

Our Ref : APB/BB/2

Hill Farm
Penhurst
East Sussex
TN33 9QS
17 January 2021

Dear Mr Merriman,

Re : Community Fibre Partnerships – further help needed

We write to follow up on our letter of 12 November 2021.

Your recent assistance to make contact with the Minister of State at the DCMS on our behalf was very much appreciated. You may recall that consequently the Minister confirmed that in December 2021 the DCMS had finally approved the release of Rural Gigabit Vouchers (RGV) for our two Community Fibre Partnership (CFP) schemes. This was very good news to hear indeed after a 6 month wait and a basket full of excuses from Openreach.

Sadly it is not the end of the story. Openreach has now advised that notwithstanding the approval of our RGV, it will seek to align any new CFP schemes with its wider build programme and as such it is unable to provide us with any project start dates.

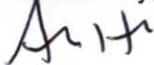
Given that the wider build programme has historically never come close to our parishes and presumably will not do so in the near future either, it appears that we are left with no solution to get our rural homes and businesses connected anytime soon. We are now 3 years down the road from when the main build contracts for East Sussex were completed.

The on-going pandemic continues to remind us all of the criticality of good Internet connectivity as a key enabler for supporting local businesses and assisting rural communities to work from home.

We think that somehow we need to call 'foul' on the way Openreach is abusing its position, controlling and effectively monopolising how and when infrastructure is built in East Sussex. It is guilty of misrepresenting (in terms of time lines and prioritisation) the way in which its CFP schemes make use of RGVs. Hence we would like to ask if it would be possible to have a short meeting with you to discuss how best we might break through this latest barrier to progress.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Hoad – Chairman, Ashburnham & Penhurst Parish Council

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CC : Andrew Wedmore – Chairman, Brightling Parish Council
Kathryn Field – East Sussex County Council
Clerk – Ashburnham & Penhurst Parish Council
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