

# Borders Broadband

## Herefordshire and Gloucestershire

Briefing Note No.6 ♦ July 2012

[www.herefordshire.gov.uk/broadband](http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/broadband) [www.gfirstbroadband.co.uk](http://www.gfirstbroadband.co.uk)

### Working together to bring high-speed broadband providers to Herefordshire and Gloucestershire

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#### The story so far ...

Visit [www.herefordshire.gov.uk/broadband](http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/broadband) or [www.gfirstbroadband.co.uk](http://www.gfirstbroadband.co.uk) for:

- Information sheets for businesses and communities
- Earlier Borders Broadband briefings
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Press releases
- Background information

*The Borders Broadband project is managed by a partnership of Herefordshire Council, Gloucestershire County Council, GFirst (Gloucestershire's Local Enterprise Partnership) and government agency Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) to enable improved county-wide coverage of broadband.*



## Procurement update

The Borders Broadband project is reaching the final stages of the procurement process to secure a telecommunications company to design, build and operate a wholesale broadband network in rural Herefordshire and Gloucestershire.

The contract will cover the areas which do not currently receive high-speed broadband services, or where there are no private sector plans to provide such services in the next three years. Funding to deliver broadband in these areas has come from national Government sources (via BDUK) and locally from Herefordshire Council and Gloucestershire County Council (detailed in previous Briefing Notes).

The "Call for Final Tender" has been issued to remaining suppliers to submit their final offer to be evaluated in mid-August. This follows a process of negotiation and dialogue to ensure the best deal possible is reached for Herefordshire and Gloucestershire, considering the funding available and the timescales required. The intention is that Cabinet committees of both councils will consider the award of a contract in mid-September 2012.

The project's priority remains the same - to make sure everyone has access to the "Universal Commitment Service" of 2Mbps speed to wipe out the "not spots" in the county (where there is no broadband), along with the availability of Next Generation Access (NGA) of 30Mbps or above, allowing households and businesses to use the web effectively now and in the future.

As one of four national pilots, the project is testing new ground in the provision of broadband in deeply rural areas, where there is limited existing infrastructure to support improved services.

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## Extra funding

The Borders Broadband project team has successfully secured additional funding from BDUK (Broadband Delivery UK) to meet the challenge of providing broadband in deeply rural areas.

As the project has evolved, there has been a greater understanding of the task involved in deploying a wholesale broadband network to challenging rural geography. For Herefordshire particularly, low population density and scarcity of settlement makes the infrastructure deployment more complex.

BDUK's original allocation to Herefordshire was £6.35m. This has now been increased to £10.1m in recognition of the challenges, with an expectation that the local authority matches the contribution, along with private sector investment from the selected provider. At this stage, the allocation for Gloucestershire from BDUK remains the same at £8.07m.

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## Go ON UK - helping you get online



While the Borders Broadband Project is pressing ahead to provide communities in Herefordshire and Gloucestershire with access to faster broadband, we are aware that many people are still not using the internet - even when it is already available. UK Online Centres have highlighted that 96% of internet users say it has improved their life; that 72% of employers were unlikely to even offer an interview to people who couldn't use a computer; 96% of employers expected people to be able to email, and 88% wanted employees to be able to search for information online.

Go ON UK is a national programme to support individuals and communities to get connected. Go ON UK will pick up the baton from Race On-Line 2012 to get the final 8.2 million people online and encourage everyone to improve their digital skills, ensuring that no one is left behind.

The national programme is supported by local activity, with Herefordshire Council and Gloucestershire County Council signed up as delivery partners, and the Borders Broadband Project is exploring opportunities for this.

If you are interested in using some of the Go ON resources to help others in your community to get connected visit: [www.go-on-uk.org](http://www.go-on-uk.org). The Borders Broadband project is also interested in hearing about local schemes which can be promoted through the two counties. Let us know by emailing [bordersbroadband@herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:bordersbroadband@herefordshire.gov.uk).

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## Financial help to access the web

The Borders Broadband survey showed that one of the biggest challenges to going online was being able to afford to buy the equipment and pay monthly broadband charges. The survey showed that 77% of responders see broadband as essential to their home life, especially important for study, work and searching for goods and services. However, the top three obstacles to people not using broadband is because they do not have a computer, monthly connection charges are too expensive and equipment cost too high.

GetOnline@Home is a Microsoft-backed scheme offering refurbished PCs at a lower cost for those who may not be able to purchase hardware to access the internet without financial help. Under the scheme, PCs are available for £99 if you're on qualifying benefits (or costing £149 for anyone) as well as offers on laptops, a range of already-installed software and reduced broadband packages. For info on the scheme see [www.getonlineathome.org](http://www.getonlineathome.org) or phone 03719 100 100.

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## Support for business

The increased access to and optimisation of Broadband is seen as a priority for both Herefordshire and Gloucestershire, in supporting the economic prosperity and future growth of the counties.

Both counties are running support programmes - not just to get businesses online, also to make the most of being connected to access new markets, communicate with customers, create efficiencies and run new activities to meet the potential of their business.

In Gloucestershire, GFirst and the County Council has worked with other South West local authority partners and Peninsula Enterprise to secure European funding for a project which will provide a high-speed broadband business support programme. The programme will offer a series of awareness-raising events, specialist advice and support, to target and drive up demand, exploitation and growth of businesses in the eligible areas. Local Delivery Plans are being finalised and support will start in parallel with the deployment phase.

In Herefordshire the local authority has commissioned UK Information Technology Association (UKITA) to develop a toolkit to help the county's businesses understand how high-speed broadband can make them more efficient, save them money and help them grow faster.

A series of free events for businesses are being rolled out across Herefordshire, with the first event in Hereford on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> August, 12-2pm, at the Kindle Centre at ASDA. BT's Superfast Mobile Showcase will also be present, showing how fibre-based broadband is being delivered in Hereford. For details of other events see [www.herefordshire.gov.uk/broadband](http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/broadband) or call 01432 260609.

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## Submission to Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra)

On behalf of communities in Herefordshire and Gloucestershire, the Borders Broadband project team has submitted an expression of interest to Defra for the Rural Community Broadband Fund. The fund aims to ensure that the most rural communities have access to financial support to enable access to high-speed broadband. If a grant is awarded to the project, the additional funding will be available to help achieve the ambition of New Generation Access for everyone.

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## National announcements

### National framework signed

In parallel with the Borders Broadband procurement, BDUK has been developing a National Framework with Telecommunications Companies to deploy to other parts of the country. This means that other local authorities can use the basis of the framework to run their own procurement from the choice of two companies (BT and Fujitsu). The four national pilots, including the Borders Broadband Project, have supported the development of the national framework from their experience of running their own procurements.

### 100Mbps for cities

Chancellor George Osborne has announced the cities which will benefit from £100m investment to make them "super-connected" creating 100Mbps (megabit per second) citywide networks in ten urban areas. The cities are London, Edinburgh, Belfast, Cardiff, Birmingham, Bradford, Bristol, Leeds, Manchester and Newcastle. Also announced was a further £50m to improve net access in ten smaller cities including Gloucester. For more information click [here](#).

### Mobile infrastructure

The Government has also committed £150 million in capital expenditure to improve mobile coverage and quality where existing coverage is poor or non-existent. The procurement for the Mobile Infrastructure Project (MIP) is set to begin in spring 2012, with businesses and consumers seeing benefit from improved mobile coverage from early 2013. This will be achieved by working with industry to address mobile not-spots. The Borders Broadband Project is making representations to BDUK for the inclusion of local areas in the MIP. For more information click [here](#).

### Commercial roll-out

As featured in a previous briefing note in addition to the Borders Broadband project which focuses on the most rural parts of the counties, BT continue to announce their own plans to boost access to high-speed broadband in areas considered commercially viable (which are generally the more highly populated localities). To check whether the new announcements affect you go to [www.superfast-openreach.co.uk/where-and-when](http://www.superfast-openreach.co.uk/where-and-when)

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