

Digital Infrastructure Update

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

- Next Generation Broadband
 - BT commercial programme
 - Rest of Scotland Programme
 - Community Broadband Scotland
 - Extension of Funding
 - Upgrade to Helensburgh Exchange
- Mobile Communications
 - Mobile Infrastructure Project
 - Commercial upgrades
- Public Wi-Fi

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Helensburgh and Lomond 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 and Bute. This report provides an update on the various projects within the Helensburgh and Lomond area.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that Helensburgh and Lomond 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 Helensburgh and Lomond is being delivered through one of three programmes – the commercial programme by BT (parts of Helensburgh), the Rest of Scotland project and Community Broadband Scotland supported community projects.

- 4.2 Work continues on building the new infrastructure network to support next generation broadband. 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 Unfortunately during 2015 and early 2016, we saw few new connections within the Helensburgh and Lomond area although work continues across the area to extend the fibre services to as many premises as possible within the budget of the project. A summary of all exchanges across Helensburgh and Lomond is contained at **Appendix 1**. We have sought clarification regarding these timescales and have been advised that these are the best indications currently. Members should however be aware that slippage can occur during deployment for reasons such as

underground duct routes are congested; there are utility cables or underground structures where BT want to lay fibre; BT have been unable to agree a suitable location for the cabinet or the costs of providing electrical power have become excessive. BT Openreach are testing an online search which details the progress of individual cabinets, this can be found at <http://homeandwork.openreach.co.uk/when-can-i-get-fibre.aspx>.

- 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 continued in Helensburgh with some additional connections expected during 2016.
- 4.6 Rest of Scotland Programme
The Rest of Scotland (RoS) Programme in Argyll expects connections to around 92% of premises when the commercial coverage is included.
- 4.7 Cardross exchange area was the first area to receive connections through the RoS programme in October 2014 (initial build date was 2016). During 2015, works have continued to extend coverage and although no new connections were made. It is expected that Arrochar, Clynder, Garelochhead, Helensburgh, Kilcreggan and Rhu exchange areas should see coverage improve during 2016 although this may be subject to change depending on onsite conditions. It is not uncommon for issues associated with deployment of the new infrastructure e.g. blockages in cable ducting, delays getting electrical connections etc. to cause delays. You can find out more about the activities involved in deploying the technology at www.scotlandsuperfast.com/where-when/how-we-are-building-the-fibre-network/.
- 4.8 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.
- 4.9 During 2015, CBS had informal discussions with community groups in the Helensburgh and Lomond area but no formal requests for funding were made. Communities interested in investigating a community based solution can find information at www.communitybroadbandscotland.org.uk.

Other broadband issues

- 4.10 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 Helensburgh and Lomond area.

4.11 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.

4.12 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 in 2016 and will confirm those locations which cannot be covered by the fibre rollout.

4.13 Upgrade to Helensburgh Exchange

Separate to the rollout of fibre broadband, BT have upgraded the Helensburgh exchange so that the maximum speed customers on a non-fibre broadband service will receive is now 20 mbps. All existing broadband customers will migrate automatically (unlike upgrading to fibre which people need to order). The rollout of fibre broadband will continue in the town but this upgrade should provide more speed to some of those who are not yet able to get a fibre broadband service.

4.14 **Mobile Communications**

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 Helensburgh and Lomond, principally the most southerly parts of the area, for some mobile operators. It is understood that further 4G deployments are planned principally focused on the upgrade of 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 improve coverage levels within the Helensburgh and Lomond area.

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. We are 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 Helensburgh and Lomond is improving although the rollout of superfast broadband has not been as quick as was hoped in early 2015. It is however expected that superfast rollout will continue during 2016 to provide connections over the majority of exchange areas by the end of 2016. Progress on mobile coverage is less certain although we will continue to press for improved coverage for Argyll 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
Arden	Exploring solutions	Exploring solutions
Arrochar	Jul-Dec 2016	Jul-Dec 2016
Cardross	Jan-Jun 2016	LIVE
Clynder	Jul-Dec 2016	Jan-Jun 2016
Coulport	Exploring solutions	Exploring solutions
Garelochhead	Jul-Dec 2016	Jan-Jun 2016
Helensburgh	Commercial – spring 2015 RoS – Jan-Jun 2016	Commercial – LIVE work continuing RoS - Ongoing
Inveruglas	Exploring solutions	Exploring solutions
Kilcreggan	Jul-Dec 2016	Jan-Jun 2016
Luss	Jul-Dec 2016	Jan-Jun 2017
Rhu	Jan-Jun 2016	Jan-Jun 2016

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...



HIE
Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Àrainn na Gàidhealach's nan Eilean

£145.8 million for Highlands and Islands



£264 million for Rest of Scotland

Delivered by **BT openreach**



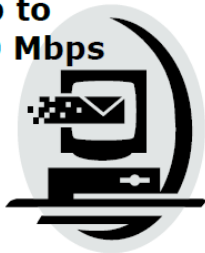
Keep up to date by registering at www.scotlandsuperfast.com/in-the-loop

2014
First properties within Argyll connected

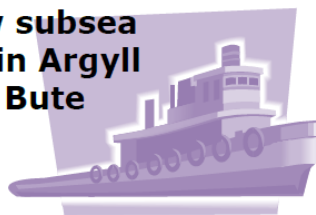
Better connected for business, online learning and social activities



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.communitybroadbandsotland.org

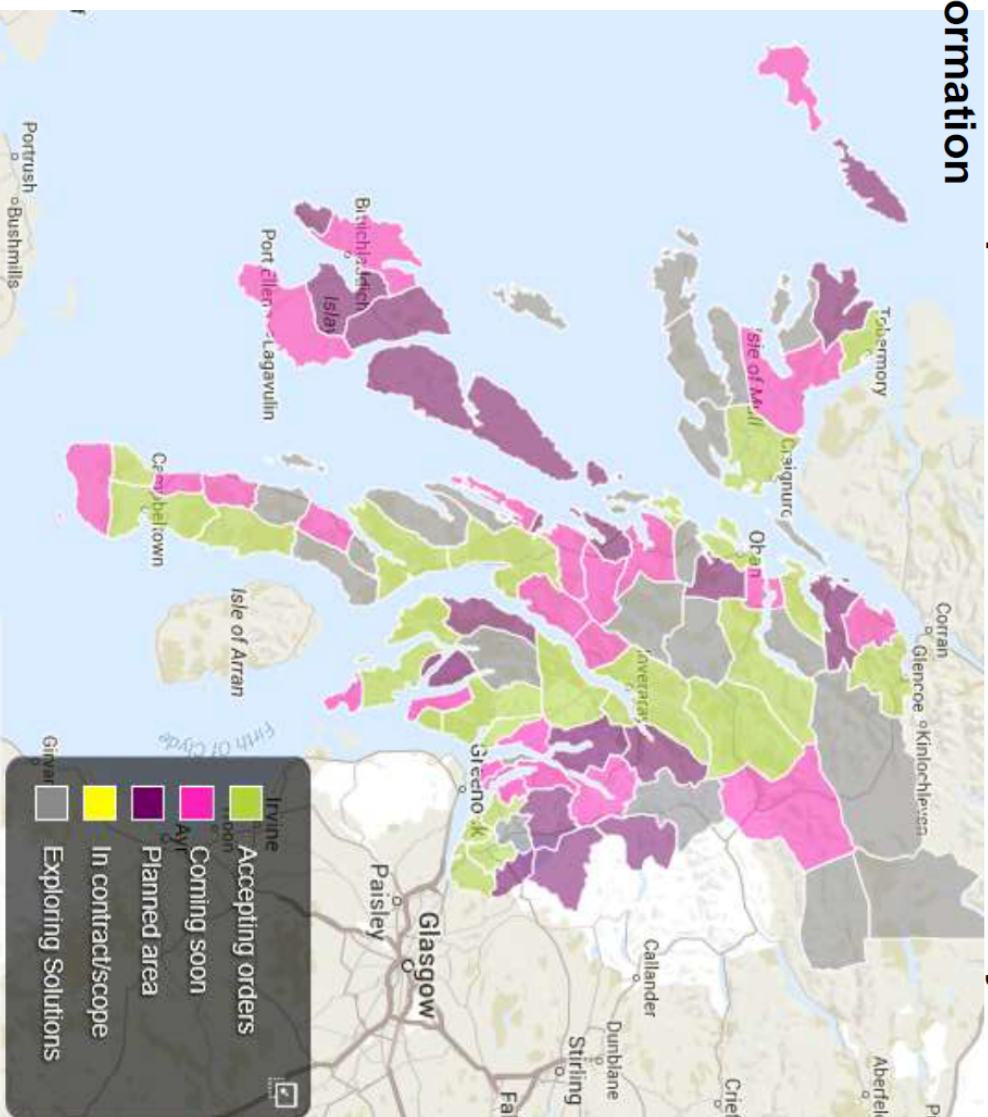
GigaPlus Argyll
Community superfast for 1,400 premises

Digital Scotland
Interactive map at www.scotlandsuperfast.com

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



Visit www.scotlandsuperfast.com/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