

DRAFT: 1

UK Broadband Initiative Heralded As Model for Stimulating Rural Economies Across Europe

Revolutionary infrastructure could create tens of thousands of jobs by enabling rural businesses to compete with big city rivals, delegates to international conference in York to be told

Press release

Date

A UK broadband initiative has been praised by the European Commission for its potential to stimulate rural economies across Europe and play a vital role in combating the impacts of the global economic crisis.

The scheme, which is being highlighted at a three-day, international conference on improving broadband services being held in York, beginning today (Wed, Dec 3), is seen as key in enabling rural businesses to compete on a level playing field with those based in large towns and cities.

NYnet, a unique public-private sector partnership based in North Yorkshire, is a 'benchmark project' in the Euro 3.5 million 'B3 - Regions for Better Broadband Connection' initiative, a unique scheme aimed at improving Europe's internet access. It will run for 26 months, involving partner organisations from eight EU member states who are sharing best practice learned from a variety of broadband projects.

They range from projects in Crete to enable fire fighters to better combat potentially devastating forest fires to an online, education based facility to improve teaching in Lodz, Poland; from an e-commerce and regional development programme in Spain to a Euro 100 million information and communications technology strategy for the region of Piemonte in Italy.

2/

NYnet was invited to participate in the B³ project following its groundbreaking work to introduce high speed broadband to North Yorkshire, an area that had previously suffered from a lack of internet access, and enabling rural businesses to compete more effectively with those based in more densely populated urban conurbations.

In less than two years since its launch, NYnet has already enabled ISPs with a North Yorkshire presence to supply enhanced broadband services to potentially 50,000 small and medium sized businesses and sole traders, putting the county at the forefront of modern, internet technology. In addition the infrastructure is also reducing costs and improving services for a spectrum of public sector services.

Roberto Moriondo - Legal Responsible of B3 Regions, Head of Information Society Department, Piedmont Region, said:

“NYnet was chosen for the B3 project because of the extremely innovative way it overcame the infrastructure and access issues related to rural broadband in North Yorkshire. This model could now provide a solution to help resolve the issues of social inclusion in similarly remote areas elsewhere.”

The 16 partners selected for the B3 project each provide a distinctive resource seen as having the potential to benefit disadvantaged rural communities across Europe.

‘B3’ aims to tackle the difficulties of implementing broadband connections in remote or disadvantaged areas and follows EU research which found only 60-70% of businesses and households in remote and rural areas of the EU have broadband. This compares to over 90% in more urban areas.

To redress the imbalance and combat the documented social and economic disadvantages of poor internet access, the project aims to transfer the existing good practices, such as those demonstrated by NYnet, throughout the EU member states, contributing to the economic modernisation and increased competitiveness of Europe.

3/

NYnet joined the project as experts in the field of rural economic and social regeneration through the provision of high speed broadband services and is the sole UK representative from a consortium of eight countries from across Europe.

Formed in collaboration between Yorkshire Forward and North Yorkshire County Council with funding from the European Union, NYnet is tasked with providing an ultra-high-speed internet network to ensure North Yorkshire is not 'left behind' the rest of the world in the next phase of the internet revolution.

Chief Executive David Cullen said:

"I am delighted that the work of NYnet has been highlighted as a model of good practice to be shared throughout Europe. Our project is groundbreaking and successful and is an excellent case study of best practice to be shared with our European neighbours to benefit their rural communities."

The B3 project was formally approved on 24th April 2008 and is funded by the European Territorial Cooperation INTERREG IV C Programme. Its objective is the dissemination of broadband through structural funds and the transfer of best practice among European regions.

The project consists of 16 partners organisations representing eight European Union Member States. Matching less experienced partners with veteran organisations to pool expertise and good practice, the project will boost modernisation efforts and increase the competitiveness of affected regions. It aims to stimulate the knowledge economy by implementing enhanced broadband connections in remote or disadvantaged areas at a reasonable cost.

Ends

**For further information please contact Paul Amourdedieu or Jen Cooke at
Acceleris Marketing Communications on 00 44 (0) 845 4567 251**