

Broadband Update September 2019

Background

Henbury Parish Council decided to investigate the possibility of residents in the parish having access to higher broadband speeds than currently available to most residents.

Openreach is the organisation responsible for the network infrastructure which is now a separate organisation from BT.

Originally, broadband connectivity was rolled out using the traditional copper telephone wires in a property linking it to the exchange. Openreach rolled out fibre to the cabinet (FTTC) which enabled higher speeds by linking cabinets to the exchange, with the last part of the connection through the traditional copper network. This is the connectivity most residents in Henbury have. The further you are away from a cabinet, the slower the speed. The closest cabinet to Henbury is cabinet 20 located at Broken Cross, which is why the average speed most people receive is significantly lower than other areas of Macclesfield. The speeds available in the village range from 11mbps to a theoretical 30mbps, though residents who are supposedly capable of receiving such speeds report that this is not their experience.

We initially approached Openreach with a view to having a cabinet installed in the village, which by reducing the final copper connection length would go some way to increasing broadband speeds.

In discussions with Openreach, we were informed that FTTC is no longer an option, and the Government have withdrawn support for such schemes, preferring instead a faster and more reliable option called fibre to the premises (FTTP). This option connects each property directly to the exchange, and will allow for speeds of up to 300mbps and above. We asked residents to submit some information to assist us in putting a case to Openreach. Over **84 separate addresses** were received (with additional responses from different people living at the same address).

Funding

The Government have a scheme (Rural Gigabit Connectivity Programme) to help rural areas obtain increased broadband connectivity and speeds. If certain criteria are met, funding is available to residential homes and businesses where the connection speed is below 30mbps. This covers the majority of properties in Henbury. The grant is £1500 for a residential property, and £3500 per business or sole trader. If you have a business address and residential, then our current understanding is you qualify for two grants. As a number of residents operate a business or consultancy from their home address they will qualify for the higher grant. A condition of the grant is that the connected property must agree to have a high-speed broadband connection for a minimum of one year, and with a minimum speed of 100mbps. There is no condition attached as to which broadband supplier you must connect with, so in most cases you will not need to change your broadband supplier, though you may have to amend your contract terms.

The grants would be co-ordinated by, and paid direct to Openreach for simplicity.

Henbury Parish Council have received an estimate from Openreach to connect 208 properties with a direct fibre-to-the-premises (FTTP) connection. The estimate from Openreach is £153,674. As many of the 208 properties in the proposal are eligible to apply for the grants outlined above, this means that IF we have enough people meeting the criteria, then there will be no cost to residents other than any your broadband supplier may charge you for improving your broadband contract to allow for a faster connection.

If all the 84 residents who have expressed interest so far agree to the scheme, we could potentially obtain a total of £126,000 towards the cost of installation. However we will still require a number of residents who have not signed up yet to join in, and we need to obtain details of residents running a business from home to secure additional grants.

Next Steps

We have agreed to supply Openreach with the details of those residents who have expressed an interest in having faster broadband. In accordance with GDPR and our published [Privacy Notice](#), we will pass your details to Openreach unless you contact us to opt out. You can do this by emailing editor@henbury.org

We will endeavour to sign up as many remaining residents as possible in the coming weeks. IF we believe we can achieve the funding level required, then we will submit this to Openreach for approval. Openreach will then contact residents directly on receipt of the information to ensure you agree to the terms of the grant. There is no obligation at this stage.

The estimated time from approval to delivery is approximately 12 months.

If you know of people in the village who you think might be interested, who have not yet signed up, please ask them to email the details below to editor@henbury.org, so we can add them to our database.

If you have already signed up, but you also run a business from home, please send your business details (all fields below) to editor@henbury.org as this will attract a higher grant.

NB Other than the case above, there is no need to contact us again if you've already signed up.

Details required:

- Customer name
- Contact name
- Address
- Town
- Post code
- Landline Telephone No
- Account holder email address
- Beneficiary Type: Business/residential
- Company number/ Sole Trader Business Name

Q&A

Q Do I have to change broadband provider?

A If your current supplier can provide the minimum speed required to ensure funding, then you don't have to change, though you may have to increase your contract to cover the higher speeds available.

Q How much extra will superfast broadband cost me?

A As this varies between different broadband providers, and depends on the contract you have at the moment, we can't say. However the costs are falling, and in some cases monthly costs are not much more than for slower speeds.

Q What are the likely timescales?

A Once we have enough people interested, we can contact Openreach and apply for the necessary grants. They advise that once all the funding is agreed and a contract in place, it typically takes around 12 months to the point where faster services are available.

Q Why does it take so long?

A From Openreach "Planning and building a fibre broadband network is a complex project. We start with a thorough design process to build a blueprint for your community and we follow that with a survey to make sure there's enough space alongside all the existing utilities underground to accommodate new cables and equipment. Once the actual build is underway.....we'll work closely with local authorities to reduce delays and keep disruption to a minimum....and check if any road closures are needed. After the network is built we carry out final quality and safety checks."

Q How can I persuade my friends and neighbours in Henbury that they should be signing up?

Superfast broadband could increase house prices

A survey carried out by ispreview.co.uk found that 68.8% of respondents would be put off from buying a "beautiful new house", if it lacked fast broadband. 73.9% considered that broadband was critically important to their home life.

Conventional broadband services can be unreliable

ADSL broadband is carried along copper cables all the way from the exchange to homes and business premises. Inevitably, the broadband signal suffers a reduction in strength (attenuation) as it travels along the copper cable from the exchange to the property, reducing the speeds that can be delivered and making the broadband signal susceptible to interference.

In contrast, high-speed fibre broadband utilises fibre-optic cables, which are immune to interference and do not suffer the signal attenuation experienced by copper lines. As a result, superfast broadband services deliver significantly higher speeds and are more reliable.

Superfast broadband improves work-life balance and enables home working

Homeworking potentially allows many people to achieve a better work-life balance, particularly parents with young children. Conventional broadband services often don't permit reliable access to business systems or allow employees to communicate effectively with colleagues or customers through video conferencing, for example.