

Report on Broadband Developments

There have been several developments since the last report to the Parish Meeting.

In May, some of the LAP Broadband Pioneers met with Barry Forde to discuss various issues around small-scale BB provision. Barry Forde was instrumental in setting up the CLEO network (Cumbria and Lancashire Education Online) and is technically very knowledgeable. This was a general discussion to explore what technologies might be available to us and was very informative.

At the last LAP meeting (13 June) there was a lot of concern voiced at various aspects of the CCC Accessible Cumbria project. As a result it was agreed that the LAP chairman would write to CCC to express our concerns about

- project management - CCC committee structure & proliferating peripheral groups
- poor (non-existent) communication with ground level participants
- lack of technical support for local groups
- perceived lack of priority given to rural communities

As a result of this letter the lead Councillor (Elizabeth Mallinson) has agreed to meet with representatives of the UKLAP to discuss these concerns. The date has not yet been fixed.

In early July, John Farmer (Longsleddale) and myself met with the directors of Kencomp - a company that provides small-scale wireless BB solutions in South Lakeland. They have agreed to provide outline plans for a wireless BB service for Kentmere and Longsleddale. We expect to have these sometime soon.

In early July I met with the MD of Krypton TV Ltd to discuss the possibilities of a satellite BB service in Kentmere. One resident has already invested in a satellite service and Pete & I intend to follow suit. This will give us a chance to evaluate the service and explore whether the service is suitable for rolling out further.

On a wider front the communications regulator, Ofcom, is to force BT Wholesale to reduce the amount it charges other internet service providers (ISPs) to use its networks. It has ruled that BT must reduce its charge to ISPs each year, by a rate of at least 12 percentage points below inflation. As a result of this, it is hoped that homes and businesses in rural parts of the UK could receive better value broadband services.

Comments

In my view I think it is unlikely that the Accessible Cumbria Project will provide Kentmere with a BB service based on a fibre-optic cable up the valley - the cost would be prohibitive. In spite of the Ofcom ruling, the chances of a commercial company doing this are also slim as it would not be commercially viable. Because of this, I think we have to explore the two options of wireless and satellite. If we can come up with feasible solutions using either of these two technologies we should be able to get grants towards at least some of the capital costs. What we will not get grants for is the on-going rental costs, i.e. what people currently pay to their ISP for their BB service. Likely costs for an improved BB service could be in the region of £25-£30 pm.

I propose to continue looking at wireless and satellite solutions and will bring forward some suggestions when I have more information. If any residents would be interested in taking part in a pilot project, please could they get in contact with me. (jackie@bettess.co.uk)

Jackie Bettess