

CURVE|IT



Dear Resident or Business Owner

Proposed broadband scheme

You will no doubt have seen news articles about the poor quality of broadband services in rural areas and wondered when an improved service might be available to you. You may have grown tired of waiting for BT to offer a fibre-based connection and taken the decision to use an alternative such as satellite or 4G. Depending upon where you live, you may be aware of the efforts by the Nuthurst Community Group to improve broadband within Nuthurst Parish and surrounding areas, and of the improvements that have occurred in certain parts of the area.

This letter is to draw your attention to an initiative that has come about because the southern part of Nuthurst Parish, served by the Cowfold exchange, appears to have no prospect of high speed broadband in any reasonable timescale. Other surrounding areas to the south of Maplehurst are almost certainly in a similar position. Even if Openreach eventually start offering fibre-based services to Cowfold subscribers in these areas, the speed and quality will be constrained by the distance of many properties from the fibre spine. It seems that the only short-term solution is for the community to take a more proactive approach and install a private scheme. This would service those subscribers on the Cowfold (864 and 865) numbers who have been excluded from the various funded initiatives already completed or in progress.

We are proposing a solution, involving the provision of a leased fibre connection to a central point at Ivorys, just south of Maplehurst, connected to subscribers by fibre and wireless links in what is called a mesh network. Several similar schemes have featured in newspaper and television reports recently. The whole system would be capable of speeds up to 1 Gigabit (1000 Megabits) per second. Such a scheme has the potential to supply broadband to premises that are remote from existing fibre infrastructure, with speeds at least 50% faster than the 330Mbps limit set by BT on their FTTP services. The Foundation would own the network and in order to provide a service to the wider community, will rely on the support and goodwill of the local residents and business owners. **In particular, we will need the collaboration of land owners in allowing free wayleaves across their land for the burial of fibre cables.** There will also be an opportunity for volunteers to assist with some of the work and thereby reduce the installation costs.

The Camelia Botnar Foundation will install a very fast data connection into its own premises at Ivorys, and is willing to accept other users onto the connection in return for a subscription cost. The Foundation needs the connection for the operation of its offices, training facilities and the shop just south of Champions Gate. The remaining capacity would be available for business and residential customers and the number of such customers may need to be limited to ensure that sufficient speed is available for all users. Should the demand from the community exceed what is available, the capacity can be increased in the future. Customers would pay similar monthly charges to those from

other suppliers, and whilst the intention is not to generate a profit, any surplus income would be used to further the aims of the Foundation, which is a registered charity.

There would be an initial cost to connect to the scheme, to cover the cost of supply and installation of the equipment at each customer property. However, the scheme may be eligible for the Gigabit Voucher Scheme operated by the Department for Culture Media and Sport. The vouchers are worth up to £2500 for each business user and £500 for each resident, provided that there are no more than 10 residents for each business. We have identified around 65 potential subscribers of which at least 10 are businesses, so would meet that criterion. The estimated charges are set out below, and would be reduced to reflect the number of customers committing to the scheme. **It is important to note that the Voucher Scheme funding (if available) is limited to the initial installation and does not apply to the monthly charges.** It also applies only to the 'Pre-Registered Package' of initial works that are described in the application for the vouchers. It will not generally be possible to add further subscribers at a later date using money from the voucher scheme. **Anyone joining the scheme later would therefore have to pay the full initial cost of their connection.** Details of the voucher scheme may be found on the DCMS website <https://gigabitvoucher.culture.gov.uk>

The estimated monthly cost would be £50 for residential customers and £120 for business users, inclusive of VAT. In the absence of any voucher funding, the connection cost would be a maximum of £400. **You must understand, however, that it may not be possible to link your premises into the scheme due to hills or trees obstructing the signal path or the refusal of neighbouring landowners to allow fibre to be buried on their land.**

The service would offer each user unlimited data at speeds up to 1Gbps (1000Mbps). By comparison, BT offer a maximum of 330Mbps on Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) and a maximum of 80Mbps where the fibre extends only as far as their cabinet (FTTC). In practice, most users on FTTC connections experience between 24 and 50Mbps. Satellite and 4G services generally achieve between about 20 and 60Mbps, but with monthly limits on the data volumes.

Technical support and design would be provided by local I.T. Solutions provider, CurveIT, based in Brighton, who have extensive experience in building and maintaining such local networks. Their web site is <https://www.curveit.com/>

We encourage you to learn more about the Camelia Botnar Foundation from the CBF website at <https://www.cameliabotnar.com>

If you have any questions about what is proposed, or would like to receive more information or register your interest in joining the scheme, please contact Alan Lindfield on 07484 606006 or email broadband@lindfield.org

We look forward to hearing from you

Alan Lindfield
Nuthurst Parish Community Group