

# BROADBAND UPDATE



To date Piddington was identified by Cherwell as being part of the 5% who will **NOT** be receiving super-fast broadband from BT as part of the nationwide BDUK policy.

However, there has been much publicity on rural broadband recently. This update is to inform the village of all new developments.

## NATIONAL LEVEL

The 'Rural Broadband and Digital-only services' House of Commons 7<sup>th</sup> enquiry released 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2015, made an in depth report to the Minister, Rt.Hon. Elizabeth Truss M.P. A number of villagers gave evidence in writing to the enquiry whose aim is 'to get broadband and mobile telephone services in rural areas'.

The principle recommendation from this enquiry 'is to make sure that enough focus is placed on those who have no access to superfast broadband. There is a risk in the current approach that improving service for those who already have it will leave even further behind the 5% of premises who have none...'

The enquiry stated that a minimum of 24 Mbps is 'Superfast Broadband'. The EU states 'Superfast Broadband will be 30 Mbps' by 2020.

The report received much publicity and rural groups have put pressure on the government to address this issue. George Osborne stated in his last budget that broadband would become a basic legal right under new proposals. £600m has been earmarked for further broadband and digital investment.

*"The government is committed to ensuring that every single household in the UK has access to the basic broadband needed to live and work in the modern world," the strategy paper stated. "So we will look to raise the universal service obligation [USO] – the legal entitlement to a basic service – from dial-up speeds to 5Mbps broadband"*

The government has committed to prioritise those premises experiencing the lowest speed broadband launching a scheme with local bodies across the UK this year to 'subsidise' the costs of installing capable services. There is no information available at this time on the nature of the subsidy. 2017 is the target date for 95% coverage.

## DISTRICT LEVEL

Piddington Parish Council has been pressing Cherwell DC for information regarding funds that have been delegated for helping the broadband 'lost 5%'. A report is due to be published in May 2015 of the findings into their investigation on alternatives to fibre-optic supply.

Cherwell's aim is to offer affected villages details of possible alternatives to fibre including a directory of approved suppliers. It is hoped that the report will also explain how funds will be allocated and whether these will need to be match by residents. However, in light of recent events we are unsure how valid this report will be.

## BT OPEN REACH

Piddington is not part of BT's current plans for upgrade. However, Mario Terzino (along with Paul Thomas from Ludgershall PC) has been in regular contact with BT for information on both villages paying to bring fibre to their respective boxes (Blackthorn have recently completed such a transaction). The initial quote was approximately £60,000 plus VAT subject to a site visit. The money would need to be raised by villagers with possible grant help

from CDC. Mario recently surveyed the village; the over-riding feeling was resistance to being charged for something 95% of the country was getting for free! A sentiment held by most rural communities.

Mario has continued to liaise with BT Open Reach on behalf of the village to see if there are any possible options that may reduce the cost to the community.

BT will be holding a Q+A session on **WEDNESDAY 6<sup>TH</sup> MAY at 7PM** in the village hall. All welcome.

Contact [mario.terzino@btinternet.com](mailto:mario.terzino@btinternet.com) for more information.

## VILLAGE NETWORKS

There are currently two nodes in the village providing wireless coverage to a large portion of the houses. VN are in the process of upgrading much of their equipment and are looking to find a further node location to cover areas as yet not receiving a signal. They will shortly be offering speeds of 24 Mbps.

Contact [kenhoward10@gmail.com](mailto:kenhoward10@gmail.com) for more information.

## GIGACLEAR

Some villagers have recently received registration forms from Gigaclear.

Gigaclear are a privately funded ultrafast, pure fibre broadband provider based in Abingdon. To date they are working on a string of network activations to rural communities around the country. It recently activated villages across Otmoor and has now made 3 more networks live in Wootton, Standlake and Forest Hill the latest village being Horton-cum-Studley up to Magnolia Park GC. Fencott, Murcott, Charlton and Oddington will be next followed by Brill and Boarstall.

*“This focused investment made by Gigaclear in Oxfordshire provides a significant contribution to meeting our programme objective of ensuring over 95% of properties have access to superfast broadband speeds in the county, enabling us to optimise our public sector investment in Oxfordshire’s communications infrastructure”*

Craig Bower (Programme Manager of Better Broadband for Oxfordshire)

Councilors from Piddington and Ludgesrshall met with representatives from Gigaclear on 25<sup>th</sup> March to learn more about the business.

Website: [www.gigaclear.com](http://www.gigaclear.com)

Villages will not be expected to finance the service but it does require 30% of households to sign up to make it viable. Gigaclear will bring fibre along the roadside affording every house access. Households will be required to pay for installation from the road and a one off router.

Gigaclear will be holding a number of events for The ‘Piddington Project’ (which includes Ludgershall, Grendon Underwood and Kingswood) over the next couple of months:

- There will be a manned stand at The Pantry on **SATURDAY 18<sup>TH</sup> APRIL** (10am – 2pm).
- They have booked the village hall for a Q+A session on **TUESDAY 28<sup>TH</sup> APRIL** at 7.30pm.

## SUMMARY

Broadband is now considered our fourth essential service. Without access to the super-fast network communities like ours will suffer. We urge everyone to get involved in all the upcoming workshops and Q+A sessions so that residents will be able to make a considered decision on the best way forward for Piddington.

**FRANCESCA DARBY (on behalf of Piddington Parish Council)**