

openreach  
Connecting you to your network

# Openreach Northern Ireland Annual Review 2020/2021



# Welcome to our Annual Review for 2020/2021

It's been an unprecedented year and within Openreach Northern Ireland we've continued to build and maintain the largest broadband network across Northern Ireland. Our Annual Review covers what we have accomplished throughout the year while detailing our investment plans for 2021/2022. We'll continue to play an important role in the long-term growth and economic recovery of Northern Ireland.

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## A message from our Director, Garret Kavanagh

### Welcome to our 2020-2021 Northern Ireland Annual Review.

I'm delighted to share this report with you as the new Director of Openreach Northern Ireland. I've had the pleasure of working for BT - and now Openreach - for the past 15 years and have worked across a wide variety of roles before my most recent role as Head of Infrastructure Delivery. I'm excited to lead our Openreach Northern Ireland team, as we continue to roll out the next generation of Ultrafast Full Fibre technology across Northern Ireland.

Our team of over 950 people work in every community throughout Northern Ireland to connect homes, schools, hospitals, libraries, governments and businesses, large and small through our copper and fibre network. We're committed to building the infrastructure that is vital for Northern Ireland's digital connectivity and the local economy.

### Keeping Northern Ireland connected

This past year has certainly been a year of learnings, challenges and new ways of working. COVID-19 has had some profound impacts on so many people, both personally and professionally.

People relied on our services more than ever with home-working, home-schooling and a huge reliance on our network to stay in touch with loved ones. We needed to continue to deliver and support a network that is vital to Northern Ireland, its health service, and critical infrastructure.

Our teams needed to adapt and mobilise very quickly, with new changes to our working practices and processes. Our main priority was to keep our people and customers safe, whilst also keeping the people of Northern Ireland connected.

### Customer Service

Operationally, we finished 2020 in a great place despite all the external challenges we faced. We delivered on all our regional quality of service standards in a year where we faced record volumes of repair work due to the pandemic. We're committed to continuing to maintain or improve this excellent level of service in all that we do.

### Full Fibre Broadband in Northern Ireland

In our fibre build programme, we finished the year with 211k additional premises now able to access faster, more reliable technology - bringing the overall total to 538k premises. That's over 59% coverage of all servable premises right across Northern Ireland and over 77% in Belfast and 60% in Derry/Londonderry.

### Recruitment

One of the things we focused on over the past year was recruitment and I'm delighted that 186 people joined Openreach Northern Ireland this year. This growth in our team will not only support our ambitious fibre plans but also boost the Northern Ireland economy and employment levels.

### Looking Ahead

By leading the way in digital infrastructure, working together as a team and working with the communities we build in, we believe we can play an important role in helping the region to build back better and stronger in the wake of the pandemic.

We've recently announced plans to invest more than £130m in Northern Ireland over the next 12 months, alongside delivery of 162,500 additional homes with Ultrafast Full Fibre and support the maintenance of the copper and fibre broadband network in Northern Ireland, and 100 new apprentice roles created as part of the investment.

We'll continue to focus on rolling out the next generation of Ultrafast Full Fibre technology in the region - an even faster, more reliable and future-proof broadband network that will be Northern Ireland's digital platform for decades to come.

## Garret Kavanagh

Director, Openreach Northern Ireland

**“We’re committed to building the infrastructure that is vital for Northern Ireland’s digital connectivity and the local economy.”**


# The Year in Numbers

FTTP rollout – Over  
**210,000**  
 homes and businesses  
 benefited from our full fibre  
 roll out in 20/21

Provisions - We carried out  
**239,907**  
 new provision orders across  
 all our products



Cable links –  
 We delivered  
**828**  
 cablelinks, helping our  
 Communications Providers  
 connect homes and businesses  
 across Northern Ireland

Faults – during the pandemic  
 we saw a  
 **10%**  
 increase in faults on our network  
 due to the massive increase in demand  
 for bandwidth

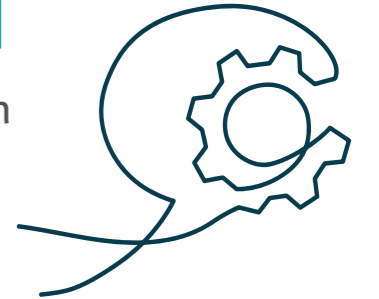
Total FTTP footprint –  
 Over **538,000**  
 homes can now access FTTP  
 as of March 21'



Community Fibre  
 Partnerships (CFPs) –  
 we supported  
**21** Community Fibre  
 Partnerships with  
 **1,878**  
 homes and businesses  
 now serviced with full fibre

Appointments –  
 We had over  
**147,000**  
 customer appointments, meeting  
**98.48%**  
 of these on time.

Investment in the network –  
**£93M**  
 invested in Northern  
 Ireland in 20/21 - to  
 improve, build and  
 maintain our  
 network



# Our Fibre Broadband Build

## Our Ultrafast Full Fibre Broadband Build

Last year we made FTTP available to 211,411 homes and business across the province, bringing our total FTTP footprint to 538,088 premises - a 65% increase from the previous year. Our build last year included over 60 rural towns and villages throughout Northern Ireland.

And we've no plans to stop there – we've committed to build FTTP to at least 162,500 additional premises in Northern Ireland in the coming year, which will support even greater digital connectivity in the region. This will include premises in rural towns and villages spanning the length and breadth of Northern Ireland – from Castledawson in Co. Londonderry to Aughnacloy in Co. Tyrone.

Northern Ireland currently punches well above its weight in terms of digital infrastructure and we're very proud of the huge role we have played in driving Northern Ireland forward as the most digitally connected region in the UK.

## Ultrafast Full Fibre broadband

Our Ultrafast Full Fibre network connects homes and businesses across Northern Ireland directly to our exchanges with a single pure fibre cable. The technology is x10 faster and more reliable than current technologies. \*\*There are lower fault rates and speeds do not deteriorate over distance, future proofing Northern Ireland. With Full Fibre you'll be able to stream 8k TV or ultra HD on multiple devices all at the same time with less buffering or interruptions. And cheaper and faster delivery of public health care, education and other services will benefit local communities and societies as a whole.

## Turning off the old copper network

Once we've rolled out Full Fibre into an area, it doesn't make sense for us to keep lots of different old technologies running – it'll be very expensive, replacement parts are no longer being made, and it won't allow us to push forward with our plans to give the UK world class connectivity as quickly as we'd like.

\*Broadband infrastructure and boosting economic recovery - The role of Full Fibre in Northern Ireland: Available at: [www.openreach.com/news-and-opinion/articles/coronavirus--supporting-economic-recovery-post-covid-19](http://www.openreach.com/news-and-opinion/articles/coronavirus--supporting-economic-recovery-post-covid-19)  
 \*\* Ofcom Wholesale Fixed Telecoms Market Review : Available at : [https://www.ofcom.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0022/216085/wftmr-statement-volume-1-overview.pdf](https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0022/216085/wftmr-statement-volume-1-overview.pdf)

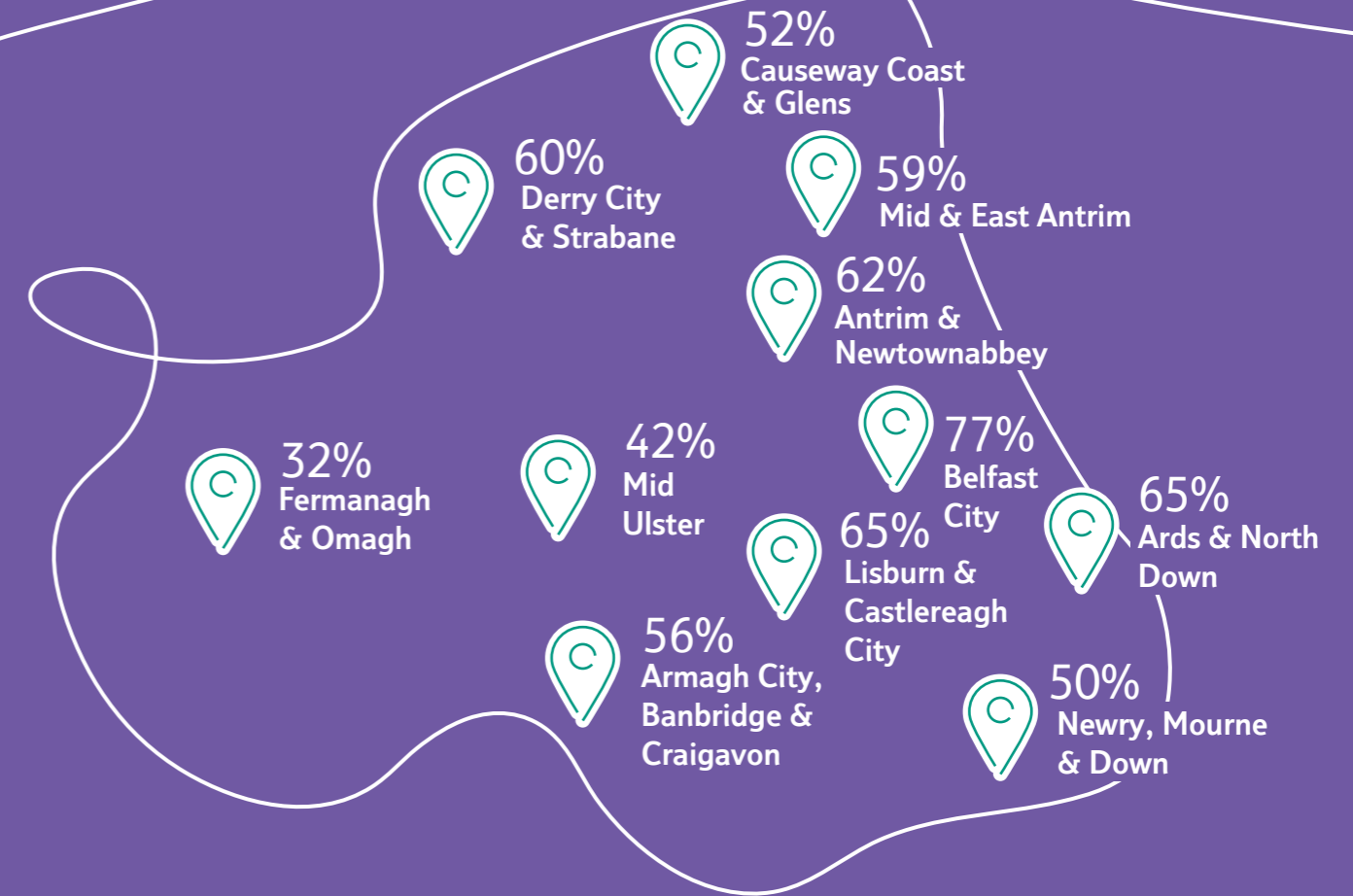
**\*We know that full deployment of Ultrafast Full Fibre broadband by 2025 could boost the NI economy by £1.3 billion and employment by 1.6%.**

So, in line with the copper retirement framework that Ofcom laid out in the WFTMR Statement, we've laid out a plan on how and when we're going to be switching off our old copper based network and what this means for consumers.

## Key points to know

- When 75% of the homes and businesses connected to a particular exchange can get Ultrafast Speeds this is FTTP, Gfast, consumers won't be able to order new connections using our old copper products (including Fibre to the Cabinet)
- We've already stopped selling new copper products in June at four exchange sites including Fortwilliam, Ballysillan, Knock and Creagh with plans to roll this out to another 52 locations across Northern Ireland between now and April 2022.
- If Ultrafast Full Fibre broadband is not available at a premise consumers won't be impacted, and will still be able to keep existing copper products until it's available.
- If a customer has a good reason not to make the move - there may be special exceptions such as if you're a vulnerable customer or have critical equipment that might not work.

## Coverage by Council Area – as of March 21



## Community Fibre Partnerships



We had another successful year with our Community Fibre Partnership (CFP) programme, with over 20 schemes delivering Full Fibre, gigabit capable infrastructure to over 1500 homes across Northern Ireland. These schemes included business parks in Magherafelt and Castlereagh, more rural schemes in areas such as Loughgall, Castledearg, Randalstown and Aghalee, and larger proactive schemes in suburban towns like Carnlough and Magherry. We currently have numerous other schemes in progress and will be bringing full fibre to the rural areas of Portrush, Moira, Banbridge and Drumbo to name a few.

The Broadband Universal Service Obligation (USO) has been implemented since March 2020, and Openreach has been supporting the wider BT Group role in being the Broadband USO provider for Northern Ireland. We have delivered new, full fibre service to 11 rural communities improving broadband services for over 200 homes and businesses, in areas such as Newtownstewart, Ardglass & Castlerock. We have a further 13 schemes in process which will see hundreds more premises with improved broadband in the most rural parts of Northern Ireland in the next 12 months.

# Year working in the global pandemic


It's safe to say that the COVID-19 pandemic has been one of the biggest challenges our business has had to face in its history. Customer expectations of a reliable, robust network placed massive demands on Openreach as everyone began working and schooling from home.

What we do has never been more in-demand than it has been since March 2020 when we first entered lockdown in Northern Ireland. We were assigned key worker status, which meant we were able to continue to work to provide an essential public service, including the important role we played in supporting our health service and Critical National Infrastructure.

Our main priority was, and always will be, to keep our employees and customers safe whilst delivering and supporting a network that was vital to keeping Northern Ireland connected. We re-engineered our working practices and processes to be able to do so.

The impact of Covid-19 can be seen in our service figures – completion of provision related orders across all products reduced to 239,907 and attendance of fault/repair jobs increased to 54,005 for the year, meeting all of our regional quality of service standards imposed by Ofcom. Despite a challenging year, we came together as a team and we delivered.

Here are just a few examples of our teams working above and beyond to keep Northern Ireland connected.



### Ian Campbell and Nick Argue

At the peak of the pandemic with hospital visitor restrictions in place a Northern Ireland Hospital phone line became faulty. Repairing the fault, Ian and Nick remained on-site until service was restored to the satisfaction of hospital staff. This fault was particularly challenging as it happened in the first period of lockdown restrictions in Northern Ireland when restrictions were high and we were developing new ways of working to keep our people and customers safe. It was important to be extremely cautious with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Health and Safety protocols to maintain the safety of hospital staff, vulnerable patients and ourselves. This meant families could continue to keep in touch with loved ones and critical communication between hospital staff and GP surgeries was restored.

# Emergency Response Team

To respond to the influx of Critical National Infrastructure sites requiring additional capacity during the year, an emergency response team of engineers was set-up. This team was available 24 hours a day and the engineers were equipped with advanced PPE to mitigate all risks whilst attending high risk sites such as doctors' surgeries and hospitals. Our teams worked unsociable hours and weekends in response to requests including the delivery of additional capacity to sites such as Belfast City Nightingale Hospital and preparing in the event of further Nightingale Hospitals in Northern Ireland.



### Connor Monaghan

During the pandemic our engineers responded to urgent need from government and communication providers to deliver Critical National Infrastructure. Like many of his colleagues Connor utilised his transferable skills moving quickly to meet the changing demands for our products and services. Working at short notice and over weekends Connor was instrumental in delivering a circuit to a local medical facility who were leading the way on COVID-19 testing packs which was a key part of the government response to help monitor and control the spread of COVID-19.

# Recruitment

In June 2020 we announced ambitions to hire over 100 new apprentice engineers in Northern Ireland, double the spaces available year-on-year, before the end of March 2021 and reached the 100 mark when Leanne Watson (29) from Belfast became the latest recruit to join the team.

Speaking about her new role, Leanne said:



“Before I joined Openreach I was working as part of a sports team staff in the cruise line industry. I was due to join a new ship when the pandemic struck and found myself having to rethink my career options. A close friend already works at Openreach and she encouraged me to apply for the programme, knowing that at the end of the 18 months training I would not only receive an NVQ but would be a fully qualified engineer. I was nervous and kept wondering if I was too old for an apprenticeship but then thought why not, this is the perfect time to apply and to try something new. I couldn’t be happier with my decision and I’m excited to see what opportunities my new post brings. I would love for my story to inspire others to think about a career in engineering.”

# 25 Best Big companies in the UK

We’re proud to be one of the UK’s top 25 companies for the second year running, moving up three places to 12th and marked as outstanding. We also won the Special Award for Learning and Development for our Open Street training centres and finding innovative ways to continue delivering training throughout the Coronavirus pandemic.



# Northern Ireland Compliance

## Northern Ireland Compliance 2020– 2021

Openreach is committed to having a strong compliance Culture and in Northern Ireland we have continued to play our part during 2020/2021. We host a six-monthly Northern Ireland Regulatory compliance committee (NIRCC) and produce a Northern Ireland Compliance report on a yearly basis, which is approved by the Openreach Board Audit Risk and Compliance Committee (OBARCC). There are three areas to highlight over the last year.

### Compliance Training

Our mandatory computer-based training completions for 2020/2021 were 100%. Maintaining these training completions within date is essential for Northern Ireland compliance.

### The commitments – Core Transmission compliance review

A health check was undertaken between January 2021 and April 2021 by Business Integrity on the Transmission Network team’s system access to ensure that all data held by Openreach Northern Ireland is secured, controlled and used appropriately. The health check did not identify any major areas of concern, and nothing that could affect the interests of external Communications Providers.

Small numbers of Openreach Northern Ireland staff were found with access to systems associated with power and transmission work, which in the rest of the UK would be limited to staff working for the BT Networks division, formerly known as BT Technology. This is due to the existence of a combined control team responsible for both transmission and access network layers.

10 people were found to have access to the BT instance of a work flow management tool who did not have a practical need for this access in their current roles. This wouldn’t have had any impact on the sharing of Openreach commercial and customer confidential information and the removal of these accesses has been completed.

### Compliance Breaches

There were 0 Northern Ireland commitments compliance breaches in 20/21.

In December 2020, Ofcom found that BT Group failed to provide information to telecommunications company Eir, related to Fibre on Demand on an ‘equivalence of inputs’ basis, compared with BT’s own downstream Enterprise business unit. This related to the bidding process for a public sector contract in Northern Ireland in 2018 and both bidders were supported during the bidding process by Northern Ireland Networks (which at that time was hosted by BT Enterprise but has since moved to be hosted by Openreach Limited and has been rebranded to Openreach Northern Ireland). BT Group, including Openreach Northern Ireland, cooperated with and accepted Ofcom’s findings, settling with them to pay a fine of £6.3m. We have put measures in place to prevent this happening again. Ofcom recognised that these errors weren’t deliberate and that we took a number of steps to comply with the regulatory obligations. Based on Ofcom’s decision, we don’t believe this impacted the tender outcome of the contract in question.

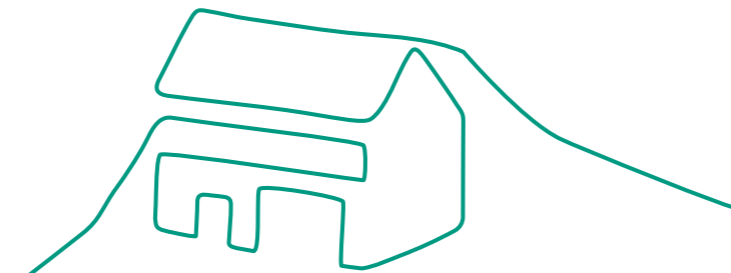
## Looking Forward

We're undergoing a once in a generation upgrade to our broadband network from copper to Full Fibre. 700,000 homes and businesses will be able to access Ultrafast Full Fibre technology by March 2022, that's 75% of properties across the country and investment of £130 million in Northern Ireland between 2021 and 2022. We're building a strong and resilient network that will meet the needs of everyone, now and for decades to come.



**100**  
Apprentices

We're investing at least  
**£130M**  
in expanding our  
network across 21/22



Additional homes and businesses

**162,500**

Investment will support the maintenance of existing copper and fibre networks as well as ultrafast Full Fibre Broadband network build.

## Contact Us

Want to know more about Openreach in Northern Ireland?

Website – [openreach.com/northern-ireland](https://openreach.com/northern-ireland)

LinkedIn – [linkedin.com/company/openreach](https://linkedin.com/company/openreach)

Twitter – [twitter.com/weareopenreach](https://twitter.com/weareopenreach)

Facebook – [facebook.com/weareopenreach](https://facebook.com/weareopenreach)

YouTube – [youtube.com/OpenreachOfficial](https://youtube.com/OpenreachOfficial)

We'd also appreciate any comments and feedback you have on our review. Please send to Gabrielle Hicks – [gabrielle.hicks@openreach.co.uk](mailto:gabrielle.hicks@openreach.co.uk)





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