**Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership**

**Helensburgh and Lomond Area Community Planning Group**

**Thursday 8th February 2018**

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### Digital Infrastructure – Area Update

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**Summary**

The following report provides an update on the various digital infrastructure projects which are ongoing in the area including Superfast Broadband, other Broadband issues and mobile communications.

### 1.0    Purpose

1.1    Work has continued 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 Helensburgh and Lomond area.

### 2.0    Recommendations

2.1    The Area Community Planning Group is asked to note the contents of the report.

### 3.0    Detail

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

3.1    **Next Generation Broadband**

Next generation broadband within Helensburgh and Lomond is being delivered through the commercial programme by BT (parts of Helensburgh), the Digital Scotland's Rest of Scotland (RoS) project

3.2    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.

3.3     During 2016/7, we saw further considerable movement with new available connections which meant that next generation broadband is available to the majority of premises in the Helensburgh and Lomond area many for the first time. Work continues in many of these locations to extend the fibre services to as many premises as possible within the initial budget of the project. This initial budget has made more connections than originally expected through technological advancements and efficiency savings. Additional funds have also been made available through the Gainshare or Clawback mechanism that was written into the initial contract with BT.
A summary of all Cabinets across Helensburgh and Lomond is contained at Appendix 1.

3.4     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.digitalscotland.org/whereandwhen. 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.

3.5     BT commercial programme
The commercial rollout by BT has upgraded a number of Cabinets in the Helensburgh exchange areas this is now complete. The last commercial cabinet to go live was Cab6 around Christmas. The premises not connected through the commercial program will be connected as part of the current RoS contract or the R100 program

3.6     Rest of Scotland Programme
The Rest of Scotland (RoS) programme in Helensburgh and Lomond is currently expected to connect 95% of premises when taken with the commercial rollout by mid-February. This Phase will see further connections made through 2018 in part mainly to Gainshare money, after which the R100 will pick up where Phase1 left off.

3.7     The first live premises through the RoS programme in Helensburgh and Lomond were made during 2014 when premises in the Cardross exchanges went live. Further fibre connections have since been made available in a majority of the exchange areas across Helensburgh and Lomond, many of these areas have received a fibre service ahead of the initial timescales within the first rollout plans. There has been some unforeseen technical difficulties in some exchange areas which has seen major delays and caused distress to expected customers.

3.8     Work is continuing across Helensburgh and Lomond with the initial contract which was due to end Dec17 however a contract extension has been given due to additional funds being made available, this will see continued deployment during 2018. It was announced that areas around Arden and Portincaple have been injected into the program through the Gainshare funds that have been made available. In addition Cab 22 on the Helensburgh exchange has been programmed to get Fibre to the Premise (FTTP). The only confirmed dates for the completion of these Gainshare works is currently the end of 2018.

**Other broadband issues**

3.9    Extension of Funding
Additional funding was received from Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) and the
Scottish Government which will extend the fibre rollout.

3.10    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.
This saw BT make a payment of £17.8 million across both programmes which will
be used to extend coverage. It must be stressed that take-up of the new
upgraded service could be better, it currently standing at around 40%. To assist
with raising awareness of the access to SFB and increase take-up I have some
cards which can be distributed across the area for people to take away with them.

3.11    Reaching 100% (R100)
A Scottish Government (SG) commitment is that every premise in Scotland is to
have access to Superfast Broadband with broadband speeds >30Mbps by 2021.
The R100 has split Scotland into 3 Lots North (Lot1), Central (lot2) and South
(Lot3).This has now entered the procurement stage with Invite to Tender (ITT)
being published. Helensburgh and Lomond is split between Lot1 and Lot2, Lot1
has an estimated value of £384M and Lot2 has an estimated value of £83M. The
procurement exercise is expected to last around 9 months with the expected
contract commencement date of late 2018/beginning of 2019. Very little
information will be available during this period due to commercial sensitivities.

**Mobile Communications**

3.12    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 most parts of Helensburgh and Lomond although some pockets do
not have coverage, for some mobile operators. Further 4G deployments are
planned as numerous planning applications have been approved however it is still
not clear when full network activation will be complete. Appendix 2 outlines all the
current mast locations and the some of the proposed new masts sites.

3.13    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. Significant
movements have been made towards this target. I have provided a wide frame
coverage maps in Appendix 3. These are taken from Ofcom's coverage data and
show coverage for Vodafone (map1 voice), (map2 data) and EE coverage (map3
voice) and (map4 data). As you can see data coverage from EE is slightly better.
This is mainly down to the new Emergency Service Network contract (ESN) that
EE were award. This is to provide 4G coverage for the blue light services (Fire,
Police and Ambulance). It has been conveyed that a majority of the Phase1 ESN

sites will be activated by March 2018.

3.14   Credit must be given to the Councils planning teams for their continued efforts in seeing these numerous planning applications progress through the system, with a considerable number of these being quite contentious sites in designated and sensitive areas. In the last two years there has been just under 200 applications for new mast sites or mast upgrades across Argyll and Bute from various network operators.

3.15   Other activities
       As well as MNO commercial upgrades and the ESN program there are other programs currently being progressed. There is the Emergency Service Mobile Communication Program Extended Area Sites (ESMCP EAS), these are sites that are being progressed by the Home Office to provide additional coverage in areas that are not commercially viable. There is also the 4G infill program which is being progressed by Scottish Futures Trust which aims to building robust masts that are suitable for holding multi operator equipment, with adequate power and fibre backhaul capabilities. This is also aimed at areas that are not commercial viable. Procurement for the 4G Infill is due to be launched imminently with the SG committing £25M.

3.16   One of the main reasons to the historic bad mobile coverage is the general topography of Argyll and Bute. Due to the licence obligations placed on some operators by Ofcom and government agreement by the other MNO's to provide similar coverage, this is why we require such a large number of mast site. Additionally the ESN is mainly targeted at the road network and data connections require a general direct line of site.

**4.0   Conclusion**

5.1    Digital connectivity across the Helensburgh and Lomond area is constantly improving with the continuation of the fibre rollout programmes and the upcoming R100. Digital Scotland has outlined that it is possible that further funds may be required to meet the government's commitment to the R100 and that further procurements may be required to achieve this milestone target of 100%.  Rollout is expected to continue during 2018 with coverage extending across more of the rural exchange areas. Progress on mobile coverage is although slow, we will continue to press for improved coverage through both commercial and publically funded programmes.

**5.0   Implications**

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

5.2    Financial – Across Scotland funding of £600m has been committed to the R100 programme. No direct financial implications to the Council at the present time.

5.3     Legal – none.

5.4     HR – None.

5.5     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.

5.6     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.

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

**Name of Lead Officer**

Executive Director of Development Infrastructure: - Pippa Milne

**For further information contact:-**

Iain MacInnes, Digital Liaison Officer (01546) 604647
E-mail iain.macinnes@argyll-bute.gov.uk

**Appendices**

1       Exchange/Cabinet overview
2       Map of current and proposed mast sites
3       Ofcom mobile coverage maps

**Appendix 1**

| Exchange Location | Cabs in program | Cabs Completed |
|---|---|---|
| Arden | 3 | 0 |
| Arrochar | 4 | 3 |
| Cardross | 6 | 6 |
| Clynder | 3 | 2 |
| Coulport | R100 | |
| Garelochhead | 5 | 4 |
| Helensburgh | 6 | 6 |
| Kilcreggan | 3 | 1 |
| Luss | R100 | |
| Rhu | 4 | 4 |
| | | |
| | | |

As outlined Helensburgh have received BT commercial cab upgrades the table above reflects DS funded cabs only.

Arden exchange: has been injected into the program as part of Gainshare the only available date currently available is the end of 2018. BT will have services to this exchange area as soon as they can subject to survey.
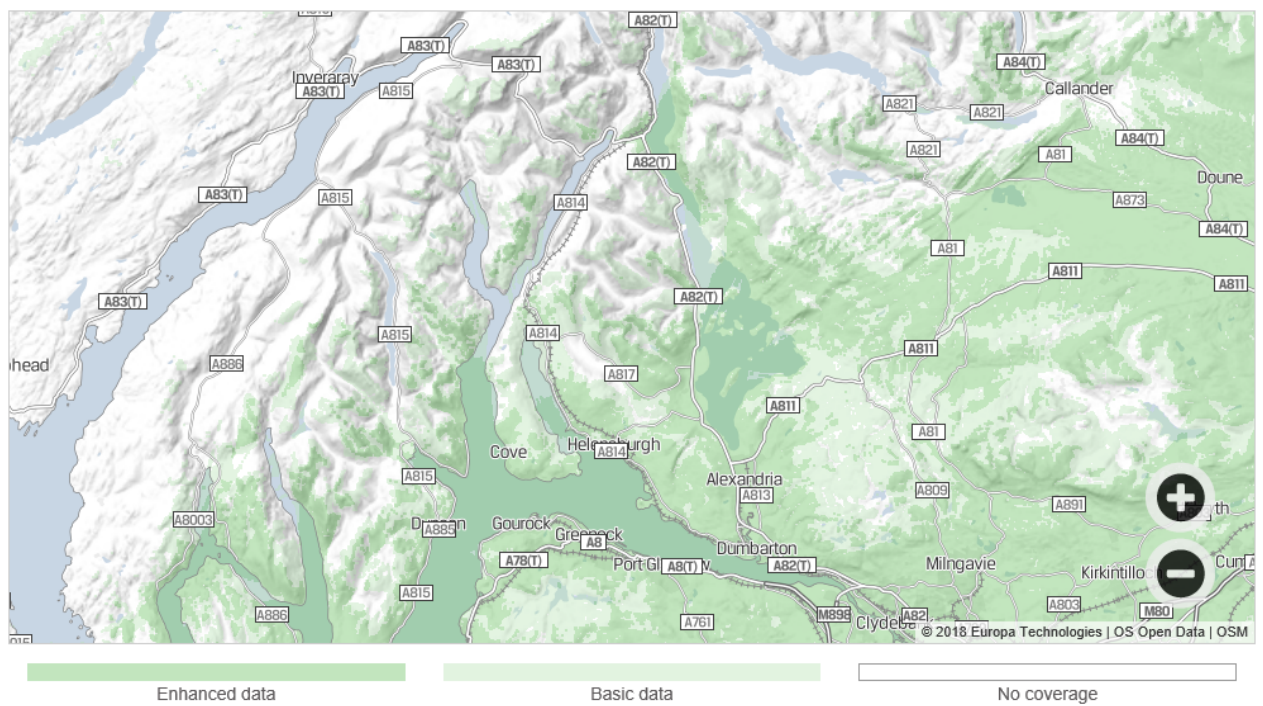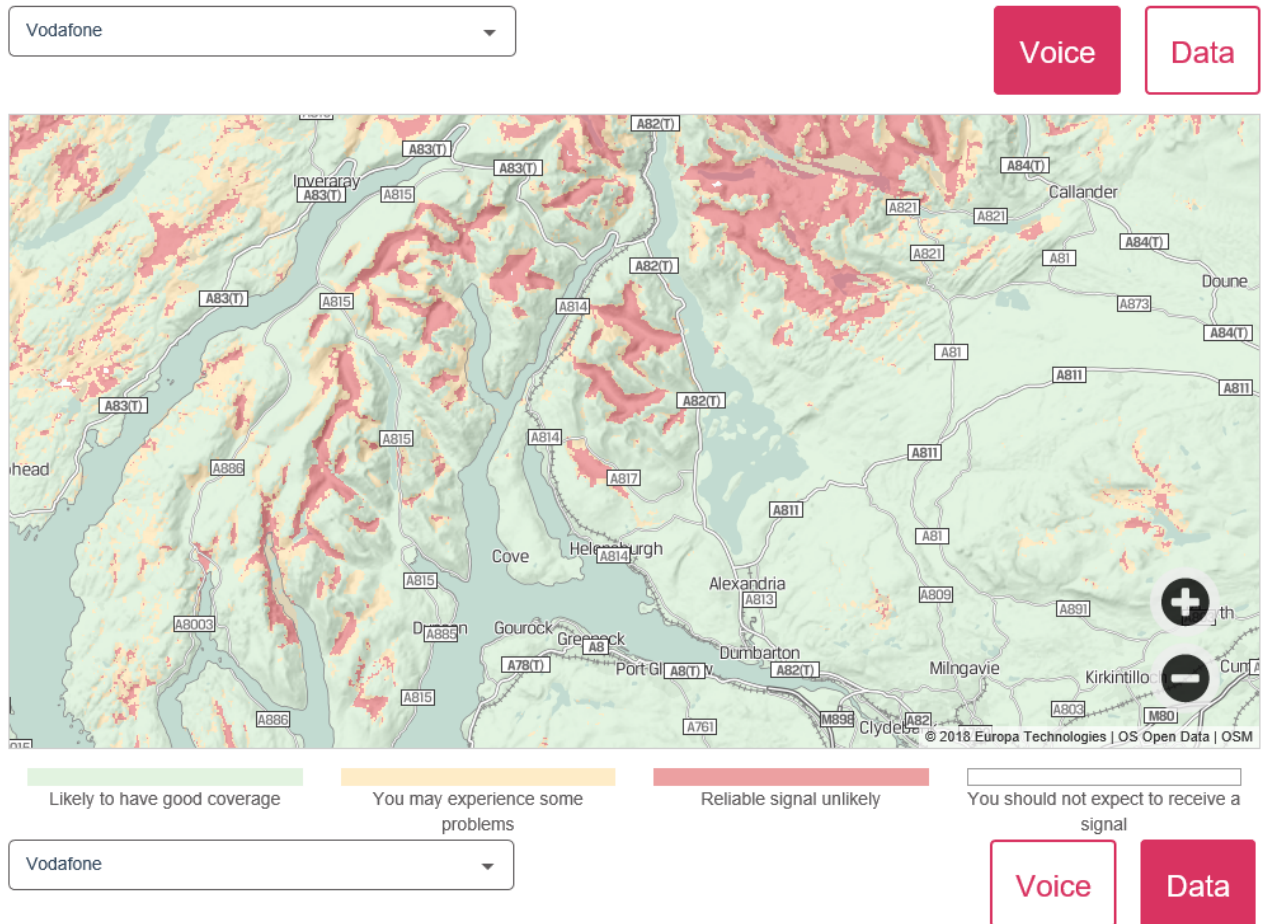
Coulport and Luss exchange areas are out of scope of the Phase1 program however DS/BT are exploring solutions to bring Next Generation Access to this exchange area and will be part of the R100 project.

**Appendix 2**

# Appendix 3

This map shows mobile availability in your area. Please select your network to view availability from your provider.

Vodafone ▼        **Voice**   Data



| Likely to have good coverage | You may experience some problems | Reliable signal unlikely | You should not expect to receive a signal |

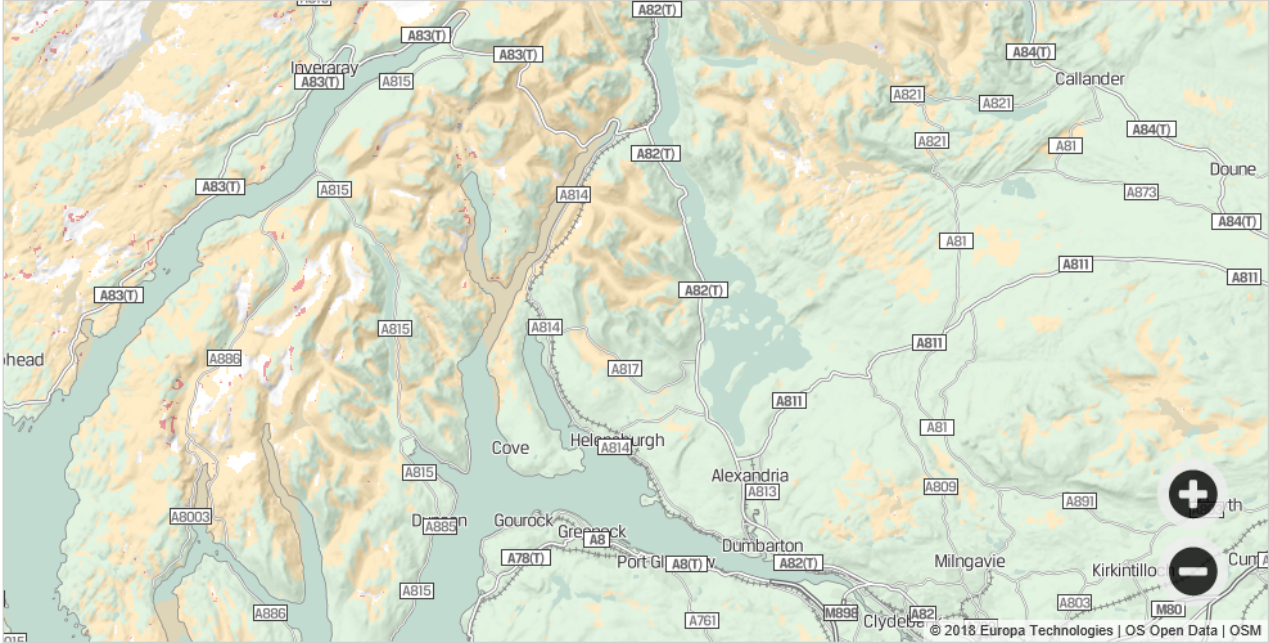Vodafone ▼        Voice   **Data**



| Enhanced data | Basic data | No coverage |

This map shows mobile availability in your area. Please select your network to view availability from your provider.

EE ▼  Voice  Data



| Likely to have good coverage | You may experience some problems | Reliable signal unlikely | You should not expect to receive a signal |

EE ▼  Voice  Data



| Enhanced data | Basic data | No coverage |