

Brettenham Broadband Update – 13 April 2017

Most of the central and eastern parts of Brettenham village are served by the Rattlesden Exchange (with the cabinet located at High Town Green). These premises are scheduled to be served by a new cabinet installed in the village as part of the Better Broadband for Suffolk (BBfS) programme. The programme aims to bring superfast broadband to as many parts of Suffolk as possible, building only in those areas where commercial broadband upgrades were not viable.

The premises in the village that are served by the Rattlesden Exchange are scheduled for upgrade in Phase 3d of the BBfS programme, which equates to Quarter 2 of 2017/18. This means that a new cabinet should be installed in the village by September – this will be an FTTC (fibre to the cabinet) installation, which means that a fibre spine will be provided from Stowmarket (or possibly Hadleigh) to the new cabinet, and that once live, the fibre broadband service will route back to a larger exchange, rather than to Rattlesden or Bildeston. Individual premises will be linked to the new cabinet by copper lines, but the fibre connection between the new cabinet and the exchange will make a huge difference to Broadband speeds.

BT will not be simply upgrading an existing cabinet, but will be “re-arranging” the copper telephone network and re-routing lines from premises onto this new cabinet. This is more complex in engineering and service continuity terms, hence the positioning of Brettenham in the overall upgrade plan compared to some of those areas which were simpler to upgrade (and had similarly poor speeds). However, this plan is subject to successful completion of survey and design work by Openreach. This work is needed to look at the practicalities of, and any issues associated with, installing a new cabinet in the village (e.g. power and planning issues) and laying fibre to the cabinet.

Initial survey work has been completed and appears to have not thrown up any major issues or problems *to date*. A second survey is currently being undertaken (which is not unusual), which looks into the finer details of the proposed installation, such as the best location for the cabinet to maximise coverage and speed, intercept the existing copper telephone lines, and pick up mains power. The Openreach central planning team are now finalising the design and the build plans.

Assuming all goes well with the survey and design phase, formal confirmation of the build (referred to as Milestone Zero which is when BT are contractually committed to the build) will happen in early July, with the build taking place between July and September (average build time is about three months).

Computer-based modelling by Openreach appears to indicate that premises served by the new FTTC cabinet could potentially achieve download speeds of 50-65Mbps, although actual speeds cannot be determined until installation is complete. Those closest to the new location of the cabinet should expect 80Mbps.

In terms of other parts of the village (e.g. the western end) which are not served by the Rattlesden Exchange, there is less certainty about the nature and timing of any upgrade. It is likely that any upgrade in these areas will not happen until sometime during 2018/19, although the detailed phasing of subsequent builds is often very fluid. However, it is quite possible that these complex areas will receive an “FTTP” (fibre to the premises) solution, as they are not economic to reach with a cabinet. More information on these areas will be available in due course.