

Rural Priority no 4 – Broadband Provison

In Action newsletter of January 2010, Jeremy Legget's article on Rural Broadband Provision stated that AirS will continue to campaign for improved services, but will also be working with communities on local initiatives.

As part of the Rural Access to Services Programme,(RASP) a number of parishes in West Sussex have been investigating the need for internet availability to be located in community hubs, so that residents or visitors to the area can access information easily and without incurring huge expense. Many residents in rural areas do not have computers at home, and yet local authority consultations and services promote their websites as being the preferred method of contact, as well as publicly funded bodies such as the BBC.

In one West Sussex village, Cocking, the parish council and RASP group have been successful in their grant bid to obtain some laptops to be installed in the local tearooms, one to be available during opening hours for anyone to use, and the others to be used for taster training sessions on internet and pc use. In preparing the funding bid, the issue of broadband coverage had to be thoroughly researched, and some of the information gleaned will undoubtedly be of interest to other rural communities which are thinking of embarking on a similar exercise, or indeed, which are having broadband issues.

- Firstly your parish will want to establish whether there is broadband coverage, and at what level. You may already know this if you have it yourself at home, but there are various websites which can help you. Either of the following websites will tell you where your nearest exchange is located.
<http://www.broadbandchecker.co.uk>
www.samknows.com
- Distance from the exchange is an important factor for the level of service you will receive. The discrepancy between the speeds you pay for and the highest speed you can get on the line is an indication of the effect of distance.
For those who are interested in the science, this is what an expert told us: *"You will have a twisted copper pair from your house or place of work all the way to the exchange (although it is probably a remote concentrator rather than an exchange - the BT network has 6000 concentrators, 600 actual exchanges and 60 main trunk switches (rule of thumb). A remote concentrator is a line frame which links the lines to a fibre connection which multiplexes the traffic over the fibre. Traffic is actually switched at the actual exchanges)."*
- If you want to check broadband speed for your pc, there are a number of websites which can do this for you, such as www.mybroadbandspeed.co.uk During periods of peak demand, speeds may dramatically reduce, so 2 or 3 checks and a mean average taken is advisable.

- Consumers who live in areas where an exchange has not been enabled can express interest in receiving ADSL by registering their demand with an ISP. BT has established trigger levels for customer interest at many of its exchanges. When registrations reach a pre-set trigger level, BT will start the process for the exchange to be enabled. If demand at any exchange without a pre-set trigger level reaches 150, BT will re-survey the exchange to identify whether a trigger level can be set.

- On the subject of wireless networking, this comment is taken from a government website: http://www.broadband.gov.uk/html/ukbroadband_task_force/publications.html.
“At a regional level, a growing number of groups are developing community wireless networks in areas where ADSL and cable modems are not available. These services are being used by both residential and business users. To find out if there is a community wireless network in your area, take a look at Annex 2 of the Guide to Wireless Broadband, published by the Government’s Broadband Taskforce., “

- Finally, if you are unable to access any of the weblinks above, (perhaps because your parish does not have broadband coverage!) please contact Action in Rural Sussex for assistance.

Rowena Tyler, Community Leadership Development Officer,
Rowena.tyler@ruralsussex.org.uk tel: 01798 344612