

North Isles Community Broadband - background notes to survey

We recently met with Shetland Broadband and Shetland Telecom to enquire about the options for offering everyone in the North Isles access to very high speed broadband.

Several issues arose including a vast disparity in:

- What (if any) broadband service people get.
- What are BT's plans in the near future? (HIE project)
- The SIC Pathfinder scheme which currently provides broadband to schools etc. and is due to end in early 2014 with no currently identified replacement.

The North Isles need high quality, high speed broadband to support and grow our communities and businesses. The only way of providing a long term sustainable solution here is to provide the service using a fibre core linked with a mix of fibre to the home and/or wireless options.

There is a £146m project led by HIE, delivered by BT – stating that, ‘...84 per cent of Highlands and Islands homes and businesses will have access to fibre broadband by the end of the project (2020).’ It seems unlikely that BT will upgrade the exchange to provide broadband speeds up to 20Mbps in the North Isles as we do not meet their criteria for target figures due to our marginal population.

As you will have seen recently, West Burrafirth has successfully taken the initiative to help their community. It’s time for us to do the same. This project will need significant financial investment (ca. £1.5 million) as well as community engagement.

Following a meeting with representatives of the North Isles Community Councils, Development Companies, Councillors and Community Work to apprise them of our findings, they requested we undertake some basic information gathering:

We would like to invite you to share your experience as a broadband user and provide us with realistic data in this questionnaire. We will then collate and present this to you, and other relevant parties, alongside research proposing financially viable options for the provision of a core fibre optic broadband service across the North Isles.

Further engagement with the communities on Yell, Unst and Fetlar will hopefully allow interested individuals to come together in focus groups which would operate locally to manage communications and feedback to the main North Isles group.

Questionnaire attached. Access also online at www.unst.org, www.fetlar.org or www.welcometoyell.org

Please note this is only an initial information gathering exercise and there will be many opportunities for detailed input.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further please contact:

Robert Thomson 01957 733 369 or email robert@fetlar.org or
Verona Shaw 01957 711495 or email up@unst.org

***Please return in the box provided or to Verona Shaw or Robert Thomson by
24th June 2013.***