

Fibre broadband to Shudy Camps: Update August 2021

Back in April you will remember we asked people to indicate their interest in having “Fibre To The Premises” (FTTP) deployed in the village so we could have 21st Century broadband. We had a great response and we have been working with Openreach to cost a scheme that will pass 107 premises in the Parish that don’t already have fibre access. Once a premise is passed then Openreach will be able to connect it on demand. Openreach are now submitting the scheme to the Department of Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS) who administer the Government’s Broadband Voucher scheme. This funds a voucher worth £1500 for a residence, or £3500 for a premise from which a business operates, towards the total cost of a project.

If DCMS approve the scheme, Openreach will then set up a web site where you will be able to pledge to take the service if offered. This means that, if Openreach build the network, you will subscribe to fibre broadband from whichever provider you select on standard terms and conditions. So for example, you could ask BT for a broadband package, or your current provider which could be say Virgin; and pay the same as you do now for the same speed, or pay more to get speeds up to 900 Mbit/s. Note that virtually all the broadband providers already use Openreach’s (was BT’s) network.

In order to meet the DCMS timescales, once the pledge website is open (before the end of August we hope) there will be a relatively short time, maybe only a couple of weeks, to collect pledges. In order for the vouchers to fully cover the cost of the scheme, we will need to get about 90 of the 107 premises to pledge. If the cost is not fully covered by the vouchers then the scheme can’t go ahead unless some other source of funding can cover the shortfall.

So it’s really important that you keep an eye out for publicity from the Parish Council and act fast when the pledge website opens. We will post on WhatsApp, the website, on noticeboards, and put flyers through letterboxes. Please tell your friends and neighbours if they don’t see any of these and encourage them to sign up if they want great broadband.

John Haine, Parish Council

Frequently Asked Questions

Why is fibre being rolled out?

All modern networks are based on optical fibres, using pulses of laser light instead of electrical signals, at their core. Fibre can carry huge amounts of data, and is cheaper and more reliable than ordinary cables. Fibre has reached the “green cabinets” in our villages but not yet to most individual houses in rural areas.

Why fibre broadband?

COVID has shown us how important a good home broadband service can be. Once you have one or two adults working from home, children using broadband for education, and everyone consuming multiple entertainment channels from the Internet, slow broadband makes life very difficult. Fast broadband is becoming an essential service everywhere and can add significantly to property prices when available.

What is FTTP?

At the moment your fixed telephone and broadband internet service is connected by copper wires, either overhead on “telegraph poles” or underground, from one of the “green cabinets” located on Carsey Hill. Though the cabinets are connected back through fibres the maximum internet speed you can get is limited by these copper wires. Some of use can get nearly 80 Mbps, many are lucky to get 30, and some struggle to get 10, depending on the distance to the cabinet and the condition of the wires. When the copper is replaced with fibre carrying light pulses, which can be run overhead or underground just like copper, speeds of up to nearly 1000 Mbps (1 Gbps) are possible however far you are from the cabinets. The fibre network is also cheaper to install and more reliable.

What about Nosterfield End and Mill Green?

A previous subsidy scheme ran fibre to these outposts of the Parish and most premises there can now get gigabit broadband. For some unknown reason the scheme omitted 5 houses in Nosterfield End and 1 in Mill Green. The ones in Nosterfield are the subject of a separate voucher scheme and the one in Mill Green is included in the main Shudy Camps one.

How much will it cost me?

Once the fibre passes your property you should be able to subscribe via your preferred provider at his standard rates for “full fibre”. For examples, look up the available speeds for your provider with the postcode CB21 4TE. For BT, this ranges from £27.99/month for 20 Mbps including phone service to £57.99 for 900 Mbps inclusive. Of course these are subject to contract terms.

If the scheme goes ahead when will fibre be available?

Once we reach the required number of pledges to cover the cost, we sign a contract with Openreach, and when that is done (which would be in September/October) they can proceed with detailed planning and rollout. Service should then be available within 12 months.

What if we don't get enough pledges?

If the voucher scheme doesn't get enough support there are possible alternatives. Another fibre network provider, County Broadband based in Essex, is building out this way and has reached the Bumpsteads. The Camps are on their radar, but would probably be later than Openreach and of course their plans may change. If we don't get the voucher funding we will probably start detailed discussions with County next March and realistically it would be another 12 months before service could be available.