

Fast Broadband For Chilton – the Latest Position

First many thanks to all those who responded to the initial Survey, without proper evidence of demand it is not possible to do anything. The final number interested in an alternative supplier was approaching 70 with a few supporting lobbying or content to wait for BT .

The Technical Options

Now the technical bit !

Fibre to the Cabinet

This is an attractive option that involves running a fibre optic cable into the village, installing a new cabinet with the relevant electronics and then connecting to the existing BT cabinet. The advantage is that it removes the long length of copper cable between us and Rowstock and would give significant increases in speed with little additional equipment needed in your home. The disadvantage is that copper cabling within the village is still used and the speeds that many of you have reported suggest that there are problems with this.

Wi-Fi

Again a fibre is run into the village but this time it is connected to a few transmitters located at high points. The aim being to ensure that any household wanting the service has a reasonably clear line of sight to a transmitter. A small receiver is then placed on each house using the service. The clear advantage is that all dependency on old copper cabling is removed, but there are limits on the speeds these networks can operate at i.e. they are slower than fibre.

Fibre to the House

This is the ultimate and gives the speeds some Virgin customers enjoy in towns like Abingdon that were originally wired up for cable TV. Clearly this is an expensive and disruptive option for a village like Chilton.

Potential solutions

Rutland Telecom have delivered a Fibre to the Cabinet service to a number of villages and they did look promising but unfortunately they are a small company and like other similar organisations were overwhelmed with work. They had an initial look at our requirements but are now unable to say when they would be able to give us a proposal. In business terms we are at the low end of numbers of potential customers required to justify a project.

County Broadband favour Wi-Fi solutions and based on an initial survey could provide a service. They could even start a small scale service using a satellite link in advance of fibre to the village. The issue is likely to be cost though as initial indications were c £30pm but this is to be confirmed (however this pricing is comparable with BT Infinity).

BT are currently unwilling to provide anything other than a basic fibre into the village leaving us to provide a DIY solution . This has worked for some communities in Cumbria but requires a lot of work .

Other potential solutions will be followed up as and when identified.

Lobbying etc.

Our local MP Ed Vaizey has so far failed to reply but mails have been resent!

Oxfordshire County Council are aware of our issues and were very interested to note that we had carried out a survey. The results of the survey will be used as evidence in their bid for Central government funding for Super Fast Broadband roll-out in Oxfordshire. The bid will be submitted in the next two months.

The sale of Chilton Field has now been confirmed which means a large number of new houses will be built in the parish. This may present an opportunity for the whole village to benefit from Fast Broadband and early contact will be made with the developers.

The Independent Networks Cooperative Association has been contacted and they are optimistic about being able to help with advice and further contacts.

There has also been contact and exchange of information with other villages that have similar issues e.g. West Chiltington and Wendlebury .

Summary

We haven't yet got a firm commercial proposal and the relatively small number of potential customers has limited interest.

Blewbury ran an excellent campaign to get BT Infinity (which is basically a fibre to the cabinet service) in the next two years or so but it looks like we will have a long wait for any significant improvements from BT.

However there are many communities with similar issues to ours and it's likely that a solution at the right price will be found.

And Finally

There are mobile Wi-Fi services available that use the mobile operators 3G networks. If you can get a signal (and you can in many parts of the village) services such as MiFi from Three Mobile can give speeds up to 2Mb/s for £15.99 pm on a rolling monthly contract (there is a 5GB monthly limit on the amount of data you can download).