

New broadband connections will help market county to inward investors



● PROGRESS: Creative Edge's Dave and Melinda Rickett take advantage of the new broadband technology

Cornwall no longer seen as 'digital desert'

THE introduction of broadband technology to Cornwall has been welcomed by businesses eager to take advantage of the new high-speed communications.

At total of £12.5m will be invested, with £5.25 million from an Objective One grant, to upgrade 12 of Cornwall's telephone exchanges with ADSL broadband technology and provide an intensive support system to 3,300 small and medium-sized businesses.

The Act Now project is a partnership between BT, the South West Regional Development Agency, Cornwall County Council, Cornwall Enterprise, Business Link Devon & Cornwall and Cornwall College, will make Internet use quicker and more efficient.

It is being praised by the business community as a vital asset which will help attract new firms to Cornwall as they will no longer see it as a "digital desert".

This is the assessment of Tim Dwelly, chairman of the Digital Peninsula Network, a group of small to medium-sized businesses that offers the chance to sample new technology.

He adds: "ADSL is an excellent first step towards Cornwall becoming a truly digital peninsula."

Around 10,000 other businesses

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and 93,000 homes stand to benefit in Cornwall once the 12 exchanges are complete and demand increases.

One business has already taken the plunge and switched from the usual ISDN narrowband line to the rapid response ADSL.

David Rickett, director of Truro-based design consultancy Creative Edge, is more than happy with the broadband system that it has been using for four weeks.

He believes: "A business would be doing themselves a disservice if they don't take it up. It's ten times the speed of an ISDN. There is no business argument not to transfer."

Having designed websites, logos, brochures and packaging, Creative Edge relies heavily on technology.

"The immediate reaction is that broadband is a lot faster than the ISDN system that most small to medium-sized businesses tend to use," Mr Rickett continued.

The ADSL line, Mr Rickett contends, is as cost-effective as ISDN.

"It's cheap. An ISDN costs the same and you can be on the net all day," he says.

"Costs are something I didn't really think about, especially when you're paying for an ISDN line anyway, which is about £500 a year."

For a single user, Mr Rickett pays

GUIDE TO BROADBAND TECHNOLOGY

DIGITAL Peninsula Network director Tim Dwelly explains broadband technology:

■ What is it? "Basically, broadband technology allows much faster connections for your modem. When connecting to the Internet you get much higher speeds than conventional landline.

The ADSL line is a mid-range speed and is more suited to small businesses."

■ How do I get it? "There is a choice of where to get the service from. Very much like your phone bill, you will be able to choose from a range of telecoms companies."

■ How much does it cost? "You

can look to compare costs with different suppliers. You're looking at £40 to £50 a month, but you may pay more for the higher the speed."

■ What do I do to my existing setup? "Nothing. It's a question of just changing the settings of your modem."

■ When is it arriving in Cornwall? "Twelve Cornish towns will be upgraded. The exchange at Truro is already operational. Penzance, Newquay, St Austell and Redruth will be online by March. Falmouth, Bodmin, Camborne, Launceston, St Ives, Bude, Saltash and St Ives will follow in 2002."

£40 a month line rental. Installation is ordinarily £150, but Mr Rickett had it installed for a special offer price of £75.

"Now I know don't worry when I see the machine is left on all day."

"When you're a partner in the business, that is a factor to be considered."

The time-saving aspect of broadband is particularly useful to Creative Edge.

"When we used to download soft-

ware, it would take so long that we'd leave it overnight," he said.

"But with broadband, 50 meg software only takes about 20 minutes to download."

For his business needs, Mr Rickett has nothing but praise for broadband.

"It's very efficient, it enables you to communicate with people at speed," he said.

"The time cost savings have been huge."