

Better Broadband for Norfolk Information Sheet 25 (14 February 2017)

In December 2012 Norfolk County Council and BT signed a deal to extend the availability of superfast broadband (24 Megabits per second plus) to more than 80% of Norfolk's homes and businesses by the end of 2015. The Better Broadband for Norfolk (BBfN) programme completed ahead of schedule in September 2015, having given 186,000 extra Norfolk premises access to high-speed broadband.

An extension to the programme is now underway, which is now set to make high-speed broadband available to more than 95 per cent of Norfolk's premises by spring 2020.

We aim to keep the people of Norfolk updated about the programme on the BBfN website (www.betterbroadbandnorfolk.co.uk) and via these information sheets every three months. Read on for our latest update.

What's happened since the last update?

Eleven million pounds of new funding in the BBfN programme has allowed us to further extend the reach of the programme. Thanks go to five Norfolk district councils, central government and a rebate from BT for this money. In addition, around £10m of underspend from the first contract will be re-invested into this phase of the broadband roll-out. As a result, we expect high-speed broadband will be available to more than 95% of Norfolk homes and businesses by spring 2020.

To put this in context, in December 2012 only 42% of Norfolk's premises could get high-speed broadband. Currently, 87% can buy a high-speed broadband service.

As BBfN continues, we're reaching more remote parts of Norfolk, which pose more difficulties to BT's engineers, and where there are fewer premises in the radius of the new cabinets. So we're working just as hard to bring superfast broadband to more parts of the county as quickly as possible, it's just the 'bang for our buck' is a bit smaller now – but we know it's no less anticipated or appreciated by those who we're reaching.

What else has happened?

We've recently improved the BBfN website (www.betterbroadbandnorfolk.co.uk) to make it easier for people to find out if an address in Norfolk is likely to be able to access high-speed broadband if it can't already. Using a new mapping tool, people can now check by postcode area where better broadband is already available and, if it isn't, whether there are plans to provide it under the BBfN programme.

We'll keep the website's map and search tools updated with the latest information - please keep checking on there if you're waiting for news. And because the map on the website gives a much clearer picture of where the BBfN programme is making a difference than the previous version, we will no longer give great long lists of places that have had services go live recently in these information sheets. As far as reasonably possible, and having listened to people's feedback and suggestions, we've tried to make sure the website has the answers to your questions.

And apologies this update is coming out much later than the stated 'every three months' – we wanted to tie it in with the website being ready, and there were some unforeseen delays in the website going live.

Continued...

If BBfN has improved broadband speeds in my area, how do I get a faster broadband service?

As and when new better broadband services become available to your home or business, you need to contact an internet service provider to see what broadband packages are available and buy a new package or upgrade your current package to enjoy faster broadband speeds. You can check what's on offer via a broadband price comparison website - Ofcom has accredited eight of these sites, visit www.ofcom.org.uk for more details.

What about the five per cent of Norfolk premises that won't get faster broadband by spring 2020?

We'll keep doing all we can to make our money go as far as possible and explore any opportunities to get more investment in BBfN. In the meantime, there is information about a national broadband subsidy scheme on the BBfN website which those with the slowest broadband speeds are eligible for – look under the FAQs section on the website. Central government also intends to introduce a broadband universal service obligation that would give everyone a right to a decent broadband connection on reasonable request. An announcement on this is due later in the year.

If you require further information please visit www.betterbroadbandnorfolk.co.uk or telephone Norfolk County Council on 0344 800 8020.