

Notts broadband plan is still on target

Rural communities in Nottinghamshire with little or no internet access are on course to get access to superfast broadband speeds in the next three years.

Nottinghamshire County Council is reassuring residents and businesses that it remains on target to roll out its broadband plan, which will guarantee access to superfast broadband speeds for 90% of premises and at least 2Mbps for the rest.

The County Council is currently in the middle of the procurement phase, which means that it will soon be selecting a partner to help it deliver superfast broadband across the area, with two telecoms companies competing to be the chosen provider.

An announcement on the successful bidder is scheduled for the beginning of July when the Council will also be in a position to give individual communities and businesses a better idea of the phasing of the project.

Work on the ground is expected to start before the end of this year, with the first communities expected to get access to next generation broadband from early 2014. The County Council has complied with all the Government's requirements through development of the project and is working towards completion of the project by the end of 2015, in line with the Government's expectations.

Jayne Francis-Ward, the Council's Corporate Director for Policy, Planning and Corporate Services and lead on the broadband project, said: "The economic benefits of having a better connected county are potentially huge and the County Council is doing everything it can to bring superfast broadband to Nottinghamshire as soon as possible. The days of a digital divide between different areas of the county are numbered. We've had to jump through a lot of hoops to secure the final go-ahead from Government, but we're on track for the contract to be signed off by the end of June this year. We'll then be able to be much clearer about the roll-out timetable. In the meantime, we're continuing to pursue further European funding to top up the money already available for the project, which may well enable us to roll out next generation broadband access even further and even faster."

An estimated 66,702 homes and businesses in Nottinghamshire will benefit from the roll out of the plan. Rural areas, many of which currently have little or no access to broadband will benefit the greatest. The number of properties covered in each district is:

Newark and Sherwood - 26,210

Bassetlaw - 15,626

Rushcliffe - 13,157

Mansfield - 3,538

Ashfield - 3,072

Gedling - 2,905

Broxtowe - 2,194

None of the properties to benefit from the roll out of the broadband plan have been identified for future upgrades by the telecoms companies in the next three years, which means that without this significant public infrastructure investment, homes and businesses face the risk of being left behind. It is hoped that the plan will particularly make the conditions for enterprises in rural and urban areas more equal and will be a powerful driver of business productivity, investment and economic growth.

Nottinghamshire County Council estimates that the upgrade of the broadband network will cost £17m, with £8.5m being provided by the Government, the County Council and District and Borough Councils. The remaining £8.5m would be met by whichever telecoms provider is selected to implement the upgrade.

Further information on the Nottinghamshire Broadband plan, including the timetable for its implementation, is available at www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/broadband

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