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Our Reference: 202200325353
Your Reference: Broadband Rollout across Moray

26 October 2022

Dear Marc,

Thank you for your email dated 12 October, 2022, to the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery regarding Broadband Rollout across Moray. I am responding as the Cabinet Secretary with portfolio responsibility for digital connectivity.

As you know, but to inform the Council's Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee, the area of telecommunications is wholly reserved to the UK Parliament under the provisions of the Scotland Act 1998. Despite this, the Scottish Government has had to step in and take the lead in addressing poor coverage and use the Scottish Government's own resources, given the economic importance of broadband in Scotland.

The Scottish Government recognises the ever-increasing importance of good quality digital connectivity in all aspects of our lives, and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have only served to reinforce that. Situations like those you describe are why we made our commitment to extend superfast broadband access to 100% of premises in Scotland, regardless of remoteness or rurality.

Our commitment to ensure that all homes and businesses can access superfast broadband is delivered through three strands of activity - the £600 million Reaching 100% (R100) contracts (North, Central and South), our Scottish Broadband Voucher Scheme (SBVS) and commercial coverage.

Interim vouchers were introduced to allow property owners, whose properties were expected to benefit from R100 contract or commercial build, to secure a temporary superfast broadband connection by the end of 2021, as per the Scottish Government's commitment. Given the necessary pause in awarding the R100 North lot contract as a result of a legal challenge, we decided to extend the closing date for Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

Tha Ministearanna h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh www.lobbying.scot



interim voucher applications by three months to 31 March 2022, providing members of the public with even more time to apply.

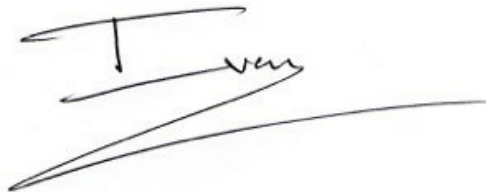
However, it must also be noted that the R100 SBVS as a whole is ultimately a demand-led scheme, meaning that it is up to the property owners to decide whether or not to secure a connection in this way. Despite extensive advertisement of the R100 SBVS across local, national and social media, we did not see any tangible increase in enquiries or applications, which is why we did not deem it necessary to extend availability of interim vouchers any further. However, the voucher worth up to £5,000 remains available for eligible properties, which are not expected to benefit from superfast broadband through the R100 contracts or commercial build.

There are a number of active SBVS suppliers delivering connections in Moray. 160 connections have already been carried out using vouchers, with another 70 currently in build.

I would also add that R100 officials are in regular dialogue with officials from Moray Council, and it should be noted that the council has access to the current deployment plan for R100 contract build as well as access to R100 SBVS data. Members of the Scottish Government Digital Connectivity R100 team will be attending a members briefing in Elgin on the 6th of December and will be happy to take any further questions there. According to the current deployment plan, there is contracted build scheduled for Moray in each of the next five years (2023 to 2027). The Council has access to this data at individual property level.

I hope that this information proves useful to you and your constituents.

Yours sincerely,



IVAN MCKEE

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