Super fast broadband promised

BT announced this week that 33,000 more homes and businesses in Scotland will be next to benefit from its £2.5 billion plans for super-fast broadband.

Six more exchange areas will be upgraded by Autumn 2011. They are Dunblane; Dundee Park; Fountainbridge, Newington and Waverley exchanges in Edinburgh; and parts of Mid Calder in West Lothian.

This latest phase builds on BT's existing roll-out plans and will take the total number of Scottish homes and businesses able to access super-fast broadband to around 134,000.

Openreach, BT's local network business, is carrying out the upgrades. The technology will be available on an open, wholesale basis to all companies providing broadband services.

BT is investing up to £2.5 billion to deliver fibre broadband to up to two thirds of UK homes and businesses, subject to an acceptable environment for investment. It's the largest single commercial investment in fibre-based broadband ever undertaken in the UK, and one of the biggest civil engineering projects running at this time.

Super-fast broadband, using fibre to street cabinets (FTTC), offers much faster download speeds of up to 40Mbps, potentially rising to 60Mbps, and upstream speeds of 10Mbps, which could rise to 15Mbps in the future. BT is also trialling fibre to the premise (FTTP) broadband services, at download speeds of up to 100Mbps.

BT's fibre plans build on existing initiatives such as the upgrade of its existing copper network to deliver faster broadband as part of its pioneering 21st Century Network. This is set to offer speeds of up to 20Mbps to around 20 million homes using the existing copper network by next spring, with

exchanges serving 55 per cent of UK homes and businesses already enabled.

Brendan Dick, BT Scotland director, said: "This latest investment in super-fast broadband is great news for many Scottish homes and businesses.

"Fibre broadband has the power to revolutionise the way we use the internet. It has huge implications for the way we live, learn and do business, with massive opportunities for entertainment, education and entrepreneurs. People in these communities will soon be able to experience the internet as they've never seen it before.

"We want to extend the fibre footprint and the benefits it brings to the final third of the UK where the economics pose a major challenge, but this will require a collective effort. An infrastructure project on this scale – arguably as important to Scotland's future as the road or rail networks – can only be done in partnership. We're keen to talk to public and private sector organisations about how this can be achieved.

"Many factors are taken into account when making the tough decisions about where to focus our investment. We're working on ways to give people more of an opportunity to demonstrate where demand for next generation broadband is the greatest," he added.

David Campbell, Openreach's managing director of Next Generation Access, said: "We have already brought faster broadband speeds within reach of more than two million premises and we are well on our way to passing four million premises by the end of this year.

"Fibre-based broadband offers consumers far faster speeds and lets them explore new and innovative ways of doing things online and communicating with friends, family and colleagues. It is a complete and radical change in the user experience. It will also create huge economic benefits for the UK – for

businesses and the health and education sectors – and help support a low carbon economy."

Super-fast speeds give customers greater flexibility in how they use the internet, with much faster downloads (a music track could be downloaded in five seconds) and much easier uploads of photos and videos. Internet users can run multiple bandwidth-hungry applications at the same time – some members of a family could be watching different high definition (HD) movies or 3D TV, while others are gaming or working on complex graphics or video projects.

For businesses, the new network will be the catalyst for many new services and applications. Computer processing and file storage will become more sophisticated and secure using cloud computing technology. There will be faster back-up of computer systems and wider use of high quality video conferencing in firms and between them and their customers.

While BT estimates that most premises in these areas will be able to access fibre-based broadband, it is likely that a minority will not initially be able to receive services due to a variety of technical and commercial reasons. Openreach is actively looking at alternative solutions for these locations.

Further information about the roll-out, including demos showing the difference super-fast broadband makes, is available at www.superfast-openreach.co.uk