

MAIDSTONE LOCALITY BOARD
28 March 2012, 2.00-4.00pm
Information Item – Make Kent Quicker Campaign
Abi Jessop, Community Engagement Officer KCC

1. Background

- 1.1 The Government is committed to delivering the best superfast broadband network in Europe by 2015. Money has been allocated from a £530 million fund to each local authority in England to stimulate commercial investment in high-speed broadband and provide 90% of homes and businesses with superfast access (>24Mbps), with universal access to standard broadband of at least 2Mbps.
- 1.2 Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK)¹ is responsible for managing the Government's broadband funding, but the responsibility for leading the broadband roll-out has been devolved to local authorities. They were required to submit an initial Local Broadband Plan, detailing their plans for rolling out broadband in their area by 29 February 2012. The Kent and Medway Local Broadband Plan was approved a month ahead of the deadline.
- 1.3 BDUK has made £9.87m available for broadband infrastructure improvements in Kent and Medway. KCC has committed a further £10m to make this project happen. It is anticipated that the network operator who wins the right to build the network will contribute the remaining funding required for this £43m project.

2. What is the *Make Kent Quicker* Campaign?

- 2.1 Before broadband providers will invest in improving the broadband network in Kent and Medway, local people need to say they want it. To show providers the demand there is in the county from residents and businesses, KCC has launched the *Make Kent Quicker* campaign.
- 2.2 The *Make Kent Quicker* website was launched in February and will run to the end of June. Kent residents and businesses are being encouraged to go to www.makekentquicker.com to register their demand for quicker broadband.
- 2.3 At 9 March², when the number of people registering their support passed 5,000, the top five districts were as follows:

¹ BDUK is a unit within the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

² The latest figures available at the time of writing.

District	Number of Registrations
Sevenoaks	1036
Maidstone	730
Tunbridge Wells	717
Ashford	540
Canterbury	335

2.4 Businesses account for just under one-quarter of the total support in Maidstone so far. The breakdown of supporters by type was as follows:

Type	Number of Registrations
Business	37 (5.1%)
Home-based business	129 (17.7%)
Residential	562 (77.0%)
Left blank	2 (0.2%)
TOTAL	730 (100%)

2.5 As well as the website, plans for further promotion and publicity include:

- Posters that can be tailored to individual districts and flyers.
- Promotion to businesses in conjunction with the chambers of commerce.
- Radio advertising on Heart FM, starting before the end of March, running the whole way through to the end of the campaign.
- Print and web-based advertising through the Kent Messenger group.
- Action for Communities in Rural Kent is helping to get the message out in rural areas.
- Media releases will be issued throughout the campaign to keep the momentum going.
- Further resources and maps will be added to the *Make Kent Quicker* website in due course.

2.6 The *Make Kent Quicker* website also offers the facility for visitors to test the speed of their existing broadband connection and get tips to improve it.

Appendix

Frequently asked questions about the BDUK project.

APPENDIX – Frequently asked questions about the BDUK project

What does this mean for my area?

This project is seeking to ensure that 90% of Kent and Medway's properties benefit from superfast broadband and the remaining 10% have access to a service of at least 2Mbits/s.

Until we have completed the procurement process, it is not possible to accurately confirm where the 'final 10%' hardest to reach (i.e. and most expensive to serve) properties are located. However we expect these properties to be in the most rural parts of the County.

It should also be stressed that the 90% superfast criteria is a minimum requirement. If we are able to demonstrate high demand for better broadband services, network operators may be persuaded to invest in providing superfast services to even more properties in Kent.

Why is this project not delivering superfast broadband for all properties?

The government, through its agency Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK), has made £9.87m available to upgrade Kent and Medway's broadband infrastructure in line with their targets of securing superfast broadband for 90% of properties within each county and the delivery of a service of at least 2mb for the remaining 10%. KCC has committed a further £10m to make this project happen and it is anticipated that the network operator who wins the right to build the network will contribute the remaining funding required for this £43m project.

We currently estimate that delivering superfast solutions to the 'final 10%' of premises across Kent would require additional investment of circa £30m due to the costs involved.

When will I get better broadband?

Whilst we still confirming the delivery timelines with BDUK, we estimate that the build and roll out of this network across Kent will commence from early 2013 and will finish by 2015.

It will not be possible to confirm the geographical phasing of this roll out until after the procurement has been completed and initial survey work has been undertaken.

Why will the work not start until early 2013?

This project represents a major infrastructure project and will involve spending almost £20 million of public funding. As a result, we need to abide by legislation surrounding procurement and state aid. We are committed to bringing this infrastructure on line as soon as possible for the benefit of Kent's residents and communities. We are working closely with BDUK to make this happen and are delighted that we have had our local broadband plan signed off (which is a prerequisite of us accessing the Government's funding) ahead of many other areas.

Will I need to apply for funding for my area to benefit from the BDUK?

No – the project will be rolled out through all areas of Kent and Medway eligible to benefit from the BDUK project.

As a result of securing this investment, Kent County Council has put its own broadband grants on hold.

Why do I need to register my demand?

Kent and Medway are keen to upgrade their broadband infrastructure – like all other parts of the UK. Achieving this will still require substantive investment from the private sector and we want to ensure that Kent and Medway are seen as an 'attractive investment proposition'.

As part of our business case, we will be asked by potential suppliers for evidence of demand. If we are not able to demonstrate high levels of demand to potential suppliers, it is unlikely that we will not secure the necessary private sector funding to take this project forward.

Furthermore, areas that are to demonstrate a high level of demand may be prioritised by suppliers within the roll out plan and/or better from an enhanced broadband service upgrade if a strong business case has been made.

What can I do to help?

Please encourage your neighbours to register their demand.

We are working with Action with Communities in Rural Kent to set up a network of local community and business champions to extend the reach of this campaign.

If you would like to get involved, please contact 01303 813790.