

Claxton Parish Council

Parish Clerk
Mike Balmer
01508 484162
mbalmer@btinternet.com

6 Claxton Mill
Claxton
Norwich
Norfolk NR14 7UG

24 September 2014

Dear Mr Bacon

BETTER BROADBAND FOR NORFOLK (BBfN) - BUT NOT ALL OF US

I have been instructed by Claxton Parish Council to contact you to seek your support for a more targeted approach to the roll-out of improved broadband services in this part of rural Norfolk. Last year we had a presentation from Karen O'Kane, Norfolk County Council's lead on BBfN, which raised more questions than answers for a small village in South Norfolk without the clout of larger communities.

The government has given a commitment that everyone will "enjoy" minimum download speeds of 2Mbps by the end of 2015. Claxton residents have little faith that even this can be delivered. The run from our nearest exchange at Thurton is 2 miles to the centre of the village and more than 3½ miles to the furthest extremities. We do not have a green roadside cabinet in the village, unlike many of those around us, meaning that our line from the Thurton exchange will not benefit from a fibre-optic solution. It is little wonder that some of the residents who live at the end of the line suffer the poorest service in terms of download speeds. We recently undertook a survey of all households to establish exactly what speed was being delivered, and got a 30% response. As you will see from the chart on page 3, the results are mixed. Some enjoy reasonable speeds (3Mbps+) while immediate neighbours struggle to load a page in a reasonable timeframe.

Karen O'Kane spoke of an "alternative technology" solution which would have to be developed for villages like Claxton. All we've read so far suggests that this will be left to the last minute, underlining fears that we will lose out. We are still seeing news reports that the larger cities are now getting 50Mbps+, and do not understand why so much money is being ploughed into delivering even greater speeds in such places, rather than bringing the rest of us up to an acceptable level.

Parts of rural Norfolk have seen individual commercial enterprises providing bespoke solutions. We have in mind the Wispire project with the Diocese of Norwich which puts wireless repeaters onto church towers and Norfolk Rural Community Council's "ThinkingWISP" solution. Claxton Church was not chosen for Wispire so we get no benefit from that source, and similarly "ThinkingWISP" has a couple of significant deadspots in Claxton (see map extract on last page) meaning electors cannot consider that solution either.


Claxton Parish Council

What would we like to see? Put simply, a lot more attention being paid to rural communities, more contact with us and a clearer, honest message about where we stand and how soon we can enjoy what is fast becoming another essential utility, not least for those who work from home or operate businesses locally. A reasonable level of broadband service is now one of the big issues for those seeking to move to rural communities, and there's no doubt in our minds that an inability to ensure a reasonable level of service will cause second thoughts among potential new residents, especially those who use their broadband for more than basic e-mailing and internet browsing.

I am copying this letter to our local member on South Norfolk Council, our member on Norfolk County Council and to Karen O'Kane at the BBfN project, as well as to our Parish Councillors. A copy will also be placed on the village website for all to see.

We look forward to hearing from you - particularly if there is any good news!

Yours Sincerely



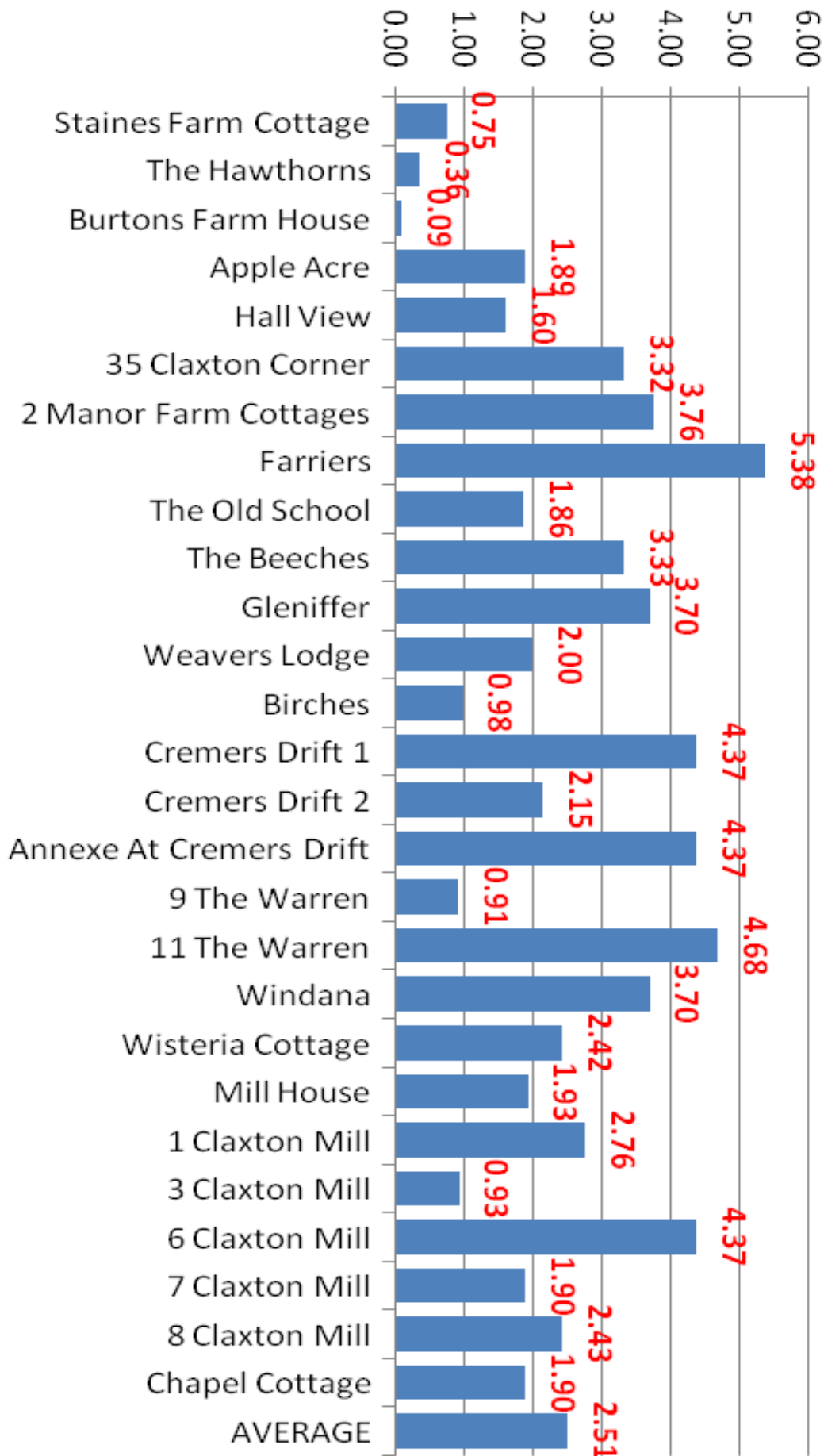
M A Balmer
Clerk to Claxton Parish Council

Richard Bacon MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

cc: Derek Blake, South Norfolk Council
Adrian Gunson MBE, Norfolk County Council
Karen O'Kane, BBfN Programme Director, Norfolk County Council

Claxton Parish Council

Download Speeds in Mbps (July 2014)



Claxton Parish Council

