

13 June 2014

First three communities to benefit from multi-million pound Superfast Essex broadband programme unveiled

First new green fibre broadband cabinets officially launched this week

The first three communities to benefit from the Superfast Essex broadband programme have been revealed as the first three 'live' fibre broadband cabinets in the county were unveiled this week.

Events were held in the Colchester, Braintree and Harlow districts over two days to mark this key milestone in the programme to rollout faster broadband across the county.

Approximately 300 homes and businesses in these areas are the first to be able to benefit from the programme – just over 100 of which are in Colchester Business Park, over 130 in Rivenhall Village, and just under 70 in the Harlow Enterprise Zone.

In a joint statement Essex County Council (ECC) Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and Infrastructure, Cllr Kevin Bentley; ECC Chairman, Cllr Norman Hume; Colchester Borough Council Leader, Cllr Anne Turrell; Braintree District Council Leader, Cllr Graham Butland; and Harlow District Council's Portfolio Holder for Resources and Enterprise, Cllr Tony Durcan, said: "This is an exciting time for this programme and these communities and two business parks which will stand to benefit. Enabling our residents and businesses to access faster broadband is important for driving the economy and day-to-day living in the modern world. This is just the start."

On Wednesday 11th June, Essex County Council (ECC), BT, and Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK), were joined by Colchester Borough Council and guests to celebrate the arrival of the first cabinet in the Colchester District in Colchester Business Park, Wyncolls Road, near the junction with Severalls Lane. The ceremony was supported by representatives from the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), Essex Chamber of Commerce, Essex Branch of the Institute of Directors and local businesses.

On Thursday 12th June, ECC, BT and BDUK, celebrated the arrival of the first cabinets in the Braintree District, in Rivenhall Village, and the Harlow District, in the Enterprise Zone.

The launch of the Rivenhall cabinet in Church Road, near the junction with Rickstones Road, was supported by Braintree District Council, Rivenhall Parish Council, Rivenhall CofE Primary School and members of the community. The Primary School's choir performed two songs accompanied by guitar, 'As One' and 'Give it all You've Got', as part of the event.

In the Harlow Enterprise Zone, the launch at Templefields, in River Way, near the junction with Temple Bank, was supported by Harlow District Council and the Project Director for Harlow Enterprise Zone, along with representatives from the FSB, Harlow Chamber of Commerce, and local businesses.

At each event guests heard speeches from key partners, watched the official ribbon-cutting, and had the opportunity to see inside the new green cabinet and learn more about the technology in the BT mobile demonstration suite.

Bill Murphy, BT's Managing Director, Next Generation Access, said: "We have been working hard to get us to this important milestone. This is an exciting time for Essex and the beginning of a journey that will see the communications landscape completely transformed.

"This project will boost the local economy and help to create and protect local jobs. It will be of enormous benefit to local businesses which can use the faster speeds to improve their competitiveness both within the UK and abroad."

Ed Vaizey, Communications Minister, said: "This is fantastic news for the people of Essex. We understand how important access to superfast broadband is - the UK already does more business online than any other European country, and the widespread access to superfast broadband that this £24.6m scheme will deliver will provide a tremendous boost to the Essex local economy."

Priti Patel, Member of Parliament for Witham, said: "As Chair of the Essex Business Transport & Infrastructure Forum (EBTIF) I have campaigned extensively for better broadband services in my constituency and across Essex. I am pleased that this week the first three of the local Superfast Essex fibre-enabled cabinets are going live with one of the launches in Rivenhall. I am looking forward to seeing this superfast broadband introduced in my constituency where it will support the growth of our local economy and bring greater better broadband access to much of our community."

Greg Clark, Chairman of the Harlow Enterprise Zone Board, said: "Providing access to high quality broadband services is one of the central promises to business of the Harlow Enterprise Zone. This new service in Templefields will help existing businesses to grow and will also help us to attract new businesses to the Enterprise Zone, bringing new jobs to Harlow. We welcome this initiative from BT and the Superfast Essex project which we know will have a significant positive impact on local businesses."

Improving broadband is important to Essex County Council to boost the local economy. It will help enable businesses to grow and compete in a global market; support people to get the most out of their education, training and career by enabling better access to online information and services; and support people to work or run a business from home.

Superfast Essex is a £24.6 million programme to deliver the county's biggest ever broadband transformation. The council is spearheading the programme in partnership with BT to make fibre broadband available to more than 87% of premises in the county by the end of summer 2016, with the potential to achieve superfast speeds of 24Mbps and above¹. Additionally, the Superfast Essex programme aims to deliver 2Mbps for all premises in the county in the project area, fast enough to use online services such as BBC iPlayer.

It is estimated engineers from Openreach, BT's local network business, will lay nearly 900,000 metres of optical fibre and install more than 400 new green fibre broadband cabinets at roadsides throughout the county.

The programme builds on BT's commercial plans, which have already made fibre broadband available to more than 500,000 Essex premises.

The new fibre-based network will be open to all broadband service providers on an equivalent basis. It means households and businesses in Essex will benefit from a highly competitive market, bringing greater choice and affordable prices from a wide range of service providers.

Residents and businesses can check if they are connected and able to access fibre services from these cabinets by using the Openreach link in the 'How do I get it?' box at the bottom of the 'Where, when and how' page of the Superfast Essex website, www.superfastessex.org <<http://www.superfastessex.org>>. No-one will be automatically connected. Anyone interested in taking up a fibre broadband service will have to ask their existing Internet Service Provider to switch their service to fibre. You may have to change your package or provider to get a faster connection.

ENDS

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For BT enquiries contact BT's regional press office on its 24-hour number: 0800 085 0660. All news releases can be accessed at BT's website: <http://www.bt.com/newscentre>

Notes to Editors:

¹You could receive up to 80Mbps. This is a BT Openreach wholesale speed. Internet Service Providers (ISPs) may use different speeds in their advertising. Individual line speeds will depend on network infrastructure and the service chosen by the ISP.

Fibre to the cabinet will be the main technology used. This can deliver wholesale downstream speeds of up to 80Mbps, and upstream speeds of up to 20Mbps. Fibre to the Premises technology - delivering ultra-fast wholesale speeds of up to 330Mbps - will also be used in certain areas and will be available on demand throughout the fibre footprint should local businesses want the ultra-fast speeds it offers.

It will also boost the competitiveness of local businesses, helping them to find new customers and operate more efficiently, whilst opening up a host of new learning and development opportunities for households.

Superfast broadband benefits include users being able to use multiple bandwidth-hungry applications at the same time and sending and receiving large amounts of data much more quickly and efficiently. New fibre services are set to transform the way consumers use the internet, from the simple sharing of pictures and video to enjoying the growing boom in entertainment services available on-line.

For local businesses, the fibre network will underpin the introduction of many new services and applications. Big business applications driven by new 'cloud' services will be within the reach of enterprises of all sizes. Computer back up, storage and processing will be faster, and the use of high-quality videoconferencing will become a viable possibility.

List of attendees for each event - Available on request.

Photo captions (left to right)

P1010319 – COLCHESTER: Colchester Borough Council Leader Cllr Anne Turrell; BT's Regional Partnership Director, East of England, Annette Thorpe; Institute of Directors, Essex Branch, Chairman Tim Price; Openreach Programme Manager Tony Smith; BT Project Manager Matt Galley; Openreach Delivery Manager Keven Gilson; Superfast Essex Senior Programme Manager at Essex County Council Connie Kerbst; Superfast Essex Contract Manager at Essex County Council Ian Frost; Essex County Council Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and Infrastructure Cllr Kevin Bentley.

P1010351 – RIVENHALL: Rivenhall CofE Primary School Choir with BT's Regional Partnership Director, East of England, Annette

Thorpe; Braintree District Councillor, Essex County Councillor and Rivenhall Parish Council Chairman James Abbott; Rivenhall Parish Vice Chairman Howard Bills; Essex County Council Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and Infrastructure Cllr Kevin Bentley; Essex County Council Chairman Cllr Norman Hume; and Braintree District Council Leader Cllr Graham Butland.

P1010371 – HARLOW: Essex County Council Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and Infrastructure Cllr Kevin Bentley; Harlow District Council Chief Executive Malcolm Morley; Harlow District Council Chairman Cllr Linda Pailing; Harlow District Council Leader Jon Clempner; Essex County Council Chairman Cllr Norman Hume; Harlow District Council Project Director for Harlow Enterprise Zone, Andrew Bramidge; and BT's Regional Partnership Director, East of England, Annette Thorpe.

About Superfast Essex

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Superfast Essex is the programme to improve broadband connectivity across Greater Essex (including Southend and Thurrock) being co-ordinated by Essex County Council. It is part of the national government-led programme, known as Superfast Britain, which is being led by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) through a team called Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK).

ECC, BT and BDUK are jointly investing £24.6million into the Superfast Essex programme. This programme together with BT's commercial rollout will ensure 87.4% of premises in Greater Essex will have access to fibre by 2016, with the potential to achieve superfast speeds of 24Mbps and above.

For more information visit www.superfastessex.org<<http://www.superfastessex.org>>.

About BT

[Description: BT_Logo_1]

BT is one of the world's leading providers of communications services and solutions, serving customers in more than 170 countries. Its principal activities include the provision of networked IT services globally; local, national and international telecommunications services to its customers for use at home, at work and on the move; broadband, TV and internet products and services; and converged fixed/mobile products and services. BT consists principally of five lines of business: BT Global Services, BT Business, BT Consumer, BT Wholesale and Openreach.

For the year ended 31 March 2014, BT Group's reported revenue was £18,287m with reported profit before taxation of £2,312m.

British Telecommunications plc (BT) is a wholly-owned subsidiary of BT Group plc and encompasses virtually all businesses and assets of the BT Group. BT Group plc is listed on stock exchanges in London and New York.

For more information, visit www.btplc.com<<http://www.btplc.com>>.

About BDUK

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Superfast Britain is a Government programme of investment in broadband and communication infrastructure across the UK. Run by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, this investment helps businesses to grow, creates jobs and will make Britain more competitive in the global race. The portfolio is comprised of three elements:

- £780m to extend superfast broadband to 95% of the UK by 2017
- £150m to provide high speed broadband to businesses in 22 cities
- £150m to improve quality and coverage of mobile phone and basic data network services

Administered on behalf of Government by Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK), Superfast Britain is transforming Britain by promoting growth, enabling skills and learning, and improving quality of life.

For further information: <https://www.gov.uk/broadband-delivery-uk>