

From: **David Cooper**
Date: 6 February 2014 16:05
Subject: BT Superfast Broadband Capacity
To: enquiries@superfastsurrey.org.uk

Dear SuperfastSurrey,

I have been following the Public Accounts Committee meetings with BDUK and BT and hope that you may be able to answer my question. To explain, at the latest PAC meeting on the 27th January 2014 a question about whether the local authority superfast deployments are based on the same technical and commercial parameters as BTs commercial deployment was answered by Sean Williams, who said:

“Yes, the technical configuration, the cost structures, our suppliers and the rates, are the same in our commercial footprint as in the BDUK areas. They are highly sensitive pieces of information for our businesses.”

I know that BT initially deploy ducting, cables and cabinets to cover approximately one third of the premises. Some areas in Surrey, within BT’s commercial footprint, are experiencing extreme delays and inaction from BT while waiting for the initial limited capacity to be increased and it seems that BT may be reluctant to increase it for a small number of extra premises. The increase in capacity in many cases requires further street works to install more ducting, cables and sometimes an additional cabinet. The delay is what we may expect from a commercial company without any competition.

However, my concern is that we are continually told by SCC that in excess of 99% of premises will have access when the project completes later this year. Therefore my questions are;

1. Given that BT as a matter of policy only initially deploy infrastructure to cover approximately one third of premises, who will pay for the capacity to be increased after the contract completes and who will make sure it happens in a reasonable time and it works?
2. Are there any safeguards in the SCC contract with BT to ensure that the investment of public money actually secures access to greater than 99% of premises.

I look forward to your reply.

David Cooper

From: xxxx
Sent: 11 February 2014 09:39
Subject: Fwd: BT Superfast Broadband Capacity

Dear Mr Cooper

Thank you for your email.

Surrey Country Council partnership funding is paying for additional infrastructure to extend the fibre network to premises within the Superfast Surrey Intervention Area.

The Superfast Surrey Broadband Programme contract is only in relation to the 84,000 homes and businesses in our Intervention Area. The contract includes a series of milestones and payment penalties and Surrey County Council is overseeing the delivery of the contract to ensure that the contract is delivered within the agreed timeframes.

Kind regards

xxxx

On 11 February 2014 12:35, David Cooper wrote:

Dear xxxx,

Thank you for your prompt reply. However, have you missed the point of my e-mail?

I fully understand the scope of the Superfast Surrey Broadband Programme and the 84,000 homes and businesses in the Intervention Area.

The point is that in the Intervention Area, BT are using the same methods as in their commercial deployments, which means they are initially not installing enough infrastructure to and in each new cabinet to allow access for all businesses and premises. Access for those that are not initially covered depends upon BT installing at a later date further ducting, cables and in some cases another new cabinet. BT and SCC publicise premises having access for each new cabinet with all homes and businesses included despite only approximately one third having access after the initial deployment. Based on the statistics published, SCC seems to believe that the job is completed after the initial installation of each cabinet.

This state of affairs is likely to remain until demand for connections exceeds the initial installed capacity and for many cabinets this could be after completion of the SCC contract with BT. Once the initial threshold is reached, BT may be reluctant to increase capacity. Based on experience so far, there will definitely be long delays why they decide whether to do anything and if they do go ahead, further significant delay because of the necessary street works.

Therefore, I am afraid that your reply does not answer my questions. I would be pleased to receive clarification based on my questions, as it appears to me to be misleading to claim almost full coverage when only approximately one third of premises are actually covered.

Best Regards

David Cooper

From: xxxx
Sent: 11 February 2014 14:48
To: David Cooper
Cc: enquiries superfast
Subject: Re: BT Superfast Broadband Capacity

Dear David

Thank you for clarifying your queries. Please find below our response.

1. As you are aware, the objective of the Superfast Surrey programme is to roll-out the fibre network as far as possible into Surrey so that the 84,000 homes and businesses can access this fibre network if they choose to. BT has developed a deployment plan that offers the best value for money, reach and timescales for Surrey. As part of this plan, the capacity of fibre take-up has been carefully considered to cater for the expected demand. Once the cabinet has been connected to the fibre network, further expansion becomes a commercial decision determined by BT including timescales etc. Should high demand be experienced, then BT have the ability to add additional cards or even an additional cabinet should that be warranted. There have already been several examples of demand requiring the installation of additional cards and these have been installed by BT at their expense.

2. The Superfast Surrey Programme contract is based on deployment of fibre-based infrastructure to the 84,000 homes and residents in the Intervention Area. Surrey County Council does not have oversight over the commercial roll-outs of either BT or Virgin Media as this is commercially sensitive information.

Kind regards

xxxx

On 13 Feb 2014, at 09:39, David Cooper wrote:

Dear xxxx,

Thank you for confirming the detail of the SCC/BT fibre deployment.

I now understand that the £21.3 million of public investment will buy what BT /SCC expect as an initial demand with any further demand being down to BT to meet after the initial deployment.

I offer the following comments questions (some rhetorical) as a means to bring forward “the benefit of retrospect”. The things of concern are apparent to some now, but will not become apparent to the residents and businesses in Surrey until it is too late, especially with deluded statements about numbers and speeds as for example here; <http://www.surreymirror.co.uk/Council-s-99-broadband-pledge/story-19338730-detail/story.html>

1. Those interested in the BT / SCC project have observed that for the new installed cabinets, BT are not providing the full number of tie cables between the old and new cabinets, thus limiting the initial capacity to 100 premises. Is SCC paying for new cabinets loaded with the full complement of line cards despite the limitation being the tie cable?

2. Future installation of tie-cables, often involves excavation to provide more ducting, which will cause further delays. Surely, the public money should be spent to ensure that the necessary “hard” infrastructure in the ground is installed from the start, thus avoiding further street disruptions and delays, which in any case could provide BT a commercial reason for not increasing the capacity, unless they secure further public funding.

3. Clawback from BT of state-aid under the EU regulations depends on set demand thresholds being exceeded. How do the likely delays in meeting future demand affect the ability for SCC to claw back subsidy?

I hope the above comments are useful to your project and of course, I will be happy to have my concerns allayed by any comments you may have on my perception of the project.

Best Regards

David Cooper

Tue 18/02/2014 12:17

Dear David

1. The capacity of fibre take-up has been carefully considered by BT to cater for the expected demand and cards have been installed accordingly. As previously advised, should high demand be experienced, then BT have the ability to add additional cards or even an additional cabinet should that be warranted. There have already been several examples of demand requiring the installation of additional cards in cabinets within our roll-out and these have been installed by BT at their expense.

2. £20 million is being invested into this programme by Surrey County Council to extend the fibre broadband network as far as possible into Surrey. The infrastructure that has been installed is part of a deployment plan that offers the best value for money, reach and timescales for Surrey.

3. Clawback does not come in play until after the Superfast Surrey roll-out has been completed. Initial indications are that the take-up of fibre broadband in our deployment area is high and when cards are filled, Openreach have organised the installation of new cards within a few weeks.

4. When an exchange is enabled to the fibre network, that does not mean that all the cabinets off it will be connected (RFS) at the same time. That is why we provide a postcode checker on our website and also direct residents to the BT Wholesale checker which provides indicative broadband speeds to a home or business.

Kind regards

xxxx

Sun 23/02/2014 21:41

Dear xxxx,

Thank you for your reply.

I understand that it is a relatively simple matter to increase capacity by adding cards to meet increased demand but in most cases the capacity is limited by the number of two wire circuits

connected between the old PCP cabinet and the new fibre cabinet. This is usually limited to 100 services after the initial installation.

My concern is that the headline statistics from BT and SCC lead the public to believe that the project will provide 99.7% access to superfast broadband by the end of 2014. BT could not make a commercial justification to provide access to those in the intervention area so it is difficult to see how the SCC contract will guarantee that BT will complete further considerable street works either during or after the contract completes to increase capacity.

We question the ability of BT to install sufficient extra tie cables in a single duct to meet the full capacity of a new 288 cabinet without further repeated street works. In detail, in some places to provide full capacity it will be necessary to pull a total of four more 100 pair cables, through a 90mm duct nearly 50 meters long with sharp entry bends and already containing the initial two 100 pair cables, four fibre tubes and a five pair telemetry cable. Given that this is not possible, further duct(s) will need to be installed at considerable expense and disruption. Again, how can SCC guarantee that BT will actually do this as demand increases?

We have already seen considerable delays awaiting such works in BT's commercial deployment area where an apparent reluctance by BT is disguised by disinformation to, for example, persuade customers that their line is too long, when in fact it is not. This does not bode well for any further upgrade work to get anywhere near the 99.7% promise.

I notice that Walter wrote to the Surrey Advertiser raising these questions, inviting comment from BT and/or SCC (see the text here – <http://tinyurl.com/oeb5hhk>)

Now that we have answers on the “who pays” for the upgrades, do you think this should be reported in the Surrey Advertiser?

Kind Regards

David Cooper