

# UK town residents to enjoy WiFi connected pavement

October 18 2015, by Nancy Owano

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Credit: Virgin Media

UK pedestrians in Chesham will experience a first when they stroll around. Virgin Media is behind the initiative of a Smart WiFi Pavement, to provide people with Wi-Fi access. Residents will be able to

"streetsurf," according to the news release. Virgin Media is a provider of all four broadband, TV, mobile phone and home phone services in the UK.

The company is out to make a name in improving out-of-home connectivity. The Virgin Media news release said, "Chiltern District Council and Virgin Media have joined forces to blanket Chesham's high street with superfast WiFi. The unlimited WiFi service is available to residents, businesses and visitors passing through the center of Chesham; the service even covers parts of Lowndes Park – Chesham's 36 acre park space." The pilot is available to all the 21,000 residents and businesses of Chesham.

Speeds of up to 166Mbps are highlighted; the number is seven times the average UK broadband speed.

Where does connectivity come from? Virgin Media's street cabinets will be used along with Smart Pavement. This is the first time that Virgin Media has built metropolitan WiFi directly from their street cabinets, and it is also the UK's first deployment of a WiFi-connected pavement.

How it works: the user chooses "Virgin Media WiFi" in the WiFi settings on the device. People with Android devices who are VM mobile customers will access it through the Virgin Media WiFi Buddy app.

Tereza Pultarova in *E&T* magazine went into more detail about how it works: "The pavement, developed by Virgin Media, provides connectivity via submerged [access](#) points linked directly to Virgin's street cabinets, which are connected to the fiber-optic network. The pavement provides download speeds of up to 166Mbit/s, allowing users to download a file of about 634MB, equivalent to one episode of 'Coronation Street,' in about 35 seconds."

Sophie Curtis in *The Telegraph* said these submerged access points are actually concealed under manhole covers in the pavement, "as well as other 'street furniture' such as lamp posts. The manhole covers are made from a specially developed resin that allows radio signals to pass through it."

Why of all sites in UK did the company pick Chesham as their pilot site? Virgin Media said "the local authority is innovative and actively engaged with the local people in trying to find ways to enhance the area for both residents and businesses." Chesham has a population of over 21,000 with residential areas, businesses, industrial centers and a High Street featuring numerous specialist shops alongside national retailers.

Moving forward, Gregor McNeil, Managing Director of Consumer at Virgin Media, said, "We want to build more networks like this across the UK and encourage more forward thinking councils just like Chesham to get in touch."

**More information:** [about.virginmedia.com/press-re ... nt-with-virgin-media](http://about.virginmedia.com/press-releases/2015-10-18-uk-town-residents-wifi-pavement-with-virgin-media)

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