

Lies, Damn Lies and Broadband Speeds

Recently OFCOM have aired concern that the speeds advertised by BT, Talk Talk and virtually everyone else were misleading and not representative of the actual speeds obtained by actual customers.

There are new guidelines being discussed and if you having been watching closely I believe BT have stopped claiming up to 76Mb/s in very large letters for their high speed “fibre” broadband product in their adverts and in much smaller letters it now says a lot less for their high speed service which is closer to reality for an average customer. I understand that they have also been told to stop using the word fibre in their advertisements in a misleading way and to make it clear that their product is not fibre to the home.

Now BT are according to their website; Britain's “most popular Broadband Supplier”. You might believe this to mean that their customers like them, but they have the second lowest score on the Which consumer satisfaction survey of 45%* so we shall guess they mean something else. I believe they have been consistently asked to be much clearer and more accurate in their advertising which I believe is the Advertising Standards Agency's polite way of saying stop setting out to mislead the public. Where does that leave the rest of us in trying to find out what speed you will get before you sign a new contract with either BT or a less “popular” alternative?

If you current supplier is using the BT wiring to get to you, and another supplier is using the same wiring to get to you: - Ignore all the promises and expect the same speed. There is a technical limit to the speed that can be pushed down the wire and it is do with Noise on the Line and Length. These are not materially affected by supplier choice. These lines are maintained by BT Openreach and you will have seen their vans in the parish because they seem to be here all the time.

In the last few days of writing the Government has told BT Openreach that by 2020 it must provide 10Mb/s to *any* household in the UK that requests it. The 10Mb/s is well judged as really it is all you need for day to day usage. You won't be able to stream HD easily, but everything else should work reasonably well. It has not agreed pricing, installation time or any possible state subsidy yet with BT. But if you want to stay with a traditional fixed line provider it looks like you will be able to do that if you are happy waiting at least 2 years for it. Historically that would have been your only choice.

There are also two alternatives in the Parish if you wanted something a little faster now.

BT / Talk Talk etc Standard 1Mb/s to 4Mb/s service around £30 to £40 a month
18 Month minimum contract.
Comes with Phone Line.

Gigaclear up to 100Mb/s service around £50 a month
cheaper and faster options available
Installation usually £250+ but Offers available. 18 Month minimum contract.
Available everywhere now.

WBCB up to 100Mb/s service £25 a month
Installation £150. 30 Day rolling agreement
Wi-Fi help and guidance provided
Becoming Available Everywhere in the Parish
Free Trial maybe possible.

Andy
West Berks Community Broadband
By the Community: For the Community

* The best land-line based service was Zen Internet at 86%. The worst Talk Talk with 36%