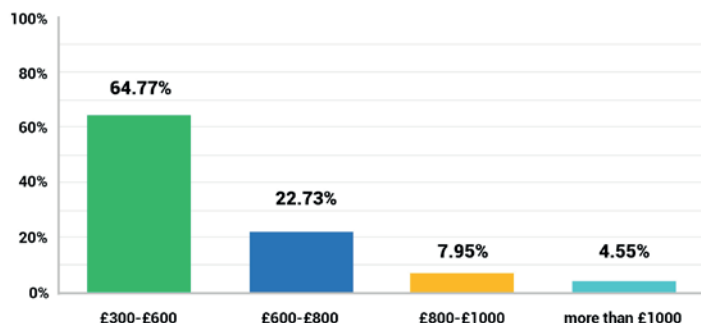


UK community broadband in focus

How much would you be willing to invest in a community-own broadband project offering higher internet speed, improved customer service, lower prices and great online privacy?



Widespread discontent with internet service providers means that 78% of Brits approve of community-owned broadband projects. However, only 35% of those in favour would be willing to pay £600 or more to cover initial installation costs.

“Community-owned and operated networks give people total control over their internet. Prices are lower and speeds higher compared to services offered by traditional ISPs, not to mention improved customer service and enhanced online privacy. However, the initial cost of such a project is usually in excess of £600, a price which not many Brits are willing to pay,” commented digital marketing agency, Rebootonline.com

The agency has surveyed 1,563 Britons to find out whether they would be in favour of community-owned broadband projects. The data, it said, speaks to a general willingness on the part of communities to mobilise:

- 78% of respondents said they would be prepared to provide access to their property free of charge.
- 67% held they would be ready to volunteer to support the building of a community-owned infrastructure.
- 34% of respondents saw the ability of communities to pool resources together as a major impediment when it comes to establishing a communally-owned broadband network.
- 42% listed initial cost of the project as a chief obstacle.
- Of the ten case studies on gov.uk, just three reported a cost per premises lower than £650. Only two of these (B4RN and Tove Valley) were community-owned and operated, while the third simply saw Preston village in Hertfordshire buy into

a planned BT broadband upgrade (without gaining ownership over the infrastructure or its operation).

- The B4RN and Tove Valley projects came in at £600 and £385 respectively. However, the low cost of Tove Valley's network was largely due to funds obtained through BDUK via the Rural Community Broadband Fund (RCBF). This scheme is now closed, meaning such a low cost could likely not be replicated.

Other major reservations that UK residents have when it comes to community broadband schemes are represented by:

- The ability of the community to successfully maintain the network without significant outages (46%).
- Lack of technical expertise needed to establish network (42%).
- Security/privacy concerns (54%).

“This last stat is important; it points to a fundamental lack of understanding among Britons when it comes to both the status of their data security under the traditional ISP model, and their online privacy within a community-owned network,” said the agency.

Current UK legislation requires ISPs to store detailed internet usage logs on all their users; these include lists of websites visited, software used and files downloaded, among other pieces of information.

“The recent Facebook Cambridge Analytica Scandal, as well as examples of how U.S. legislation in this area has evolved, shows just how big the market for such data is, and how eager both governments and corporations can be to make profits using a citizen's private data. Community-owned and operated broadband projects, by their very nature, would ensure that users' private data isn't sold on. Furthermore, when it comes to securing the network against cyberattacks, local collectively owned ISPs, as they have fewer users, would be better equipped to fight hackers off. In fact, research suggests that traditional ISPs focus their security protocols on shielding their own infrastructure, as opposed to protecting the customer or third parties,” added the agency.

You can find more information on how to build your own ISP in its guide at www.rebootonline.com/blog/how-become-your-own-isp-uk/ or www.rebootonline.com