

Mobile internet at Benone

In an area where the rural population is less than 2,000 for 8 months of the year and swells to more than 15,000 during June and July the customers of companies supplying broadband there have a problem. It has been an issue known for some time by the internet providers but they are in the main dependent on BT OpenReach to provide the hardware and infrastructure.

The service can be terrible in the summer months, but be great in winter. On trying to renew my current landline broadband I was being offered the same price for a reduced service (average 3Mb/s) on an 18 month contract which in Belfast gets me a 30 times faster service. This would just about manage email and browsing but streaming video would be problematic. So in effect the service is going to be worse than it has been in previous years. In a recent proposal to provide a better network the Government asked local users to sign up to a much faster system - GigaBit. They have now agreed the voucher scheme, and my application has been agreed. When this will be provided I do not know. Possibly later this year. It should improve access for us considerably.

See <http://click.info.openreach.co.uk>

All the local mobile masts are booster stations usually dependant on land lines or service from major masts at Mussenden Road above Castlerock or at the Point Road at Bellarena so they are also subject to overall service degradation due to large numbers of users (much like trying to get a signal at a football match). The one benefit of using mobile technology is that once a signal is obtained your service is likely to remain relatively good for the duration of the connection. The best way to do this is to buy a router with a Sim card slot. You can also use a second hand “unlocked” smart phone, or one you don’t use anymore. These have to remain “on charge” to be effective. Avoid joining a mobile Sim supplier with a “Plan” since you have to pay for this for 12, 18, 24 months, running into hundreds of pounds for short term use. There are however suppliers like GiffGaff and Smarty which allow you to buy your service a month at a time, and an amount you prefer - ideal for Benone .