

Starter Pack

If you are reading this, the chances are your hyperfast broadband is about to appear on a hillside near you. Many parishes are already connected and everyone is willing to share their knowledge and experience. This starter pack is a brief guide to help you get your area up and running. There is a lot more info on our website www.B4RN.org.uk and of course, help at the end of a telephone line.

From experience we are trying to develop a simple model following a logical sequence of events. We have learned a lot by trial and error and much from our mistakes - please share your feedback so that we can keep updating this guide and help each other to make everything run more smoothly. You will always be most welcome to visit a parish with work in progress. Call, e-mail or write for contacts and information.

Remember, B4RN fibre optic cabling should ideally travel through private land. The cost of laying it through anything else is expensive.

Leave a message on our answering service and we'll respond within 24 hours 01524 555887

E-mail us: info@b4rn.org.uk

Write to: Broadband for the Rural North Ltd, Station Yard, Melling, via Carnforth, Lancashire, LA6 2QY

To begin

Keeping people informed and nurturing their enthusiasm is most important. Experience tells us that from a small core of dedicated volunteers the project gathers its own momentum simply by talking, sharing and - most exciting, visiting a live area and seeing exactly what a hyperfast connection can do.

Share knowledge and experience

As B4RN is a community project there is no definitive right or wrong way. Work together to achieve the most direct and simple solutions. Other parishes will share their know how and suggest best practice. Always ask for information - we're all very happy to help.

Accept all offers of stationery, printing, room hire - if everyone pitches in, costs can be minimal. Use the facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/pages/B4RN-rural-broadband/105319176241916> or start your own [automated newsletter](#) like others have done

Wray village has produced a particularly clear, simple flyer that they are glad to share. Feel free to amend it to fit your parish. Drop it through every door so that no one can claim to be in the dark about B4RN:

"Thank you for registering your interest in the new B4RN broadband system which with your input will be installed shortly in Wray.

If you are interested in helping here are things you can do:

- *invest in shares - we need new local investors to pay for the ring route round the village. Unlike the initial share issue which paid for the materials for the core route new investments can be ring fenced to Wray.*
- *click on this link to open a map of the current diagrammatic layout of the system. XXX (Insert your own map here) wray map*
- *think where the broadband service should be installed in your house and how the duct can best enter your house - we can help*
- *talk to your neighbours to see if they want to join - encourage them if they don't, and try to sort out the route local to yourselves - again we can help*
- *we want to set up groups in each district of the village (see map) to co-ordinate the duct installation in the area. Each group will report to the Village Co-ordinating Committee*

- *once the route local to yourselves is firmed up and agreed with B4RN through the above committee start installing duct work in your own garden and locally.*
- *offer your services to the local and/or the co-ordinating committee - we will need a whole range of skills.*

In considering the routing into your house consider how the digging can be minimised - two or more houses can be linked in through one trench and service ducts can be clipped to external walls (ducts are 7mm dia similar in size to a tv aerial). Many people will not be able to dig in their duct so if we cannot find a shared route we will need volunteers.

AN IMMEDIATE REQUEST: we need a store in the village for materials - say half a single garage and someone to act as Storekeeper.

(Thanks to Wray for sharing that)

Arrange a local meeting and encourage discussion. The pub, school or institute is a good place and usually free or at least inexpensive. Volunteers from areas already connected are willing to attend and share their knowledge.

Set objectives for your meeting. For instance - collect names and contact details of interested parties and assess offers of help with regard to skills, expertise, time and commitment. Identify key people with good contacts in your parish who have time and the drive to get things moving.

Form a committee

The word 'committee' often strikes horror into the hearts of the most dedicated folk. But, as this is the ultimate community project, a committee it must be. We all have to pull together and keep each other informed. Coherence is most important. There is little point in several people undertaking the same task - so share, discuss, network and enjoy.

We need team players from the community who can offer time, expertise and energy. Computer literacy is not necessarily top of the list - transferable skills are. Someone willing to become a Parish Champion and take on the role of leader is very helpful. Diplomacy is the key. Remember that whilst the great majority of our community is right behind B4RN there are still a few people and landowners who don't share our vision of the future and their views must be respected. Polite, reasoned negotiation is important and the patience to give up and re route where necessary.

Make sure you communicate regularly with all committee members so that everyone is up to speed. Mis-information is easily spread and jolly difficult to retract.

Finance

At this stage you have no money and will need to decide how to deal with any incurred costs - things like stationery and travel. Often the committee is prepared to meet these costs initially in the knowledge that once B4RN is generating income it will be able to reimburse. Do bear in mind that in these tough financial times it would be a mistake to exclude people who have time and expertise to contribute but who simply can't afford to get there. We all know about rural miles and the cost of diesel.

Parish information

It almost goes without saying that local knowledge of people and geography is a great advantage. To get you started B4RN will supply the following online, and in .pdf format:

- Large scale maps detailing field boundaries and properties - showing provisional routes for ducting and hubs.
- The preliminary list of interested properties
- A master copy of the wayleave agreement, to be duplicated and signed by landowners.

What to do

Check the properties in your area, and ensure that your map is right up to date. As the project gathered momentum, more names will have been added to the preliminary list. You may know of a property that has been missed off. Please notify B4RN.

Visit interested (and also not so interested) parties. Be diplomatic. It is most important to empathise with people's' doubts and concerns as well as their positive enthusiasm.

Although this is a high tech project, we have discovered that the easiest way to understand the geography and land ownership is to physically take your map and coloured pencils and ask landowners to colour in their own land. This will give you an indisputable record of land boundaries and access. It will also encourage farmers and landowners to consider the best, most economical and least disruptive route they would like to take across their land. They may also specify a convenient time of year to avoid cropping etc. Ask them to sign a wayleave agreement.

Is the provisional route suggested by B4RN is the most viable? Your local knowledge will be invaluable as you get to know people's preferences and landowners support or otherwise.

Consider outlying properties carefully. It could be that they might be more conveniently connected from an adjacent Parish. Discuss this with B4RN to ensure the easiest, most cost efficient route for connection.

Identify any problem areas and liaise with B4RN for solutions. So far we have worked around SSIs, land used for arable purposes, other services, rivers and streams, overhead cables, sites of local importance, and churchyards.

Funding for your Parish

Once you have a definitive map of your area, with the routes favoured by landowners detailed, B4RN can begin to work out what it will cost your Parish to purchase ducting and fibre. Of course, there will already be an initial estimate, but until the definitive route is drawn the actual cost cannot be calculated.

You may well have Early Bird investors in your area but they have invested in the core route to get the whole project up and running. They will receive share dividends in the future.

Point would-be new investors to the B4RN website or telephone / postal contact details.

Families and individuals can sponsor ducting, buy enough for their own connection or you can organise a village whip round or fundraising event. Remember, this project is for the community, by the community. Once everyone is connected not only will it bring us all very efficient, cost effective

broadband, television and telephone services, it will also make money for the community and pay dividends to investors.

And finally...

Once you have your final route with wayleaves signed the next stage is to detail exactly where individuals and businesses want their fibre optic connection to enter their properties. They will need to know where the main route passes them so that they can dig in their own ducting with minimum disruption. It will probably be useful to have a team of volunteers willing to dig for people unable to do it themselves - for instance the elderly or incapacitated.

Let digging commence

You will need the final copy of your map, showing the actual route, someone to organise your volunteers and someone to record progress and problems.

Make sure the volunteers are well briefed and that they have the appropriate tools, equipment and clothing. Good boots, waterproofs and hi-viz vests are a good start.

It is a good idea to make sure that first aid is available, establish mobile phone signal and position for coordination of work (sometimes you will find work-parties may be quite dispersed). We have a copy of our health and safety policy for the team leaders.

Once the ducting for the fibre optic is laid, B4RN will help you organise the blowing of fibre, splicing and connections to the property. Most of this work can be completed by community volunteers with training and support from B4RN, although we also have people we can call on to help with this work.

Feed back to B4RN and share any tips you have discovered to make the whole process easier. Subsequent parishes will certainly appreciate the benefit of your experience.

B4RN is committed to provide a service to every property within the B4RN area boundaries giving a full gigabit fibre service, regardless of distance, or existing exchange boundaries. This solution allows everyone to cease their less reliable twisted pair phone lines and save a little on those increasing costs too.

"Murphy's Law", fair weather and foul; The network is designed so every core route has duplicated fibre feeds back to two distribution points thus maintaining services even if a cable is damaged. Fibre isn't affected by lightning and over 500 km of fibre is already safely buried away from any overhead hazards. Every cabinet is provided with a battery-backed power supply and an external power connector for a standby generator.

This means that once you are connected, if you invest in a standby battery unit and have a tablet etc. you too can always remain in full communication with the outside world. E.g. You can find out if there are road closures due to floods etc.

If you reprint any of this for your own community project outside the B4RN area please give credit where credit is due. ;)

Thanks to:

Graham from Whittington

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Robert and Phil from Wray

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