

Fast Broadband for Chilton ?

What is it all about ?

If National statistics apply to Chilton there are approaching 250 households with Internet Connections but, because of our rural location some distance from the nearest BT Exchange (Rowstock), the connections are slow .

In the early days of the Internet we connected to it by getting our computer to dial a number over an ordinary telephone line. This worked well for the services that were available, such as email and looking at simple web sites, but technology moves on at a relentless pace and new services appeared that required much more information to be sent to your computer, ie they used more bandwidth, and many, such as Google Maps were unusable on dial-up.

The so called Broadband (or specifically ADSL) services were developed and rolled out initially in urban areas where there are large numbers of houses close to exchanges . In our area Broadband was eventually enabled at Rowstock but a feature of ADSL is that the available speed reduces significantly with distance from the exchange. Because of this, Chilton is a poor relation in the Internet world with connection speeds typically less than 2MB as opposed to 8MB + .

It's easy to check your connection speed. Just put Broadband Speed Check into Google and you will find numerous sites that will do it; simply follow the instructions. The check will give you two numbers: the speed at which data is downloaded to your computer and the speed at which you can send data from your computer or upload. These numbers are very different and that's down to the A in ADSL which stands for asynchronous i.e. it doesn't work at the same speed in both directions. The faster download speed is the one commonly quoted.

You will also have noticed that at times your connection appears to slow down . This is due to what the suppliers call contention , but it simply means that you share a line with other houses and if everyone is using the Internet at the same time it inevitably slows down . Many houses now have more than one PC iPhones etc all of which can connect to the Internet aggravating matters .

Why does speed matter?

Well it's all down to the services that are currently available and those that will be developed in the future. There are enough people out there with fast connections to make it viable for suppliers to deliver services that need high bandwidth - but we can't use them effectively in Chilton ! A good example is BBCiPlayer: great for catching up on programmes you missed BUT unless you want to wait hours for the entire programme to download before you can watch it , you'll need a reasonably fast connection 2MB+ to allow you to simply click on the program and start watching it immediately (called streaming). If your connection is slow the programme will often stop and may have poor sound quality(often called buffering). Internet radio should work well though and is an interesting alternative to DAB .

However, HD TV is now with us and 3D may soon be accessible. Predictably, these new and emerging services need serious bandwidth. In addition, you could also chose online video rental or many other yet to be released services which will also require faster broadband connections than we currently have in Chilton

What can we do in Chilton?

The easiest option is to do nothing apart from asking BT when are they going to get round to Chilton. As far as can be established we are NOT on the list for the next year or so but BT try and resist giving too much information about their upgrade plans as they believe it helps their competitors !

We can, of course, lobby via MPs but we are a smallish village and we already have a broadband service of sorts, so we won't be seen as a priority.

We could take action and arrange to get a supplier that specialises in rural broadband (*it's not the village that specialises!*) into the village. Rutland Telecom, for example, has been identified as a company that could supply a super fast broadband service to Chilton. However, in order to get them in we need an indication of how many people would take up the option of a service at up to 24MB for a monthly charge comparable with their current costs. This option could provide us with a fast reliable service in months not years.

If there was sufficient interest, the next stage would be to arrange for a survey to be done, funded by the Parish Council, which would establish exactly what could be provided and the initial capital cost (likely to be £25K to £50K) and how that capital cost could be funded - local investors? Grants?

So what next ?

Please use the tear off slip below to get your reply back to Chris Broad, indicating which option you would like followed up. It is important to remember that, at this stage, ticking Option C **does not** commit you to taking a new service.

It would, however, be useful to know if any businesses located in the village would prefer Option C

Please tick the option you would prefer. If you are a business located in the village, please also complete the last line.		
Option A	Wait till BT do something	
Option B	Lobby BT & MPs	
Option C	Investigate an alternative provider	
Business located in Chilton		

Chris Broad, 14 Latton Close

Or by email to broadcj@o2email.co.uk