Broadband Steering Group

Minutes of the Meeting held on the 5th March 2014 @ 7:30 p.m. Fernaig House

Present: Phil Game, Mary MacBeth, Joe Grimson

1   Apologies:

Geoff Harrington, Neil MacRae, Hamish Howat Hurst

2   Previous minutes

Proposed by Joe, seconded by Mary

Copies of previous minutes are on our website at:-
http://www.stromeferry-and-achmore.co.uk/index.asp?pageid=433827
Email Broadband@fernaig.fsnet.co.uk if you would like to be put on the circulation list or you have any questions.

3   Chairman's report

3.1   CBS

We met with Sandra Byrne (CBS) on the 26th February, we gave Sandra an update on our situation and she suggested CBS might be able to help in the following areas:-

Insurance, none of the other schemes have managed to get insurance for equipment out on the hill, Sandra will forward details of a company that can provide public liability insurance.

We explained the situation regarding our solicitor and Sandra suggested it might be possible for us to be given approval to start to draw down our grant without a signed mast lease given the problems we have been having. Sandra asked that we give her background information and ask the landlord to write to us in lieu of a mast lease. We have now done this and are waiting for Sandra's response. Our thanks to Fay Mackenzie for her help in this matter.

We explained that we are now waiting on Norma Young the Area Education manager in Portree to approve our request, Sandra will see if Mark Tate the head of CBS can help.

Sandra will chase Alaistar Nicholson Community Broadband Operations Manager at CBS for details of a connection through Cable and Wireless.

We gave Sandra details of the presentation to the Highland Council by Stuart Robertson HIE regarding the roll-out of broadband with BT. We asked that Sandra raise our concerns at the highest level and get HIE to develop a proper working relationship with BT.

We asked Sandra if CBS had developed standards, she said she would forward what she had.

Sandra gave us a brief update of progress at other groups:-
Applecross - have capacity issues at Portree.
Sleat - are looking to use Mallaig School as a hosting site possibly using C&W for their backhaul.
Glenelg - are working on a business plan
Locheilnet which covers - Loch Eil, Glenfinnan, Loch Linnhie, Banavie, Achnacarry, Clunes, Bunarkaig had a power outage of more than 24 hours in the recent storms - do we want to buy a generator for the hill?
Others in the area; Elgol / Strathaird, Waternish, Glendale, Staffin (Skye) North Eridale, Achiltibuie,

Sandra confirmed that Kyle will be the main handover point in the area and Lochcarron will also be able to provide leased lines.

In the future there may be a possibility for us to buy bandwidth from SWAN (the Scottish Wide Area Network) which is due to replace Pathfinder in 2016.

We asked Sandra to produce a monthly progress report to keep all the broadband groups up to date so we could all keep up to date.

We asked Sandra to ask Alaistar Nicholson (CBS operations manager) to produce a monthly progress report to keep everyone up to date. The CBS newsletter is OK but doesn't address all the areas we are interested in.

We suggested Sandra organise a meeting for all local groups to be able to exchange ideas.
Action: Phil

3.2   Subscribers

The total number of subscribers is now 47, one new subscriber and one new inquiry this month.

3.3   BBC Alba

This is on hold pending the system being available for a demonstration, no change this month.

3.4   Update

On the 12th February there was a presentation to the Council from Stuart Robertson Director of Digital HIE, you can view the webcast here - http://www.highland.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/123222

The presentation was rather vague on details and timings but the following points are worth noting:-

> Although the usage targets for the whole of Scotland are 85% by 2015 and 95% by 2017, these drop to 65% by 2015 and 84% by 2016 for the Highlands and Islands.
>
> HIE / BT have now shifted their emphasis on the roll-out and will now **not prioritise** those who currently have the poorest service and instead will concentrate on connecting the largest number of subscribers as quickly as possible. This is a major change of policy and means that those who currently have the poorest bandwidth may not see **any** improvements within this timescale.
>
> On our behalf our councillor Audrey Sinclair asked about timescales for upgrades to the local network and details of the relationship between HIE & BT. The response from Stuart Robertson was not encouraging. It is clear that BT are the dominate partner and are deciding which areas are upgraded and when. BT regards the location of their equipment as commercially sensitive information and will not reveal locations, even equipment funded by public money!
>
> BT will only upgrade 8 out of the 380 exchange areas in the Highlands through their own funding; the remainder will only receive improvements thanks to public money.

Over the past few days there has been an eruption of emails from groups all over the West Coast discussing the possibility of setting up a network from Applecross in the north down to a leased line in Fort William / Oban via all the community schemes along the route. If this is feasible it might mean we will get much increased capacity before the HIE/BT upgrade due in 2016. This proposal is at a very early stage and may come to nothing but it does demonstrate that community groups working together might be able to use their collective networks cooperatively to increase backhaul capacity and reduce costs for the benefit of all subscribers.

3.5   Terms of Reference

Deferred

4   Secretary's report

4.1   Public liability insurance

The NFU have responded to say they are unable to quote, we have raised this with Sandra and CBS will provide an alternative insurer.
Action: Mary

4.2   Equipment insurance

The NFU have responded to say they are unable to quote; CBS are unaware of any insurer that will provide cover for equipment out on the hills. We will see what provision CBS require from us in lieu of insurance cover.
Action: Mary

4.3　Terms of Reference
Deferred

4.4　Risk register
Mary has created and circulated a draft risk register for additions / comments.
Action: Mary

5　Finance Director's Report
Hamish wasn't able to attend but had circulated an updated set of spreadsheets prior to the meeting.

Opening balance	£ -592.34
Income this period	£　0.00
Expenditure / accruals this period	£　3.09
Closing balance	£ -595.43

Action: Hamish

6　Internal auditor's report
This was deferred as Geoff was unable to attend due to prior commitments.

7　Customer Relations

7.1　Volume trial

Hamish circulated a new volume trial test plan for comment; we will organise another meeting finalise the details.
Action: Hamish

7.2　Terms of Reference
Deferred

8　General topics

8.1　Documentation
We first gave the solicitor our documents in October and they wrote to us just before Christmas asking CMNet to provide proof of identify which we did on the 15th January and since then we have heard nothing. We chased them on the 6th February, they promised to give us an update within a couple of days, then nothing. We chased them again on the 17th February, no reply at all. We chased them again on the 28th February. On the 4th March they responded to say that they have been busy and will get back to us by Wednesday the 5th. They have not done so.

The 5th March is **seven weeks** since we gave them written confirmation we wanted them to proceed and provided proof of identity. It is **five months** since Neil first sent them the documents.

It seems likely they haven't done anything at all and so we have decided to part company and look for another solicitor. Joe suggested we try the solicitors used by the Fernaig Trust who have been responsive.
Action: Phil

8.1.1　Domestic contract
8.1.2　Mast lease
8.1.3　Hosting Agreement
8.1.4　Loan Agreement (previously called the Bond contract)

All the above documents are in abeyance waiting submission to a new solicitor.

8.1.5　Standing Order

Hamish has altered and circulated a new Standing Order.
Completed

8.2 Relays

8.2.1 Plockton

We believe we have now found equipment that will allow us to power all the external equipment using a single low voltage supply. This is a safer solution than external mains power runs and will reduce the amount of work required from the electrical contractor.

We are waiting for approval from Norma Young the Area Education Manager (West), CBS have volunteered to help us get approval to install our equipment.

Action: Phil

8.2.2 Lochcarron

We have given up on ever having another clear day and so will go over to Lochcarron and discuss what is required to set up the equipment. We will then confirm the line of sight on a separate visit.

Action: Neil & Phil

8.3 Testing

8.3.1 Outstanding issues
8.3.2 Management & accounting capabilities
8.3.3 Test to Joe's at Braeintra
8.3.4 Test to the Glen
8.3.5 Check all parameters
8.3.6 More testing with routers

No progress this month.

Action: Phil

8.4 Restoring power to the old TV repeater

8.4.1 Hydro power supply

This is in abeyance, pending submission of mast lease to CBS.A question has arisen as to whether we should buy a small generator to power the backbone relays should the power be out longer than the UPS backup.

Action: Phil, Neil, Hamish

8.4.1.1 Removal of old cable

This is deferred until we have the alternate power supply in place.

Action: All

8.4.1.2 Protection of cable on the hill

We will provide Fay with a plan showing the exact location of all our equipment and cable runs.
No progress this month.

Action: Phil

8.5 ISPs

8.5.1 Use of C&W at Plockton School

Neil has obtained the contact, however we have been told that CBS are already looking into this on behalf of Sleat. We are waiting for a response from Alaistar Nicolson at CBS.

Action: Phil

8.5.2 Community backhaul

This is at a very early stage but in the long run may provide by far the best solution.

Action: Phil

8.6 Implementation Plan

The detailed implementation plan for the installation of the backbone relays has been completed and agreed subject to some small changes. We have a detailed "shopping list" for the first batch of equipment we need to purchase.

Action: Phil

8.7 Flat Ethernet cable

It looks like this is not possible.

8.8   Company Logo

As several members were unable to attend (and those that were present all had different views) we decided to return to this topic at another meeting. Our thanks to Mags McFadden for her suggestions.

Action: All

9   Director's training session

As several members were unable to attend we decided to run this at a later date.

10   AOB

11   Items to add to the agenda of the next meeting

None

12   Next meeting

The next meeting will be arranged when we know if our grant will be released.
The meeting closed at 9:30 pm