

The main news is that the Broadband Advisory Group (BAG) has been re-convened and is attempting to take a much more proactive role in trying to achieve the best outcome from the Digital Scotland programme for the whole of Stirlingshire, both rural and urban.

- Meeting on Jan 27 of re-convened BAG chaired by Cllr Neil Benny. Several other councillors in attendance plus Bruce Crawford and Steven Paterson, Shaun Marley (CBS), Douglas Baillie (newly appointed Broadband Project Manager) and other BAG public representatives. Key points:
 - As it seems no information would be forthcoming from the Digital Scotland programme, it was decided that we would do a self-audit of the likely situation facing rural Stirlingshire towards the end of the DS programme,
 - Fife have already undertaken an exercise of this kind (as have KBG) and Douglas Ballie was actioned to liaise with them to find out what lessons could be learnt and whether we should replicate their exercise,
 - Commercial wireless providers are extending their networks and this would seem to be a viable area for many properties across the Carse. How suitable it could be for the western villages was less clear. Shaun Marley has some coverage information to which Douglas Baillie should be given access for assessment. The height of the masts will be a significant factor,
 - The review done for Stirling Council as a prediction of coverage by FarrPoint will be re-examined and an update may be commissioned,
 - Cllr Ian Muirhead is organising an Open Day for the villages in the expected coverage area of the Ben Gullipen (Callander) mast to make residents & businesses aware of options available to them. It is unlikely that this will be before April or May.
- Douglas Baillie has been invited to attend a future KCC meeting, probably April or May;
- As yet we have no clarification about the status of cabinet E3 (power still lacking) and the discrepancy between DS and BT “WhereandWhen” sites. E1 has been advertised as live. No further details available of Crosshead Rd cabinet;
- KBG have done a brief, desktop Mobile coverage survey of the Strathendrick area that appears to indicate the best 3G coverage is from EE or Three, and for 4G from EE, though all have significant not-spot areas;
- When collating information and providing feedback to communities we could perhaps do more in collaboration with other “Strathendrick” CCs. These reports have been available on our website and are being shared with other CCs, however there are some CCs that might be overlooked eg Fintry, Buchanan and Balmaha. The current joint activity between Balfron, Blanefield/Strathblane and Killearn is another opportunity for closer cooperation;
- Cabinets in other local areas (reliability of dates shown unknown): **Balfron (Boquhan)** – unchanged (1 being built (live by June 2016), 1 undergoing Field Survey (live by Oct 2016)); **Balmaha** – nothing planned; **Blanefield/Strathblane** – 1 cabinet (Netherblane) live; 1 undergoing Field Survey (live by Oct 2016), 2 in Design (live by Jan 2017) and 2 “planned”; **Buchlyvie** – 2 undergoing Field Survey (1 with planning applied, live by Oct 2016); **Croftamie** - cabinet (between village and A811 jn to Balloch) now live; **Drymen** – cabinet being built on Balmaha Rd (just past jn with Old Balmaha Rd), 4 cabinets undergoing Field Survey (live by Oct 2016) and 2 more in Design (live by Jan 2017); **Fintry** – 2 in Design (live by Jan 2017); **Killearn** – 2 undergoing Field Survey (1 we think is Crosshead Rd, 1 might be sited just south of Baptiston on the A875), and 2 “planned”; **Milton of Buchanan** – nothing planned;
- To help further the case for better connectivity, we have discussed doing a survey of local businesses to clarify, with more factual information, the type of benefits or features of the business that would be enabled with faster speeds. This might even allow businesses that had turned away from this area to be able to reconsider the possibility;
- With no proactive local publicity coming from Digital Scotland, we have written to them asking when they are proposing to bring their mobile Roadshow to the village. We are awaiting their response. Nationally DS are celebrating that 5000km of fibre has been laid, 500,000 premises can get fibre broadband, and 28 more exchanges going live shortly (but none apparently in Stirlingshire);
- Yet more properties are now on the ADSL2+ service (without any specific notification from their ISP), detectable by a speed of above 8Mbps if you are fairly near the exchange or one of the 2 cabinets. However, there are still a significant number who are not on ADSL2+. If you have not yet got this improvement, it will be worthwhile speaking to your ISP. It may need starting a revised, or new, contract but you may also find you can get a better deal.

Doug Ashworth

Chair, Killearn Broadband Group