

Note of MCC/MCDC Meeting with BT & Openreach representatives 19 May 3.00 via ZOOM

**Attending**

**Morvern community**

Annie Tordoff	Morvern Community Council (MCC) Secretary
Nick Tordoff	Morvern Community Development Company (MCDC) Board member
Dr Susan Taylor	GP for Morvern
Jane Stuart-Smith	Chair MCDC
Linda Dignan	Iain Blackford's office

**Open Reach**

Brendan Dick	Chair, Openreach Scotland
Fraser Rowberry	Director Service Delivery, Openreach Scotland
Fraser MacDougall	Local Area manager, Openreach Scotland
Fraser Reid	Senior Manager Scotland, BT Technology

- 1 BD thanked all for attending. Meeting had meant to be in person but due to COVID19 this was not possible. As a general introduction BD said that overall the network had held up during the increased levels of use in the lockdown. Open Reach (OR) have been working in improving rural exchanges and evolve a better network capability with increased speed and Superfast BB.
- 2 FR gave an overview of the planning Open Reach (OR) had been working on capability for BroadBand (BB) telephone infrastructure for the community of Morvern:
  - The current infrastructure was at the end of its working life and there was a planned upgrade to the faster and far more resilient CN21 system that had been delayed due to COVID19. This involved upgrading the exchange and the mast on Mull
  - OFCOM's license had been received that morning by OR and as soon as the COVID19 restrictions on working were lifted the work would be planned. No date can be given at present but OR said weeks/months not years and BD said by the end of the summer.
  - OR staff required to make upgrade and there were challenges in planning safe working due to COVID19. BT/OR said that working practices locally are of a higher standard than national ones. Accommodation would be needed for the upgrade work. AT confirmed MCC could assist with finding accommodation for staff.
  - The line speeds will be quicker from around current 8MB to 20MB, but speed dependent on distance from exchange as always. There will be significantly increased capacity for users and there is significant capacity for future upgrades as technology improves products.
- 3 NT raised issue of infrastructure and capacity to expand when new houses built. Example of Achabeg difficulties cited. FM explained that he had arranged for more

- resources to be available in the area. He has appointed 3 staff to Lochaline area who are multi-skilled to work on all the different aspects of the local network and know the area.
- 4 They outperform all OFCOM service level measures at present. Agreed that local knowledge was key to reduce wasted journeys and cost. Dr Taylor gave examples of multiple trips to surgery which were badly planned. BD explained that the Service Provider for the NHS network (SWAN) is Capita. There have been a number of occasions when Openreach engineers have been given incorrect job details to complete work for Cps (communications providers)
  - 5 Recent outage had resulted in many residences getting conflicting and wrong information about when repairs would happen which had been very frustrating. OR explained that Service Providers, such as BT Retail and Capita's, customer service people dealt with inquiries and clearly did not always understand what was going on or give consistent answers which led to more frustrations. FM explained that his engineers are sent a fault report by, for example, BT Retail and the fault details can sometimes be logged incorrectly by BT call centre agents which results in difficulties when on site. The OR engineers do their best. Help with local intelligence would be really good.
  - 6 FM said that OR monitors SM platforms e.g. Twitter and the local FB page. If there is a problem, please comment on these platforms as these are picked up quicker by OR than phoning through a complaint or reporting a breakdown.
  - 7 On infrastructure resilience MCC pointed out the radio mast on Mull was critical to service and was vulnerable to extreme weather events. OR said new equipment was designed to withstand much greater weather issues including lightning but they could not guarantee no interruptions at all.
  - 8 OR has an alert system so that when there is a complete breakdown the Scottish Government is alerted for emergency response issues.
  - 9 BD shared the Scottish Infrastructure Commission's ambitions to make the country full fibre by 2027. The Scottish Infrastructure Commission set up to review needs of Scotland's infrastructure for next 30 years and the final recommendations are due to go to the Scottish Government in the next few months, for acceptance (or otherwise).
  - 10 Discussed new hub and housing and how best to plan for the supply of fibre to these buildings and other future developments. OR explained they work on a 'to order' basis. I.e. an order comes in and they respond. This works if the infrastructure is there but if not (as in in outlying places) much more difficult and expensive to put in place hence the delays. As the Hub and housing are close to the exchange these should be well provided for. Discussed Killundine buy out briefly and potential demand there.
  - 11 FM confirmed that there was no underground duct route between Carnich and Lochaline. Whilst there had been a route many years ago (a dozen or so), it had been redundant since then and was not suitable for economic re-use.

NB Current take up of superfast broad band in Lochaline is 42% of total customers which is low. BD asked why this might be? AM said it was partly due to lack of trust in the quality of the service offered.

## **OUTCOMES**

1 A single point of contact for Morvern via MCC. This must be within OR protocols, but the offer was flexing the protocols a fair bit to provide this. This was agreed: MCC would have a contact point with OR to report major issues. This was not for trivial complaints and only one member of MCC would be the liaison with OR. AT to be that point of contact - meeting arranged to agree how to proceed

2 It was also agreed that understanding local layout and issues was helpful to OR especially as they were learning new ways of working due to COVID19. Eg a 4 day trip to Shetland had not taken place because testing kit had been sent to the customer and he had (with guidance from OR engineer) fixed the fault using WhatsApp. The repair achieved much faster and at less cost.

BD offered to connect Jane as chair of MCDC to a planning person within openreach for future developments - Action BD

3. A contact with 'BT retail' was to be identified to ensure all compensation and explore how better BT information can be given to customers - Action BD

MCC reps thanked OR for their time and help in working with community reps to get a resolution and help deal issues in the future. Establishing the links with local OR team is of key importance.