EUROPE'S LARGEST INTERNET EXCHANGE

The London Internet Exchange (LINX) – the largest Internet exchange point in Europe – this week switched its 250 trillionth (250,000,000,000,000th) packet of data since its foundation in 1994. An average packet of data consists of between 450 and 550 bytes – roughly the equivalent of around 500 characters in an e-mail message.

At the same time LINX announced that peak traffic flows at the exchange have topped 14 gigabits per second, about 140 times more than its closest UK rival. This is equivalent to 840,000 average e-mail messages per second.

LINX now handles up to 96 per cent of UK Internet traffic using powerful, high-capacity switching and routing equipment in eight Docklands and City of London tele-hotels. It is owned by more than 120 Internet service providers (ISPs) and content delivery service providers (CDSPs), connecting their networks to allow data to move efficiently around the world.

LINX sales and marketing manager Vanessa Evans said: "We continue to see phenomenal growth in traffic levels at the exchange. We expect this growth will continue, as more and more people use the Internet at home and at work and as businesses expand their e-commerce operations.

"We are continually introducing new services and equipment to improve our service to members."

ISPs and CDSPs in the UK that are not LINX members usually buy network services from those that are, in order to provide the connectivity needed for the transfer of data via the Internet. LINX members have to meet stringent technical quality standards.

In 1995 LINX switched 'only' 640,575,000,000 packets of data during the year on behalf of its initial five members. It estimates that it has switched around 50,000,000,000,000 over the past 12 months – an increased annual rate of over 7,800 per cent.

The current peak traffic flow is more than twice the level recorded twelve months ago.

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Notes to editors:

1. Data is broken down into a number of 'packets' when it is transmitted over the Internet. Each packet consists of a small amount of data plus an identification number and the Internet address of its destination. The many packets which may make up one e-mail message or the content of a website might travel over several different routes to reach their destination where the user's computer re-assembles them into the correct order.

2. LINX is currently handling peak traffic flows of three million packets per second with minimum flow rates dropping to one million packets per second. Volumes have roughly doubled over the past year so an estimated 50 trillion packets have been handled by LINX in the past 12 months.

3. One gigabit is 1,000 million bits of data. While Internet traffic consists of a wide variety of data, one gigabit is roughly equivalent to 60,000 average e-mail messages.

END

LX1:mh
11:iii:02

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