



CASE STUDY

Our rural superfast broadband project

Nippy Netflix, buffer-free BBC iPlayer, glitchless gaming. Until July 2013, these were fanciful ideas to the residents of the small rural community of St Edwards Park in Staffordshire.

BSF (Before Superfast)

Stuttering streaming and flaky Facebook were the order of the day, as folk struggled along with broadband speeds that topped out at 5Mbps (for the lucky ones). Envious glances were often cast in the direction of the nearest town – just a few short miles down the road, but a digital world away. For it had been promised its place in the exciting communications revolution of superfast, fibre-optic broadband.

Not even a twinkle in the eye

“Why,” it was asked by the villagers, “should we be left behind with second rate broadband just because we happen to live in a beautiful rural location?”

Like many rural communities across the country though, St Edwards Park faced a long wait for the roll out of superfast broadband. In fact, their village didn't figure at all in BT's fibre network plans for the foreseeable future. Quite simply, the return on investment for the big telco companies to serve a (relatively speaking) small community wasn't enough to justify the expense that would be involved.

If you want something doing...

The only way the community was going to be brought up to speed was through a privately funded project. Which is where Internet Connections join the story.

Get connected. Stay connected.

At a glance

Superfast St Edwards Park

Leek
Post & Times
Incorporating Leek Paper



Karen Bradley MP and Internet Connections' managing director Andy Harding at the launch.

Estate has broadband

RESIDENTS of a parkland estate can now enjoy the benefits of superfast broadband connection following completion of a major project.

The new service has been brought to St Edwards Park, Cheddleton, which comprises around 360 households, by Leek-based Internet Connections.

The company has completed work all over the country for businesses, but the Cheddleton project was a first for residential customers.

Now the company has

said that if the scheme proves to be a success, it will be asking other communities in Cheddleton whether they would be interested in receiving a similar service.

Director Andy Harding said: "We first floated the idea of a superfast service to residents of St Edwards Park in January, with the expectation that once we received enough interest, which became clear in February, it would take around six months to get the service live, so we have pretty much delivered on time."

The launch was attended by Staffordshire

Moorlands MP Karen Bradley; Tom Nadin from the North Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Chris Mitchell, community highway manager, Staffordshire County Council; Andrew Dukessell, DBD Architectural, councillors; and members of Internet Connections staff. Mrs Bradley said: "It's fantastic that a local company is leading the way. Internet Connections are filling a gap in the market, and I'm sure the new broadband service will be a great benefit to residents and businesses in Cheddleton."

- >> Internet Connections Ltd stepped up to deliver superfast broadband to a rural community in Staffordshire.
- >> From initial consultation to delivery took just over six months.
- >> St Edwards Park accelerated from having some of the slowest speeds in the UK, to being in the top 15%.

CUSTOMER TESTIMONIAL

I can now use Netflix and rent HD movies from Apple, and have content available immediately, before I was having to wait for up to an hour. I couldn't believe how fast albums downloaded, literally 10-15 seconds. So far everything has been great, you have gone the extra mile a few times to make sure the service is as it should be which is something you just don't get with BT.

Mr Marsh, St Edwards Park resident

The technical bit

Internet Connections are just one of a handful of pioneering businesses to have used "Sub-Loop Unbundling" (SLU) to deliver broadband services to isolated communities. This complicated-sounding process allows a third party (us in this case) to feed high speed connectivity into homes by linking their own networks with the infrastructure that is already used to deliver telephone and standard broadband services. To do this, we built a fibre-connected street cabinet next to the existing BT cabinet that served the community, and joined the two together using a special tie cable.

Faster than 75% of the rest of the UK

From determining the feasibility of the project, to connecting the first home to superfast broadband took just six months, and the results were well worth the wait. Superfast-connected homes went from having some of the slowest broadband in the UK to enjoying a service of between 40-50Mbps – that's faster than 75%* of the rest of the country. Not bad for a woodland housing estate out in the countryside.

"It's fantastic that a local company is leading the way. Internet Connections are filling a gap in the market and I'm sure the new broadband service will be a great benefit to residents and businesses in Cheddleton. Modern infrastructure for communications is vital to the economy of our area and I'm pleased to see an option is available in Cheddleton.

Karen Bradley, MP Staffordshire Moorlands

*Based on figures provided by Ookla Speedtest

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Big news in the local press

Broadband boost for housing estate

By Leslie Jackson

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HIGH speed broadband is set to become a reality for dozens of residents on a parkland housing estate courtesy of a Leek-based company.

Every Tuesday for the last two years, managing director of Internet Connections, Andy Harding, and his friends have gathered at The Red Lion in Cheddleton when the talk would invariably turn to grumbling about the slow and unreliable broadband they had to live with at St Edwards Park in the village.

Just a short distance down the

chances of super-fast fibre broadband for the site was pretty bleak.

"Then we noticed that on its journey from Manchester to Leeds, our own fibre network runs along the A520, passing the junction with the East Drive entrance to St Edwards Park."

The company then decided to leaflet residents on the estate to see if they were interested in having the system brought to their homes.

Mr Harding added "We needed 50 people to show an interest to make it viable. Already we have 55."

"We have now put in a planning

"If this proves successful we could move the system further into Cheddleton village and then towards Wretley Rocks."

"If planning permission is secured the company hopes to start work right away."

"Homes could then be receiving the fast system within three months."

Office and marketing manager James Burns said people living on St Edwards Park had been really positive.

He said: "A lot of people are excited about getting a decent service, especially from a local company."

Mr Harding is looking for a local



Contractor Mark Glover and Andy Harding, who lives on the estate and whose company is installing a broadband service.

Broadband is a step closer

PLANS to make Superfast Broadband available for residents on St Edwards Park in Cheddleton took another step forward last week.

Contractor Mark Glover of Ashley Construction, Trent Vale, moved in to prepare the site for installation of the communications cabinet.

Andy Harding of Internet Connections, which is supplying

the Broadband service, said: "Although the project has involved sourcing specialist equipment from as far away as Norway and Taiwan, we were really pleased to be able to use the services of a local contractor for this vital work – it has been a job very well done, on time and to the expected high standards."

"Now that the bulk of the civil works have been completed, the

next stage is to actually get power and connectivity into our cabinet, and service testing can begin."

"We're expecting power to be connected on the June 18, and fibre connectivity shortly after that."

He added: "The final part of the excavation to cross the main road will be carried out on Sunday."