

Suffolk Local Broadband Plan



Summary Briefing Note

Suffolk

Suffolk is the 8th largest county, and one of the most rural counties, in England, with around one third of the total population (715,700) and premises (339,993) in the larger towns, and the other two thirds in the other smaller towns, villages, hamlets and farms across the county. Suffolk's economic output (GVA) is £12.5bn, with over 70% from the services sector.

Economic Outcomes

We believe that reliable, higher-speed broadband services are vital to future economic development in Suffolk, driving:

- » economic growth of 15-20% (£2bn)
- » the retention and growth of small businesses (500 pa), particularly in the creative industries
- » retaining and growing employment (5,000 FTE jobs)
- » raising and modernising skills and achievement levels
- » and avoiding a 'digital divide'

Transformation of the delivery of public services

Suffolk is at the forefront of transforming the delivery of public services, which provides a unique opportunity to plan for the availability of more reliable, higher-speed broadband services to both improve and extend the public services delivered, and to reduce costs.

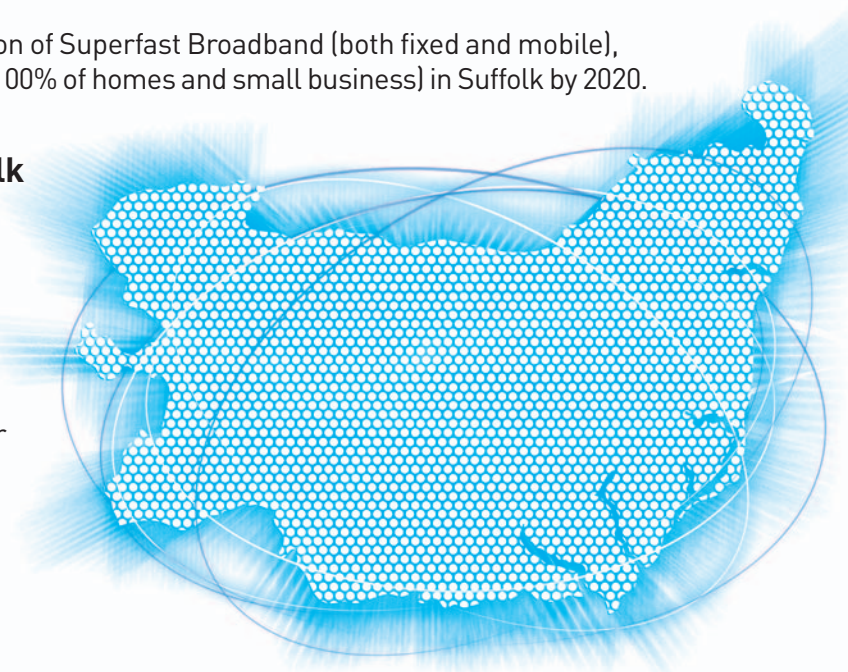
Broadband is now at the heart of Suffolk's plans for delivering better learning, better care, better policing, a better environment, and better communities.

Our vision for Better Broadband in Suffolk

Our ultimate vision is for the competitive provision of Superfast Broadband (both fixed and mobile), offering typical speeds of 100Mbps, to everyone (100% of homes and small business) in Suffolk by 2020.

Current Generation Broadband in Suffolk

The average broadband speed currently experienced by Suffolk's consumers and small businesses is under 5Mbps, although this average masks wide variations in speeds across the county: while almost a quarter may get at least 6Mbps (up to 8Mbps), and a further third get between 4Mbps and 6Mbps, around a further quarter get between 2Mbps and 4Mbps, and nearly one fifth (60,000 premises) get less than 2Mbps, with some lines across all of Suffolk not able to support a broadband connection at all.



Of the 128 exchanges serving Suffolk, just 16 of those exchanges serving the larger towns have been unbundled by one or more competing operators, with the remaining 112 exchanges serving areas beyond the larger towns having no competitive provision beyond BT. So far, BT has announced just 10 exchanges in Suffolk to be enabled with ADSL2+ (up to 24Mbps) by the end of 2010/11.

Virgin Media covers around one in eight (13%) of Suffolk premises (82,000), although only in certain parts of Ipswich, Newmarket and Felixstowe.

Mobile Broadband is largely confined to 3G coverage of the larger towns in Suffolk and public WiFi 'hot spots', with little or no Mobile Broadband coverage of other parts of the county.

We are planning to get Superfast Broadband (20Mbps+) to most premises (85-90%) by 2015, with the remaining 10-15% also getting a significant improvement in broadband speeds (2Mbps – 10Mbps+) by 2015 from interim solutions (pending the 100% vision by 2020).

Our plan

Our plan assumes a predominantly fibre-based solution (a mix of fibre-to-the-premises (FTTP) and fibre-to-the-cabinet (FTTC)) to 85-90% of premises by 2015, with interim solutions (mostly Fixed Wireless Broadband (FWB), but also some Satellite Broadband) serving the remaining 10-15% of premises also by 2015.

Note that the interim Fixed Wireless Broadband solution has to be a county-wide overlay (to reach the premises that remain un-served by the fibre-based solution), but the number of premises served by the interim FWB solution will be limited to around 10-15% because of the relative economics of fibre-based versus FWB solutions and the limited amount of suitable radio spectrum available.

The plan specifically aims to ensure that the one fifth of all Suffolk premises (60,000) that currently get less than 2Mbps, will all get more than 2Mbps by 2015.

Ultimately (beyond 2015), we would like to see fibre-based solutions extended to 100% of Suffolk premises, complemented by county-wide availability of Mobile Broadband (4G/LTE).

Our approach

We are planning to deliver this 'whole county' plan by using public funding to leverage further investment by commercial operators through a competitive procurement process.

Critically, our plan assumes an open access, wholesale platform across the whole county providing both fibre-based and interim solutions, to enable competitive retail service provision to everyone in Suffolk, and to manage the technology risk between the evolving fibre-based and interim solutions.

Note: we are not proposing just small-scale trials or pilots in limited parts of Suffolk, nor are we setting up our own local telecoms operator in competition with established operators.

The total capital cost of our deployment plan to 2015 is £45m, about half of which will come from central Government and local council funding, matched by private sector investment from a competitively selected commercial operator. We are also seeking further funding from other programmes and local authorities to fund a demand stimulation programme and to meet programme operating costs.

Contact us

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