

Innovative Funding category

Finalist 3: Cybermoor

The Challenge

- * Alston Moor is the most sparsely populated parish in England so it sits low down the list investment targets for private finance.
- * Securing public funding is complex - as considerations about state aid, open networks and wider government strategy all need to be taken into account.
- * Policies are constantly shifting, as is the technology and customer expectations.
- * Developing a new fibre network and migrating existing wireless customers onto the network is extremely challenging.
- * The environment for deploying fibre is amongst the toughest in the UK. The ground is full of rocks (hampering mole ploughing), snow can lie for 2 months of the year increasing the cost of digging and as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, overhead solutions have to fit in with the local built and natural environment.

The Solution

- * We split Cybermoor up, developing Cybermoor Networks as the digital infrastructure part of the business, which could be attractive to a wide range of investors and also operate as an open network.
- * Cybermoor Ltd continues to provide ISP services to residents.
- * We have worked with INCA and other industry partners to come up with wholesale pricing and service packages.
- * We were able to secure RDPE money, by using a state aid block exemption which expired before the end of 2010.
- * Working with the Cabinet office community shares project, we have developed a community share offer for Cybermoor Networks, which will allow members of the community to invest their own money in the network.
- * This shifts some of the responsibility for NGA coverage back onto the community.
- * Ericsson are supporting the project as they see this as a valuable learning opportunity

The Achievement

- * We have secured RDPE funding to connect 300 homeworkers and businesses.
- * Planning for the community share issue is at an advanced stage.
- * Ericsson are supporting the development of the network and it will be evaluated by Aberdeen University's dot.rural project, to demonstrate challenges and lessons for other communities.
- * With community buy-in, we have reduced our costs by using negotiating low cost wayleaves.
- * Some of the finance is being used to develop skills for local residents to carry out work in building the network – see photo right of local man Derek Snowden being trained in fibre splicing by Lucid Optical Solutions. He now has a City & Guilds qualification. The cabinet below at Nenthead school was built by local tradesman and officially opened by Ed Vaizey.

