Presently, Arkland Farm can only access broadband via the Scottish Government's Broadband Reach sponsorship through Avanti Telecommunications. This is because it is over 8 km from the nearest exchange (Mossyard) and the existing landline infrastructure is old and poor.

The service from Avanti has proved very reliable for the most part with only severe weather conditions disturbing operation (such as snow storms) and has recently been upgraded with the launch of their Hylas 1 satellite. However, it is an expensive service compared to other methods of connection and a £24 per month subscription will only purchase a 1 Meg connection speed at best. Faster speed is available at a higher subscription but this puts the service more into the commercial user arena, and even these higher speeds do not come close to the best offered by good, short copper wired connections or, of course, fibre optic links.

As more and more services a being provided by broadband internet and the amount of data transmitted rises, the need for fast connections becomes imperative. The telecommunications companies have done well in bringing high speed connectivity to large centres of population but have ignored the rural areas for obvious cost reasons.

The transmitters of data aimed at the general public, particularly in the entertainment and information gathering fields (such as the BBC with its i-Player, and search engines such as Google) use huge bandwidths if heavily subscribed. The radio and television companies in particular encourage their listeners/viewers to re-run time shifted programs, yet I have seen little evidence of the broadcasters funding any improvements to the internet access system, i.e. broadband. This seems counter productive.

The availability of good quality television and radio signals from the huge number of main and relay transmitters throughout rural Scotland covers a much greater area than does the broadband availability. At Arkland, broadcasts from Cambret Hill, (a transmitter run by Arquiva which is visible only a mile away), and from Caldbeck in Cumbria are of high strength, so why are these (and other) transmitter sites not utilised for the provision of wireless broadband?

Any system that could provide fast internet connectivity for the rural regions in particular, and at an affordable cost to the end user would be hugely welcomed.

For what they are worth, these are my thoughts on the present status of broadband both at Arkland in Dumfries & Galloway, and generally in rural areas.