



It's no optic-al illusion we are leading UK with connectivity

WE are in an enviable position here in the North East that is unrivalled anywhere else in the UK. Something is happening here that will set us on a trajectory that can't be matched by other UK cities.

Manchester, Birmingham, Bristol and Leeds won't be able to compete and we are emerging as a real alternative to London in our capabilities.

What is driving this change is world-class connectivity. We have now developed capabilities here that will make us attractive to big tech companies who want and need the infrastructure that allows the secure, reliable and fast movement of vast

JOHN WILSON on how the North East now sits at the heart of a major new global, digital hub.

amounts of data at high speed.

In one important respect, the city and the region is now leading the way in global connectivity with some very important developments at the Stellium Data Centre in North Tyneside.

The data centre campus - located on the Cobalt Business Park - is the largest single, purpose-built data centre facility in the country and now home to the UK's only cable landing station on the recently launched

North Atlantic Loop.

This advanced Fibre Optic Network is currently under construction - the first of this new generation of Transatlantic cable routes - which, when completed, will make it faster and more reliable to transfer data from Newcastle to the US, the Nordics and Northern Europe than from anywhere else in the UK.

This will give the region faster and more reliable digital connectivity, and

make it hugely appealing for inward investors and data-rich businesses looking to expand within or relocate to the region. Newcastle now sits at the heart of a major new global digital hub.

In part, the North East has geography to thank for its connectivity successes. Just as the old ferry routes chose the shortest sailing distance from the North East to Denmark the new fibre optic cabling needs to follow the same; circumnavigating the globe covering the shortest distances possible.

There are currently 15 of these major fibre optic cables connecting

the US to the UK and mainly through London.

Over the coming few years, this number is set to drop to seven, with at least two of those routing through the Stellium Data Centre campus. Through the remainder of this year, 18,000 kilometres of fibre optic cable will be laid in the North Sea and Atlantic Ocean to create this new diverse, resilient and secure next-generation network, scheduled to go live in January. At 130,000 miles per second - approaching the speed of light - we are set to see a projected latency

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J2 Agenda

Time out EXTRA

who, what, where, when?

WHO wrote the novel *The Brothers Karamazov*?

WHAT nationality was the publisher Karl Baedeker?

WHERE in Europe, other than Moldova, is the leu the standard monetary unit?

WHEN was the Russian daily newspaper *Izvestia* founded?

remember when...

The following events all occurred in a year in living memory. Can you guess the year?

1. The USA hosted the World Cup
2. The Channel Tunnel was officially declared open
3. An earthquake measuring 6.7 on the Richter scale hit Los Angeles
4. Tony Blair became Labour Party leader

impossipuzzles

Jack had been watching his sister as she checked her cash. "You've got a lot," he said. "How much exactly?"

"None of your business, but I'll tell you," Jill replied. "If I had a penny less, I'd have three times as much as I'd have if I had 39p less than what I've got."

Well?

wordwise

The word may sound familiar, but what does it mean?

KLEPTOMANIA

- A. Fear of enclosed spaces
- B. Fear of open spaces
- C. Mania for stealing

who am I?

A convicted spy, I was born in New York in 1915. In my youth I aspired to become an actress, but began work for a shipping company where I became involved in labour disputes. My husband Julius and I were known Communists, and in 1951 we were sentenced to death for passing atomic secrets to the Soviet Union.

10 questions

1. The Second World War led to the building of what at Harperley, Weardale, in 1943?
2. Britain's deepest cave, known as Titan, is found in which region?
3. The north-west tip of mainland Scotland is known as Cape what?
4. In which century did the dodo become extinct?
5. The name of which type of pastry is a German word meaning 'whirlpool'?
6. Which town in Kent gave its name to a type of warbler bird?
7. Which port in south-west Norway is that country's second city?
8. Which Durham-born music producer, who has worked with Frankie Goes to Hollywood and Seal, among others, sang with The Buggles?
9. The Grand Remonstrance was a list of grievances sent to which king by Parliament?
10. Which Scottish-set 2013 film is set to the music of the Proclaimers?

answers

WHO WHAT WHERE WHEN: Fyodor Dostoyevsky; German; Romania; 1917

REMEMBER WHEN: 1994

IMPOSSIPUZZLES: Jill had 58p

WORDWISE: C

WHO AM I: Ethel Rosenberg

10 QUESTIONS: 1 A prisoner of war camp, 2 The Peak District/ Derbyshire, 3 Wrath, 4 17th, 5 Strudel, 6 Dartford, 7 Bergen, 8 Trevor Horn, 9 Charles I, 10 Sunshine on Leith



➤ New Stellium data centre at Cobalt Business Park

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(connection speed) of 66ms from New York to Newcastle.

With these developments in mind, and to capitalise on the capabilities that they will provide, it is essential the region's infrastructure focus shifts from just road, rail and transport to ensure that digital connectivity and digital infrastructure is also embedded into the fabric of the city and the wider region.

Our digital infrastructure will have to be given the same priority as transport if we are to succeed as a region. We must ensure the fibre-optic cabling that will link the UK to US via the North East at such speeds doesn't bypass the city and its residents but rather see full fibre going to every local authority facility, every home, and into every business premise large and small, what's called Fibre to the Home (FTTH) and Fibre to the Premises (FTTP).

By adopting this approach and then making it happen we can then truly acclaim Newcastle as - not just - a Smart City but the UK's leading Smart City.

To this end we need local authority leadership and business buy-in so that the city and the wider region reaps the benefits for itself, not just in provision of an infrastructure that others seek to leverage from afar.

A nightmare scenario would be for this next-generation data highway to start at the North East but to have no on/off ramp into the cities, its businesses, households and premises.

The region's infrastructure improvement targets must continue to prioritise digital.

If we harness the opportunities and capabilities that this new connectivity

provides we won't need to go cap in hand to central government for road and rail improvements and expansion of our airports.

If we play to our strengths and develop our capabilities in connectivity, it will be big business and international lobbying that will do this campaigning for us. Capitalise on these connectivity opportunities and external pressure will be exerted on the 'powers that-be' to demand easy and improved transport access to Newcastle. Build it and they will come - we need to act now and act quickly to capitalise on this opportunity.

So what does all this mean and what's to be gained from having the highest data speed links between the UK the US and Europe here in the North East? We will literally have the future in our own hands - in the smartphone in our pockets, and the laptop on our desks.

Connectivity allows us to buy on Amazon, book a cab on Uber, or a room on Airbnb - it has driven the seismic life-style and business shifts that we've all witnessed over the last 10 years and will fuel the digital transformations and innovations of the future. We just need to ensure that everyone is part of it.

It is not just about improving download speeds, it is about innovation, change and re-invention, it's about a future that we can't yet imagine.

It is about building the capabilities that will allow the development of AI, machine learning, virtual and augmented reality, 5G and whatever else is next.

It is about doing it here in Newcastle and the North East to harness the creativity and innovation that is the lifeblood of this region and ensuring everyone gets to play their part. In turn, this will enable talent attraction and retention,

inward investment and economic development.

In summary, connectivity is what's driving the regeneration of businesses and cities, and if cities don't keep pace with the technological advancements and the speed of data exchange, they will get left behind.

The framework for the future of cities is that they are sustainable, agile and productive - the only way they can achieve this is through technology. To be a truly SMART city the whole city needs to be connected on a scalable fibre optic infrastructure.

The good news is that Newcastle City Council is well advanced on its own ambitious and expansive Local Full Fibre Network (LFFN) programme. In addition, NE1 Ltd - the Business Improvement District company for Newcastle city Centre - is seeking to champion Gigabyte connectivity for the city centre and to inspire businesses and individuals within the NE1 catchment area.

It is a cornerstone of their own five-year business plan to improve the digital infrastructure for both business and consumers and this is one way to achieve this goal.

If we can get the whole of the NE1 postcode fibre-optically connected, it will act as a catalyst for the wider city area and then the region.

To ensure all city centre businesses recognise the opportunity and learn about the transformational potential of gigabyte connection NE1 is hosting a series of business briefings. For more details contact adrian.waddell@newcastle1ltd.com

■ John Wilson is Chief Operating Officer of Stellium DataCenters



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