

## Community Fibre Partnerships

# Reaching out to your community

Doing a bit of planning about how to engage your community could be the difference between success or failure of gathering contributions for your new fibre infrastructure. If you want people to consider donating to, or investing in, your project you need to clearly put across the benefits of doing just that!

There are lots of different ways in which you can raise awareness locally about co-funding a new fibre infrastructure. We suggest you use more than one, and keep a steady flow of information into your community as you embark on the process. It's worthwhile having a small core group to lead the fibre project for your community, this way things can be evenly shared out and nobody will feel overwhelmed that the whole thing rests on one pair of shoulders.

### Where to start

For many people email is the easiest way to communicate, but you've got to get everyone's email addresses within the community first of all. So to start with, a letter to each property is often the best bet. You can follow this up by a flyer, for example, to invite the community to convene at someone's house (if the community is small) or consider using a local school, village hall, or other nearby public venue for people to get together. Here, you can explain about the

benefit of having faster internet and outline the community fibre project. At this point you can capture people's email addresses and find other people in the community who may be keen to help with the project. Very often, we have people here at Openreach and BT Group who are able to come along to initial community meetings in support, so do get in touch if you feel we could help. In addition, other channels such as a community Facebook page is a great way of highlighting the project and keeping people informed. This kind of activity combined with simple posters and notices in local shops, notice boards and such like, will help keep the project front of mind.

### Clarity of Message

Whether you're planning to have a community meeting or putting pen to paper, it's best to explain things with a clear overview at the start. Remember, you may understand the project inside out, hence can automatically comprehend the details of a potentially complicated message, but others won't be, so always be clear when explaining this to other people. If you want funding, you have to create a common bond of understanding quickly and then build up the excitement.

## Speak directly to your audience

The easiest way to speak to an audience is to use personal pronouns like “you” and “your”. Don’t waste time telling and dwelling on what people already know. Focus instead on what they need to know about the project that will bring them to trust you and to take the action you want them to.

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## Some key messages for when corresponding with your community

### We’re in the 5%

Around 5% of the UK isn’t covered in existing national fibre broadband rollout plans and [xxx community name] falls into that group. We’re not content with that, so want to work in partnership with Openreach to get superfast broadband to [our homes / our community]. We’ve set up the [xx community project name] to raise money to jointly fund the cost of a new fibre broadband cabinet that will be connected to the national fibre network. Openreach will fund a large chunk of the cost and we need to raise monies to cover the remainder.

### We need superfast broadband to support in an increasing number of internet-capable devices in the home, which include:

- mobile phones
- iPads and tablets
- notebooks
- e-readers (such as Kindle)
- desktop PCs

- games consoles
- Apple TV and media players
- Sky+ boxes

All these devices compete for the same limited bandwidth, and basic broadband services with slow speeds is increasingly becoming a major bottleneck. With growing families, where there’s a significant number of people in a household, basic broadband is no longer enough!

### *Here’s a different way you can position that message:*

A large (and rapidly increasing) number of bandwidth-intensive services use broadband as a delivery mechanism, including:

- streamed video services, such as YouTube, Netflix, BBC iPlayer, ITV Player, NowTV, Netflix, Amazon and BT TV
- TV and video download services, such as Sky Anytime Plus and Apple iTunes
- fast downloading of HD video content (rather than standard definition content)
- streamed music services, such as Spotify
- voice and video telephony services, such as Skype and Apple FaceTime
- online backup services, such as Carbonite, Livedrive and Apple iCloud.
- BBC iPlayer requires at least 3Mbps to stream HD content, and Netflix can demand 6Mbps or more to stream high-quality video. Online backups of important content, such as family photographs, can be unbearably slow with conventional broadband. Without superfast broadband, consumers have an increasingly reduced set of online services to choose from

## Superfast broadband is now almost the same price as basic broadband

The prices of superfast broadband services are falling significantly, and there's already a small difference between the price of superfast broadband and basic broadband services. Ofcom found that the difference between the monthly rental fees for ISPs' lowest-cost 'superfast' services and their lowest-cost 'current generation' services is often relatively small, with the price differential ranging from £5 - £10 a month for most ISPs that offer both types of service.

## Superfast broadband could increase house prices

A survey carried out by [isreview.co.uk](http://isreview.co.uk) found that 68.8% of respondents would be put off from buying a "beautiful new house", if it lacked fast broadband. 73.9% considered that broadband was critically important to their home life.

## Conventional broadband services can be unreliable

ADSL broadband is carried along copper cables all the way from the exchange to homes and business premises. Inevitably, the broadband signal suffers a reduction in strength (attenuation) as it travels along the copper cable from the exchange to broadband modems, reducing the speeds that can be delivered and making the broadband signal susceptible to interference.

In contrast, high-speed fibre broadband utilises fibre-optic cables, which are immune to interference and do not suffer the signal attenuation experienced by copper lines. As a result, superfast broadband services deliver significantly higher speeds and are more reliable.

## Superfast broadband improves work-life balance and enables home working

Homeworking potentially allows many people to achieve a better work-life balance, particularly parents with young children. Conventional broadband services often don't permit reliable access to business systems or allow employees to communicate effectively with colleagues or customers through video conferencing, for example.

## Why Openreach?

We look after the fibres, wires and cables that connect the country and on top of that offers the greatest choice of service providers. Our network is available to all UK communications providers – that's well over 500 – so once the fibre cabinet is delivered, each one of us will be able to upgrade to superfast via a service provider of our own choice and shop around for the best deals.

Our infrastructure already provides a complete network covering virtually the entire country and supporting 28 million phone lines.

We maintain and improve our infrastructure so once our new fibre cabinet / fibre-to-the-premises is installed, it will become part of that infrastructure.

We've got years of experience using tried and tested technology to deploy a superfast fibre rollout.

## No pay, no gain

Of course, there's no obligation for everyone to contribute, and ultimately there will often be people who benefit from co-funded fibre infrastructures without paying a penny towards it. To encourage all the premises who are set to benefit from the co-funded the project, we recommend you make it clear that by contributing to the new fibre infrastructure will guarantee that their home (or business) will be covered. Set out an average amount per premise once you've have the costings, or identify any major stakeholders who may be up for putting in a significant contribution.

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## Call to Action

State the call to action clearly at the end of your letter, email or speech. I.e. what do you want people to do as a result. For example do you want people to 'like' a community Facebook page you've set up, or come along to a community meeting you're arranging.

Good luck!