

Brits test balloon broadband relays

October 19 2005

Engineers in Britain will be testing the ability of high-altitude balloons to relay high-speed broadband service.

A research team from the University of York is following up on earlier experiments using large balloons to handle broadband traffic at speeds up to 120 Mbps, the British Broadcasting Corporation reported Wednesday.

"Proving the ability to operate a high data rate link from a moving stratospheric balloon is a critical step in moving towards the longer term aim of providing data rates of 120 Mbps," said David Grace, the project's principal scientific officer.

The balloon tests are partly funded by the European Union as a possible alternative to limited-speed land lines and costly satellite services.

The technology has been tested in Sweden and has engineers thinking balloon service could become a reality within five years.

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Citation: Brits test balloon broadband relays (2005, October 19) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2005-10-brits-balloon-broadband-relays.html>

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