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Dear Peter

Broadband in the Western Isles

Thank you for your letter dated 19 June 2008.

To take your questions in order

1. There are currently 5308 ADSL broadband connections in the Western Isles. I'm afraid I can't break that down into business and residential use – that would be a question for the ISPs
2. All exchanges including the 21 exchanges in the Connected Communities coverage area will be part of the 21st Century network. We have no current plans to upgrade further exchanges in the Western Isles prior to 21CN rollout in the area.
3. 21CN is an upgrade of our 'core' network i.e. the cables to the telephone exchange. It is designed to empower the end user with new levels of control choice and flexibility – offering communications from anywhere to any device. 21CN will consolidate BT's 16 separate network platforms each supporting different devices into one. Every item of electronic equipment today has the potential to become a network device from a television or hi-fi to a camcorder or fridge. All domestic appliances and security systems could be controlled remotely in the future via a home-hub. A practical example of this might be the capability to turn on a cooker or heating system at home before you leave the office. In future people who share data on their computer will be able to speak to each other over the web at the same time. 21CN has the capability to enable ISPs to offer a wide range of services – probably including some that haven't even been thought about or developed yet.
4. The decision on which services should be offered over 21CN will be one for the ISPs. Service providers now have the opportunity, where end users are connected to a 21CN broadband-enabled exchange, to choose to supply them with products and services based on BT Wholesale's next generation broadband service known as Wholesale Broadband Connect (WBC). WBC is being delivered as quickly as possible to as many end users as possible to support service providers own plans to move their end