

ORB's position on BT's decision to scrap ADSL trigger levels

BT announced yesterday that it had decided to scrap the ADSL trigger level system. It also announced its plans to publish Ready For Service (RFS) dates at the end of June 2004 for all the exchanges that currently have trigger levels, these are mainly in smaller towns and villages in rural areas. This is clearly a major change in the broadband market and Oxfordshire Rural Broadband (ORB), as a major force in rural broadband in Oxfordshire, would like to make its position clear.

Firstly, we would like to congratulate BT on finally realising what the Broadband campaigners that formed ORB have been saying for over 18 months, that there is significant need and demand for broadband in all rural areas of the UK and particularly Oxfordshire. This announcement means that ORB is significantly closer to achieving its initial mission of bringing broadband to the whole of the county.

Secondly, we would like to point out that this is the final stage in what can be called "Broadband Version 1". Many rural properties will only be able to get a basic 512/256 kb/sec service because their telephone line length is more than 3 km and there is a consensus that this is not true broadband in that it does not allow broadcast quality video transmission. In addition, the asymmetry of BT ADSL i.e. the uplink is only 256kb/sec, means that is difficult for end users to host their own high quality services and truly release community creativity. The vast majority of homes in South Korea and Japan have access to at least 2mb/sec symmetrically now (4 times ADSL) and California has a massive project to deliver 1 gigabit (200 times ADSL) to all homes by 2010. This requires other technologies as BT's existing copper based infrastructure is close to its limits. The main options for true broadband are Fibre to the Home (FTTH) and wireless.

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Thirdly, we are already rolling out “Broadband Version 2” wireless networks that deliver a minimum of 10mb/sec symmetrically that cover the Wychwoods, Kingham, Rissingtons, Sutton Courtenay and many villages in South Oxfordshire. As we still have the full support of our funding partners and communities we will continue to offer a service and look forward to competing with ADSL providers as and when they arrive. We are confident that the superior product and community based services, such as Voice over IP and community CCTV, that we provide will continue to be attractive to our members.

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About ORB

ORB’s mission is to help local communities access broadband services at affordable and market competitive prices throughout the whole of Oxfordshire, using “best of breed” wired and wireless technologies.

ORB is a community enterprise. Formally, is it a company limited by guarantee that using model memorandum and articles of association from Co-ops UK. The company is owned and controlled by its members who elect a management committee, on a one member one vote basis, to oversee the day to day operation. The membership is made up of broadband campaigners, organisations that support community enterprise and, most importantly, ORB’s customers. The community enterprise structure ensures that the maximum economic value is kept within the community.

ORB and its partners have wireless broadband networks in:-

- Shipton, Milton and Ascott-under-Wychwood
- Kingham, Churchill and Cornwell
- Fifield, Lyneham and Idbury
- Chalgrove, Benson and Ewelme
- Sutton Courtenay and Appleford

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