

Gloucestershire survey highlights need for faster broadband

Nearly half of households consulted in a Gloucestershire-wide survey have internet download speeds below the Government's minimum acceptable level.

Most survey respondents say they are dissatisfied with their internet speed, and most experience sluggish internet service at certain times of day. Nearly half say they regularly lose their connection.

The survey, involving nearly 6,000 Gloucestershire households, was conducted by the Borders Broadband project, a multi-million pound initiative to secure private investment in a new fast broadband infrastructure for rural Gloucestershire and Herefordshire.

Gloucestershire County Council leader Mark Hawthorne said: "These findings highlight just how much demand there is for high-speed broadband in Gloucestershire, and how vital it is for our residents, our public services, our businesses and for the local economy."

Borders Broadband is managed by a partnership of GFirst (Gloucestershire's Local Enterprise Partnership), Gloucestershire County Council, Herefordshire Council and Government agency, Broadband Delivery UK.

The project was awarded £14.4m by the Government for Gloucestershire and Herefordshire, making this one of the first parts of the UK to share £530m cash for rural high-speed broadband. This has been boosted with a further £7.5m investment by Gloucestershire County Council and £6m from Herefordshire Council.

Major private sector investment is vital to the project's success. Public funding is being used to attract a commercial telecoms supplier and persuade them there is significant demand for high-speed broadband in the county's rural areas.

Companies have been involved in a complex tendering process to provide the new infrastructure, and a contract is expected to be awarded this summer.

The Borders Broadband survey was conducted by Gloucestershire Rural Community Council between September 2011 and February 2012 to investigate demand for high-speed broadband. Key to the survey's success were the hundreds of volunteer 'broadband champions' who helped distribute questionnaires in the county's rural communities.

Findings highlight dissatisfaction with existing internet speeds and high demand for fast broadband. The survey found that:

- Nearly half of households surveyed reported having download speeds lower than 2Mbps (Megabits per second) – the minimum broadband speed the Government says should be available to every UK home or business.
- More than half of households spend over 20 hours a week (collectively as a household) on the internet.

- Six out of ten households use the internet to work from home, either for an employer or to run a business or both, while a third use it for school, college or university studies.

A separate survey of businesses in Herefordshire and Gloucestershire found that nearly half have download speeds well below 2 Mbps. One in six firms have speeds of less than 0.5 Mbps. And six out of ten businesses are either very dissatisfied, or dissatisfied with their current internet service.

David Owen, Chief Executive at GFirst, said: “These figures just aren’t acceptable in a world where high-speed internet is vital for businesses to grow. Many firms are reliant on broadband to not only communicate internally and externally but also to sell their products to overseas markets. We must ensure Gloucestershire has high-speed broadband to help our businesses compete on a global scale.”

Click [here](#) for a summary of the Borders Broadband Household Survey results.

For further information on Borders Broadband, visit www.gfirstbroadband.co.uk

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