

NORTHERN GRID TAKES EDUCATIONAL BROADBAND TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Northern Grid for Learning, the regional broadband consortium for the North East, has ensured that its schools, City Learning Centres and partner Local Authorities will have one of the most advanced educational networks in the country following the agreement of a new three year contract with networking company Easynet.

Over 230 000 people already use the network across the North East including pupils, teachers and school managers. Mel Philipson, manager of Northern Grid, explains, "In the last few years we have seen the volume of broadband use in schools – from classroom teaching activity to school administration – increase dramatically. Videoconferencing links with Brazil, virtual staffrooms and engaging media-rich teaching resources all rely on the fast, safe infrastructure which we deliver. As our users continue to find innovative ways of embracing technology we need to ensure that they have a world class infrastructure to support them."

This ongoing partnership with Easynet will see the Northern Grid core network upgraded to deliver greater resilience, reliability and security. Technically the upgrade will remove any single point of failure, adding a second internet break out point and providing each Local Authority with at least one hub. These will then be connected to the neighbouring hub to create a regional mesh ensuring that users receive a reliable service even in the unlikely event of a problem with the main line.

Northern Grid has consistently set the standard for broadband technology in education, meeting the original DfES connectivity targets two years ahead of schedule. With such a comprehensive network in place, Northern Grid has been able to work closely with schools in its region to support their adoption of technology and has been able to identify future requirements and trends of use which has led directly to this latest project.

As the first regional broadband consortium in the country to implement this advanced network technology, Northern Grid is continuing to lead the way in

creating the national education network of the future. Jill Ainscough, managing director of Easynet UK said, "Over the past five years we have forged an excellent partnership with Northern Grid, with open dialogue ensuring that we understand their objectives and strategic requirements. The latest stage in this alliance – to deliver a fully-upgraded, failsafe network – is the beginning of an exciting new era for education in the North East."

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Notes to editors:

The new contract is worth £5million over the next three years.