

The Openreach Fibre Community Partnership for Hope Woodlands

Final report for Derwent and Hope Woodlands Parish Council, January 2023

- The provision of full fibre broadband for Hope Woodlands has been undertaken using a Fibre Community Partnership with Openreach. Negotiations and enrolment in the scheme began in June 2020, and after two and a half years the project has been successfully completed.
- Funding for the project made use of vouchers from both the government and Derbyshire County Council, and each household needed to pledge their allocation for use on the scheme.
- The Parish Council agreed to act as the 'legal entity' for the scheme, thereby taking on the financial risk if anyone who pledged a voucher failed to take up a contract with a service provider.
- Although initial costings were still prohibitively expensive, the project became viable after we agreed to undertake a 'self-dig' for the most difficult to reach properties at Crookhill and in the Alport Valley.
- After numerous delays, Openreach made excellent use of the A57 Snake Pass road closure in October 2022 to undertake installation work requiring access to the telecommunications conduits alongside the carriageway.
- The 'self-dig' sections of buried cable at Crookhill and in the Alport Valley were completed by M Downes Earthworks Ltd using a 'Ditch Witch' vibrating mole plough. The machine and contractors were excellent. A contribution toward the self-dig costs was gratefully received from the National Trust.
- The on-site build was completed by October 18th and the work in the exchange was finished and commissioned by November 4th 2022, when we became 'live'. All 19 properties in Hope Woodlands were included.
- Households and businesses have now taken up contracts with service providers of their choice (minimum 12 months), thereby releasing the government and DCC vouchers for Openreach to get paid. Sufficient vouchers have been redeemed to cover the costs so there is no longer any financial risk to the Parish Council.
- Hope Woodlands properties should now all have good telephone connections alongside the other broadband benefits. It was a prolonged and convoluted process, but ultimately with a successful and worthwhile outcome.

Peter Robinson
Community Lead



The 'Ditch Witch' vibrating mole plough (M Downes Earthworks Ltd) burying the new cable.