Welcome to the third edition of the Superfast Staffordshire Newsletter

Work on the project has been progressing behind the scenes as well as in the street. This time there are some exciting new things to tell you about as well as updates since the last newsletter. If you know of anyone else who could benefit from receiving a copy, please let us know and we will add them to the distribution list.

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An Update from Mark Winnington

Cabinet Member for Economy and Infrastructure

I’m thrilled to be able to tell you which parts of the County will be the first to benefit from the Superfast Staffordshire programme. These locations will go live from April, when communities and businesses can start to reap the rewards of months of planning.

High speed broadband is being brought to around 4,000 properties in Ash Bank, Clifton Campville, Kings Bromley, Marchington, Yarnfield and Yoxall. This is in addition to premises in Rugeley and Colton, which we announced last Autumn.

Fibre broadband will also be extended in parts of Burntwood, Heath Hayes and Penkridge, which are not covered by the commercial network.

By Spring 2016 Superfast Staffordshire will have seen the laying of one million metres of fibre optic cable – that’s longer than the length of Africa!

Other things to tell you about include a very successful launch event we held last November on the same day that we launched our new website.

In partnership with Shropshire Council, we have secured European funding to work with businesses and enjoyed a well attended first event in February.

I’m particularly looking forward to April when I will be able to announce the switching on of the first Superfast Staffordshire cabinets.

An Update from Openreach

Openreach is the infrastructure division of BT Group and are responsible for the planning and delivery of the new fibre network.

We are now well underway with our ‘Plan & Build’ phase and the more eagle-eyed of you will have spotted evidence of new green cabinets at various locations around the County. Fibre-optic cable is being provided to these new green cabinets, which are called DSLAMs (digital subscriber line access multiplexers).

We then connect the new DSLAMs to the existing green cabinets that provide you with the standard broadband service to your homes over copper lines. To make sure...
that we can get superfast speeds to your home, all of the new DSLAMs need to be located within 50metres of the existing cabinets.

To summarise, the new fibre is connected to the new Green cabinets (DSLAMS), which is then connected to the existing green cabinets. The signal then goes over the existing copper lines into your home.

During a series of presentations and workshops, delegates heard about the huge engineering challenges involved as well as how they might benefit from the new technology.

Businessman, Adrian MacLaughlin talked about how faster broadband services has given his business the competitive edge and has improved the services he provides.

It's a DSLAM Ma'am!

Here you can see in the foreground one of the new green cabinets (a DSLAM) which is being connected to the existing green cabinet, which is in the top right of the picture

We at Openreach have also been working with the County Council to ensure that we minimize disruption to road users. Please see the Horsefair, Rugeley example below.

The Launch Event

St George’s Park, 22nd November

Progress to date and future plans was the focus of an event at St George’s Park designed also to give local businesses, broadband champions, parish councils and other organisations an insight into the project and the benefits of fibre broadband.

We also heard how faster broadband services can help people stay more independent in their homes for longer through new services such as telecare and telehealth.

The event was also a fantastic opportunity to launch the Superfast Staffordshire website and twitter feed.
Minimising Road User Disruption

In the last issue we reported how the Highway Network Management Team, from Staffordshire County Council (SCC), has been working with Openreach to minimise disruption to road users and how SCC are an industry leader in identifying and encouraging multiple works to be carried out together.

Horsefair in Rugeley has been a good example of where we have been able to do this. Installation of fibre cables were incorporated into the County Council's £500,000 regeneration project in the area, which is scheduled for completion in May 2014.

Website and Twitter

Superfast Staffordshire now has its own website at www.superfaststaffordshire.co.uk and a new twitter feed @superfaststaffs

Since its launch in November last year the new website has had over 5000 hits. If you have not seen it yet, please do take a look as it contains the following information:

- A map indicating where and when communities are likely to benefit from fibre broadband
- Information about the benefits of fibre broadband
- Information about how to get fibre broadband, including links to price comparison websites
- Case studies of people making the most of fibre broadband
- Information and links to help people use many of the features that access to the internet offers e.g. how to skype, how to email, etc
- A Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) section
- A place for people to register their interest
- News and Events sections

We also like to impart information though our twitter feed. If you haven't already done so, please follow us:

@Superfaststaffs

Digital Champions

We have surveyed all people who originally signed up to be broadband champions to find out how many would like to be “Digital Advocates” and how many would like to be “Digital Champions”

Digital Advocates will be there to help us inspire people who are not sure about the internet to discover the benefits and they will help distribute information about when superfast broadband is coming to their area and where people can access information and training to do with the internet. We are currently designing posters and leaflets that can be distributed around the areas that are going live.
The *Digital Champion* role takes this a step further in that these are volunteers who feel they are able to organise and deliver simple training on the use of the internet to small groups of people or on a one to one basis. This role has now been advertised on the County Council’s volunteer pages in the Rugeley area, although we will now be extending this to cover the new communities announced. Those that volunteer will receive training and the tools with which to undertake the role. These resources are currently being developed.

Optimising Business Broadband

*Businesses in Staffordshire and Shropshire will be helped to get the most out of faster broadband speeds thanks to a successful funding bid.*

Staffordshire County Council, in collaboration with Shropshire Council, has successfully bid for £214,000 from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) for the project, Optimising Business Broadband.

A series of events and training programmes will take place across the two Council areas to ensure businesses are well placed to take advantage of access to faster broadband which is being delivered as part of the national BDUK (Broadband Delivery UK) framework.

The project will give businesses the opportunity to have one-to-one support from experts who will visit businesses to show how they can save money and increase productivity by using fibre broadband services.

The project aims to work with businesses across the Shropshire Council and Staffordshire area until the end of June 2015, helping them to boost their turnover and efficiency using fibre based broadband.

Extra Funding from DCMS

*The Department for Culture Media and Sports has recently announced that local projects around the UK will now receive additional funding from a £250 million pot, to reach the hardest to reach locations. This funding is in addition to the funding we have secured for the current Superfast Staffordshire programme.*

**So what does this mean for Staffordshire?**

This new funding is to ensure that 95% of the UK premises will have access to superfast broadband by 2017. In Staffordshire the current contract with BT will ensure that 95% will have access to superfast broadband by 2016 – that’s one year earlier.

The government has given Staffordshire an indicative funding allocation of £1.68 million to start to address our remaining 5% of premises that will not have access to superfast speeds. In order to take advantage of this funding, Staffordshire needs to be able to match fund it. For example, if Staffordshire input £1 million into the extension programme then the government would put in £1 million and not the full £1.68 million. Staffordshire County Council is therefore currently seeking ways of match funding the government’s indicative allocation.