

Welcome to Update No 9 for Kilmeston, Cheriton & Bramdean Fibre-to-the-Premises (FTTP) project CFP 46126.

Dear Applicant

I am sorry that this update has been so long in coming but it has been difficult to disentangle some of the emails that have been arriving since 13 May.

The meeting held at the Flower Pots Inn on that Friday was very largely disappointing. Unfortunately, apart from our MP, Flick Drummond, almost all the wrong speakers came for the panel.

The meeting began with a brief outline from Tom Haye (read by Guy Hornsey) of the background to the FTTP project to improve connectivity and speeds for residents of Kilmeston, parts of Cheriton and Hinton Ampner. It included the history to date and the expectations of those present.

Sadly the speakers all spoke in broad generalisations and it seemed clear that none of them had thought to address the particular geographical issue. Whether this was due to inadequate briefing of the speakers in advance of the meeting, or whether the speakers chose to ignore the briefing was unclear. What was clear was that none of them addressed the particular local issue.

We had representation from EE which largely focussed on the provision of mobile telephony and data via 4 and 5G. Although some of us living within line-of-sight of a 4G 'phone mast can use that technology to get faster internet speeds than are available with CallFlow, it was not really the subject of the meeting, which was meant to concern the provision of fibre-to-the-premises (FTTP). It's ironic that, hereabouts, it's difficult enough to get 2G, 3G or 4G, let alone 5G.

There was also a couple of civil servants from the ministry who spoke in management speak, which was very largely incomprehensible. We think we understood that we are likely to be in what they referred to as "phase one" (good). On further questioning, it turned out that Hampshire as a whole will be in "phase one B" (less good) but it was suggested this might be let to suppliers in January 2023. Likewise there was brief reference to the fact that the "Voucher Scheme" was being taken off hold (for viable projects) but no detail was forthcoming. What any of this means in terms of when we might actually be connected to FTTP was not made clear despite many efforts by the audience to get some kind of understanding of the timetable and, particularly for those of us of a certain age, how it compares with our life-expectancy.

There was also a representative of Hampshire County Council. Frankly, it was difficult to understand his role or contribution and he gave the distinct impression that he would have preferred to be somewhere else. He seemed to suggest that the Hampshire County Council top-up proposal

was still in play, but that, as before, there is still only £1M worth of top-up available, which is grossly inadequate considering the number of people within the county who are looking to upgrade to FTTP.

The most glaring absence was that of Openreach or, for that matter, any other infrastructure provider. This meant that there was nobody on the panel with any grasp of the infrastructure technicalities, challenges or roll-out possibilities. There seemed to be more technical expertise in the audience than on the panel.

Since then, as I mentioned at the top of this, there has been a flurry of emails from Openreach, Hampshire County Council, Cllr Neil Bolton and Flick Drummond's office. Most concerned the possibility that those homes in the north of Cheriton and those between Wood Lane and the A32 might be added to our project. On the face of it, this would seem a sensible economy of scale and effort. However, it's clear from Openreach (and from our previous conversations on the extension from Beauworth) that such neat and apparently-inexpensive extensions of the infrastructure would attract so much bureaucracy as to delay the main project by months, if not years. The overwhelming sense of these email exchanges therefore was that the main project should not be further delayed and so, sadly, the extensions will have to be addressed as separate projects.

Overall, we are very slightly more optimistic. Hope springs eternal.

Kind regards

Graham Cresswell  
for  
Cllr Jason Bridgen  
Tom Haye  
Guy Hornsey  
David Annette (Cheriton lead)