

Blackdown Hills  
 Parish Network  
 Steering Group

MINUTES BHPN STEERING GROUP Monday 6 September 2021 at 10.00 via Zoom

**Attendance:**

Heather Stallard	Chair, Hemyock parish rep
Catherine Bass	Co-ordinator
Daniel Lazar	Membury PC
Alison Weekes	Clayhidon PC
Graham Long	Uptontery PC
Mike Canham	Otterford PC <i>joined 10.45</i>

**Apologies**

Ken Pearson	Clerk to Stockland PC
Bob Nelson	Broadhembury PC
Alex Stevens	Uptontery PC
Roger Habgood	CLlr Monument, SW&TD

Guest : Andrew Kerby (Gigaclear - Community liaison SW) joined the meeting at 10.46)

1. **Apologies** received from KP, BN, AS and post mtg, RH Who                      When
  
2. **Minutes of Steering group mtg**  
**Agreed** minutes of 17 March 2021.
  
3. **Matters arising**
  - a. **CB** will write to AONB manager Tim Youngs explaining that meetings requested by the BHPN with the local MPs are not open to attendance by the AONB. The allocated time offered by the MPs is always short, and if the AONB has a particular matter to raise, they can do this directly with the MPs. CB                      now
  - b. Noted that the outcome of the unitary status decision had resulted in Govt supporting the single unitary route for the whole of Somerset, rather than 2 unitaries aligned with two each of the existing local authorities. Await further information via Somerset LAs & parishes
  
4. **Finance**  
 Current balance £909.82. Neroche parishes have re-joined, one or two previous members still to confirm intent to contribute in 2021/2022 year.  
 £150 recently paid for website maintenance.
  
5. **AONB requests to share information with parishes** CB                      With 3a response  
**CB** will seek clarification on emailed requests from the AONB to distribute information to parishes. Thought to be duplicating effort and cluttering inboxes if AONB is already circulating the same info to clerks, as is apparently the case.
  
6. **Broadband**
  - a. Current updates: Noted that Andrew Kerby (not yet in the meeting) had assisted in the free renewal of Smeatharpe Hall Gigaclear B-b service.
  - b. No information available on overall Airband progress in B-b roll out in Blackdowns. No information from CDS either, although **DL** reported that Airband has been surveying in Membury with a view to commencing work in Q1 2022. However, if users already receive an 'adequate' 30Mb connection they will not be included unless they pay for an out of contract connection.
  - c. Govt rollout of £5bn Project Gigabit will not benefit Devon or Somerset until 2025 at earliest.
  - d. There is much commercial activity in several areas across and on the margins of the AONB from providers such as BT, Gigaclear, Jurassic Fibre & Truespeed who are taking advantage of the lack of CDS/Airband activity to supply rural areas with a variety of upgraded options. Gigaclear is the only one offering ftp. Others are either offering inferior fttc or GPON access. Pole sharing via Openreach n/w, where underground fibre laying is non-viable, is now an option for commercial operators, however BT is not making this easy.

**Andrew Kerby** joined the meeting at 10.46, introducing himself as the Gigaclear's Community Liaison officer for the SW. (*post meeting it transpires he is also a Dorset County Councillor, Cons, representing Winterbourne North*) and gave an overall summary of Gigaclear's (GC) programme in the area.

1. GC's current interests in the SW are purely commercial, no reliance on other partners, owned by Infracapital, EU based infrastructure division of M&G Investment Management, operating as AltNet UK.
2. Install only fttp with capacity to offer 900 Mbps symmetrical service. BT offer is fttc, at best 80 Mbps down, 20 Mbps upload.
3. GC aims to work commercially, researching viability, designing potential routes, identifying obstacles and on ground mapping (showed detailed maps on screen having ascertained the meeting was not being recorded).
4. Outsource the actual build to subcontractors.
5. Previously the majority of GC installations were done by trench installation, however the Openreach pole network is now open for use by other suppliers. Trench installations have to be fully reinstated within 6m of the work.

**Qu.** GC is completing the original commercial backbone commenced in 2016 and curtailed when CDS withdrew their contract in 2018. How does anyone express interest in connection outside of this planned area?

- A.** Officially those areas are supported by CDS's Airband rollout, but GC is happy to talk with parish councils about community led projects which can demonstrate a commercial need. Individual needs are of less interest but could be included.

**Comment:** BHPN could go to all parishes to determine interest in developing projects, **AK** offered to work on the wording of such a proposition.

**Qu.** Airband is working on dates to supply postcodes in Membury to supply inferior service; if this were pointed out to potential users could they petition for a GC service instead?

- A.** No point in 2 providers operating in the same area at once.

**Comment:** When BDUK funds CDS operations, there is a preset cost / property which is not publicised, which suggest that only properties below that threshold will be served. GC and Jurassic Fibre have their own costings and could start rolling out the service, why wait in Membury? GC could act as fast with a better outcome for households, how many domestic connections are required to be cost effective? **AK** replied that this is dependent on many variables, fully aware of competitor activity.

**Qu.** With regard to mobile network connection, 5G and 4G, is there provision for 5G in the GC plans?

- A.** Possibly

**Qu.** What provision is there for retrospective connection to the GC network as it is rolled out?

- A.** A connection pot is installed outside every premise as it is passed while installing the commercial network to enable future domestic connections.

**Comment:** noted that large housing developments do not have fttp access as a prerequisite, options only become available to new owners on occupation.

#### **Discussion**

Be useful to get a response from parishes as they may well be unaware of the opportunity to get ahead of Airband roll out via community projects.

There will be no Project Gigabit funding for CDS until 2025 because they challenged the programme as interfering and not value for money. The press has virtually ignored all alerts to this situation.

**AK** left the meeting at 11.44.

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**GL** suggests that commercially for GC this is still a numbers game, they will leave poor service areas outside their commercial route alone unless potential customers are prepared to shout very loud. **HS** concerned that rural businesses, working from home will suffer.

**7. Agricultural building and light shielding in the AONB:**

Requirement for adequate shielding for both these issues is really down to the Local Planning Authorities and is indicative of the difference between guidance issued for National Parks as opposed to AONBs. LPAs tend only to follow up after complaints and even then have no enforcement option. Parish Councils have even less influence. LPAs should take more account of the BHAONB guidelines. **CB** to look at the current guidelines and discuss possibility of developing suitable wording with Lisa Turner ( AONB office) for all PCs to use in comments on planning apps.

CB

Before next meeting

**8. AGM date, format, topic:**

Date: Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> November 7.15 for 7.30, CB to circulate date to all clerks  
 Venue: tba  
 Topics: Broadband and climate  
 Develop further at next meeting

CB

End  
 September

**9. AOB**

**Carbon Footprint tool**

**GL** queried the very high 'coal burning' input of Upottery with developers at U of Exeter. Coal apparently also includes wood burning stoves. Redesign of that element of the tool is unlikely without further funding.

**10. Date of next meeting tbd**

Meeting closed at 12.20