



## Crooklands Hotel gets Superfast Boost with the arrival of Gigabit Technology



The Crooklands Hotel, 'where modern meets traditional and where relaxation is key' has been given the boost of gigabit broadband capability thanks to the successful delivery of their community broadband scheme supported by a gigabit broadband voucher which was topped up through the Borderlands Growth Deal.

The Connecting Cumbria team talked to Chris Vincent about the community broadband scheme process and the benefits of an improved broadband service to his business.

Chris told us how the family owned and run hotel recognised that their poor broadband service was holding them back in many ways. With this in mind, Chris explained how the hotel reached out to B4RN, with whom they had worked with previously to connect their residential property, in search of an improved service.

Chris went on "B4RN sent over the links to which we had to provide information to support our community scheme. As we are a rural business premise we were eligible for the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme and the Borderlands Growth Deal Top Up Voucher which provided a combined sum of money towards the provision of a new broadband network to serve our business property".

"B4RN provided a quote for the work which incorporated the use of the voucher and also an agreed element of self-dig along the land in which the hotel is set in order to keep the costs within the scope of delivery. B4RN were really good at managing the whole process and continuously kept us in the loop with developments. They managed the voucher application on our behalf and provided excellent support throughout the whole process".

Chris said "for us, the self-dig was non-onerous, carried out by ourselves using a shovel we dug across grass and gravel after which B4RN took over to lay the network and drill the wall of the hotel for entry of services into the premise. This part of the process was extremely straight forward and was very much worked hand in hand with the network provider".

Prior to the arrival of gigabit connectivity, the hotel really struggled with their 8Mbps giving them in the region of a 1Mbps wireless connection which was not able to cover the full span of the property. Chris said “at busy times in the hotel we could not use some of the equipment which relies on the Wi-Fi connection such as our payment terminals”.

“Since the installation by B4RN however we can now access speeds of at least 900Mbps giving us around 300Mbps wireless connectivity. This has allowed us to expand the network and offer the vastly improved broadband services to all guest bedrooms and our conference suite. The ability to tap in to a decent Wi-Fi service at venues such as ours has become an expectation and I fear if we were not now able to do so, it would be something which would put prospective business and holidaying clients off using the facilities we offer”.

Chris went on “as a result of the improved broadband service we have been able to create and manage our website which showcases what the Crooklands Hotel has to offer. Our website is something which we are really proud of and gives prospective clients an insight into the hotel and what it offers and allows them to book a stay via the online booking system. Alongside the website we run our Facebook page which again provides followers with an insight in to our hotel and keeps them up to date with any events which may be happening. We have also added a ‘buy a gift voucher’ button to our Facebook page which has proved to be really popular with customers. Having an ‘online presence’ is something which we believe is essential to us being able to present our business. It allows potential customers to take a look at their leisure and contact us via a range of different methods. The broadband service we now have allows us to monitor and respond to any enquiries efficiently which is something which is really important to us and to our customers”.

Behind the scenes the gigabit broadband service allows us to carry out a multitude of online administrative functions to support the smooth running of the hotel. These tasks range from the ordering of food for the kitchens, online banking which saves us travelling to our nearest bank and providing confirmations and check in details to clients who have booked to use our facilities”.

Chris said “the improved broadband service has benefitted our business immensely; I would urge other businesses working at minimal broadband speeds to look into the possibility of a community broadband scheme and working with a provider to deploy a service which meets the needs of them and their community. We are proof that this can work”.

If you are interested in pursuing an improved broadband service via a community scheme; in the first instance you should visit <https://gigabitvoucher.culture.gov.uk/> to find out if you are eligible for a rural voucher and to access a list of providers who are active in your area.

The Borderlands Growth Deal Top-Up scheme is now closed however up to £2m of additional funding from Cumbria County Council is now available to help homes and businesses in rural areas of Cumbria get access to much faster and more reliable internet connections. Your chosen provider will advise you if you are eligible for this Cumbria top-up and it will be automatically added to your application.