

Case Study: Birmingham

Openreach FTTP – Access to superfast connectivity for SMEs in Birmingham city centre

Around 800 small to medium sized enterprises based in two landmark Birmingham buildings, The Custard Factory and The Big Peg, can now benefit from access to superfast connectivity, as Openreach brings its Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) to Birmingham for the first time.

The Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) infrastructure went live in The Big Peg in January and will follow in The Custard Factory in March. It will deliver download speeds of up to 300 Mbit/s and upload speeds of up to 30 Mbit/s.

As the Openreach FTTP infrastructure is open to all communications providers, it will also allow flexibility and control over communications contracts, giving business occupiers the freedom to choose the best deal.

Doing loads more, far faster

For all businesses, the real, tangible benefit of FTTP is that they will be able to do any online task, from online file sharing to HD video conferencing, in a fraction of the time it takes with broadband delivered over copper. However, for the community at The Custard Factory and The Big Peg, data intensive work is the lifeblood of their business so superfast connectivity will have even more of an impact on their working life.

The Custard Factory is exclusively for creative and digital businesses and the Big Peg has a number of residents with media heavy requirements, for example a TV station and a number of innovative web and graphic design companies. As far as these companies were concerned, FTTP couldn't have come soon enough.

Offering businesses the best space with the best speeds

The Custard Factory is the UK's leading regional destination for creative and digital businesses, independent retail and cultural activity. It is at the heart of Birmingham's creative and digital quarter in Digbeth, just over 5 minutes walk from The Bullring and Moor Street Train Station. It is home to 500 businesses ranging from innovative start ups and SMEs to global brands such as ASOS. The Big Peg is a landmark building for entrepreneurs and growing companies in the heart of the city's resurgent Jewellery Quarter, with the new Golden Square public square currently under construction at the foot of the building.

Lucan Gray, of The Custard Factory and The Big Peg, commented "Creative and digital are two of the areas where Birmingham businesses can and do compete globally. These are vital growth sectors for our economy. Geography is no barrier for ideas based businesses. However, fast connectivity is one of the most important ingredients to enable the City's creative and digital working community to thrive.

"The arrival of Openreach offers superfast connection speeds, and a choice of provider and will enable the businesses based to can get the best possible speeds at the best possible price. Our resident businesses still have to pay connection fees and line rentals, but the cost of installing the core infrastructure, which would normally fall on them, has been borne by Openreach.



"That's because their network investment saw that the scale of The Custard Factory and The Big Peg would make it commercially viable. There are approximately 800 studio offices in total, and so it will be attractive to attract communications providers."

Getting down to business

Openreach business development director Martin Corbett takes up the story:

"We wanted to get straight on with the nuts and bolts so we could launch as soon as possible in The Custard Factory and The Big Peg.

"We collaborated with Lucan and his team on the design of the core infrastructure going around the buildings. We had to make some readjustments on network entry points to both properties, but that wasn't a major problem.

"There were no significant issues with The Big Peg. It's a modern building with risers and false ceilings. So we had more than enough space to install our cables and equipment.

"We did encounter some minor installation challenges in the The Custard Factory, which actually consists of several buildings. However, our engineers found the space they needed and are about to start in the FTTP installation there.

"Without getting too technical, we've put fibre optic terminating points every 20 metres above the ceilings in all the corridors in both properties. They act as local distribution points for the Custard Factory studio offices."

Tenants were keen to know more

Several of the businesses based in both The Custard Factory and The Big Peg had seen what was going on and were keen to ask questions about FTTP. Once they'd heard about the benefits it would deliver for them, they couldn't wait for it to be installed.

In our experience of other FTTP installations the commercial benefits will be tangible. One FTTP client – the owner of a small business village based in a set of converted warehouses just outside Wolverhampton – reports that it's responsible for 98% occupancy and more than 20 tenants-in-waiting."

It's thumbs up from Lucan

Lucan is very happy about the progress Openreach made with the installation work in his properties and excited about the prospects of FTTP going live.

He concludes: "I initially thought that working with Openreach could have the potential to be a nightmare. Being such a vast organisation, I was worried about whether they would be able to offer a personal service and about how tuned in they would be to the specific needs of The Big Peg and The Custard Factory.

"I'm delighted to say the opposite proved to be true. I've had conversations with senior people who've been happy to deal with any issues as they arose. I only have to pick up the phone and it's sorted! It has been a very positive experience."

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