

PR 6648

For Immediate Release

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**A week to go to make views known about the future of Norfolk
Openlink**

With the Norfolk Openlink project due to draw to a close on March 31 next year, Norfolk County Council and partners are seeking the views of residents and businesses about the service, in order to help shape what its future could be.

Until Friday November 30, users logging into the Norfolk Openlink network and anyone visiting www.norfolkopenlink.com will be able to complete a short survey, where the results will help shape future options, which will be considered by the relevant authorities involved in the project.

The £1.35 million pilot project was launched in July 2006 - looking to evaluate the impact mobile technology could have on economic development in Norfolk and the delivery of public sector services.

The project, which is managed by Norfolk County Council and fully funded by the East of England Development Agency, is the first wireless broadband network to pilot both rural and urban locations, and the largest of its kind in the UK.

The network covers most of Norwich city centre, to a 4km radius from County Hall, as well as key sites to the east and west of the city: Broadland Business Park, University of East Anglia, Norwich Science Park and Norfolk & Norwich University Hospital. Following an extension of the scheme in January, it also covers parts of South Norfolk.

The survey for users of the network looks to provide details about the nature of users of the network, seeking details of where they use the network, how they access it, what they use it for, how they think such a service should be funded, amongst other things.

The survey for non-users looks to gain details of whether those individuals are aware of the network, and if they are - why they have chosen not to use it, amongst other things.

Regulations do not permit the general use of public money to fund such services but a private/public sector partnership could be a future option, with the other end of the scale being a possible decision to take down the pilot equipment.

Ann Carey, Joint Project Director - Norfolk Openlink Project, Norfolk County Council, said:

"The whole purpose of the pilot was to learn as much as possible about how a network like this would benefit the public sector, but also businesses and individuals within the area.



"We have lots of data about how many times the network has been accessed and various technological information, but we lack more 'human' details and the point of the surveys is to find out information about how and why individuals were using the network, as well as finding out why it was other individuals chose not to use it.

"We are also very keen to gauge the views of both groups as to what they think should happen in the future, and all these views will be taken into account when decisions are taken further down the line."

The project is supported by the INTERREG North Sea project BIRD aiming to support best practice in supporting regeneration via Broadband use.

Notes for editors

Norfolk Open Link has been developed by Norfolk County Council and fully funded by the East of England Development Agency and will feature key applications in conjunction with the major partners at South Norfolk Council, Norwich City Council, University of East Anglia (UEA), Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital , Norfolk Constabulary and Norwich City College

For further information

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