



Press Release Wed 14th March (no embargo):

**B4RN Breaks the First Sod and starts its Community Dig March 31st at Jubilee Tower, Quernmore, starting at 1pm, 2pm Grand opening ceremony, 3pm tea and cake.**

The community-owned, rural, gigabit Fibre To The Home project, Broadband 4 the Rural North, has passed another major milestone this month. The Early Bird offer ended on 29th February, and B4RN CEO, Professor Barry Forde, is pleased to announce that sufficient shares have now been sold to commence the digging which will begin at the event on March 31st.

"We are delighted with the response to the share issue, which has surpassed even our highest hopes," said Professor Forde. "This proves that the appetite for investment and support of such community owned broadband projects is alive and well, and that solving the problem of rural broadband for the next generation is prompting people to invest even in times of economic hardship."

At the launch the local community will be celebrating the start of the dig. John and Andrew Metcalfe, local farmers, will be breaking the first sod, and are some of the many farmers who will be laying the ducting in order to buy shares in B4RN. "This will make a major difference to our community, and to me and my young family. As they grow they will be able to use the technology that children elsewhere take for granted, and we will be able to diversify our business through it." says Andrew Metcalfe

The launch will be held at a local beauty spot that is half way along the first of the core routes. The dig will progress out from either side of the start point, and all 13 core routes should be live in 3 months, weather permitting. Subsidiary routes and spurs to properties will branch out from that. There has been so much enthusiasm that the management committee is considering whether to bring forward the timescale for later phases of the build.

B4RN is the only UK community offering gigabit broadband, meaning that consumers will have the opportunity to work, live and play faster and more efficiently than most places in the world. This forward-thinking, fully-fibred approach has been recognised as the optimal solution to the digital divide, and will encourage regeneration of this deeply rural area, bringing new jobs, opportunities and revenue to rural Lancashire.

The support of the local community has been key to B4RN's success to date, and there are many people and businesses within the area who will be earning their shares through sweat and labour as well as investing their money.

Prof. Forde stated, "This is where we can reduce the costs that a traditional telecommunications company would face, by using local skills and knowledge, working directly with the community, and being a part of it. B4RN is a 100% community project, with neighbours helping neighbours. The community spirit is strong in rural areas and B4RN is a showcase for that spirit."

Share ownership starts from £100, with 30% tax refunds available to anyone investing between £500 and £20,000 under the Government's EIS (Enterprise Investment Scheme), which makes it an attractive proposition for all investors. £1500 ensures a Foundation Membership with additional bonuses such as a free connection and one year's free subscription to the gigabit service. B4RN's coverage area is close to the coast, the Lake District and the Yorkshire Dales, making it an ideal base for weekend breaks, holidays and the chance to explore some of the

north of England's most beautiful tourist areas. External investors can nominate a property within B4RN coverage area for the free connection, including holiday cottages.

Full details of the share issue, including the business plan, are available on <http://www.B4RN.org.uk> along with maps of the coverage area and phases.

## NOTES TO EDITORS

1. B4RN has been more than three years in the planning and development stage. The B4RN project will bring a state of the art, fibre optic broadband connection to the rural communities long before most of the urban areas. Rural Lancashire plans to be a world leader in “hyperfast”.

2. Professor Barry Forde (B4RN Chief Executive) is a networking expert with many years experience of designing, building and operating high performance networks. He was responsible for the CLEO network which provides connectivity to over 1000 schools and public sector sites across Lancashire and Cumbria. Bios are available for Professor Forde and the Management team <http://b4rn.org.uk/management-team>

3. The full business plan is available on the website, along with details of the pricing and payment structure for local residents and businesses. <http://b4rn.org.uk/business-plan> This includes bonuses of free install and connection for 12 months with a £1500 investment and payment in shares for involvement in the deployment of the project.

4. The target of registrations of interest required for a green light was passed in just three months, followed by the share launch in December. “The share capital needed for the core route was raised by 29th February 2012 and digging will commence on 31st March 2012. The phased network will be built by the community over three years for the seven phases.” said Barry Forde.

5. B4RN will initially provide internet and telephony with further services in the future. Each home will have a battery backup so telephony over the fibre means landline connections are no longer required.

Photos (to be accredited to B4RN) are available at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/b4ruralnorth>

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