

A letter to Worlingworth parishioners on the broadband progress

Back in March of this year, I agreed to look into alternative broadband providers, as the current provision for some areas of the parish is quite dire.

I sourced a provider called County Broadband, their offer seemed reasonable and they were invited to attend a parish council meeting to outline further their provision. At the same time Councillor Matthew Hicks invited Fram Broadband to the same meeting, this would allow us to compare.

This meeting was well attended by parishioners, which I believe highlighted the interest and need for the village to gain a more reliable and faster broadband supplier.

At this meeting it did seem that Fram Broadband had more infrastructure in place and it was said that they were waiting for planning consent to erect a 39m mast, and then they would be able to offer out the service. County Broadband could not offer much on the night as a feasibility survey had to be completed to ascertain what would be required for the Worlingworth area.

After some thought the parish council decided we should ask County Broadband to carry out the survey so that we knew exactly what would be on offer. I then received an agreement form from County, before they would conduct the survey. There were some aspects of this agreement that did not seem to meet the parish council's expectations, so it was passed to SALC's (Suffolk Association of Local Councils) legal team who advised the parish council not to proceed with this agreement.

In the meanwhile we have not heard from Fram Broadband, I did contact the parish council clerk for Brundish who have Fram as their broadband provider, and asked for feedback from anyone who the councillors knew who had signed up. I got 1 response which was not critical but did state that on wet and windy days the service could be intermittent, especially with trees being in the way.

I still plan to visit Fram Broadband and enquire about their plans going forward.

Another method of getting connected is through 3G / 4G, while this is not broadband in that sense as it is part of the mobile phone network, if you have a smart phone it is probably quicker than broadband. It is possible to use a mobile phone as a tether and operate a pc through it, Councillor Karen Osborn does this, and this is how she does it.

Karen paid to have a mobile wi-fi from Three, originally for the train commute into London. However, she then discovered it was performing much better than the BT broadband at home, as long as a mobile signal can be located, which she does have as there is a line of sight to the wind turbines and mast at Eye. Obviously, this may not work for everyone in the village. The monthly cost is £15.98 per month and there was a one-off cost of £50 to buy the mobile device. Karen has used it for home working as well as using it for general domestic use. However, it would not be fast enough for gaming or watching BBC i-player. The other thing you need to do is keep another router to make sure wi-fi printers still work, but all Karen's printing is done through connecting as and when required to the "now redundant" BT hub.

I do suspect that a lot of these providers are waiting to see the outcome of OFCOM's report on BT and Open Reach as that ruling could open the market up in a variety of new ways, I'm sorry the news could not be more positive.

Other options are satellite broadband, and I had a deal pop up in my Facebook account Europasat www.europasat.com for 1.66 per day which at approaching £50 a month could be classed as expensive.

All the best Pete Brash