procurement is dependent on the conclusion of negotiations between the Government and the European Commission on State Aid Regulations. These set out the rules on how public funding can be invested.

The County Council has already started talking to BT about what more the telecoms provider may be able to deliver in the county. BT is currently completing its modelling work which will inform its proposals to the County Council. These proposals will be assessed for value for money, extent of speed and coverage, and the timescales for delivery.

More news will be reported next year once the outcome of these investigations are concluded.

Keep up to date - You can subscribe to the project website at www.superfastnorthamptonshire.net to receive E-News alerts and project newsletters to stay up to date on progress and the latest initiatives. You can follow us on Twitter @SFastNorthants.

Why not check whether your home or business can take up superfast broadband or is expected to be served in forthcoming plans by visiting the project website interactive [When and Where map](#) and [Roll Out Schedule](#). The website is also there to help you find out more about the broadband technology being delivered, the network build, information about the benefits of superfast broadband, advice on how to get connected and answers to lots of Frequently Asked Questions.

Satellite Broadband Voucher Scheme Launched

As part of a national programme, the County Council has launched a new Satellite Broadband Voucher Scheme to meet the Government's basic broadband policy commitment. This aims to ensure that all premises have access to broadband services providing at least 2Mbps.

Whilst the County Council's Superfast Northamptonshire project remains focused on its full coverage target for superfast broadband, the new satellite scheme will provide immediate support for residents and businesses in the county which are currently suffering some of the worst broadband speeds. It is estimated that around 1,650 premises could be eligible for this scheme.

People can apply for a voucher worth up to £350 towards the cost of installation of a satellite dish and the equipment necessary to provide a satellite broadband service.

The voucher includes an active code which a resident or business must quote when placing an order for satellite broadband with one of the four satellite providers that have registered to operate the scheme. The value of the voucher is deducted by the supplier to cover the cost of installation; the customer is responsible for choosing the level of service they wish to take up and for paying the ongoing monthly subscription costs for that service - this may vary depending on what level of service or package is chosen.

The Satellite Broadband Scheme will provide a vital connection for residents and businesses who are in need of faster broadband solutions today in areas where the existing provision is below 2Mbps.

See the [Satellite Voucher Scheme](#) page on the project website for more information.

Broadband Connection Voucher Scheme

Did your business benefit?

The national Broadband Connection Voucher Scheme, part of the Government's Superfast Britain programme, closed in mid November after a surge in demand saw the £40m allocation for 2015/16 scooped up.

Eligibility for the scheme, which had previously only been open to cities, was secured by the County Council from 1st April 2015, working with Coventry City Council who administered the scheme.

The County Council worked with local partners to promote the Connection Voucher Scheme to local SME's. Some 375 Northamptonshire companies had voucher applications approved before the scheme closed which collectively are worth more than £417,800. Companies are continuing to use their vouchers to get their faster broadband connection installed.

The top 10 most active suppliers for the scheme in Northamptonshire were:

Blue Global
BT
Cat5 Communications
Gigaclear
Infologic Telecom
Redraw Internet
TalkTalk
Virgin Media
Warwicknet
Zen Internet

Early findings from the Department for Culture Media and Sport suggest that businesses benefitting from a broadband connection delivered by the Scheme were reporting on average a £1,300 per year increase in profits, with a new job being created for every four new connections.

If you run or work for a business and are interested in hearing more about how superfast broadband could help to boost your company, then check out the [business case study videos](#) on the project website to find out more and hear directly from local companies about their experience. Even better, why not contact the team to showcase your story and share with others about the difference superfast broadband has made.

Superfast Broadband is available to around 90% of premises in Northamptonshire. The Connection Voucher Scheme may have closed but the opportunity to get your business superfast connected has not.

See the ['For Business'](#) section on the project website.

Spotlight On Community

Superfast music and arts community group has big plans!

'Performing Room' is an award winning music and arts community group based in the Castle area in the centre of Northampton founded and run by Janan Fifield. For 15 years it has been funding, volunteering and delivering music workshops, projects and events. This has supported about 10,000 children, young people and adults living in Northamptonshire.

Performing Room is currently bringing forward a project to develop a purpose built 'learning through performing' community. It will be a creative space and social outlet that combines teaching music with multimedia skills to improve the lives of local people who may have a physical disability, mental health issue, or be

affected by homelessness, unemployment or crime.

Superfast broadband is helping the group to thrive and achieve greater things by increasing its networking capacity and bringing together a stimulating learning experience using traditional and electronic instruments with a digital media learning environment using audio, video and lighting.

Janan explains the impact that superfast broadband is having on the project:

“Without superfast broadband we cannot effectively use the music and digital media in all the ‘performing rooms’. This is especially important when they are all in use at the same time. We are fortunate that we now have a speed of up to 120Mbps.”

“This means we can now offer activities in our nine ‘Performing Rooms’ using computers, cameras and projectors for local people to take part in innovative online multimedia projects and develop the skills and experience they need to improve their musical performance and shape their futures in a positive way.”

The ultimate goal is to connect local people with local business and cultivate creative pathways into volunteering, learning and employment.

To find out more about The Performing Room please visit:
www.performingroom.co.uk or via
[Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#)

Fighting Cyber Crime

2.5 million cyber crime offences such as computer hacking occurred in 2015

Office for National Statistics

University of Northampton Computing students equipped with skills to fight cyber crime

Undergraduates from the University of Northampton are being equipped with the skills to fight on the frontline against computer hackers. The University has responded to the growth in hacking by offering a degree course in Web Technology and Security, and encouraging undergraduates on other computing courses to undertake a Security module.

George Pickers graduated with a degree in Computer Science in 2014, before securing a position as Security and Governance Specialist in the IT department at Weatherbys, a family owned private bank which also provides services for the horseracing industry.

The grounding in computer security George gained at University prepared him for his role at the Wellingborough-based firm.

George said: *“As with the majority of organisations, we face incoming threats on a daily basis. The knowledge and skills I honed at the University gave me a real understanding and the practical know-how to deal with the challenges we face in our department.”*

With several of the University’s academic staff affiliated to the British Computing Society (BCS), the institution hosts official BCS events. This has included Pen Testing which sees teams try to hack into specially set-up networks and protect their own - a discipline which is useful for an ethical

computer hacker, known as a 'white hat' hacker, who specialises in testing methodologies to ensure the security of their organisation's own systems.

Head of Computing at the University, Gary Hill, said:

"Security is one of the biggest growing areas in the industry, as more and more personal data and company information is stored online and shared across networks. Our courses reflect this, and we have a proud track record of graduates who go on to work for some of the biggest organisations in the UK and beyond."

For more information about the BSc or MSc Computing (Web Technology & Security) course, [click here.](http://www.northampton.ac.uk/study/courses/courses-by-subject/computing)
<http://www.northampton.ac.uk/study/courses/courses-by-subject/computing>

Race To The Top

Coding Competition Closing Soon

Northamptonshire County Council, The Worshipful Company of Information Technologists (WCIT - a City of London Livery Company), Code Club and the University of Northampton have organised a competition for schools to encourage increased and improved teaching of computer coding.

The Coding Club was founded 3 years ago and now has over 3,000 afterschool volunteer led clubs in operation throughout the UK. There are 30 clubs in Northamptonshire which teach skills to up to 15 children at a time on how to make games, create animations and produce webs pages.

The aim of the competition is to inspire young people to achieve digital fluency through collaboration and challenge. The

competition will run from the launch event on 2 October 2015 until 8 January 2016.

Winning entries will be rewarded with the Northamptonshire Race to the Top Coding Competition Cup and prizes for the students and their schools. Click on the links to find out how to get your school involved in the [Club](#) or to enter the [competition](#).

Want to start your own coding club?

As part of the RTTT Coding Competition, the County Council is encouraging schools to start a Code Club (www.codeclub.org.uk) and work through the free projects to get some practical ideas. Code Clubs can be run by a teacher, or by a teacher and a volunteer who has some knowledge about coding. If you can spare an hour a week to help inspire the next generation, please email Katharine Childs on eastmidlands@codeclub.org.uk to find out more.

News in Brief

Free technology skills help from Barclays Digital Eagles

You may have seen Barclays Digital Eagles advertised on TV. The County Council's Library Service is working with Barclays to help people access free advice about using the internet and digital devices.

You can find Digital Eagles every Friday between 12pm and 3pm at the Central Library in Northampton. You can take your laptop or tablet or use the Library Service computers. If you need help on setting up social media or email accounts, how to connect to wifi or set up and use Skype, or anything at all internet based they are there to help. Whether you need 20 minutes of help or three hours Digital Eagles are there

to help. Sessions are held in The Pod on the 1st floor or the Central Library. For more information about Digital Eagles please [click here](#).

NextGen15 finalist place for Tove Valley Broadband

Congratulations to Eric Malcomson and his team at Tove Valley Broadband and the Abthorpe Broadband Association for scooping the second place at the prestigious national NextGen15 Awards against strong competition from other finalists in the Rural Networks category.

Eric was presented with the runner up award at the House of Lords on 5th November by the Earl of Erroll. For the fifth year running, NextGen15 hosted a great evening to celebrate the best of UK digital achievements. The County Council was amongst finalists in the Digital Innovation Category for its INV-ENT Digital Scheme.

To find out more about Tove Valley Broadband go to www.tovevalley.com

When and Where Update

Stage 1 Roll Out Headlines December 2015

- Stage 1 Complete - 3 months before the end of March 2016 contract deadline
- 61,000 premises passed by fibre
- 53,940 premises now able to take up superfast broadband (>24Mbps) (total at 30th Sept 2015 – to be updated in January 2016 with final figures for end of December 2015)
- 308 new fibre cabinets or structures deployed
- 490km of fibre optic cable laid

The first stage of the project has completed 3 months ahead of schedule and has delivered more coverage than expected. Some of the latest places to benefit include parts of Grange Park, Great Addington, Great Houghton, Harringworth and parts of Northampton including Kingsthorpe.

Stage 2 is now underway and earlier than contracted, taking advantage of the good progress of the project to date. The first premises in Stage 2 are now expected to be served in early 2016 rather than September 2016 as BT originally envisaged. Some of the first areas coming forward by summer 2016 include parts of Brafield on the Green, Brigstock, Broughton, Fotheringhay, Syresham and Wollaston as well as parts of Corby and Kettering (timescales may be subject to change).

Since September 2015, you have been able to follow progress on the roll out via a new Roll Out Schedule page on the project website. This lists all cabinets and structures which have been deployed by the project and are live and supporting services, and those that are coming forward in the active planning, survey and network build programme. This list will change as new cabinets and structures come forward into the schedule and as others are completed and expected delivery timescales are updated.

Remember that if you're in an upgraded area, getting a faster fibre broadband service is not automatic. You need to contact your internet service provider to ask about an upgrade or go online to compare offers available from different providers to find the best deal for you. To buy a fibre broadband service you normally need to have a minimum access line speed of around 15Mbps. You can check this using [BT's Wholesale ADSL Availability Checker](#).

How to stay in touch...

To keep up to date with the latest news on the Superfast Northamptonshire project please visit the project site at: www.superfastnorthamptonshire.net

Why not subscribe to the website to receive E-News Alerts

Or for further information please email: bigidea@northamptonshire.gov.uk

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