

Reports for Brightling Parish Council meeting 13th November 2024

This report covers 3 topics:

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

Katrina is reporting on the Environment Strategy generally.

This report covers the period since the meeting on 10th July. I apologize for not producing any reports for the meeting on 9th September.

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.

I have recently added two new contributors: Katrina Blench and Nicola Magill.

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.

There have been no episodes of downtime since my last report. There is one outstanding issue: we are unable to upload gpx navigation files. This has been reported to IT support at RDC and we await a resolution.

Broadband

I have had confirmation that Phoebe's Shaw (the only property in the parish of Brightling that was not covered by the recent upgrade to full fibre) should get it by the end of 2026.

Although the project to bring full fibre broadband to the Brightling telephone exchange was notionally completed some time ago, there are still a couple of loose ends that I am pursuing.

- One of the 4 properties in the Mountfield Park Farm area now has full fibre up and running. A second one tried to order it, but the installation could not be carried out as one of the telegraph poles (installed earlier this year) to bring the fibre optic cables down from Mountfield Lane turned out to be too short! This has been raised as a complaint with Openreach and hopefully will be fixed in due course. The other two properties in this area have not yet placed an order as far as I know.
- Avenue Lodge has twice tried to order full fibre. There is a defect (missing CBT) that has prevented the installation. What should have happened is that a complaint should have been raised for Openreach to fix the fault; instead the ISP simply cancelled the order for the upgrade. The order has now been re-raised and I am trying to get Openreach to accept that there is a fault that they need to fix.

I intend to stay involved until these and any other loose ends are fixed.

Within the project, but outside the parish of Brightling, the remaining loose ends have been tied up. The one house in Ashburnham that was yet to be connected has now been connected and the connectivity problems at Woods Corner appear to have been resolved.

It is important to understand (it seems that not everyone does) that properties are not upgraded automatically to full fibre when it becomes available; you have to order it if you want it. You get a much better service on full fibre and in most cases it seems to cost no more (or even less) than the old hybrid fibre service. However, anyone moving into the area and ordering a new service will only be offered a full fibre service, with digital

voice (see next paragraph). If ordering an upgrade, it is important to include telephone as well as broadband, otherwise you will find that you have lost your landline connection, or been allocated a new landline number.

As mentioned in my July report, 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 had one on-site meeting with Southern Water representatives (which I was unable to attend), on 11th September. Southern Water subsequently wrote back, claiming to have dealt with all the points raised during the on-site meeting. The working party subsequently met, without Southern Water, on 30th October, and came to the conclusion that SW had not satisfactorily dealt with many of the points raised, and resolved to write to SW and to continue to try and improve the mitigation measures and ensure that they are fully carried out.

Separately, Brightling Parish Council are to consider raising a “complaint” (using the term loosely) with RDC about the lack of effective consultation on this and other matters. I won’t report on this further as the matter is to be fully raised at the BPC meeting.

In my opinion, the mitigation issue and the “complaint” issue are two separate strands which should not be confused or conflated.

Andrew Wedmore