

## Steventon Fast Broadband Update, December 2015

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### **BACKGROUND**

On 1<sup>st</sup> October 2015 a presentation was given in the Steventon village hall on the subject of "Broadband In Steventon". An action point was agreed to "Research potential suppliers to bring faster broadband to the village, and at what terms and cost."

The slides shown at the meeting can be found on the Steventon web site at the following link:

<http://steventonvillage.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/BroadbandinSteventonSeptember2015.pdf>

This information has not been repeated in this document.

The purpose of this document is to provide an update on progress made so far. The remainder of this document is structured as follows:

- Summary
- Detailed Research

### **SUMMARY**

This section provides a summary overview of the research and conclusions so far. Hampshire County Council (HCC) and eight Internet Service Providers (ISPs) that deliver superfast broadband were contacted both by email and phone.

The "Hampshire County Council Superfast Broadband Rollout Programme" and BT Openreach (BT) are working in partnership to rollout superfast broadband. When recently asked about the date for delivery to Steventon they each provided different and conflicting answers. The earliest possible date for Steventon seems to be between January-September 2018. My impression is that detailed plans do exist between the HCC and BT for up to maybe eighteen months. Beyond that it is probably more of a wish list until proper surveys and costing are performed.

The larger ISPs such as Virgin Media deal mostly with cities and large towns, and their surrounding areas. The current level of interest from Steventon would not be cost effective for them to consider us.

A medium sized company called Call Flow looked technically very promising, offering a hybrid solution of fibre and wireless to individual rural communities. However, they are so busy that they first require a detailed plan and commitment from Steventon before they will talk to us.

Small, newly formed companies have their own challenges. A satisfactory hybrid technical solution that is cost effective can be quite complicated, with a steep learning curve and substantial experience to be first gained by the company. Such companies are probably not suitable for Steventon.

There is a small Basingstoke company called HiWiFi that we are currently working with to investigate possible options for bringing superfast broadband to the village. They are a wireless internet service provider, and provide fast broadband to areas of Basingstoke, Hannington, Hatch Warren and Beggar Wood. HiWiFi has visited Steventon to look at the lay of the land, and have had meetings with two of the businesses here. A hybrid solution of wireless and fibre is currently being investigated. See the section Detailed Research for more information about HiWiFi.

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There are two concerns for both a supplier and for us in “doing it ourselves”. Firstly the financial cost and secondly the longer term viability. If the HCC and BT do decide to bring superfast broadband to Steventon in 2018, then:

- Would we feel that our money has been wasted if we have already opted for an alternative solution?
- A supplier could lose their investment if we switched to BT.
- Would the HCC even consider installing superfast broadband in Steventon if it already had access to it?

On the other hand, Steventon may end up not being included in the HCC rollout programme in 2018.

The government has made a commitment to provide fast (not superfast) broadband to every household by 2020. Fast broadband is defined as up to 10 Mbit/s; would this be fast enough by 2020? Would they be able to afford it once they have done the sums?

In the meantime we are currently pursuing the investigations with HiWiFi.

### DETAILED RESEARCH

The following organisations were contacted:

- Hampshire County Council Superfast Broadband Rollout Programme
- BT Openreach
- hyperoptic
- Virgin Media
- Kijoma
- Vispa
- Call Flow
- Gigabeam
- HiWiFi

### **The Hampshire County Council Superfast Broadband Rollout Programme and BT Openreach**

The Hampshire County Council Superfast Broadband Rollout Programme and BT Openreach are working in partnership to rollout superfast broadband. They were both contacted specifically regarding Steventon pursuing a self-funding route. They each provided different and conflicting answers.

The HCC stated that Steventon was not in the 4% of Hampshire that is too difficult to reach with a fibre installation, and that Wave 2 Phase 5 of their rollout programme planned for January-September 2018 does cover Steventon. Therefore self-funding cannot be considered.

BT Openreach stated that Steventon is too far from the exchange for a fibre installation to be cost effective and other techniques are being explored. They suggested that the cost of a fibre installation could be between £25,000 and £50,000. The cost would be subject to detailed survey and design, and may be higher or lower.

Other suppliers suggested that the BT cost for a fibre installation in Steventon could be more in the region of hundreds of thousands of pounds once a thorough survey was done.

My impression is that detailed plans do exist between the HCC and BT for up to maybe eighteen months. Beyond that it is probably more of a wish list until proper surveys and costing are performed.

### **hyperoptic**

hyperoptic is an internet provider that installs fibre all the way to the premises. This eliminates peak-time slowdowns, buffering and timeouts, and enables gigabit connectivity. They have been awarded the "Best Superfast Broadband" accolade at the 2015 Internet Services Providers Association (ISPA) awards for the third year running.

hyperoptic focuses on bringing its services into developments with fifty or more units, and require everyone in an area to register their interest. They seem to work mainly within cities and stated that there is currently nothing in our area, so they cannot help us.

### **Virgin Media**

For Virgin Media to bring cable to our area people must register their interest, and when there is a “hot spot” they will consider coming out.

### **Kijoma**

Kijoma is a wireless broadband provider. As their website was last updated in February 2014 this company was not investigated further.

### **Vispa**

Vispa is a wireless broadband provider. They focus on areas that are considered to be “broadband not spots” or where customers are too far from their telephone exchange to receive broadband at all. Unfortunately, they only operate in the north of the country.

### **Call Flow**

Call Flow builds bespoke networks that are designed for each individual rural area.

They are able to link their own cabinets to BT’s street cabinets to achieve a solution broadly similar to BT Infinity. Call Flow claim to be the only UK company with their cables deployed on BT poles and ducts under Ofcom regulated “infrastructure sharing”. They have also been a wireless internet service provider for over ten years. Therefore, Call Flow is able to use a combination of fibre and wireless capabilities to deliver a hybrid solution that fits the specific requirements of a rural area.

An installation must be able to attract 30 - 50 customers. Call Flow ask for evidence that this threshold is likely to be reached through an agreed pre-registration process undertaken by the community co-ordinator or by the parish council.

They also require detailed plans from communities interested in working with them. These plans must include: Type of solution preferred and why; Options for reducing cost of installations, for example, can ducting for cables be dug cheaply or for free; Host sites provisionally agreeable to accommodating radio aerials; An outline network plan; Maximum loan amount likely, and planned lenders (residents, businesses or a combination); Forecast customer numbers, and if this aligns with loan amount.

As such a commitment and plan is required upfront, this company was not investigated further.

### Gigabeam

Gigabeam primarily focus on customers that are in geographic areas not serviced by high speed internet (typically less than 10 Mbit/s). They will rollout their own network, using gigabit fibre where they can, then connect the last hop to customers homes and businesses via high-speed wireless links.

The business was created in June 2015 and when contacted in November 2015 they had not yet gone live. The rollout to their first customers was imminent. They had a few villages lined up near Winchester and Kingsclere.

This company was not investigated further.

### HiWiFi

HiWiFi is a small company, established in Basingstoke since 2007. They are now a wireless internet service provider, and provide fast broadband to areas of Basingstoke, Hannington, Hatch Warren and Beggar Wood.

The director has visited Steventon to investigate the lay of the land, and has had meetings with a couple of the businesses here. There are technical challenges to bringing wireless internet to Steventon as it is quite hilly and there are a lot of trees. However, these issues can be overcome if a number of home owners or landowners with properties on high ground would be willing to host aerials or repeaters, on their buildings or even in their trees, to beam a wireless signal around Steventon.

A hybrid solution of fibre and wireless is currently being investigated together with HiWiFi, as follows.

There are several ways that fibre could be brought to Steventon:

- It seems that every main railway line across Britain has buried fibre optic cable running alongside it, so could we tap into that?
- HiWiFi felt it worth checking if BT Openreach already has fibre optic cable running under or near to Steventon.
- What would the cost be of a BT Openreach fibre installation running from the North Waltham cabinet to the easiest and nearest point in Steventon by road?
- What would the cost be if a private company installed fibre in the village?
- Could we dig some of the trenches across land ourselves?

Wireless options:

- What is the cost of erecting a wireless mast in Steventon?
- Investigate possible "lines of site" between the houses on high ground.

It may be easier to phase in a fast broadband solution to interested businesses first, and then extend to the rest of the village.