

Making Kent Quicker Update: October 2013

Faster broadband is coming to Kent and Medway

Kent County Council is working with BT and the Government's broadband agency, Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK), to bring better broadband to Kent.

This means, when combined with existing rollout plans, that:

- at least 95% of all properties in Kent will have access to higher-speed fibre-based broadband infrastructure by the end of 2015;
- every property in the project area will be able to access a broadband service of at least 2Mbps; and
- a minimum of 91% of premises will get superfast broadband of at least 24Mbps.

Despite representing one of Kent's largest infrastructure investments, the project will take less than three years to deliver – and will involve laying 7,000km of fibre the length and breadth of the County.

Progress to date:

- Kent County Council signed a contract with BT to deliver the project on the 18th of March 2013, following an extensive procurement process.
- Project delivery is on track and we are committed to delivering this essential infrastructure as quickly as possible.
- The build for the first phase is underway and surveying/detail design work for phase two has already started.
- The first services will go live in early 2014 and the fibre build will be completed by the end of 2015.

Frequently Asked Questions about the Making Kent Quicker Project

Why is this project needed?

- The Making Kent Quicker Project aims to bring broadband to every property in Kent and Medway – and will ensure that over 90% of households and businesses will be able to access superfast broadband services.
- This project is focusing on delivering better broadband services to rural parts of Kent and Medway that will not benefit from commercial roll out

programmes because of the costs involved in upgrading rural broadband infrastructure.

- Without this project many rural businesses and communities would continue to have either no or very slow broadband services as there are no plans to upgrade infrastructure in many rural parts of the County.

How much is Kent investing in this project?

Given the importance of broadband connectivity to Kent's businesses and rural communities, Kent County Council is investing over £10 million to make this upgrade happen. For every £1 of Kent money being invested the Council has leveraged nearly £3 from other sources (approximately £1 from central government and £2 from BT).

Who is involved in delivering this project?

This project is being led by Kent County Council, in partnership with BT and BDUK.

What is this project seeking to achieve?

We want to ensure that Kent's rural areas are not left behind by:

- making sure that all properties in the project area have access to a basic broadband service of at least 2Mbps – the minimum speed that the Government says should be available in every home and business.
- providing significant levels of speed uplift to provide superfast broadband (i.e. a speed of at least 24Mbps) for at least 91% of premises across Kent and Medway by building on commercial rollouts.

Which areas will benefit from the project?

The 'Making Kent Quicker' Project will focus on providing upgrades to those areas that have slow or poor broadband and will not receive better broadband services through existing commercial/market-led plans to upgrade broadband infrastructure.

We are particularly keen to ensure that no area misses out. As a result we have undertaken extensive consultation with operators and asked all broadband providers to confirm and provide robust evidence as to which premises in Kent and Medway they are currently able, or plan, to serve.

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

Ensuring that a minimum of 91% of premises in Kent will get superfast broadband by 2015, 95% will on fibre infrastructure and everyone will get a basic broadband service represents a major step-change - as many rural areas are not set to benefit from existing commercial rollout programmes.

Reaching a higher percentage, however, will require significant additional public sector investment. This is because the the money available for the improvements is not enough to fund 100 per cent superfast coverage as the costs rise significantly in bringing superfast broadband to the hardest to reach areas.

We are pleased that the Government has announced plans for releasing an additional £250 million to ensure that 95% of properties can access superfast broadband – and we are keen to ensure that Kent is able to benefit from this new scheme – when details are announced.

In the meantime, we are committed to researching other opportunities – including new technological innovations - to help us realise our ambition of bringing superfast broadband services to all rural communities.

My property is in the project area. When will I get better broadband?

The network build has already started and the first services will be available in early 2014.

You can find out the latest updates and when improvements are happening in your area by going to www.kent.gov.uk/broadband and typing in your post code.

How is the roll out plan being decided?

We want to achieve the best possible broadband coverage for Kent and Medway for the resources available. To achieve this, the network is being designed and built in the most technically efficient and cost effective way to maximise speed and coverage. The rollout plan will take into account many factors such as existing infrastructure, planning requirements, local demographics and geography.

Given the size of the project, it is not possible to plan every area at the same time, so some areas will be planned and enabled before others.

Why can't the project be delivered faster?

This project represents one of Kent's largest infrastructure projects and has an ambitious timescale for completion. The project build will involve laying over 7,000 km of fibre optic cable, installing over 5,000 fibre distribution points and more than 1.4 million hours of construction time.

We are acutely aware of the frustrations that many rural communities and businesses have with their current broadband connections and are committed to delivering this project as soon as possible. We are particularly pleased that we were able to complete the procurement work ahead of schedule and are keen to maintain this momentum.

Will my community have to apply for funding to get better broadband from this project?

No – the project will automatically be rolled out throughout all areas of Kent and Medway eligible to benefit from the Making Kent Quicker project.

As BT is installing the network will I have to use BT as my Internet Service Provider?

No. The infrastructure upgrades being funded by this project are being built by Openreach (BT's local network business) and will be 'open access'. This means that any Internet Service Provider can choose to use the infrastructure to provide customers with new services.

Currently around 80 communications providers offer fibre broadband services over BT's network. This will enable Kent residents and businesses to choose the provider and broadband package that best suits their needs.

Will my existing Internet Service Provider offer me the new broadband services?

Any Internet Service Provider can choose to use the infrastructure to provide customers with new services. You will need to check with your current Internet Service Provider to see what products they are prepared to offer.

What do I need to do to access the new services when they become available?

Once services are available in your area you will need to contact your ISP to find out if they are offering a fibre-based service and tell them you wish to upgrade.

I signed up to the Making Kent Quicker Campaign. What is the next step?

Thank you! We have now had over 19,000 businesses and communities register their demand for better broadband services which is an excellent response.

Successfully delivering this project required us to be able to lever in significant investment from the appointed network supplier – and as part of the procurement process we were asked to evidence the demand for better broadband services to provide a business case for this investment. Your help has enabled us to do this.

What might cause changes to planned deployment?

During the network design and build phases, technical problems may be encountered which means that the planned implementation is either not technically or financially viable, or will take longer than anticipated. These include **issues arising from survey where:**

Practical problems are identified (such as ducts being blocked) which require more work than originally anticipated. Before the build can begin, the assumptions that underpin the indicative implementation plan need to be tested by undertaking physical surveys e.g. inspecting ducting to ensure it is suitable to carry fibre optic cables. If problems are identified an impact assessment will take place to see if the intended implementation can still be technically achieved/is financially viable. The impact assessment will also confirm whether the original timing is still achievable.

It is not practical or affordable to survey everything prior to implementation. As a result, problems may be identified during the build. Where these issues cannot be overcome by the engineers an assessment will be undertaken to ascertain whether a technical alternative can be found and whether it is financially viable. There may also be a need to review the original timings.

Please go to www.kent.gov.uk/broadband and type in your postcode for the latest updates.