



**Runner-up: Superfast Cornwall by Superfast Cornwall**

**The Challenge**

The economy of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly has declined over the years and the region gained European Union Convergence status in 2005, with less than 75% of the EU average GVA (Gross Value Added). Traditional heavy industries have weakened, leaving the county dependent on tourism, fishing and agriculture. This has made it harder for businesses in the county to compete and for the county to attract employment to its towns and villages.

Superfast Cornwall is an ambitious programme which aims to transform the local economy by making Cornwall & Isles of Scilly one of the best connected places in the world. A £132m partnership between the European Union, BT, Cornwall Council and Cornwall Development Company, it's the largest ever single European Regional Development Fund investment in superfast broadband infrastructure. By the end of 2014, at least 80% of homes and businesses across Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly will have access to superfast fibre-optic broadband and we are aiming to bring faster broadband to everyone else through alternative technologies. Businesses will find it easier to innovate, improve their productivity and efficiency, provide better service to customers and compete more effectively as a result. This will drive growth and economic regeneration across the region. The targets we set ourselves are to create 4,000 new jobs and safeguard 2,000 more.

We face two main challenges – geographic and financial. Cornwall is a rugged and largely-rural county. The costs of deploying new infrastructure – roads, pipelines and so on – are much higher than average as a result; the county could not afford to finance the project itself.

**The Solution**

To solve the financial problem in funding the project, we adopted an innovative gap-funded model. £78.5m of the £132m budget will be provided by our partner, BT. The remainder - up to £53.5m is being provided by the European Regional Development Fund Convergence Programme. Funding was awarded to stimulate the development of higher-value business, more-competitive, knowledge-based economy.

The geographical challenge is ongoing. When it comes to deploying the cables needed to provide new telecommunication services, the problem is solvable with many being routed through ducts that are already in place, but there are many remote properties in the county that are beyond the reach of the fibre-optic systems being deployed elsewhere. To connect such locations a variety of alternative technologies must be used – principally, satellite, wireless and advanced copper broadband.

**The Achievement**

Work started in September 2010. By January 2011, the first pilot exchange area was enabled and seven further areas were upgraded by the end of March. In all, this made superfast broadband available to customers at 15,000 premises (compared to a target of 10,000). Since then, customers have been signing up at a rate BT says is among the highest it has experienced anywhere in the UK.

By March 2012 services will be available in a further 18 exchange areas covering 90,000 premises and the aim is to complete the 'Big Build' county-wide by 2014.

At this stage the focus is on premises passed and levels of take-up both by end users and by communication service providers. By September 2011 1,500 end users were receiving the new service from more than 10 participating service providers. Long term, the focus will move to the numbers of jobs created, the level of inward investment attracted and so on.

To maximise the impact of superfast broadband on the economy, a demand stimulation programme drives awareness and take up by promoting the benefits for both consumers and businesses. At Superfast Cornwall Labs, academics and business experts are working on innovative ideas for the future. A programme workstream is also underway to driving up levels of digital inclusion. Finally we are tracking the degree to which the project influences broadband deployments in other rural areas of the UK.