

Name withheld response

Dear WLA Team

Thank you for your reply.

I have been thinking about how I might provide my information and it seems the best way would be to explain the issues that we are experiencing in the Walsall area by some examples of companies with whom we have been talking.

Firstly I shall attach the submissions we have made regarding an engineering company in Walsall.

We made enquiries to several different telecoms providers to see how we might improve our internet connection. The existing connection was very slow, at times limiting us to less than 256kb.

We contacted several businesses local to this industrial estate. Some were experiencing similar issues. For others who seemed to use the internet for emails only it was less of an issue. For others who wished to send and receive data in the form of files and images it was becoming a real frustration.

For example engineering company need to send and receive blueprints. Similarly a photographic studio, ***** Photography, who have to either, download their images onto memory sticks and send them by courier and/or use mobile phone data which is both slow and expensive but still faster than the internet connection on the site.

Investigations indicated that at some time in the past Virgin had run a cable onto the site to feed a telecoms mast. We hoped to be able to use this connectivity. Numerous communications over several months (we were like detectives trying to solve a crime) with various organisations including actually tracking down the mast installers eventually sent us off with a flea in our ear and no success. Virgin advised that although they had put a connection to this mast this was a private independent situation for this specific application and they had no agreement to open this connection to other users and in the immediate future no intention to extend their connectivity to the site for other users. This meant to all intents and purposes Openreach was the only potential cost effective provider.

Further enquiries indicated that Fibre availability coming from the Walsall Exchange stops at the junction of Green Lane / Hospital St / Old Birchills and starts again at the junction of Green Lane / Newfield Close. However happenstance on meeting with an Openreach engineer working on an access point in Green Lane near to the Industrial Estate in question lead us to understand that fibre actually runs past our estate. It seems whoever controls the purse strings have decided the Cabinet that serves our estate will not be connected. We were told it could be connected at a cost of some £30,000, if we paid for it. We were also told to approach our local Council for support in this project.

Something certainly seems awry here and someone somewhere knows the profitable answer. I am lead to understand that several companies in the area are paying for leased lines at great cost compared with Fibre connectivity.

The attachments are a draft of a letter to our local MP Mr Winnick followed by a reply several weeks later from the UK Minister. We sent a reply and received a reply from our MP and another from the Minister basically informing us that if Openreach did not want to activate the relevant cabinet that

was their commercial decision (we seem to have temporarily mislaid this reply. But we should be able to access a file copy, if required). Hence seeking out your investigation and writing to you.

To further rub salt into our wounds in December 2016, when we started writing to our MP, we received this mailer

https://www.blackcountrylep.co.uk/news/major-boost-for-black-country-households-and-businesses-as-fibre-broadband-project-passes-30000-premises-milestone/?dm_i=hlN,4mwyx,o5g3zs,h9rcj,1

bragging about how our local Black Country partnership was enabling Fibre in the Black Country. We, of course did not qualify, because our 'exchange' was already fibre enabled. In addition, earlier in this process, when grants of up to £3000 were being provided to enable fibre to be installed, again we could not qualify because although our exchange was enabled our local cabinet was not. There seems to be a lot of headlines floating around that when push comes to shove fail to deliver.

I hope our somewhat convoluted submission helps and I am happy to answer any questions regarding it.

In addition two other stories related

A company ***** within the immediate vicinity of the Walsall Exchange has been trying to get fibre installed for two years. They are ***** . They have been told it is not available.

In addition a property management company in Walsall within 500 meters of the exchange had standard broadband. They decided that they wanted fibre. An order was placed for it to go onto their line that was used for their internet access. They then realised that there was a possibility that in the transfer they might lose connectivity if something went wrong. So they ordered a second analogue line on which to put fibre. Once the service was live they would cancel their original line. They were told fibre was not available on the newly requested line. Two days after they had this advisory Openreach arrived and installed fibre converting their old internet line to fibre. So it was available for a well established line but not for a new line.

There are numerous additional fibre issues in this local region. If you need additional information I am happy to undertake interview.

Regards

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