Better broadband connectivity for rural and remote communities in East Lothian – do you want access to Superfast Broadband?

Good broadband connectivity is becoming increasingly important in people's lives. We need it for work, learning, accessing services, leisure and keeping in touch with family and friends.
Connectivity varies across East Lothian. People in rural and remote communities therefore can find it difficult to take full advantage of digital opportunities.

What we can do

Representatives from rural communities in East Lothian are working with Haddington and Lammermuir Area Partnership to try to address this. They want to make sure that people living and working in rural and remote areas have access to Superfast Broadband. Superfast or Next Generation broadband services are those that can provide download speeds of over 24Mbps. This makes it much easier to perform tasks that involve a lot of data – like watching films or transferring large files.

The first step is to prove that a significant number of people in these areas really want and need Superfast Broadband.

You can help – take part in our survey

Help to establish the need for Superfast Broadband in your area by taking part in our **Improving Broadband Connectivity Survey**. You can do this by:

- Going online at https://eastlothianconsultations.co.uk/policy-partnerships/community-broadband for more information and access to our online survey

- Emailing h&lp-ap@eastlothian.gov.uk or phoning 01620 827 822 for more information and to have a form posted to you.

We need your views by 20 February 2015.

Which areas does the survey cover?

We have identified a number of areas across the county that currently look like they will not significantly benefit from existing plans to roll out Superfast Broadband in East Lothian. These include:

- rural areas around Gifford
- Garvald and the rural areas surrounding this village
- Athelstaneford
- parts of the wider Pencaitland area
- villages in the Lammermuir hills
- Dirleton
- Fenton Barns and the surrounding rural areas
- Drem
- Kingston
- Whitekirk
- rural areas around Aberlady.

We would really like to hear from anyone living or running a business in these areas.

If you live or work outside these areas but are concerned about your access to broadband, you can still fill out the survey – there might well be things that can be done to help.

Some background information

Owing to commercial demand, Superfast Broadband is already available in a number of the county's larger towns, particularly in the west. Current plans for the commercial roll-out of Superfast Broadband do not include many of the smaller town and villages across East Lothian.

This is where the Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband Programme comes in. This is a programme designed to provide fibre broadband infrastructure to those areas not covered by commercial rollout plans – for more information go to http://www.digitalscotland.org/superfast-broadband/the-programme/

Parts of East Lothian have already benefited from this programme, including premises in Tranent, Haddington and Cockenzie. More areas are due to benefit because exchanges in Gifford, Longniddry and Pencaitland are due to be able to offer this service in the near future. You can find out more about the Digital Scotland programme in your area at http://www.digitalscotland.org/whereandwhen

This programme and the commercial roll-out plans mean that:

- around 85% of premises in Scotland should have access to fibre broadband by the end of 2015
- around 95% of premises in Scotland should have access to fibre broadband by the end of 2017.

However, because of the rural nature of much of East Lothian, it still looks like large areas of the county will be missed out.

Because of this, representatives from a number of rural communities across East Lothian led by members of the Haddington and Lammermuir Area Partnership have begun talks with Community Broadband Scotland (http://www.hie.co.uk/community-support/community-broadband-scotland) to see what can be done locally to improve the situation.

The first thing we need to do is prove that people in our rural and remote communities want and need access to Superfast Broadband. **Please help us to make a good case by filling out the survey.**