

PE1703/D

Scottish Government submission of 16 November 2018

You asked us to provide information to the Public Petitions Committee in relation to the delivery of superfast broadband internet access across Scotland. Please see below the specific points you raised, along with our responses.

- **Whether the Scottish Government expects to meet its Reaching 100% programme by 2021**

We have been clear from the outset that delivery of the 100 per cent target by the end of 2021 will be challenging given the complexity of the procurement process, Scotland's geography and the scale of the project. However, we remain committed to this timescale and to delivering our ambition for Scotland's digital future; one unmatched anywhere else in the UK.

- **In striving to deliver the Reaching 100 programme, whether urban areas have been prioritised over rural areas in the delivery of superfast broadband**

The opposite is the case. The £600 million committed to the programme will be focused on rural areas. Indeed, we have purposely excluded urban premises from the initial R100 procurement, so that we can target investment where it is most needed. We expect commercial suppliers to fill gaps in urban areas and are encouraged by plans from the likes of BT, Virgin Media, CityFibre and Vodafone, which suggests that this is beginning to happen.

- **Whether the Scottish Government has mapped all the fibre cable infrastructure that has been laid in Scotland and who it belongs to**

Ahead of launching the R100 procurement, the Scottish Government undertook an Open Market Review – a formal engagement exercise with the market to determine what broadband infrastructure (basic broadband and Next Generation Access) is already in place and where there are plans for investment in such infrastructure in the coming three years. The output of this exercise informed a public consultation on the Intervention Area for the R100 programme. The Scottish Government has also undertaken wider infrastructure mapping, utilising information provided on a voluntary basis by telecoms suppliers and other infrastructure owners to build a picture of any latent infrastructure assets across Scotland.

- **With regard to the fibre infrastructure running through the village of Laid, who owns the cable and whether it can be utilised by the local community**

Fibre cable through the village of Laid was installed as part of the Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband (DSSB) programme and is, therefore, owned by BT. The cable forms part of the backbone network linking Melvich and Durness handover points. The village is not part of the current DSSB rollout owing to the relatively low number of premises spread over a 4km section of road, making it challenging to serve cost effectively within the confines of the DSSB contracts.

However, this new fibre cable is open to all R100 bidders, other telecoms providers and any other group who wish to make use of it, including the local community. This highlights the importance of the investment we have made, alongside our partners, in the DSSB programme – pushing fibre out deeper into rural Scotland and opening up new opportunities

even where full coverage has not yet been achieved. On that basis, the fibre will make it easier for R100 suppliers to connect any un-served premises in future.

Additionally, 4G mobile can provide an alternative to fixed line services. It is the Scottish Government's understanding that O2 intends to upgrade the mast serving the community during 2019.

I hope this provides all the information you need.