

Kinnerley Parish Council and Freedom Fibre

Thursday 11 July 2024 via MS Teams

3:30pm to 4:20pm

Attendees

Freedom Fibre:

Maya Powell – PR and Communications Manager
Steve Slingsby – Head of Build Assessment
Paul Spike – Programme Manager
Steve Warner – Head of Build Assurance

Kinnerley Parish Council: Parish Councillors Charles Green, Mark Cuthbert-Brown, Mandy Chapman and Parish Clerk Ian Cruise-Taylor

Shropshire Council: Ben Walker, Cllr Vince Hunt

Purpose of the meeting:

The meeting was called to address issues raised with Freedom Fibre by councillors and residents of Kinnerley Parish about the proliferation of poles and their locations, and about perceived slow or poor communications. Kinnerley Parish Council emphasised that it is of course supportive of Project Gigabit's attempts to "level - up" by bringing fast fibre broadband to premises that have missed out under previous initiatives.

1. Poles | Locations of existing poles to be used

Question posed by Kinnerley Parish

You have said that you currently are unable to disclose a list of the locations (latitudes and longitudes) of the existing poles in Kinnerley Parish that you will be using. However, your Project Gigabit updates have stated for some time that Stage One, your design and survey stage has been completed. So your statement that you don't know which existing poles you will be using comes as a surprise, particularly in view of the letter of 14 March 2024 from Julia Lopez MP. You seem now to be saying that you can use only existing poles that have been put in as a direct result of government funding, rather than all BT/Openreach poles.

Freedom Fibre response

- Freedom Fibre can share the list of existing telegraph poles installed to some extent.
- We can see BT's poles and we use them, but we can only see a limited no. of Airband poles and we can only see the ones that are part of the previous Government schemes.
- It is still the case that we can only use existing poles that have been put up with the government funding.
- We can't access the maps of any other providers and it's commercially sensitive for them to give us this information

- A definitive list of every single BT pole we would use would not be feasible due to resource and time

Agreed actions

Freedom Fibre have agreed to share our current map which will outline where we are using existing poles and where we have proposed new poles, which will indicate the proportions of new and existing poles used, and the location and extent of underground ducting – Deadline - mid August

2. Joint user poles

Question posed by Kinnerley Parish

A detailed explanation of which existing joint user telegraph poles you can use, and which you can't. We are aware of the letter of 14 March 2024 from Julia Lopez MP, the Minister for Data and Digital Infrastructure, to all fixed-line operators, in which she emphasised that, in light of increasing public concern, **it is more important than ever for you to ensure that you are doing everything possible to explore the possibility of sharing existing infrastructure and underground network deployment before making the decision to use telegraph poles** (her emphasis).

The national agreement *EREC EB/TP Issue 4: Telecommunication Providers and Distribution Network Operators joint use of poles*, also appears to allow telecommunications providers like you to attach to electricity poles.

Freedom Fibre response

- At this time our only joint user pole provider is Scottish Power
- Talks with National Grid are also ongoing
- The process overall, for all providers, is still new, complicated and demand led but it is in all our interests to have access to other providers poles
- Freedom Fibre acknowledged that, had the letter of 14 March 2024 been issued earlier in the process, more joint user poles might have been identified
- Freedom Fibre confirmed that it would be cheaper to pay a licence fee to use a joint user pole than it would be to erect a new pole

Agreed actions

- Kinnerley Parish Council to share details of most contentious locations for Freedom Fibre to prioritise.
- Please note that not all requests can be considered due to the resource and time required and approvals from external parties. Deadline – within 4 weeks of receiving maps

3. Tree felling or pruning

Question posed by Kinnerley Parish

You have confirmed that any new poles installed will not require unnecessary felling of trees. Are you able to say how many trees you do plan to cut down, rather than to prune?

Freedom Fibre response

- It is very unlikely that felling of a tree will be required, therefore at this time we cannot provide a number
- There will sometimes be tree pruning required and we will not have the need to

remove trees. We have a professional arborist that will carry out our works.

- Should a tree need to be cut down, the process will include tree preservation order (TPO) checks and liaising with local authorities.

Agreed actions

No actions from this meeting – Freedom Fibre will liaise with relevant stakeholders and local authorities should interference with trees be necessary. Although it must be stressed that it is unlikely any trees will be cut down – this is a last resort.

4. VAS unit and pole location SHF31.PO.093.042

Question posed by Kinnerley Parish

It would be better to relocate proposed pole SHF31.PO.093.042 to ensure that it will not impede the working of the VAS unit nearby, to its west.

Freedom Fibre response

- Every time Freedom Fibre have the need to break ground, we issue a full safe dig pack which covers all assets under ground, if there are any within the vicinity there is a site meeting arranged with the asset owner and an arrangement is agreed onsite.

Agreed actions

- SHF31.PO.093.042 – will be pushed back in to the bush so it will not be obstructing the VAS unit.
- Freedom Fibre confirmed that it would check that this pole will not then impede the radar beam of the VAS unit

Dates of actions to be agreed

5. Undergrounding

Question posed by Kinnerley Parish

You have confirmed that you will be placing fibre cables underground in some locations. What proportion of your network will be underground and why is this method not being more widely used, particularly in sensitive locations?

Freedom Fibre response

- We only put our own duct in if we can't go overhead – We try where possible to go overhead for access, environmental impact and commercial control
- We use duct every time there is BT duct and can unblock BT duct if suitable to ensure it's of the quality for adequate use, future-proofing the network, but try where possible to go overhead as stated above
- Reasons why we might not go overhead include high voltage power / thick trees - Line of sight, access on Traffic Management (TM, i.e. traffic lights) controlled roads etc
- The "test rod and rope" procedure for inspecting and clearing underground ducts is being used

Agreed actions

- No specific actions from this meeting

6. Slow response to residents' engagement with you

Question posed by Kinnerley Parish

One parishioner was sufficiently concerned about not having had any response from you to queries raised to come to our last Parish Council meeting and to ask if we as a Parish Council could do anything to find out when you intended to respond to his queries.

Freedom Fibre response

- We apologise for the delay in communication and appreciate the patience of parishioners
- We recognise resident concerns and respond and engage with them as best we can - we try to be amenable to resident requests
- To maintain progression with the build which is hugely widescale, we must recognise that it is a permitted development – with a long term vision we do listen and can to some extent be adaptable, but fundamentally this is a cross-party UK government drive

Agreed actions

- **Freedom Fibre to prioritise reviewing and responding to any outstanding queries from Kinnerley Parish Councillors that haven't been covered in this meeting, and any individual queries from residents**

7. Surveying for buried utility connections

Question posed by Kinnerley Parish

Have any surveys been done to establish whether there are any buried utility connections where you are proposing to put new poles. The particular instance given was proposed pole SHF31.PO.093.039, which was thought to be at the site of a water connection.

Freedom Fibre response

- Every time Freedom Fibre have the need to break ground, we issue a full safe dig pack which covers all assets under ground, if there are any within the vicinity there is a site meeting arranged with the asset owner and an arrangement is agreed onsite
- Re pole SHF31.PO.093.039 safe digs have been carried out which would have determined anything within the surrounding area. If something is flagged, they would move the pole within 5 metres.
- Surveys will be done and are part of the standard process so this would always be the case; each survey lasts 28 days
- If there is any impact on the assets – we would have a site meeting to agree safe digging assets

Agreed actions

- No specific actions from this meeting