

# Minutes - Public Meeting - BT Broadband 18th November New Mills Village Hall

**Attended by:** Manafon Community Council; Councillor Bob Benyon (Chair of meeting) and Clerk Lorraine Stanton. BT Group; Martin Jones (BT Group Project Manager) and Openreach Paul Jones Project Manager.

National infrastructure operated between BT and Virgin.

Rural areas are stuck in ADSL/Copper which doesn't deliver optimum speed and reliability issues evident.

July 2010 agreement renewed July 2013 for government is for 95% properties equal to 750,000 premises. BT agreement was that a period of 18 years before they would see any return on investment, any profits went back to Welsh Government and reinvested back into the network.

Speed of the rollout was of the essence, current status 560,000 of the 750,000 completed, 3 months ahead of plan. 95% of Wales is scheduled for fibre superfast broadband, the remaining 5% of rural areas are challenging in terms of solutions. These 5% pockets are not really communities but outlying properties single or few dwellings and a "value for money" exercise is likely.

BT remains responsible for the entire infrastructure.

Vast majority of properties will be fibre optic exchange to cabinets copper connection to premises (FTTC), any premises 3kms or more from cabinet the signals drop away on speed. Some properties will be served by (FTTP), junction boxes to pick up from exchange, no loss on speed with this.

For Rhiw Valley, spine in place and should be connected to parent exchange Newtown by Xmas for roll out to start but that will still leave a high degree of work to be done.

Pantfrydd is 14 kms from exchange and presents delivery problems; fibre to remote nodes is a solution for small nucleuses of premises. Adfa and Llanfair are 11 kms away, the old legacy of ADSL & copper is no good, and the fibre has to be moved nearer to these locations to work.

For houses not by the roadside or beyond the proposed FTTP connection points would require BT to survey to see what can be achieved. Fibre would go in if can be done but would depend in service providers if a charge for facilitating would arise, up to 1000 metres most don't charge but some will, if something different was required then extra costs are inevitable. Consolidation of a service provider if a few properties needed a connection then same provider could be more cost effective option.

Customers wanting to take up superfast broadband would have to order/negotiate via current or alternative service providers, it is not an automatic upgrade.

Existing connections won't deteriorate after the installation of superfast broadband.

The BT website from December will provide more detail as to which properties will be FTTP or FTTC and when cabinets will be enabled. (Clerk to monitor via BT Web Site and keep residents informed via web site).

Manafon / New Mills is expected to be mainly FTTP connection, FTTP is massively more expensive to build but not more expensive to customer. Latest we should see connection is end of 2016 early 2017, some residents commented that this is the third time there has been a delay, and enablement date has slipped due to infrastructure issues in Newtown and Tregynon, blocked ducts and other issues. Hopefully Tregynon will be before Christmas and then FTTP down the valley by Feb/March latest, Paul Jones of Openreach agreed to keep Clerk informed on dates.

A question was raised by Clerk as to reliability of service / speed if residents were with other providers than BT, BT said that there can be no difference in speeds/level of service to none BT providers, was not allowed.

On the subject of Pantyfydd, BT suggested that remote nodes were the likely (but expensive) solution and it would be 2017 before explored further. BT advised that grants were available through ABC, see link for more information. Groups of houses can pool grants to obtain a solution.

<http://gov.wales/topics/science-and-technology/digital/infrastructure/abc/?lang=en>

Once the 95% installation is completed there are additional plans in place to look at mopping up the remaining 5% but it has to be recognised that this is going to be expensive, talks are underway to determine how this could be funded.

This target of 95% is targeted for completion by November 2016 including Rhiw Valley (except outlying properties), there is always the possibility it could be earlier than this, and everything is planned and executed in quarterly periods.

The strategic planning is in place but this can be affected by issues with highways, road closures; wayleaves etc.

Once on fibre connection there will be a much improved continuity and consistency of service, no risk of water ingress.

The meeting was made aware of some of the other benefits of superfast broadband, once in place residents may be able to talk to their current or other providers about VOIP for telephone calls, negating the need for land lines for phones, some operators were offering for around £8 per month, for total reliability it would be necessary to invest in a very small UPS unit to cover power outages.

BT/Openreach were reminded of the necessity for the roll out to be expedited as the Valley was made up of many small business, sole traders running businesses from home as well as the farming community and a reliable and fast broadband connection was critical. Concerns were raised about the cost, BT assured residents that there is no difference in cost to business/residential but customers should only purchase the data they need and speed they need.

Other alternatives are Ethernet products at speed 1 GB but these are expensive.

Caravan parks and tourism are crucial to the Welsh economy and BT are investigating and considering options and solutions to meet this demand.

Martin would send some documents to Clerk to publish on web site. He also confirmed that he has a team of 3 in Cardiff ready to respond to customers with questions.

Some suggestions about what to do if some customers were not getting superfast was to fire in complaint, after complaint after complaint and someone should listen.

From January Clerk would check the information on roll out on the BT web site and would provide regular updates via council web site; [www.manafoncommunitycouncil.co.uk](http://www.manafoncommunitycouncil.co.uk)

Councillor Benyon thanked BT and residents for attending.

Martin is quite happy to receive emails if any questions arise, his email address is:

Paul's email address is: