



PRESS RELEASE

Tellumat
March 12 2007
Page 1 of 1

Rural Eastern Cape to get wireless broadband, free voice calls

A project to roll out WiMAX broadband services in the Amathole district of the Eastern Cape will offer local residents and businesses access to high-speed Internet access and free voice over IP (VoIP) telephone calls within the network by the middle of this year.

The deal will see Tellumat install WiMAX base stations on behalf of under-served area licence holder Amatole Telecommunication Services in regional centres including East London, Bisho, King Williams Town, Alice and Fort Beaufort in the first phase of the roll out. The network will be expanded in further phases to cover other targeted areas in the Amathole district.

"WiMAX is specifically designed to cover wide geographical areas serving large numbers of users at an affordable price," says Tellumat's Geoff Carey. "Worldwide it's considered one of the best solutions for 'last mile' broadband connectivity. WiMAX technology can offer access speeds approaching 70Mbps per base station sector. The broadband service will be offered with connect speeds ranging between 64 kbit/s and 2 Mbit/s, effectively providing a wireless alternative to other broadband service offerings.

Amatole Operations Director Bevan Booy, says the company, which has so far offered cellphone services through roaming agreements with the major cell networks, will offer both voice and data services including VoIP through its wireless broadband network. "People will pay a monthly subscription for an always-on connection to the network which they can use to access the Internet as well as to make VoIP calls," says Booy. "All calls within the network will be free, and subscribers will be able to buy airtime for calls outside the network or outside the region at very competitive rates. There will be no need to buy special equipment - we supply a terminal for each subscriber and they simply plug in existing phones and computers."

The deal is pending release of funding from the Universal Service Agency, but Booy says Amatole intends to launch services in June this year. "The Amathole district has been very poorly served by the major telecommunications operators so far," he says. "ADSL is available in some suburbs of East London, but in the rest of that city and the district there is little or no broadband access available. There is huge unmet demand from residents and businesses, as well as government agencies, and we expect wireless broadband access to be very well received."