

New LTE-A wireless broadband network takes first steps

WBS has commenced the rollout of its new national LTE-Advanced wireless broadband network. As coverage expands existing iBurst customers will be migrated over to the new LTE-A network and new users will be added.



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WBS is building the network using existing sites and facilities leased from independent tower companies and other telecommunications networks. The first facilities leasing agreement has been concluded with Vodacom and will see WBS lease 5,000 high sites onto which it will install its own radio equipment.

The current rollout plan is to have 500 sites active by March next year, 2,000 by the end of 2017 and 5,000 by the end of 2020. In addition to these high sites, WBS is planning to secure a further 5,000 sites from other sources within a similar timeframe.

Equipment will be acquired from the established equipment vendors, the funding for which has been secured from shareholder resources and traditional bank funding. The equipment vendors will also assist with installation and management of the network as is commonplace in the industry.

Streaming deal

The company claims its new network will have significant and sufficient capacity to allow other MNOs to roam on it. Roaming is standard practice in the industry and by separate agreement the first non-exclusive roam agreement has been signed with Vodacom. This will enable WBS to use some of the network capacity being created to generate revenue while building the customer base.

WBS's new LTE-Advanced network will serve as an 'economic pick-me-up' for South Africa, according to WBS chairman Paul Harris. "Fast, affordable broadband services will bring tremendous benefits to South African consumers and business alike. We're a 55-million person, upper middle income country and we need an ultra high-speed, broadband data-only network to match where we're going," he said.

WBS is keen to engage with other telecoms firms and service providers to explore additional, similar

agreements of mutual benefit.

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