

Reports for Brightling Parish Council meeting 20th September 2023

This report covers 4 topics:

- Welcome packs
- Environment Strategy
- Web site
- Broadband

Welcome packs

The updated welcome pack is now ready to use, and I will email or print copies on request.

I have not in fact received any requests since the new welcome pack was developed, back in March 2023.

Environment strategy

I contacted officers at Rother to discuss my concerns about the “Rother Village Halls Energy Project – Site Decarbonisation Survey” report and had a meeting with Elize Manning and Dr Lucie Bolton of Rother District Council on 3rd August. Subsequently a revised report was issued with some of the mistakes corrected.

The Village Hall has not had official confirmation about whether any money will be available for energy efficiency and decarbonisation upgrades, but I think it unlikely that any money will be allocated to Brightling Village Hall. Taking all the village halls in aggregate, it is clear that the best return on investment will be to concentrate the available money on buildings that could benefit from fabric upgrades, in particular loft and wall insulation – which has already been done at Brightling.

A member of Brightling Environment Group attended the Dark Skies Planning session on Tuesday 11th July. I don't yet have a report of this meeting, but I should have an update after the next meeting of Brightling Environment Group, on 1 October.

I have attended two sessions of “Energy Champion” training at the Town Hall. These were delivered by Energise Sussex Coast. Details of what this is about can be seen at <https://www.rother.gov.uk/news/rother-welcomes-its-first-cohort-of-energy-champions/>

Web site

The site continues to be hosted by Rother District Council.

The main contributors are me, the Parish Clerk, Jane Beard, and Chris Wing. If other contributors want to come forward I would be very happy to get them a logon and give any necessary training.

Broadband

The project to bring full fibre broadband (with speeds of up to 900 Mbps) for Netherfield Village / Brightling / Woods Corner got the go-ahead from BT Openreach on 8th July 2022. The timescale was broadly 6 months planning, 6 months physical delivery, giving an original delivery deadline of July 2023. Subsequently I was told that the project was running late but would be complete by the end of 2023.

The last official progress report that I received was on 11 August, as follows:

| PONID | No. of premises | Area | Status |
|-------|-----------------|----------------------------------|---|
| V8001 | 48 | Cackle Street, Darwell Hole area | Were previously expected early August; no further information. |
| V8009 | 41 | Woods Corner | Virtually there now as well. Expected completion date now 18/8/23 |

| PONID | No. of premises | Area | Status |
|-------|-----------------|--|--|
| V9007 | 29 | Netherfield Road | Fully complete: FTTP available to order now |
| V9008 | 38 | Perrymans Lane, Willingford Lane, Mount area, and road to Woods corner | Were previously expected early August; no further information. |
| V9010 | 51 | Central Brightling, Ox Lodge area and upper part of Cackle St | Were previously expected early August; no further information. |
| V9012 | 46 | Darwell Hill | Fully complete: FTTP available to order now |

I have learned from Irene Marshall that she now has FTTP broadband, ordered and installed. I suspect that this means that the whole of Woods Corner (PONID V8009) is live. If this is the case then the project is roughly 50% delivered.

It is not clear whether the “expected completion” date includes the quality check and commissioning or whether it refers just to the physical build and would need to be followed by the quality check and commissioning.

It will be apparent that the progress information supplied by BT / Openreach is not as helpful as it might be. I have requested an updated progress report but the Project Manager is on holiday until 2 October.

Four properties from the Mountfield Park Farm area were excluded from the original scheme on grounds of cost. After pressure from me, Openreach re-looked at this area and realised that they are much closer to Mountfield Lane than they are to Brightling Road (which is where their phone lines currently come from), thus raising the prospect that they could be included. Unfortunately I still do not have clarity on whether there has been any progress as a result of this.

Unlike many broadband projects, there is no legal contract with BT Openreach and no cash deposit has been required. In particular there is no commitment from the Parish Council. The only commitment is from individuals who have pledged that when the new service becomes available, they will sign up to take the new service for a minimum of 12 months.

Andrew Wedmore