

Digital Infrastructure Update

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report provides an update on the various digital infrastructure projects including:

- Superfast Broadband
 - BT commercial programme
 - Highlands and Islands Programme
 - Community Broadband Scotland
- Other broadband issues
 - Extension of Funding
- Mobile Communications
 - Mobile Infrastructure Project
 - Commercial upgrades
- Public Wi-Fi

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Bute and Cowal Area Committee

1. Note the content of this report.

Digital Infrastructure Update

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Work has commenced on a number of programmes which aim to improve the digital infrastructure across Argyll. This report provides an update on the various projects within the Bute and Cowal area.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Bute and Cowal Area Committee
1. Note the content of this report.

4.0 DETAIL

The work being undertaken in relation to digital infrastructure relates to broadband or mobile communications.

4.1 Next Generation Broadband

Next generation broadband within Bute and Cowal is being delivered through the commercial programme by BT (parts of Dunoon), the Highlands and Islands project and Community Broadband Scotland supported community projects.

- 4.2 Work continues on building the new infrastructure network to support next generation broadband. Having completed the subsea cable links in 2014, land based backhaul and local access fibre cables are required to connect communities. Whilst telephone exchanges will continue to provide a service in relation to telephone calls only a handful of exchanges will handle next generation broadband services, new access cables running from these “headend” exchanges directly to new communication cabinets within communities will ensure that the superfast speeds reach the local cabinets.
- 4.3 During 2015, we saw new connections which mean that next generation broadband is available in the Bute and Cowal area for the first time, work continues in many of these locations to extend the fibre services to as many premises as possible within the budget of the project. A summary of all exchanges across Bute and Cowal is contained at Appendix 1.
- 4.4 Once the new fibre cabinets are live, customers who want access to superfast broadband must order the upgraded fibre service from their internet service

provider. Members of the public can check whether they are able to order a next generation service at www.scotlandsuperfast.com/where-when. If they are not able to order a next generation broadband service they will be given an indication of whether the service is likely to be available within their exchange area and if so when the first premises are expected to be connected.

4.5 BT commercial programme

The commercial rollout by BT has connected some premises in the Dunoon exchange areas with the majority of connections being made in Summer 2015.

4.6 Highlands and Islands Programme

The Highlands and Islands (H&I) programme in Argyll is currently expected to connect 83% of premises when taken with the commercial rollout.

4.7 The first live premises through the H&I programme in Bute and Cowal were made during the summer when premises in the Dunoon and Rothesay exchanges went live. Further fibre connections have since been made available in the Innellan, Tighnabruaich, Kilmun and Strachur exchange areas, many of these areas have received a fibre service ahead of the initial timescales within the first rollout plans.

4.8 Work is continuing across much of Bute and Cowal with further deployment expected during 2016.

4.9 Community Broadband Scotland

Community Broadband Scotland (CBS) operates to support communities in taking forward their own broadband solution where coverage through the above programmes is not expected.

4.10 CBS continue to work with communities in the Kyles of Bute area to undertake scoping and feasibility work around a community broadband project. Other communities interested in investigating a community based solution can find information at www.communitybroadbandscotland.org.uk.

Other broadband issues

4.11 Extension of Funding

Additional funding has been received from Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) and the Scottish Government which will provide a further £42 million to extend the rollout into Phase 2. It has not yet been confirmed as to how the additional funds will be allocated or the implications it could have for coverage in Argyll or the Bute and Cowal area.

4.12 In addition to government funding, the Phase 1 contracts provide for a “gain share” clause to clawback funding if the project reached agreed take up levels. In August 2015 it was announced that BT would make a payment of £17.8 million which will be used to extend coverage.

4.13 In order to better understand how the additional funding could be utilised, a modelling exercise is currently being undertaken. It is expected that this will be completed early in 2016 and will confirm those locations which cannot be covered

by the fibre rollout.

Mobile Communications

4.14 Mobile Infrastructure Project

Previous updates detailed work associated with the Mobile Infrastructure Project. This project closed in March 2016 and unfortunately will not deliver any new masts within Argyll.

4.15 Commercial upgrades

When Ofcom awarded the contract for delivering 4G across the UK it included a stipulation that 95% of premises within Scotland receive coverage. 4G coverage is available to some parts of Bute and Cowal, principally the Dunoon area, for some mobile operators. It is understood that further 4G deployments are planned most likely to be focused on upgrades to existing mast sites.

4.16 Alongside the 4G licence, amendments have been made to the licences issued by Ofcom to the mobile operators to implement 90 percent geographic voice coverage throughout the UK by no later than 31 December 2017. It is not yet known whether this will result in any coverage improvements across Bute and Cowal.

4.17 Other activities

As updated at the last Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee, we met with the Scottish Government and Scottish Futures Trust at the beginning of September to identify activities which can assist with improved mobile and broadband connectivity. We continue to work with them to develop opportunities within Argyll and Bute. The Council is also working with businesses, including through the Economic Forum, to lobby for improved mobile coverage. The issue of poor mobile coverage has also been raised by the fish farming industry and we are working together to lobby for improvements.

4.18 Our hilly landscape is one reason why mobile coverage can be intermittent. To try to assist mobile operators in building new masts, our Development Management Team has indicated an in principal agreement to trial larger masts within suitable locations. Detailed discussions will need to be undertaken to identify those locations which might be suitable.

4.19 Public Wi-Fi

In November 2015, a pilot for public town centre Wi-Fi in Helensburgh, operated by Helensburgh based company BroadChord, commenced. Focused initially on Colquhoun Square, BroadChord are hoping to deliver a second phase of coverage the first half of 2016. Should the pilot in Helensburgh prove successful, consideration may be given to whether a similar public Wi-Fi service could be provided to other locations within Argyll.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 Digital connectivity across the Bute and Cowal area is improving with the biggest change during 2015-16 being the introduction of superfast broadband. Rollout is expected to continue during 2016 with coverage extending across more of the rural exchange areas. Progress on mobile coverage is less certain although we will continue to press for improved coverage through both commercial and publically funded programmes.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Policy – the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) and Economic Development Action Plan support improvements in the digital infrastructure.

6.2 Financial – Across Scotland funding of £410m has been committed to the Phase 1 next generation broadband project across Scotland (including a contribution from COSLA on behalf of all local authorities). A further £42m is confirmed for phase 2. No direct financial implications to the Council at the present time.

6.3 Legal – none.

6.4 HR – None.

6.5 Equalities – the differing nature of the deployment of new technology has the potential to lead to inequalities in terms of access to digital services including those which support business and personal development.

6.6 Risk – there is an overall risk that the economic benefits arising from modern digital infrastructure are not fully realised. There are risks that those areas which do not benefit from digital infrastructure could become less attractive locations within which to live and work which could have implications in relation to the SOA objective of growing the population. The various programmes are reliant on new technology and innovation which is developing rapidly. Some projects are reliant on commercial operator decisions to invest whilst grant funding is necessary for many aspects of digital infrastructure improvement in Argyll. These aspects all create a level of uncertainty around the extent of infrastructure improvements.

6.7 Customer Service – improvements in broadband and mobile technology improve the opportunities for digital based customer services.

Appendices

1 Exchange overview

2 Broadband leaflet (correct at March 2016, updates will be available from <http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/superfast-broadband#leaflet>)

See also <http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/superfast-broadband>

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APPENDIX 1 EXCHANGE OVERVIEW

Exchange Area	Initial Programme Date	Current estimate for date for 1 st connections
Ardentenny	Jan-Jun 2016	Jan-Jun 2016 <i>Announced</i>
Cairndow	Exploring solutions	Jul-Dec 2016
Colintraive	Exploring solutions	Jul-Dec 2016
Dunoon	Commercial – Sum 2014 H&I - Jan-Jun 2016	Commercial – LIVE H&I – LIVE
Glendaruel	Exploring solutions	Exploring solutions
Innellan	Jan-Jun 2016	LIVE
Inveraray	Jul-Dec 2016	LIVE
Kilchattan Bay	Jan-Jun 2016	Jan-Jun 2016 <i>Announced</i>
Kilfinnan	Exploring solutions	Jul-Dec 2016
Kilmun	Jan-Jun 2016	LIVE
Lochgoilhead	Jul-Dec 2016	Jul-Dec 2016
Rothesay	Jan-Jun 2016	LIVE
Strachur	Jan-Jun 2016	LIVE
Tighnabruaich	Jan-Jun 2016	LIVE
Toward	Jan-Jun 2016	Jan-Jun 2016 <i>Announced</i>

Announced – HIE or Digital Scotland Team have made formal announcements that this is an exchange they are actively working on, they would normally expect to make the first connections within 6 months of the announcements (subject to no delays being encountered).

Next Generation Broadband in Argyll and Bute



Connections now in Balvicar, Campbeltown, Cardross, Carradale, Craginure, Dalmally, Dunoon, Helensburgh, Innellan, Inveraray, Kilmun, Ledaig, Lochgilphead, Machrihanish, Oban, Rothesay, Strachur, Taynuilt, Tarbert, Tighnabruaich and Tobermory exchange areas



More Exchange Areas coming soon...



£145.8 million for Highlands and Islands



£264 million for Rest of Scotland

Delivered by BT openreach



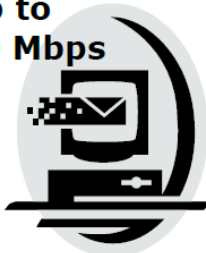
Keep up to date by registering at www.scotlandsuperfast.com/in-the-loop

2014
First properties within Argyll connected

Better connected for business, online learning and social activities



Up to 80 Mbps



10 new subsea cables in Argyll and Bute



85%

of properties expected to be connected by 2017

Digital Scotland
Community Broadband supporting communities to develop their own solution
www.communitybroadbandscotland.org



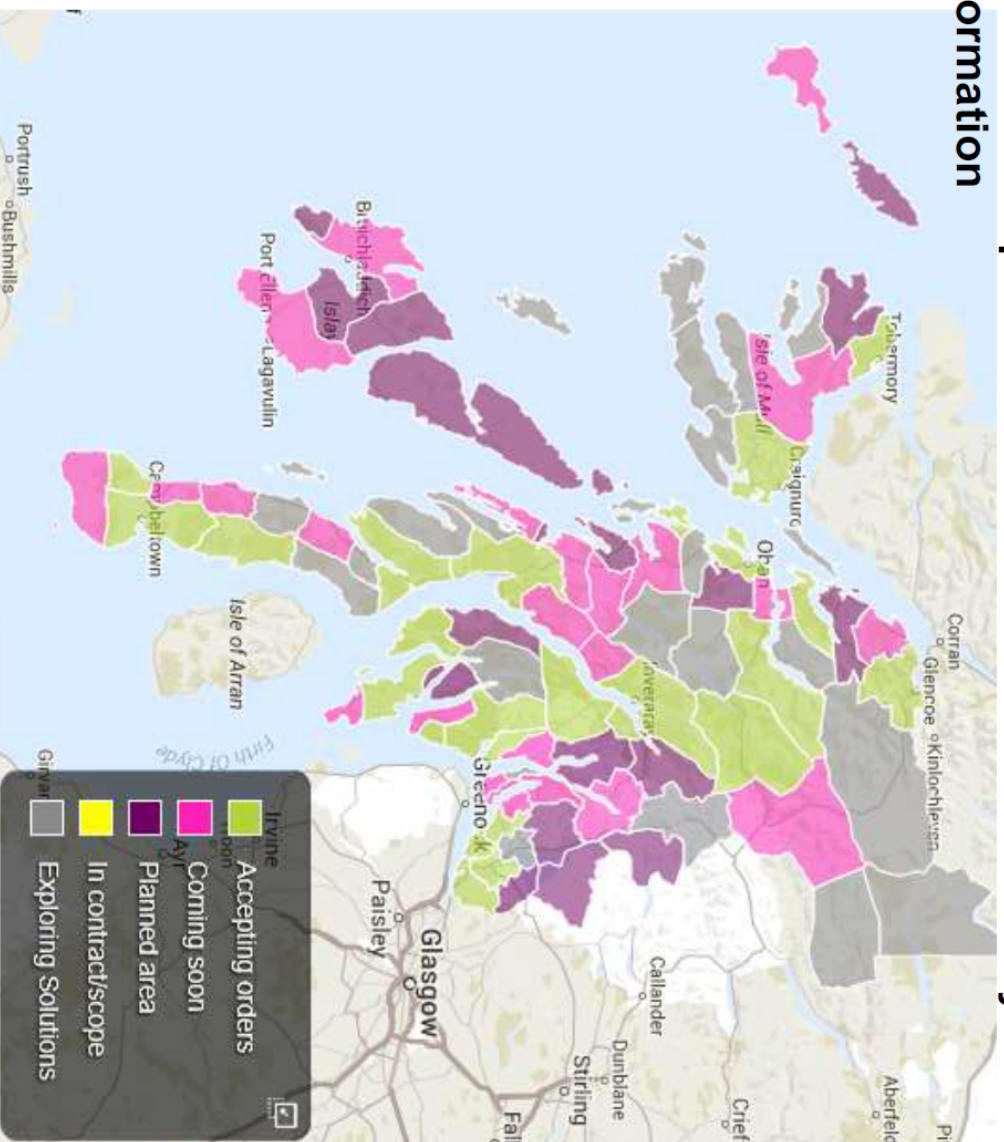
Community superfast for 1,400 premises

Digital Scotland
Interactive map at www.scotlandsuperfast.com

www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/superfast-broadband



Visit www.scotlandsuperfast.com/where-when and enter your details for further information



For premises in Aros, Barbreck, Colonsay, Craignure, Dervaig, Fionnphort, Jura, Kinlochspelve, Lismore, Luing, Pennyghael, Port Askaig, Port Charlotte, Portnahaven, Tiroran and Ulva Ferry exchange areas see also http://gigaplusargyll.co.uk/post_code