

Heart of the Superhighway

TELECOMMUNICATIONS



Brendan Dick

Heart of the Superhighway Brendan Dick, Director, BT Scotland

In the first decade of the new millennium, communications networks moved to the heart of day-to-day life in Scotland. As we enter the second facing of the twin global challenges of climate change and economic recovery, ICT (information communications technology) is indelibly linked with the ongoing transformation of the world as we know it.

Communications technologies are pivotal to Scotland's economic success and social wellbeing, and will help the nation to emerge stronger after the current crisis. Research shows that businesses which are already making good use of technology have coped much better with the downturn.

Scotland enjoys one of the most competitive broadband markets in the world. Broadband is available to 99 per cent of Scottish homes and businesses, with 60 per cent of lines broadband-enabled in many rural areas.

In the year ahead developments in new broadband technologies will support Scotland's entrepreneurial spirit and international reputation as a dynamic and innovative place to do business.

Services are speeding up on the back of BT's new 21st Century Network (21CN), the world's most advanced global communications platform. These include ADSL2+ and private Ethernet networks. ADSL2+ will increase broadband speeds up to 20Mb/s, reaching 55 per cent of UK homes and businesses by spring.

Ethernet affords businesses faster, cheaper transfer of data and lower cost calls between sites at a fraction of the cost of traditional networks. There are already more than 50 BT Ethernet connection points across Scotland, with more to come.

On top of this, super-fast, fibre-based broadband will be available in more parts of the country. Edinburgh and Glasgow are already amongst the first UK cities to benefit from the service,

which brings much higher download speeds of up to 40Mb/s, coupled with the faster upload speeds which are increasingly critical to businesses.

Communications technologies have the power to revolutionise public service networks, too. For instance, one single information network is being created across Scotland's police forces so all can share virtually all data. Savings of £40 million per annum are expected within three years, while officers' time is freed up for other duties. Imagine what could be achieved with one unified network across Scotland's entire public sector...

ICT will also help Scotland make a successful transition to a low carbon economy. The Scottish Parliament has passed into statute some of the most challenging climate change targets anywhere in the world - to reduce emissions by 80 per cent by 2050, with an interim target for a 42 per cent cut in emissions by 2020.

The move to a low carbon economy will be as pivotal to our society's development as the original industrial revolution or the advent of computers.

Telecommunications have a fundamental role to play, offering alternatives to transportation which also improve productivity and the bottom line - enabling the one-minute commute as people work or run businesses from home, and swapping air miles for conference call minutes.

Communications technology will enable Scotland to prosper in the low carbon economy of the future.

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