

Roll out of higher speed broadband in Bruisyard, Cransford, Rendham and Sweffling

Notes of the meeting held in Bruisyard Village Hall on Wed 19 February 2014

Representatives nominated by the Parish Councils of Bruisyard, Cransford, Rendham and Sweffling met on Wednesday 19 February with Peter Ingram, Director of the 'Better Broadband for Suffolk' programme, and Jonathan Chown who project manages the programme. The objective of the meeting was to understand how and when the Bruisyard, Cransford, Rendham and Sweffling area would benefit from the publicly subsidised programme to deliver higher speed broadband throughout rural Suffolk. The key points arising from the meeting were;

- Of the 340,000 premises in Suffolk, ~200,000 are in towns and sub-urban areas which are included in BT's commercial roll-out of high speed fibre broadband to be completed in 2014. The purpose of the 'Better Broadband for Suffolk' (BB4S) is to deliver higher speed broadband to the ~140,000 premises not addressed by the BT commercial programme.

- BB4S programme received a government grant of £11.86m which has been matched by funding from Suffolk County Council and the District Councils. This funding will be sufficient to extend the total number of premises in Suffolk able to receive higher speed broadband to ~80% by the end of 2015 with a commitment that all remaining premises can receive a minimum 2Mbit/s download speed. A competitive tendering process was undertaken and the contract was awarded to BT in Dec 2012.

- The programme is divided into 9 phases which start sequentially every 3 months. Each phase has a 3 month 'survey and design' stage which is then followed by a 6 month deployment stage. The first 8 phases will be completed by Sept 2015. Phase 9 will offer an interim solution to provide a minimum 2Mbit/s service to those not addressed by the high speed broadband roll-out.

- The high speed fibre broadband service of up to 80Mbit/s download and up to 20Mbit/s upstream is delivered over optical fibre to a street cabinet which then connects with the existing copper cable to the premise. The actual download and upstream speeds are very dependent on the length of the copper cable between the premise and the cabinet. For cable lengths above 2km, the download speed has reduced to only a few Mbit/s.

- Under the BB4S programme, optical fibre has already been installed between Saxmundham, Wickham Market and Framlingham. The street cabinets in Framlingham and Saxmundham will be switched on shortly.

- The plan is for fibre to be extended from Saxmundham to Rendham in Phase 5. Fibre may also be extended from Framlingham with the prospect of 3 other cabinets being installed in the area. The 'Survey and Design' stage for phase 5 will start in Sept 2014 and end in Dec 2014, BB4S will then be able to let us know which premises in our area will be able to receive high speed broadband with deployment completed by June 2015.

- BB4S has recently been awarded a further government grant of over £10m which will be matched by Council and District funding, to extend high speed fibre broadband to 95% of all premises in Suffolk. This extended programme will start before the end of 2014 and be completed by March 2017. This extended programme will take optical fibre to small cabinets (called 'nodes') in villages

and hamlets which are not served by Phases 1 to 8 of the original BB4S programme. Premises with a 2 km range of these 'nodes' will then be able to receive a high speed broadband service.

- Even with this extended programme a small number of remote premises will still not be able to receive the higher speed service. Phase 9, which addresses the obligation to deliver a minimum 2Mbit/s service to all premises has therefore been extended to June 2017.

- Customers will still be able to opt for the minimum 2Mbit/s service for delivery by Dec 2015 if they wish – the cost of deploying this interim solution which is not upgradeable will however reduce the money available for fibre deployment into the villages and hamlets not served by Phases 1 to 8. Each customer not served by Phases 1 to 8 will be asked in Sept 2015 whether they wish to take the minimum 2Mbit/s solution.

Next steps

- We have agreed with BB4S (Peter Ingram and Jonathan Chown) to meet again in early January 2015 at which time we will be told which premises in Bruisyard, Cransford, Rendham and Sweffling will be able to receive the high speed broadband service under Phase 5 which will be completed by June 2015. We will also be told by BB4S the plans for the extended programme in our area covering the timescale and an indication of which premises are likely to benefit (subject to the survey and design stage).

- We will also aim to work with the BB4S team following the meeting in January to understand which (if any) premises in our area will not benefit from the extended programme and should therefore be recommended to opt for the minimum 2Mbit/s service commitment when offered in September 2015. Customers who will benefit under the extended programme which will be completed by March 2017 could still opt for the minimum 2Mbit/s service by Dec 2015 but in the knowledge that this may delay or jeopardise them receiving a higher speed fibre broadband service at a later time.

- Our aim is to make sure that we obtain as much information as possible from BB4S to make sure that all households and businesses in Bruisyard, Cransford, Rendham and Sweffling are fully informed of the broadband service they will be able to receive and by when, and can make their decisions based on the best information available.

David R Smith

20 Feb 2014