

ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

BULLETIN ITEM

Subject: Local Full Fibre Network (LFFN)

Date: 5 May 2021

ECO: Infrastructure and Environment

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide committee with an update on the Local Full Fibre Network (LFFN) project.
- 1.2 Initiated in January 2019, the Local full Fibre Networks (LFFN) partnership project aims to provide gigabit capable, full fibre infrastructure, to 152 public sector sites in Fort William, Inverness, Thurso and Wick.
- 1.3 Currently the project stands at 68 sites completed, 53 sites built to site boundary and 31 sites remaining.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 Initiated in January 2019, the LFFN project aims to expand the footprint of gigabit capable, full fibre infrastructure in the region. Back in 2019 less than 1% of the Highland region had these next generation connections.

The Highland Council is the lead body for delivery of the Local full Fibre Networks (LFFN) partnership project consisting of Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), NHS Highland (NHS), Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and University of Highlands and Islands (UHI). As the lead partner the Highland Council provides the necessary procedures and resources used to deliver aspects such as procurement, project management guidelines, financial reporting and communications and engagement.

The project is procured through the existing SWAN network lead by Capita, CityFibre has won the contract as the principal supplier with GCU carrying out the work on the ground.

The project will see core networks created in 4 Highland settlements: Fort William, Inverness, Thurso and Wick by delivering gigabit capable connections to 152 public buildings (or anchor tenancies), provided by the 5 partners who sit on the Digital Programme Board.

This project will deliver a range of direct benefits, relating to how the public sector partners, who will receive gigabit capable connections, use them at all their nominated sites. Significantly, the network created provides the potential for a wide range of indirect or aspirational benefits that the digital team within HIE will continue to monitor as part of the longer-term legacy of this project. These relate to communities, businesses and the Highland region as a whole.

- 2.2 Market engagement undertaken by Capita has secured a bid for the Highland LFFN project. The final order value is £7,740,719. This will be funded by savings partners achieve from reduced network charges and £4.3m of funding from the DCMS LFFN challenge fund.

3. Project Progress

- 3.1 Currently the project stands at 68 sites completed, 53 sites built to site boundary and 31 sites to be initiated. All sites will be completed by September 2021.
- 3.2 The COVID pandemic had a significant impact on project delivery through a cessation of work and a return to work restrictions which substantially slowed the programme of work. The work was due to be completed by March 2021 however it was necessary to renegotiate the funding with DCMS to extend the deadline to September 2021. A condition of this work was that a major portion of the programme was still completed by March 2021. Working closely with Capita, Cityfibre and Highland Council Roads team the majority of the disruptive work involving road restrictions was achieved within deadline and ahead of the traditionally busier part of the year for road usage around Inverness.
- 3.3 The remaining work will be scheduled to complete as soon as possible, and a report will be brought to committee upon completion.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment

Date: 15 April 2021

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