Super-fast BT broadband goes live in Scotland

BT outlines ‘mixed economy’ broadband market

The dawn of a new ‘mixed economy’ for broadband services in Scotland and the rest of the UK drew closer in March following the successful roll-out of super-fast, fibre-based broadband services in Glasgow and Edinburgh.

More than 30,000 homes and businesses in the two cities now have access to super-fast, fibre-based broadband following the upgrading of Halfway and Western exchange areas in Glasgow and Dean Exchange in Edinburgh.

The roll-out of super-fast broadband and the next generation broadband service ADSL2+ is creating a mixed broadband economy which will provide the country with the communications capabilities for the future.

Fibre-based broadband is being laid by BT’s local network business Openreach to support speeds many times faster than those experienced by most households and businesses – with download speeds of to 40Mb and upload capability of up to 10Mb.

Concurrently, BT Wholesale is upgrading exchanges using ADSL2+ which offers speeds of up to 24Mb. More than 50 exchanges covering a third of Scottish lines have been enabled, and more upgrades are in the pipeline.

Brendan Dick, director, BT Scotland said: “It’s no longer a case of one size fits all. Businesses and households will increasingly be able to choose the broadband service that suits their needs best – whether delivered over copper, fibre or mobile networks.

“The start of super-fast services in parts of our two major cities puts Scotland at the forefront of BT’s UK-wide rollout of fibre-based broadband and complements our delivery of a mix of new technologies across the country.”

Super-fast speeds are more than enough to run multiple bandwidth-hungry applications at the same time. For example, some members of a family could be watching different high definition (HD) movies, while other are gaming or working on complex graphics while taking part on online video conferencing.

For businesses, computer processing and storage of files becomes more sophisticated and secure using ‘cloud computing’ technology. There will be faster back-up of systems and wider use of high quality videoconferencing within firms, and between them and their customers.

Brendan Dick stressed that Scotland must continue to make a robust case for high speed networks, as viable demand for next generation broadband would predominantly be in urban areas. Outside areas covered by commercial deployment, the Digital Britain strategy would play an important role.

He added: “We need solutions to address the needs of various geographic areas in the UK and important in achieving this will be collaboration and partnership between government and industry and the many stakeholders involved.

“Scotland must influence and gain from Digital Britain as much as possible and must make sure it doesn’t suffer due to its proportionally larger rural base and dispersed market. Government and industry needs to actively pursue programmes that drive use of, and demand for, ICT services.”

Meanwhile, it’s been announced that two further small exchanges – Vidlin and Lismore – are to be upgraded for full ADSL as part of the Scottish Government’s Broadband for Scotland work with BT. They join 27 others being upgraded to full ADSL and S2 where capacity is being increased.

Super-fast Roll-out

Live:
- Glasgow Halfway
- Glasgow Western
- Edinburgh Dean

Planned:
- Edinburgh Craiglockhart
- Edinburgh Corstorphine
- Glasgow Giffnock
- Glasgow Bridgeton
- Bothwell
- Dalgety Bay
- Dunfermline
- Livingston
- Newton Mearns
- Penicuik

Note: not every line in an enabled exchange area will currently be suitable for super-fast broadband.
BT helps councils tackle post credit crunch challenges

A BT expert has been outlining how integration can help local authorities meet the challenges they face post credit crunch at a major conference in Scotland.

Max Wide, BT’s director of strategic development for the local government sector, was speaking at the annual conference of SOLACE Scotland – the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers.

The conference promised leaders a warts-and-all discussion on maintaining public services in a period of declining funding. Speakers focused on the key challenge of managing resources more effectively through better collaboration, and the skills required to lead the necessary changes in the way public services are delivered.

Max said that as councils were challenged to make savings of 12-15 per cent, a consensus was emerging on the need firstly to drive costs out in individual organisations, and then to join up across organisational boundaries.

He gave several examples of such changes in practice, citing how two local authorities in Suffolk worked together with BT to integrate service delivery across the key functions of both – Adult & Community Services, HR & Payroll, Recruitment, Learning Development, Revenues & Benefits, Customer Services, Finance, ICT and Business Continuity. In doing so they provided integrated access to 450 different council services from walk in centres, call centres and the internet, and delivered fully functional HR and payroll services for 9,000 staff.

A project focused on similar functions in Liverpool saw the cost base reduced by £100 million over five years. Time spent on processing housing benefit claims reduced from 143 days to just 19 days and business rate collection rose to more than 99 per cent.

The result in both areas wasn’t just lowered costs but also transformed access to services for customers and staff.

Max said the challenge for leaders was to recognise that efficiency does not mean doing the wrong thing more cheaply; taking a transformational approach can both lower costs and bring improvements. This isn’t easy however, this kind of change needs leadership and requires us rethink assumptions about professions, where people work and the buildings we need, as well as the trading potential of services and the kinds of services we provide.

The full presentation can be downloaded from the SOLACE Scotland web site.

BT hits one million UK Wi-Fi hot spots

BT has reached its goal of building a million-strong Wi-Fi hotspot network, including 110,500 in Scotland. Now the largest network in the UK and Ireland, the hotspots are available in homes, independent businesses, high street chains and major city centres.

BT Wi-Fi users are also on track to spend more than a billion Wi-Fi minutes online this year*, a peak attributed in part to the massive growth in UK iPhone traffic. In the last eight months, BT has signed UK deals to provide O2, Orange and Vodafone iPhone customers** with BT Openzone Wi-Fi access.

Brendan Dick, director, BT Scotland, said: “Whether at home, at work or out and about, wireless access is central to keeping people and communities better connected. In the UK we’ve grown from 500,000 hotspots to one million within six months and in Scotland the 110,500 hotspots include 8,000 in Glasgow and 6400 in Edinburgh. We will continue to add more to meet demand from smartphone, laptop, iPod and now e-reader users. This is yet another important milestone in driving high speed connectivity throughout Scotland.”

Five million BT consumer and business broadband – plus BT Mobile Broadband – customers have inclusive Wi-Fi minutes in their contracts to surf, work or make cheaper VoIP calls. Casual users can buy access from as little as 1/2p per minute.

BT Openzone customers can access a further 65,000 hotspots in the UK and overseas through international roaming partners. BT FON members have access to another 225,000 FON (hot) spots in the UK and worldwide.

* Between April 2009 and 31 March 2010
** Plus O2 Mobile Broadband customers

Celebrities including David Walliams and Fearne Cotton set off from John O’Groats on the BT Sport Relief Million Pound Bike Ride, aiming to raise £2 million for Sport Relief. They faced an uphill battle through blizzards on the Scottish leg of the journey but ultimately triumphed, reaching Land’s End four days later. Their efforts raised a stunning £1,337,091 towards the record-breaking total of £31,633,091. Photograph © Paul Gregory
BT hosts parliamentary surgery on disability and inclusion


Experts from a range of inclusion organisations, including Help the Aged/Age Concern and employment services agency Remploy, showcased projects and discussed their issues and concerns with MSPs.

Brendan Dick, director of BT Scotland, said: “Disability and inclusion is not a specialist subject – something we can leave to the experts. We all have a part to play in creating products, services and a workplace where everyone can participate and contribute. It’s an opportunity for politicians and experts to talk about what we do well here in Scotland – and what we can improve on together.”

Hosted by Murdo Fraser MSP, the workshop was part of BT’s ‘Including You’ campaign which focuses on all aspects of inclusion policy from product design to work practises and people policies.

Edinburgh is first UK city to launch BT carbon club initiative to tackle climate change

A network of carbon clubs could be launched across Edinburgh to enlist citizens in the battle to save energy and tackle climate change.

The City of Edinburgh Council is the first local authority in the UK to adopt an innovative carbon club scheme pioneered by BT.

The council will set up clubs at five diverse city sites as the first stage in a project which, if successful, could be extended right across Edinburgh.

They are: the council’s Waverley Court Headquarters; City Chambers in the historic High Street; Currie High School; and Murrayburn and Bankhead Depots, which house environmental, refuse and repair services and road services.

BT has created a web site where council employees can form their own clubs and will manage the site during the pilot. Club members can access a library of information and energy savings tips, build their own micro-sites and pledge to undertake actions that will reduce their impact on the environment.

Council leader Councillor Jenny Dawe said: “I’m delighted that the council is leading the way in implementing best practice through the UK’s first Carbon Club pilot with BT. The concept offers staff the chance to make a real difference through generating cost, and carbon, savings for the organisation.

“We will all need to work together if Edinburgh is to succeed in its environmental aims and I look forward to working closely with BT and the wider business community in rolling-out the Carbon Club concept across the city over the coming months.”

BT’s carbon club initiative was launched in June 2007 as a way to bring people together to work on carbon reduction initiatives. The company now has more than 130 clubs in operation and more than 14,000 pledges have been made.

Forty communities in Scotland get connected with BT award

Forty community and voluntary groups in Scotland have been awarded a laptop and a year’s broadband internet connection.

The groups will be able to use their awards to take full advantage of the tremendous opportunities offered by the internet.

BT Community Connections has supplied awards to East Lothian Roots and Fruits, Highland Youth Project, Multiple Sclerosis Society Fife Branch, New Rhythms for Glasgow, the Polish Association Aberdeen and Scottish Borders Elder Voice, to name but a few.

James McClafferty, BT senior regional manager and chair of the Scottish judging panel, said: “It is great to know these awards will open doors to a whole new digital world for community and voluntary organisations. In our connected times, where technology is always on the advance, having internet access matched with online ability is increasingly essential.”
BT targets Scotland for green energy drive

BT Wind for Change, believed to be the UK’s largest corporate renewable energy project outside the energy sector, is gearing up for major investment in Scotland.

BT’s large-scale, on-shore wind project, which aims to develop 250MW of wind capacity, is set for a major push in Scotland on the back of the Scottish Government’s decision to give the Beauly to Denny electricity transmission line the go ahead.

Welcoming the decision, Richard Tarboton, BT’s energy and carbon director, said: “The decision for an upgraded transmission link gives BT the confidence to now start to seriously invest more time and effort to look for appropriate sites in Scotland.”

BT has already started exploring the potential for on-shore wind on Orkney, and will continue to explore a range of other potential sites across Northern Scotland.

Lord Wallace of Tankerness, a committed advocate of renewable energy, supports the efforts that BT is making. He said: “I am delighted that a major PLC such as BT is looking to invest in on-shore wind generation in Scotland. The firm promise of an upgraded Beauly to Denny transmission link will allow BT and other such major renewable energy players to develop, with even greater determination, the quantities of clean energy which our industrial sector must secure in the 21st century.”

BT has reduced its carbon footprint by some 58 per cent since 1996 and its renewable energy usage currently stands at around 40 per cent of total electrical power used. Over the next few years, it has more ambitious targets: to reduce its carbon footprint in the UK by 80 per cent on the 1996 figure, through improvements to energy efficiency, sourcing energy from low carbon generation and producing up to 25 per cent of its own energy requirements from its renewable energy developments, to be achieved by 2016.

More information about BT’s Wind for Change programme and its wider environmental work can be found at http://www.btplc.com/climatechange/

Computer whizz-kid Jake is Scotland’s no.1 Internet Ranger

Twelve year old Jake Leitch, from Kirkcaldy in Fife, has been named BT Internet Ranger of the Year for Scotland for helping his mum to discover a new lease of life online after she suffered a stroke.

Jake was nominated for the award by his mum Jackie Leitch, who he has cared for since her stroke two years ago. As well as helping out with everyday activities such as shopping, cooking and washing, Jake has taught Jackie valuable IT skills which have helped her recovery.

Presented with his prize of a BT laptop and £250 of IT vouchers, Jake, pictured, said: “I really enjoy using computers and it’s great that I can use them to help my mum too. I have found being a teacher challenging, but really fun and it has helped me understand more about the symptoms of strokes and caring for people who have had one.”