

WiFi Broadband for Batcombe

We have been approached by Voneus, a Broadband service provider, with a proposal to instal a temporary wireless Broadband transmitting mast and equipment on the church tower. For many of us this would provide a radically improved Broadband signal of 24 Mbps minimum (averaging between 24-35 Mbps). Following on from this, Voneus already have programmed to instal underground fibre optic cables in Batcombe - hopefully by mid-2021 - in place of the mast that will then be removed. This undertaking is not subject to how many subscribers sign up for the temporary WiFi system and will provide us with a vastly improved Broadband service over the current BT offering.

Contrary to some common myths, there are no known health issues that arise because of these WiFi masts whose signal is not even as strong as that of a mobile phone. One such mast is currently operating from the roof of Wells Cathedral as well as a number of other churches around this country. Being very low powered – with a weaker signal strength than a mobile phone - this WiFi service is considered safe for installation in schools by the World Health Organisation. It is not to be confused with a 5G mobile phone signal, being more akin in power and wavelength to the much weaker TV signal that comes through roof-mounted aerials.

By allowing this temporary installation to go ahead, the church will be helping to redirect an existing wi-fi signal more widely around the village that we hope will serve to improve peoples' lives within our community. This in turn - and hopefully in mid-2021 - will secure the real prize of a permanent fibre optic cable infrastructure that will provide us with an even better service and will allow us to remove the temporary mast and equipment on the church tower.

Voneus fully understand that our church is a Grade I listed building and they have provided express assurances that there will be no damage to the fabric of the building as the installation would be purely temporary and easily removable. A qualified electrician will complete the work and issue a Minor Works Certificate.

Voneus have offered to pay the PCC a small fee of £1.00 per month from each live connection to the church as well as providing a permanent free Broadband service to the church itself.

Many of us have had to endure very poor value for money from a dismal and deteriorating level of service from BT with frequent fluctuations and a signal that is often so weak as to be unusable....especially during the last lockdown. The real benefit here for the village is that we will finally get underground fibre optic cables that will transform many of our lives - especially if we increasingly have to work from home in the future.

The PCC has voted unanimously in favour of this initiative and Voneus have said that they will make every effort to install the equipment in the near future.

This message is being posted on the Parish Council website, on Facebook and in the Parish News magazine.

Batcombe PCC
4th November 2020