

Broadband plans stepped up

PLANS put forward by the European Commission to speed up the delivery of broadband to homes and businesses across the EU have been welcomed by local MEP Malcolm Harbour.

The commission has brought forward outline regulations for access to new high speed networks that will encourage market investment while ensuring competition.

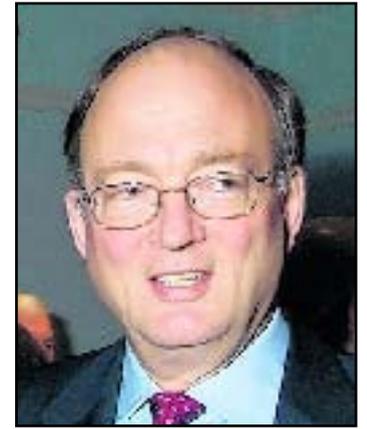
It has also proposed a more efficient allocation of radio spectrum to ensure there is sufficient for wireless broadband, and has proposed a new 'communication' which calls for national governments to bring

forward clear and concrete plans to support broadband investment, including details of how they will make use of EU funds.

Broadband 'penetration rates' vary from 13 per cent in Bulgaria and 38 per cent in Denmark, while the UK's is 29.8 percent.

Mr Harbour, chairman of the European Parliament's internal market committee, said: "These proposals will ensure the regulatory clarity that is needed to encourage investment from the market so that every household has access to broadband.

"This will help the EU's Single Market to continue to 'go digital', creating jobs and prosperity."



■ Malcolm Harbour MEP



■ Lorely Burt MP with Haq Khan and Mike Ryan of Pack & Send

Parcel force gets rolling

PACK & Send, the packing and shipping solutions provider which launched in the UK at the start of last year, has opened its first Midlands store in Sheldon.

Located on Coventry Road, the new store will cater for both personal and business customers requiring packing and shipping services.

It offers excess baggage shipping, specialist packing and transportation

and courier services to the UK and more than 220 countries worldwide.

The Birmingham Pack & Send is owned and operated by Haq Khan, a local JP and businessman.

The launch was attended by Solihull Liberal Democrat MP Lorely Burt, her colleague Yardley MP John Hemming and Mike Ryan, CEO of Pack & Send UK. For more call 0121 741 2737 or e-mail sheldon@packsend.co.uk.

Bosses pull a sickie on health

PLANS to hold a seminar to promote a healthier workforce have been scrapped - because not enough businesses were interested in attending.

The event, organised by Solihull Chamber of Commerce, Solihull College and the local primary care trust, was to concentrate on helping staff stop smoking, promoting a healthy diet, combating stress, and tips on keeping fit.

The snub comes when, according to the CBI, 180 million sick days were taken last year costing British industry a cool

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£16.8 billion. Locally, smoking alone cost businesses £6 million in lost days, according to Solihull NHS Care Trust.

Stunned director of Solihull Chamber, Jane Jackson, said: "It's simple - a healthy workforce equals a healthy business and we are very disappointed at the lack of uptake.

"I just cannot explain it - these are difficult times and you need to be firing on all cylinders - you need to have your staff to be fully productive."

With many companies now 'lean and mean' it also means there is little slack when someone goes off sick. Trying economic times and staff shortages also add to the burden of stress - one of the biggest causes of time off sick.

"The care trust were to give advice on reducing stress, taking blood pressure and emphasising the importance of diet and exercise," said Ms Jackson.

The Chamber hopes to hold the event again in the future and are looking for around 50 delegates - to register an interest, call Liz Ayto on 0121 781 7384 or e-mail: solevents@solihull-chamber.com.