

Item 8 - Question Time

To the Leader of the Council

"Could you provide an update on the rollout of fibre broadband in the Highlands, with particular reference to (a) progress in landward areas and (b) progress in "not-spots" in City of Inverness and other urban areas, and on what the Council is doing to further progress matters?"

Response to Mr A Graham

Fibre Provision Under Existing Contract with BT - Rollout of fibre broadband continues under HIE's contract with BT. Since 1 April, Fibre to the cabinet (FTTC) cabinets have gone live in John O'Groats, Melvich, Brora, Kilchoan, Mallaig (Morar), Sligachan, Skeabost Bridge, Edinbane, Broadford, Portree, Boat of Garten, Culbokie, Munloch and Kessock. In addition, Fibre To The Premises (Fibre to the Premises) has been completed in Mallaig (Morar), Fort William and Brora. Further FTTC cabinets are complete and will be live shortly in Skeabost Bridge, Aultbea, Dornoch and Strathpeffer and FTTP will shortly be completed in Portmahomack. BT continues to fill in gaps in Inverness with one FTTP structure going live recently and another built but still to go live.

Rollout under this contract will continue across the Highland Council area until September 2019 with a mix of FTTC and FTTP deployment which will mainly be in the landward areas but will include some additional infill in Inverness and the larger population centres.

Fibre Provision through the R100 Programme - The Scottish Government's R100 procurement is underway with three bidders still in the running. A successful bidder is expected to be chosen by early next year with deployment starting as soon as possible after contract signature."

Fibre Provision through the Local Full Fibre Challenge Fund - The Council has gained £4.2m of Local Full Fibre Network (LFFN) support from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. This will provide full fibre Infrastructure (Gigabit Capability) in Inverness, Fort William, Thurso and Wick. The Council has also proposed that a proportion of the City Region Deal £20m allocation could be used to provide full fibre networks to a further eight settlements. (Portree, Golspie, Tain, Invergordon, Aness, Dingwall, Aviemore and Nairn).

As part of the LFFN programme there are also vouchers which can be accessed by businesses and households to connect directly to fibre where this is available and these will shortly be promoted by HIE and Business Gateway.