

Broadband meeting 16th Feb

An open meeting was arranged by the Parish Council with representatives from the Connecting Devon & Somerset Programme: Matthew Ballard Programme Manager, Somerset County Council & Laurent Boon Programme Director BT to discuss the Penselwood situation in terms of the rural superfast broadband implementation.

It was well attended by a number of villagers and they represented the broad spectrum of current broadband users both geographically and in terms of user experience (which are of course related), which varies from approximately 18Mbps download speed to a miserable 0.7 Mbs.

The following key messages were noted:

The Bourton Exchange where the village draws its service from has been upgraded to fibre-optic making it capable of delivering superfast Broadband. The majority of properties in Pen get their broadband via a secondary cabinet sited by Long Lane Stables. That cabinet is to be "evaluated/surveyed" sometime between Jan & June 2016 to see if the link to the Bourton exchange can be upgraded to fibre-optic. It is *probable* that it can and will be, though not absolutely definite if the survey uncovers a particularly expensive difficulty for example, it may not be. There is an outside possibility that the survey could be brought forward due to other external and technical factors so we are advised to keep a regular check on the website.

A few properties mainly lower parts of Underhill and Leigh Common also draw from the Bourton Exchange but via a different routing and cabinet (or possibly 2 cabinets). The rural broadband programme seems to work on "cabinets" rather than communities and the representatives didn't know if the other cabinets are due to be surveyed. They agreed to try and find out and come back to us.

If (as seems likely) the Long Lane Stables cabinet is upgraded it could be anytime between March and October 2016 (assuming the survey is not brought forward). The upgrade will only go as far as the cabinet beyond that the links to individual properties will remain the existing copper cable. Experience elsewhere suggests that for any property coming off that cabinet that is within 1.2km is likely to achieve superfast broadband <24mbs (though will need to contract for this through their BB provider). Beyond 1.2 km and up to 1.8km properties are likely to see an improvement but not superfast and beyond 1.8km are unlikely to benefit.

Properties linked via a different cabinet will only improve if that cabinet is also upgraded.

There is a "phase 2" to the whole programme funded beyond Dec 2016 to draw in some of those properties that don't benefit from this round. It is designed to uplift the coverage from 90% to 95% and it is possible that properties in Pen who don't achieve superfast in the current 5 year programme *may* benefit from that but it is far too early to say.

Jane Ashman

16.2.2015