

Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland Programme for Government commits Government to “*working with the private sector, to develop and begin to implement a strategy that will ensure that all of Northern Ireland has a world class telecommunications infrastructure in terms of broadband capacity, access and cost*”. To advance that agenda the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment is implementing a range of complementary initiatives designed to progressively develop telecommunications infrastructure, stimulate demand for broadband, and develop broadband applications to both support the knowledge based and driven economy and to promote digital inclusion. These initiatives include a major tender for broadband services across N. Ireland; technology and company neutral pilot projects under the UK Broadband Fund; flagship projects addressing broadband applications, content and services; a public sector aggregation exercise and, via Invest Northern Ireland, a programme of demand side initiatives. This comprehensive package of measures complements both the ‘e’ Europe Action Plan and the UK Broadband Strategy.

Vision for Broadband in N. Ireland

On 7 October the DETI Minister launched a new vision for telecommunications in N. Ireland entitled “Broadband Northern Ireland – Fully Connected”. This vision, (which can be viewed at <http://www.detini.gov.uk/cgi-bin/downutildoc?id=201>) is to have a fully connected N. Ireland with equitable access to cost effective broadband services for all. It also set challenging targets for N. Ireland:

- To be the leading broadband region in the UK;
- To be the first region in the UK to have 100% coverage of broadband services;
- 100% broadband access with a minimum of 512k for all households and businesses by end of 2005;
- 12% of households and 20% of business take-up of broadband by end of 2005; and
- 100% broadband at 2Mbps at cost competitive prices by end of 2006.

UK Broadband Fund

Northern Ireland secured £1.46m as its share of the £30m UK Broadband Fund to develop innovative schemes extending broadband networks to a wider range of customers than those who appear commercially viable. To date almost £1m has been invested in 30 projects that seek innovative ways to encourage the rollout of broadband to areas currently considered to be commercially non-viable. (See Annex A). At present, a further 23 applications are under consideration.

The DETI Minister issued a Third Call for applications on 7 October 2003, in particular, from any person or organisation aspiring to develop broadband applications, content and services. The closing date for applications is 31 March 2003 by which time DETI is confident the full budget will have been allocated.

Local Access Tender for the Provision of Broadband Services

On 7 May a Prior Information Notice (PIN) was published in the Official Journal of the European Union to alert the market that it was the Department’s intention to seek tenders for the provision of broadband services. In response to the high level of market interest from some 40 broadband service providers a number of information days were held in Belfast and Birmingham during May and June.

In line with an announcement by the DETI Minister an Invitation to Tender for this contract for the provision of broadband services was published in the European Journal on 22 July.

From 27 responses received on 22 August 2003, 6 were short listed and issued with an Invitation to Negotiate on 10 October. Five replies were received by the closing date, 12 November 2003. These are currently being evaluated and a single preferred bidder will be identified by the end of 2003.

Flagship Broadband Applications, Content and Services Call

This call, with up to £2 million available, sought innovative broadband projects addressing applications, content or services that will directly impact on the effectiveness of the Northern Ireland economy. Of the 19 submissions received by Telecommunications Policy Unit, three submissions were selected to go to the Request for Proposals stage. Subsequently, in September 2003, one group withdrew their proposal. DETI is currently evaluating the 2 remaining business cases including full Green Book economic appraisals. An announcement of funding to a proposal from Derry City Council addressing e-government, e-business and e-tourism applications over wireless technology is expected to be issued following the NI Assembly elections.

Demand Stimulation

Demand stimulation activities, to complement DETI's supply-side initiatives, are the responsibility of DETI's enterprise agency Invest NI. Its Broadband Stimulation Programme, which was launched in Londonderry on June 23rd, seeks to raise awareness of broadband technologies and the economic benefits they can bring, and so increase uptake of broadband services by business.

The programme consists of a wide range of awareness-raising activities backed by a programme of practical intervention that is both advisory and financial. Through Invest NI's e-Solution Centre at Lisburn, assisted by regional and sectoral Broadband Advisers, expert impartial face-to-face support is delivered to companies. In addition a programme of local broadband road shows has been developed. A total of 16 events, 6 of which have been completed, are scheduled to take place this financial year.

The programme seeks to help small and medium sized enterprises to take advantage of high-speed Internet connections using any broadband technology. Support is available at 40% of the installation and first year running costs for eligible companies up to a maximum of £5,000. To date Invest NI has supported almost 500 companies and is on course to meet its target of 1000 companies by the end of March 2004.

Public Sector Broadband Aggregation

Following completion of a feasibility study led by DETI the decision to proceed with public sector broadband aggregation was made by the Permanent Secretary's group on 29th August 2003. This decision was subsequently endorsed by all Ministers and publicly announced by Ian Pearson on 7th October.

The project is now being taken forward by the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) with DETI supplying project management and support. The current phase of the project is looking at the type of organisation/team needed to implement broadband aggregation including its structure, management and funding. The project team will report its recommendations to PSG in December 2003.

Interreg III

This EU Fund to promote cross-border integration has allocated €7 million to stimulate investment in and accelerate development of efficient communications and e-commerce infrastructure in Northern Ireland and the six border counties of the Republic of Ireland. DETI's Telecommunications Policy Unit is liaising with the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources (DCMNR) in Dublin to develop a Call in line with the aims of Interreg III. It is planned to launch the Call early December 2003 with the target of having projects approved by the end of March 2004.

Digital Island

DETI's Telecoms Policy Unit is currently addressing a number of cross border telecoms issues through the Digital Island initiative. This is a policy-level framework, put forward by InterTradelreland,

DETE and DETI, aimed at seeking the fullest exploitation of the digital technologies by businesses across the island. Telecoms Policy Unit, together with DCMNR and DETE has agreed to take forward a strand within the Digital Island model on ICT Infrastructure and Services. Issues currently being addressed include:

- all Island tariffs for data and mobile communications;
- all Island telephone numbering ranges;
- spectrum roaming in the border regions; and
- cross-border infrastructure.

Current Broadband Fund Projects in Northern Ireland

BBF 001/02	WesternConnect Ltd	A Trial to Deploy a Wireless Broadband Network in Derry
BBF 002/02	WesternConnect Ltd	Broadband Access Business Applications
BBF 004/02	Derry City Council	Study to Identify Sustainable Broadband Telecommunications Solutions for the Derry City Council area
BBF 006/02	Northern Ireland Advisory Committee on Telecommunications	A Project to conduct research into the attitudes and awareness of Broadband internet access technologies in Northern Ireland
BBF 009/02	Down District Council	The Provision, Use and Demand for Broadband within the SEED Council areas
BBF 010/02	Fermanagh District Council	The Provision, Use and Demand for Broadband within the Fermanagh District Council area
BBF 011/02	Strabane District Council	The Provision, Use and Demand for Broadband within the Strabane District Council area
BBF 012/02	Omagh District Council	Broadband feasibility study for the Omagh District Council area
BBF 013/02	Dungannon and South Tyrone District Council	Broadband feasibility study for the Dungannon and South Tyrone District Council area
BBF 025/02	Westernconnect Ltd/Internet Concepts	A project to develop the ICT and broadband capabilities of the Construction and Engineering Sectors in the North West
BBF 027/02	Moyle District Council	A Project to Examine the Provision, Use and Demand for Broadband Technology in Moyle, Ballymoney, Larne and Ballymena Borough and District Councils
BBF 036/02	StreamOn.net Ltd	Feasibility study into the Development of a Virtual Trade Fair and Business Broadcasting Channel

BBF 039/02	ACe Associates	Feasibility Study into the deployment and use of a high bandwidth network in the Greater Belfast area
BBF 046/02	Derry City Council	Broadband Stimulation Initiative for the Derry City Council area
BBF 047/02	KBLonline	A Proposal to demonstrate broadband access in rural areas without using incumbent Telco infrastructure
BBF 055/02	Antrim Borough Council	The Provision, Use and Demand for Broadband Technology in the Antrim Borough Council area
BBF 056/02	Cookstown District Council	The Provision, Use and Demand for Broadband Technology in the Cookstown District Council area
BBF101/03	David Brunnen Advanced Business Facilities Ltd	I-Burst Pioneer Project at NI Science Park
BBF102/03	Gordon Welsh EPEC	Broadband for the Social Economy
BBF 103/03	Caroline Mulvenna NIACT	NIACT Annual Conference
BBF 104/03	Brendan Hegarty Fermanagh DC	Demand Stimulation in Fermanagh DC
BBF 105/03	Margie Greer BTNI	Demand Stimulation to Enable 19 Exchanges in NI
BBF106/03	Margie Greer BTNI	Proposal For A NI ASP Portal
BBF107/03	Pat Gorman The Institution of Electrical Engineers	Connecting Commerce, Creativity & Community
BBF109/03	Sean Convery - Applied Networks Ltd	Broadband Wireless Network Technology Trial
BBF110/03	Jacqui O'Neill - Newtownabbey Borough Council	Feasibility Study Into Provision of Pilot BB Projects in Newtownabbey & Carrickfergus BC areas
BBF111/03	Paul O'Callaghan - NTR Broadband	Proposal For Provision Of Wireless BB Services to the Lisburn Area
BBF112/03	Paul O'Callaghan - NTR Broadband	Proposal For provision Of Wireless BB Services to the Strabane Area
BBF113/03	Marcus Porter- BTNI	Proposal For A Broadband trial in Derrylin & Ballinmallard
BBF114/03	Adrian Lyon- Aperture	Aperture Mesh Wireless Broadband Trial

Scotland

The **Scottish Executive** (the devolved Government for Scotland) is dedicated to promoting access to higher bandwidth services. In the Partnership Agreement - the document proposing the Executive's policies for the 4-year term of the Scottish Parliament – it stated:

“We are committed to extending broadband connectivity for every area of Scotland to ensure Scotland’s competitiveness, both internally and internationally, in both public and private sectors.”

The key aim of the Executive's broadband strategy, “Connecting Scotland” is essentially to promote affordable and pervasive access to broadband connections across Scotland. The Scottish Executive takes the strategy lead for the various programmes to encourage broadband provision and uptake. They provide funding support from the £4.4m Scottish portion of the UK broadband fund and via the £24m funding allocated for the Executive's new broadband initiative. These activities are taken forward in partnership with the Executive's enterprise agencies – **Scottish Enterprise** (SEn) and

Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) - who are the implementers of broadband measures in Scotland.

Initiatives and Targets

The Executive's broadband strategy has been recognised as being comprehensive, with its full range of activities to stimulate the market. Some of these measures are Scotland-wide. Some are also undertaken specifically by either SEN and HIE in order to tailor solutions according to the particular circumstances and permitted levels of assistance in their respective areas. In December 2002, the Executive published an update to its broadband strategy, accessible at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/lifelong/csbf-00.asp>. This gives a flavour of its various broadband activities, although many further measures are now in place.

The update document shows that, over the last few years, the Executive has supported a number of ongoing broadband pilots aimed at awareness raising of broadband and trialling alternative technologies. These are part-funded by the UK broadband fund.

Moreover, just over a year ago, the Executive announced a major **£24 million initiative** to accelerate and widen access to affordable broadband coverage for at least 70% of the Scottish population by the end of March 2004. A number of additional demand-side measures have been implemented for this initiative. They include a "business broadband incentive", which is offsetting the costs to Scottish businesses when they take on a broadband connection. Furthermore, the Executive recently launched a broadband marketing campaign to promote demand for the technology, which is again, strengthening the case for its commercial supply.

These measures have helped to ensure that the Executive's target of, at least, 70% affordable broadband coverage in Scotland was achieved in January 2004. The Executive is therefore currently considering what further steps can be taken to increase coverage beyond that figure. The scope for undertaking a supply-side intervention is being examined – fully taking into account State Aid rules, recent decisions by the European Commission on broadband interventions, as well as independent advice on the development of the broadband market in Scotland.

Scotland-wide Measures on Broadband (implemented by SEN and HIE)

Raising Broadband Demand/Uptake

1. A "Business Broadband Incentive" scheme

This scheme is encouraging up to 5,000 businesses to take up a broadband connection. Grants are available throughout Scotland until March 2004, with £300 available to businesses that install broadband services such as telephone line, cable or fixed wireless. For businesses in areas where these services are not or are unlikely to be made available in the near future, £1,200 is available to help with the cost of installing and running a more expensive satellite broadband connection, or a bespoke solution. The scheme, which has the support of industry organisations, has been very successful and since its launch in the Summer, over 4000 businesses have requested applications for the grant.

2. High profile marketing campaigns to encourage demand for broadband

Marketing campaigns have been developed to increase both the access and take-up of broadband in Scotland under the 'Broadband for Scotland' banner. There are two key initiatives underway that are already delivering results:

- Advertising campaign – The objective of the campaign is to raise awareness and demand for broadband. The key call to action is to visit a new web site www.broadbandforscotland.co.uk to register for broadband and to access information that includes the benefits of broadband and details of service provider coverage. In the first phase of the campaign over 4500 people visited the site with over 1000 registering for broadband. The second phase of the campaign commences mid February with television, outdoor, press and radio.
- Field marketing – Local promotional activity targeted at areas that do not yet have access to ADSL-equivalent broadband. The objective is to encourage businesses and consumers to register

their interest in broadband for their community. The plan is to increase this campaign to target over 150 areas by the end of March 2004.

3. Broadband Demand Analysis/K-Map

Scottish Enterprise has undertaken a significant piece of broadband analysis work to help make informed decisions about possible demand and / or supply interventions. The rationale for this work is to take the guesswork out of any decisions where public money is being invested in Scotland in any broadband demand or supply side interventions. The KMAP tool will provide a very effective and unique Scotland wide capability. It will provide the means to make intelligent and informed decisions on any investment based on dynamic and granular data sourced from telecoms suppliers and other commercial data sources.

The solution will be available at a desktop browser level to manage demand and maintain data integrity. The KMAP tool will have the ability to drill down from an all Scotland level to street level and will be fully supported by linked data. It is planned to open access to the tool to the suppliers to aid them in making informed decisions as they approach their markets.

Technology trials

4. Powerline projects

Two technical trials of powerline comms technology are being undertaken in Crieff and Campbeltown in Scotland in partnership with Scottish Southern Electric (SSE). The trials are proving successful, particularly in Crieff which has exceeded expectations in terms of reliability and performance. Indeed, SSE have since launched services in Stonehaven to test the commercial case for further widespread roll-out of PLC. Emission levels have not exceeded the permitted levels. However, to reduce regulatory uncertainty, those involved in this project would like to see EU-wide standards for emissions from PLT defined and ratified.

5. Community Wireless projects

HIE have set up the Community Network Demonstration project (Hi-Wide) as part of a major investment to bring broadband to communities that are not covered by broadband technologies. As part of this, they have set up Wireless Networks in 5 communities, intended to demonstrate wireless broadband technologies and test the process of rolling out to the most remote communities throughout the Highlands and Islands. Two wireless trials are also underway in the SEn area in Aberfoyle and Lochwinnoch where communities have been very innovative and proactive in getting these aggregated community broadband demand projects underway. Apart from getting users connected to broadband, SEn is garnering key learning from these pilots on how to overcome the logistical, technical, organisational and legal challenges posed by this model.

Initiatives in the Scottish Enterprise Area

6. Provision of e-Business Demo Centres to promote benefits of broadband

These provide accessible hands-on experience of simple broadband applications together with independent expert advice for SMEs to make educated decisions on using broadband. There are currently 11 eBDCs and they are delivering a workshop designed to meet the needs of SMEs who are on the Broadband learning curve. The interactive workshop, entitled Using Broadband, was developed to raise awareness and educate SMEs on the business benefits of broadband. The workshop has been revised to feature the business benefits of applications. A satellite-enabled mobile "Broadband Bus" complements the physically located eBDCs to provide workshops in much remoter areas. Over 600 delegates have attended Using Broadband workshops either in eBDCs or on the Broadband Bus.

7. Neutral Broadband Website

This is providing online independent advice and information on broadband for businesses. Over 33,000 unique visitors to the site from January to November 2003. High interest has been recorded in both the suppliers' pages and there are 49 business benefits-orientated broadband case studies on

the site. The site has become a natural hub for all of Scottish Enterprise's broadband activities and is integral to the promotion and administration of the Business Broadband Incentive scheme.

8. **Scottish Borders Rural Broadband Service**

This pilot project is designed to trial innovative approaches to the delivery of broadband services in areas not served by the private sector. The Scottish Borders area was chosen as the location of this pilot, as it had the lowest availability of broadband in Scotland. The trial is aimed at creating a sustainable business model that will continue beyond the DTI Programme which ends on 31 March 2004.

Fixed wireless technology will be used to deliver the broadband service and will provide a high quality symmetrical service of 512 Kbps and a contention ratio of 1:30.

SBRB Ltd is a subsidiary company of Scottish Enterprise Borders, set up to act as a wholesale provider of network services to Internet Service Providers (ISPs), it does not provide broadband service directly to the public. SBRB enables ISPs to use its network for the delivery of broadband services to businesses and residences in the Scottish Borders. Based on the present schedule, the intention is that the SBRB service will be rolled out to 11 locations in early 2004.

9. **Broadband Farming and Community Broadband (wireless) projects**

Two broadband projects, being undertaken in Ayrshire, are investigating the benefits of broadband to the rural and voluntary sectors. The **Community Broadband Project** - is a technology trial providing broadband connectivity to 11 third sector organisations such as voluntary groups and not for profit organisations in the Girvan and Ardrossan areas of Ayrshire. It is delivering huge benefits to the organisations which are dealing with disability, rural transport initiatives and youth development as part of their remit. The **Broadband Farming Project** is using wireless technology to deliver specialist rural content and applications to 14 rural and farm businesses based in south Ayrshire. The project is raising awareness and stimulating demand for broadband access from local SMEs, residents and community groups in the area, by demonstrating the benefits experienced by the pilots' users.

10. **The Wireless Excellence Network (WEN)**

The WEN has been established to promote Scotland as a global leader in wireless. The objectives are to raise awareness and educate, promote research & development, trial future technologies and bring together Scottish expertise from manufacturing, software development, telecoms and academia. As part of this, a Wireless Incubator at Hillington Park Innovation Centre (Renfrewshire) has been established where SMEs can develop, test, and demonstrate wireless applications at the Centre, which has been equipped with the necessary wireless hardware, technical support, and contingency systems. Scottish Enterprise have also worked in partnership with NTT and BT to bring the most advanced wireless technology to Scotland at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre (EICC). A wireless hotspot has been created where visitors can access the Internet at broadband speeds and experience the difference between 3 wireless technologies.

Initiatives in the Highlands and Islands Enterprise Area

11. **Support for upgrade of telephone exchanges to provide broadband**

Under their capital grants cover, HIE have subsidised ADSL-upgrades in a number of exchanges in their area –in Stornoway, Lerwick and Kirkwall as well as Grantown-on-Spey and Fortrose. This has helped to increase broadband coverage in the Highlands and Islands from about 17% to around 40%.

12. **Mini-ADSL broadband**

Following HIE's successful collaboration with BT on the "ADSL Exchange Activate" commercial trial of "mini D-SLAM", two exchanges near Inverness have been upgraded to provide broadband on a permanent basis. HIE is currently assessing the case for a wider roll-out of this service in a number of its smaller exchange areas.

13. **“Connected Communities” wireless project in the Western Isles**

The 'Connected Communities' project will deliver a high performance broadband wireless network across the five main populated islands of the Western Isles bringing together a diverse range of private and public sector organisations and individuals. The network backbone will link the main communities within the islands chain using a combination of 5Ghz and 2.4Gz wireless systems to provide high, medium and low bandwidths and a range of local applications.

A locally owned asset management company will own the network and a separate islands based services and management company will be established to maintain the system and provide connections to customers.

Other Scottish initiatives on broadband

14. **Pathfinders**

The Scottish Executive's Finance Department is also running two pilot projects (the Pathfinder Projects) in the Highlands and Islands and the South of Scotland to aggregate public sector demand for broadband infrastructure.

15. **Spark**

In addition, the Spark project led by the Executive's Education Department has delivered a broadband interconnect, providing every education authority in Scotland with a high-capacity link to every other education authority.

16. **Telecoms Trading Exchange**

Scottish Enterprise's Telecoms Trading Exchange project (TTE) is a virtual marketplace for wholesale broadband connectivity. It opened in January 2003 and is providing Scottish businesses with high capacity bandwidth at competitive rates. The TTE is essentially a website where worldwide telecoms companies can post their prices for services available in Scotland. The exchange is open to any telecoms company and Internet Service Provider.

ATLAS

17. Scottish Enterprise's Project ATLAS aims to address a complex set of issues constraining the market for high-end broadband telecoms in Scotland. This will benefit of high-end users in 13 selected business parks across Scotland. The ATLAS Business Park Network is currently being developed and will provide advanced broadband fibre connections on the parks to over 500 companies.

Wales

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to providing a high quality telecommunications service as the basis of a knowledge based economy in Wales. This is also recognised as being central to Wales's competitiveness, business excellence, and its science driven innovation. The effective rollout of affordable broadband services across Wales also has a strong social dimension and is crucial to addressing the full range of e services and products. The Assembly Governments e – vision for Wales is set out in Cymru ArLein Online for a Better Wales (www.cymruarlein.gov.uk).

While recognising the need to develop policy within an UK context, Wales has sought as much flexibility as possible in developing its telecommunication strategy to ensure its interests are met. In doing so it has built links and relationships with the UK and Wales Broadband Stakeholders Group. It has also established working relationships within its local public and private sectors in Wales and indeed across the UK.

Wales's broadband strategy has a twin focus: to stimulate demand and to encourage supply. It has an economic and social rationale, improving business on one hand and services to the customer, consumer and citizen on the other.

Broadband Wales Programme

The Broadband Wales Programme is a key underpinning component of the CymruAr Lein strategy. The Economic Development and Transport Minister launched the programme in July 2002 as the Assembly Government's flagship programme for facilitating widespread, affordable broadband access across the length and breadth of Wales. This five year, £115 million programme is designed to address the significant market immaturity that is apparent within Wales. The Assembly Government has developed a series of targeted interventions aimed at tackling market failure and increasing the roll out of broadband. It is supported in its work by the Broadband Wales Stakeholders Group and its activities will be monitored by the Broadband Wales Observatory, which is in the final stages of being procured.

In 2003, there has been a significant change in the broadband environment across Wales; with 144 of the exchanges in Wales either enabled or are scheduled to be enabled and a further 260 exchanges with trigger levels set. The aim is for in excess of 95% to have broadband availability by the end of the programme (JULY 2007). Broadband is of course an essential tool for continued growth and development. Research, has demonstrated a strong relationship between connectivity levels and a country or region's GDP. Broadband activities at local level have also helped extend the availability of the service across Wales. One example is the connecting Caerphilly project, where the public and private sector worked together in order to improve roll out. This resulted in Caerphilly becoming the first local authority area in Wales to have all of its exchanges enabled.

The Broadband Wales Programme includes projects, which focus on both demand and supply. As they are both inextricably linked.

Promote and Improve demand

Demand Stimulation/Marketing

The Broadband Wales Unit's demand stimulation/marketing is a £2.4 million, three year all Wales campaign that is targeted at business/consumers and opinion formers. These large scale-marketing activities will stimulate demand across Wales. The campaign includes:

Advertising – In both local and national press and radio supported by information packs designed to help and support potential broadband users to identify the benefits they can gain from receiving a connection. The campaign aims to identify what form of technology will best suit the customers' needs, either as a business or leisure user.

PR – This includes a range of materials including news stories, in depth articles and broadband user case studies. These materials highlight the great benefits of using broadband for the end user.

Direct Marketing – Targeting households and small businesses.

Market Research – Including surveys to better understand the characteristics of the Welsh Market place and the specific needs and attitudes of citizens and communities towards broadband.

Broadband Wales Taskforce

This is a £1.8 million all Wales project to provide "feet on the street" throughout Wales. Eight people are currently being recruited and will be in place shortly. The taskforce responsibilities will include.

- Building relationships at local level to help stimulate and develop projects which support the aims and objectives to the Broadband Wales Programme.
- Demonstrating the benefits of broadband to a variety of audiences and sharing best practice.

Opportunity Wales

This is a £ 20 million Objective 1 funded business support Programme to help SMEs integrate e commerce into their core activities. 'Opportunity Wales' provide advisers who are drawn from the public, private and voluntary sectors. They are able to visit each business to provide a free

eCommerce review, followed up by additional low cost, high-value consultancy services. 'Opportunity Wales' can also provide financial assistance should a business wish to purchase products and services identified through the ecommerce review. 'Opportunity Wales', up to 30th November 2003, has assisted 4899 companies, dealt with 914 client aid requests and paid £420,067.60 in client aid. More information can be found at www.opportunitywales.co.uk. There are a range of other projects and activities aimed at helping increase demand for broadband and details can be found at www.busesseye.org.uk.

The SME Satellite Broadband Subsidy Scheme

This scheme was launched in September 2002, initially focussed on giving SMEs a subsidy of up to £1500 to take up broadband via satellite subject to a certain set of conditions. This scheme is to become technology neutral in February 2004 and will also include the voluntary and charity sectors.

Try Before You Buy Demonstration Facilities

There is a network of ICT Support Centres across Wales (24), which have been enabled with satellite, and where available terrestrial DSL broadband services to offer broadband try before you buy facilities to businesses. These are highly successful as they allow potential users to try out the technology and enjoy hands on experience. Further details can be found at www.busesseye.org.uk.

Improving Supply

The Broadband Wales projects aimed at improving the supply of broadband in Wales are:

Broadband Infrastructure Subsidy Initiative (BISI)

The Broadband Infrastructure Subsidy Initiative (BISI) project is a £26.8 million European Structural Objective 1 project that aims to bring affordable broadband infrastructure to economically deprived areas of Wales. A publicly funded subsidy of £15 million will be offered for the provision of infrastructure. This will need to be matched by a minimum of £12 million from the private sector. It will involve an open procurement process that will be conducted through the Official Journal of the European Community. Any subsidy given will be designed to create the maximum value for the investment.

Regional Innovative Broadband Support (RIBS)

The Regional Innovative Broadband Support Project (RIBS) is a £13.4 million Objective 1, European funded project designed to bring affordable broadband technology to relevant areas of Wales. The overall project is technology neutral and will make broadband more widely available. The Welsh Assembly Government will be putting out calls for innovative broadband projects on a phased basis. The first phase will focus on projects that require very high bandwidth to support innovative solutions. The criteria and the first call for proposals will be put out shortly.

Provision of Broadband to relevant Business Parks/Locations in Wales

The underpinning Broadband Wales Programme research identified that there were a number of businesses either already in Wales, or looking to locate in Wales who need access to fibre speed broadband connectivity. The businesses have been identified and demand analysis is currently being undertaken with a view to exploring the economic and possible legal actions shortly thereafter.

Provision of International Tier 1 Broadband connectivity in Wales

The underpinning Broadband Wales Programme research also identified that access to Tier 1 internet connectivity could be vital in ensuring economic prosperity for Wales. Consultants have been working on evaluating the options and benefits for Wales in obtaining improved international connectivity. The way forward will be decided when the options have been fully considered.

Provision of Broadband in the Public Sector in Wales

Lifelong Learning Network for Wales (LLNW)

- This is a £36 million all Wales project designed to deliver broadband connectivity to schools, libraries and learning centres throughout Wales. This project has the ultimate ambition of connecting all primary schools and learning centres at a minimum of 2 mbs and all secondary schools and libraries at 8 mbs. Local Authorities can also use the Lifelong learning Network to support their own electronic traffic.

Extension of the Lifelong Learning for Wales (ELLeN)

- This is a £13.4 million Objective 1 project. The Welsh Assembly Government recognises that the procurement of broadband connectivity at local authority level can be expensive for those in more remote. It will provide funding to extend broadband to more public sector sites/locations in the Objective 1 areas.

Dawn 2 Health Service Network

- The Welsh Assembly Government has led and implemented this £ 20 million all - Wales project that will provide GP's surgeries and other NHS premises with up-to-date technology. At present 95% of practices are already utilising broadband connectivity through connection to the all-Wales IP/VPN network. In addition, 90% of GP practices in Wales have connected to the centrally managed messaging and web services.

Further information on all of the above projects can be found at www.cymruarlein.wales.gov.uk and www.broadband.wales.gov.uk