

Wingfield Parish Council

David Young: Parish Clerk

Little Barn, Grove Road, Brockdish, Diss, Norfolk, IP21 4JP

Tel: 01379 668556 Email: dyoung@workmail.com

Suffolk Better Broadband Programme

Public Consultation Response

Endeavour House

8 Russell Road

Ipswich

Suffolk

IP1 2BX

6th April 2016

Re: State Aid and Public Consultation

This is our story of a village denied access to superfast broadband with no plans in place to remedy the situation. Ofcom state that a speed of 10Mbps is the minimum required by any household to stream programmes and access websites: <http://maps.ofcom.org.uk/check-coverage/>. The current broadband performance in the village is below this minimum and levels shown in the Ofcom data. In many cases the performance is below the Universal Service Obligation (USO) of 2Mbps (See Appendix). It is understood that this scenario is shared by many villages in the Mid Suffolk constituency.

Wingfield Parish Council wish to submit the following points which we hope will be considered and taken into account despite the fact that we understand that this may be out of scope for the current consultation.

In 2015 the Government pledged to support rural development¹ especially with high migration levels due to unaffordable housing in our major cities. Flexible home-working is growing fast in rural rather than urban areas and this tends to involve higher skilled people attracted by the better quality of life on offer. At the same time, Devolution is on the horizon where rural areas will need to be far more involved locally in managing funds to attract the necessary trades and skills to develop

¹ Towards a one nation economy: A 10-point plan for boosting productivity in rural areas. Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs, August 2015

employment, affordable housing and economic growth. Technology expansion in Ipswich, Norwich and Cambridge is currently leading the way forward to achieve this provision in East Anglia.

Unfortunately half of the 329 residents living in 139 properties in Wingfield are connected to Cabinet 3 via PCP3, primary connection point in Battlesea Green, Stradbroke where most of our businesses are located with a cable route length in excess of 4.3 km. We understand that the cable between the exchange and PCP3 is aluminium instead of the usual copper reflecting an infrastructure of the 1950s. GFast is the alternative, and we understand that some areas of the village from Top Road to Church Road could benefit, but beyond this point, the signal reduces with distance making it unreliable for all parts of the village. Currently BT Openreach do not have any plans to connect Superfast broadband to Wingfield residents or businesses currently connected to PCP3. On their website, BT Openreach 'when- can-i-get-fibre' displays the current message under 'Cabinet Fibre Journey' for PCP3 postcodes:

"WE ARE EXPLORING SOLUTIONS: We're working with government and industry to explore ways to bring Superfast fibre to as many people as possible but don't have a plan for your area yet. You might consider co-funding fibre access in your community."

Bleach Green and Earsham Street and all properties connected to the Fressingfield exchange are enabled and will receive Superfast Broadband within the next four months. We are heading for a **village divided** which will not only impact on residents working from home connected to PCP3 but will also affect future property sales as Rightmove lists Internet speeds against all properties online.

Mount Everest Base Camp has a better Internet speed than parts of Wingfield.

Without an effective fast broadband connection in this highly competitive market, and with the existing poor infrastructure invested by BT in Wingfield, it is unlikely that we will see an improvement in housing, employment and economic growth. Yet at the same time we have several businesses and individuals in the village that rely on a reliable fast broadband connection to develop their work and staffing. They are currently experiencing a constant uphill struggle to maintain adequate speeds to carry out their everyday business transactions. This will further impact on people or businesses wishing to move to the village seeking local employment in the area, or those who wish to work from home and commute to London, Ipswich and Norwich.

In the centre of the village, St Andrews Church, Wingfield Barns, Wingfield College and the De la Pole Arms, all historic listed buildings in a conservation area, form the hub of the village attracting visitors and tourists from a wide area, including The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge who attended a friend's wedding in the church in 2012. East Anglia is one of the fastest growing tourist regions in the country and is an important part of the development programme for the rural growth in the region. We would like to think that Wingfield contributes to this strategic plan with its rich cultural history and heritage.

Please see the attached PDF document with a small cross section of local postcodes in Wingfield village with average Internet speeds taken over the Bank Holiday weekend 27th - 29th March 2016, all connected to the Stradbroke Exchange PCP3.

The following businesses are connected to the above:

Wingfield Barns IP21 5RA: Visual and performing arts, conferences, education, weddings, venue hire and community events attracting visitors in East Anglia and beyond. www.wingfieldbarns.com

Wingfield College IP21 5RA: Invitation to View: www.invitationtoview.co.uk/properties/wingfield-college/

Cone Tree Nurseries IP21 5QZ: Wholesale company, selling to garden centres and nurseries in East Anglia. www.conetreenursery.co.uk/

Cowhams Garage IP21 5QT: Accident and body repair, vehicle hire, tyres and M.O.Ts.
www.cowhams.co.uk/

Swingletree Stables IP21 5QZ: One of the largest carriage driving centres in Europe.
www.swingletree.co.uk/

GWC Equestrian Centre IP21 5RB: Venue hire; training, clinics, shows and equestrian events
www.gwcequestriancentre.com/

Holly Tree House IP21 5RG: Bed and Breakfast. 100% 5 star reviews on
TripAdvisor. www.hollytreehousebandb.co.uk/ (one of the lowest speeds in the village due to the
distance from PCP3)

Alldis Associates, Holly Tree House IP21 5RG: Commercial, interior design and exhibitions in
UK and Europe.

The Online Letting Agents: The Old Rectory, Vicarage Road IP21 5RB: A national letting
agency. www.theonlinelettingagents.co.uk/ (unable to run the business from home due to poor
Internet speeds, the company are now renting an office in Diss, Norfolk)

Wingfield Castle: Grade I listed, ancestral home of the Wingfield family and their heirs, the De La
Poles, Earls and Dukes of Suffolk, now a private house.

Lee Smith Scrap Metals Ltd. Wingfield Green IP21 5RE: Wholesale metals and metal ores
covering the East Anglia region.

G F Webster & Co Units 2-5 Corner Green Farm Wingfield Green IP21 5RE: mixed farming and
automotive repairs including classic cars.

**The above list does not include all the many private residents who rely on broadband to
work from home part-time, full-time or who commute to work in the region and London.**

Finally, may we remind ourselves of what our Prime Minister, David Cameron, said:²

***“Access to the Internet shouldn’t be a luxury; it should be a right – absolutely fundamental
to life in 21st century Britain.”***

David Young: Parish Clerk on behalf of Wingfield Parish Council

Cc: Dr D Poulter MP: Central Suffolk and North Ipswich

Guy Mc Gregor: Suffolk County Councillor

Elizabeth Gibson Harries: Mid-Suffolk District Councillor

Clive Selly: C.E.O: BT Openreach

² Department for Culture, Media & Sport, Prime Minister's Office, 10 Downing Street, The Rt. Hon David Cameron MP
and The Rt. Hon John Whittingdale MP, 7 November 2015. Part of: Broadband investment.