



Damian Hinds
MP for East Hampshire

24 March 2011

Damian Hinds Backs Hampshire's Bid for Broadband Funding

Damian Hinds has endorsed Hampshire County Council's bid for Government funding to increase 'superfast' broadband coverage across East Hampshire.

£530 million of government finance is being made available through Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) so that local authorities can help register demand and develop plans to stimulate the market.

Hampshire County Council is aiming to secure a share of the BDUK Funds to support increased broad band access across the county. A comprehensive bid is currently being drafted for submission on 18 April. Decisions are expected by the end of May.

HCC will not be basing the bid on the council taxpayer subsidising any capital costs for the project.

For the bid to be successful, HCC must demonstrate widespread support for the plan from individuals, communities, businesses, public services and politicians across the county by the end of March 2011.

Damian Hinds said

"Broadband internet is an absolutely essential part of modern life, both for businesses and for families.

"Increasingly the growth of small companies is driven by their visibility not just on the High Street but on the internet. It is also a key part of maintaining a flexible working environment. This winter's bad weather showed us just how crucial it is for people to be able to work and stay connected from home.

"The internet is also an increasingly vital part of education. All our children need to have access to the internet as part of the learning process.

"Coverage in our major towns is very comprehensive, but in our rural communities, like Buriton, Bentworth and Kingsley, there are still internet black spots. I would encourage everyone to show their support for Hampshire's bid by registering online at www.hants.gov.uk/broadband"

Hampshire County Council Leader Ken Thornber said

"Hampshire County Council would welcome expressions of support which would be of great help in our bid for Government funding. Broadband in rural areas is one of our major objectives in keeping Hampshire open for business."

-ENDS-

Notes to Editors

Although one million Hampshire residents in urban areas will get superfast broadband through market forces by 2015, vast swathes of Hampshire, including broadband 'not spots' adjoining urban areas, will be left with very slow internet access, less than 2 Megabits per second (Mbs), or even worse no broadband coverage at all. This equates to 112,500 people and 25,000 businesses in Hampshire.

The Government 'Broadband Strategy' was launched on 6 December 2010 by Jeremy Hunt, Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport. This aims to ensure that Britain has the best broadband network in Europe by 2015.

The Government broadband strategy sets out the goal of delivering a fibre point (digital hub) in every community in the UK by the end of this Parliament, bringing superfast broadband within reach of communities urban and rural, and commits to ensuring that homes and businesses right across the UK are able to access a next generation broadband, even in the most remote rural areas.

Hampshire County Council, along with its partners, will be submitting a comprehensive bid for some of the £530 million of government finance that is being made available through Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK). To be successful, Hampshire County Council will need to demonstrate demand and show we have widespread support from individuals, communities, businesses, public services and politicians.

The bid must also set out how the local authority plans to stimulate the market by using its award winning public sector network as part of the infrastructure.