

Reports for Brightling Parish Council meeting 10th July 2024

This report covers 3 topics:

- Web site
- Broadband
- Environment – Park Pale solar farm

Katrina is reporting on the Environment Strategy generally.

Web site

The village website is at <https://brightling.community>.

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

The site continues to be hosted by Rother District Council, free of charge.

Since my last report two months ago there has been one episode where the site was “down” – for about 24 hours. I notified RDC IT department and they got it running again. However they did not actually reply to my email or provide an explanation.

Broadband

Progress has been made regarding the 4 properties in the Mountfield Park Farm area (these properties are within Brightling parish, by the way). Telegraph poles have been installed down the drive from Mountfield Lane a CBT (connectorized block terminal) has been installed and fibre has been spliced to the inline junction box at Park Pale. At this rate they may have full fibre FTTP by mid-August, although the official estimate is still mid-October.

This will leave just one property in the parish without access to full fibre: Phoebe’s Shaw on Perrymans Lane / Fontridge Lane. This is because this property is connected to the Burwash telephone exchange rather than the Brightling exchange. Today I have learned that the Burwash exchange is to be converted to FTTP by Openreach on a commercial basis (ie without public subsidy) with a completion date of December 2026. Therefore I am hopeful that Phoebe’s Shaw is covered by the new Openreach contract and will get FTTP by the end of 2026. I have not yet communicated this to the owners; I will try and get firm confirmation first.

This could also be good news (eventually) for the good people of Burwash (and the bad ones, for that matter). I think this means that most of Burwash is on track to get FTTP by the end of 2026. I will try and find out the exact scope of the Burwash project, so that anyone interested can find out whether they are covered or not.

The project to provide FTTP to the Brightling exchange area covered more than the parish of Brightling: it included parts of Netherfield, Woods Corner and Ashburnham. One house in Ashburnham is yet to be connected (work is in hand) and there are some connectivity problems for some properties at Woods Corner. I intend to stay involved until the whole project is complete.

In May this year BT announced a revised timeline for switching customers to Digital Voice (VoIP) and has extended the target date to January 2027 (the previous target was December 2025). Some parishioners have expressed concerns about this, ie VoIP landlines will not work during a power cut unless you add extra equipment, and monitoring services such as burglar alarms and health telecare may have problems. There is quite a good explanation at <https://www.telcotitans.com/btwatch/bt-delays-digital-voice-switchover-revamps-all-ip-rollout-plan/8105.article> It might be a good idea to see if we can arrange some sort of information session in the Village Hall: perhaps we can get someone to come from BT and have a question and answer session.

If you have any queries, please drop an email to highwealdsuperfastbroadband@gmail.com

Environment – Park Pale solar project

This refers to the proposal by Southern Water to install a 1.2 MWp solar farm between the Darwell reservoir dam and the road (Mountfield Lane). Rother District Council have issued a Certificate of Legal Development. Details are at <https://planweb01.rother.gov.uk/OcellaWeb/planningDetails?reference=RR/2023/2467/O>

Following a meeting of Mountfield Parish Council on 11 June 2024 a working party was set up and Cllr Petty and I are members of this working committee. The aims of the working party are to agree mitigation measures with Southern Water, ie screening and environmental improvements which could include a new permissive footpath to the north of the reservoir which would enable one to walk all the way round the reservoir without going on a road.

The working party has had one meeting and has requested an on-site meeting with Southern Water representatives. Southern Water appear to be playing for time rather than co-operating enthusiastically, ie they have not agreed to any of the suggested dates for the on-site meeting.

Andrew Wedmore