

Attention : Mr Clive Selley
Chief Executive Officer, Openreach Ltd
81 Newgate Street,
London
EC1A 7AJ

Our Reference: HOAWED/2

Dear Mr Selley,

17 January 2022

Re: Demand Led CFP Pilot schemes – Severely delayed

We wrote to you on 22 December 2020 in response to the announcement by Openreach that it was opening the door to demand led Community Fibre Partnerships (DLCFP), ref <https://www.openreach.com/RGC>. We had requested your help to support two ambitious DLCFP for our communities, serving over 850 premises collectively and valued at circa £1.5m. We approached you because we were anxious to be an early mover to benefit from additional funds available from our county council and to be ahead of the closure of the first Rural Gigabit Voucher (RGV) scheme, which ended 31 March 2021.

Subsequent to our letter we engaged quickly and actively with your Executive Office team. We submitted our CFP applications on 28 January 2021 (CFP 57216 & 59602). It was then only in May 2021 that we were provided with final commercial offers, both of which were immediately accepted. We subsequently waited for over 5 months hoping to hear that the Pre-Registration Package (PRP) stage was complete but to no avail.

We thus elected to contact our MP Huw Merriman for help and he immediately approached the Minister of State at the DCMS. The minister promptly confirmed in writing that our schemes had been approved on 07 and 14 December 2021 respectively (DCMS reference numbers OR12062 and OR12086).

Despite this very belated good news we have now been informed by Openreach that it will seek to align any new schemes with its wider build programme and as such it is unable to provide us with a project start date.

It can not be overstated just how disappointed we are to receive such news, particularly as it flies in the face of Openreach's earlier commitment to proceed with the RGV pledging process and subsequent infrastructure build as soon as PRP is complete. Your wider build programme has historically never come close to our parishes and it seems a fair assumption that it will not do so in the near future either.

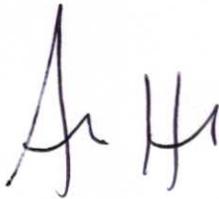
Hence, one year after we wrote to you and on the tail end of a huge amount of preparatory work on our side, it seems that we have achieved absolutely nothing. We do not even have a provisional project start date from Openreach with which to plan around. The pent up demand and frustration levels in our community both remain equally high.

We think that our projects continue to have a very high probability of success based on the number of RGVs needed and the £1000 per premise "top-up" still on offer from East Sussex County Council. 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 urge you most strongly to give our project priority to go ahead now and to help us finish what we set out to achieve when we approached you over a year ago. We will not rest until our community gets connected and will aim to use whatever levers we can to achieve this. We will continue to work with our MP to avail of his help to highlight to the DCMS our experience with Openreach and our on-going need for a practical and timely connectivity solution.

Should you have any questions or queries on the information that we have set out please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely,



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CC: Clerk to Ashburnham & Penhurst Parish Council
Clerk to Brightling Parish Council
Huw Merriman – MP
Kathryn Field – East Sussex County Council