

Hello Nigel

I hope you are well.

There's a complete overview below – but this is a brief summary of the three things to highlight:

1. The government's procurement for a gigabit broadband contract continues to go through the relevant processes which should hopefully lead to a supplier being awarded the contract. We should know if Ovington has been included for delivery under the 'winning' bid in late 2023.
2. If Ovington isn't picked up under the BDUK contract (and there's nothing to suggest it won't be), government are intending to increase the standard gigabit voucher funding amounts from £1500 per home and £3500 per business to a flat rate of £4500 per property. Along with the Durham County Council top up, as long as the community is willing to sign up to a voucher, there should be plenty of available funding to attract a registered scheme supplier to deliver gigabit broadband when the scheme reopens to County Durham (this is expected to be late 2023 after BDUK have appointed a supplier to their contract).
3. In the interim, the community might want to consider alternative faster broadband solutions than they can receive now, such as 4G with an antennae or the next generation of satellite broadband services (such as Starlink). These services also offer telephone capabilities.

Full summary

Ovington properties will be considered as part of a government procurement for a contract to deliver gigabit broadband. The procurement, and resulting contract, is co-ordinated by Building Digital UK (UK).

The Invitation to Tender (ITT) is currently out with suppliers. The ITT details the harder-to-reach (and typically rural) properties that are potentially eligible for delivery under the contract, as commercial providers have no current plans to provide coverage.

Suppliers are in the process of developing their bids to submit to DCMS, which are expected to be submitted in January 2023. The bids from suppliers will then go through the usual evaluation, moderation and assurance processes, before DCMS select a supplier to award the contract to (estimated by the end of June 2023).

After the contract is awarded, the appointed supplier will enter a period of mobilisation where they undertake physical surveys and planning in order to develop detailed delivery plans. Only at this stage will BDUK and the supplier be in a position to provide indicative timescales to communities on delivery dates and I'd estimate this to be late in 2023. Obviously as soon as we know any information, we'll be in touch but it's looking to be a while yet.

Should Ovington not be picked up under the contract, BDUK have indicated they will work with the community to obtain coverage using the government voucher scheme. In reality, I expect that to happen between yourselves and my team (Digital Durham) as we'll be looking to engage with voucher scheme registered suppliers once the voucher scheme opens back up in County Durham – and we can work together to fill any gaps with voucher funding. The scheme is currently paused to the region until BDUK progress the procurement and appoint a supplier to deliver their contract, so I'm expecting it to reopen to County Durham towards the end of 2023.

The good news is that government are changing the standard voucher funding amounts. They are currently £1,500 per home and £3,500 per business, but they will increase to a flat rate of £4,500 per property and this is a much more viable amount of funding to get to rural communities like Ovington. In addition, Durham County Council also have a 'top up' to the standard voucher amounts to make additional funding available (if required) which should help us get to more rural properties that might otherwise miss out on gigabit broadband coverage.

Hopefully this all makes sense. Please let me know if you have any questions on it in advance of your meeting.

Kind regards

Alli

Alli Walker, Digital Durham Manager, Digital Services, Durham County Council
| 03000 260 555 | 07824 460 538 |

From: Julienige@gmail.com <julienige@gmail.com>

Sent: 07 December 2022 10:20

To: Alli Walker <Alli.Walker@durham.gov.uk>

Subject: [EXTERNAL]:Ovington Broadband

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Good morning Alli

Next Tuesday we have a Parish Council meeting, and on the Agenda is, as usual, an item regarding our lack of Broadband.

Could you please update me with the latest situation and where we are in the queue for joining the 21st century digital world.

Sadly, since Dave Bottoms died earlier this year, we have not had any update or communication from the prospective supplier.

Thanks for your help

Nigel Parkes

Ovington Parish Council.

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