

Borders Broadband

Herefordshire and Gloucestershire

Briefing Note

May 2011

Introduction

The Borders Broadband project aims to deliver the best, most reliable and affordable Superfast Broadband coverage in rural England and presents a major opportunity for Herefordshire and Gloucestershire to be at the forefront of the UK's economic recovery. The unique selling points of living and working in an idyllic rural environment whilst accessing some of the best Broadband coverage in the country has the potential to transform the economies of both counties by increasing the productivity of local business and attracting new companies.

The first phase of the project is one of four Broadband Delivery UK national pilots and covers the southern areas of Herefordshire and the Forest of Dean in Gloucestershire ([map available](#)). The second phase will include the remaining rural areas of the two counties where private sector investment in Next Generation Access (NGA) is unlikely to reach. The total cost of Superfast Broadband provision for the two counties is estimated to be in the region of £50m, made up of public and private funds, making this a major infrastructure investment which will be deployed over the course of a number of years.

The procurement process will address the immediate demands of business and communities, leading to universal 2Mbps coverage, as a minimum, in order that everyone has the opportunity to access Broadband. In tandem, any improvements put in place will be "future proofed" so business can access the higher speeds they need to be competitive, and individual households can take advantage of future services that require improved speed and reliability.

Aiming to achieve through procurement

Considering the immediate need for coverage balanced with future speed requirement, the procurement process will be **seeking suppliers to provide:**

100% access of 2Mbps in the Phase one area through 2013

100% access to 2Mbps in the Phase two area through 2015

100% access to Superfast Broadband in the Phase one area through 2015

100% access to Superfast Broadband in the Phase two area through 2018

Bidding suppliers will be judged on how quickly they will be able to provide next generation access, although it is anticipated that project completion will be in advance of the European objective of 30Mbps for all by 2020. This will also help meet the UK Government objective to "ensure this country has the best Superfast Broadband in Europe by the end of this parliament (2015)".

Procurement approach and timetable

The procurement will follow a “gap funding” model, which will use the public sector funds to make the investment in next generation Broadband viable for private sector suppliers. A competitive dialogue process will be used to explore the supplier’s most viable technology solutions before the final contract is issued. The contract will be a single procurement for the whole of rural Herefordshire and Gloucestershire with a prime contractor who manages the sub-contracting relationships.

Outline timetable for Phase one:

Pre Qualification	26 th May – 10 th July 2011
Competitive Dialogue	August – January 2011/12
Contracting & Mobilisation	March – May 2012

Protocol through procurement

This is a highly complex procurement. As such there are strict protocols to ensure that we remain open, fair, transparent and non-discriminatory. In line with EU Procurement Directives, adhering to these principals is mandatory.

During this process individuals may be approached by potential suppliers about this project. As we need to ensure we do not inadvertently disadvantage any potential providers and jeopardise the process, individuals should not attempt to provide responses to any questions raised. Instead, please direct all queries to Bob Gennard, the co-ordinating point for the procurement process at Herefordshire Council. Bob’s details are: 01432 261617 or rgennard@herefordshire.gov.uk. The implications of Members, Officers and partners of the participating authorities breaking the integrity of the process are that the Councils could be subject to legal challenge with the process ultimately being declared void. This would cause significant cost and reputational damage to the organisations involved and cause delays in providing the enhanced service to the community.

Note: This notice will remain in place for the duration of the procurement stage which is planned to end in March 2012.

Meeting with Parishes

Meetings with local members, parish council and community representatives are planned to take place in the Phase one area over the summer. The purpose of the meetings are to update Parish Councils and local community representatives/members of progress, but also to explore the best way of working together with communities to meet the ambitions of the project. In practice, such collaboration could be in the form of supporting the installation of the infrastructure, or through encouraging more people to take up and exploit the benefits of Broadband as it becomes available, thus stimulating demand for the wider market enhancement being facilitated by the project.

Demand Stimulation

The take up of Broadband is essential to ensure network suppliers achieve a commercially viable and sustainable service and that the economic, social and public sector efficiency benefits can be realised.

To encourage businesses to expand through utilization of the latest technologies Herefordshire and Gloucestershire are seeking EU funding to run specific development programmes. The programmes will operate separately (due to different funding routes) but will mirror each other. The Herefordshire project is expected to be in place by November 2011 and will cover the Marches areas (Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford). The Gloucestershire programme will operate in a similar time scale.

As well as establishing the technical infrastructure, the Borders Broadband project will work with service providers in the public sector and beyond to enhance how services are delivered digitally. It is hoped this will provide one of a range of solutions to the ongoing challenge of delivering quality services in rural areas.

Appointing the Team

The Project Executive consists of Geoff Hughes (Director of Places and Communities, Herefordshire Council), Nigel Riglar (Commissioning Director for Communities and Infrastructure, Gloucestershire County Council), David Crow (BDUK) and Zack Pandor (Joint Director of ICT in Herefordshire).

The Project Team is being recruited, but currently consists of:

Natalia Silver, Project Director (Herefordshire Council - from July)

Claire Edwards, Head of Planning and Performance (GFirst)

Alan Ronald, Broadband Development Manager (Herefordshire Council)

Angela Presdee, Investment Manager (GFirst)

Matt Smith, Operational Manager (Herefordshire Council – temporary until July)

Technical Manager, tbc from July.

Further information and regular project updates will be available at:

Herefordshire - www.herefordshire.gov.uk/broadband

Gloucestershire – www.glosfirst.co.uk/broadband

For project enquiries, contact email: bordersbroadband@herefordshire.gov.uk