

Broadband revolution will divide the city

THE STREETS of Milton Keynes have recently been filled with hundreds of BT OpenReach vans. Every street corner, it seems, has at least five of them. They have been drafted in from all over the country and their crews have been working here seven days a week. These eager beavers, all on overtime, are staying in virtually every B&B in town, all at BT's expense. But what are they all doing here?

They have been conducting a major experiment, one for which Milton Keynes was considered ideally suited because its infrastructure is so young. This means that most of the buried cable ducts will not have succumbed to ingress by tree roots nor from ground movement and roadworks, so they can be easily rodded and new cables installed to the local manholes outside your house or business.

The cables are carriers for what will be, if successful, the biggest domestic and business broadband revolution in the country. A revolution which will make Milton Keynes even more desirable for new businesses and people working and living here. The so-far empty cable sheafs are each designed to hold ten fibre optic cables which can easily be blown through with a special piece of kit in good time for the installation which is due to go live later this year.

A further fibre optic cable can then be extended to and installed in your house or business giving you a guaranteed mini-

mum 100Mbps broadband connection - enough to give you at least five full HD TV channels at any one time or download large graphic files or an album in seconds.

In short, your Sky satellite dish or Virgin cable TV system will effectively be obsolete. It will, if successful mean that you will never again suffer the torture of slow download or upload speeds for big files. Imagine the bliss of never having to see that circulating graphic drag its sorry self around in front of a frozen image any more.

However, as you might suspect, there is more to this than meets the eye. There are two separate programmes in place at the same time in Milton Keynes.

One is the Fibre To The Cabinet option, which is deployed elsewhere in the country - for example, in North London and even here in Newport Pagnell, which in its BT guise is branded BT Infinity.

This gives users a decent 40Mbps. However the fibres only make it so far as the green above-ground cabinet somewhere on your estate and copper, (or even for those really unlucky, aluminium) cable takes over from there, for the 'last mile', as it's known.

'This will inevitably create an underclass of houses and businesses...'

The new much higher-speed programme is part of three country-wide trials, one here in Milton Keynes, one in Highams Park in London and one, already successfully completed, on a greenfield site for 12,000 homes in Ebbsfleet in Kent.

This system is called Fibre To The Premises, where the glass cable runs all the way to your premises from the below-ground man hole near your house and can deliver a guaranteed minimum of 100Mbps.

But here's the bad news: the FTTP experiment only covers the Bradwell Abbey exchange - the largest in Milton Keynes - which serves 28,486 residential premises and 1,185 non-residential premises including all of the city centre.

However, the initial roll-out will not, apparently, include all premises on this exchange. Exchanges omitted include Newport Pagnell, which is already FTTC; Milton Keynes (which covers Bletchley); Wolverton; Emerson Valley and Old Stratford. Some of these may in time join Newport Pagnell and become FTTC exchanges with a decent 40Mbps, but none are so far scheduled to take part in BT's great FTTP experiment.

This will inevitably create an instant underclass of houses and businesses, my own business included... although I could, if I wish, run a HDTV studio from my house by year's end.

If you would like to know which

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exchange you are on, enter your phone number at the following website address: www.samknows.com/broadband/exchange_search

If you don't like the answer and don't fancy being a FTTP broadband wannabee, join the campaign for faster fibre at the MK Broadband Action Group. Visit www.bb4mk.com.

Cheerio.

Investment success hits new heights

MILTON Keynes Partnership's inward investment division Invest Milton Keynes has this year recorded 27 investment successes (new or expanding companies) to the end of June, which created or safeguarded a total of 505 jobs.

These investments include international companies from Australia, Germany, Holland and Nigeria.

Enquiry levels for commercial land and premises are currently ahead of figures for this time last year.

Last year was a record year for IMK in terms of investment successes, with 98 recorded, which created or safeguarded a total of 1,757 jobs.

The jobs figure was lower than the previous year, mainly due to the tough economic conditions, but the fact that our highest ever number of businesses made a commitment to the city is nevertheless very positive.

GUY BARNETT
 Marketing manager
 Invest Milton Keynes

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Tumour research centre receives £0.5m boost

TWO charities raising funds for research into childhood brain tumours have paved the way for the establishment of a brain tumour research centre at the University of Portsmouth.

Ali's Dream and Charlie's Challenge are members of the Brain Tumour Research group of charities and have committed £400,000 between them. The grant will be backed by a further £100,000 from the umbrella charity.

These grants will ensure that the long-term aim to find a solution to brain tumours is maintained and secured.

Brain Tumour Research, based at Padbury near Buckingham, has urged the government to reassess how research funding into cancer treatment is allocated. Charity director Sue Farrington-Smith said: "We would like to see a commitment by the government to help establish a working group to review how UK cancer

research funding is allocated across different disease types."

A total 16,000 people each year in the UK are diagnosed with a brain tumour. One-fifth of all cancers spread to the brain and brain tumours kill more people under the age of 40 than any other cancer. Yet research receives less than one per cent of UK cancer research spending.

Sue's sister Julie Phelan set up the charity Ali's Dream along with family and friends, following the loss of her daughter Alison in 2001, three weeks before her eighth birthday.

Julie said: "When Ali was diagnosed, there was no information to guide us on where to turn for help in order to gain a better understanding of what to do next. After Ali died, we were left with no support. We felt so passionate about trying to ease the pain for others suffering in this way."

Brain cancer is a relatively rare cancer but those diagnosed with it rarely survive.

Julie said: "As a family, our determination is to see our Alison's Dream realised, through the cure of other children who are suffering as she did from this dreadful illness. We need brain tumours to be taken seriously and to have the same voice as the bigger cancer related charities."

Geoff Pilkington, Professor of Neuro-oncology at the University of Portsmouth will head the Centre of Excellence. He said: "Currently a disproportionate amount of UK research funding is channelled into leukaemia and the more pervasive cancers such as breast and prostate.

We need to significantly increase the level of funding that goes into brain tumour research and establish regional centres of excellence dedicated to laboratory-based brain tumour research.

"Continuity of research programmes is essential if we are to turn round the fortunes of those diagnosed with a brain tumour."

WE'RE MISSING YOU



MAKE US YOUR CHARITY OF THE YEAR

In the UK, more children and people under the age of 40 die of a brain tumour than any other cancer.

- Brain tumours kill more children than leukaemia or any other cancer
- They kill more women under the age of 35 than breast or any other cancer
- They kill more men under the age of 45 than prostate or any other cancer
- They kill more women than cervical cancer

However, brain tumour research is still woefully underfunded because it is not widely known about. Support us by making us your charity of the year and help give hope to the 16,000 children and adults diagnosed with a brain tumour each year.



Brain Tumour Research

Funding the fight

CALL 01296 733011

eMAIL:

info@braintumourresearch.org

GIVE:

www.braintumourresearch.org

Registered charity number: 1093411

www.braintumourresearch.org