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# 199,000 homes passed by FTTH networks in the UK

Tuesday 22 January 2013 11:27:36 by Andrew Ferguson

The UK is already one of the most digital engaged nations in the world, the volume of our online shopping is already decimating the high street, where it has lagged behind other countries is the adoption of full fibre to the home (FTTH/FTTP) services. This is starting to change as evidenced by the regular news of new small projects bringing future proof services to parts of the UK.

With the FTTH Council Europe conference coming to London in just under a months time, it is worth looking at the numbers they have for FTTH/B in the UK. For those not aware FTTB is where fibre is supplied to the basement of a building and Ethernet cabling used to distribute it around a block of flats, e.g. Hyperoptic, Ask4 and others.

As of December 2012, the UK has some 199,000 homes passed by a FTTH/B network, with a takeup rate of 8.5% (17,000 subscribers). This take-up rate is very close to the 8.9% for FTTC services which has some 1,165,000 subscribers in the UK. With similar takeup rates those accountants in charge of balance sheets may feel vindicated in saying that FTTC is the best investment vehicle, this though has to be balanced by the knowledge that in the 5 to 10 year timeframe further spending will be required to boost FTTC speeds. Of course the gamble on the part of Openreach is that the cost of FTTH deployment will drop over time and on the part of the Government it is that our lead in the digital economy will not be eroded in the next 3 to 5 years.

FTTH/B Data as of December 2012 released by FTTH Council Europe

| | Subscribers | Homes passed |
|---|---|---|
| Total | 17,000 | 199,000 |
| Openreach | 7,000 | 95,000 |
| CityFibre | no data | 24,000 |
| Others (e.g. B4rn, Gigaclear, Hyperoptic) | 10,000 | 80,000 |

FTTC Data as of December 2012 released by FTTH Council Europe

| | Subscribers | Homes passed |
|---|---|---|
| Total | 1,165,000 | 12,980,000 |
| Openreach | - | 12,500,000 |
| BT Retail/Infinity | 1,000,000 | - |
| Digital Region | no data | 480,000 |
| TalkTalk | 15,000 | - |
| Other providers via BT Wholesale and Sky | 150,000 | - |

Openreach subscribers are shown assigned to who retails the service to the public

The dominance of BT Retail in the FTTC market is clear and very much reflects the early data of the ADSL roll-outs when the public assumptions was that BT Openworld services were the only to get the service from when an area got ADSL for the first time. While Openreach does attempt to publicise bringing FTTC/H to an area independent of providers, it is all too often that people refer to this promotion as Infinity arriving in an area. The delays that TalkTalk and Sky sometimes have in offering their services at a specific fibre handover node do not help.

With the Openreach Fibre on Demand product just months away from launch it is the perfect time to highlight what the FTTH Council Europe defines as Homes Passed and seems to be a sensible definition.

> "'Homes Passed' is the potential number of premises to which a Service Provider has capability to connect in a service area. Typically new service activation will require the installation and/or connection of a drop cable from the homes passed point (e.g. fiber-pedestal, manhole, chamber, utility-pole) to the premises, and the installation of subscriber premises equipment at the premises. This definition excludes premises that cannot be connected without further installation of substantial cable plant such as feeder and distribution cables (fiber) to reach the area in which a potential new subscriber is located."

FTTH Council Europe definition of Homes Passed

Based on this definition the wording around Fibre on Demand becoming available to around half the UK and this growing to around two thirds by 2014 and potentially to 90% at some point in 2015/2016 if the BT Group wins all the BDUK projects needs to be carefully watched. A property would only be considered as passed by a FTTH network when the fibre is at the last manifold close to a property, so as one premises orders Fibre on Demand another 8 to 12 properties (varying based on size of manifold) can be added to the Homes Passed counter, though subsequent homes will still have to pay their fair share of the Fibre on Demand activation fee.

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Have your say on Europe.

The Prime Minister David Cameron has pledged a referendum on involvment in the European Union in 2017 if the Conversatives win the next General Election.

What would your vote be if a referendum on remaining in the EU was to take place today?

- Remain in the EU
- Leave the EU
- Undecided
- Don't care

Looking now at broadband, do you think the United Kingdom broadband landscape benefits from us being in the EU?
In essence does the positive side of EU funding benefit us versus the time spent on obtaining EU State Aid approval for projects.

- Yes
- No
- Undecided
- No opinion

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## Comments

Posted by Somerset 6 days ago
Customers are only interested in availability, fibre suppliers only in quantity of product sold.

Posted by cyberdoyle 6 days ago
Homes passed is a bit of a con really. Its a bit like ofcom saying we can all get broadband because we are on an enabled exchange.

Like the 'upto' - I think 'homes passed' is marketing hype. I just wish people would tell the truth and stop trying to make stuff sound better than it really is.

Posted by andrew (tb staff member) 6 days ago
@cyberdoyle so how do you measure availability? Or is availability of a service irrelevant?

Posted by tthom 6 days ago
If i am reading correctly..

Some 12M can get FTTC yet a mere 10% have/are subscribed to the service not very good planning from Openreach or people have lied about intrest

Posted by Discus 6 days ago
"Some 12M can get FTTC yet a mere 10% have/are subscribed to the service not very good planning from Openreach or people have lied about intrest"

Not necessarily, I can't be the only one that got fed up with sub standard speeds (2 meg or less), while places with already decent speeds were upgraded to fibre. I registered my interest and would have gladly subscribed, however, I decided to move instead because at the time the cabinet was not in the roll out plans. The 16 meg I now get is more than sufficient for my needs, so I now no longer (currently) need fibre.

Posted by tthom 6 days ago
I would need line bonding to reach those speeds

Posted by andrew (tb staff member) 6 days ago
@tthom one issue is minimum contracts, so many people will be waiting for exit costs to drop the way people complain about £1 more a month online rentals, the price premium FTTC can carry puts people off.

Posted by zyborg47 6 days ago
For some people the extra cost may not be worth it if they get a pretty decent ADSl service. i certainly would have not gone for the wireless service if I could have got at least 7megabits or more. not sure if I will go with fibre when my contract is up, I see no need for 40Mb/s and the extra cost even if it is only a few quid. also not easy to change to different ISP, like some ADSL now.

Posted by mervl 6 days ago
I think the "baked beans" pricing argument is right for most people. Broadband as a commodity, take the cheapest you can live with (around 4Meg/0.5Meg, I reckon from local experience).

Posted by tmcr 6 days ago
In my case, well past the premises. Distance home-exchange 1.1km, home-cabinet 1.2km - in the opposite direction. This applies to both Digital Region and Openreach.

Posted by Michael_Chare 4 days ago
I think the 'others' category for FTTH/B needs more analysis since it appears that Gigaclear only start an installation if 30% of homes are willing to subscribe.

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