



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Sarah Davidson  
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Scottish Government

**Public Audit and Post-legislative  
Scrutiny Committee**  
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Dear Sarah,

## **AUDITOR GENERAL REPORT: SUPERFAST BROADBAND FOR SCOTLAND**

At its meeting on 25 October, the Public Audit and Post-legislative Scrutiny Committee took evidence from the Auditor General for Scotland on her report, [Superfast broadband for Scotland: Further progress update](#). A link to the Official Report of the meeting can be found [here](#).

Following the evidence session, the Committee agreed to write to the Scottish Government raising a number of issues that were discussed during the course of the meeting.

### *Community Broadband Scotland*

As you are aware, the Auditor General's report is critical of Community Broadband Scotland (CBS) stating that CBS "did not deliver the anticipated benefits for rural community broadband projects."<sup>1</sup> The report refers to the review of CBS which found that a lack of specialist skills, poor communication and complex tendering requirements contributed to lengthy delays and failed procurements.

It is clearly essential that the issues that arose in relation to CBS are not repeated in developing the R100 programme. In his evidence to the Committee, Fraser McKinlay from Audit Scotland acknowledged that there were lessons to learn about "ensuring that the right skills are in place, that there is proper resourcing and, for me, that there is clarity of purpose."<sup>2</sup> The Committee is therefore seeking detailed information about how the lessons learned from CBS are to be reflected in future Scottish Government

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=11737&mode=pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=11737&mode=pdf>

digital connectivity plans. In particular, the Committee wishes to be reassured that, in taking forward the R100 programme, a sufficient number of staff will be in place with the required technical skills for the duration of the contract.

*Broadband speeds*

A key theme discussed in the report concerns effective communication with communities and consumers in order that they know what speeds can be expected at their properties. This issue was explored in some depth at the Committee's meeting. In particular, Members queried why the figures audited by Audit Scotland appeared to focus on fibre coverage, rather than on the speed actually received by properties.

The report states that the Scottish Government currently estimates that around 376,000 premises in Scotland cannot currently access speeds of 30 Mb/s. The Committee seeks clarification as to whether this figure refers to—

- (a) the number of actual premises that cannot achieve that speed (irrespective of whether the cabinet to which those premises are connected can achieve those speeds); or
- (b) the number of premises connected to a cabinet that cannot achieve these speeds.

The point being, that focusing only on improving speeds at the cabinet may not result in all premises connected to that cabinet actually receiving speeds of 30 Mb/s.

On a related point, the report notes that the procurement exercise for the R100 programme requires bidders to set out how many of the in-scope premises they could connect, how they would do this and at what costs. As such, the Scottish Government will not have an exact picture of how many and which premises its £600 million subsidy will cover until final bids are received. The Committee would welcome clarification on what the Scottish Government is committed to achieving through its R100 programme and what precisely the £600 million investment is intending to achieve in terms of delivery of broadband speeds to individual premises (as opposed to the cabinets to which those premises are connected).

The Committee intends to invite oral evidence from the Scottish Government once the contract has been awarded to obtain clarity on what the investment of £600 million will provide.

In the meantime, I would be grateful if you could provide a response to this letter by **Wednesday 12 December**.

Yours sincerely,



**Jenny Marra MSP**  
**Convener**