Northamptonshire County Council

SUPERFAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
Update on the delivery of Superfast Broadband in Northamptonshire: September 2011

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Superfast Northamptonshire

This is the third newsletter produced by Northamptonshire County Council on the *superfast Northamptonshire* initiative. This edition is designed to outline the latest position and the next steps for the initiative.

Contents include

- Latest News
- On-line survey results
- New blog site
- E-petition
- Rural Community Broadband
- Update on BT roll-out plans

Superfast Northamptonshire aims to enable superfast broadband to be accessed by all residential and business properties in Northamptonshire.

The total investment needed to deliver this is in excess of £100m. However, a large proportion of the investment will be provided by private telecoms providers taking advantage of commercially viable opportunities.

The County Council's focus is therefore the areas where providing superfast broadband access would not be commercially viable to private sector providers. It aims to appoint a private sector telecoms provider to act as a partner to co-invest in superfast broadband in these areas. This covers over 74,000 residential and business premises in the more rural parts of the county (these are known as "White Areas").

The Bid

In April, the County Council submitted its broadband plan to Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK). The plan has been positively received and the County Council is making some small amendments and updates to reflect feedback from the BDUK team.

The County Council is also working closely with the BDUK team on their 'call off' framework. The purpose of this framework is to enable authorities to deliver a quicker competitive procurement process than would be possible through a traditional European Union procurement route. As part of this the County Council attended an 'industry day' in London recently.

Latest News

The County Council has received the news from BDUK that we have been allocated £4.08 million to contribute towards the rollout of superfast broadband to provide coverage of the "white areas" of the County between now and 2015. By white areas, we mean those localities which are difficult to serve on an economically viable basis and this

Northamptonshire let yourself grow

additional funding will help make it become a more attractive and feasible proposition

We are receiving around £55 contribution for each premise to be made accessible to the superfast broadband compared to around £35 per premise as received by, for example, our neighbours in Leicestershire, Milton Keynes and Buckinghamshire etc. This puts us on a comparison with the highest benefitting authorities like Cornwall and Cumbria that are receiving significant funding in absolute terms

The £4.08 million is considered to be a contribution towards providing 90% coverage of superfast broadband in the County. However, our business case sets out how we can deliver a 100% coverage in line with the political policy steer from the County Council. The total package to cover the "white areas" is in fact £34 million. The County Council plan to add to the £4.08m million by contributing up to a further £4.08m million of County Council funding

Key timeline	
BDUK framework out to OJEU	July 2011
Approval of Broadband plan by BDUK	November 2011
BDUK framework	May 2012
Planned start on site	December 2012

Launch of new blog site

A Superfast Northamptonshire blog site has been developed to update local residents and other interested stakeholders. Here you can catch up with the latest news, interact with others, and sign up to receive regular newsletters plus lots more. The dedicated blog site can be found HERE

You can also sign our E-Petition which is designed to complement the on-line survey. This will help influence the impact of our project to central government and the telecoms industry by demonstrating clear countywide demand and support for the roll out of superfast broadband. Sign the E-Petition HERE

Other Rural Community Broadband activities

The County Council led approach is not the only way in which rural communities can get better broadband.

The East Midlands Broadband Consortium (EMBC), which includes the County Council, currently operates a broadband network to supply schools across Northamptonshire. It is possible that this connection could be upgraded so that it could also enable much better broadband for the surrounding local community.
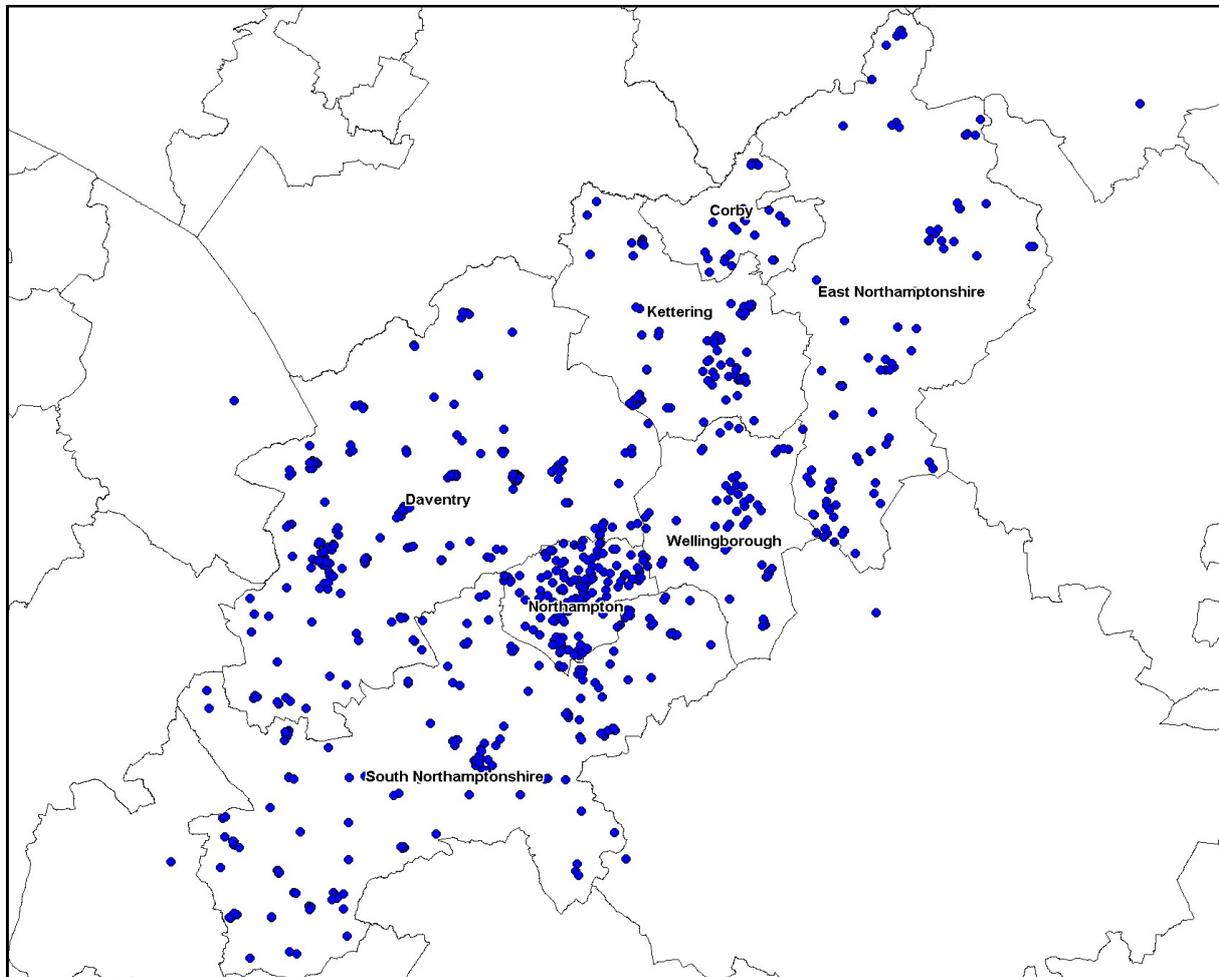
EMBC is currently looking for around ten schools and local communities, across the East Midlands, interested in investigating the opportunities of utilising the school broadband infrastructure for the wider community. If your school has its broadband delivered over fibre and if there is support or a campaign already running in your local community to get better broadband, we would be interested in hearing from you. Even if you are not sure about your own connection, but know that the local parish council or groups of residents and businesses are working to find a solution to broadband issues, EMBC may be able to help.

To find out more please contact thebigidea@northamptonshire.gov.uk and we will pass your information on to EMBC to explore the opportunities

Broadband Survey

In April, the County Council conducted a two week intensive data gathering exercise through its 'Broadband Survey' to gain as much information as possible regarding broadband speeds, usage and opinions on current access. We received over 1100 responses, a fantastic and unprecedented response.

The results we received were widespread, the county map below indicates where the surveys were

Some headlines from the survey included;

- 50% of respondents had an average speed of less than 2Mbps, with less than 5% of respondents having an average speed of over 10Mbps.

- Over 20% of respondents considered their current service to be unreliable.

- At home, broadband was primarily used for web browsing (27%), emailing (27%), education (14%) and TV streaming (13%).

- At work, enhanced broadband reliability was a key factor in flexible working (31%) improving customer service (28%) and supporting business growth (16%)

The results of this survey have been used to inform the County Council's broadband plan and investment case.

Community Case Study Example

These are local case studies of proactive communities which are developing their own surveys to register demand and help make the case for improved broadband access.

There are also examples of local communities which are in direct discussions with telecoms providers to develop their own broadband solutions.   Further details of these will be available on the blog site and in the next newsletter.

Helmdon
A project to bring fibre broadband to residents in Helmdon in South Northamptonshire is underway. The FiSH project (Fast Internet Service for Helmdon) is in its infancy but already the ingredients are coming together.

Faster broadband was a need identified by the recently refreshed Parish Plan and Helmdon Parish Council is fully behind it. Councillor Danny Moody says "Our closest exchange is 4km away in Sulgrave so current speeds are very low, sometimes struggling to hit 1Mbps", "the frustrating thing though is that there is a fibre pipe into the village for the primary school, so the capacity is there and it's just a case of working out how it might be delivered."

Helmdon residents have had a number of meetings with EMBC, who manage the fibre infrastructure as well as "last third" companies such as Gigaclear who could take the fibre from the school to individual homes. Councillor Moody added "The technology is the easy bit. At the end of the day it will come down to simple economics... are there enough residents prepared to sign up to a contract with a service provider such that it makes financial sense for the provider to invest in the infrastructure". Although with speeds of ten times, even 100 times what is available now the FiSH project looks certain to make progress.

Warmington and Lutton
A broadband survey was sent to 467 domestic properties and 19 businesses in the villages of Warmington and Lutton in the north of the county.   The survey received a 100% response rate from businesses and a 28% response rate from domestic properties.   Some key findings were:

> 28% of respondent households said that high speed broadband would encourage the setting up of a new business from home, thus enabling both environmental benefits and economic benefits.

> 11% of businesses said high speed broadband would enable their employees to work from home, which means savings in office space, electricity usage for computers, lighting, heating etc.

BT roll-out plans for superfast broadband

As part of the Superfast Northamptonshire initiative, BT is upgrading a number of exchanges serving the county. The details of these exchanges and latest position available at:

http://www.openreach-communications.co.uk/superfast/where-and-when/

How I can support the bid?

If you have not already recorded your support for this bid, and would like to;

You can sign the superfast Northamptonshire e-petition (details above);

and/or you can write to:

Ed Vaisey MP
Minister for Culture, Communications & Creative Industries
Department for Culture, Media and Sport
2-4 Cockspur Street
London
SW1Y 5DH
askedvaisey@culture.gsi.gov.uk

Further Information

For more information on superfast Northamptonshire please visit the new blog site which has links through to the previous two editions of the newsletter. Also it has more case study examples for your information and interest.

Contact

For further information, please contact :
Bigidea@northamptonshire.gov.uk

Or 01604 236641

Next edition

The next edition of this newsletter will be produced in November 2011. This will provide an update on the bid and also the numbers signed up to the e-petition.

We thank you for your continued support