

From the Office of the Minister



Department of
**Enterprise, Trade
and Investment**
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Our Ref: DETI SUB 611/2010

Claire McGill MLA
Northern Ireland Assembly
Parliament Buildings
Stormont
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25th January 2011

Dear Ms McGill,

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 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 availability of services in Plumbridge, Greencastle and Dunamanagh. You will be aware that two of my officials attended the public meeting on the evening of 30 November in Plumbridge and outlined to those present various initiatives either underway or completed and which have delivered access to broadband solutions. In fact, both Greencastle and Plumbridge were identified as priority locations when I first launched the Broadband Fund in August 2008.

Both locations are covered by the extensive fixed wireless network deployed by North West Electronics with some £237,000 support through my Department. In fact, the network is so extensive that eighteen locations in County Tyrone which were prioritised under the 1st call can all avail of services. My officials continue to engage with those who raised issues at the public meeting and have also written to BT, North West Electronics and OFCOM seeking input and response where appropriate. 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. Two cabinets serving Plumbridge are being upgraded at Gortin exchange, with one of these cabinets (already completed) in the middle of the village. Greencastle is served by exchanges in Gortin, Carrickmore, Mountfield and Tulnacross, with a total of nine cabinets being upgraded. Five cabinets are being upgraded in Dunamanagh exchange. 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.

Yours sincerely,


ARLENE FOSTER MLA
Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment