



BIZ BUZZ *Today's business crisis update*

03/03/2021

BUDGET QUICK CHECK...

ULTRAFAST BROADBAND REACHES NEW

BUCKENHAM VIA OPENREACH/BT-OR DOES IT?

THE LATEST ON THE MOBILE MAST... LOCKDOWN-THE LONG HAUL...

THE BUDGET CHANGES...The Chancellor spoke for an hour. What we all need is the quick check of the main points. Many of the Covid support measures will continue until September. Furlough will reduce until September. Universal credit uplift of £20 pw will continue for another 6 months. Corporation tax will rise but not until 2023. Min wage is up to £8.91 phr from April. All the easy-to-read details are here <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-56266773>

IN A NUTSHELL FROM HMRC:

Extension to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme CJRS is extended until the end of September 2021 but payments reduce. The Govt will continue to pay 80% of employees' usual wages for the hours not worked, up to £2,500 pm up to the end of June 2021.

In July, CJRS will cover 70% of employees' usual wages up to £2,187.50.

In August & September, 60% of employees' usual wages up to £1,875.

Employers must continue to pay furloughed employees at least 80% of their usual wages for the hours they do not work during this time, up to a cap of £2,500 pm. You can top up wages above the 80% if you wish, but you don't have to.

You must continue to pay NI & pension contribs on subsidised furlough pay from your own funds.

CJRS eligibility from May For periods from 1 May 2021 onwards, you will be able to claim for eligible employees who were employed by you and on your PAYE payroll on 2 March 2021. This means you must have made a PAYE Real Time Information (RTI) submission to HMRC between 20-3-20 & 2-3-2021. You & your employees don't to have benefitted from the scheme before to make a claim, as long as you meet the eligibility criteria. More info: 'Job Retention Scheme' on GOV.UK. You can now submit claims for periods in February. These must be made by **15th March 2021**

VAT deferral

If you deferred VAT payments due between 20 March & 30 June 2020 and still have payments to make, you should pay by 31 March 2021. If you can't afford to pay by 31 March this year, you can use the online VAT deferral new payment scheme. The new scheme lets you pay your deferred VAT in equal monthly instalments, interest free. You can spread payments across a number of months. The earlier you join, the more months you have to spread your payments across.

- 11 instalments if you join by 19 March
- 10 instalments if you join by 21 April
- 9 instalments if you join by 19 May
- 8 instalments if you join by 21 June.

Join quickly online. Go to GOV.UK & search 'VAT deferred'. The online service will close on 21-6-21

Stamp duty On 8 July 2020, the nil rate band threshold was increased temporarily to £500,000 until 31 March 2021. The government has extended this for 3 months until 30 June 2021. It will then be held at £250,000 until 30 September 2021, before returning to its permanent level of £125,000 from 1 October 2021. According to the Nationwide House Price Index, the average price of a house in the UK is now £231,061 meaning that for many potential purchasers, particularly first-time buyers, the extension to the increased nil rate band will be welcome news.

<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKHMRCED/bulletins/2c4b093>

IS IT JUST EIGHT ULTRAFAST HOUSES....WHILST THE REST OF THE VILLAGE WAITS?

It's a bizarre situation but, as it turns out, not unique. This is how the Broadband race is shaping up and here are the answers to your questions...

COUNTY BROADBAND have confirmed that they intend to provide ultrafast Fibre to the Property (FTTP) in New Buckenham if they can. They have the relevant number of interested residents to

proceed to the - "Design stage". This is no guarantee that every property will be FTTP enabled (that still depends on cost, planning etc.) But if all goes well it could happen within a year.

BT's FTTP investment has been mostly in cities and whilst Wymondham and Attleborough were recently added to their list, the surrounding villages were not specified. Norfolk County Council's latest update through their Better Broadband for Norfolk project states that New & Old Buckenham remain merely "under consideration for further upgrades". Both villages are currently using the slower Superfast FTTC (Fibre to the Cabinet - the last bit of the connection being copper to the house) Open Reach/BT does not have NB or OB on their list to offer Ultrafast. Last year OpenReach promised to increase their commitment to rural houses by 3.2m. The full list of locations for their FTTP build in rural market towns and villages until 2024 is here...and No! New Buckenham is not on it. <https://www.openreach.com/transparency>

SURPRISE ULTRAFEST OFFER TO SOME Despite all that, an OpenReach email has arrived at an NR16 2AG address in New Buckenham stating that Ultrafast FTTP broadband is now an option. BUT, a postcode checker with both OpenReach and BT confirms that most of the 18 addresses in NR16 2AG can't access Ultrafast, nor can the rest of the village. It appears to be those closest to Dam Brigg.

WHAT'S GOIN' ON? A number of other Norfolk and Suffolk villages have had a similar issue. In Rickinghall there are about 750 houses. 41 of them have FTTP from BT whilst the rest of the village is not on the list. Similarly, Stradbroke, Fressingfield, Caston, Griston. Despite months of waiting there's been no further extension and no policy suggesting more ultrafast links to others in the area. In Melis, BT fitted FTTP to new houses on an estate, paid for by the developer, but went no further. A cynic might say that this allows Openreach to advertise their roll out to many rural villages in a bid to meet their 85% access by 2025...or it may be just the start of a delayed rural roll-out.

WHAT ABOUT THE COUNTY BROADBAND DEAL? So what should you do if you've signed up to County and BT makes an offer? County say you can continue to do deals with whoever you like until you get the email that tells you their FTTP service is up and running for you. (For New Buckenham this is likely to be about a year away). At that point you will get a CB email. You then have 12 months to let your present contract run out and join County and take their service you signed up for. If you don't go with CB you will be breaking the contract and must pay the monthly premiums for the next 2 years. If you abide by your CB contract you'll be with them for a minimum of two years and then you can switch back to whoever you like.

SO WILL OPENREACH BRING ULTRAFEST TO ALL OF NEW BUCKENHAM? Who knows? However, Open Reach upgrade their build programme every 3 months...so you may get lucky... To check your access <https://www.bt.com/broadband/full-fibre>
<https://www.openreach.com/fibre-broadband>

THE LATEST THRILLING INSTALMENT OF THE MOBILE PHONE MAST MYSTERY

EPISODE 9,032,576 (If you have a phone number which you feel could serve as an episode number, please get in touch!)



Once again we have been in touch with the wonderful Juliet at Waldon who manage the infrastructure mast build for O2. We pointed out the most infuriating news that EE is extending its 4G coverage to more rural areas. One of these is Attleborough! They have good service already. Why waste the extra capacity on them?



We asked Juliet, "Does this mean that if folk switch to EE they might get a better mobile service that's operational in our village? If there's even the suggestion of that , many people here would

do it. The increasing necessity to work from home now and in the future means that mobile operations are totally key. Many of the people who live in villages like this are business people constantly on the road or (BC- Before Covid) travelled to large cities to do their job. In future they won't be doing that and will be in desperate need of good mobile comms. They'll switch away from O2 to anyone who can supply. O2 has been promising a decent service here for more than 4 years and we are still in as bad a position as we were then."

Juliet said, " *I can't comment on EE services in the area as we are not involved in that matter. I can only advise that my colleagues are continuing to work on completing all the necessary steps so that this site can be built and integrated into the network. This is not reliant on any external funding. I will pass on news of progress when I receive it from my colleagues in the acquisition team as I know you and your neighbours are, understand, very keen to know when the coverage issues in your area will be resolved.*"

LOCKDOWN - THE LONG HAUL ... The rules and regs of relaxing the lockdown are getting ever more complex. Heaven help anyone who is trying to get to another County, let alone another country! Your best bet is to go to this Government website. <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus> Pour yourself a strong coffee and have some nourishment to hand. There is a lot of reading and checking to do. It's all here from the rules on schools to the easing at Easter.

STAY SAFE... KEEP CALM... DON'T GIVE UP!

If you know anyone who might find this group useful, do pass the information on to them
www.np4nb.online Business news, info, views? Get in touch. info@np4nb.online

All Biz Buzz crisis updates are to be found on www.np4nb.online