

PE1703/B

Highlands and Islands Enterprise submission of 26 October 2018

We need reassurance that that target will be met and that the communities' concerns are being addressed. ([Official Report, page 28](#))

We want to write to the Scottish Government, Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. ([Official Report, page 29](#))

- The Digital Highlands and Islands NGB project has now passed 181,250 premises.
- Added to commercial coverage over 230,000 premises have access to the new network in the H&Is – this is 85% of premises in the region.
- The Digital Highlands and Islands project has successfully met its 84% regional and its local authority area targets. These were 70% in the Outer Hebrides (currently 78%) and at least 75% in all local authorities (current highest 92% Moray).
- Deployment using additional residual funds has been agreed and build will continue until September 2019. The residual funds will provide both uplift speeds in some places (connected to a cab but currently getting slow speeds) as well as build into new, unserved areas, much of it planned as FTTP.
- In 2013 the Highlands and Islands had 4% NGB coverage, today we have 85% coverage and by the end of the build in September 2019 our target is at least 87%.

The Committee understands that while superfast broadband has not yet been delivered to the village of Laid in North West Sutherland, fibre infrastructure runs through this village. Therefore, the Committee would also be grateful if HIE could confirm in its response whether it knows who owns this fibre cable, and if it can be used by the community of Laid. ([Correspondence to HIE from the Public Petitions Committee](#))

- Fibre cable through the village of Laid was installed as part of the Next Generation Broadband contract between HIE and BT. The cable belongs to BT and forms part of the backbone network linking Melvich and Durness handover points. Unfortunately, the village is not in the current rollout owing to the relatively low number of premises spread over a 4km section of road making it challenging to serve cost effectively with the Fibre to the Cabinet (FTTC) technology used for the majority of the rollout to date.
- The good news is that the community is in the intervention area for the Scottish Government's R100 project which is currently in procurement. Given that several bidders are involved and negotiations are still underway it is too

soon to understand how or when the community might receive improved broadband but the presence of fibre cable should make connection easier.

- If the community does not want to wait for R100 and has access to private funding it may want to investigate BT's Community Fibre Partnership initiative. Details can be found at <https://communityfibre.openreach.co.uk/>
- Other Highland communities such as Achnasheen and Moy have recently taken advantage of this route to install Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) services.
- Although applicants are likely to require some private funding, they may be able to access funding under the 'Better Broadband Scheme' – details are available here <https://www.scotlandsuperfast.com/how-can-i-get-it/alternative-solutions/>
- If there are any businesses in the community financial support may be available through the 'Gigabit Voucher Scheme' – details are available here <https://gigabitvoucher.culture.gov.uk/>