Celebrating Fibre Broadband in Northamptonshire

The Superfast Northamptonshire project aims to secure access to superfast broadband across the county by the end of 2017. Around three quarters of this coverage is expected to be provided competitively through the private sector's commercial plans – this leaves the Superfast Northamptonshire project to focus public investment only where it is needed to bring forward faster broadband which otherwise wouldn't happen.

This edition of the Newsletter celebrates the investment being made by telecoms providers commercially in the county including those that some readers may be less familiar with. A strong market is good news and the County Council continues to promote Northamptonshire to telecoms providers more widely as a great place to invest.

We asked telecoms providers with networks and plans in Northamptonshire to tell us about what they do and this Newsletter shares their articles with you.

All content has been provided by the companies named in each article.

What is in this Edition?

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.

Bridge Fibre

Delivering Business Connectivity at Silverstone Park

Commercial development and asset management company MEPC is building on the history, heritage and global reputation of Silverstone Circuit, to create a home for high-performance technology and motorsport engineering.

Silverstone Park is set to become a global destination for a diverse range of businesses with shared aspirations and values, who through their passion and determination, innovate, engineer and perform at the highest levels.

Bridge Fibre was selected by MEPC to provide superfast, business grade connectivity for Silverstone Park. Initially this was focused on the Innovation Centre, but has rapidly expanded to cover other buildings on the Park and across to the newly acquired Buckingham Road site. Currently we provide up to 100Mbps, and this is scheduled to be increased to Gigabit services in the near future. As the masterplan and development of the Park expands then this will be enhanced with a diverse, resilient connection and a fibre ring within the Park.

As business park specialists, Bridge Fibre gives landlords and tenants the same quality of connectivity that is normally only available to major corporates. Our world-class fibre comes at a competitive price, giving you the trusted internet service that your business needs to thrive and grow.

Bridge Fibre works in partnership with landlords of multi-tenanted business parks to solve connectivity problems by delivering premium fibre optic broadband, secure server hosting, and reliable telephony services.

The Bridge Fibre team work to understand the needs of your business park and your tenants, be they start-ups, SMEs or larger enterprises. Our team builds excellent working relationships by consulting closely with you and your tenants. Also, we never use jargon, so you understand what we are doing, and why.

The outcome is a bespoke solution for your business park, enhancing its internet infrastructure and increasing capacity for your tenants.

- Business broadband options: Contended or Dedicated internet, with a range of download and upload speeds that provides your business park with guaranteed high-speed connectivity at a price they can afford.
- Business hosting services, including a secure hosted server, email hosting, backup services, disaster recovery, hosted applications, SharePoint, web hosting, domain services and rackspace.
- Reliable telephony services delivered over the fibre connection, eliminating costs of traditional phone systems and guaranteeing quality of service.
- Dedicated, long-term ICT support delivered by our sister company, Bridge Partners.

Bridge Fibre is already working with leading business parks in Cambridge, Norwich to Oxford and Bristol to Glasgow, as well as with Northamptonshire's Silverstone Park.

For further information about how we can help you or your Park, visit our website www.bridgefibre.co.uk, email sales@bridgefibre.co.uk or call 01223 755055

British Telecommunications

Keeping the UK connected

BT is a major investor in Northamptonshire both in terms of its investment in the county's telecommunications network and its impact on the local economy.

The company spends £39m with local suppliers and supports more than 1500 jobs in the county.

To date BT has already provided more than 175,000 homes and businesses in Northamptonshire with access to high-speed fibre broadband as part of its substantial £2.5bn commercial investment programme to bring fibre broadband to two-thirds of UK premises.

The company was also delighted to win the contract to partner with Northamptonshire County Council to deliver the first phase of the Superfast Northamptonshire project to extend fibre broadband to 90 percent of homes and businesses in the county by the end of 2015 (when combined with the private sector's commercial plans, including BT's own substantial investment). This is progressing at pace with more than 21,500 additional homes and businesses in Northamptonshire already able to access high-speed fibre broadband.

BT has been working right across the UK, in all weathers, up telegraph poles, down man holes, over the hills and in the valleys to bring faster broadband to the UK's cities, towns and villages, including Northamptonshire. You can watch BT's YouTube channel for further insight into what's involved in our work.

BT provides open, wholesale access to its network and unlike other operators, has more than 140 service providers currently trialling or selling fibre services over its network. This is great news for the homes and businesses using the technology because open networks foster competition, resulting in more choice and lower prices.

To find out more about BT's fibre roll-out plans go to http://www.superfast-openreach.co.uk/where-and-when.

Gigaclear

Bringing ultrafast broadband to residents & business in Northamptonshire Villages

Gigaclear has recently announced plans to bring ultrafast broadband to some of Northamptonshire's rural communities.

Entrepreneur Matthew Hare established ultrafast broadband provider, Gigaclear, in 2010. Matthew lived in a rural community in Oxfordshire and had first hand experience of what a slow and unreliable service could mean.

Matthew explains, "It could be particularly frustrating for those wanting or attempting to work from home in order to avoid long or costly commutes. Families often found the network could support only one device at a time and in only one room – making it difficult for youngsters to take advantage of online educational resources, for example. There was insufficient broadband for even basic entertainment or communication services such as BBC iPlayer or Skype."

Matthew came up with an approach that involved rolling out a fibre-optic network to every property in an area - delivering better reliability and speed performance than the existing copper networks'. .. Fibre-to-the-premise (FTTP) technology provides speeds of up to 1,000Mbps for both uploads and downloads – ensuring the current and future needs of rural communities are met. Gigaclear normally requires around 30 per cent of the residents in a community to sign up in order to make the investment in building a fully fibre network commercially viable.

In October 2011 Gigaclear delivered its first FTTP network to Hambleton in Rutland, in association with Rutland Telecom. In 2012 it helped the Oxfordshire villages of Appleton, Eaton and Besselsleigh join the best-connected communities in the world.

Appleton resident Graham Rose, said, "I have been using the Gigaclear service for a while now, and have been blown away – not just by the speeds but, by the realisation of how many more services I can use because of those speeds. I can make high quality video calls and, having switched to internet telephony, I have a better quality telephone service that costs me less."

For businesses operating in rural areas, fast and reliable broadband is now a make-or-break utility. Many businesses have to relocate if it is not available. They rely on effective communications via traditional voice, multi- and social media to thrive, compete and take advantage of an ever-wider market opportunity.

When installing its network in an area, Gigaclear provides enough fibre to allow each business in a community to have one or more services at no additional construction charge. Businesses typically pay a £200 connection fee, a £200 installation fee and then a monthly subscription. This is as low as £59/month (including VAT) for a superfast 50Mbps symmetric service - that's 50Mbps for downloads and 50 Mbps for uploads - with unlimited use and none of the 'how far are we from the cabinet' issues.

Operation improvement specialist [Newton Europe](#) is based at one of the Oxfordshire business parks Gigaclear has connected. Greig Harper, IT Manager comments, "With 150 employees across the UK, communication is very important to us. We need bandwidth for e-learning and video conferencing as well as working with ever increasing datasets. Gigaclear was one of the main reasons for us moving here. Taking a leased line in a rural location would have been prohibitively expensive but with Gigaclear we have what we need – now and for the foreseeable future. We've moved to a cloud-based infrastructure and can provide remote IT support to colleagues working on site with clients. It has freed the central IT team to focus on more strategic matters."

Today Gigaclear owns and operates nine networks across Oxfordshire and Rutland, it is completing four more networks in Oxfordshire and Kent and has recently announced plans to make substantial investments in Peterborough and

Northamptonshire.

In Northamptonshire, the communities involved include **West Haddon, Ravensthorpe, Guilsborough, Hollowell, Creaton, Cottesbrooke, Scaldwell, Ashley, Kingscliffe, Apethorpe, Aynho and Croughton**. Roll out will start in each community once 30 per cent of residents have opted to take the service. Gigaclear includes a 'Gigameter' on its website which gauges how high take up has reached in a community. Gigameters for West Haddon, Ravensthorpe and Guidlsborough, and for Kingscliffe are already live on Gigaclear's 'Progress in my Community' website page. The areas with highest demand are likely to be addressed most quickly – who will be first in Northamptonshire...

Ultrafast broadband will be available from £37/month plus optional landline telephone at just £7/month.

Gigaclear is hosting two more 'community broadband question and answer' sessions in the West Haddon and Guilsborough areas in September. These events are for any residents in West Haddon, Guilsborough, Coton and Ravensthorpe who wish to find out more about Gigaclear and its plans for ultrafast fibre-to-the-premises broadband for these areas.

The event details are as follows:

Tuesday 16th September, 20:00 to 21:30, Guilsborough Village Hall

Tuesday 23rd September, 19:30 to 21:00. West Haddon Village Hall

To find out more about Gigaclear, its services and pricing, visit www.gigaclear.com or email info@gigaclear.com.

Independent Fibre Networks Limited

Bringing superior telecoms infrastructure to new homes across the UK

In the new knowledge economy, with the increasing importance of communications networks and digital industries, the availability of high speed data connectivity will be a critical factor in deciding where people live and work.

IFNL believes that only Fibre to the Home (FTTH) or Fibre to the Premise (FTTP) delivers the full benefit of bandwidth needed to provide a great home entertainment experience that happens when there are no limits to speed and capacity.

The benefit isn't just about speed, it's about the unlimited capacity of fibre to carry large files, such as movies, music, photographs and leading-edge games – as well as medical images and multimedia programming for distance learning. Fibre shatters the limitations we've come to expect from older technologies.

In order for areas outside the larger urban conurbations to prosper, there is a need to provide a future proof infrastructure that attracts people to base their homes in these locations, which will support the connectivity needs of these local economies.

IFNL delivers next generation 'Open Access' fibre optic networks to new residential and commercial developments across the UK. This network provides voice, very high speed data and communal satellite systems to these communities and businesses enabling them to prosper in this new digital age. Our aim is to bring a superior data experience to the users of our network that matches other leading countries with access to fibre connectivity.

Our solution is providing an 'Open Access' network infrastructure to enable choice of Service Providers, giving residential and business customers the very latest in communication and entertainment technology.

Our pure fibre infrastructure provides the ultimate telecommunications experience with end-to-end fibre-optic cable, right into the home. The capability of the fibre network means that distance limitations are no longer an issue, as well as the ability to provide increased capacity as customer bandwidth requirements inevitably grow over time.

The main services currently delivered over the fibre optic network are Voice and Next Generation Access in the form of 50Mbps, 100Mbp and 300Mbps broadband to residential customers. IFNL deliver a variety of services to business customers that ranges from single phone and broadband services for a small business, through to large business connections with bandwidths from 10Mbps up to 1Gbps.

IFNL work with all major housing developers across the UK, and operate networks across over 40 different sites. Over 30 of these sites are active and include new developments in Aylesbury, Milton Keynes, Swindon, Melksham, Kings Cross, Exeter, Bridgwater, and Bristol to name but a few. **In Northamptonshire, our active sites are currently Priors Hall in Corby and Stanion near Corby**.

IFNL are passionate about providing choice and best value to customers connected to its fibre network and is attracting some of the UK's largest Service Providers to deliver services to customers connected to the IFNL fibre infrastructure.

Fibre to the home allows imagination to be the limit and not the communications technology.

For further information please contact us on:

IFNL Helpline: 0845 051 1669
IFNL Email: enquiries@IFNL.net

IFNL web: www.ifnl.net

Tove Valley Broadband

This is the story of Abthorpe Broadband Association and its coming of age, bringing fibre to Tove Valley

"It all began in early 2003 over a pint of *Hooky* in our village pub The New Inn. A group of regulars were bemoaning the fact that broadband was fast becoming more and more important for small businesses, but those in our small village of Abthorpe were unlikely to benefit as the large companies would be unable to connect us for the foreseeable future.

Eric Malcomson, one of those drinkers, blandly stated that if the big boys couldn't connect us – we'd do it ourselves! The rest of the group, although perhaps subconsciously thinking that Eric was three pence short of a shilling, decided to humour him and went along with his proposals. A steering committee was formed with Eric as Chairman and after a survey it was quickly ascertained that there was a real need for broadband in our South Northamptonshire village. A company limited by guarantee was formed.

The inaugural meeting of the Abthorpe Broadband Association Ltd (ABbA) took place on 30th June 2003 where it was agreed that the whole enterprise should be totally operated by unpaid volunteers. Ten of those volunteers each applied for a £500 RABBIT Grant (Remote Area Broadband Internet Trial) each from a Government agency and when their grants were successful all the 'rabbits' were put in the pot to help fund the new network.

Things happened fast! A satellite dish was fixed on one of the director's home, linked to Aramiska a Belgian satellite company. Pop-ups in Flemish or French became familiar sights. The satellite was linked by cable to the doctor's house next door from where a wi-fi signal was transmitted to access points dotted throughout Abthorpe and to Slapton on the other side of the Tove Valley. Initially 25 villagers had small wi-fi receivers affixed to their premises so that they could access broadband of 5Mbps – fast in those days.

As news went round the village more and more people joined ABbA – over 50% of them needed broadband for their businesses. The monthly fee dropped from £25 to £15, then to £10 and then to £5. As ABbA, a not-for-profit company, had accumulated so much money in its account the directors finally decided that the service should be offered free. This happy state of affairs lasted for three years.

Despite all the hard work, those early days were fun. A computer and Internet demonstration was held for anyone who was interested, a course sponsored by the Co-operative's Community Fund was arranged for older people, a digital photography exhibition showed-off the new medium and the company received an award in the *Broadband Britain Challenge.*

Nine years passed and much to most people's surprise ABbA continued to thrive.

By 2012 superfast broadband delivered by fibre optic cable was rapidly being introduced into the major population centres of the country and the Government's rural programme was just getting underway. Over another pint of *Hooky* or two, it was decided that if we wanted super-fast broadband in the foreseeable future it was to be a DIY approach again.

But as the costs of doing this for a small village such as ours would be prohibitive, it was decided that the company's operational area would have to be enlarged to include other villages in the Upper Tove Valley such as Wappenham, Weedon Lois, Weston and Bradden. A meeting was called at Abthorpe village hall inviting volunteers from other local communities to offer their services to enlarge the network. Eric and his fellow directors hoped that a dozen or so people would volunteer. 36 keen volunteers turned-up and agreed to help using their considerable expertise!

Things happened very quickly after this. Arrangements were made to hire the fibre optic cable going into St Loys Primary School at Weedon Lois. After a faculty had been submitted to the Diocese of Peterborough, permission was given for the company's wi-fi signal to be transmitted from

St Loys across the Tove Valley to Wappenham Church that with ongoing transmitters acted as a hub for the distribution of the signal to the other villages.

The new superfast service now known as *Tove Valley Community Broadband* was hugely successful and membership soared. One local doctor described that when his children returned home for the holidays from university they were amazed and delighted that their broadband speeds at home were significantly better than at university. The MD of a local based company explained that he had been contemplating moving his business elsewhere until the new Tove Valley service arrived. The local children took to the new service with enthusiasm and downloaded films and videos and joined social media sites. When they arrived home from school speeds dropped from the 30+ Mbps available during the day and it became clear that the service would have to be upgraded yet again.

Fortunately Government and European Union grants were available then to help little community enterprises such as ours. In the Summer of 2014, and after a great deal of hard work preparing detailed funding bids to Government and completing negotiations with local landowners, Eric signed a contract with DEFRA and BDUK that made a grant of over £100,000 available so that fibre optic cables could be laid between the villages in our operational area once this year's harvest has been safely gathered in.

On 18th August 2014 work began to link our villages with fibre optic cables. Northants Land Drainage Ltd – a highly respected local company is contracted to lay ducts across the fields and it is hoped that by the end of the year our rural community will have the benefit of some of the fastest broadband speeds in Europe.

Our adventure continues!

For more information log onto
www.tovevalley.com

Virgin Media

Supercharging thousands of new homes across Northamptonshire

Virgin Media has teamed up with housing developers in and around Northampton to bring superfast broadband and unbeatable home entertainment to thousands of new homes.

Virgin Media delivers superfast broadband over its modern fibre optic network alongside the most advanced interactive television service, bringing together hundreds of TV channels, thousands of hours of On Demand TV, movies and music, Netflix, BT Sport and Sky Sports and more in a single set-top box powered by TiVo.

Customers can create a bundle of services that best suits their needs, combining great entertainment, home phone services and unbeatable value mobile SIMs with superfast broadband of at least 50Mb as standard in a single, flexible package.

Making the right connections

Virgin Media has partnered with housing developers including Taylor Wimpey, Persimmon, Redrow and Kier so people moving into their new homes will be able to enjoy great entertainment and superfast broadband speeds straight away.

A number of estates in the Northampton area, such as Taylor Wimpey's development in Pineham North and Kier Homes' development in West Hill, will benefit from the collaboration, with more to follow as plans progress for other sites within reach of Virgin Media's network.

Blisteringly fast broadband speeds

Virgin Media's new top speed of 152Mb, introduced earlier this year, is 19 times faster than regular broadband.

The new 152Mb top speed means customers can download an entire TV show in just one minute, but the ultrafast service really comes into its own in satisfying the rapidly growing demand for

bandwidth around the home as people use multiple connected devices online at the same time.

Virgin Media's entry-level service is now 50Mb, setting a new standard for internet connectivity that is five times faster than regular broadband.

Can-do cable

People who would like to become a Virgin Media customer but are not sure if they are in a cabled area can use Virgin Media's postcode checker to find out if the company's services are available where they live. The checker can be found on the right-hand side of Virgin Media's home page at www.virginmedia.com.

If the postcode checker says a home isn't within a cabled area but neighbours living a street or two away can get Virgin Media services, drop an email to cablemystreet@virginmedia.co.uk with your name, full address and contact details. Virgin Media is always expanding its network to new areas and may be able to bring cable to your street in certain cases.

The 'Cable My Street' team can also help people looking to move into a new build by confirming whether a new development will be ready to offer Virgin Media services when residents move in.

At the moment, Virgin Media is working with developers to offer its services in the following new build estates:

- Barratt Homes - Upton Way, Northampton
- Redrow Homes - Northampton Lane North
- Redrow Homes - Powell Lane, Barton Seagrave
- Taylor Wimpey Homes - Pineham North, Northampton
- Kier Homes - West Hill, Northampton
- Persimmon Homes - Old Marina Hospital, Northampton
- Keepmoat Homes - Upton Way Northampton
- Lagan Homes & Metro Housing Trust - Northampton Rd, Northampton
- Taylor Wimpey Homes - Billing Park, Northampton
- Kier Homes - Chester Rd, Wellingborough

This is on top of Virgin Media's established network providing services in other parts of the county including elsewhere in Northampton and in Kettering, Wellingborough, Rushden and Corby

With many developments underway and more in the pipeline, these exciting partnerships are bringing superfast broadband to a growing number of homes in Northamptonshire, helping residents unlock fantastic connectivity and entertainment when they're handed the keys to their new homes.

WarwickNet

Fibre connecting business parks in Northamptonshire

WarwickNet is a Coventry-based Internet Service Provider with a specialist focus on Business Parks and Industrial Estates. We are now fibre connecting business in Northamptonshire.

Founded a little over 10 years ago, WarwickNet runs its own substantial network, delivering high quality, business-grade connectivity, Voice and MPLS solutions to poorly connected Business Parks and Industrial Estates.

The company takes pride in a reputation for engineering excellence, as one of the very first Internet Service Providers (ISPs) in the UK to bring Fibre to the Cabinet broadband to Business Parks, and for its innovative use of the bonding of copper lines to bring low cost leased line options to small businesses who would struggle to afford fibre leased lines.

Present on a substantial number of parks throughout the Midlands, WarwickNet are now investing in Northamptonshire and bringing much needed fast fibre broadband to businesses on poorly connected parks in the county.

Corbygate Business Park was the first location in Northamptonshire to benefit from WarwickNet's fibre roll out and a number of businesses on the park snapped up faster services when the park went live in July. With the cabinet built, and final works completed, ultrafast broadband of up to 80Mbps and leased lines of up to 1Gbit/s are available to all tenants on the estate.

Andrew Smeaton, business park manager for Corbygate Management, said: "*We are grateful to WarwickNet for their support and commitment which has enabled this established business park to offer improved broadband speeds across the estate and thereby progress into the modern age.*"

Ben King, Chief Executive of WarwickNet, said: "*We are pleased to be working with forward-thinking local authorities such as the Northamptonshire County Council and will soon be rolling out Superfast Broadband to other Business Parks and Industrial Estates across the county.*"

WarwickNet's plans in the county include provision to other business parks and estates in Corby including parts of Earlstrees, Phoenix Way and Weldon North as well as Kettering and other parts of Northamptonshire.

For more information on **WarwickNet**'s services on Corbygate Business Park, call 024 7699 7222 or visit www.warwicknet.com/corbygate-business-park and for all general enquiries about WarwickNet's fibre roll out to business parks in Northamptonshire contact Mark Hitchcock- Business Development Manager- mark.hitchcock@warwicknet.com

Hear more about the benefits for business from Northamptonshire's own

Local company **Airspotters.com** is a niche business that sells model aircraft and much more. A home start business, now operating from Corby Enterprise Centre, it has customers across the globe. The business is heavily reliant on a fast internet service. Visit the Project website's "Benefits" page to view our business case study videos and hear from Airspotters directly about how superfast broadband has enabled their business to grow.

<u>Superfast Business Facts</u>

✔ In total, 65% of Small to Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) have increased their Internet usage over the last 2 years.

✔ The proportion of businesses with increasing turnover is around twice as high amongst those utilising online technology compared with those who are not.

✔ 78% of SME's believe that superfast broadband increases their business's productivity

S*ource: Britain's Digital Opportunity- Go-On-2013*

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:
bigidea@northamptonshire.gov.uk

Or by post please contact:
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