

Wanganui looks beyond broadband

By PAUL BROOKS

Last week it all came together for Wanganui's Ultra Fast Broadband (UFB) network.

The last of the fibre-optic cable was laid, enabling 17,000 Wanganui households and businesses to be connected, and UCOL hosted the Beyond Broadband Expo where workshops were held and providers and support businesses could ply their wares and offer advice to prospective customers.

At the official Expo opening last Thursday evening in the UCOL Atrium, a number of speakers praised UFB, the people who made it possible and the advantages for Wanganui.

Compered by Richard Riley, Ultra Fast Broadband general manager sales and marketing, who commented on the good crowds thus far, speakers included Mayor Annette Main, MP Chester Borrows, Malcolm Inglis of UCOL and William Hamilton, chief executive of UFB.

In the absence of Wanganui's John Maihi, Kaumatua Tame Pokaia from Hamilton did the honours for Tangata Whenua, after which Annette Main — who was recently connected to UFB — thanked those who worked to complete the project.

"It's a pretty important step which recognises a huge amount of hard work that's gone into making us a connected community," she said. Annette thanked UCOL for providing the premises and support, and suggested people attend the Demystifying Broadband workshop held on Saturday.



ON SHOW: Tash Brechmanis and Greg Nixon had their NZ Computing Solutions stand at the Beyond Broadband Expo.

PICTURE / PAUL BROOKS

"We are extremely proud of being recognised as one of the world's top 21 intelligent communities, one of the smart 21 . . . we know that's very big.

"It's well worth working to

and I recommend that other places in New Zealand do that job — we're willing to help.

"It's been awarded to us because of the kind of work that we've actually done to become

leaders in the digital world, and we're really proud of that reputation."

She said it's important that everyone in the community has the ability to be connected to the

digital infrastructure. "We want everybody to be connected at the level that works for them."

Chester Borrows spoke of the government investment of about \$35m and suggested there was now no further need for Wanganui to lose Government departments to other centres. "There's no excuse now for that to continue," he said. "If you can run NASA from a corrugated iron shed in Whangamomona now, there's no reason for Government agencies to be drawing staff away from provincial cities such as Wanganui.

"UFB will increase productivity for businesses and innovation, make it easier to do business with the rest of New Zealand and the world, increase and provide better access to services and healthcare, allow more efficient energy consumption and enable students to access the best teachers and online resources," he said.

Malcolm Inglis, chair of UCOL, said, "If you're not in ultra fast now in education, you're not really in the business of education . . . Advances in technology are central to improving the practices of education. All of our students and staff will benefit.

"Ultra Fast Broadband will improve access and encourage the increased use of this means of delivery. Increased use of online delivery due to the speed of access will, in turn, open up more study opportunities for people who are not in a position to come to classes."

The Expo was officially opened by William Hamilton.