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## Broadband should be "connected" through sewers

### Down in the dumps?

by Katie Scott published on 6 December 2007

A British firm is claiming that by using the UK's sewer network, it can drastically cut down the costs of connecting the country to broadband.

The company, called H2O Networks, is currently looking into providing networks to businesses and individual consumers.

Internet Service Provider Ask4 has already signed up and managing director Elfed Thomas hopes the UK could soon compete with Japan and Paris where use of the sewer system is widespread.

"The sewer network is more than capable of handling cable. There is no reason why this can't be deployed throughout the UK."

He added that there is, in fact, 360,000 miles of sewers in the UK and this is ideal for widening broadband access.

H2O Networks began installing broadband fibres in sewer systems in 2003 but its negotiations with water firms nationwide continues.

Focus (Fibre Optical Cable Underground Sewer) is already proving universities in Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Bournemouth with 20GB/s connections with speeds of up to 20GB/s.

According to the company, the key advantage is cost. Laying cables for broadband has so far involved digging up roads across the country, which is not only expensive (around £150-200 per metre) but also disruptive. But by using the sewer, they claim this is avoided and the man hour costs are reduced significantly.

Managing director Elfed Thomas told the BBC: "To roll out a networking deploying fibre over a



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2km area would be 6 to 12 months in the planning. We can do it physically in 4 hours".

Using the example of Napian University, he continued: "It cost the university around £80,000 to have a 1.2km fibre network. With a traditional fibre network these costs would have been in the region of £400,000 to £1.2m".

Thomas adds that the charge for having a 10MB/s or 20GB/s is the same as there are less restrictions on capacity.