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It's time the UK caught up with Europe

Web guru backs broadband roll-out

By **MARTIN WILLIAMS**

WALES is on track for a broadband bonanza that will benefit economies and business.

That's according to Karin Ahl of Sweden firm Rala Infratech, president of the European Fibre to the Home Council (FTTH).

Speaking exclusively to Business Post, Karin backed our 'Up to Speed' campaign and said the Welsh Government and BT's £425million rollout of superfast broadband - especially in north west Wales, is the right way forward for the country.

Up to 30,000 homes and businesses in Bangor, Caernarfon, Dolgelau, Pwllheli, Menai Bridge and Porthmadog were made top priority by the WG and will have quicker speeds by June.

With Russia, Lithuania and other parts of Europe enjoying better network coverage and broadband than large parts of

the UK, Karin said it is time governments realised how vital a rapid connection is for industry and infrastructure.

"I think the way Wales is doing it is the right way, by rolling out superfast broadband to the areas that need it most," she said.

"In Sweden, like Wales, there are a lot of rural areas with no connection and it's about getting that higher quality of life for the people, it really does make a difference," she added.

Karin said the UK must look overseas for best practice in mobile and internet communications.

"They need to look at how it is stimulating economies and really focus on the consumer.

"They should take back case studies and advice and learn from them."

Karin was speaking after the recent European FTTH conference in London, where hundreds of delegates discovered Russia has seen a 42% increase in the number of FTTH subscribers.

More steady growth of 15% is reported in Europe, where Lithuania and Sweden lead the way.

"Eastern Europe and Scandinavian

countries have reinforced their position as fibre leaders, and the disparity between the early and late adopters is becoming even more apparent," said Karin.

"These FTTH leaders are gaining an economic advantage over their less well-connected neighbours. Good communications infrastructure helps to retain existing businesses and attract new ones. Countries that delay the roll out of FTTH are looking at a serious lost opportunity to prepare for their economic future."



Karin Ahl