

Hamilton Fibre Players Ready at the Starting Line

"Hamilton Fibre Network Ltd and its Network Operator, Velocity Networks Ltd supports the Government's decision to withdraw the BIF funding model and Digital Development Council to work directly with those parties involved in the network business", said Blair Bowcott Chairman of HFN and John O'Donoghue, Managing Director of Velocity. "As the Minister states, this is too important to get wrong and the opportunity to work with aligned industry parties will enable us to deliver a better long term solution for Hamilton and the Waikato as well as providing access to the larger pool of funding signaled by the new government", says Bowcott.

The BIF funding model seemed to favour more isolated urban networks without focussing on an interconnected national solution, was complicated and only provided a small portion of funding required to make a real difference. It appears the National Government is now addressing these shortfalls with its approach of providing more funding and consulting directly with industry players.

HFN was the recipient of a \$3.3m grant under the previous Government which together with existing fibre optic network and cash contributions from the venture partners has been used to construct a new fibre optic network covering 45 kilometers around Hamilton City operated by Velocity Networks. HFN was also one of the few urban fibre network applicants to submit a full BIF application ready for immediate implementation rather than an Expression Of Interest (EOI) requiring further development. "The detailed planning we completed in that funding application puts us in a strong position to move positively and quickly. The Government and industry generally agree that a Public Private Partnership or PPP is the ideal model to move ahead with these types of initiatives and our existing structure has always been based on this approach." says Bowcott.

"As the network operator, Velocity is continually surprised at just what our existing customers and service providers have been able to achieve when technical and commercial obstacles to broadband access are broken down. Our network passes thousands of addresses and has numerous customers representing a broad range of markets including major corporates, small and medium businesses, health, education, local government and other utility network operators", said Shane Hobson, Business Development Manager of Velocity.

Velocity's plans include a gigabit capable ethernet schools loop that will be superior in both speed and quality to the copper or wireless solutions offered by any other providers and with the planned zero ongoing cost for schools will give them access to the kind of network speeds they need to make a real difference for our kids' education. Work on the loop has started with the fibre network being extended into Whitiara Primary School and Hamilton East Primary School enabling them to collaborate across the network to Southwell School and Hamilton Girls High School in real time. Connections to other schools will be dependent upon raising further funding from either local private sources or Government.

"As the private party in the Hamilton venture we intend to be actively involved as we continue to develop our local network suitable for local requirements while ensuring it's a seamless part of a nationwide solution. We look forward to active engagement with the Government and co-operative industry players in the near future." says O'Donoghue.

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ABOUT VELOCITY NETWORKS AND THE HAMILTON FIBRE NETWORK

Hamilton based Velocity Networks is partnered with Hamilton Fibre Network (HFN) in a collaborative project led by Hamilton City Council and Wintec, with support from the University of Waikato and Environment Waikato. Their combined fibre networks span the city, providing ultra-high speed broadband internet access to commercial buildings at speeds of up to 1Gbps (1000Mbps). Operating as an 'open access' community network, users are free to subscribe to services from a range of application and internet service providers on the network.

The project has a number of implementation phases and is expected to be completed by 2010. The initial rollout of the extensive fibre network has been funded by a \$3.3 million grant from the Ministry of Economic Development, as part of the Government's Digital Strategy. For more information, see www.velocitynetworks.co.nz or contact : Shane Hobson
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