

The RTPI and planning

1. The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) is the largest professional institute for planners in Europe, with over 23,000 members who work in the public, private, charitable and education sectors. It is a charity whose purpose is to develop the art and science of town planning for the benefit of the public. The RTPI develops and shapes policy affecting the built environment, works to raise professional standards, and supports members through continuous education, practice advice, training and development.
2. Planning is far more than a regulatory function. Planning facilitates the coordination of infrastructure provision and the delivery of sustainable economic growth, British planning is an important export to some of the fastest growing economies in world, and RTPI-accredited planning schools are internationally recognised for their expertise. Planning is central to delivering the infrastructure the country needs that will underpin sustained and sustainable economic growth.

Clause 7 Electronic communications code : the need to promote growth

3. The “practical and intended effect of the clause 7 changes will be to make it easier to provide fixed broadband in rural areas”¹ including National Parks. Despite the widely accepted need to improve broadband in rural areas and Government commitment² to doing so, hitherto it has not been possible to visualise the scale of the issue easily.
4. The RTPI is keen to ensure that policy-makers have access to the best possible information when making decisions and the Institute believes that it is often easier to examine policy issues spatially (using maps). The RTPI’s Map for England project is an attempt to bring existing policies and programmes together to highlight the benefits of this approach.
5. The RTPI, in conjunction with software specialists Idox, has made it possible to **see the relationship between superfast broadband coverage and National Parks** on the Map for England webpage: <http://www.idoxgroup.com/mapforengland/>
6. When the data for National Parks and Ofcom’s access to superfast broadband coverage are visible, **it is clear that overall National Parks have some of the worst access to (availability of) superfast broadband in England, and National Parks in the North of England are particularly poorly served (see figure1, appendix).**
7. But the Map for England reveals that **the problem is not uniform: availability of superfast broadband varies between and within National Parks (see figure 2, appendix) according to Ofcom’s data.**

footnotes

¹ Nick Boles MP, Planning Minister, response to Parliamentary Question 8 November 2012

² “Rural and remote areas of the country should benefit from this infrastructure upgrade at the same time as more populated areas, ensuring that an acceptable level of broadband is delivered to those parts of the country that are currently excluded.” Paragraph 1 of the Executive summary of BIS Britain’s Superfast Broadband Future December 2010; Broadband and Mobile Connectivity, Defra’s Rural Statement 2012.

8. The map contains other layers of information, including likely areas of population growth. When this layer is visible alongside superfast broadband coverage, **there is clearly an issue that needs to be addressed in the East of England which is both a growth area (and an internationally renowned centre for research) and an area that receives a low rating by Ofcom for superfast broadband availability (see figure 3, appendix). The RTPI urges policy-makers to consider how this issue might also be addressed.**

The Map for England project

9. Despite the generally recognised and accepted need to ensure a joined up approach to planning, infrastructure and services, there is no single place to view this information.
10. The RTPI commissioned a study as part of their Map for England campaign which showed that there are many benefits to joining up different sources of policy information. However it is not easy to compare these different maps, so the RTPI (in conjunction with software specialists Idox), have put together the Map for England to help organisations visualise the impact of some existing policies and programmes.
11. The project currently has a number of layers of data including Local Authority boundaries, National Parks, projected household growth, Areas of Outstanding National Beauty, the proposed HS2 route, broadband coverage, the worst 20% areas on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (2010), Highways Agency Pinch Point Programme and 2nd round Regional Growth Funding per head.
12. The RTPI believes that in addition to assisting policy-makers to make better informed decisions, a Map for England would have the following benefits:
 - **Helping to boost growth.** Housing, industry and business would be able to make quicker and better informed investment decisions which were more closely aligned to public sector infrastructure funding plans.
 - **Being much more transparent.** Local communities would be able to find out about how government plans affect their areas and to influence them.
 - **Saving time and money.** When writing new strategies, Government departments could see the existing plans for different parts of the country and relate their new strategies to them. Datasets drive innovation.
 - **Helping to coordinate infrastructure** across borders with Scotland and Wales.

Contact the RTPI

If you require more detailed information please contact the RTPI. For more information about the Map for England website, please visit www.mapforengland.co.uk

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Appendix

It is easier to see the following examples on the Map for England website:
<http://www.idoxgroup.com/mapforengland/>

Data on superfast broadband is taken from Ofcom Superfast broadband availability which can be seen here: <http://maps.ofcom.org.uk/broadband/>

Each area has been ranked from 1 to 5 on the percentage of residential and non-residential premises where either Virgin Media cable, Openreach Fibre-To-The-Cabinet or Digital Region networks are available.

- 1= 90% availability or more (green)
- 2= 70% - less than 90%
- 3= 50% - less than 70% (yellow)
- 4= 30% - less than 50%
- 5= less than 30% (pink)

Figure 1: Access to superfast broadband in the North of England's National Parks

Figure 1 shows that availability of superfast broadband in the North of England's National Parks is particularly poor with an Ofcom rating of 5 (the worst) shown in pink.

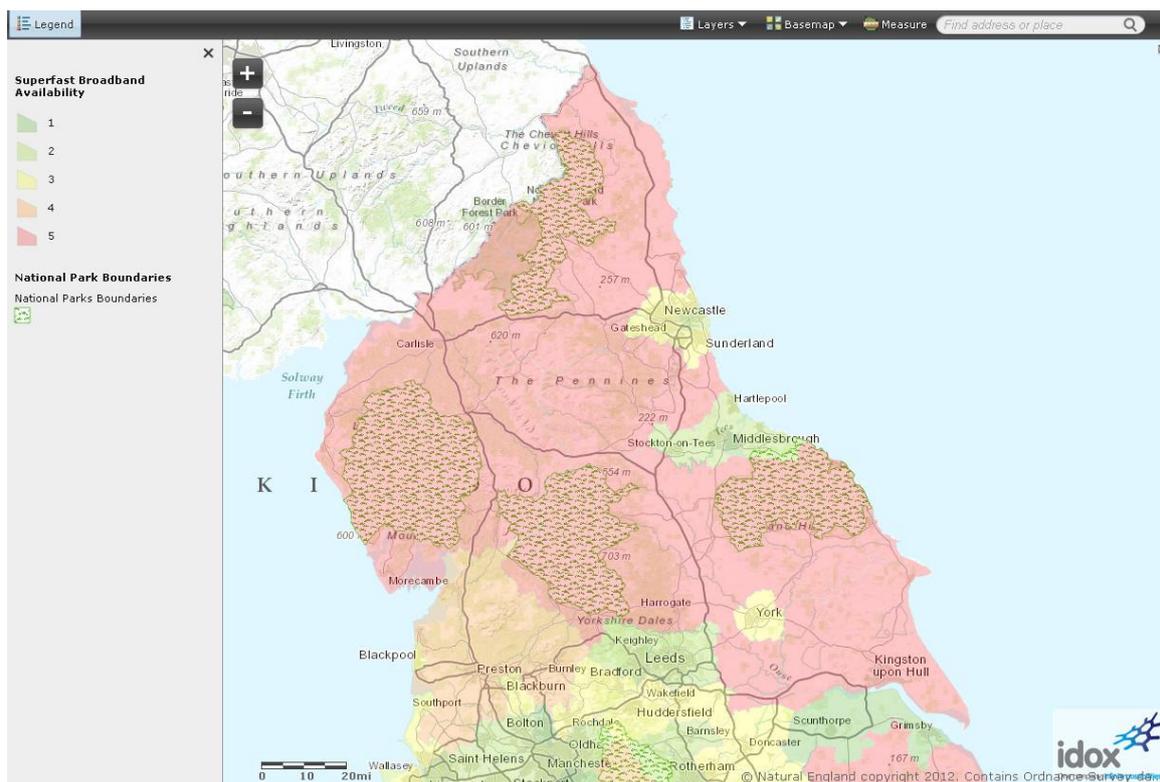


Figure 2: Access to superfast broadband within the South Downs National Park

Figure 2 shows that availability of superfast broadband varies *within* the South Downs National Park, according to Ofcom's data.

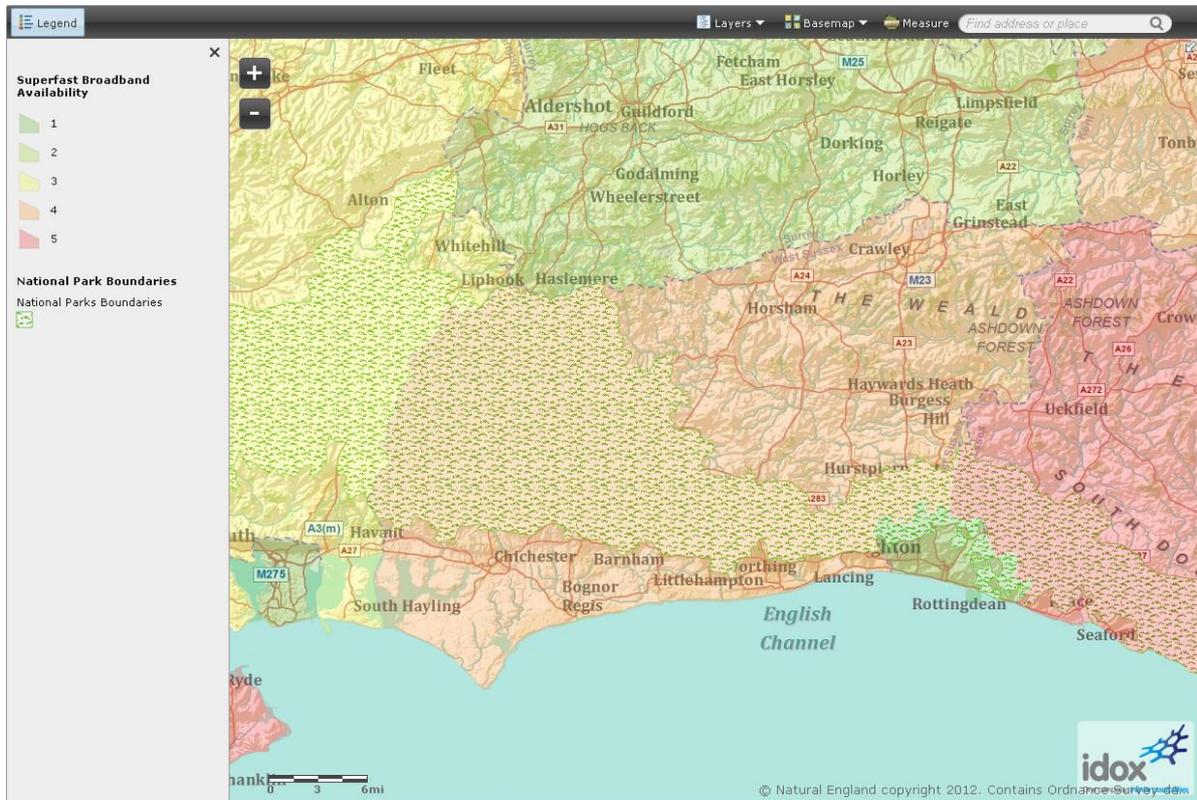
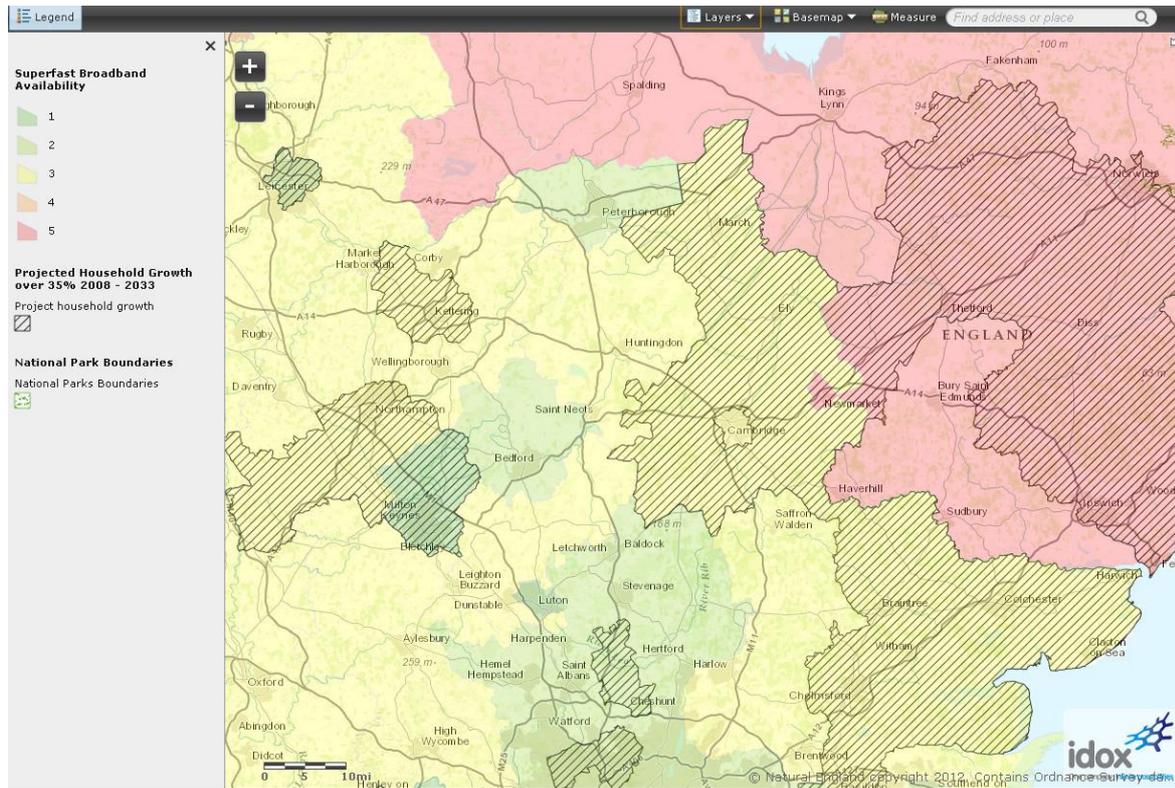


Figure 3: Access to superfast broadband within projected areas of growth in East of England is poor

Figure 3 shows that much of the East of England is rated 3 (yellow) or 5 (pink) by Ofcom for access to superfast broadband. Areas with significant projected housing growth are shown by hatching.



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The RTPI is a charity registered in England (262865) and Scotland (SC 037841).