

# **CPEND Broadband Project**

## **Presentation of consultant's report**

### **13 May 2011 at the Parish Centre in Blandford Forum**

#### **Attendees**

See attached list

#### **Welcome address, and role of the community partnerships**

Scott Norman (SN), Chair of the DT11 Forum Community Partnership

SN thanked everyone for attending. He explained that the meeting was a vital part of the process of assisting the North Dorset community to reach its goal of having a broadband service fit for purpose. What is needed now is advice and support from the project's partners.

SN gave a short presentation about the Community Partnerships Executive for North Dorset (CPEND), highlighting some of its successful community projects, the most important of which is currently the Broadband Project. He introduced Steve Adamson, thanking him for his drive and determination in leading the project.

#### **Outline of the Broadband Project**

Steve Adamson (SA), Team Leader, Broadband Project group

SA gave a presentation which outlined the aims and objectives of the project, and the key steps taken so far. These have been to carry out a survey to demonstrate the need for the project, to produce a report, to get funding for these key steps, and to involve supporters from a wide sphere.

#### **The Dorset Public Service Network (DPSN) and its role**

Darren Roberts (DR), DPSN Client Manager

DR presented a report which highlighted the importance of collaboration between public services, the private sector and community groups. The intention is to provide best practice toolkits to communities and business groups, with resources, advice, training and workshops. DPSN is working with Bournemouth university to identify other groups like CPEND that they can support, and will put the CPEND project up as an example for other communities to aspire to.

#### **The Broadband Project survey**

Rob Leenderts (RL), CPEND Technical Team Leader / Sector Development Manager, Cable and Wireless Worldwide

SN thanked RL for his support on the technical side, and for setting up the survey. RL gave a report covering the geographical area, the number of responses, which at 1,123 he considered to be extremely good, and the results. The key findings included a high dissatisfaction with current broadband speeds, a large percentage of people prepared to pay for a higher level of service, and a high response rate from businesses.

#### **Presentation of the report**

Adrian Wooster (AW), Independent broadband consultant

AW presented the findings of the report, beginning by putting the broadband situation in North Dorset in context, by making regional and national comparisons. Some of the key points he made included:

- The South West generally has relatively very low levels of investment and competition (BT is the sole provider in many areas so almost has a monopoly)
- BT's announcement about bringing high speed broadband to Blandford is not good news for the surrounding rural areas as it will diminish the business case for carrying out improvements there
- With very high broadband speeds available in Bournemouth, there is a risk of businesses gravitating there and away from North Dorset
- The way forward could be through the 'Big Society' approach, which is what has happened across Europe, with investments being made in some areas, leveraging communities to find solutions where no one else can.
- However digitally isolated an area is, if you can get together with all sectors of the community you can overcome any problems in getting superfast broadband. The partnership approach is most viable for areas like North Dorset.
- AW outlined the possible ways forward, and believes that it we should aim for higher than the average level of service. Broadband speeds are rising fast, and we should not get left behind.
- We therefore ought to consider different approaches for different parts of the CPEND area, including fibre optic, fibre to cabinet solutions and wireless.
- Community, public and business investment are all essential, with funding from Broadband UK as the catalyst.

### **Discussion – 'the Dilemma'**

Questions to the panel, chaired by Scott Norman, with Steve Adamson, Adrian Wooster, Hilary Ritchie and Rob Leenderts

Sara Loch asked for an explanation of the fibre to cabinet option. It was explained that when you start to deliver fibre optic networks, you can take a fibre from the BT exchange to the cabinet. This is economical and requires less digging, as a copper link from the cabinet to the house already exists.

It was also confirmed that fibre to cabinet would not always be the solution, for example in those areas where BT cabinets no longer exist. The further away from a cabinet a home is, the slower the speed.

Scott asked Hilary Ritchie (HR) of North Dorset District Council to comment. She covers economic development and community planning for the council, which are both key to this project. Funding so far has come through Sowing Seeds and was just a small amount, but it has started off the process and brought in business and community, so was important money and the study it funded was invaluable.

As far as the economy is concerned, the roads are not brilliant, but what businesses need is to be able to trade globally and competitively, and at speed. There is a high percentage of people in the district working from home, and diversification of farm buildings is encouraged. If businesses are to remain competitive and not go to Bournemouth we need the infrastructure in place. We have a fragile economy, and want to provide good career

opportunities and salaries for young people. CPEND is key in co-ordinating the parish planning side, as are parish and town councils.

Anthony I'Anson of Alcatel-Lucent said a real concern is funding, and a potential route to making the business case work is aggregation. He is glad that inroads are being made, but in terms of stakeholders within DSPN he wanted to know whether, for example police, fire and ambulance, schools, health are on board, as this is vital for aggregation. The concept of a smart city or community is not new, and he asked what is being done in terms of policy at a county level, to provide an overall steering function and plan.

Helen Heanes of the DSPN responded, and said the districts are partners, all the schools on board, and they are talking to health and fire which are interested, as is the borough of Poole. Others will come on board as the project goes along. The County Council does have a broadband plan and is making the business case for investment.

The council has also talked to town and parish councils which are keen to be partners. It was pointed out that a representative of the DAPTC (Dorset Association for Parish and Town Councils) sits on CPEND. Hilary Ritchie agreed that aggregation is crucial at all levels for the business case and they are doing their best to get everyone working together.

Steve Adamson (SA) pointed out that the crux of dilemma is money, as there are not enough people in the project area to spend enough money to service the investment if it were done on a purely commercial basis. So there has to be some sort of intervention, and he would like to see more creative thinking from central government - for example if you put in new fibre, this attracts business rates, unlike existing cable, and this is a barrier to investment. Instead, there could be incentives, such as 'tax holidays'. We need to find other ways to reduce the cost. For example, industry tends to come across similar situations over and over again, so there is an opportunity for industry to finance reports which could be used over and over again to reduce costs.

John Goode of Tarrant Monkton Parish Council asked about mobile broadband, and whether it was worth exploring more use of this. AW explained that this is not really viable, due to the technical limitations of 3G (the data service you get with a mobile phone which allows you to use the internet).

Rob Leenderts said there are mobile technologies which go further – the fourth generation (4G) and David Hough of Ericsson agreed that mobile technologies can provide supplementary services, but not the complete solution. AW also pointed out that satellite internet services are also delivering faster services now, but there are delays and restrictions.

Nic Nicol of Blandford Rotary asked about the security issues of allowing communities to connect to schools, surgeries and so on. Helen Heanes said that the security aspect is being looked at, and that extra capacity would be provided for the public sector. Mark Trojacek of Fibre Options said it was worth noting that they have looked at this issue in

other counties and found that even if the county was prepared to connect to a Public Service Network (PSN) – it can be more expensive than bringing in an alternative, commercial supplier.

Michael Dunn, the Regional Manager for BT, said BT's door is always open to discuss deploying faster broadband. They are working with lots of counties and have lots of knowledge. He pointed out that significant announcements have just been made about fibre to cabinet solutions.

### **Closing Address**

#### **Bob Walter MP**

SN introduced Bob Walter MP, and said he has been very supportive of the whole scheme.

Bob Walter pointed out that community projects like this are part of the Big Society, that the Broadband Project is commendable and we should try and make it work. If we combine our solutions with those of the Dorset Public Sector Network, we will get added value. The community partnership approach is very important for business, and we have many vibrant businesses in this area, some of which are getting into international markets, and they need good communication. We have great disparity of coverage, and the response from the networks and ISPs is also disparate, so we have to tackle this ourselves. We must all support the CPEND project, and look at funding after the initial Sowing Seeds money. We need to bring together all business partners, and its worth noting that we have plenty of communications experts in this town (a defence college of communication and information systems at Blandford Camp). People may well be prepared to pay for a better service, as they do for BskyB and mobile coverage. Businesses need to have ownership of the project and really be part of it. He emphasised that if his help is needed and he can do anything useful he is very willing.

Scott Norman asked anyone wanting to get involved, or with suggestions or offers, to contact Steve Adamson or Rob Leenderts, and thanked the Broadband Project team and others for all their work.