

Our Ref: PP/AM/C20

Mr Ian Shanks
Head of Scottish Affairs
BT Scotland
PO Box 234
EDINBURGH
EH12 9UR

19 June 2008

Dear Ian

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me last week to discuss the situation regarding the provision of broadband on the Western Isles, it was very helpful.

Constituents from the area, in particular the Northbay and North Uist communities, continue to make representation to me about provision and I would be grateful therefore if you could confirm the following for me to help me reply to, and inform, constituents who are in touch with me about these matters:-

- How many broadband connections to individual private customers does BT provide in the Western Isles?
- Has BT any plans to, or is BT prepared to, upgrade any further exchanges in the Western Isles before the roll out of the 21CN?
- What do the plans for a 21st Century Network of exchanges by BT comprise?
- What improvement in services will BT offer over its 21st Century Network than current services provide?
- What bandwidth/speed of service will the 21CN offer?
- Is bandwidth over the 21CN likely to be constrained the further a customer is from an exchange?
- What are the backhaul constraints on the 21CN?
- What is the target date for completion of the 21CN?

Peter Peacock
Member of the Scottish Parliament for the Highlands & Islands
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Head of Scottish Affairs

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- Is the target date likely to be met in all circumstances, or might there be some variation for some consumers?
- What advantages over Connected Communities will the BT 21CN programme offer in the Western Isles and are there any respects in which the service might be lesser than that on offer by Connected Communities?

I look forward to receiving your response to the above questions to allow me to respond to my constituents.

Best wishes.

Yours sincerely

PETER PEACOCK, MSP

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Mr Stuart Robertson
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INVERNESS
IV2 7GF

20 June 2008

Many thanks for your help so far with the Western Isles broadband situation.

As I am sure you are aware, HIE's recent decision to extend the Connected Communities network rather than procuring an ADSL upgrade for local exchanges has been met with a high degree of dissatisfaction and I continue to receive complaints, particularly from the Northbay and North Uist communities.

Given the unpopularity of the decision in the Western Isles, I would now urge you to review urgently the pricing structure of Connected Communities and extend the bandwidth available to customers, with the objective of both reducing prices and increasing bandwidth.

As indicated when we met, I would be grateful if you could, in addition to considering the above request, also advise me on the following in order to allow me to reply to, and inform, constituents who are in touch with me about these matters:-

- How many broadband connections to individual private customers does ConCom provide in the Western Isles?
- How many exchanges have a BT broadband service on the Western Isles and when were these introduced?
- Is ConCom a part of HIE, or does it have separate legal status?
- Does HIE have any partners in the operation of ConCom?
- Which bodies constitute 'Connected Communities'?
- Why was the Connected Communities project developed?

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Head of Telecommunications

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- Can you provide a brief outline of how the project has developed?
- How much money has been invested in the project and how has this been spent?
- Why has it taken so long to roll out the Connected Communities service?
- Did the existence of the Connected Communities project put barriers in the way of BT enabling the remaining WI's exchanges?
- What are the advantages of Connected Communities to the Western Isles?
- What broadband internet service providers can provide services over the ConCom network?
- What are the technical limitations to the speed of connection within the ConCom network?
- What scope exists to improve the speed of ConCom broadband connections?
- What advantages over ConCom will the BT 21CN programme offer?

I look forward to receiving your response to the above questions to allow me to respond to my constituents.

Kind regards.

Yours sincerely

PETER PEACOCK, MSP

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