

Getting connected 4 | Broadband in non ADSL areas

This article shows the viable broadband alternatives for businesses that cannot receive an ADSL broadband connection as a result of their rural location.

Do you want a broadband connection but cannot receive one?

Most Broadband usage in the UK is supplied using the local telephone exchange, which has to be enabled to supply ADSL (Asymmetrical Digital Subscriber Line). Where this is not possible, as is the case in many areas of Somerset, then communities and local business face the possibility of having no broadband connection. This effectively puts their local economy at a disadvantage.

The benefits of having a broadband connection are numerous and for business would include

Benefit	Description
Increased sales	Always on e-mail means a faster response to customer enquiries
Cost savings	No dial up charges since the connection is always on for a set monthly payment
Improved efficiency	No time wasted waiting for information to download
Improved customer satisfaction	You can respond to customer issues more quickly
Opens new markets and maintains existing ones	Some procurement contractors are now insisting that all suppliers have broadband connections e.g. defence industry

How can I have a broadband connection if ADSL is not available on my local exchange?

If you operate a business in an area where the local telephone exchange cannot provide ADSL then you can, regardless of your location, obtain a broadband connection using other technologies. This applies even if you are in the most remote areas such as Exmoor. Furthermore, pound for pound, these technologies offer more bandwidth than the conventional service.

Without getting too involved in the technical jargon there are a number of alternatives that are tried, tested and proven to work. These are:

- Wireless
- Satellite
- Symmetrical Digital Subscriber Line (SDSL) technology

Wireless

It is possible to use wireless technology to provide broadband connections in a small town or community – particularly in a business park or industrial estate. This reliable technology could typically provide broadband access for a monthly cost of between £30 and £50. This solution has numerous benefits, but is dependent upon having commitment from local business and organisations.

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Briefly, a main broadband pipe is brought into a central location and wireless technology is used to split this large 'pipe' into local businesses and residential subscribers. The technology will deliver the business benefits described above.

Satellite

Satellite technology can be used to supply broadband to any location, even the most remote areas. This tried and tested technology starts from £15 per month and is simple to use and install. This requires you to have a satellite dish installed on your premises. This is then connected to your network, or stand alone PC. Satellite is suitable for networks of 1 to 100+ machines and is simple to use.

SDSL technology

It is possible to provide a version of Broadband called SDSL (symmetrical) using the local telephone exchange infrastructure i.e. every one who has a phone line could get broadband.

This solution involves putting some equipment outside of a telephone exchange, which in turn has a direct connection to telephone lines in the exchange. This solution is suitable in areas where there is a reasonable requirement for broadband but the telecommunications provider will not supply the service.

Keep things simple

The biggest mistake potential users of these types of technology make is getting too involved in the technical details. The best analogy to make is that if you required a conventional 56k modem you would buy one down the local shops and plug it into your machine. These technologies are similar; you are purchasing a connection to the 'outside' world and plugging into your machine. It is what you do with that connection that makes the difference and will drive your business forward.

Grants

There are various sources of funding for projects in the South West e.g. community and local business projects to help subsidise the cost of broadband technology. In the South West area, each business meeting the qualification criteria could receive funding of around £700 as a minimum from one source to help with the cost of broadband where ADSL is not available. For further information about grant eligibility, please contact <http://www.rabbit-broadband.org.uk>

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What does all this mean, and what are the benefits for my business?

The point to be made is that even if you are in the most remote area and your local telephone exchange cannot provide a broadband connection in your area, or there is no chance of your exchange being upgraded, there are alternatives that work.

Hence, if you answer yes to the questions below please consult your e-business adviser at Business Link Somerset on 01823 287600.

- Do you want a broadband connection?
- Would your business benefit from a broadband connection?
- Are you in an area where your local telecommunications provider cannot supply a broadband connection?
- Would the provision of a grant help you with the cost of a broadband connection?

Source: Paul Burgess <http://www.broadbandinruralareas.co.uk>

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