

Better Broadband for Norfolk

Potential Expansion of broadband coverage

Background

The Better Broadband for Norfolk (BBfN) Programme is working to extend broadband coverage across Norfolk, beyond the reach of commercially funded deployments. This is being achieved using call-off contracts under the provisions of the national Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) Broadband Delivery Framework contract.

Using the national framework contract ensures compliance with European Union State Aid requirements and procurement legislation. It also provides an assurance regime that includes external scrutiny.

This report provides information on delivery of the first BBfN contract, and potential steps towards achieving 100% coverage in Norfolk.

Progress to date

The programme has been based on achieving the maximum coverage possible for the available investment.

The Contract sets the implementation outcomes, timescales and investment conditions that must be met to fulfil BT's contractual obligations.

The first contract was completed three months ahead of schedule and under budget. As a result over 80% of Norfolk properties now have access to Superfast broadband.

The first contract has included installing over 1,750 kilometres of fibre optic cable across Norfolk, and approximately 700 fibre cabinets, over one hundred are in new locations where cabinets have not previously existed.

In the Breckland District Council area this has seen coverage increase from 30% to 79%.

State Aid

The contract contains provisions relating to State Aid which remain in force for seven years following implementation completion. Primarily this:

- States that public subsidy can only be applied to provide new infrastructure to serve properties with access to a broadband download speed of less than 15 Mbps. This has changed since the first contract which had a 24 Mbps threshold
- States that only Next Generation Access Technologies can be funded, unless a property has access to less than 2 Mbps, in such cases alternative technologies can be funded
- Provides protection against over subsidy if Take-up of fibre services is higher than the contract assumes, this is known as 'Claw-back'

The contract specifies that Claw-back must be used to expand Superfast coverage. A £5.3 million rebate has recently been agreed and BT was asked to add this sum to the potential District funding.

Appendix A

Proposed expansion of Next Generation Access infrastructure

The second contract known as Superfast Extension Programme (SEP) was signed in December 2014, it aims to meet the Government's target of 95% of premises with access to Superfast speeds.

State Aid means that subsidy can only be applied to provide infrastructure for properties with access to less than 15 Mbps. However other properties may benefit if served from new infrastructure that's primary role is to provide improved speeds for sub 15 Mbps properties.

SEP Part 1 included £12 million which will be applied across Norfolk to achieve the maximum additional coverage possible. This funding is drawn from BDUK £6 million, New Anglia LEP £5m and £1m from Norfolk County Council, implementation is underway.

SEP Part 2 is based on potential investment from the five District Councils with significant rural areas. The Government has agreed to match District contributions for the expansion of Superfast coverage. The £5.3 million 'Claw-back' has been added to this funding offering a further 1.5 times match against potential District funding. Government and Claw-back funding equates to £2.50 for each £1 of District investment.

This table demonstrates coverage by District, it begins with commercial coverage, and adds the increased coverage from each BBfN contract, finally showing the potential coverage available based on District and associated match funding.

	No. of premises	Commercial	BBfN contract 1	Commercial & BBfN1	BBfN2 Part 1	Commercial, BBfN1, SEP Part 1	BBfN2 Part 2	Commercial, BBfN1, SEP & Gain Share
Breckland	61,095	30%	49%	79%	9%	88%	6%	94%
Broadland	57,780	55%	31%	86%	6%	93%	4%	97%
Great Yarmouth	47,417	63%	30%	93%	1%	95%	0%	96%
Kings Lynn and West Norfolk	73,993	28%	55%	83%	6%	89%	3%	93%
North Norfolk	56,112	11%	64%	74%	10%	85%	7%	92%
Norwich	69,343	94%	5%	98%	1%	99%	0%	99%
South Norfolk	58,860	14%	61%	75%	10%	86%	6%	91%
Norfolk Coverage	424,600	42%	42%	84%	7%	91%	4%	95%

The table demonstrates a significant smoothing in coverage between Districts. Assuming all five Districts choose to proceed, overall coverage across Norfolk will reach 95%, with all Districts achieving over 90%. This is based on achieving maximum coverage for the available investment.

To achieve the greatest efficiency implementation of SEP Part 1 and Part 2 will be managed as a single integrated deployment, although implementation timescales are yet to be confirmed, completion of the rollout may extend, possibly in to 2019. This is due to the scale of works required.

The Breckland District Council area will increase from 30% commercial coverage to 94% if District investment proceeds.

Satellite Voucher Scheme

Every county's first contract included dedicated funding for a 'Phase 9' to meet the Government's commitment to offer at least a Basic Broadband speed of 2Mbps for every property.

Appendix A

The Government's Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) team has been developing a single national Satellite Voucher Scheme which will be available in mid-December. The scheme will:

- Run for two years from December 2015 to December 2017
- Be available for premises that have access to speeds of less than 2Mbps, and where a fibre solution is not yet confirmed following survey
- The scheme will be accessible via the Better Broadband for Norfolk website. Eligible applicants will be issued with a subsidy code that can be used with a number of approved satellite providers

This is not intended as a substitute for Superfast broadband, it is for those people who do not even have access to a Basic broadband speed. If a Superfast solution becomes possible it will be implemented.

Achieving 100% Superfast coverage

While significant progress has been made across Norfolk, even with further investment there will be 5% of properties that will still not benefit. For those who are still struggling with slow broadband speeds at their home or business further action / investment will be required if Superfast speeds are to be achieved.

There will be a multi-million pound under-spend from contract 1, the exact level will be confirmed early next year and the County Council has already committed to use this funding to expand coverage further.

The Government is piloting a range of new technologies with a range of suppliers to find new solutions to providing Superfast speeds for the 'final 5%'.

Universal Service Commitment

The Government has recently announced the introduction of a broadband Universal Service Commitment to provide access to at least 10 Mbps broadband download speed by 2020. Further details are not currently available.