



North Skye Broadband Press Release

North Skye Broadband, “the most important infrastructure project for Skye since the Bridge”, was launched today 11th February 2016 at the Skeabost Hotel.

North Skye Broadband has secured significant investment from Highlands and Islands Enterprise to progress this critical infrastructure project, which aims to deliver reliable, super-fast broadband services to over 2000 North Skye homes and business premises.

North Skye Broadband has been driven by the work of grass-roots local community organisations such as the Glendale Trust, who recognised many years ago that broadband provision for local communities is at best adequate, but for many it is practically non-existent here on Skye. Concerns were raised as far back as 2011 that without significant investment in reliable infrastructure, our rural areas would be facing a rapidly-widening digital divide. Frustration at recent faults in the existing infrastructure have highlighted just how important a reliable broadband service is to our rural communities and businesses.

Chair of North Skye Broadband (2015) Ltd, Geoff Semler, said:

“In our view, this is the most important infrastructure project for Skye since the Bridge was built. Our network will not just connect North Skye to the mainland, it will connect us properly to the rest of the world - benefitting everyone and everything, from healthcare to small business development, long into the future.”

Historically, investment in rural broadband provision, particularly in the Highlands and Islands, has been deemed economically unviable due to the cost associated with installing infrastructure, because many premises are at the extremities of large expanses of difficult terrain. This grass-roots approach will put the emphasis on delivering a solution rather than making profit for private gain. The model of community broadband has been proven in many rural communities, some - like Broadband 4 the Rural North in Lancashire - are now delivering the best internet services in the world.

North Skye Broadband will deliver one of the largest community-led, super-fast, broadband projects in Scotland. The locally operated, staffed and managed service aims to deliver a minimum of 30Mbps to 100% of the properties across Skye that will not benefit from the current BT superfast roll out. In these days of telehealth, remote working, and international business requirements, 30Mbps is not a luxury - it is an absolute necessity.

Over recent months a large number of committed volunteers representing Camustianavaig, Bernisdale, Glendale, Kilmuir, Duntulm, Minginish, Skeabost, Staffin, Struan and Waternish have led the project. The funding approval from HIE has allowed North Skye Broadband to contract a project manager who will oversee the community engagement, development and delivery of the technical solution while seeking to secure the maximum benefit from available funds. Being a community-led organisation, North Skye Broadband will ensure its running costs are sustained with all profit being



reinvested in improvements to the service or directly distributed for the benefit of the local community.

The project is being backed by Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), who are delivering funding and support directly and via Community Broadband Scotland (CBS).

The project will work in areas that are unlikely to benefit from the Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband (DSSB) fibre roll-out, also led by HIE, which has now started rolling out on Skye. While delivering access to fibre-based broadband across a number of towns and villages in Skye, the DSSB project will not, by any means, reach everyone.

With CBS help, North Skye Broadband is developing an aggregated model of delivery, bringing together communities to build economies of scale and develop a sustainable service.

This model will build on a similar community and CBS project being developed in locations across Argyll and the islands that seeks to make Next Generation Broadband (NGB) services available to around 1,500 premises.

Archie Macdonald, Senior Advisor, Major Projects Team for CBS said:

“This is an exciting project whose strength lies in the extensive community involvement and enthusiasm.

There isn't a singular technology available to bring next generation broadband to rural communities. CBS is here to help important organisations like North Skye Broadband assess all the options. By drawing together communities in the areas that are unlikely to be reached by commercial networks we can support them in developing viable ways to deliver superfast services.

The creation of North Skye Community Broadband is great news and will create a sustainable social enterprise vehicle to procure and manage the provision of superfast broadband to those unlikely to be reached by the Digital Scotland roll-out delivering real benefit to visitors and those that live and work in the area.”

The timeline for delivery is as follows:

- Issue of the Invitation to Tender (ITT) Spring 2016
- ITT Return Deadline Summer 2016
- Evaluate Bidder Responses
- June 2016 Contract Award August 2016
- Service Delivery For Customers Spring 2017

For anyone interested in signing up to North Skye Broadband or investing in the project more information can be found at www.northskyebroadband.com