

News from Buckinghamshire County Council

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For Immediate Release

Broadband plan for Buckinghamshire could be ready by autumn

Broadband for Buckinghamshire's 'not spots' has taken a step forward following talks with Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK), which heads the government initiative to ensure that communities and businesses across the UK get a high quality service.

A Local Broadband Plan should be ready to submit to BDUK as early as October through a collaborative partnership between strategic economic development bodies and local authorities in Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire, established earlier in the summer.

Discussions between Bucks Business First (BBF) and BDUK have confirmed government support of around £2 million towards the cost of high speed broadband in Buckinghamshire in partnership with commercial wholesale broadband providers.

BBF, a group set up last year by business leaders determined to ensure the continued economic success of Buckinghamshire, has been working on plans to reach all the county's businesses and homes with broadband of at least 2Mb/sec and up to 40Mb/sec, with the full support of Buckinghamshire County Council.

Developing broadband across Buckinghamshire is one of County Council Leader Martin Tett's priorities, and he welcomed the government grant. 'The development of broadband is critical for supporting the growth of our economy, and it's good for our efforts to focus on the creation of new jobs particularly for our young people.'



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



BBF estimates there are 46,000 homes and businesses in Buckinghamshire with speeds below 2Mb/sec, or in 'not-spots' - those without broadband. It aspires to provide next-generation superfast broadband for more than 90% of premises, and ensuring the remainder have a speed of at least 2Mb/sec. Delivery would be through a mixture of fibre-optic cabling and wireless technology.

The latest move to collaborate with Hertfordshire is likely to accelerate broadband development through merging the two counties' plans and procurement processes, and setting up a joint project team to drive it forward, aiming at tendering by late summer 2012.

BBF Chief Executive, Stuart Jones, said: 'I am delighted that BBF is able to drive this strategically-important initiative forward. It is our intention that the delivery of this collaborative BDUK project will enable us to stimulate economic growth, support business development and ensure that our communities are able to fully embrace the benefits of high speed broadband.'

When ready, the Local Broadband Plan will document the scale of the project, include the number of premises it will serve, and estimate the overall cost, which will be met through funding from local authorities and central government, matched by contributions from commercial broadband providers.

Background details

The government's support for Buckinghamshire is part of a £530 million investment in the UK's broadband network announced by Culture Secretary Jeremy Hunt in August. English counties will receive £294.8 million, and Scotland £68.8 million. The government says the investment will ensure that the UK has the best superfast broadband network in Europe by 2015, with 90 per cent of homes and businesses having access to superfast broadband and for everyone in the UK to have access to a service of at least 2Mb/sec.