



Media release

Thursday 10 December 2015

## **Fast rural broadband key to the region's progress**

Canterbury's local authorities have welcomed the announcement by Spark New Zealand today to fast-track its roll-out of fast 4G broadband services across the region by December 2016.

Fourteen locations in Selwyn have been identified as locations for 4G reception sites. These will be located at Arthur's Pass, Aylesbury, Bankside, Burnham, Darfield, Dunsandel, Glentunnel, Leeston, Lincoln, Springfield, Rolleston, Southbridge, Tai Tapu, Castle Hill and West Melton.

"Spark has made a considerable effort to understand the needs of our farmers and rural communities, and how important fast broadband is for Canterbury's economy and for rural communities to access services," says Selwyn Mayor Kelvin Coe.

In August, the Mayoral Forum launched the Canterbury Regional Economic Development Strategy. The strategy is an action plan, with seven work programmes covering transport, digital connectivity, freshwater management, value-added production, education and training for a skilled workforce, newcomer and migrant settlement, and regional visitor strategy.

Each work programme has a lead Mayor. The digital connectivity work programme is led by Damon Odey, Mayor of Timaru District.

Mayor Coe said access to better and faster broadband underpins all the other six work programmes.

"We need digital data and communications on farm to ensure the most efficient use of water. We also need it to manage nutrients, stock and the business of farming, including keeping our farm workers safe and getting emergency help to them quickly if there is an accident," Mayor Coe said.

"This announcement will help improve access to education, health and emergency services in rural areas. It will help rural communities including newcomers and migrants stay connected to family and friends elsewhere, and connect them to services. It will also help local businesses provide better services to customers."

Mayor Coe said Spark's investment in 4G broadband services is great news for Canterbury. "It's a great example of how local government can work together and collaborate with the private sector to get better results for our communities."

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