

## **Broadband report for Kentmere Parish Meeting on 08 May 2017**

I have been asked by several residents to clarify some details regarding the project to install fibre Broadband in Kentmere. Hopefully most of the queries are answered below.

### **The National Picture**

The Broadband (BB) project in Kentmere is part of a very large Government initiative to ensure everyone has access to a decent BB service. They set up a body called Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) which is responsible for specifying the rules and the targets and allocating funds. The following links give more information.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/broadband-delivery-uk>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2010-to-2015-government-policy-broadband-investment/2010-to-2015-government-policy-broadband-investment#appendix-1-superfast-broadband-benefits>

So this is the national picture and following is the Kentmere project background.

### **The Kentmere Project**

Cumbria County Council set up a body called Connecting Cumbria (CC) to manage the deployment of BB in Cumbria. There was a lot of preliminary discussion between the end of 2010 and 2011 but eventually CCC went out to tender and the contract was awarded to BT in September 2012 and the contract officially signed in November 2012. In order to maximise resources within the Connecting Cumbria project, CC adopted a policy of communicating via local representatives (called Hub Co-ordinators). To that end I have been attending various meetings for several years to try to ensure Kentmere was kept within any initiative to allocate funds.

- The money for the Kentmere project came from State Aid and not BT. That meant the deployment of BB had to adhere to the rules and targets set out by BDUK and Connecting Cumbria (CC) managed the project according to those rules and targets. Consequently, Kentmere along with all the other parishes in Cumbria were not in a position to influence the process.
- The main stipulation was that the cost per premise should not exceed BDUK's cap and also there was a requirement to achieve the maximum connectivity for each £ spent. The Kentmere deployment was very near the limits. I feel we are very lucky that Kentmere 'came out of the hat' and that CC managed to keep this project within the BDUK budget. Longsleddale have not been so lucky.

The first the Parish (including myself) knew of the project was in August 2016 when white chalk marks appeared on the road near Low Bridge. I then contacted CC who put me in touch with Openreach so that I could relay information to residents.

In September 2016 notices were posted informing residents that poles would have to be erected between Boundary Beck and Hellwell Lane to carry the fibre. If people wished to object, they could write to Openreach.

At the last Parish Meeting in November 2016, residents were concerned about the poles. It was suggested that if residents felt strongly about the poles they could try to raise the money for under-grounding but I am not aware of any initiative to do so. As agreed at the Meeting, Peter Lansberry and myself went to Penrith to discuss with CC the possibility of under-grounding the fibre. After a detailed and informative discussion it was explained to us that under-grounding was not possible for the following reasons.

- The land between Boundary Beck and Helwell Lane is very difficult to dig - it is broken up by walls, fences, hedges and drains and many large boulders lie quite close to the surface. The difficult terrain made it impossible for Openreach to use their machinery so hand-trenching would be needed in a lot of places.

- The cost for Openreach to underground the fibre is approximately 4 times higher than on poles and so the cost of the Project would have been too high to go ahead.
- The possibility of a self-dig was considered but rejected by CC because of previous experiences of a self-dig trying to trench a valley similar to Kentmere. It is not a matter of just digging a trench.

We pushed Connecting Cumbria hard on this issue to reflect the overall strength of feeling at the Parish Meeting, but it was obvious that they would not accept this. Peter and I then tried to communicate this to the landowners in December 2016. So at that point it was known that there definitely would be poles.

Work started on the project proper in February 2017. On 14 February, I drove/walked the route with an Openreach engineer and at that point obtained agreement for 'break-out' points which would enable Kentmere residents between Staveley and Hellwell Lane to apply for a Fibre to the Premise (FTTP) service even though this was outside the CC project. I will contact those residents about the FTTP service when I have more information. I was also told that negotiations had already begun with two landowners regarding wayleaves for the poles.

On 19 March a message was sent to residents to let them know about road closures to enable the poles to be erected, the trees to be cut back and the fibre strung. Work started on this on 27 March and although this did not go entirely to plan and caused some inconvenience to residents, the work was eventually completed on 12 April. Currently we are now waiting for Electricity North West (ENW) to provide the power to the green cabinet at Pumple Syke. Negotiations with ENW have been time-consuming and further complicated by them working from out-of-date plans and photographs but this was eventually sorted out when they made a site visit on 27 April. They now have to issue the correct wayleave forms and schedule the work. I have been told that this may still take some weeks.

### **Who will benefit?**

The Kentmere Project was designed and costed to serve the properties in postcodes LA8 9JL and LA8 9JP. I have been told that there should be some improvement to speeds at Hallow Bank but a resident at Hallow Bank has also been told they are too far away for speeds to improve so we will have to wait and see. It is also Connecting Cumbria's long-term aim to bring superfast BB to all of Cumbria so the BB in Kentmere should make it easier to reach further into Kentmere when funds become available. As mentioned above, those Kentmere properties between Staveley and Hellwell Lane have the possibility of applying for a FTTP service.

### **What next?**

No firm timescale is available for the completion of the project but when the cabinet goes 'live' I will let residents know. *If you want to use the new fibre service you will have to apply for it. It will not happen automatically.* Meanwhile I will prepare some information to help residents to get the best deal out of their current ISP (or some other ISP).

Finally, I must emphasise that this project was not initiated by Kentmere Parish Meeting and the Meeting had no control over how the project was run. I have acted as a liaison between CC and Openreach and the residents but it was CC's project and they ran it according to BDUK rules and targets. If residents feel strongly about the poles then they are still at liberty to co-ordinate a project to raise the money to underground the fibre.

Jackie Bettess  
April 30 2017

I would like to thank Peter Lansberry and Roger Dewhurst who have both helped me with various aspects of my efforts to bring BB to Kentmere.