

## Satellites touted as solution to UK's rural broadband issue

Technology on the verge of huge growth, say experts

Written by Dan Worth



Satellite broadband could soon provide speeds in excess of 10Mbit/s

Satellite broadband could be the answer to Britain's digital divide, according to internet industry experts.

David McCourt, chief executive of Skyware Global, told V3.co.uk that the government "will have to look at satellite technology as a solution to providing broadband across the country".

The installation of fibre optic cable would be too time-consuming and expensive to provide broadband in rural areas, according to McCourt, and bottlenecks are appearing in the telecoms infrastructure as data rates on the network grow.

"As more people want access to data wherever they are in the world, and increasingly data such as video rather than just voice, the capabilities of the cable networks are under pressure," he said.

Current speeds on satellite broadband range from 2Mbit/s to 7Mbit/s, but new satellites being developed will be capable of offering speeds from 10Mbit/s, he added.

McCourt also noted that developing countries looking to digitise their infrastructures would choose the speed and efficiency of satellite broadband rather than cable systems, which would drive the technology's growth as well.

Patrick French, a senior analyst with Northern Sky Research, agreed, saying that in developed economies satellite broadband is helping meet the demand from users who see broadband access as a must-have service.

He also agreed that satellite broadband is an excellent technology for issues of rural divide and has done very well in countries with government subsidy programs, like Australia.

However, he pointed out that satellite broadband subscriber patterns mirror population densities.

"Satellite broadband is very effective at filling the still substantial number of broadband white spaces that are found in and around urban and suburban areas."

Currently there are around 1.2m satellite broadband customers worldwide, with around 900,000 subscribers in North America, and around 150,000 in Europe, said French.

McCourt believes this figure could grow to anywhere between 10 million and 15 million within the coming years.



David C. McCourt  
Skyware Global Chairman and CEO