

Distributed Satellite Broadband

Applications: Satcom Network Systems and Services



"The goal is to reduce the cost of satellite broadband for each individual user and therefore enable people in rural areas without ADSL access to obtain a broadband internet connection."

Greg Poulson, Managing Director, Freetimers Internet



PRIME CONTRACTOR:

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PROFILE:

Many areas of the UK and the world are unable to obtain a broadband Internet connection due to the costs of a dedicated satellite system being too high, or to the inadequacies of the ground-based telecommunications infrastructure. With the support of ESA and the UK Government, Freetimers Internet, in its Freetimers DSB, or Distributed Satellite Broadband, Project, has successfully developed a reliable and cost effective satellite-delivered broadband system, which fundamentally transforms this situation.

By sharing the expensive components of the system among a number of users, Freetimers DSB can now deliver affordable broadband to rural communities and other areas where the infrastructure cannot support ADSL. Trialed in two Pilot programmes in both rural and urban parts of Northamptonshire, England, the technology has been proven a great success, with considerable development of client premises and ground station equipment undertaken to enable a high quality reliable service to be offered. The Pilot programmes, brought to an end in July and August 2004, were converted into a commercial offering after virtually all the participants confirmed that they wished to carry on with the service, some deciding to do so even though terrestrial ADSL was available to them.

Bringing together a number of technologies, Freetimers DSB can serve individuals, communities, businesses and other organisations at prices largely competitive with ADSL, which was one of the goals of the Project. Prices start from £17.99 (incl VAT) per month, with the typical residential package costing between £20 and £30 per month, depending on the package chosen. For small groups of between 5 and 10 separate users, packages can be customised, with prices adjusted accordingly. Speeds available range from mid-band 128 kbps and 256 kbps, to broadband 512 kbps all the way up to 2 Mbps. Higher speeds are limited only to that available to the satellite systems employed, and speeds are expected to continue to rise. For Communities, Rural Business Centres and rural Industrial Estates, intra-network traffic can reliably work at wireless speeds up to 28Mbps, and for wired networks at 100Mbps, and wireless relays and spurs can reliably be established up to a kilometre away from the satellite equipment prime site or another relay, making the service highly expandable and scalable.

The Freetimers DSB service is now available in the Midlands in the UK, and will soon be launched throughout the UK and Europe. Freetimers welcomes all enquiries, and interested parties can register online at their website www.ft-dsb.com.

Freetimers Internet is also currently seeking partners to assist with the rollout in the UK and other countries, and will welcome enquiries in this respect.