

WEATHER... MORE LOCAL THAN EVER

UTV Internet has forged a new partnership with US based global weather provider WeatherBug to introduce weather stations throughout Northern Ireland to deliver live local weather to www.u.tv users...with the technological backing of BT in Northern Ireland.

The WeatherBug network here already consists of 35 weather stations with high definition cameras that provide live, up-to-the-second weather data and real-time images of weather conditions in local areas including Larne, Castlewellan, Cushendall, Ballygawley, Lisburn and Derry.

UTV is planning to expand the global WeatherBug network by offering WeatherBug weather stations, high-definition (HD) cameras, and online weather data services to local schools, towns and tourist destinations throughout Ireland.

Jeremy Biggerstaff, Managing Director, UTV New Media said: "The integration of the WeatherBug network content into www.u.tv will provide our users with real-time weather information making our websites among the most

comprehensive resources for local weather information on the web."

UTV intends to introduce the award-winning WeatherBug Schools Programme to Northern Ireland which enables schools to invest in a WeatherBug station on their property from £87 per month. Once installed weather at the school's site can be accessed by users all over the world as well as integrated into the school's education programme.

But the Weatherbug network also has clear potential links with public sector agencies and the business community here.

"Our big advantage is the fact that our stations update every couple of seconds, so we're very strong

on accurate short-term weather forecasting, particularly in the 0-6 hour window," explains Weatherbug's European MD Jeremy Usher.

The advantages to operations like NI Electricity are very clear. The company relies on accurate weather forecasting during stormy weather when supply can be interrupted.

But there are plenty of other potential applications. One example is one of our largest industries, agriculture.

"In North America, we've teamed up with the farming authorities in Canada, for example, to provide up to the minute weather information to wheat farmers there who use the information to plan their crop

spraying and other activities. Weather data is just as important to farmers on this side of the Atlantic Ocean."

BT's Roger Priestly outlines other possible users of Weatherbug's data. "The emergency services are an obvious possible user, as our sporting event organisers, the roads service and logistics operators."

Weatherbug has firm plans to increase the number of individual data-collecting stations around Northern Ireland, stations which can also supply historical weather data as well as forecasting information. The historical data can have commercial applications too, not least in the insurance industry.

"With more than 15 years of experience in building, deploying and operating weather networks around the world, we've found that while a single weather station can be useful for one specific location or organisation, a weather network can serve as a utility for the entire community. We're pleased to bring this concept and time-tested approach to schools, local councils, businesses and consumers," adds Weatherbug's Jeremy Usher.

