Success Story:
Leeds Council, Virgin Media Business, Siklu Provide WiFi coverage for Tour de France Grand Départ

Siklu Delivers Street-Level Gigabit Backhaul to Handle Surge in Demand

**Challenge:** Tour de France grand depart requires a WiFi backhaul capacity boost that will perform as planned

**Solution:** Siklu’s EtherHaul-600T V-band radio

**Benefits:**
- Gigabit throughput
- Tiny and unobtrusive
- Predictable performance

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On July 5, hundreds of thousands of fans and spectators poured into Leeds, the third largest city in the UK, to witness the Grand Départ of the 2014 Tour de France. Leeds Council chose Virgin Media Business to provide free high-speed WiFi coverage in the city centre. To ensure the most reliable and fast connection to the Internet, Virgin Media Business selected Siklu’s tiny Gigabit 60GHz radio for backhaul.

The ‘Grand Départ’ of the 101st Tour de France, visiting Yorkshire for the first time, attracted an estimated 230,000 people to the Leeds city centre, and took months to prepare to ensure its success. Part of this was providing Internet connectivity for the crowds who visited and shared this once-in-a-lifetime experience via social media.

The challenge fell to Virgin Media Business, which was awarded a concession by Leeds City Council in 2012 for access to street furniture to provide public WiFi and to boost mobile data services in locations across the city. In preparation for the Tour de France event, Virgin Media Business boosted its WiFi coverage to prepare for the expected enormous number of simultaneous Internet sessions.

Many of these WiFi hotspots connected directly to the fibre backhaul, but others needed wireless backhaul. Following a trial of several months, Virgin Media Business selected Siklu’s EtherHaul-600T – a tiny, unobtrusive radio providing Gigabit throughput. These were deployed by the Leeds City Council lighting contractor along major streets in Leeds, on different types of lighting poles.

The Tour de France is the third largest sporting event in the world. It was absolutely vital to provide reliable high-speed Internet connections for the thousands who lined the city centre streets for the launch. Moreover, The Headrow is the principal shopping street, and houses the top cultural buildings and period architecture. Therefore, it was equally vital to ensure any equipment deployed in the street blended in inconspicuously.

Bruce Girdlestone, Senior Business Development Manager, Virgin Media Business, said: “This has been a fantastic collaboration between a number of different parties to bring reliable, high-speed mobile connectivity to the thousands of people who enjoyed this once-in-a-lifetime occasion.

It’s a great example of the opportunities that enhanced broadband connections can bring – and not just during big sporting events like this. It’s also shown the resilience of the infrastructure in meeting the demand for higher capacity data services through smartphones and tablets.”

“This is one of the many applications for which EtherHaul is an ideal solution,” said Shahar Peleg, Director of Product Management and Marketing of Siklu. “Users constantly require even higher capacity Internet connection on the go, via both WiFi and the cellular network. Providing
such capacities require street level installation, with minimum footprint, high reliability and completely automatic installation. We are delighted to have been able to provide visitors to Leeds and Tour de France, as well as their many social media friends, with a memorable and positive experience.”