



Smart Growth Analytics

economic research and intelligence consultancy

Superfast Broadband rollout set to boost home-based enterprise and economic growth across Somerset

Key evidence from Smart Growth Analytics suggests that the rollout of Superfast Broadband will significantly boost the growth and success of Somerset's fast-growing 'industry' of home-based offices. In turn, this will help to promote economic growth, and create much-needed jobs, across the County.

The data shows that there are currently more than 9,000 dedicated home offices in Somerset, and that almost 4% of all those in employment in the County, are currently working in a home-based office on a daily basis. This is some 20% higher than found nationally, and around 5% more than found regionally, across the South West of England. In fact, amongst the 16 Principal Authority Areas of the South West, Somerset has one of the highest volumes of home offices; only Devon, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire contain more home offices than Somerset.

The economic importance of the home-based enterprise sector to the Somerset economy should not be under-estimated; recent analysis of business and employment growth trends shows that, since the economic downturn began in the spring of 2008, it is the growth of the home-based sector that has led to all net increases in both businesses and employment.

Amongst Somerset's five district authority areas, South Somerset has the highest volume of home offices (with some 2,600 home offices). West Somerset, however, has the highest percentage of home office workers as a proportion of all workers living in the district; almost 5% of all workers in West Somerset are home-based office workers. Alternatively, Taunton Deane has the highest 'density' of home offices amongst the five districts, with just over four home offices per sq. km.

Whilst dedicated home offices are a significant economic feature across the whole of Somerset's residential areas, there are certain parts of the County that can be described as 'home office hotspots'. For example, the small village of Cotford St Luke, located just outside Taunton, is notable for having the highest volume of home offices (amongst more than 300 small local areas across Somerset). On the other hand, the highest percentage of home office workers, as a proportion of all employed residents within the local area, is to be found just outside Somerton, in and around the small rural villages of Henley, High Ham and Wearne. Almost one in ten workers in this small local area is a home office worker. Finally, an analysis of home offices and workers per sq. km shows that it is the more urban areas of Somerset which tend to have the highest concentrations (given the size of the local area). For example, the data shows that the Keyford, Trinity and east Stonebridge areas of Frome each contain well in excess of 100 home offices per sq km.

Jim Plunkett-Cole, Principal Analyst at Smart Growth Analytics, said:

“The findings from this analysis help us to understand the increasingly important home-based economic functionality of residential areas in more rural economies such as Somerset. They show how the world of work and entrepreneurship are changing in the County, as more and more of us can work remotely, or at home, and are supported into doing so with technological advances such as Superfast Broadband.”

“The local economic benefits of home working are considerable, not only for the individual “bottom-line” of the business, but also for the Somerset economy in general. For example, more staff working at home can mean a smaller central office workspace requirement for the enterprise, thereby saving rent. This can be a significant saving for businesses in prime rental areas. It can also raise productivity as, for employees; the benefits include convenience, flexibility and huge time and cost savings through reduced commuting. In fact, many home office workers report that, having made the switch, their general quality of life improves as a result, and we see happier and more productive workers! Superfast broadband also raises the general level of business start-up and growth in the local area, because it enables entrepreneurs to innovate and explore new home-based business opportunities, opportunities that would have been difficult to explore previously, if not impossible to explore previously!”

“The rollout of Superfast broadband will act as a considerable boost to the County’s home-based enterprises, and especially to its (already) rich ‘industry’ of home offices. It will lead to an increase in home enterprise and home working across Somerset, enabling more and more individuals and businesses to derive the benefits of home working, and supporting even higher levels of innovation and entrepreneurship in the County’s residential areas.”

Through crucial mechanisms such as these, Superfast Broadband will provide a vital, and long term boost, to the growth and competitiveness of the Somerset economy.”

(Further information on home offices in Somerset can be found on the page below, in the two supporting tables which accompany this press release.)

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Table 1: Summary of Home Offices in Somerset by District

Authority Area	Volume of Home Offices	% of Resident Workers in Home Offices	Home Offices per sq. km
Mendip	2,200	4.4%	2.9
Sedgemoor	1,900	3.8%	3.4
South Somerset	2,600	3.7%	2.8
Taunton Deane	1,900	3.8%	4.1
West Somerset	600	4.6%	0.9
All Somerset	9,200	3.9%	2.7
South West	90,500	3.7%	3.8
England & Wales	830,600	3.3%	5.5

Source: Smart Growth Analytics Ltd estimates based on analysis of data from the Office for National Statistics

Table 2: Top Home Office Local Area Hotspots in Somerset

Top 5 for Highest Volumes of Home Offices		
Local Area*	District	Volume of Home Offices
Cotford St Luke	Taunton Deane	100
Litton / Chewton Mendip / The Horringtons / Dinder	Mendip	100
Churchstanton area of the Blackdown Hills	Taunton Deane	90
Rural area surrounding Wiveliscombe	Taunton Deane	90
Muchelney / Kingsbury Episcopi / Stemberidge / The Lambrooks / Barrington	South Somerset	80
Top 5 for Home Office Workers as % of All Employed Residents in the Area		
Local Area*	District	Home Office Workers as % All Workers
Henley / High Ham / Wearne / Othery	South Somerset	9.1%
Area surrounding the Wells Road in north Glastonbury to Edgarley	Mendip	8.7%
Tellisford / Woolverton / Rode / Rudge / Standerwick	Mendip	8.7%
Litton / Chewton Mendip / The Horringtons / Dinder	Mendip	8.5%
Rural area surrounding Wiveliscombe	Taunton Deane	8.4%
Top 5 for Highest Volume of Workers per sq. km		
Local Area*	District	Volume of Home Offices per sq. km
Keyford area of Frome	Mendip	140
Trinity area of Frome	Mendip	130
East Stonebridge area of Frome	Mendip	130
Cotford St Luke	Taunton Deane	110
Central Glastonbury (to NW of the Abbey)	Mendip	110

*From more than 300 small local areas across Somerset

Source: Smart Growth Analytics Ltd estimates based on analysis of data from the Office for National Statistics

Notes for editors:

The aim of the 'Connecting Devon and Somerset' Superfast Broadband initiative is to have:

- Improved broadband (>2 Mbps) to every business and community across Devon and Somerset by 2015
- Superfast broadband (>24 Mbps) to at least 85% of the area by 2015, with 100% by 2020

This press release, including further data and tables, is available on the Smart Growth Analytics website at www.smartgrowthanalytics.co.uk/media.html.

Smart Growth Analytics is a Somerset-based economic research and intelligence consultancy that specialises in the provision of local area information concerning enterprise and entrepreneurship. As well as bespoke local area projects for both Public Sector and Private Sector organisations, Smart Growth Analytics currently acts as strategic economic advisor to a range of organisations, including Principal Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships.

Jim Plunkett-Cole, the founder of Smart Growth Analytics, is a professional economist and analyst, and an experienced local area economic development practitioner.

The data analysis shown here has been extracted from the Home Office Dataset, created by Jim Plunkett-Cole of Smart Growth Analytics Ltd. The Dataset is an extract from the Smart Growth Analytics Knowledge-Base of local area data and analysis covering enterprise and entrepreneurship in the UK.

All data shown are estimates derived through synthesis and modelling of the very latest national statistical information (from the Office for National Statistics). All data refers to 2010.

Please note that the data, analysis and other information shown in this press release are estimates and should not be taken as a statement of fact. They have been prepared with informed professionalism in the subject area, drawing upon the best available information, and are provided in good faith. Smart Growth Analytics Ltd reserves the right to alter the underpinning methodology for this data and analysis, or to edit or withdraw the work entirely as it sees fit. Any personal or commercial use of this information is entirely the risk, and solely the responsibility of, the person or persons using the information.

Further regional extraction and analysis of the Home Office Dataset from Smart Growth Analytics will be the subject of future press releases.

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