

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Environment, Development and Infrastructure

Date: 8 November 2017

Report Title: City WiFi Update

Report By: Director of Development and Infrastructure

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 The report provides an update on the City WiFi Project.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to note the update provided.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Inverness City WiFi Project, led by The Highland Council and funded by the Inverness and Highlands City-Region Deal, aims to create a free open public Wi-Fi system across the Highland region for visitors and residents. By being available 24/7 365 days per year it aims to stimulate economic growth and increase digital inclusion and increasingly such digital connectivity which is seen as essential if the Highlands region is to be innovative and keep its competitive placing/ranking in the tourism market. Allied to this, the WiFi project also offers the opportunity to gather data about local users and tourist activity, and the creation of a wireless infrastructure in a town centre allows, for example, smart traffic management technology to be utilised.

4. Current Status

- 4.1 The first phase of the Inverness City WiFi project, branded Ness WiFi, has provided fast internet coverage in a pilot area including the Victorian Market, Falcon Square and surrounding streets. The system is providing reliable fast internet usage to users, whilst being family friendly (Internet Watch Foundation Standard and updated twice daily) and content filtered with average daily user number of between 300 – 600 users. Users also have language choices when logging into the system (with Gaelic coming on-line). Phase 2 is currently being installed to cover Inverness City Centre and across the river along to Eden Court, the Northern Meeting Park and Ardross Coach Drop off with a go live date of 30 November 2017.
- 4.2 The creation of backbone wireless network(s) allows for future proofing and the opportunity to have one singular network as a opposed to multiple to run Internet of Things, Traffic Management, Sensors, CCTV etc. This potentially could provide vast savings for The Highland Council for the future and provide many options for projects.
- 4.3 The project is also working on providing footfall data solutions to provide valuable footfall data throughout the project zones which doesn't currently exist and could be shared with relevant groups.

5. Phase 3

- 5.1 With development work on creating a suitable model of WiFi design for the project, this has enabled the project budget to allow for deployment to be rolled out across Highland towns. Available resources are allowing for WiFi to be provided in 14 town centres. Based on a desire to introduce WiFi to a number of town centres across Highland, allied to a need to service a number of tourism hotspots, the following 14 towns have been identified for Phase 3 rollout: Alness, Aviemore, Dingwall, Dornoch, Drumnadrochit, Fort Augustus, Fort William, Invergordon, Nairn, Portree, Tain, Thurso, Ullapool and Wick.
- 5.2 The rollout for the 14 towns aims to be live by the end of 2017. The Project has also won a consultancy award through Scottish Town Partnership, which is being used to involve local communities, groups in business to get involved and support the project areas will also look at monetisation and sustainability of the project long term. The Scottish Government is also consulting with Highland Council to seek guidance of WiFi issues and plans.

Designation: Director of Development and Infrastructure

Date: 6 November 2017

Author: Keith Grant, City Wireless Project Manager