



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

PUBLIC PETITION NO.

PE01703

Name of petitioner

Hugh MacLellan on behalf of Laid Grazings and Community Committee

Petition title

Access to broadband in rural Scotland

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to deliver superfast broadband internet access to every household and business in Scotland, particularly in rural areas, before 2021.

Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition

I have contacted Rhoda Grant MSP who is aware of the petition.

Petition background information

In the interests of growth in the Scottish economy as a whole, and with a view to boosting business opportunities and employment throughout Scotland, this petition has been lodged to request that the Scottish Government make it an immediate priority to ensure that all rural areas currently out of range of local broadband internet coverage are provided with a reliable superfast broadband internet service suitable for twenty-first century communication within the shortest possible timeframe.

With the Reaching 100% Broadband program, the Scottish Government has made a commitment to delivering 100% superfast broadband coverage across Scotland by the year 2021. Many homes and businesses in rural areas in Scotland currently remain at an economic disadvantage due to the lack of access to superfast broadband internet services. The present situation is adversely affecting Scotland's rural economy and employment possibilities, and change and progress in this matter are urgently required.

For example, the village of Laid in North West Sutherland does not have broadband as is the case in many rural areas. A fibre optic cable laid three years ago runs through the village. There are no plans at present to install an exchange system to enable the houses in the village to receive broadband.

Laid has three B&B establishments, a caravan park and an internationally recognised ceramist who, in addition to her gallery and studio, has a popular sculpture woodland. The North Coast 500 tourist route runs through the village and many visitors stay in Laid to enjoy the stunning scenery. However, many of the tourists are not prepared to

Laid to enjoy the stunning scenery. However, many of the tourists are not prepared to stay in the B&Bs as there is no acceptable broadband. As an example of this, my internet download speed on 30 July 2018 was 0.05Mbps and the upload speed was 0.49Mbps.

This subject was high on the agenda at the Laid Grazings and Community Committee AGM in May 2017. Agreement was reached that the villagers should start a petition to be signed by the residents of Laid and also visitors who stayed in the B&Bs, caravan park and visited the gallery. 750 signatures were collected over summer 2017, supporting the following statement:

“We the undersigned wish to see Broadband established in the village of Laid for the benefit of residents, local business and tourists alike”.

This is one example of a village that can attract a significant volume of signatures over a relatively short period of time. It therefore raises the question of how many other rural areas in Scotland would be supportive of the action called for in this petition.

The purpose of the petition is to prioritise broadband installation for Laid and all rural areas who do not have broadband at present, at the earliest opportunity.

As you know broadband is, as the government keeps reminding us, no longer “nice to have” but an essential part of everyday life. Laid as with all rural areas is equally entitled to have this facility as the people who live in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen or Inverness.

Unique web address

<https://www.parliament.scot/GettingInvolved/Petitions/PE01703>

Related information for petition

Do you wish your petition to be hosted on the Parliament's website to collect signatures online?

YES

How many signatures have you collected so far?

0

Closing date for collecting signatures online

12 / 09 / 2018

Comments to stimulate online discussion