



Rich in fibre



Installing a truly full-fibre broadband connection in a property doesn't just benefit the homebuyer but the housebuilder too, says **MIKAEL SANDBERG**, chairman of VXFIBER

For many potential homebuyers in the UK, access to a high-capacity broadband network is becoming one of the deciding factors when selecting a property. The only solution to guarantee futureproof connectivity for any new build is the installation of full-fibre cabling that can deliver 1000Mb – or one gigabit – in download and upload speeds.

The UK is woefully underserved in fibre connectivity currently, despite it being essential to the UK's digital future. The government's stated intention is to achieve full nationwide fibre coverage by 2033, but this will be too late when it comes to the data-hungry technology we already rely on today.

Government funding can only go so far. Most new fibre connectivity will come from upgrading outdated copper cabling in homes and from installing fibre in new builds. There is a great opportunity for public and private sector collaboration in fibre installation and to catch up to leading players in Europe like Spain and Sweden.

With new digital technology emerging constantly that requires ever-greater data consumption, the importance of high-speed connectivity in the home is steadily increasing. The likes of smart fridges, home hubs, cloud gaming and video streaming are consuming more data than ever before. Fibre cabling will only serve to increase a property's value and will soon become standard in property construction.

When constructing a new build, installing fibre should be as essential as the plumbing or electrics. The case for providing fibre for businesses is more obvious than supplying it to domestic properties but with the rise of remote working, more people are depending on high-speed internet at home to maintain business communications.

Most so-called 'fibre' broadband residential services actually use copper cabling to connect between the cabinet at the end of the street and the customer's house. Full fibre-to-the-premises (FTTP) connectivity has a much higher cost, as old copper cabling is ripped out of the ground and replaced by fibre. The installation of fibre outside of the property is down to network operators and the government, but the property must be equipped with fibre as well to benefit from gigabit connectivity.

Fibre should be installed at the construction phase to avoid later disruption. Installing copper instead of fibre will only devalue the property and the copper will need to be dug and replaced in a few years time, as and when fibre broadband

becomes the standard.

Housebuilders need to be careful when defining broadband connectivity, in terms of what the property can facilitate as well as what is available in terms of fibre from the cabinet. Most fibre services currently offered by operators in the UK are in fact only fibre to the cabinet (FTTC): they rely on old-fashioned copper cabling to connect to the subscriber's house. That's why some UK providers can be misleading when they promote this type of service as 'full fibre'.

Full FTTP provides superior gigabit download speeds and extremely low latency, which far outperforms any broadband service delivered over copper.

If the true value of enhanced connectivity was understood, there certainly would be greater emphasis on fibre installation in property construction. Full-fibre connectivity can stimulate economic growth and deliver social benefits by providing enhanced connectivity to local business, homes and public sector sites.

Full fibre will also support new technologies that depend on fixed high-speed connectivity, such as tele-health and surgery, and remote-controlled smart homes and appliances. Large-scale fibre installation will also ensure the UK is not left behind when it comes to future technologies like

5G, connected cars, and the internet of things.

The UK can learn much from its European neighbours. Sweden for example already has 91% fibre coverage, with 44% of homes connected. However, unlike the UK, fibre connectivity in Sweden is often driven by local authorities and district councils, recognising both the economic value and social benefits of enhanced connectivity.

The UK also needs to appreciate these advantages and perhaps emulate the successful open-access model deployed across Sweden. In an open-access model, such as ours, the fibre network can be owned by a range of organisations; not just a telecoms operator or an ISP, but a local authority, a property developer or a utility firm. They then lease the fibre to multiple service providers for them to access and use to deliver their own broadband services. This approach lowers costs for the service providers, encourages greater competition, and leads to much higher uptake among residents.

Bandwidth demands are only set to increase as we look to future technology, which will rely on fibre cabling to deliver massive volumes of data at incredibly high speeds. Housebuilders may fear the extra outlay, but with the revenue potential that full fibre offers by increasing the value of each property, future-proofing a home's broadband is not just an investment for tomorrow but an investment for today. ^{SN}

