

Rural Gigabit UPDATE... getting closer!!

We've made some good progress in the last week with the broadband project.

Openreach have now confirmed the costing for the scheme - they will need "pledges" from our local community which total about £450,000 to cover the required infrastructure work. This covers the planned costs of about £350,000 plus a contingency of about 30%. Openreach have made a funding application to DCMS (Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport) on this basis, and expect to get a response in the next few weeks.

As a reminder, the infrastructure doesn't cost individual households or businesses a penny – it is covered by the available Government and WSCC funding, that we 'pledge' to the scheme. The next stage of the process after DCMS approval is the pledge, and we'll be told how to do that soon.

Based on Openreach's calculation, we now think we need between 110-120 "expressions of interest" and ultimately pledges. The final number is not fixed because it depends on the mix between business and domestic pledges. (They attract different levels of funding).

The good news is that today we have a little over 100, so we are nearly there – but we still need a final push to get us over the line with some certainty. **If you haven't got round to making your expression of interest, now is the time!!**

Without enough expressions of interest the scheme will not happen. If you're interested in participating, then email patchingpc@gmail.com . We need to know your name, address, postcode and whether you are a domestic or business user (as the funding is different for businesses).

There is no commitment or pledge required now, just an expression of interest so that Openreach can confirm the scheme is viable. Please respond as soon as possible!

Some local residents have received a postcard from a company called 4TECH, offering a similar service, and requesting pledges. We had a call with 4TECH before we spoke to Openreach. They appear to have taken it upon themselves to offer a deal in Patching and Clapham without our approval (not that they need it).

The primary reason we didn't select 4TECH was that users have to sign up for their internet service for 3 years. We felt this was restrictive and not openly competitive in a way that we could support. As we understand it, signing up with 4TECH locks you in with them, unlike with the Openreach proposal which is supplier agnostic.

We are a little concerned that 4TECH involvement may muddy the waters and cause holdups. Our recommendation is to stick with the planned Openreach scheme.

Please support this initiative.

Patching Parish Council, 22 February 2021