

UK broadband install

Background

So this is a bit of a story worth telling. Some folks still seem to have this weird belief that the UK is so much better off now after “brexit”, that the economy is strong, businesses are flourishing, and it is so easy to get things done now.

I have a house in Scotland, and given the mobile coverage of all the UK operators is so dire there (it's 3 miles from the town of Arbroath, so it is hardly remote rural Scotland), I thought it'd be a good idea to order broadband.

However, the service providers in the UK consider anything outside built up areas as remote rural Scotland (maybe that's why the mobile coverage is 1 bar if I'm lucky), so the choices of who would actually deliver are very close to zero. It seems to be BT or Fleur Telecom/Home Telecom/whatever they are called this week - I opted for the latter on recommendation by a neighbour (BT is hugely expensive being the former incumbent monopoly).

To make things more complicated, apparently, the phone line into the house has not been connected in the street because a phone line has not been needed so far. But with more and more appliances being “smart” (ie needing an Internet connection to allow owners to find out what they are doing), broadband is needed.

The OpenReach fibre terminates about 1km away, so the actual copper run is quite short, so it should be possible to get decent broadband, delivered on VDSL, with operators promising about 40Mbps down and 1.5Mbps up. (Folks in Arbroath itself enjoy fibre broadband with 1Gbps speeds. 3 miles away. Hmmm.)

The Timeline

1. Broadband service was ordered on 21st December 2022
2. On 4th January 2023 I was emailed to be told that an “engineer” (why does the UK insist in calling technicians “engineers”??) would turn up on the 13th January between 8am and 1pm. And that this person might need access to my house. As I was away at the time, I arranged with a neighbour for access.
3. The technician from Kelly Communication arrived just after 7am on the 13th January when my neighbour was still asleep. He phoned and woke them up. My neighbour was not amused.

4. Kelly Communications installed the OpenReach wall box in my house (the line was there but just not terminated) and verified the connection to the pit at the roadside outside my house (the pit is in my garden!) They could not connect the copper though because there was no room under the cover, as they put it. They showed my neighbour what the issue was. The technician called OpenReach to explain the problem. The technician said he could try and force the cable in but it would likely break the telephone service for all residents in that area. The technician stated that OpenReach would have to attend to replace the cover in the pit to accommodate my connection.
5. On 11th February I emailed Home Telecom to find out about progress of the installation and when OpenReach was likely to attend to replace the cover in the street-side pit. No answer from Home Telecom until I called them on 20th February where I was told that they were in conversation with OpenReach to get the installation completed. I called again on the 22nd February and the same message was repeated, in that there was an active discussion with OpenReach to complete the job.
6. On 27th February I received an email to say an “engineer” (yep that technician being mis-named again!) would arrive on 6th March between 1pm and 6pm to complete the connection. OpenReach automated system called my neighbour to say the appointment was actually on 14th March between 1pm and 5pm, press “1” to confirm, etc. My neighbour accepted the time on that day. My neighbour sat in the house the entire time; no one showed up, no phone call, nothing. I informed Home Telecom about the no show via the current open ticket for my job - no response from the ticketing system or a human.
7. On 22nd March I finally received an email from Home Telecom apologising for the delays I have been experiencing and that the issue has been raised with OpenReach, and that an update would take 24-48 hours. I called on 27th March to follow up about this, and was told it would take 24-48 hours to get an answer even though the issue supposedly had been raised on the 22nd. I followed up by email on the 29th March. No answer from Home Telecom. Same ticket used, still open. *Does anyone actually use their ticketing system, I wonder, or is it just a way of ignoring email and blaming a computer?*

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