

BETTER BROADBAND PROJECT FOR UPGATE, REEPHAM ROAD, HENGRAVE & LITTLE WITCHINGHAM

Although Broadband speeds in the main village of Swannington are largely reasonable, our hamlets on the periphery are suffering a poor service. Many residents of Upgate, Hengrave, Little Witchingham plus Reepham Road/Felthorpe Road (near Attlebridge) Swannington will have met or spoken with Chris Liles (of Upgate) or Edward Jones (of Little Witchingham) regarding improving their Broadband service. As at early February 2017 Chris advises this is the latest position:

Key: BDUK = Broadband Delivery UK programme - which aims to provide Superfast Broadband (target minimum **24** megabytes per second = mbps) to 95% of the UK by Dec. 2017.

Current performance: Most households in the areas below currently achieve Broadband performance of less than 10% of BDUK's target i.e. only 1 to 2.5 mbps.

UPGATE

Upgate has recently been included in BDUK's Plan meaning Upgate will get Superfast Broadband without needing financial input from the community. Timescale is within the next two years.

HENGRAVE, LITTLE WITCHINGHAM, REEPHAM ROAD & FELTHORPE ROAD (near Attlebridge)

- No nearby fibre system so major installation work would be required. Estimated community funding needed to achieve such is circa £50,000 for **EACH** of the 3 areas above.
- For EACH household in those areas presently receiving under 2 mbps Broadband, there is potentially £350 funding available via the BDUK voucher scheme.
- BDUK Voucher Scheme expires 31/03/2018 BUT to qualify for funding the BT deadline was 6th February 2017. This was one week from the date this update was received.

Due to only having a few days before the funding application deadline expired, a selection of people in each of the above three areas were immediately contacted. The consensus emerged that (unsurprisingly) none of the three communities would be prepared to apply for their funding but then still have to top-up with (potentially) a few thousand pounds from each of the very few households across the three areas.

We are disappointed that for those last three areas we cannot report a better outcome. Hopefully, as Broadband service improves in areas around them, the chances of tapping into nearby service systems will become increasingly feasible. So, having reasonable service in neighbouring areas could help e.g. a local MP to bring pressure on BT to improve Broadband across our full village community.

For Upgate though, it is interesting that when we started this project about 9 months ago, Upgate was not in the BDUK Plan to get Superfast Broadband. After completing our research, we made our detailed submission to BT during November. Then in late January we find it has 'recently been included'. Perhaps flagging-up that there are 30 Broadband lines desperately needing improvement in Upgate alone may have given BT/BDUK a nudge? We like to think so!

Chris Liles