

## Superfast Broadband

In Membury, the BT is the only provider of internet connections. Many local residents have slow and unreliable internet connections, as the technology used by BT to provide connections is not capable of speeds now becoming standard in towns and cities elsewhere in the UK.

The specialist rural broadband company [Gigaclear](#) are just starting a project in Upottery and Yarcombe to provide extremely fast broadband internet by installing fibre connections directly into properties. This approach provides dramatically faster internet connections so activities such as watching TV, making telephone and video calls as well as running businesses from home become much more realistic and acceptable. Fast internet services have the potential to transform the options available to local schools by providing access to a range of interactive teaching materials and by providing children access to study materials at home via the internet.

Given the internet service from Gigaclear seems so much better, you might expect that it would also be much more expensive, or the contract terms would be more onerous. Surprisingly this is not so, especially once you include costs for other services that can be provided over the internet such as telephone.

New resident Duncan Mackinder, has volunteered to act as the focal point to both provide information, and to feedback interest from the Membury area to Gigaclear, in the hope that we can influence Gigaclear to provide their broadband services in Membury.

Further details about Gigaclear (including options and costs) can be found from their web site at:  
<http://www.gigaclear.com/>

If you would like to know more, or would like express interest (with no commitment of course) in a Gigaclear service, please contact Duncan, giving him your address and contact details.

Duncan's contact details are:

Email: [duncanmackinder@gmail.com](mailto:duncanmackinder@gmail.com)

Tel: 01404 881183

Duncan would like to point out that he has no financial relationship with Gigaclear. The information provided here has been gathered from attending a public meeting in Upottery hosted by Gigaclear to explain their project there, and also from the Gigaclear web site. As a home based IT worker, Duncan would of course jump at the chance of ordering an internet connection from Gigaclear. Duncan is currently using a combination of very slow BT ADSL and a much faster 4G mobile telephone base internet connection, however neither are anywhere close to the Gigaclear service and are certainly much more expensive!

### **For those interested in a little more technical detail on internet connections:**

In the Membury area, BT is the only provider of fixed line internet connections, Whilst internet connections via other means, such as mobile telephones are possible, these are often rather expensive.

BT connections run over the BT Openreach network. Whilst the core of the network is fibre, the final connection to properties in most areas, including Membury, is via copper telephone wires. It is the length of the copper wire which limits the internet speed. Internet connection speeds drop rapidly as the length of copper increases, so unless you are lucky enough to live very close to the cabinet where the connection to the fibre network occurs, your internet speed can be very low. In rural areas, these final copper links are often rather long and so many connections suffer from very poor speeds. In addition, the telephone wires generally run above ground over telephone poles, so are prone to being damaged or broken in storms when hit by falling branches and trees.

BT Internet connections are based on a system called ADSL. ADSL typically transfers information 10 times faster from the internet to your computer than it transfers information from your computer to the internet. For normal web browsing and email, this asymmetry is not a problem. However, when users want to share photos and videos, backup the contents of their machines to internet storage devices or work online, the slow upload speeds become very restrictive.

The Gigaclear network is entirely fibre from the national internet backbone into your premises, with fibre being laid underground. So their connections do not suffer the problems of speed dropping due to copper connection, nor the asymmetry of connection speeds, nor the risk of storm damage. Gigaclear do not use

any of the existing BT Openreach infrastructure, so they are able to determine their own pricing, schedules for installation and terms of usage. All Gigaclear connections are uncapped (meaning you can transfer as much information either to or from the internet) as you wish. With BT, uncapped connections are possible, but cost more. Gigaclear provide 4 options for domestic customers, the difference being maximum speed of the connection, with speeds ranging from 50Mb, through 100Mb, 200Mb to their fastest offering of 1Gb (i.e. 1000Mb). The same speed is provided both to and from the internet, so sharing large files such as home videos or backing up copies of entire machines, is practical along with many other digital services. Very few BT customers are able to download information faster than even the slowest Gigaclear 50Mb connection, and none can upload information at anything remotely close to the speeds provided by Gigaclear.

With fast, reliable and uncapped internet connections, it is possible to use the connection for a range of other services such as TV and telephone including video calls. For example, Gigaclear provide an option (for a small additional monthly charge) to provide a telephone service via Vonage (a separate company). Vonage supply a device which looks and acts like a normal telephone but which connects via the internet. Depending on the telephone package you choose, you can even move your existing BT landline number over, so avoid the inconvenience of changing telephone number, and of course you no longer need to pay any bills to BT. As with internet, the telephone package costs are lower than the BT equivalent, for example the most expensive option which provides unlimited calls to UK landlines and mobiles and over 60 other countries is just a couple of pounds a month more than just BT line rental charge (which of course excludes cost of the phone calls themselves). So when comparing costs, it is worth comparing your household's total costs for internet and land line telephone service, against the internet and telephone package from Gigaclear.

As a commercial company, Gigaclear need to run their internet service at a profit, and in a way which is sustainable in the long term. They therefore select areas in which they judge that installation and operation costs will be covered by projected income from customers. Given that their model has led them to select the villages of Yarcombe and Upottery as one such area, it may well be that Membury and another neighbouring village of similar size, would also fit their criteria as a viable service area. No doubt the volume of interest from the area will also influence their commercial considerations.

Gigaclear stress that they wish to work in partnership with local communities, for example keeping the inevitable disruption which accompanies burying even something as small as optical cables in the ground to a minimum.

Gigaclear are a relatively new company but already have 20,000 customers across a range of rural locations spread over southern England.

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