



General Background Information

Introduction

UK Broadband Ltd has been licensed by Government to provide wireless broadband services to the public across much of the UK. It owns all 15 regional Public Fixed Wireless Access Licences issued as part of the Government's policy for a "Broadband Britain". Subsequently, OFCOM has granted UK Broadband Code Powers under the Communications Act 2003 due to the public benefits associated with the system.

UK Broadband Limited is a wholly-owned subsidiary of PCCW, the largest telecoms provider in Hong Kong where their broadband service is provided to over 700,000 customers. It is currently introducing its fast and easy wireless broadband service to the UK. This will bring high speed broadband through a wireless network, providing flexibility and portability for use in the home and office.

The Need for Broadband

- **Broadband as a Public Service**

UK Broadband is required under its various regional licences to provide a public wireless broadband service to the UK. This will assist in the Government's aims of achieving ubiquitous coverage of broadband access to each and every household, community group, and other local establishment.

Broadband provides a high capacity communications link that has the capacity to handle large amounts of data both quickly and easily. When applied to the internet it enables much faster access times and the ability to watch and send video images.

Presently in the UK the only broadband services available to consumers is via an existing telephone or cable line. As a result, many areas of the country are without access to broadband services. Those people who do have broadband access can often find that connection and on-going costs can be high and in addition they can experience considerable time delays in getting the service installed.

- **The Government's Broadband Policy (April 2004)**

The following is an extract from the Government's Policy for Broadband in the UK which was published in April 2004:

*“The Government believes that rapid rollout and adoption of broadband across the UK is important to both its social and economic objectives. In February 2001, the Government published UK online: the broadband future, which set a new target **for the UK to have the most extensive and competitive broadband market in the G7 by 2005 with significantly increased broadband connections to schools, libraries, further education colleges and universities.** This target is about getting the UK’s broadband environment right for business and consumers, as well as ensuring that public sector organisations gain optimum benefit.*

- **The Benefits of Broadband**

There are many benefits which broadband can bring to the UK. The DTI report titled ‘UK National Broadband Strategy’ published in early 2004 makes specific reference to the benefits of broadband and states:

“Beyond these general economic impacts, broadband promises to deliver a bundle of other benefits, including:

- *greater lifestyle choices for people as, for example, home-working possibilities increase;*
- *improved public service delivery through transformation of the public sector and increased access for citizens to on-line education and health services;*
- *substantial new opportunities for digital content providers to commercialise new products in the ever-expanding digital space. With its strong media and computer games industries, this is an area where the UK has the potential to benefit.”*

This report also draws attention other benefits including assisting sustainability targets and states:

“The UK Government sees broadband as a key enabling technology in support of policy objectives other than e-business. In recognition of key role that broadband will play in delivering an enhanced educational experience the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) has a target to have broadband installed in all schools by 2006. The Government also sees broadband as having an important contribution to make to its targets to make sustainable improvements in the economic performance of all English regions and over the long term reduce the persistent gap in growth rates between the regions, defining measures to improve performance and reporting progress against these measures by 2006”

- **Wireless Broadband**

UK Broadband will provide FWA technology offering immediate broadband access from a simple 'plug and play' modem (no external receiving on the customers property is required). This will provide a real alternative to fixed line operators, and for many households and businesses it will be their first chance to experience high-speed broadband.

It is the intention of UK Broadband to supply wireless broadband internet services to residential and business consumers throughout the UK by means of a wireless link to an installation as proposed in this application. It will therefore be possible to offer immediate broadband internet access to customers to whom these services might otherwise be unavailable through conventional telephone or cable systems, as well as offering choice and flexibility of service in areas where such services are currently available.

The wireless service is not a mobile service, but it is portable, so that a customer can, for example connect a laptop computer to the same account both at work and at home.

- **Competition**

The UK National Broadband Strategy also makes reference to the prospect of competition in broadband provision and the important role this plays in benefiting consumer choice. It states:

“Consumers benefit from choice and low prices. The previous section on retail competition shows how the consumer benefits from a wide choice of retail offers in the UK. To this should be added the choice of infrastructure provision in some areas of the country provided by the cable and fixed wireless operators and across the UK by the satellite operators.”

- **UK Broadband - Initial Launch**

UK Broadband was initially launched in the Thames Valley area in May 2004 offering two forms of broadband via its customer-facing Internet Service Provider. This is the first area in the country to experience this type of wireless broadband service, with an initial choice of a 512Kbits per second or 1 Megabit per second. This is 10 to 20 times faster than a standard dial up Internet connection.