

## Community Fibre Partnerships



### Case study: Kings Cliffe, Northamptonshire

## Community turns to crowdfunding for superfast solution

### High and dry

Although it would be accurate to describe Kings Cliffe in Northamptonshire as a small village, it's been growing quickly in recent times.

Evidence of this includes the shiny new Sovereign Grange development built on the edge of the village which features a range of homes designed to attract first time buyers as well as larger families.

Although many Kings Cliffe residents were unhappy with the broadband speeds they were getting, expectations rose when a potential solution emerged – as local broadband campaigner Sam Schofield explains:

Continued Sam: “I live in Sovereign Grange. Lots of families, young people and professionals live here – all of us are keen internet users. So, we were thrilled that the Sovereign Grange community was to be included in the Kings Cliffe superfast upgrade.”

“But then, after eighteen months of discussion with the proprietary fibre broadband provider we discovered that we were suddenly excluded from their plans. The rest of the village would be ok – but we were going to be left high and dry.”

“Unfortunately Kings Cliffe wasn't in any superfast fibre rollout plans which, of course, was frustrating for the community. But then a communications provider stepped in to say they could connect the village providing there was sufficient demand.”

## To the rescue

Sovereign Grange community finally received some good news when Sam Schofield met with Paul Bimson, a regional partnership director with BT. Paul told Sam about Openreach's Community Fibre Partnerships initiative and how it could potentially unlock a viable solution for the battle-weary community.

"Paul came along and he was a real saviour to us when we were at a low point. He was a continual presence and worked closely with our community to help us get to grips with the Community Fibre concept. He helped us to understand how we could jointly fund a cabinet upgrade with Openreach," said Sam.

Sam Schofield then spearheaded a communications campaign to galvanise fellow Sovereign Grange residents into contributing to a fund.

"We needed to raise around £10,000 which would match the contribution from Openreach and get the project done," said Sam. "We decided to go for online crowdfunding the money. We felt it was open, transparent and people could put in what they could afford."



From left to right: Paul Bimson and Sam Schofield

Paul Bimson said: "The Sovereign Grange community made incredibly rapid progress and crowdfunding really delivered for them. Astonishingly, they hit their £10,000 target in just six weeks."

This meant that Openreach could begin carrying out all the engineering work required including installation of a new fibre broadband cabinet and underground cables. Fibre broadband went live in Sovereign Grange in October 2016 making superfast speeds of up to 80Mbps available to around 350 homes for the first time.

"There's a good feeling in the community right now. What's more, unlike the rest of Kings Cliffe who are stuck with a proprietary supplier, we are all free to choose who we go with as a service provider," said Sam Schofield.

"The Sovereign Grange community has shown real determination and vision to bounce back from earlier disappointment. I am thrilled that the Community Fibre Partnerships initiative has been able to step in and rescue the situation," Said Paul Bimson.

"As soon as we began working with the Openreach Community Fibre Partnerships team I knew we were in safe hands. Not only do we now have superfast speeds, we've empowered local people to be able to choose their provider – and that's a big thing."

**Sam Schofield, resident  
Kings Cliffe  
Northamptonshire**

## Communities interested in partnering with Openreach

Our dedicated team at Openreach is focused on helping communities understand what we can do, as well as to support them to bring faster broadband to parts of the UK not already covered by existing rollout plans.

For more information on Community Fibre Partnerships with Openreach, visit [www.communityfibre.openreach.co.uk](http://www.communityfibre.openreach.co.uk)



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