

Headlines

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The Media Monitoring Agency

Raploch Regeneration Project

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Andrew Cassell, Presenter

There's long been a fear that a digital divide could be opening up between those who have access to computer technology and those who don't. A series of initiatives, tied to the regeneration of several areas around Scotland, is being launched from today to redress this by giving every home and business high-speed access to the internet. It will start in Stirling on the Raploch Estate as David Calder reports.

David Calder, Reporter

Until recently the Raploch area of Stirling was a byword for depravation, drugs, despair, but things are changing here. Most of the buildings beside me are boarded-up waiting to be demolished. New, high-quality homes are being built and everyone here is determined that there should be more than just a cosmetic change.

Jim Gilmour, Stirling Council

My name is Jim Gilmour and I am a business executive with Stirling Council Economic Development. We intend to put in fibre optic cabling which will offer high-speed broadband connectivity. What we're doing today is demonstrating various applications of digital and broadband technology to let the citizens of Raploch see exactly what can help them to improve their lives in the future.

Anne Maguire, local MP

The Raploch has undoubtedly had its difficulties.

David Calder

The local MP Anne Maguire who, this morning, will join other dignitaries in launching the "Building Smarter Communities" project in Raploch. She says it's right to take advantage of the redevelopment to plan properly for the future.

Anne Maguire

It will be a springboard to an area which, I think, has a tremendous future, not just in Stirling but in the wider community in central Scotland.

David Calder

She's particularly keen to see both young and old residents learn about the new technologies.

Anne Maguire

Young people, one assumes, know all about technology. To find out that actually they don't have quite the technology skills that we assume, and to see them building up those skills and also to look at older people who are discovering technology.

David Calder

Mary McKinlay has lived in Raploch all her life. She wants to take advantage of any opportunity to learn about computers so that she can keep up with her family.

Mary McKinlay, Raploch resident

If they're putting broadband in through people's homes then they're going to have to educate us how to use it. My grandchildren and my daughters are both well-versed in the computer world and it's an absolute wonder.

David Calder

And that, says Jim Gilmour, is where Mini Molli comes in.

Jim Gilmour

It's a minibus - "mobile online learning initiative". – with a satellite dish on the roof, and with wireless equipment inside. We'll be able to link the twelve laptop PCs that we have to Mini Molli anywhere within Raploch and deliver training on a one-to-one basis if necessary.

David Calder

Millions of pounds are being spent revitalising Raploch but much of the money for the IT part of the programme, not to mention the training, is coming from Europe. Its Equal Fund is supporting the development, as Lee Beridge, the Building Smarter Communities Project Manager, explains.

Lee Beridge, Project Manager, Building Smarter Communities

We are actually focusing in on the use of technology, the training in the communities, so that people, by the time they actually have the physical infrastructure in place, will be able to utilise it.

David Calder

But it will only be successful if it helps prepare local people for jobs in the twenty-first century.

Lee Beridge

There's no point in building new homes, new community centres if there's no jobs so the whole purpose is that we help the local businesses within Raploch so that there's vacancies there for the local people.

David Calder

Mary McKinley is pleased to see the changes taking place in her neighbourhood but is reserving judgement for the time being.

Mary McKinlay

It'll take a lot more than a few new buildings to bring up the character of the area again, but we have a lot of strength here and we will do that.

David Calder

But MP Anne Maguire sees this as a golden, once-only opportunity.

Anne Maguire MP

By having access to the jobs they themselves improve their own confidence, their own self-esteem, their own income and that's to the greater benefit of the whole Stirling community.

David Calder

She says that within ten years Raploch should just be another successful part of Stirling, one of the most prosperous areas of Scotland.
