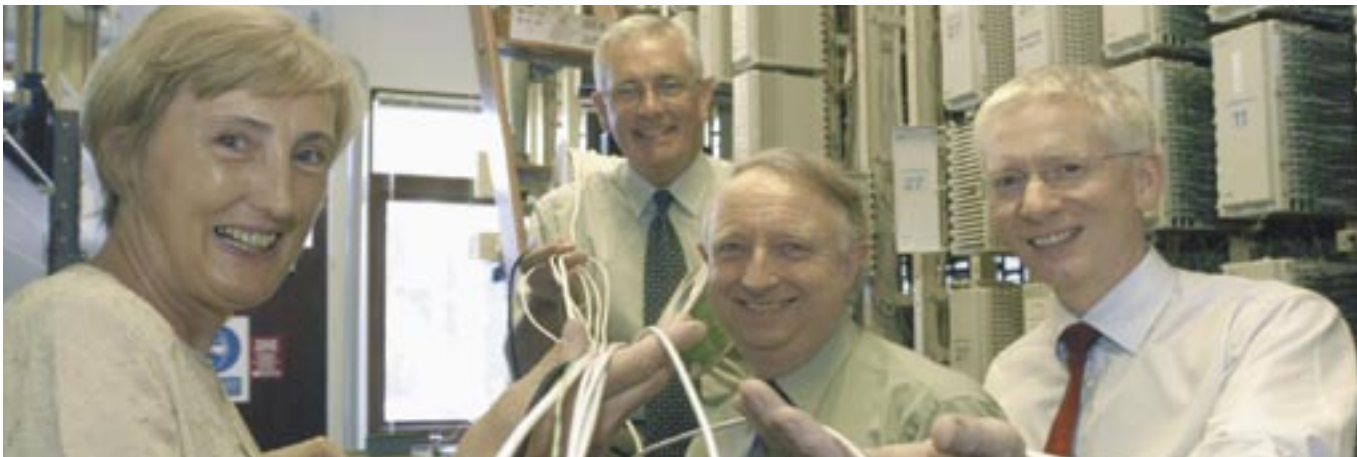


SEEDA's Achievements for: Tomorrow's Technology for Today's South East 1999-2003



The enabling of the Battle Telephone Exchange (pictured) is the result of a partnership consisting of BT, the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) and SEASCAPE – Hastings & Bexhill Renaissance Ltd., the company formed to drive the regeneration of the local economy. Other partners are East Sussex County Council, Hastings Borough Council and Rother District Council. SEEDA Broadband Director Peter Radley (second right) celebrates the enabling of the Battle Telephone Exchange with (from left to right), Patricia Vaz, BT; Graham Gubby, Leader Rother District Council and Keith Sadler, Deputy Director for the Hastings & Bexhill Taskforce.

Introduction

During the year 2002-2003, SEEDA worked with partners towards achieving its goal of a 'Wired Region' where the benefits of technology, and above all, the life changing opportunities inherent in affordable Broadband access for all members of the regional community, are fully realised.

SEEDA's Wired Region project aims to enable businesses and individuals to live and prosper in the rapidly developing global information society and knowledge economy. This is vital for the South East if

it is to maintain and improve its economic performance.

The priority in the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) is to 'maximise access to and take up of Broadband facilities in the region'.

Another priority of the Wired Region team has been to finalise development of SEEOnline, the regional portal that will host the online forum for private, public, voluntary and community sector organisations in the South East.

Achievements

- Broadband briefings were organised across the region to drive awareness and understanding of Broadband benefits among businesses. These were partnered by Business Link and the Institute of Directors and aimed at their membership.
- 500 grants for Satellite Broadband access for businesses in remote areas were awarded through Business Link with advice provided by UK Online and Wired Sussex.
- The demand survey stage for a coastal superhighway linking the coastal towns of Kent, Sussex and Hampshire has been completed and has demonstrated a positive business case for the creation of a fibre network along the coasts of East Sussex and Kent.
- The Division has been working on a series of projects to make Hastings Britain's first e-town. Plans have been developed for a Broadband roll-out and a Broadband demonstration centre. A new online Ufi/LearnDirect centre has recently been opened to further benefit the community.



Key Facts

- The two areas of greatest deficiency for Broadband access in the region are:
 - Rural areas where there is a deficiency in mass market services;
 - East of the region where there is a lack of telecom providers of high-speed services.
- Broadband availability via ADSL (landline) grew to over 75% in 2002-2003, with the South East having the highest coverage outside London.
- The national average Internet uptake stands at 47% of households.
- The number of Broadband enabled telephone exchanges in the region stands at about 50%.

Some of SEEDA's specific initiatives for a 'Wired Region' in delivering the RES objectives are:

RES Objective: Stimulate demand for Broadband

Following the announcement that the bandwidth for the new NHS network, N3, will be regionally procured by Special Purpose Vehicles, as a pathfinder, SEEDA has been working with regional partner organisations, with the UK Broadband Task Force and with other Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) on activities to ensure the success of the programme. These include the creation of a "task and finish" group, to exchange best practice between RDAs.

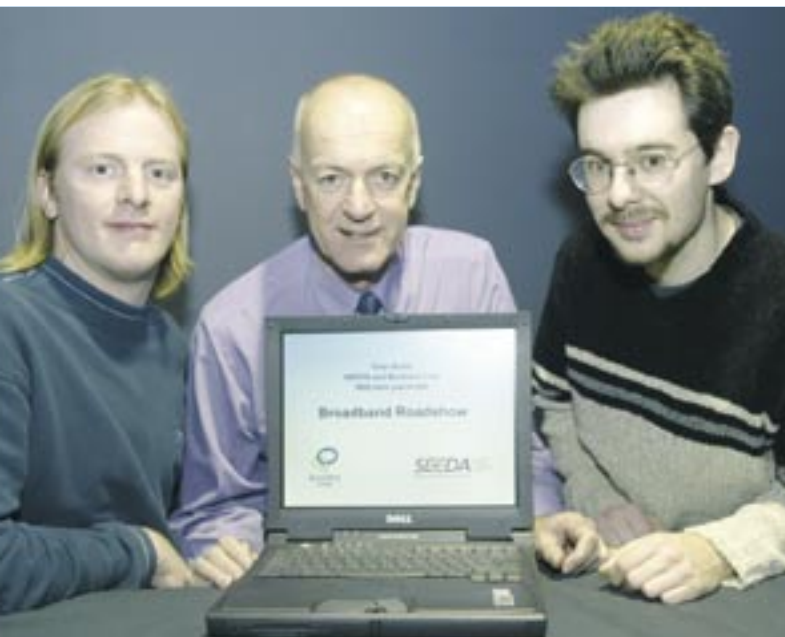
SEEDA has made grants available to every County Council and Unitary Authority in the region for them to source their own demand aggregation consultancy.

SEEDA completed a programme of enterprise roadshow Broadband promotion events, working with the Business Links and the Institute of Directors (IOD).

By working with Economic Partnerships, local authorities and online specialist public services like Wired Wessex, SEEDA is engaged in constant promotion of the benefits of Broadband to businesses in particular.

RES Objective: Promote the development of remote office facilities

SEEDA launched a survey to establish the demand for and viability of Teleworking Centres in the region. The survey delivers its final output during August 2003, after which SEEDA will determine the number, location and timing of any Teleworking Centre development.



SEEDA worked with Business Link to deliver Broadband awareness and support demonstrations to businesses across the region. Shown above, two entrepreneurs discuss Broadband benefits with a Business Link partner (centre).



The SEEOnline Team - SEEDA-funded SEEOnline service offers a facility to public, private, voluntary and community sectors for sharing knowledge and information.

RES Objective: Develop the region's Broadband infrastructure

SEEDA initiated a demand survey in support of the Coastal Superhighway project, funded out of the UK Broadband Fund. This survey indicated that the area of the region to the east of the M23 could support the creation of a new fibre network along the coasts of East Sussex and Kent, in order to reduce the cost of leased lines and to foster a competitive access market in 10 key towns, supporting over 50 of the 119 most deprived wards in the region.

Consultancy was initiated to determine the level of intervention required on the Isle of Wight to increase the availability and take up of Broadband.

SEEDA launched its satellite grant service across the region, using Business Links to market and administer the service. The programme has been a considerable success, resulting in all 500 grants being allocated within three months of the regional launch.

SEEDA represented the English RDAs in a submission to the EFRA Parliamentary Select Committee into the provision of Broadband in rural areas. Grants have been made available to every County Council and Unitary Authority in the region to finance the creation of wireless Broadband networks. These grants will cause the creation of up to 50 projects, delivering Broadband to mostly rural communities who are unable to get Broadband from the major carriers. In addition, a SEEDA direct grant programme will also make smaller awards available on a more selective basis.

RES Objective: Promote and develop regional and local portals

SEEOnline

SEEOnline.net is an online service for sharing knowledge. It exists to help people, particularly those working in the public, private, voluntary and Community sectors throughout the South East of England.

By encouraging interaction between individuals and across the sectors, it enables the easy transfer of information and experience in pursuit of the region's strategic objectives.

Progress during the year led to a successful launch of the SEEOnline pilot site in March 2003. Work on the project has focused on three main areas:

- Technical development
- Content and partnership development
- Strategy, process and marketing development

An overall technical design plan was produced and the need for a web-based content management system identified. This was subsequently procured and implemented in January 2003.

Four PC-based servers were purchased to host the various software elements which make up SEEOnline and these were connected to the Internet via a connection to the University of Surrey (UniS) and on into the SuperJANET academic network. Usability testing of SEEOnline was undertaken by an externally contracted agent to ensure the website met W3C web accessibility and other usability standards.

Initial content and partnership development has focused strongly on supporting the new Regional Economic Strategy. A pilot partnership with the British Urban Regeneration Association (BURA) has been established and a “Community Best Practice” website launched as part of SEEOnline, with BURA providing and managing the content. Other content partnerships in various stages of development are with Enterprise Hubs, SEEDA’s Broadband team, the Regional Business Support Board and the Action South East Forum. In total, about 20 potential content development areas are being considered at present.

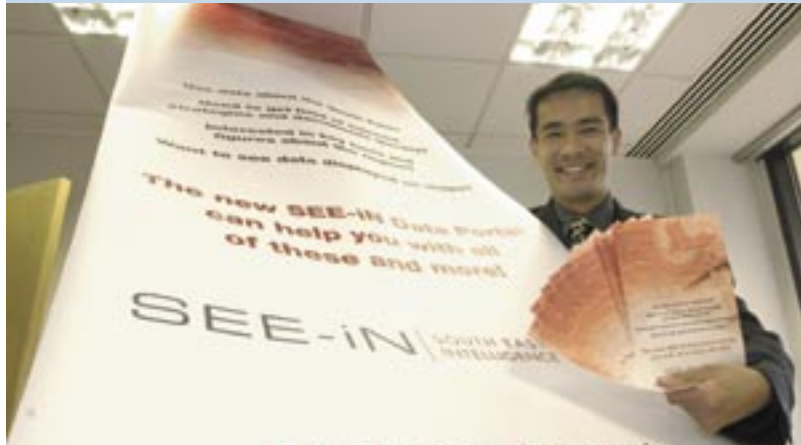
To aid in partner recruitment a “Partner Pack” is being developed and will provide details of the SEEOnline project, what it is, why it is needed and how to get involved. For those already signed up as partners a “Contributor Manual” will provide extensive information including guidelines on writing for the web.

Generic content in the form of news and events is also being developed. A formal arrangement has been agreed with the BBC to supply various news feeds to SEEOnline. Discussions have also taken place with the Government Office for the South East (GOSE) and the South East England Regional Assembly regarding the possibility of both publicising their news and events through SEEOnline.

A quality assurance policy is in development to ensure that SEEOnline content meets the high standards of SEEDA and its partners.

Other Web Projects

- In addition to SEEOnline, the Wired Region web team has undertaken the technical development of the South East England Intelligence Network (SEE-iN), a joint project with SEEDA’s Strategy Division and a number of external partners. The pilot SEE-iN website, which is hosted on SEEOnline’s server and software infrastructure, went live in March 2003.
- The team was also responsible for the creation of the Hastings and Bexhill Regeneration Partnership’s website – “Our Future”. This was launched in September 2002.
- A project plan for the migration and future development of SEEDA’s corporate website has been produced and is under consideration.



Manfai Tang, Regional Intelligence Co-ordinator of the SEE-iN website, a joint initiative between SEEDA and a number of external partners.

Printed on totally chlorine-free paper, 75% recycled and 25% from sustainable forests.



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