

Inkpen Superfast Broadband Project

The RCBF/DEFRA broadband funding application

The following outline of Inkpen's SFB status necessarily excludes the substantial volume of detail on which the decision making relied. This exclusion is purely to enable a concise statement of our position to be made. Any questions relating to this should be directed to the Inkpen SFB team.

In the latter half of 2013 we found out that Inkpen was not to benefit from the government funded project, to get superfast broadband (SFB) to 90% of the UK. Inkpen was in the last 10% and because of the dispersed nature of the village, the cost of bringing the necessary infrastructure to Inkpen made it likely that Inkpen would struggle to get included in future broadband upgrades. We made representations to Richard Benyon and others but at the end of the day, the allocation of funds is a statistical process biased towards the greatest number of connections at least cost. Our village structure isn't helpful in this regard.

On the 11th November 2013 WBC contacted Inkpen PC and 14 other local parish councils offering the prospect of some level of SFB via a different funding mechanism, using EC money administered by DEFRA. On the basis that something is better than nothing, We opted to take part in this. The caveats were that we had to raise funds and complete all application formalities, tendering and assignment of contracts by 31st March 2014. It was realised by all parties that this was a very challenging schedule.

Two mechanisms for providing SFB to these rural parishes was proposed. Fibre to premise and wireless. Fibre to premise costs of the order £1000 per premise connected, and the wireless solution from £300 per premise. In addition, the equipment cost per premise (i.e. modem, antenna etc) was between £120 to £150 per household. These two methods of provision do not provide an identical result but meet the criteria to be classed as SFB.

Inkpen was asked to raise £18k minimum to make it viable for some level of SFB connection. However, some of the initial 15 parishes pulled out of this DEFRA process and in order to maintain the viability of the scheme and Inkpen's option, we raised our funding level to £25k. The matched funding sequence that WBC proposed meant that our £25k would get Inkpen up to £100k worth of broadband connection. That is a maximum of 100 dwellings connected by fibre or 330 dwellings connected by wireless.

Although Inkpen SFB team was ahead of the game in terms of paperwork, supplier discussions, and raising finance, by the end of January it had become clear that it was unlikely that West Berkshire Council could meet the process timescales. In this event, we would forfeit the opportunity to get Superfast Broadband into these parishes.

With this in mind, the Inkpen SFB team made representation to BT. Shortly after, BT made an offer that would bring SFB infrastructure into Inkpen with initially one of its three cabinets connected to SFB by Sept 2015. This would allow SFB services to be further distributed in Inkpen at a later date (potentially by 2017). If the distribution of SFB services is not done in a carefully managed way, further funding and SFB distribution within the Inkpen and the surrounding villages could be put at risk.

Summary of options :

Wireless Broadband

Cheapest option but not so robust in tree clad hilly countryside. More of a stopgap than a long term solution. Most see it as inferior to a BT SFB offering.

Ionica – Wireless Broadband Failure - What are the lessons for today (2012/2013)?

Rural coverage (the “Digital Divide”)?

- Radio won’t easily reach the houses from outside the village because they are in valleys and/or shadowed
- Need to build multiple base stations in the village to provide diverse paths

Issue with standard phone calls (probably require BT phone line as well)

Not very resilient technology in terms of future proofing. Isolates communities with a non-standard solution.

Ionica (Cambridge start-up company) went into receivership and all customers were subsequently given free installation by BT and Telewest.

Ionica customer experience - Reception very good however if it rained or there was lightning connection performance deteriorated.

Fibre Optic Solution – Gigaclear.

Installation Expensive – probably too expensive for dispersed communities but fibre to premise solution is the best.

Issue with standard phone calls (probably require BT phone line as well).

Technologically quite resilient but company size/finances limits Gigaclear’s scope.

For both options

Issue with wired phone line (cost) and keeping existing phone number. SIP phone option will not work if there is a power outage. Not everyone gets a good enough mobile signal to use their mobile phone as a replacement to a land line.

BT options.

If BT will extend network now (by 2015) then more premises will be available for SFB within the second phase of the SFB project (2015-2017).

No issue with company vulnerability – financially stable.

Better un-bundling opportunities – more competition in terms of supplier and price.

Less urgency for householders to commit to SFB.

Many Households attracted by BT Sports offering.

Keep existing phone line and number (future Ofcom issue)

Use of BT Hot-Spots for mobile out of house use for Vodafone and BT customers.

BT generally slow to introduce new technology but technology resilient. If we can get BT SFB then more chance of getting upgraded to future technologies.

We have opted to go down the BT route.

The current proposal from BT is subject to RCBF funding and provides as follows:

The list of BT cabinets is:

PCP	THP	Area	Attempted location
THWN P3	160	Aldermaston	Basingstoke rd
THSCR P1	172	Aldermaston	Reading Rd, Padworth
THTAD P16	81	Aldermaston	Calleva Park
THTAD P17	84	Aldermaston	Calleva Park
THEI P2	288	East Ilsley	High St
THWN P4	316	Beenham	Clay Lane
THCHD P1	136	Brightwalton	Brightwalton Green
THWN P2	245	Brimpton	Brimpton rd / Cookham rd
THCMN P4	171	Compton	Cheap st / High st
THGRS P1	225	East Garston	Passonage Farm
THGRS P601	89	East Garston	Shefford Woodlands
THHRJ P3	396	Hampstead Norreys	Hampstead Norreys rd, Hermitage
THCMN P2	477	Compton	Compton Primary school
THHRJ P5	248	Hampstead Norreys	Forge Hill
THIN P1	211	Inkpen	Kintbury rd / Folly rd

Total Homes Passed (THP)

Potential RCBF SF Registration Anticipated Coverage				
Parish District	Premises	%	Adjusted THP	Intervention %
Aldermaston	607	28%	450	74%
Aldworth	117	42%		0%
Ashampstead	121	78%		0%
Beenham	487	49%	313	64%
Brightwalton	152	50%	131	86%
Brimpton	204	37%	199	98%
Compton	644	25%	647	100%
East Garston	251	48%	246	98%
East Ilsley	249	68%	252	101%
Hampstead Norreys	331	81%	329	99%
Inkpen	379	77%	159	42%
Winterbourne	86	65%		0%
	3628		2726	75%
Outside Intervention area			573	
Total THP			3299	

WBC have revised the documentation for our application and submitted an update to BDUK/DEFRA on 24th Feb.

The overall cost for the 'revised proposal' has gone up to £828k, a BT contribution of £278k and no local private funding. This is expected to be delivered within the same timescales as Superfast Berkshire – by September 2015.

Whilst this is slightly more expensive, it still represents comparatively good value for money and falls within the window to progress under 'change control' of the existing contract agreed by WBC for Berkshire.

The BDUK / Government announcement on the Superfast Extension Programme (SEP) has been further delayed due to flooding priorities. I am being told we should hear later this week.

BDUK have confirmed that they will be sticking to the advertised process – all applications in by 28th Feb, decision announced by end March. Fingers and toes crossed that our application is successful and we are awarded the grant we are bidding for.

Funding Issues.

Many of you have kept an eye on our fund raising progress. It has been one of our most successful attempts at raising funds within the village. We were initially asked to raise £18k, and then, following the withdrawal of 3 parishes from the RCBF scheme we raised this to £25k in order to present a better case for DEFRA funding and increase Inkpen's chance of getting SFB.

Greenham Trust Funds Held

Project	Donations	GiftAid	Matched	Row Total
WB10239	620.00	130.00	620.00	1370.00
WB10730	9890.00	2087.50	5150.00	17127.50
WB10739	2030.00	405.00	1830.00	4265.00
Totals	12540.00	2622.50	7600.00	22762.50

As you can see, matched funding and gift aid represent a substantial part, contributing over £10k to the total so far.

However, **the current BT proposal has no requirement for local private funding (LPF).**

What **we don't know** is whether LPF will be required for SEP, the Superfast Extension Programme, and, **we don't know** whether or to what extent SEP will increase SFB access within Inkpen. There are still major hurdles ahead and having some funding behind us gives us the possibility to explore options.

If we are successful in having the BT proposal funded by DEFRA, which will be confirmed on or around 31st March, then at least we will have brought SFB into Inkpen. The challenge will then be to get at least cabinet 2 and the exchange connected. Funding for cabinet 3 connection may require the financial support of Ham residents as this cabinet is in Ham.

Clearly we haven't finished in our efforts to get SFB widely available in Inkpen, but we have concluded our effort in relation to this RDBF/BDUK/DEFRA project, and for that, private funding is no longer required. **The issue before us now is whether you are prepared to let your donation stand, for use in our ongoing fight for SFB in Inkpen.**

So what are the options for donors ?

- 1) You can write to Greenham Trust and withdraw your donation now.
- 2) You can leave your money with Greenham Trust, but conditions will now apply.
 - a. You must agree to relinquish any right to withdrawing your money in future
 - b. If it turns out that the funds raised are not needed for SFB then they would become available for some other Inkpen community project.
 - c. You have no expectation of any personal or material benefit from the money donated. Otherwise HMRC's conditions for Gift Aid will be violated.

- d. You have the option to leave your money with Greenham Trust and withdraw from Gift Aid. This will remove the option of fund matching from Greenham Trust. You would need to write to Greenham Trust and indicate that you want to withdraw from Gift Aid (if you have already opted in)

Our intention will remain to use the fund to get as much of Inkpen connected to SFB as possible.