

6th July 2010

Dear Stakeholder,

This note provides you with an update on developments since the East Midlands Broadband Summit which *emda* hosted on 12th February 2010. There are three matters on which to report further, namely;

- funding via the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE);
- an East Midlands rural broadband manifesto; and
- the Broadband Line Information Monitoring Project (BLIMP).

RDPE broadband funding

In February, we reported to the summit that the EU had made extra funding available specifically for rural broadband. The money came from the European Economic Recovery Plan (EERP), but was to be distributed through the RDPE's equivalent in each Member State. For the East Midlands, this meant £400,000. However, a number of Regional Development Agencies, including *emda*, were minded to increase the amount of funding available by adding funding from the RDPE. We anticipated adding £4m in this way, and secured the support of all RDPE stakeholders in the region and the *emda* Board to do so. We thus anticipated launching a £4.4m fund, once the necessary approval had been received from either London or Brussels. However, the approval did not come before the election and, since then all budgets are being revised. It cannot be assumed, therefore, that the 'extra' £4m for broadband will be available, or that all RDPE stakeholders would continue to endorse its use in this way.

We have, therefore decided to launch a smaller fund, consisting of the £400,000 of EERP money. We are now inviting Expressions of Interest (Eoi) for grants from this broadband fund. The closing date for this Eoi stage is 13 September. After that, we will respond quickly to those submitting Eois, and a limited number, whose outline proposals are both eligible and of considerable merit, will be invited to proceed to the full application stage, although success there is not guaranteed. Full details of how to apply can be found at www.emda.org.uk/rdpe. Please contact us if you would like a paper copy.

There are new restrictions on the promotion and marketing activity that *emda* is allowed to undertake. Therefore, I would be grateful if you could use your own networks to publicise the availability of this fund.

Rural broadband manifesto

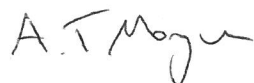
Since the February summit, we have drafted a rural broadband manifesto (copy attached), which identifies a number of ways to promote the rural broadband cause within our region. However, as I am sure you know, *emda* is to be abolished, as are all the other regional development agencies in England. It will therefore be for others, possibly at the sub-regional level, to advance this work, however they see fit. The East Midlands Rural Affairs Forum (EMRAF) is one partnership that will continue to promote the rural broadband needs of the rural areas enthusiastically and diligently; EMRAF has agreed to be one of the national lead rural affairs forums on this issue, and the EMRAF chairman, Helen Woolley, will be directly involved in this.

Broadband Line Information Monitoring Project (BLIMP)

BLIMP, the broadband speed tracking software jointly being developed with a number of RDAs, was promoted at the February summit, and we were pleased with the interest shown in it. Work on improving the user interface is continuing but discussions are taking place with BDUK (the procurement body established by Government to manage the delivery of the 2MB Universal Service Commitment) to take on responsibility for further development of the application and related marketing activity.

I am grateful for your interest in rural broadband matters within the East Midlands. If there are any related issues you wish to raise, or any points arising from this letter, please do not hesitate to get in touch with Melanie Fischer or Lucy Pike (email ruralbroadband@emd.org.uk or telephone 01159 888 300) in the Rural & Communities team.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Morgan
Director, Skills & Communities