

NEWSLETTER 19 – October 2016

Telecoms Providers invited to Bid for Stage 3

On 1st September 2016, the County Council launched an Invitation to Tender (ITT) which seeks bids from telecoms network providers to help deliver the next Stage of the Superfast Northamptonshire project. Northamptonshire was one of the first three authorities to publish a procurement over the summer for the next wave of the broadband roll out, maintaining our place at the forefront of the national programme.

Readers may recall that stage 3 involves a number of measures aimed at extending the roll out of Next Generation Access (NGA) broadband networks in the county of which the procurement is one. Stage 3 involves:

- continuing to promote Northamptonshire as a good place for private sector commercial telecoms investment i.e. without the need for public funding (almost three quarters of premises in the county should be served commercially);
- progressing an open public procurement to award new broadband infrastructure delivery contract(s) through a competitive bidding process; and
- considering proposals to extend the County Council's existing contract with BT to deliver more.

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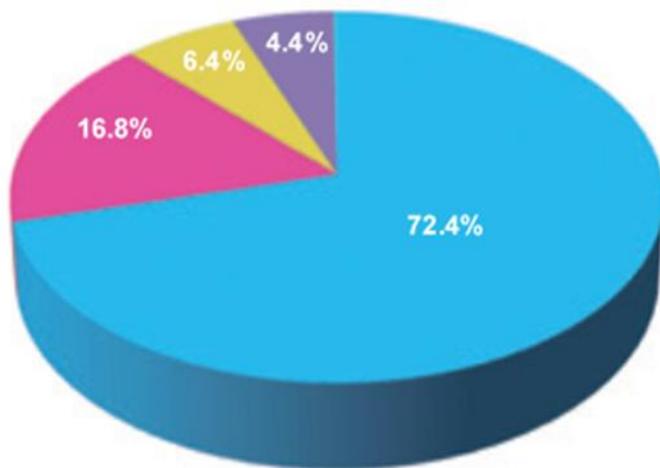
What is Next Generation Access?

NGA simply refers to higher performance technologies than broadband provided over traditional copper networks. NGA is fibre optic based. It provides for a higher throughput (higher download and upload speeds), and for the purpose of the Stage 3 procurement, must be capable of supporting access line speeds

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.

above 30Mbps. The Stage 3 procurement asks bidders to put forward plans which will meet this 30Mbps capability. This is also a requirement of the new National Broadband Scheme for the UK. Examples of NGA include Fibre to the Premise, Fibre to the Cabinet or Fixed Wireless Access.



Key

- Expected existing and planned Commercial NGA Fibre Coverage
- Project Stage 1 - Superfast coverage delivered by end December 2015
- Project Stage 2 - Superfast coverage due to be delivered by December 2017
- Project Stage 3 - Remaining areas where superfast solutions need to be secured

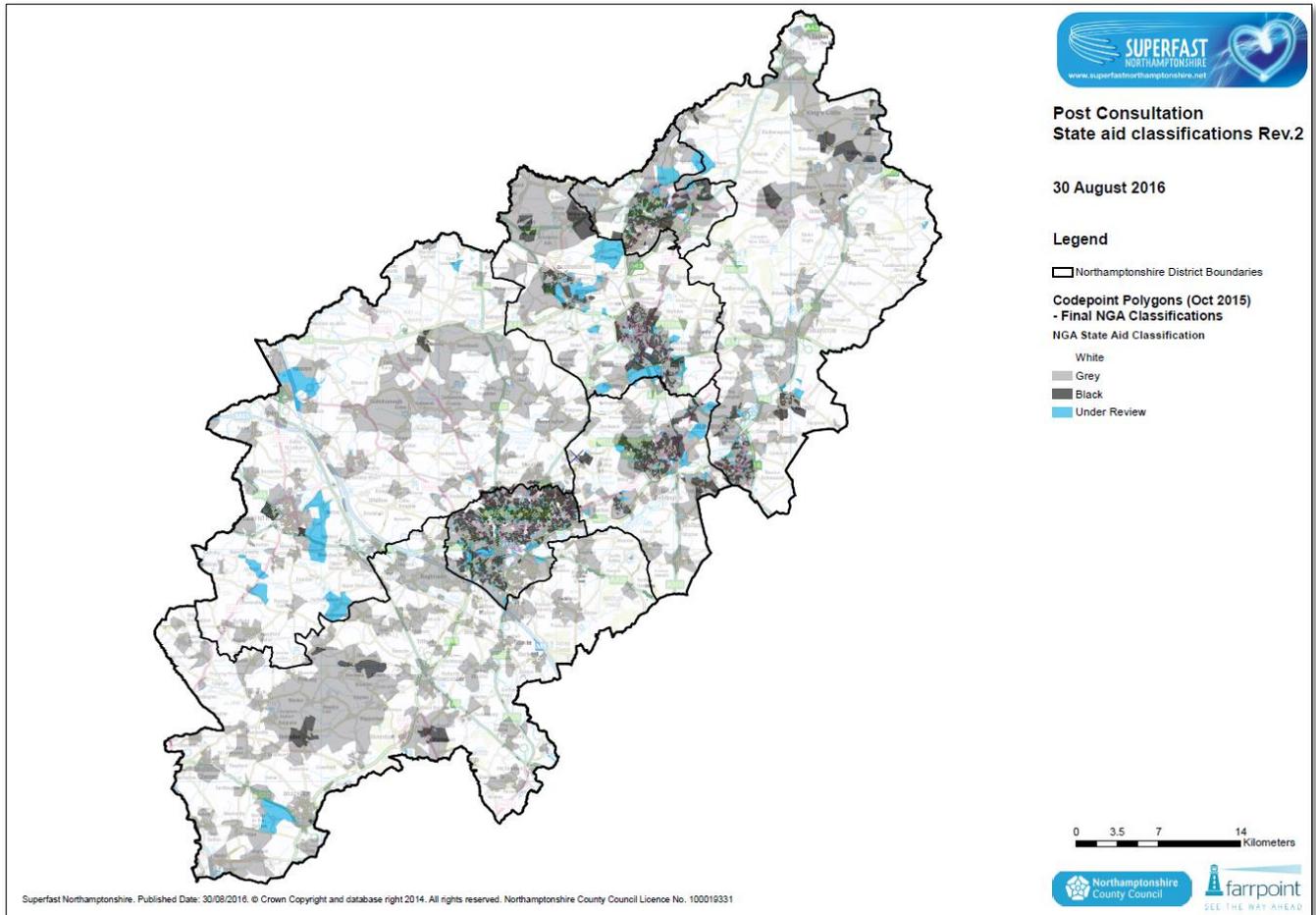
The Superfast Northamptonshire broadband roll out is focused on areas in need, where there are no commercial plans. Commercial network coverage is critical to helping achieve the County Council's ambition to see superfast broadband available countywide and reduces the burden on public funding needed. The County Council has no control or responsibility for commercial broadband plans. Some of the NGA network providers already serving the county include:



How has the area for Stage 3 investment been decided?

The eligible intervention area has been identified following an Open Market Review (asking telecoms providers to report on their existing and planned NGA coverage) and a State Aid Public Consultation which closed on 30th June 2016. You can read more about this on the project website [State Aid Public Consultation](#) page and on the [Progress Overview](#) page (see the 'Identifying where public investment is needed' section). It is important that commercial plans are taken into account and not undermined so that public funding remains focused on areas of need.

The intervention area for Stage 3 is shown on the State Aid map (below). You can access this map by clicking on it or going to the project website. The 'White' areas show where NGA solutions (supporting speeds above 30Mbps) are still required and where public funding can be invested to help bring this forward – these are areas where there are no commercial network plans providing for services of this speed. The intervention area for Stage 3 involves around 14,000 premises countywide. The Black and Grey areas are where there is existing or planned commercial coverage, or areas covered by Stages 1 and 2 of the Superfast Northamptonshire project. The Blue areas are under review. These are areas where existing commercial plans may be less certain. This includes where villages may be considering a community based initiative with a supplier but which was not confirmed at the time of the State Aid Public Consultation. We need to ensure that if necessary, these under review areas can be brought into scope of the project, subject to available funding.



The County Council secured the necessary State Aid clearance on 1st September 2016 and the ITT was launched the same day. State aid Regulations set out the rules about how and where public funding can be invested in broadband infrastructure and the standards and procedures which need to be met and followed.

What are the Stage 3 ITT Requirements?

The Stage 3 procurement is focused only on the rural areas in the county. There are around 8,500 premises in the ITT area. These include whole communities, some villages which are already partially served, clusters of premises in rural areas, and more remote premises.

The further that the broadband network is extended in the county, the more costly and challenging the deployment becomes. This is partly because the number of premises to be served are much lower and

the distances which need to be crossed are likely to be much further.

The County Council is inviting telecoms operators to put forward their proposals to deliver as much NGA coverage (>30Mbps) as possible in these rural areas for the public 'gap' funding available, and to deliver these plans as soon as possible. The ITT is technology neutral (a regulatory requirement) which means it will be up to bidders to determine what technologies they put forward as part of their solution design.

The County Council has committed **£6.58m** of public funds to the Stage 3 procurement, including £1.6m from the Department for Culture Media and Sport. This brings the County Council's total commitment to the project to date to over £8m.

Bidders have been asked to design broadband networks which would serve whole communities. The aim, where possible, is to avoid more villages only being partially served through this initiative. However, there may be constraints which mean this is not always possible.

The ITT also asks bidders to set out how their proposals provide for remote premises or small clusters of remote premises (including farms) and the extent to which these solutions would be scalable. These are expected to be the most challenging of premises to serve. No specific geographic priorities have been set in the ITT. This is because solutions for all premises are important - the focus is on securing plans which deliver to as many of the 8,500 premises in the rural intervention area as possible. Other initiatives for Stage 3 will be coming forward to consider plans for those premises in non-rural locations which still require superfast broadband solutions.

When will the outcome of the ITT be known?

Interested telecoms operators have until late November 2016 to prepare their proposals and submit their bids. These will then go through a robust evaluation process which will consider price and solution design quality, speed and coverage outcomes, and delivery timescales amongst others.

Count down to January 2017. Telecoms delivery partners and Stage 3 plans to be announced.

The County Council expects to make an announcement in January 2017 on the outcome of the ITT and contract awards. This is when more information on Stage 3 will be available and what this means for areas concerned. Details will be set out on the project website and in the first newsletter of the New Year.

Emerging Demand Hot Spots

Readers may recall our last Newsletter in June led with the headline ‘We want to hear from you’’. Well, we’ve heard from over 1,000 of you so far which is great and we’d like to hear more! We’ve extended the closing date for the [Demand Registration Survey](#) till 30th December 2016 which gives you, your friends, neighbours and work colleagues in Northamptonshire more time to get involved.

The demand registration survey, which was launched in May 2016, simply aims to find out more about the current level of demand for superfast broadband in the county. The survey is available to complete on line via the Home Page on the Superfast Northamptonshire website at www.superfastnorthamptonshire.net.

The results of the demand registration survey will help us to understand current levels of demand for superfast broadband services. In particular, it will provide useful information to telecoms providers thinking about opportunities in the county, whether commercially or for the [next stage](#) of the Superfast Northamptonshire project which is now coming forward.

The Top 10 ‘hot spot’ responses to the on-line survey (up to mid-September) are shown in the table. This shows responses in absolute numbers and also an estimate of responses as a percentage of all premises in a village. Plans for these areas vary including some like Little Brington and Overthorpe which are currently expected to be served through Stage 2 of the project (subject to survey), and Clipston, Laxton and Clopton which are part of the 8,500 premises in scope of the Stage 3 procurement.

Survey Top 10 Hot Spots of Demand (mid-September 2016)

Community	No. of Responses	Estimated% of Village Premises
Clipston	56	20%
Laxton	36	73%
Little Brington	33	34%
Clopton	31	53%
Overthorpe	31	38%
Norton	31	22%
Blakesley	31	14%
Hinton-in-the-Hedges	29	36%
Sudborough	24	30%
Lower Harlestone	24	28%

These 10 communities account for over 31% of all the survey responses received.

4% of farmers in the UK have no access to the internet

(Source NFU spotlight on farm broadband, 2016)

Rural superfast broadband coverage in the UK rose from 22% in 2014 to 37% in 2015

(Source OFCOM Connected Nations Report 2015)

By 2017, 48% of the projected worlds' population will be internet users – that's 3.6 billion people

(Source Cisco Visual Networking Index 2016)

Summary of Key Findings

- 28% of respondents were experiencing speeds below 2Mbps
- 88% of respondents were experiencing speeds below 24Mbps
- 94% of respondents suggested they would take up a superfast broadband service if it was made available.

One of the survey questions explored what people would use a superfast broadband service for. As might be expected, "General Family Use" was the most popular answer, whilst over 60% of respondents needed it to work from home.

Full results from the survey will be released on the Project website by the end of January 2017.

When and Where Update

Roll out Headlines – September 2016

Stage 1 – Completed 3 months early in December 2015

- ✓ **61,950** additional premises passed by fibre, of which
- ✓ **53,800** premises in the target 'in need' areas now have access to superfast broadband

Stage 2 – commenced early and delivery is on track

- ✓ **5,350** premises passed by fibre, of which
- ✓ **4,950** premises are able to access superfast broadband speeds
- ✓ **64** new fibre structures are now live and providing superfast services
- ✓ The Stage 2 contract with BT is currently expected to see superfast broadband reach **20,465** premises by December 2017

The County Council appointed BT to deliver the first two Stages of the Superfast Northamptonshire project. Together these should see over 23% of all premises in the county (74,250) able to access superfast broadband.

By end-September 2016, Stages 1 and 2 of the Superfast Northamptonshire project had passed 66,300 premises by fibre. However, the important figure is how many premises now have access to superfast broadband - this is the target outcome for the project. Superfast coverage is reported quarterly and at the end of September 2016, over 58,750 additional premises were able to take up superfast broadband as a result of public investment. This is clearly brilliant news for these households and businesses. However, there is more to be done.

Having started earlier than expected, Stage 2 is now well underway and making good progress. Some of the latest areas to benefit include parts of Preston Capes, Everdon, Denton, Brafield on the Green, Easton Maudit, Wollaston and Fotheringhay, as well as parts of Kettering, Northampton and Wellingborough.

You can find out more by going to the [Roll Out Schedule](#) on the project website. The Roll Out Schedule provides information on areas where services are available and areas that are in the build programme and therefore 'Coming Soon'. This list will change as new cabinets and structures come forward into the schedule and as others are completed and are moved to the 'Available' listings.

The Coming Soon list is also updated to provide the latest position on expected delivery timescales – this means the timescales listing will change as they become firmer and closer to completion. This information is more detailed than

timescales shown on the When and Where map and is updated more regularly.

Timescales can come forward, but sometimes they may have to move back. This can be unavoidable if issues arise when building the network which cause delays and have to be managed. This could include, for example, blocked underground ducts, difficulties securing permission to cross private land (a wayleave) or traffic management requirements. You can find out more in the [FAQ's](#).

If you live or work in Cotterstock, Syresham or Whitfield then gear yourselves up to go superfast! The network in these areas is due to go live soon so keep an eye on the Roll Out Schedule for more news.

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 (ISP) to ask about an upgrade or go online to compare offers available from different providers to find the best deal for you. You can find out more about how to take up a superfast broadband service by visiting the [Get Connected](#) page.

Superfast broadband more popular than ever

The number of people signing up for high-speed fibre broadband as a result of the Superfast Northamptonshire project has quadrupled in the last two years, according to research by the County Council.

At the end of September 2016, over 58,750 premises in the county had access to superfast broadband thanks to public investment in the county's fibre broadband network. **Over 40% of these has taken up a fibre broadband service.** This is big

increase compared to less than 10% in June 2014 and 23% in June 2015. This is also much higher than the national average of 27% reported by Ofcom in the [Connected Nations Report 2015](#). We expect to see this 'need for speed' to continue to grow.

Some areas have snapped up the opportunity, such as Orlingbury near Wellingborough, which has one of the highest levels of take up at over 70 per cent of premises served. At Ward level, Barnwell in East Northamptonshire also exceeds 70 per cent.

County Councillor Ian Morris, the Cabinet Member leading on the broadband project said: "I am delighted that take up of superfast services in the county is growing strongly – in March 2016, we were ranked in the top four out of the 44 broadband projects nationally for take up. We want to get the most out of our public investment in the broadband network and therefore take up of services and making the most of the applications this opens up is critical.

Increasingly, local businesses and residents are seeing the benefits that a superfast fibre broadband service can bring. This may be helping to boost the bottom line for business through time and money saving applications, or at home, enabling the whole family to go on-line at the same time without frustrating buffering delays."

To find out if superfast broadband is available in your area visit www.superfastnorthamptonshire.net. The [When and Where map](#) provides an overview of expected plans in the county (both commercial and subsidised) and the [Roll Out Schedule](#) gives you the latest more detailed information on where services are 'coming soon' and areas where services are already available (those served through the Superfast Northamptonshire project). You will also find links to other availability checkers

including those for BT Wholesale, Virgin Media, Gigaclear and others (see the 'Useful Links' on the right hand web page index).

Managing Network Capacity

Take-up rates of superfast broadband in Northamptonshire are soaring and the county is one of the top performing for take-up levels nationally. This is great news and means that more and more people are taking advantage of the benefits this new technology can bring. However, such high demand means that managing the capacity of the network to ensure that new services are available to order is very important.

BT manage capacity for Superfast Northamptonshire in the same way as for their commercial network. BT use their expertise and experience to advise on the capacity required for the network in each area. When a particular location goes live, they continue to monitor closely how many people are signing up for fibre services, so capacity can be increased if required.

Once a roadside cabinet approaches capacity, an automatic alert is triggered so extra capacity can be ordered and provided as quickly as possible. Sometimes this can be a relatively quick and easy solution involving the installation of additional equipment at the exchange. This can provide a solution in a matter of hours or days. However, sometimes more significant additional works on the network are required to cater for additional demand in an area and in some cases this can take a few months to complete.

The County Council does not receive automatic notification of capacity issues from BT or its local network business, Openreach. Sometimes it receives enquiries from local people and businesses who are unable to temporarily take up a service because fibre broadband has proven so popular in their area and the cabinet has reached capacity. When the

County Council receives such enquiries it contacts BT to find out more about when services are expected to be available to order again.

Please note that the County Council has no control over the timescales to resolve any network capacity issues. The latter will be dependent on the scale of works required.

CityFibre launches Gigabit Northampton

CityFibre has announced that [Northampton](#) will become the UK's next Gigabit City. CityFibre is making its 45km state of the art pure fibre network available to Northampton's business community by means of a partnership with [dbfb](#), a long-standing Northampton-based business Internet Service Provider (ISP).

Dbfb will offer innovative and affordable, gigabit speed internet services to Northampton businesses up to 100 times faster than the UK's average. This gigabit connectivity will allow businesses to future-proof themselves as their demand for bandwidth increases, seamlessly integrating a new generation of powerful cloud services. As a business with close links to the town, dbfb have pledged an initial donation of £5,000 to the Cynthia Spencer Hospice for the first 50 connections, and will then donate £50 per business connecting to the new network thereafter.

The gigabit network will provide the ultra-fast and future-proof infrastructure required for new and existing businesses in the area to thrive. Northampton was named the best place for business start-ups outside London in the Centre for Cities' report [Cities Outlook 2016](#), and these companies will now have access to some of the most advanced internet connectivity in the country.

Greg Mesch, CEO of CityFibre, said: "We're delighted to announce Northampton as a Gigabit City and dbfb as our launch partner. Pure fibre networks like these will one day be common-place but until then, Northampton and its businesses will be able to enjoy a huge digital head start on the competition."

Brian Kingston co-founder and Chairman of dbfb said "dbfb has always been at the heart of Northampton's business community. It is not every day you have the chance to introduce a product that will transform the way a business can operate! This is truly a new generation of internet service and as a Northampton business ourselves, we are hugely proud to bring it to our town. Gig Up Northampton!"

For more information on CityFibre's presence in Northampton please go to <https://www.cityfibre.com/gigabit-cities/northampton/>

Openreach recruits more Northamptonshire engineers and apprentices

Openreach, BT's local network business, has announced it has completed another major recruitment drive in the East Midlands in order to improve customer service across the region. The latest recruitment has included the hiring of around 10 engineers and apprentices in Northamptonshire to help install new lines and fix faults more quickly.

Towns in Northamptonshire where the latest Openreach recruits are based include Daventry, Kettering, Northampton and Wellingborough.

It's the latest in a series of major recruitment drives undertaken by Openreach in the East Midlands in recent

years. And part of a nationwide initiative, which has seen Openreach employ thousands of engineers and hundreds of apprentices across the UK in the last three years.

Readers may also be interested to know that Openreach publishes regular customer service performance data on its website, showing how it delivers against a range of service targets, including standards set by the regulator, Ofcom.

It has been meeting or exceeding all 60 of Ofcom's service standards with the latest results showing that 84 per cent of faults are fixed within two working days and 93 per cent of new lines are installed on time. As these measures become tougher each year, the new recruits will help the company continue improving service levels.

Owen Moody, Chair of the BT regional board in the East Midlands, said: "This latest recruitment represents another major investment by BT in Northamptonshire as a leading employer and provider of essential services.

"New recruits are now embarking on exciting careers in a fast-moving industry, which is making a major contribution to the future success of the county. Already, they are working hard to ensure that local households and businesses get the best possible service whether they have ordered the latest new technology, such as superfast fibre broadband, or simply reported a fault.

"Given our focus on service, we've recruited people who can connect with customers and give them a very good experience they'll remember. In return, they have the opportunity of a fantastic career in a company that's at the forefront of building the UK's connected future."

Practical Tips for improving your broadband speed

There are a number of factors which can affect your broadband speed. Whilst some are beyond your control, there are steps you can take to help improve your experience. The following OFCOM tips may help.

Do a speed test on your line. This will show you what speed you are actually getting. Take a few tests over several days and vary the times you carry out the test. Ofcom accredited price comparison sites [Broadband.co.uk](https://www.broadband.co.uk), [Broadbandchoices.co.uk](https://www.broadbandchoices.co.uk), [Cable.co.uk](https://www.cable.co.uk), and [Simplifydigital](https://www.simplifydigital.com) all have speed checkers. Note that the speed you get may be limited by the service package you have ordered.

Have a chat with your ISP. If you have a problem with your connection, try contacting your provider in the first instance. They should be able to help you work out what the cause is and how you might be able to fix it.

Update your browser. Check whether you are using the latest version of your web browser – newer versions not only provide better security but should also work faster. You can check your browser [here](https://www.getsafeonline.org) on the Get Safe Online website.

Some electrical devices can cause interference to your router. Some electrical equipment such as halogen lamps, electrical dimmer switches, stereo or computer speakers, fairy lights, TVs, monitors and AC power cords have all been known to affect routers. It is advisable to keep your router as far away as possible from other electrical devices as well as those which emit wireless signals

such as cordless phones, baby monitors. If possible place your router on a table or shelf rather than on the floor and always keep it switched on.

Upgrade your router to the latest model.

If you have an older router, or you have been suffering from regular disconnections on your line, it may be beneficial to upgrade the router. Your provider should be able to provide information on how to do this.

Password protect your broadband. If you don't keep your wireless router secure, anyone nearby could log onto and use your broadband. Not only could this slow down your internet speeds but your online security could also be at risk. To find out whether you are secure, search for available wireless networks. If your network is secure there should be a picture of a padlock next to it. If there isn't then you'll need to password protect your router. Use a password that contains a mixture of numbers and upper and lower case letters. If you are not sure how to set or change a password, speak to your provider.

Try wired rather than wireless. Try using an Ethernet cable to connect your computer directly to your router rather than using WiFi. An Ethernet cable is a computer networking cable which should give you a faster, more reliable connection.

Phone line interference. Any interference on your phone line could slow your broadband down. Make sure your home has the most up to date main phone socket and plug microfilters into every phone socket in your home. They look like little white boxes and split the phone and broadband signals so that they don't affect each other.

Plug your broadband router directly into your home's main phone socket. Try not to use a telephone extension lead – leads can cause interference which could lower your speed. If you have to use an extension lead, use a new, high quality cable with the shortest possible length. Tangled and coiled cables can also affect speeds.

Fit a broadband accelerator or filter device. There are a number of devices available that are designed to filter out interference from your home phone wiring. These may improve speed and, even if they don't, can help stabilise your broadband line and make it more reliable. Try searching online for devices that may suit your needs.

Advice and information in this article is published by Ofcom.

News in Brief

21st Century Technology Arrives in Historic Rockingham

Superfast broadband is now available to around 50 homes in the historic village of Rockingham following Superfast Northamptonshire investment in the area. The picturesque village near Corby involved some additional considerations for the fibre broadband roll out. Engineers working for Openreach, BT's local network business, called in the experts when survey work highlighted the planned route for new underground cables would pass through an area of historic interest. As a result, an archaeologist spent time at the site before deciding the work could proceed as planned. The need to safeguard local history which may be buried underground was a key consideration when the new ducts routes were dug. Around 1,200 metres of new cabling and ducting was laid as part of the works. Services enabled by

the new Fibre to the Premise technology went live in June 2016.

WarwickNet Gets More Businesses Connected

WarwickNet delivers high speed internet to business parks. As a network and service provider, it launched its first services in Northamptonshire back in June 2014, bringing superfast broadband to Corby Gate Business Park. WarwickNet now serves all or parts of 14 business parks in Corby, Kettering, Wellingborough and Northampton. To find out more have a look at the [Telecoms Providers](#) page on the project website or go to <http://www.warwicknet.com/business-park-broadband> or call 024 7699 7222.

Warwicknet services are coming soon to Finedon Road Industrial Estate in Wellingborough.

New upgrade plans for Denford confirmed

The County Council and BT met with Denford Parish Council last month to confirm plans to bring fibre into the village. However, due to the distance from the cabinet, which is located in the southern part of Thrapston, the village has not seen the superfast broadband benefits needed and for many speeds remain generally low.

Many residents in Denford can already order a fibre service following an upgrade in 2014 to the green roadside cabinet which serves the village. Stage 2 of the Superfast Northamptonshire project will see Openreach, BT's local network business, build a new fibre spine into the village and install a new green roadside cabinet to provide upgraded services to local homes and businesses. Works are

currently expected to be completed by Spring 2017, sooner if possible. BT reported that residents served will see minimum speeds of 24Mbps and some much higher

Free digital Help

So ... you've got yourself connected with superfast broadband ... the world is your oyster. Or is it? Do you know your way around your new iPad, laptop or PC? Confused as how to make the most of opportunities that could be there for you?

Don't worry, there is help out there for you and it's FREE.

Digital Eagles

Free internet help online via the [Barclays Digital Eagles website](#). Barclays have created their Digital Wings page which is a free and fun digital learning tool designed to develop and grow your digital confidence. There are tools and tutorials for all abilities to help boost digital knowledge.

If you are having a problem with your device, such as a tablet, iPad or laptop and would rather speak face to face then Barclays Digital Eagles are there for you too. Sessions are run every Friday at Northampton Central Library from 12pm until 3pm and are free. Issues that they regularly deal with are setting up email, retrieving lost documents and even unlocking devices. The service is now being expanded to Rushden Library where the Eagles are available to help on Tuesdays from 10am.

Library Plus - IT Buddies

The Library Service operates a volunteer led initiative called IT Buddies which operate out of most libraries across the county. To date 27 libraries offer this

service and in the last quarter 47 IT Buddies volunteered over 1000 hours of time. Assistance with issues with your tablets, computers or laptops to how to search the internet, use email etc. is available free of charge. Take your own device with you or use the computers available in the library. The libraries also operate a **Free Friday**, for use of the computers. To find out which library nearest to you has a 'Buddy' visit the [Library Service Website](#). If you know anyone who may be interested in volunteering within the Library Service visit the 'Get Involved Hub' at www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/getinvolvedhub.

Google Digital Garage

Provided by Google, [The Digital Garage](#) offers free tutorials on everything from your website to online marketing and beyond. Choose the topics you want to learn, or complete the whole online course for a certification from Google and IAB Europe.

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

or for further information please email:

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Or by post please contact:

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