

Making Kent Quicker Update: July 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 the project representing one of Kent's largest infrastructure projects, 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.

Current highlights

The project is going well and we are committed to delivering this essential infrastructure as quickly as possible. The infrastructure deployment will be delivered in nine phases, with the first communities able to order services in early 2014.

Signing the contract kicked off a period of intensive planning and surveying work which typically lasts 6-9 months. This started immediately for the first phase and is progressing well.

It will be repeated for every phase and involves the Openreach (BT's local network business) team:

- carrying out a full assessment of the existing infrastructure in the project area
- planning where new equipment will go within BT's telephone exchanges
- designing the network
- surveying underground ducts
- identifying the optimal location for the new fibre street cabinets and over-ground equipment.

The surveys enable us to confirm our deployment plans after which we will be able to start sharing rollout information.

We anticipate that we will be able to announce in October 2013 the first locations to receive services and that the 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 most 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 other 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 Medway Council, BT and BDUK.

What is this project seeking to achieve?

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

- a) ensuring 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.
- b) providing significant levels of speed uplift to provide superfast broadband (i.e. a speed of 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 – and 95% will on fibre infrastructure - will be a major achievement as many rural areas are not set to benefit from commercial rollout programmes. It is providing the best coverage and speed improvements possible for the money available. Reaching a higher percentage would require significant additional public sector investment.

Given that plans are subject to change due to issues identified through survey or build (i.e. blocked ducts) we are not yet able to confirm the locations of these 5% "hard to reach" areas that are unlikely to get fibre services based on current plans.

We remain committed to working with BT to ensure the best possible outcome for these 'hard to reach locations' and KCC is looking to secure additional funding for additional broadband upgrade work.

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

Intensive planning and survey work is currently underway and project delivery is on schedule. As a result:

- the build will start later this year
- the first communities to benefit from this project will be able to order services in early 2014
- we are aiming for services to be available to all properties by the end of 2015

It will not be possible to confirm the geographical phasing of the rollout until the survey/planning work for each phase has been undertaken and an implementation plan finalised with BT.

Further updates will be published on kent.gov.uk/broadband.

How will the roll out plan be 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.

Which communities will benefit first from the Making Kent Quicker Project?

The project implementation will be delivered in nine phases.

At this early stage it is impossible to say which areas will be first as a significant amount of planning and survey work needs to be carried out. We expect to be able to share this information during autumn 2013.

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?

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.

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 almost 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**
 - 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.

- **Planning issues**

- Planning permission will be required for some activities. In the majority of cases it is anticipated that these will be achieved within the project's planned timeframes, although delays can occur. In extreme situations if local objections are upheld it may not be possible to implement planned broadband upgrades.