

newstatesman

Special
Supplement

driving

digital

Britain

BRITAIN'S DIGITAL FUTURE
DELIVERED TODAY

Digital Britain
at Labour
Conference:
*see back
for details*

ntl:

*A special
supplement from ntl
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newstatesman

It is sometimes hard to believe the internet has been in our lives for just a decade. Many of the big brands we now associate with the web started life in 1994-95, as small ventures with grand ideas. In no time at all, they were going to scrap paper, bricks and mortar, transforming the way we lived, learnt and communicated, saving us time and money, finding us jobs, homes and lovers – in short, fulfilling our wildest dreams. So elevated was their vision of the future that many of them failed to spot problems already on the ground; these obstacles didn't floor every single company, but they certainly slowed them all down a bit.

Initially rather excited by the frenzied predictions, home and business users of the internet found the reality frustratingly slow, fairly meaningless and occasionally dangerous; many couldn't get access however hard they tried, others simply didn't want to know. On the defensive, or just unimpressed, people turned back to their TVs, glossy mags, faded paperbacks and 1950s-style radios. But that was not the end of it. The introduction of broadband has allowed higher speeds and, with it, greater content. Now you can be online without being disconnected just before your email has been sent or your shopping basket has been updated. And that's not all. Broadband (along with improved measures to deal with viruses, fraud and pornography) has reawakened much of the original optimism for the internet's transformative, participatory potential, and the hype seems more justified than before.

Yesterday I sent emails, listened to the radio and bought three large pots of paint at the same time, all through one computer. Other people use theirs to watch movies and sport; many play games with friends. And this convergence of digital media is happening far beyond our desktops. You can play video and music on mobile phones, and vote through your TV. And apparently it won't be long before it is common to talk to each other over the net. Using my mobile phone, I can email, surf the net, take photos, write a letter, play games and, if I could work out how, set an alarm to wake me up in the morning. My device is multitasking more than me. In the "digitally networked home", it could communicate with all my other devices, too.

The benefits appear wide-ranging. Music giants that so feared downloading are now embracing it; public service employees are able to work remotely more efficiently; and citizens can communicate instantly and watch Coronation Street pretty much anywhere, anytime. But as the initial internet boom and bust taught us, it can pay to advance with care. With each user becoming an audience of one, a lot of content will be created in a bid to give us all what we want. But how good is that for us? And how can we ensure the quality of that quantity? In the decisions made about how the technology should be developed, promoted and regulated, the people who use it must come first, and the people who don't must never come second.

Emily Mann

The digital opportunity

A personal letter from Simon Duffy

When ntl launched its 10Mb broadband offering in the summer, I made it clear that we wanted this to be something that everyone from the most seasoned web veteran to the complete novice would take advantage of.

That is because our vision of a digital Britain is not a narrow, technocratic one, where the few in the know or with the resources can reap the rewards.

On the contrary, "digital" – be that in its television, telephone or internet roles – must attain the ubiquity of electricity or mains water supply: a tool that transforms the quality of life, enhances opportunity and drives economic growth.

That is why ntl has as its primary focus the accelerated delivery of a fully enabled digital Britain.

But what does that mean?

For consumers, it means affordable, fixed-cost services that meet the everyday needs of hardworking families. It means the enhanced parental control, privacy and security that we can offer through the cable network. It means keener pricing for telephone services, and a real choice of subscription TV provider.

Citizens will also benefit from greater economic opportunity and the chance to access training and education online.

For the public sector, it means the faster than expected delivery of digitally enabled services, to the benefit of taxpayers, workers and managers alike.

Take our delivery of high-speed bandwidth to Glasgow's 27 special needs schools, our work to migrate police radio to digital in Cheshire, Thames Valley, Dorset and Northumbria, and our completion of a voice and data network, delivering a low-cost patient booking system to the Ipswich Hospital NHS Trust.

These are just a few examples of the way digital is going to improve public services for those delivering and benefiting from them.

And for business, digital means a more dynamic relationship with the market, lower costs, and more attractive products and services, sold better.

Indeed, the opportunity for the private sector to transform its productivity through the use of digital networks is at best barely realised. The Government rightly recognises that increased productivity is a fundamental strategic goal for the UK economy: we cannot go on working harder and adding less value than our counterparts in the US and Europe.

The application of digital advantage to business processes will be the key driver of our ability to compete. With productivity higher, and increased value added for each hour worked, society will have more time for family life, leisure and other pursuits which enhance the quality of life.

Today, our digital future is at a crossroads: we have an unprecedented opportunity to capitalise on a high-capacity, national digital network that is already, in large part, in place: the cable network.

A strong cable network will provide a competitive platform that reduces prices and increases value for consumers, business and the public services. In particular, it will stimulate competition in the markets for telephony, subscription television and internet services.

By leveraging the power of the cable network, we all stand to gain from a truly digitally enabled society which works for the benefit of all.

Simon Duffy
President and Chief Executive Officer
ntl

Meeting Glasgow's special needs

Ntl Business delivered a reliable, resilient and robust network infrastructure, delivering high-speed bandwidth to Glasgow City Council's Education Services. The ntl bespoke network will provide communication solutions to 27 special needs schools in the Glasgow catchment area.

In response to the growing demand for high bandwidth, Glasgow City Council recognised the need for an infrastructure that would not only support its existing activities with primary and secondary schools in the area, but would allow Glasgow's special educational needs schools to communicate efficiently with the wider school community.

Glasgow City Council's aim is to maximise the learning potential of all young people in the city, regardless of their ability or additional support needs. The scalable bandwidth and improved network connectivity supplied by ntl to



the special needs schools will help to support individual learning programmes and requirements. Teachers will now be well supported in using new and emerging technologies to meet the diverse range of learning needs.

Archie Walker, ICT Manager in Glasgow City Council's Education Services Department, said: "Ensuring communication throughout the wider school community is key in facilitating

improved learning, teaching and data sharing.

"ntl has provided us with a reliable and cost-effective solution that gives our staff the confidence that the communications technology they need is ready and waiting at the flick of a switch. We now know that we have a resilient system that delivers steadfast connectivity and allows greater understanding and collaboration across the city."

Tony Harris, Managing Director, ntl Business, added: "ntl has been providing tailor-made communications solutions to the public sector for over 20 years. Implementing advanced communications is crucial to the current drive to meet local e-Government objectives and we have worked closely with the team at Glasgow City Council Education Services to provide a truly scalable solution to accommodate their needs in such a specialised teaching environment."



Ain't no mountain high enough

Ntl's Public Safety Group is working to provide the Mountain Rescue Committee of Scotland (MRCofS) with a new unified communications system. A bespoke radio solution will enable multi-agency communications during search and rescue operations. This system will replace numerous existing older radio networks and single channel operations.

The MRCofS is a charitable organisation, which represents 23 teams of civilian volunteers. The new communications system has been funded by a generous grant from the Scottish Executive as well as a substantial bequest.

Nick Forwood, chairman of the MRCofS commented: "It has been clear for some time now that our volunteers needed a more unified network to allow for reliable communication between the variety of mountain rescue teams and other emergency services attending incidents.

Malcolm Davies, ntl's Group Sales Director for Public Safety added: "Due to the nature of the harsh terrain, plus the conditions and weather experienced by Scottish Mountain Rescue teams whilst carrying out their duties, this was a challenging contract for us."



Shoreditch goes digital

broadband ICT. ntl is committed to working with the project in the future. It will create one of the largest broadband communities in Europe, covering over 20,000 residents and 1,000 businesses.

Residential services include:

- Entertainment and communications
- Online webcam CCTV across estates that can be monitored by residents in their homes
- E-learning and classroom lessons for school age and adults

Other community services include local health information, remote Dr/Nurse consultations, health and diagnosis information, benefits entitlements, and local "Time Out".

Information will also be provided on housing, employment and consumer benefits, benefit entitlement and a local 'Time Out' guide. For businesses, particularly SMEs, services will include network services, systems

and supplier information.

The key to the sustainability of SDB is that residents and businesses will pay a subscription to access services.

This will generate revenue and ensure that, unlike other "Wired Up" projects, the SDB is self-financing and scalable outside of Shoreditch across London and beyond. Research has indicated resident and business readiness to pay if the high-value services that they want are delivered. Affordability for residents will be a key issue.

At the heart of the value proposition for them will be the savings generated by e-consumer services such as group buying of utilities. These will increase resident disposable income sufficiently to make the SDB subscription a viable choice. The Trust is piloting an offline service that will identify the best deals for residents and negotiate on their behalf with suppliers.

Shoreditch "New Deal for Communities" programme, the Shoreditch Trust is in the final stages of establishing a strategic partnership to deliver the Shoreditch Digital Bridge.

The project will help generate 100s of jobs and new businesses in one of the UK's most deprived areas, through Europe's largest ever roll-out of socially motivated



About ntl

ntl is the UK's largest cable operator and a leading provider of broadband and communications services.

Today ntl has over 3.3 million residential telephone, TV and internet customers, a third of which are broadband subscribers, as well as providing wholesale internet access solutions to ISPs in the UK.

ntl has invested over £9 billion in the UK's largest network built for the broadband era. It spans over 10,857 kilometres and passes a third of all UK homes.

ntl provides data, voice and internet services to more than 65,000 large businesses, public sector organisations and small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) located near our existing broadband network in the UK.

The company also provides national and international network services to communications companies in the UK and Republic of Ireland.

This network:

- ▮ Serves 7.9 million homes of which 7 million are broadband-enabled homes.

- ▮ Handles more than 2 billion minutes of internet use a month.

- ▮ Has more than 3.1 million telephony lines in use.

- ▮ Handles more than 1.5 billion minutes of telephone conversations a month.

- ▮ Has a fibre backbone that is more than 10,800 kilometres long: 8,200 kilometres owned or operated by ntl and 2,600 kilometres leased from other operators.

- ▮ Has 100 telephone switches directing telephony traffic around the national and local networks.

- ▮ Has approximately 540

technical sites, ranging from points of presence (access points on to the fibre network) to transit switches (providing telephony access to the national and international network) to radio sites providing customer links to the national network.

ntl provides a range of voice, data and internet products to business customers and public sector organisations.

- ▮ In the UK, ntl's network passes within approximately 200 metres of more than 570,000 business premises.

- ▮ ntl's business customers include

Cambridgeshire County Council, Southampton City Council, Samsung, and Next.

- ▮ ntl has a 40-year heritage of working with the public sector. It currently delivers technical solutions to over 25% of local authorities, and provides over 5,000 schools and 150 further education institutions with a range of communications services.

- ▮ ntl provides external network services to national and international telecom operators in the UK and Ireland.

- ▮ ntl provides a range of wholesale telecommunications services over its national and local fibre optic networks, supporting voice, data and mobile operators.

- ▮ Products include network design and build, voice transit and termination, managed infrastructure services such as fibre and co-location along with retail products such as leased lines.

In the UK, ntl's network is second only to BT in reach, and second to none in terms of broadband capacity. ntl has invested £9 billion into its fibre-rich networks, which transport telephone, high-speed data and digital TV services across the UK.

THE CONVERGENCE OF A MULTIMEDIA WORLD

newstatesman **ntl** FRINGE MEETING

12.45pm-2pm, Monday 26 September 2005

Cloisters Restaurant, The Belgrave Hotel

James Purnell MP, DCMS minister

Emily Bell, GuardianUnlimited

Simon Duffy, ntl

Ian Hargreaves, Ofcom

Chair: Spencer Neal, New Statesman

ntl's strategy for next-generation broadband

Ntl has recently launched a great leap forward in the market for broadband internet service provision, with an even greater capacity to send and recent data put within the reach of the majority of Britain's homes.

The aim is to make 10Mb its standard broadband access speed.

Broadband customers will be able to choose a 10Mb service with a usage allowance to match their requirements. ntl will also offer a choice of broadband services with unlimited usage.

"Our broadband services will become amongst the most innovative in the world and certainly well ahead of anything else in the UK," said Simon Duffy, Chief Executive Officer of ntl. "This is a major step towards delivering Britain's digital future."

The new product strategy creates a set of "up to 10Mb as standard" cable broadband products with different bandwidth options to match usage plus a series of unlimited products at different speeds.

For the first time, a customer will be able to match speed, usage allowance and price to their individual needs. A new broadband user will be able to enjoy the same 10Mb speed as an experienced surfer and as their online expertise grows, simply move up to a higher allowance. Tools will be provided to allow customers to track their usage.

A 10Mb connection is ideal for those families with more than one PC and for those customers who want to cut the waiting time for content to download. It anticipates the development of the connected home and will encourage the creation of dedicated high-speed content.

By the end of 2006, the roll-out of this new product portfolio will be complete. There are no plans to change monthly prices. However, some customers will need to upgrade their modem. Further details will be announced at launch.

Ahead of the full roll-out of 10Mb services, for those customers who want a taste of the higher speeds, ntl is set to commence a commercial pilot of its innovative flexible bandwidth technology. This new service uses a "Turbo Button" to provide customers with the added flexibility to boost their speed, making a particular task quicker and easier. For example, when downloading a video and image-rich presentation.

Currently, an ntl technology trial in Chorleywood is delivering speeds of up to 20Mb to a school, small business and several homes. This level of speed and bandwidth offers the opportunity to enjoy a host of new services.

These include high-definition TV, 1,000 channel global radio, video conferencing amongst friends and family, global gaming, low-cost IP telephony, video email and, of course, the things people already use broadband for, but at much greater speed.

"Moving 1.5 million customers to a connection of up to 10Mb is a major initiative. However, we have full confidence in our ability to complete this programme in 2006 by leveraging our next-generation platform," continued Simon Duffy. "Anyone signing up to ntl Broadband today can look forward to surfing at 10Mb in the near future.

The new products will offer something for all internet users from the absolute beginner to seasoned veterans."