

# Accelerated fibre roll-out v



Fibre laying in Newcastle

CT professionals will be fully aware that growing customer demands for unified communications can only be effectively delivered with a high bandwidth digital network infrastructure.

Labour's moves to nationalise Openreach and provide free broadband have been quashed by Boris Johnson's thumping election win, but one thing the proposals did do was focus business minds on the slow pace of Britain's fibre roll-out and the desperate need for acceleration across the entire country, including of course rural areas.

The Prime Minister has called for full fibre across all the UK by 2025 and, responding to Ofcom's call to "supercharge" British investment in full-fibre broadband by encouraging more competition in cities and supporting BT to roll out faster speeds in remote areas, Openreach has announced plans to start rolling out ultrafast full-fibre broadband to 227 rural communities across the UK in the next 14 months.

Meanwhile, with the shackles of Labour's plans undone, TalkTalk has pressed ahead with the sale of its loss-making FibreNation business to City Fibre. According to, Chief Executive Trista Harrison this is "good news for Britain and its full fibre roll-out ambition, supporting wide-geographic reach of full fibre and further driving competition in the market".

City Fibre CEO Greg Mesch, believes the deal to be "completely synergistic", as it would bring the company's offering to new cities at lower cost. The company is now targeting 100 towns and cities across the UK in a bid to bring full fibre broadband to the whole country by expanding from large metropolitan areas into smaller population areas.

There can be now doubt that economic and political pressure is paying off and the full fibre roll out is accelerating, but over time what will it mean to you and your channel customers? Our Kaleidoscope contributors this month broadly agree that it will be a much-needed shot in the arm for channel business.

BEN KNIGHTS  
9 GROUP

"Full fibre will democratise digital services for UK plc. Businesses will no longer make buying decisions based on the performance of a variable copper service and be able to choose the best solution for them on offer and just dial up the bandwidth on the fibre to suit bandwidth requirement. Ubiquitous access to bandwidth will drive new ways of working and new opportunities for the channel to deliver not just telephony and collaboration services, but a multitude of innovative converged services enabling a full digital transformation. To date, fibre has mainly been the preserve of those willing to invest in an Ethernet option, but with Openreach plans plus the huge number of new network builds underway by both regional and new fibre providers, the options will become extensive. Maybe the main challenge will become guiding customers through all the options available to them which will not be a bad problem to have!"

SUSIE WARDELL  
EVOKE TELECOM

"High speed connectivity is the UK's communication lifeblood and with just 10% availability currently we're simply stifling access to new technologies. Investment in infrastructure is critical. A political pledge of £5bn and the Universal Service Obligation might be the answer, especially for those expensive to deploy rural areas. With City Fibre, Gigaclear, Glide, KCom and others rolling out in towns and cities, there might at last be the funding combination to get this done. We have a channel sales force ready and waiting to take these new products to market, armed with value added bundles, promising an attractive return for all. The ability to deploy IoT devices, artificial intelligence, WebRTC, augmented reality and virtual reality will help businesses improve service and insights. By powering digital transformation for a digital workforce and workplace, we can realise an estimated economic boost of £1700 per employee. That's an extra £59bn to the UK economy by 2025."

DAVID ALLDRITT  
HIGHNET

"The growth of full-fibre networks and the reach of FTTP (and leased lines) in the UK has never been in better shape. However, that's coming from a really low starting point, so the industry shouldn't be overly full of self-congratulation. We should give credit to the UK Government's fundamental change of policy back in October 2016, which would never have happened without great lobbying work from the AltNets. The challenge now is to maintain the momentum that has built recently, and to keep the pressure on policy makers to remove barriers and incentivise investment and competition. In the channel we have another great responsibility - to educate our customers. Too many business owners are struggling to make the most of digital, and using copper-based, asymmetric connectivity is not helping them. As service providers our businesses benefit from greater reliability and simplified provisioning (hopefully!), so let's make it happen, right now!"



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# will boost channel business



FRASER FERGUSON  
KUBENET

"Nationwide full fibre is key for businesses as it's the foundation that drives employee productivity and business operations. As published, the average UK employee loses 21 working days per year due to slow internet, costing the UK economy £8billion in 2018 alone. From KubeNet's experience, the current fibre rollout has been frustrating and misleading for customers, from lack of capacity to no FTTC being present in the city centres. It has severely impacted the opportunities for SME's to take advantage of cloud and hosted telephony which are hugely important for growth and in the lead up to the WLR switch off. FTTP provides high bandwidth affordable connectivity to which businesses can future-proof their telephony via SIP or hosted and our industry should continue to work with carriers, local and national Government to ensure that continued investment and importantly access to ensure the full fibre roll out continues."



CHRIS MORISSEY  
LILY COMMS

"The push to move to full fibre broadband is a much-needed change in the UK to improve communication and efficiency. Latency and legacy infrastructure have slowed down connectivity, causing frustrations for both businesses and residents who live in hard to reach areas. The announcement by Ofcom to propose new regulation to ensure that the future for the UK is full fibre is welcome and will help drive the ambitious 2025 deadline. Being able to provide FTTP for our customers aids in our message of digital transformation; helping organisations build technical infrastructures that are future proofed and optimised for speed and performance. As we move more and more of our customers to a true unified communications solution, FTTP will be an imperative part of ensuring its success."



GRAHAM WILKINSON  
BEYOND CONNECTIVITY

"For me it's not just the speed of adoption but the commercial element around financial viability which is the biggest obstacle. We all have to be realistic. It's ok to say we will all be running full fibre by 2025 but that involves billions of pounds worth of cost. Where does that funding come from and what is the ultimate end game and benefit especially when 5G is around the corner as well? I think faster broadband and 5G go hand in hand and it's important to bring the two together. There's a lot of fog out there. We are all up for it, we all want it and can see the benefits. But do the commercials fully stack up? There's not just Openreach but other providers with their own fibre networks and they can only roll-out at a certain pace. ROI is key. It's not like piping water and gas to every home. It's a commodity at the end of the day. There's huge investment going on and I'm sure we will get there in the right way."



ADAM SANKEY  
OPUS

"The fibre roll-out couldn't come fast enough! Unfortunately, the existing network in the ground is hard to upgrade. Much like the rail network, it was built for a different age. Delays are to be expected however frustrating they are. Will 5G have an impact on the uptake of FTTP when finally rolled out? If I was living in a rural area that could get 5G, why would I want to replace that with an FTTP connection? Openreach are in a race against the mobile networks, the longer they take, the less customers they will get and the less cost effective the roll out will be. There needs to be real change to allow the roll out to progress at a much faster pace so that everybody can take advantage of the investment."



SHARON MCDERMOTT  
TRENCHES LAW

"Full-fibre broadband will provide unmatched speeds and reliability, but this transformational time will not be without its challenges, particularly when it comes to negotiating with freeholders and/or leaseholders to support effective network expansions. I'm of the opinion that the targets are ambitious but achievable, if landlords and tenants are encouraged to cooperate with wayleave processes. The communication – and arguably the education process – however, must start now. Proposed changes in the electronic communications code will help operators build their network and deliver broadband at a quicker rate. This means that it will be cheaper, more efficient and faster for operators to provide broadband to occupiers, including tenants, in multi-dwelling units (and other types of property) in the UK – particularly London. By using the court system as well as talking to landlords about the benefits of full-fibre broadband – including an increase in property value – the process should be much more streamlined. Tenants are much more likely to choose a property to rent where broadband speeds are ultrafast and reliable."



TIM MERCER  
VAPOUR CLOUD

"With a collaborative approach, I'd say 90% full fibre coverage is doable by 2020 in cities, towns and major conurbations. But not everywhere, and not without multiple challenges. Vast wayleave changes are required, for example. Councils and landowners need to be encouraged to think differently. There are multiple carriers, all cost comparable, so service levels are what will make them stand out. Vast market potential exists, but it's all dependent on the ease and speed of delivery. A common goal is also essential in regarding what the market wants to achieve, as carriers are currently operating in silos. It feels like the wild west and reminds me when cable players were all being bought. Will this happen to the carriers too? As a tier 2 carrier, to a certain degree we're in the hands of the tier 1 providers, so it will be interesting to see what happens. Of course, FTTP would improve our business prospects but if the carriers make it available for commercial entities, they'll be cannibalising their own networks. It will be interesting to see what happens."

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