

B4SH | BROADBAND FOR SURREY HILLS

Winter 2019 Update: Three Cheers for our Volunteers!

Apologies for our silence these past few months, but rest assured, we have been busy! We've made good progress since our last update. The sun shone and we worked in some truly amazing parts of the Surrey Hills with glorious views and good company.

It's Been A Year!

This month sees our first customers having been connected to the B4SH network for a whole year.

More Coverage

Our full fibre service is live around Silent Pool and Home Farm – the location of our first cabinet – plus up into The Bothy at Albury Park and the south side of The Street in Albury as far as Weston Yard. Our network has now also extended and will go live early in the New Year in northern Shamley Green. We will be able to provide service down New Road and across Blackheath reaching the rural 'out of the way' properties en route. We also have a new cabinet in Green Lane, Shamley Green which gives us the ability to keep growing our service.

Our mole plough has been deployed as much as possible, supplemented with a digger and trencher where it becomes necessary. We also managed to cross the more challenging terrain of Blackheath, a SSSI area. It's always more demanding where there are many trees, and public access, so we worked as quickly and effectively as we could to minimise impact. When revisiting sites a short time after installation it is often quite difficult to see where the duct has been installed. We continue to install our network underground to protect it from tree and squirrel damage and avoid network performance issues.



Our blowing team in action



Team camaraderie - in a trench!

Celebrating our volunteers

Over the summer we have had several new, regular volunteers which now makes it possible to run two teams on the days when we need to be installing the duct and blowing the fibre.

We are proud of our volunteers who have learnt a number of new skills over the year (one now City and Guilds trained in fibre optic communications cabling)--trenching, installing chambers, mole ploughing, splicing, fleeting-- all of which are vital to our success. We salute you all and thank you for turning out come rain or shine in gloves, sun hats and wellingtons to get involved.

Investment

We have continued to raise investment in order to grow our coverage area, hence the pull by Shamley Green to bring the service to them. Not surprisingly, the closer we get to a community, the more interest is generated, hence interest is growing in Shamley Green village itself and Smithwood Common and also in Farley Green. Again, perhaps not surprisingly, the more rural the location, the keener everyone is to invest and get involved. Rural communities are still being ignored by larger providers – in spite of what election promises are being made, this is likely to continue for companies who need to make a profit and pay shareholders.

Landowners

Our success depends on our being granted free wayleaves. We must thank all our landowners who have very generously given their time, free wayleaves and been patient as we have mole ploughed, dug or trenched across their land.

Gigabit Voucher Scheme

We are registered for the Government's Gigabit Voucher Scheme. We are being guided through the steps to claim Government funding for what we are already doing. It doesn't fund the whole installation process and the small overheads we have, but every little bit helps!

AGM

We held our first AGM on 28th October at Albury Vineyard. The meeting was attended by shareholders who unanimously approved our accounts and a small number of amendments to our Rules. We thank them for their ongoing support.

What we offer

We continue to be run largely by volunteers and offer a symmetric optical fibre to the premises (FTTP) – no copper wires, no poles, no old cabinets, no reliance on yesterday's hardware or your existing provider's network. Our pure fibre network provides a 1000Mb /1 Gig upload and download broadband speed. We are not-for-profit so keep costs to a minimum, thus are able to offer a business level service but at a residential rate - £45/month plus a standard one-off install of £150.

Extending our service – how to bring it to your area

When looking at areas to extend our service we look at a balance of getting sufficient investment, a good percentage of people taking the service and then getting volunteers to turn out and help us install. It is a great way to get a community to come together and very rewarding when we connect people, but we would love to have more people step in and help us – from digging to helping with admin.

B4SH can bring the technology to the area, but local volunteers need to be actively involved in helping us roll out this exciting network. We encourage people to help us establish land ownership, get wayleaves, scope out potential routes and establish interest.

Can you help?

Local contact/champion - We encourage people to work together as a community with a local contact(s)/champion(s) who can gather interest - Residents Associations can be helpful – and then organise a meeting where we can present our service to the residents. Follow up after that meeting is also best done by the champion to keep the ball rolling. If you have knowledge of who owns land around you, who might be interested in the service, can devote a bit of time to talking to neighbours and can form a small working party, then get in touch with us!

Network planning – Is network engineering your interest? Call us, we'd love to hear from anyone who has experience or an interest in all areas from planning to execution.

“Heavy gardening”? – Heavy gardening is how one of our lovely volunteers described the duct installation process. It doesn't just involve digging. Give us a call and we can tell you where we are working so that you can see for yourself.



Fleeting the fibre on a damp day



Splicing the super-fine fibres

More information on our website www.gigupanddown.net
Any queries to enquiries@b4sh.org.uk



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