

Connections



Briefing from BT Scotland • June 2009

Half a million Scottish homes and businesses to benefit from free 20 mb/s broadband boost

Free BT Broadband Accelerator offers faster speeds and digital inclusion



Half a million homes and businesses in Scotland are to get a free broadband boost after BT announced it will more than double the top speeds for its residential and business customers.

Based on BT's new 21st Century Network (21CN), the faster speeds will initially be available from 31 exchanges across Scotland, from Ayr in the south to Inverness in the north. (See full list in table).

The upgrade to ADSL 2+ technology will benefit businesses now and households this summer, covering more than 20 per cent of BT's customers across Scotland.

Given BT is the UK's largest retailer of broadband with 4.8 million customers, the move, which comes in advance of Lord Carter's Digital Britain Report, will lead to

an increase in average broadband speeds.

The plans will see BT Retail broadband customers in enabled areas receiving faster speeds of up to 20Mb/s at no extra cost compared with current speeds of up to 8 Mb/s.

As well as boosting download speeds, upload speeds will increase to up to 1Mb/s. The faster service will enable customers to surf, upload or download data in a fraction of the time, even when several users are on the same connection. It is also good news for businesses looking to use rich media or boost their websites.

BT research has shown that one of the major causes of slower broadband speeds lies in customers' home wiring. To address this, BT is set to offer the BT Broadband Accelerator that eliminates electrical interference from telephone-extension

wiring, and can improve broadband speeds and reliability.

BT will be giving away the devices free to consumers and businesses that are likely to benefit. Crucially, this will mean more customers with marginal broadband speeds will exceed the 2Mb/s threshold required to benefit from the full range of new internet services, something the UK Government is set to address following the publication of Lord Carter's Digital Britain report.

Brendan Dick, director, BT Scotland, said: "Unlike other providers, BT is upgrading customers to 20Mb/s for free. High-speed broadband provides a faster and more reliable service that will transform the way we live, work, learn and play. We are already the UK's largest retailer of broadband and today's announcement shows that we offer terrific value for money.

"We believe the true value of broadband is in helping customers enjoy the exciting new services that it makes possible. In line with the Government's Digital Britain review, we will be making higher speeds more widely available."

In a separate move, BT Retail will begin the first trials of up to 40Mb/s super-fast fibre-based broadband in Whitchurch, South Wales and Muswell Hill, London this summer. BT's local network business Openreach is already delivering speeds of up to 100Mb/s to customers in the Ebbsfleet Valley in Kent, using fibre-to-the-premise (FTTP) technology.

List of ADSL2plus enabled exchanges in Scotland:

Aberdeen Balgownie	Edinburgh Dean	Hamilton
Aberdeen Denburn	Edinburgh Newington	Inverness
Aberdeen Kincorth	Edinburgh Waverley	Kilmarnock
Aberdeen Lochnagar	Falkirk	Leith
Aberdeen West	Glasgow Bridgeton	Musselburgh
Alloa	Glasgow Central	Livingston Station
Ayr	Glasgow Halfway	Paisley
Cumbernauld	Glasgow Langside	Perth
Dalkeith	Glasgow Pollok	Stirling
Dunfermline	Glasgow Scotstoun	
East Kilbride	Glasgow Western	

For BT contact telephone numbers please see your local BT Phone Book

BT supports 'Terminate the Rate' campaign

3 UK, BT, consumer, business and member groups have joined forces to call for a significant cut in the cost of calling mobile phones.

The Terminate the Rate Campaign has come together to call for an end to high Mobile Termination Rates, which can account for as much as 80 percent of the price per minute of a call from a home phone line to a mobile. Mobile Termination Rates (MTRs) are charges paid by operators to connect calls to mobiles and are at the root of the high cost of calling mobiles.

Last year UK mobile operators charged £750 million in MTRs just for allowing fixed-line customers to call mobiles. That's more than £60 million per month or £2 million per day. We want to Terminate the unfair Rate and bring it down to around a penny, saving consumers and businesses hundreds of millions. We're asking consumers and businesses to register their support for a fairer deal at www.terminatetherate.org

The European Commission has recognised that high MTRs penalise consumers and stifle competition and it has recommended that national regulators like Ofcom take a new approach to setting MTRs to bring them down to reasonable levels. We are calling on Ofcom to implement changes to drive down the cost of MTRs promptly.

John Petter, MD, Consumer, BT Retail said: "Fixed-line phone users know that calling a mobile is too expensive. We've done what we can to bring down that cost, but with MTRs accounting for up to 80 percent of the price per minute of a call from a home phone line to a mobile, the only way to get better prices is to Terminate the unfair Rate."



New way to chat to customers

BT Retail's inclusion website - aimed at older customers and those with disabilities - now features a new "live chat" function.

The system enables customers to simply type in their questions and receive written answers straight back from a dedicated BT customer service advisor.

Warren Buckley, BT's director of strategy and e-services, said: "We want customers to be able to communicate with BT easily and know that communication over the telephone doesn't work for everyone.

"Live chat offers our customers an alternative way to interact with BT and enables them to be confident that someone is on hand to answer their questions in real time."

BT says the service should prove especially useful for people with disabilities such as those who struggle with voice calls as a result of hearing or speech impairments.

Lorraine Gailey, chief executive of the charity Hearing Concern LINK, said: "Customer service departments often assume that a user is happy to deal with them on the telephone - and alternative, text-based, options are either unavailable or difficult to track down.

"We support the concept of BT's live chat real-time text system and have asked the regulator Ofcom to encourage further usage of such communication amongst other service providers."

Live chat will initially be available on BT's inclusion website www.bt.com/inclusion from 10am-5pm Monday to Friday each week.



Scottish Government explores Next Generation Access

The Scottish Government, BT and NESTA (the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts) explored the potential of deploying next-generation broadband access (NGA) in Scotland at a seminar attended by industry representatives in Glasgow in June.

The seminar, hosted by the Enterprise Minister, Jim Mather MSP, heard presentations from Brendan Dick, director, BT Scotland, and Stian Westlake, policy and research director at NESTA and was followed by a brainstorming session chaired by the Minister.

Central to the discussion was a focus on understanding where Scotland wants to be in terms of connectivity and coverage and how the Scottish Government, public sector and industry can help achieve this and overcome the challenges involved.

Stian Westlake outlined the vision from NESTA's recent report on 'Attacking the Recession' which included innovative ways of delivering and paying for the necessary physical infrastructure central to helping Scotland and the UK's economic recovery. Stian explained that "Scotland has the potential to be a beacon for the rest of Europe in digital technology and for the creative industries if the economic case for a high-speed network can be accepted."

Brendan Dick outlined BT's investment plans for next generation networks and explained to delegates that Scotland was at the forefront of the UK's largest ever investment programme in super-fast broadband with Glasgow and Edinburgh being in the first deployment phase of cities to have fibre to the cabinet (FTTC) technology.

"Despite this investment, Scotland must continue to make a robust case for high-speed networks and ensure that it avoids playing catch-up with the rest of the UK. Important in achieving this will be collaboration and partnership between government and industry and the many stakeholders involved," Dick added.

The Scottish Government is keen for industry to take the lead on delivering high-speed networks and industry representatives were encouraged by the Minister's determination to seize the opportunities that NGA offers and the contribution high-speed networks can make to delivering higher sustainable economic growth for Scotland.

Scottish households could spend up to £8 million this year on 0870 and 0845 calls

A new report by BT shows that calls to 0870 and 0845 numbers could cost Scots almost £8million this year. The BT report estimates that so far in 2009 households and businesses across the country have made more than three and a quarter million calls to 0870 and 0845 numbers – lasting nearly 800,000 hours.

Calls on shopping, to banks and motoring support lines such as car tax, insurance and vehicle licensing, are the most popular 0870 numbers used by Scots, whilst utility companies, banks and government support lines are the most commonly called 0845 numbers.

Annie Shaw, editor of internet finance advice website cashquestions.com, said: “Calls to 0870 and 0845 numbers can be a major cost to customers. We would urge

more phone companies to offer packages which include such calls being free. BT’s move earlier this year to include free 0870 and 0845 in all inclusive pricing was a major step forward. Scottish households can now use these services at no extra cost to spring clean their finances or fix technical problems they have been putting off.”

BT was the first company to make calling 0870 and 0845 numbers free as part of inclusive calling packages.

This report comes as Ofcom recently set out new rules to provide clarity about the price of calls to 0870 numbers. These rules will encourage communication providers to stop charging higher prices for 0870 numbers than fixed lines, and to include 0870 calls in call packages.

Hard hit businesses in Scotland could save 65 per cent on data network costs

BT has announced a major investment that could save Scottish businesses up to 65 per cent on the cost of connecting all their offices via a secure, high speed, private data network.

BT Business – with more than one million customers – is offering a new service which provides faster, cheaper transfer of data and lower cost calls between sites at a fraction of the cost of traditional networks.

Based on BT’s world-leading 21st Century Network (21CN), the BT Ethernet footprint is now the UK’s biggest with more than 600 connection points, including 30 in Scotland in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Dundee, Perth, Stirling, Inverness, Dumfries, Dunfermline, Falkirk, Irvine, Kilmarnock, Livingston, Motherwell and Paisley.

Providing dedicated bandwidth at the same speed in both directions, the services are ideal for firms running voice and business applications across two or more sites.

Bill Murphy, managing director of BT Business, said: “In these difficult times, this is a cheaper, faster way for businesses to connect. Network investment now could save a firm thousands of pounds over old technology, increase productivity just when it’s needed most and put businesses in a better position for the upturn when it comes.”



More info for Project Canvas

Project Canvas – BT’s internet protocol TV (IPTV) joint venture with the BBC and ITV – has received widespread support for the delivery of IPTV into the home via broadband.

But the BBC Trust has announced that it needs more information before beginning the second consultation stage for the project.

Responding to the announcement, the three partners have welcomed the opportunity to publish more information and are keen to support a timely conclusion of the trust’s consultation process.

In a joint statement, BT, the BBC and ITV said: “The partners believe that Canvas will maximise choice for consumers, sustain the long-term future of free-to-air broadcasting and promote broadband take-up.

“We also believe it will create significant opportunities for content providers and offer a real alternative in the TV market.

“Internet connectivity will have a transformational effect on TV. A viewing experience unconstrained by broadcast spectrum will give a far greater range of content providers access to the living room, creating unprecedented consumer choice and control over what content they view and when.”

The Trust’s announcement follows a seven-week consultation on the proposal – which received more than 800 submissions from individuals and stakeholders – as well as meeting with more than 60 stakeholders.

Areas where more information is needed include:

- the choice of technical standards for Canvas
- the way in which Canvas will work with industry bodies
- control of the electronic programme guide
- governance arrangements for the joint venture
- the use of editorial controls

BT joins sustainable elite

BT has made it into BiTC's elite group of companies awarded platinum plus status

BT has received a top honour for its ongoing commitment to tackling concerns such as climate change and social issues.

Business in the Community (BiTC) – a group of companies which encourages its members to improve their impact on society – awarded BT “platinum plus recognition”.

Only companies that rank highest in BiTC's annual corporate responsibility index are eligible for platinum plus status.

BT has been included in the top 100 rankings every year since the index was launched in 2002 and was BiTC 2007 Company of the Year.

Chief sustainability officer Chris Tuppen said: “In recent years there has been a cluster of leading companies at the top end of BiTC's corporate responsibility index.

“Platinum plus has been designed to identify the front runners and, as a result of a great team effort, BT has made it into this elite group. This is further evidence of BT's continued commitment to responsible and sustainable business.”

The BiTC corporate responsibility index is the UK's leading benchmark of responsible business – measuring a company's performance on how it is integrating corporate responsibility within its core business practices.

BiTC said BT has created strong links between business strategy and sustainability “which flow throughout the organisation”.

It said: “The senior managers who were interviewed during the evaluation process demonstrated clarity about sustainability in their part of the business and were able to envision the company in the future and the contribution that it could make to climate change and social issues that are facing the world but also that directly arise from their business model.”

New bill benefits customers

Billing is being made easier for BT's eight million consumer customers, thanks to the introduction of a simple new layout and clearer text for paper bills.

Simon Thorp, BT Retail head of consumer self-service for BT.com, said: “With a straightforward design – and written in friendly, plain English – the new bill is designed to improve the customer experience.

“It should also significantly cut the number of billing enquiries that customers have been making.”

The new bill covers all voice, broadband and BT Vision consumer customers – including reminders and follow-up letters – but currently excludes Welsh and accessible bills for customers with disabilities, which are due to be launched later this year.

Simon said around 58,000 customers have taken part in a trial of the new bill.

“Results from the trial indicate that customer billing enquiries on receipt of bills will drop by more than half a million calls this year – and by double that number next year,” he added.

“This will make a significant impact on call centre agents' time. We expect the new-look phone bill to make a considerable difference to both customers and the company.”



BT leads on green products

BT is one of the few European operators focused on creating telecoms solutions that will preserve the environment.

That's the message in a new survey of 15 operators released by market research firm Verdantix.

While no overall brand leader is perceived for sustainability, BT and mobile operator Orange are singled out for leading the development of sustainable products, as well as their sustainability credentials. Their weaker rivals include AT&T, Deutsche Telekom and Telecom Italia.

The survey – called Green Quadrant: Sustainable Telecoms Europe – says BT and Orange are ahead of the pack when it comes to internal sustainability programmes and external products that reflect them.

The operators are assessed by 15 expert buyers on 53 criteria for the report, which aims to show chief information officers and other environmental bosses how Europe's telecoms providers can support their sustainability initiatives.

Verdantix recommends buyers turn to BT Global Services for collaboration solutions, particularly videoconferencing. It says “BT's broad reach” can help cut travel costs and travel-related emissions.

It also highlights BT's sustainable telecoms and IT consulting services which help clients understand which network based-solutions will deliver the most significant cost savings and sustainability benefits.

The report says: “BT has built a strong platform through its internal sustainability programme to convince customers that it has the practical experience to deliver sustainable telecoms and networked IT solutions. The firm needs to leverage this experience to enhance its value propositions.”