

Exchange Only Lines

As the Digital Scotland rollout of fibre continues, some people are discovering that their telephone/broadband connection is an 'exchange only' (EO) line. Find out what 'exchange only' means and discover how Scotland is leading the way in tackling the engineering challenges these lines create.

What exactly is an EO line?

Telephone and standard broadband connections are made over a copper cable that links your property to the network. To reach the network, this copper cable can either be connected to a green roadside cabinet near your premises, or sometimes the copper cable connects directly to your local telephone exchange. This type of connection is what we call an "exchange only" or EO line.

'In Scotland there are considerably more 'exchange only lines' lines than the rest of the UK due to history and a large number of small communities spread over a large geographic area. This means that Digital Scotland has built a wealth of expertise in dealing with the challenges of EO lines. So if you have an EO line, we hope this factsheet will dispel a few myths and put your mind at rest.

OK, so what's the issue?

Mostly we use 'fibre to the cabinet' to bring fast fibre broadband to homes and businesses across Scotland. With this technology, engineers build a second 'fibre' cabinet next to a green roadside copper cabinet. This fibre cabinet is connected to the fibre network and then to the copper cabinet, bringing faster fibre broadband to the homes and businesses served by the copper cabinet.

The problem is that for homes and businesses with EO lines, a copper cabinet does not exist so their lines connect directly to the telephone exchange. So to enable

these premises for fibre broadband, the engineers have to build not just one but TWO new cabinets – both a copper cabinet and a fibre cabinet, as well as connect up the two and re-arrange the lines. As you can imagine, this takes longer to sort out.

Just why is it so much more complex than usual?

Connecting EO lines is considerably more complicated than connecting usual phone lines to the fibre network because it involves building twice as many cabinets.

This means:

- Twice the number of planning permissions are needed
- The copper cabinet and the fibre cabinet need to be as close as possible to each other – and it's not always all that easy to find suitable locations
- EO lines in larger communities are often in the town centres near the exchange and it is often complicated to arrange planning and traffic management in town centres
- The work of re-arranging the copper wires is highly skilled and time consuming

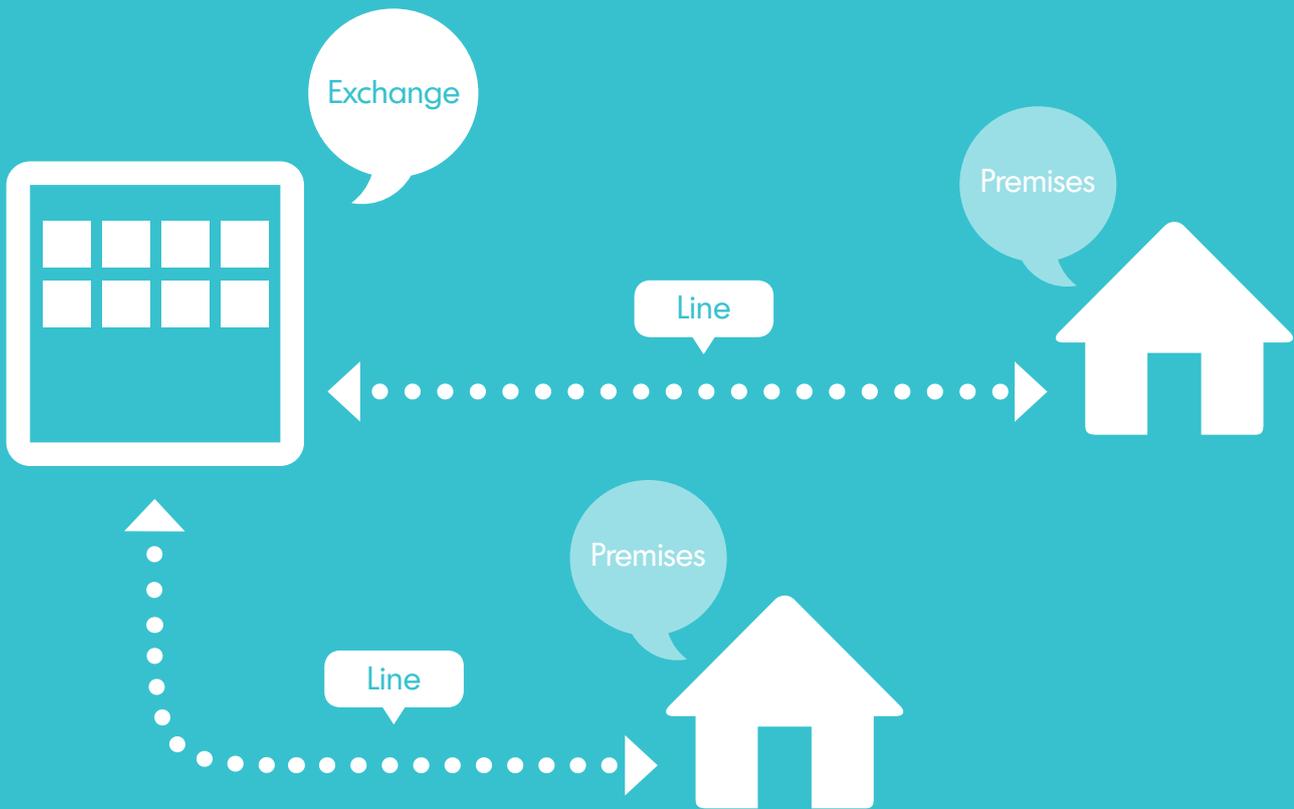
How are we rising to the challenge?

We have already connected over 338,000 Scottish properties with EO lines to the fibre network.

What this means for you

If you have an EO line, it can be more difficult for us to tell you exactly when you will be able to connect to fibre broadband or what speed you will get in advance because of the complex engineering that is involved.

However, because of the high number of EO lines in Scotland, our engineers are making excellent progress in finding the best solutions for people with EO lines .



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