

# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

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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.

## Why do I need Ultrafast (Full Fibre) broadband?

Full fibre broadband offers a more reliable broadband than older connections as well as faster uploads and downloads. This can allow multiple individuals in a household to access the Internet for different purposes without the frustration of buffering, slow loading of online content and dropped connections.

Faster Internet can have far-reaching consequences and open up better entertainment, work and communication opportunities. Online call platforms can offer cheaper contact with family and friends than traditional communication methods and help to tackle feelings of isolation and loneliness, an increasing problem, especially for those living alone or in more rural areas.

## Why do we need our own project to get this Ultrafast (Full Fibre) broadband?

All of the government's main contracts to build Ultrafast fibre based 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 Fibre Community Partnership (FCP) projects.

## 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 voucher?

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 a single voucher.

## What's the catch? What am I committing to?

Your main commitment is that once the new network is in place, then within 2 months from that date, you should sign up to a new service having at least twice your current speed (minimum 30 Mbps). (NB BT Openreach has assured us that you will not be held to this commitment if your circumstances change, for example moving house).

The cost might be a bit more than you are paying now, but it may well be the same or less, as this is a very competitive market – see next question for details.

## How much will the Full Fibre Upgrade cost me?

You are encouraged to read the 'Terms & Conditions' of the Rural Gigabit Voucher scheme. By pledging your voucher you are very much expected to take out an Ultrafast broadband service once the infrastructure build has been completed.

The installation of the Fibre Optic cables should not cost you anything as. However, you may have to pay an ongoing cost for the faster service, although increased competition appears to suggest that you may end up paying less.

Prices for Fibre Broadband change regularly. Here is a small sample taken on 25 February 2022:

Supplier	Product	Download Speed	Cost/Month
Vodafone	Pro Ultrafast 500	500 Mbps	£32.00 no setup cost
TalkTalk	Unlimited Future Fibre 150	147 Mbps	£32.00 no setup cost
TalkTalk	Unlimited Fibre 150 with phone line	145 Mbps	£29.50 no setup cost
BT	Full fibre 100	150 Mbps	£34.99 no setup cost
BT	Full fibre 500	500 Mbps	£44.99 no setup cost
BT	Full fibre 900	900 Mbps	£54.99 no setup cost

The above are typically for 18 or 24 month contracts. To include phone line, typically add £5.00 per month.

Should you eventually decide not to take out an Ultrafast service, your voucher will be taken back from the project by DCMS. In theory, if too many people do this it may cause harm to the project by causing it to be under funded.

## Do I have to order my broadband from BT, or can I choose which provider I use?

No, as mentioned above, you are not tied to BT when you pledge your voucher. Openreach will build an open network, meaning that you can order from a selection of service providers. It is this competition, which keeps the prices down.

## Isn't Openreach the same company as BT?

No. Openreach is a separate company that builds the physical infrastructure to get us all connected i.e. poles, cables, underground tunnels, green cabinets etc. BT is just 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 you choose your preferred supplier from the likes of EDF, Scottish Power, Shell Energy etc, they then supply electricity to you via UKPN's network.

## 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 Ultrafast 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 an Ultrafast 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.

When I go to the pledge site, it wants me to contribute to either the “Netherfield Ultrafast Community project” or the “Manchester Road Ultrafast Community project”. But I live elsewhere – what’s going on?

These names are simply what Openreach call the two telephone exchanges that the projects cover. The Netherfield project actually covers 463 properties in Brightling, Netherfield and parts of Dallington around Woods Corner (all on the Brightling telephone exchange). The Manchester Road project covers 392 properties in Ashburnham, Penhurst and much of Ninfield, which are all on the Manchester Road telephone exchange.

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 would 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.

Openreach "Manchester Road" FCP project number 59602

Cost £721,164, serving 463 homes across Brightling and parts of Dallington, Netherfield and Woods Corner

Openreach "Netherfield" 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 happens next?

When enough pledges come in, DCMS will send you a Gigabit email, which needs to be read and replied to and then there is no more to do. It may be some weeks before receive the e-mail simply because they will only be sent out when the pledge target has been reached.

Once all the emails have been verified by DCMS, the project will move in to the 'Delivery' stage, i.e. the physical building work 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 scheme that is useful for us in the short to middle term i.e. next 2-3 years.

## 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. Full Fibre will provide much better quality and a more reliable service.

## Can I still keep my telephone number?

Yes. You can definitely keep your existing telephone number. Depending on your service provider, you may be able to choose to take your phone service

over the new fibre connection – this will probably save you money – while keeping your existing phone number. Or you can keep your phone on its existing line, in which case your number will obviously not change either. So either way you get to keep your phone number.

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

This refers to the technology being used to facilitate Ultrafast data transfer to your home which in turn makes your Internet run very fast. The term ‘Full Fibre’ is an abbreviation for the words Fibre Optic Cable. A Fibre Optic Cable can carry 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.

## So much jargon! 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 ultrafast 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=pxrtKck570A&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.

## I still have a question?

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)