The Digital Highlands and Islands project is transforming access to better broadband, and helping communities and businesses to make best use of connectivity. It is one of the most positive economic development boosts for many years and its impact will be felt across the region.

- Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband (DSSB) project - £146 million is being invested in the Highlands and Islands to secure a better digital future for the region.
- The funding is a partnership with the Scottish Government, Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) and BT.
- The aim of the current phase is to develop a future-proofed infrastructure capable of delivering significant benefits to the most people possible within the budget available.
- At the project’s heart is the creation of a resilient, high speed fibre network which is rolling out across every local authority area.
- The contract will deliver access to at least 84% of Highlands and Islands premises by the end of 2016.
- For those in hardest to reach areas, HIE is also leading on Community Broadband Scotland, a Scottish Government initiative to support community-led solutions.
- To help communities and businesses get more out of digital, HIE is working with national partners to provide expert digital advice, workshops and events across the region.
The DSSB roll-out is designed to bring better broadband to as many people as possible, as quickly as possible, within the available budget.

It has been modelled to reach the majority of premises in every local authority area, and it’s bringing fibre optic cabling to areas where it’s never been before.

**SO FAR:**

The project has built hundreds of miles of core fibre optic network, including subsea, to link island communities.

This core network has many long term benefits - providing capacity previously unavailable and helping future-proof the region digitally.

It provides the ‘backhaul’ needed to build the local network which delivers fibre based broadband services to many homes and businesses; it also helps with additional provision including dedicated business services; and it provides the capacity needed by mobile operators to provide data services.

As of May 2016, around 125,000 homes and businesses in 150 towns and villages are able to access the fibre network as a direct result of the investment.

This is a huge first step. When added to commercial roll-out, coverage has jumped from the 4% of premises which could access fibre in the region in 2013 to 71% today.

The current contract will see that coverage extend to at least 84% of homes and businesses.
DELIVERY

Broadband services are being delivered in a number of ways.

For the DSSB project, the main technology used to deliver broadband to homes and businesses is called ‘Fibre to the Cabinet’ (FTTC). In some locations we are also using ‘Fibre to the Premises’ (FTTP).

With FTTC, fibre is run to new cabinets which are built next to existing telecoms cabs in local towns and villages. When a customer orders, the two cabs are linked together. The broadband service then runs along the customer’s copper phone line to the business or house.

In many areas in the Highlands and Islands communities didn’t have telecoms cabinets, and lines were linked direct to the exchange.

Where it’s been possible as part of the programme to draw ‘Exchange Only’ lines in, engineers have re-designed the network, building new telecoms and fibre cabinets.

The service and broadband speeds available depend on whether you are attached to a fibre cabinet, and your distance from it.

The project is making a huge first step in connectivity - but we can’t reach everyone.

Those who can’t be drawn in as part of the current roll-out will not be forgotten, and Digital Scotland partners and local authorities are already looking at how additional funding could help extend coverage further.

Community Broadband Scotland is working with groups across Scotland where the main DSSB project can’t reach.

Other technology options, including wireless, might provide a viable high speed broadband solution.

See the latest information on roll-out at: www.hie.co.uk/whereandwhen
SHETLAND, ORKNEY AND OUTER HEBRIDES

- Access to the fibre based broadband network is expected to reach at least three quarters of premises by the end of 2016.
- There were no wholesale fibre optic broadband services planned on these three island groups, so this project is transforming access to mainstream services.
- Shetland has the UK’s most northerly live fibre cabinet - Mossbank at Sullom Voe.

MORAY

- The first fibre cabinet delivered by the programme went live in Buckie in 2014.
- Coverage through the programme has now reached more than 27,000 premises in the area.

HIGHLAND

- Over 200 fibre cabinets are now taking orders across Highland, from Thurso in the north, to Uig in Skye on the west, and to Ballachulish in the south.
- Including commercial roll-out, more than 70% of premises have been drawn into the network.

ARRAN AND CUMBRAE

- Roll-out is happening now for Arran and Millport. More than 2,500 homes and business can check to see what is available.

ARGYLL AND BUTE

- More than 15,000 premises now have access to the fibre network.
- Scotland’s largest community-led project is in Argyll and Bute. GigaPlus Argyll is preparing to build a wireless project to bring superfast services to number of islands including Colonsay, Lismore, Luing, parts of Mull and Islay and the Craignish peninsula.

#CHECKANDORDER

Fibre based broadband is a completely different product to your existing broadband.

If you want it, you have to order from an Internet Service Provider.
WHAT’S ALL THE FUSS ABOUT?

HIE’s role in creating a digital region is wider than providing the infrastructure. We are also committed to supporting businesses and communities to make the most of the internet access we have now and to prepare for the new capabilities better broadband can bring.

There are a variety of benefits associated with fibre.

Depending on the package available to you, upload and download speeds can improve; it can be much easier for different members of the household to be online at once; and it can open up opportunities to work and learn from home.

In the workplace, the speed and capacity provide the opportunity to look at new ways of working. What about using technology to reach new markets, using the Cloud to access software or store data that could make your processes more efficient, and improve your customer experience?

We are involved in a range of initiatives which can help you learn more about how to achieve this.

DIGITALBOOST

Do you want help to make better use of digital in your business or social enterprise? HIE and Business Gateway are working together to offer a programme of support, including online guides, workshops and one-to-one advice.

www.bgateway.com/digitalboost

#HELLODIGITAL

#hellodigital is Digital Scotland’s first digital demonstration centre.

Based in An Lòchran, at the Inverness Campus, HIE’s aim is to inspire and support businesses of all sizes to make the best possible use of latest technology.

Delivered by HIE and Digital Scotland Business Excellence Partnership we offer showcases, masterclasses and events.

http://hellodigital.scot

DIGITAL TOURISM SCOTLAND

The tourism sector and digital technology are perfect partners.

Whether it’s world wide marketing, creating an effective online presence or understanding why customers want wifi services - digital is an important part of the sector’s future.

www.hie.co.uk/digitalandme
“The £146 million investment in fibre broadband heralds a new age of communications across the Highlands and Islands. High-speed broadband has the potential to transform communities - changing how we do business, educate our children, and deliver public services.”

Stuart Robertson,
HIE’s Director of Digital Highlands and Islands
HERE’S WHERE TO FIND OUT MORE

On HIE’s project visit:
www.hie.co.uk/digital

About roll-out in your area visit:
www.hie.co.uk/whereandwhen

For information about support for our communities visit:
www.communitybroadbroadbandscotland.org

For the Scotland wide roll-out see Digital Scotland at
www.scotlandsuperfast.com

For general information on faster broadband contact your Internet Service Provider.

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