# Openreach’s fibre discount sparks debate over market dominance and competition risks



Openreach has recently unveiled a significant discount scheme aimed at encouraging internet service providers (ISPs) to migrate their customers from legacy copper networks to fibre broadband. This strategy, effective from 10 October 2025 until 9 April 2026, offers ISPs substantial savings by providing fibre services at prices normally charged for lower-speed copper connections. The initiative, part of Openreach's Equinox 2 pricing package, includes nationwide rental offers for various fibre bandwidth tiers at the price of an 80Mbps/20Mbps line, with discounted pricing lasting for two years from the service activation. Additionally, Openreach plans to introduce a zero-cost 'upgrade journey' for migrations from certain retiring copper services, underlining its push towards a full fibre future.

However, this move has sparked sharp criticism from alternative network providers, often referred to as altnets, who argue that the aggressive discounting could stifle competition in the fibre broadband market. Nexfibre, a Virgin Media O2-affiliated fibre company, has been at the forefront of these critiques. Nexfibre executives, including CEO Rajiv Datta and General Counsel Giles Rowbotham, described the discount as "enormously aggressive," warning that it could simply transfer Openreach's significant market power from copper into the fibre domain. They contend that the steep discounts essentially pressure ISPs to migrate customers rapidly, diminishing opportunities for other fibre providers to compete effectively. Rowbotham specifically questioned the sustainability of such pricing, suggesting that the discounted rates are not economically viable in the long term and are likely to be challenging for competitors to match.

Industry association INCA (Independent Networks Co-operative Association) has also voiced concerns about the potential anti-competitive nature of the discounts, having raised these issues with telecom regulator Ofcom. Other altnets, including CityFibre, have echoed similar worries. Simon Holden, CityFibre’s CEO, remarked at the Connected Britain 2025 conference that the advantages held by incumbents—such as existing customer relationships, legacy infrastructure, and brand recognition—could undermine efforts to foster robust competition in fibre broadband. Holden emphasized the risk that without careful regulatory oversight, BT Group, through Openreach, might reclaim dominance in the fibre market reminiscent of its hold over copper.

Openreach representatives have defended the discounting strategy as a necessary and fair competitive response. Mark Shurmer, Managing Director of Regulatory Affairs at Openreach, dismissed the complaints as efforts by competitors to maintain higher prices, saying it was unsurprising that rivals would prefer less competitive pricing. Katie Milligan, Deputy CEO of Openreach, framed the discounting as part of a broader market context where Openreach is responding to competitive pressures, particularly in areas where fibre rollout by alternative providers has taken hold. She urged stakeholders to focus on accelerating fibre adoption for the country’s benefit rather than internal market battles.

Openreach’s discounting aligns with ongoing regulatory shifts anticipated under Ofcom’s upcoming Telecoms Access Review (TAR), due to take effect in April 2026. Ofcom has shown support for copper network retirement, intending to allow Openreach flexibility to decommission legacy copper infrastructure and encourage fibre migration through pricing incentives. Ben Harries, Ofcom’s Director of Competition Policy, noted plans to initiate copper stop-sell orders and allow copper price increases in certain areas to prompt customers to switch to fibre, while maintaining safeguards to promote fair competition.

The regulatory debate around this issue centres on balancing the encouragement of fibre adoption with protecting competitive market dynamics. While some industry figures see the discount as a natural commercial move, others warn of the risks inherent in allowing Openreach to leverage its dominant position. Robert Burles from AllPoints Fibre Networks suggested that while forced migrations could create openings for altnets to grow market share, careful oversight is necessary to prevent the preservation of BT/Openreach's dominance. Similarly, VodafoneThree's Colin Scott acknowledged the discount could increase fibre uptake but stressed the importance of safeguards.

Another concern raised involves the pace and structure of the copper-to-fibre switch-off. Alex Blowers, CityFibre’s Director of Regulatory Affairs, emphasised that Openreach’s control over the copper retirement process, including timings and migration conditions, grants it a substantial structural advantage. He called for a more neutral regulatory mechanism to ensure copper customers are fairly accessible to all fibre providers, enabling a level playing field.

As the transition accelerates—with BT Group CEO Allison Kirkby recently announcing that Openreach's fibre network has passed 20 million premises passed and achieved a 38% market take-up—the competitive dynamics of fibre broadband are under intense scrutiny. Nexfibre's leaders caution that the current discounting strategy reinforces Openreach's market power rather than broadening competition, a contention that remains a poignant issue as Ofcom prepares its regulatory framework for the next five years.

With Ofcom yet to finalise the terms of the Telecoms Access Review, stakeholders across the UK telecom landscape await decisions that will set the tone for the full-fibre era, balancing the imperative of infrastructure upgrade with the fostering of a vibrant, competitive broadband market.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.telcotitans.com/btwatch/enormously-aggressive-nexfibre-leads-altnet-complaints-against-openreach-copper-to-fibre-discounting/9748.article), [[2]](https://www.telcotitans.com/btwatch/enormously-aggressive-nexfibre-leads-altnet-complaints-against-openreach-copper-to-fibre-discounting/9748.article), [[3]](https://www.ispreview.co.uk/index.php/2025/10/competition-concerns-raised-over-new-openreach-fttp-broadband-discount.html), [[6]](https://www.silicon.co.uk/networks/broadband/ofcom-allows-bt-openreach-to-lower-fibre-wholesale-prices-513619)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.telcotitans.com/btwatch/enormously-aggressive-nexfibre-leads-altnet-complaints-against-openreach-copper-to-fibre-discounting/9748.article), [[2]](https://www.telcotitans.com/btwatch/enormously-aggressive-nexfibre-leads-altnet-complaints-against-openreach-copper-to-fibre-discounting/9748.article), [[5]](https://www.broadbandanalyst.co.uk/articles/isps-urge-ofcom-review-openreach-fibre-discount/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.telcotitans.com/btwatch/enormously-aggressive-nexfibre-leads-altnet-complaints-against-openreach-copper-to-fibre-discounting/9748.article), [[2]](https://www.telcotitans.com/btwatch/enormously-aggressive-nexfibre-leads-altnet-complaints-against-openreach-copper-to-fibre-discounting/9748.article), [[3]](https://www.ispreview.co.uk/index.php/2025/10/competition-concerns-raised-over-new-openreach-fttp-broadband-discount.html), [[5]](https://www.broadbandanalyst.co.uk/articles/isps-urge-ofcom-review-openreach-fibre-discount/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.telcotitans.com/btwatch/enormously-aggressive-nexfibre-leads-altnet-complaints-against-openreach-copper-to-fibre-discounting/9748.article), [[5]](https://www.broadbandanalyst.co.uk/articles/isps-urge-ofcom-review-openreach-fibre-discount/), [[6]](https://www.silicon.co.uk/networks/broadband/ofcom-allows-bt-openreach-to-lower-fibre-wholesale-prices-513619), [[7]](https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-58741963)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.telcotitans.com/btwatch/enormously-aggressive-nexfibre-leads-altnet-complaints-against-openreach-copper-to-fibre-discounting/9748.article), [[5]](https://www.broadbandanalyst.co.uk/articles/isps-urge-ofcom-review-openreach-fibre-discount/), [[6]](https://www.silicon.co.uk/networks/broadband/ofcom-allows-bt-openreach-to-lower-fibre-wholesale-prices-513619)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.telcotitans.com/btwatch/enormously-aggressive-nexfibre-leads-altnet-complaints-against-openreach-copper-to-fibre-discounting/9748.article), [[5]](https://www.broadbandanalyst.co.uk/articles/isps-urge-ofcom-review-openreach-fibre-discount/), [[6]](https://www.silicon.co.uk/networks/broadband/ofcom-allows-bt-openreach-to-lower-fibre-wholesale-prices-513619)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.telcotitans.com/btwatch/enormously-aggressive-nexfibre-leads-altnet-complaints-against-openreach-copper-to-fibre-discounting/9748.article), [[5]](https://www.broadbandanalyst.co.uk/articles/isps-urge-ofcom-review-openreach-fibre-discount/), [[6]](https://www.silicon.co.uk/networks/broadband/ofcom-allows-bt-openreach-to-lower-fibre-wholesale-prices-513619)
* Paragraph 8 – [[1]](https://www.telcotitans.com/btwatch/enormously-aggressive-nexfibre-leads-altnet-complaints-against-openreach-copper-to-fibre-discounting/9748.article), [[5]](https://www.broadbandanalyst.co.uk/articles/isps-urge-ofcom-review-openreach-fibre-discount/)
* Paragraph 9 – [[1]](https://www.telcotitans.com/btwatch/enormously-aggressive-nexfibre-leads-altnet-complaints-against-openreach-copper-to-fibre-discounting/9748.article), [[5]](https://www.broadbandanalyst.co.uk/articles/isps-urge-ofcom-review-openreach-fibre-discount/), [[7]](https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-58741963)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.telcotitans.com/btwatch/enormously-aggressive-nexfibre-leads-altnet-complaints-against-openreach-copper-to-fibre-discounting/9748.article> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.telcotitans.com/btwatch/enormously-aggressive-nexfibre-leads-altnet-complaints-against-openreach-copper-to-fibre-discounting/9748.article> - Openreach has introduced significant discounts to encourage ISPs to migrate customers from copper to fibre broadband. Nexfibre executives, including CEO Rajiv Datta and General Counsel Giles Rowbotham, have criticised this strategy as 'enormously aggressive', arguing it exploits Openreach's dominant market position and could undermine competition. The promotion, running from 10 October 2025 to 9 April 2026, offers substantial savings for ISPs that transition customers to fibre, potentially disadvantaging alternative network providers. Industry bodies like the Independent Networks Co-operative Association (INCA) have raised concerns with Ofcom about the anti-competitive nature of these discounts. ([telcotitans.com](https://www.telcotitans.com/btwatch/enormously-aggressive-nexfibre-leads-altnet-complaints-against-openreach-copper-to-fibre-discounting/9748.article?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.ispreview.co.uk/index.php/2025/10/competition-concerns-raised-over-new-openreach-fttp-broadband-discount.html> - Openreach's new discount on fibre-to-the-premises (FTTP) broadband services has sparked competition concerns among alternative network providers. The promotion, available from 10 October 2025 to 9 April 2026, allows ISPs to offer customers faster fibre packages at the cost of lower-speed services, potentially making it more challenging for smaller providers to compete. Industry bodies like the Independent Networks Co-operative Association (INCA) have raised concerns with Ofcom about the anti-competitive nature of these discounts. ([ispreview.co.uk](https://www.ispreview.co.uk/index.php/2025/10/competition-concerns-raised-over-new-openreach-fttp-broadband-discount.html?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.commsombudsman.org/raise-dispute/openreach> - The Communications Ombudsman provides a platform for consumers to raise disputes with Openreach. While Openreach installs and maintains the UK's copper and fibre network, it does not provide services directly to consumers. Therefore, complaints about Openreach should be directed to the consumer's service provider, which will forward the concerns to Openreach. In certain cases, consumers can contact Openreach directly, such as reporting network damage. ([commsombudsman.org](https://www.commsombudsman.org/raise-dispute/openreach?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.broadbandanalyst.co.uk/articles/isps-urge-ofcom-review-openreach-fibre-discount/> - ISPs have urged Ofcom to review Openreach's fibre discounting strategy, expressing concerns that it could undermine competition and harm consumers. The promotion, running from 10 October 2025 to 9 April 2026, offers significant savings for ISPs that migrate customers from copper to fibre, potentially disadvantaging alternative network providers. Ofcom has been notified of the offer but does not pre-approve Openreach's pricing schemes, relying on stakeholders to raise complaints if they believe the discounts undermine competition. ([broadbandanalyst.co.uk](https://www.broadbandanalyst.co.uk/articles/isps-urge-ofcom-review-openreach-fibre-discount/?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.silicon.co.uk/networks/broadband/ofcom-allows-bt-openreach-to-lower-fibre-wholesale-prices-513619> - Ofcom has allowed Openreach to introduce lower wholesale fibre prices, a move that has been criticised by alternative network providers. The discounted rates are part of Openreach's 'Equinox 2' offer, which aims to encourage ISPs to migrate customers from copper to fibre broadband. Rivals argue that this strategy could harm competition and reduce investment in alternative fibre networks. ([silicon.co.uk](https://www.silicon.co.uk/networks/broadband/ofcom-allows-bt-openreach-to-lower-fibre-wholesale-prices-513619?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-58741963> - Ofcom has approved Openreach's fibre price cuts, a decision that has angered rivals. The 'Equinox' offer means ISPs will pay less for fibre-to-the-premises (FTTP) services, but competitors argue it will reduce investment in alternative FTTP schemes and harm competition. Ofcom concluded that the offer does not raise concerns requiring intervention and is consistent with network competition. ([bbc.com](https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-58741963?utm_source=openai))