

Cairngorms Community Broadband Meeting

21 January 2016

Garth Hotel, Grantown-on-Spey, 10:00-12:00

Attendees

Community Broadband Scotland (CBS)	Sarah Jones, Campbell Cameron, Archie Macdonald, Jennifer Dempsie
Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA)	Murray Ferguson (Chair), David Watson, Jackie Farquhar
Badenoch Broadband & Communications (CIC) (BCCIC)	Al Fleming, Robert Cumming
Tomintoul & Glenlivet Development Trust (TGDT)	Oli Giles, Mary Williams Edgar
Cromdale and Advie Community Development Trust	Chris Bremner, Helen Webster, Stephen Crockett
Corgarff and Glenbuchat	Peter Duffus (Glenbuchat), Jo Smith (Corgarff)
Association of Cairngorms Communities (AoCC)	Roger Clegg
Cairngorms LEADER Local Action Group	David Cameron, Alice Mayne
Scottish Land & Estates	Drew Mcfarlane-Slack
Voluntary Action Badenoch & Strathspey (VABS)	Karen Derrick
Marr Area Partnership	Nick Mardell (Deeside/Donside)

Groups/locations also invited but not in attendance:

Ballater – Jim Armstrong

Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust – Dougie Baird

Cairngorms Business Partnership – Mark Tate

Highland Perthshire – Ian Bailey

Welcome and Introductions

Murray Ferguson welcomed everyone to the meeting and all introduced themselves and the organisation/group they represent.

Update on the proposed Cairngorms Community Broadband Project

Community Broadband Scotland (CBS) has been set up and funded by the Scottish Government to support communities that are unlikely to benefit from the Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband (DSSB) project to develop financially sustainable community broadband projects.

Sarah Jones (CBS) outlined the proposal from CBS.

Project Aim

The Project aim is to deliver Broadband Service with ‘superfast’ speeds of 30Mbps+, and no less than 15Mbps at times of peak demand for upload and download, to the communities of the Cairngorms National Park.

CBS are able to operate in ‘white’ postcodes (6 digits) areas where there are no plans for fibre to be rolled out under the current British Telecom (BT) contract.

The CBS remit does not include ‘grey’ areas – areas connected to fibre but too far away to benefit or areas with at least 1 property connected.

There are three key stages to developing a community broadband project and funding is available at each stage. A flow chart detailing the role of CBS and the 3 Project Stages and the funding available is at Annex 1.

Community broadband projects come in a range of shapes and sizes but what is common to them all is that the community must own the asset i.e. the broadband “kit” whether that be fibre infrastructure, wireless mast structures etc.

Community broadband projects also need to be financially sustainable in the long term as there is no funding for ongoing costs i.e. the revenue from subscribers needs to meet the operating costs of the project.

Project Area

The project area will be the Cairngorms National Park and if the natural geography allows this will also cover areas just out-with the National Park.

BT currently has the contract to roll out fibre in the Highlands and also for the other areas of the Park but under slightly different contractual obligations.

CBS, BT and the Scottish Government DSSB team are meeting on 27 January to confirm the target area of the project. The target area will be the ‘white’ postcodes (6 digits) where there are no plans for fibre to be rolled out.

The next stage would be formal ‘de-scoping’ of the ‘white’ areas, where BT formally agree that they will not progress fibre to those areas.

Requirements of the delivery organisation and experience from elsewhere

David Watson gave a presentation on what he experienced following a visit to Giga Plus Argyll (GPA) and Campbell Cameron explained the GPA project in greater detail.

CBS outlined what was required for the 'legal entity' and answered questions on the Giga Plus Argyll project.

Requirements of the Delivery Organisation

- In order to go to tender a legal entity needs to be in place.
- The legal entity needs to be set up in such a way as to be able to receive private income as well as funding.
- In the first instance the CBS project in the Cairngorms will only deal with 'white' postcode areas but the legal entity taking the project forward should have an aspiration to also tackle 'grey' areas in parallel.
- The procurement process is rigorously tested from a technical and business perspective. These processes must be adhered to with CBS and specialists providing full support. This will inform the selection of contractor etc.

Dealing with Landowners for the siting of masts etc. can be a sensitive process and there are examples where it has worked well in the past that can be replicated. GPA had no issues with this and is happy to share their methods.

Consideration of options

The Chair asked those present if they thought that there was sufficient interest at a community level to for a lead body, or an existing body, to take the project forward and all agreed that there was.

The Chair ran through the 3 options as per the [CNPA Board Paper](#) of 11 December 2015:

- a) An existing Park-wide organisation that can adapt to take on the project e.g. Cairngorms Business Partnership or Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust.
- b) An existing locally-based organisation that can scale up and adapt to take on the project e.g. Badenoch Broadband
- c) A completely new organisation set up to drive the project forwards. e.g. The Cairngorms Trust (currently in formation to support the LEADER programme).

The organisations present all agreed that they were not in a position to, or would want to, take something like this on at this time. The organisations present also stated that they did not want to set up a new legal entity to drive the project forward.

The preferred option from the organisations represented at the meeting was to utilise The Cairngorms Trust (currently in formation) and prompt it, once established, to set up a separate trading arm for the Cairngorms Broadband Project.

Alice Mayne confirmed that The Cairngorms Trust and associated trading arm for the Cairngorms Broadband Project could be set up in 3-6 months' time.

The make-up of the trading arm would have to be carefully considered to provide not only a good geographical representation but also a relevant skills representation. CBS are required to report on the make-up of the group and need to ensure that it is fit for purpose.

Following a full discussion, those present agreed that the CNPA was best placed to progress the project in the mean-time including chairing the working group. CBS confirmed that this could also include the community engagement phase of the project.

Next steps

Murray Ferguson confirmed that the CNPA were happy to progress the project for the time being, until such time as a community lead organisation is prepared to take it on.

It was agreed that one representative from each organisation/community body should sit on the working group.

The timetable for the project is as follows:

Establishment of working group to take project forward	Jan -Feb 2016
Establishment of new legal entity	Feb – April 2016
Confirm project area	Feb 2016
Issue State Aid Consultation (1 month)	Feb 2016
State Aid – Public consultation report	March 2016
Issue OJEU notice	March 2016
Commence community engagement	April - May 2016
Competitive Dialogue procurement	March – October 2016
Identify preferred bidder	October 2016
Contract Award	November 2016

AP1 - Sarah Jones to contact the community organisations and ask that they nominate one relevant representative to sit on the working group.

AP2 - Sarah Jones to circulate CBS resources to the community organisations for them to disseminate.

AP3 - Sarah Jones to circulate the outcome of the meeting on 27th January with BT and DSSB once they have clarity.

Date of next meeting

Working group to meet late February 2016, date tbc by CBS.

Start Up Fund – Flow Chart

