

# Fibre Community Partnership

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Last updated 26 Feb 2022

This list of FAQ will be continuously updated and evolved based on questions and feedback received from the community. It is intended to provide additional information to that which you will have received by mail recently.

If you need further help after reading the FAQ, please contact the following address by e-mail and we will endeavour to get back to you quickly.

[HighWealdSuperfastbroadband@gmail.com](mailto:HighWealdSuperfastbroadband@gmail.com)

### How is the Parish Council involved?

We, the Parish Council, have been campaigning and lobbying our County Council and the internet infrastructure builder (Openreach) for several years with the aim of getting a high speed internet connection available to every home and business in our parish. To this end we have been in contact with the executive offices of East Sussex County Council, Openreach and also asked our MP Huw Merriman for help. Over a year ago we identified an opportunity to lodge applications with Openreach for two projects to get a high speed internet connection made available for all remaining homes and businesses that today do not have one.

Our focus has always been to find a way to get the job done of building the infrastructure without any cost to the community and to avoid the need for every premise to have it's own individual contract with Openreach. This is why we moving forwards with a Fibre Community Partnership (FCP) scheme.

### I have heard of a CFP but not a FCP. What is the difference?

Actually nothing at all! For some reason, Openreach decided recently to change their naming nomenclature. Both Community Fibre Partnership (CFP) and Fibre Community Partnership (FCP) are terms used to describe the scenario where a community (collection of homes and businesses) clubs together it's Rural Gigabit Vouchers (RGV) in to one pot for the purpose of building infrastructure that benefits everybody.

### Why do we need this FCP?

All of the government's main contracts to build high speed fibre based superfast broadband in East Sussex have been completed. These contracts were awarded to Openreach with aim of meeting the government's commitment to have 96% of premises across the country connected with fibre by 2018. Unfortunately, rural areas such as ours are in the as yet unserved 4%. The only remaining immediately available funding to build new

infrastructure is coming from the Rural Gigabit Scheme and deployed using a Fibre Community Partnership scheme.

## **I'm happy with my internet connection, why should I be interested in these projects?**

According to Ofcom's 2018 Home Broadband Report, users getting 10Mbps or less risk becoming 'second-class citizens'. Faster broadband speeds will not only mean multiple people can stream films, play games and access social media uninterrupted now. But it will also make properties more attractive for house swaps, renters and buyers, open up reliable access as government and health services increasingly move online and new jobs and work opportunities appear with advances in technology.

## **How could slow broadband speeds affect me in the future?**

Technology is advancing at a faster rate than ever before and is likely to continue to change how we live in the next 20 years faster than we have experienced to date. Given the speed of adoption of online services during the global COVID crisis, we are likely to see more opportunities for services such as education, government and health to move online to save time, money and access. Copper ADSL connections will face shut off as out dated technology as soon as 2027, as analogue TV signals were in 2012, homes without fibre connection risk being left behind and penalised in a variety of everyday activities.

## **What is the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme?**

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) is the government department responsible for the roll out of full fibre broadband throughout the UK. For rural communities, such as ours, DCMS is making money available in the form of vouchers, to help cover the installation cost of a high speed network. Full details on how the scheme works can be found in the DCMS Terms & Conditions at <https://gigabitvoucher.culture.gov.uk/home/who-is-eligible>.

## **How much are these vouchers worth?**

Now that the DCMS have approved our project, every residential home covered by the project will be offered a voucher with a nominal value of £1,500. Also, every home-based business, or eligible small business (SME) in non-residential premises, will be offered a voucher with a nominal value of £3,500. Note that each premise can only pledge one voucher, either residential or business as appropriate. These vouchers only have a nominal value as each home or business will not actually receive any money directly. Instead, they will be asked to pledge their voucher to Openreach to help cover the full cost of our FCP.

## **What is defined as a 'Business' for the purpose of pledging a higher value business voucher to the scheme?**

A small or medium business must be turning over less than 50million Euros per annum. It can be a limited company, sole trader, or charity. It must operate from the premise in the scheme, however if a limited company can be registered elsewhere.

### **I work from home, but my company operates from a business premise elsewhere, can I claim and pledge a business RGV?**

No as the business is operating elsewhere.

### **Why can't I use my voucher on my own?**

The cost to connect one property on it's own is disproportionately high and invariably far exceeds the value of an RGV.

### **How long is my voucher valid for?**

Each voucher will be valid for 12 months from the date it is issued, following project approval by the DCMS. The Openreach pledging web page is now open and we hope to encourage enough pledges to reach the target within one month.

### **Do I have to take a high speed broadband service once I pledge my voucher?**

You are encouraged to read the 'Terms & Conditions' of the RGV scheme. By pledging your RGV you are very much expected to take out a high speed broadband service once the infrastructure build has been completed.

The full list of providers is available - <https://www.openreach.com/fibre-broadband/ftp-providers>

Should you eventually decide not to take out a high speed service, your RGV will be taken back. If too many people do this is it may cause harm to the project by causing it to be under funded.

### **Does a high speed internet service cost more per month than the current slow service I am getting?**

You will still be able to choose your service provider, and there are many out there. As with anything like this you are encouraged to shop around. In general terms you are likely to pay only a small incremental cost per month of a few pounds more for a high speed service, as compared to any current slower service that you may have.

### **I heard that there are two separate FCP projects being launched for our area. Is that true?**

Yes, it is. Two projects are being launched because we need to get two telephone exchanges upgraded to service all the target premises with high speed internet. The exchanges themselves have to be upgraded to “Full Fibre”.

The first project is intended to get the Brightling ‘Exchange’ upgraded to full fibre. This will benefit 463 properties in Brightling together with parts of Netherfield, Dallington and Woods Corner. The second project is intended to get the Ninfield “Exchange” upgraded to full fibre and will benefit 392 properties in Penhurst, Ashburnham and parts of Ninfield.

When you use the pledging website, your voucher will automatically get pledged to the relevant project.

### **Why are properties from outside of our parish involved?**

The key to the success of these projects is to have ‘critical mass’ i.e. enough properties pledging vouchers that create enough economies of scale for them to be viable. Given that we will be upgrading telephone exchanges that touch the edges of other parishes it is logical and economically sensible to offer them the chance to benefit from the chance to get a better (much faster) broadband speed too.

### **I heard that East Sussex County Council will be adding funds to our projects. Is that true?**

Yes, for every voucher pledged, East Sussex County Council will add £1000 top-up. This gives us a much better chance of reaching the pledge target. The £1000 top-ups are only available for a limited time hence it is in our interests to be an ‘early mover’ with our projects.

### **Do we know exactly what each project will cost?**

Yes, we do.

We have written fixed price offers from Openreach that were made after they had made detailed surveys. The offers are as follows:-

Openreach FCP project number 59602

Cost £721,164

Serving 463 homes across Brightling and parts of Dallington, Netherfield and Woods Corner

Openreach FCP project number 57216

Cost £475,282

Serving 392 homes across Penhurst, Ashburnham and parts of Ninfield

### **Why is the Pledge Target higher than the actual cost to build?**

The pledge target has a 30% buffer added to cater for any last minute drop-outs (people not upgrading to a high speed service). Openreach have added this to protect themselves and it is upon this basis that they are not asking for individual contracts with every premise. It is also worth noting that acute levels of dropouts / and hence underfunding has never happened anywhere in the country with this type of scheme.

### **Once we reach the pledge target, how long will it be before the infrastructure is built?**

The expectation is that it will take 12 months. It could take slightly longer if the current labour market shortages continue.

### **I've already pledged my voucher, what's next?**

When enough pledges come in Openreach they will send you a Gigabit email, which needs to be read and replied to and then there is no more to do. Once all the emails have been verified by DCMS and Openreach the project move in the 'Delivery' stage, ie, it starts.

### **How can I further help to reach the pledge target?**

Encourage neighbours, friends and family in the area to check if their address is eligible for this scheme and to pledge their vouchers.

### **Will there be any other alternative schemes coming along after the Rural Gigabit Voucher scheme?**

It is unlikely that there will be another useful for us in the short to middle term.

### **Could 5G (mobile technology) be used instead to provide faster broadband?**

The latest mobile internet technology, 5G (fifth generation), is still an emerging technology. Although 5G promises much faster speeds over mobile phones and other mobile devices, there is no guarantee that the signal will maintain its strength through walls and floors of homes and business premises. With our current 4G networks, you will often notice a downgrade to 3G (or even 2G) in transmission blackspots, of which there are many in our area. Relying on 5G alone may limit the number of people in your household or business that can use the internet at the same time. FTTP will provide much better quality and a more reliable service.

### **Is Openreach the same company as BT?**

No. Openreach is the company that builds the physical infrastructure to get us all connected i.e. poles, cables, underground tunnels, green cabinets etc. BT is one of many companies that can sell you an internet service, but only once the infrastructure has been built.

This is somewhat analogous to the way our electricity is supplied. In case of electricity supply, UK Power Networks (UKPN) own and maintain the overhead cables, transformers, poles etc whereas your preferred supplier such as EDF, Scottish Power, Shell Energy etc then supply electricity to you via UKPN's network.

### **What does the term “Fibre” mean?**

This refers to the technology being used to facilitate high speed data transfer to your home that then makes your internet run very fast. The word 'fibre' is an abbreviation for the word Fibre Optic Cable. A fibre optic cable can carry more data faster than the old fashioned copper cables that you typically see hung between telegraph poles. The new fibre cables will largely follow the same routing as the old copper cables and run right up to your property.

### **What do the terms FTTC and FTTP mean?**

When communication providers speak of fibre, they mean either Fibre to The Premises (FTTP) or Fibre to The Cabinet (FTTC). FTTC is delivered via those green cabinets that you see along our roads and most of us today have FTTC. So, you do have fibre, but only between the exchange and the green cabinets. From the cabinets to your property (either along the telegraph poles or under the ground in conduits) your connection is over copper wires. FTTP does not come via the green cabinets – it is a new connection. FTTP delivers gigabit capable fibre all the way into your home or business. It delivers faster speeds that can be guaranteed, no loss of speed at peak times and no loss of speeds due to distance. This short video from Openreach helps to explain the differences :

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pxrtKck57OA&feature=youtu.be>

Our FCP projects will result in the build of FTTP for everybody.

### **What is an ISP?**

Openreach do not provide any “added value” services such as standard voice telephony, mobile telephony, broadband or TV. Instead, they partner with a number of telecommunications and media companies, such as BT, Sky, and TalkTalk, who provide us with those services over the Openreach fibre network. These companies are known as ISPs - Internet Service Providers.

## **Will Openreach need to enter my home or business premises?**

The project will deliver FTTP from the exchange to your property. Openreach do not enter your home when they are building the network. Your ISP will do the final connection into your property when you place an order with them. The ISP will need to enter your property to connect your hub/router to the new FTTP service. If you require the FTTP connection to your home to be located anywhere different from where the current telephone cable enters, then you need to make this known to both Openreach and your ISP when the new service is being connected.

## **Will my private road, driveway or garden need to be dug up for me to get FTTP?**

Wherever possible the service will be delivered via existing telegraph poles and underground conduits. In rare cases where this is not possible, no driveways, gardens or private roads will be dug up without the prior permission of their owners.

## **Additional information**

<https://www.increasebroadbandspeed.co.uk/fttp-questions-and-answers-fags-for-an-openreach-community-partnership>