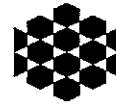


From the Office of the Minister



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Our Ref: DETI SUB 611/2010

Patsy McGlone MLA
Northern Ireland Assembly
Parliament Buildings
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BT4 3XX

25th January 2011

Dear Patsy,

BROADBAND ACCESS FOR BUSINESSES AND RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMERS IN RURAL AREAS

I undertook to provide you with some further information on the project funded under the 5th call of the Broadband Fund in response to your question at DETI Orals on 13 December 2010.

As I mentioned, a total of 23 cabinets, all in rural locations will be upgraded with fibre. Eight of the cabinets are served by the Larne exchange, six by the Downpatrick exchange, five by the Hillsborough exchange, and one in each of the Benburb, Forkhill, Crossmaglen and Newtownhamilton exchanges. The upgrade programme will be completed by March 2011, making fibre-based broadband services available to approximately 8,500 premises (business and residential) served by these cabinets. The 23 cabinets are additional to the 1,175 which will be upgraded under the Next Generation Broadband Project, of which 164 are located in County Tyrone.

You specifically asked about improvements to services in Moortown, Ardboe and Brackagh. You will be aware that in March 2010 two of my officials attended the public meeting in Ardboe and outlined to those present various initiatives to increase options for accessing broadband solutions in those general locations. The extensive fixed wireless network across the rural west of Northern Ireland, deployed by North West Electronics with some £237,000 support from my Department under the Broadband Fund was completed in November 2009 and offers access to broadband services of up to 100Mbps. Specific details on availability of services from North West Electronics are available from the company's website www.newwn.com

My Department's contract with BT for delivery of the Next Generation Broadband Project is also delivering access to fibre-based broadband products and services in the areas you have listed. Five cabinets serving Moortown and Ardboe from the Coagh exchange have been earmarked for upgrade, with four of the cabinets already fibre-enabled and ready for customer orders. Work on the fifth cabinet will be

completed by end-January 2011. Further details on the upgrade programme and business eligibility to access services is available from the website www.fasterbroadbandni.com

I will arrange for a copy of this letter to be sent to the Speakers Office, the Business Office (for Hansard) and that a copy will be placed in the Assembly Library.

*Your sincerely,
Arlene Foster*

ARLENE FOSTER MLA

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment