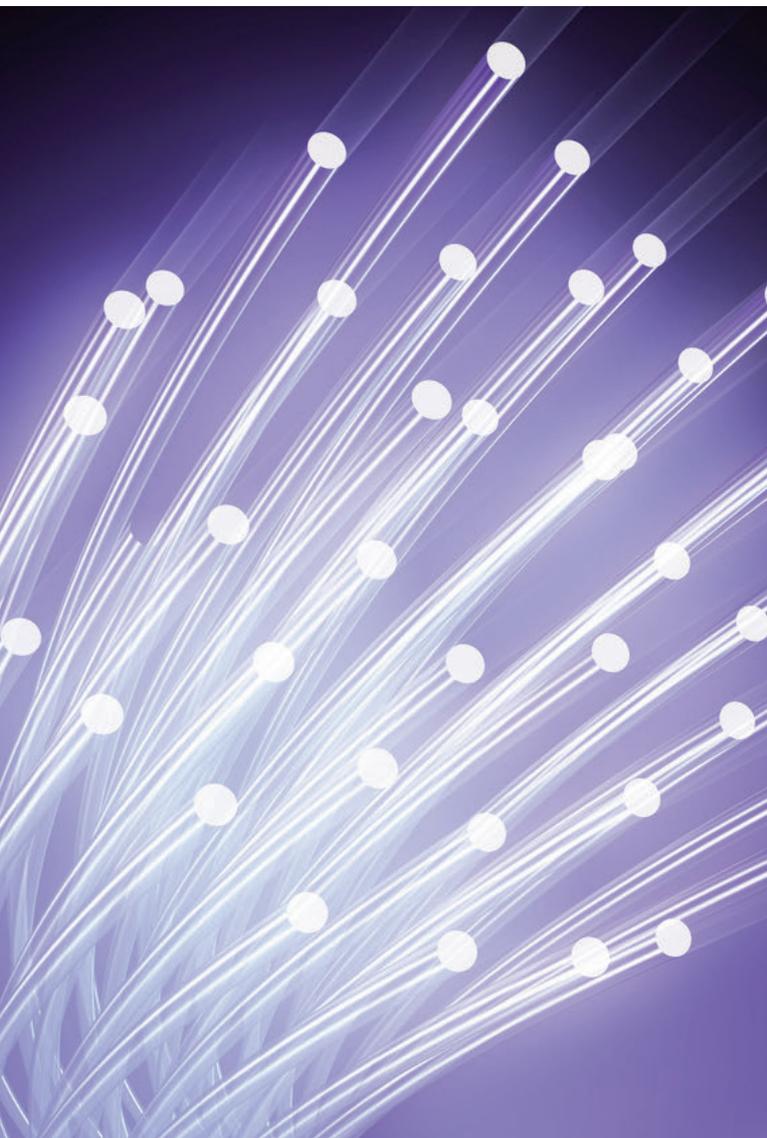




Art gallery is a picture of Superfast success



A former village pub in Felton has taken on a new lease of life thanks to the hard work of two Northumberland women and a big boost in broadband speeds. Gallery 45, previously the Stags Head, is now serving up much more than pints since two teachers decided to take on a new challenge in 2013.

The enterprising pair have completely transformed the former watering hole into a creative oasis boasting an art gallery, eight artist studios, a gift and coffee shop and rentable space, which is used by the local community for everything from tribal belly dancing to choral singing.

And with the installation of superfast broadband, as part of the iNorthumberland fibre roll-out, the pair are able to offer wi-fi to resident artists, visiting customers and to people using their community spaces. As a result they have expanded the services they offer, attracted new customers and even recruited two new members of staff.



Mary Moore Mewett and Jane Mills, owners of Gallery 45, said: “We had both reached a point in our careers where we decided that we would like a new challenge. We liked the idea of having our own business, but weren’t sure what that business might be. The pub had been on the market for some time so on a whim we put in a cheeky offer, which to our surprise was accepted.”



Superfast broadband has enabled **Gallery 45**, an art gallery based in a former village pub, to offer wi-fi to resident artists, the local community and customers.

www.feltongallery45.co.uk/

Mary said: “Our plans for the business have evolved as time has gone on – it’s been an exciting journey. We still have many ideas as to how we will develop our business but the game changer for us was upgrading to superfast broadband.

“The faster broadband speeds have made even the simplest things more efficient. Ordering stock online for the gallery and gift shop takes a fraction of the time and we’ve been able to create a fantastic website and use social media to promote the business and attract new customers. And we can both be doing different things online at the same time rather than having to take it in turns.

“The key benefit is without a doubt being able to provide free wi-fi throughout the building.”

“Our resident artists need and use it for their businesses and our customers can use it while they are enjoying a coffee in front of the wood burner.”

Gallery 45 hosted an event for Northumberland County Council’s ‘Be Digital’ Women and Broadband programme, which has provided intensive digital business support and training to 20 female entrepreneurs, who run their own businesses in Northumberland.

Simon Roberson, BT’s regional partnership director for the North East, said: “Mary and Jane at Gallery 45 are great examples of how female entrepreneurs in Northumberland are making the most of superfast broadband in order to grow their own business locally, nationally and even internationally, by reaching a global market over the internet.”

Jane added: “Our plans for the future are focused on maximising the opportunities for our community space and this is heavily reliant on wi-fi. When ‘Be Digital’ recently asked us if they could hold an event which required internet access for more than 20 guests thanks to superfast broadband we were able to say yes. Without it we would have had to turn away the business.

“Events are definitely something we would like to do more of and with great facilities, excellent transport links and our superfast connection we know we are going to make it happen.”

More than 145,000 households and businesses in Northumberland are now able to connect to fibre broadband as a result of the iNorthumberland programme and BT’s commercial roll-out of the high-speed technology.

Simon said: “Fibre broadband is without a doubt transforming the way people can do business and it’s great to hear from local people about the difference it is making to them.

“Superfast can open doors for new opportunities, fresh ways of connecting with customers – and potential customers – and it can cope as business needs develop and grow.”

The iNorthumberland broadband programme, a key part of the council’s growth investment, is being delivered by Northumberland County Council and BT.

The majority of premises in Northumberland will be getting access to some of the best broadband speeds in the UK via iNorthumberland and the commercial roll-out of fibre by BT’s local network business, Openreach.



Openreach’s network is open to all broadband service providers on an equal wholesale basis and so Northumberland households and businesses can benefit from highly competitive products and pricing from a range of providers. For up to date information on the roll-out visit www.inorthumberland.org.uk

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