# FEP as the Community-lead for Fastershire Broadband in Cinderford Proposal

## ***Introduction***

This paper seeks to approval to proceed with FEP acting as the community group leading the deployment of Gigabit Broadband, using the Fastershire Community Grant scheme in the Central Cinderford Area.

Acceptance of this proposal enables FEP to proceed in driving up interest from the local community, and when necessary act as the community group applying for the funding from the Fastershire Community Grant.

## ***Context***

In September 2020 Cinderford Town Council referred a local resident to the FEP Digital Connectivity group to raise issues and request help regarding the poor performance of Broadband in the Central Cinderford area. Following discussion with the resident a timeline was outline, identifying the hard work put in by the resident and town council of Cinderford, but also highlighted a lack of overall success in improving the local broadband speed.

Timeline:

Summer 2019

Resident researched local broadband speed in Cinderford (connections were listed as FTTC (upto 80mbps))

Autumn 2019

Resident moved to Cinderford

Order placed for FTTC Broadband connection

Order cancelled by BT as property **was not** connected to a FTTC enabled cabinet (Green box)

Winter 2019

Additional research in issue identified properties directly connected to the BT exchange were not able to have FTTC

2020

 Resident in touch with Openreach Rural Community Manager

 81 properties identified as connected directly to the Exchange (therefore cannot have Fibre)

 Area is classified as a Town so does not qualify for the Gigabit Rural Voucher Scheme

 Existing broadband is ADSL 2 often performs at less that 10mbps, and is highly unstable

***The Issue***

BT requires the resident to sign up 82 properties to the scheme to reduce the cost per connection to £62 each. This has causes significant issues and anecdotal evidence suggests:

* Not all property owners will take up the offer = increasing costs
* Local residents have reported being misled over previous broadband promises and do not want to “waste time” on another project
* Many premises do have FTTC (with variable performance) so the issue is not “whole area”

## ***Proposal***

Following discussions with Fastershire, a suggestion was put forward by them around their latest funding route. At the Digital Connectivity group on the 7th October 2020, Fastershire gave a presentation on the ‘Cinderford Issue’ and a proposal that FEP acts as the community lead in the deployment of a gigabit network was put forward.

The proposal would place FEP in a contract with Fastershire (Grant Funder), FEP (Contract Owner), and the selected provider (Broadband Network Builder) to design, build and deploy a new gigabit broadband in the Cinderford Area.

The contact would be a tri-party contract, with all operational and financial activity being carried out between Fastershire and the Provider. FEP’s involvement would be as a community lead who aggregates demand.

The approximate process would be

1. Enough eligible Cinderford Residents sign up to the Fastershire Website to show there is demand
2. FEP / Fastershire put a call out for competitive tendering to install the broadband network
3. FEP / Fastershire appoint the broadband network builder
4. Payment made directly from Fastershire to the Network Builder

Oversight and support from Fastershire and FEP as required

## ***SMART Aims***

**Stage 1 Kick Off:** We need 50 qualifying residents to sign up to the Fastershire Website. This creates a demonstrable market to encourage network builders to bid.

**Stage 2 Minimum:** To enable the build of a gigabit fibre network within the Cinderford Town Area and to address the lack of Fibre connectivity for the 82 identified premises from the local resident.

**Stage 2 Value Added**: The build has the widest possible geographic coverage, reaching to non Fibre premises as far across Cinderford as possible. This would allow connections to all premises within the Fibre build area and increases commercial viability.

## ***Resourcing***

Time from FEP to co-ordinate and organise.

Legal oversight for FEP relating to contracts.

## ***Next Steps***

Following approval confirm timetable and report back points to sub-group and stakeholders.

Action Communications and Sign Ups to drive the community funding route forward.

Sign grant agreements and start process.