

# Scottish Government submission of 17 April 2023

## PE1931/D: Improve the R100 rollout by prioritising properties who currently have speeds of less than 5 Mbps

Thank you for your email on 21 March 2023 requesting information regarding superfast broadband coverage in Scotland and Scotland's Full Fibre Charter in relation to Petition PE1931. The answers to these questions are set out below.

### **Superfast Broadband Coverage - Scotland**

Ofcom's 'Connected Nations 2022: Scotland' report from December 2022, states that:

*"There continues to be wide coverage of superfast broadband. Speeds of 30 Mbit/s are available to 94% of homes in Scotland, an increase of over 62,000 premises since last year."*

All remaining premises not in commercial or R100 contract plans can access a superfast service via the R100 Scottish Broadband Voucher Scheme. This is a demand-led programme, supporting various superfast technologies, and not all homes and businesses have chosen to take this up.

The R100 programme has three strands of activity – the £600 million R100 contracts, the R100 Scottish Broadband Voucher Scheme and continued commercial build.

While this ensured that all homes and businesses had the ability to access a superfast broadband connection by the end of December 2021, the R100 contracts are continuing to deliver future-proofed full fibre connections in some of our most rural communities.

The networks being delivered will support download speeds of up to 1,000 megabits per second (Mbps) – far in excess of our original 30Mbps commitment. We want to ensure that as many people as possible can benefit from future-proofed digital infrastructure and are working with the UK Government on the design of Project Gigabit, which represents an opportunity to build on the success of our R100

investment and continue to target public investment at the parts of the country who stand to benefit from it the most.

## **Scotland's Full Fibre Charter**

[Scotland's Full Fibre Charter](#) was introduced as a way of leveraging a number of key commitments and collaborative working from industry.

The Charter operates on the basis of pledges, both for communications network operators and the Scottish Government. These are aligned to our ambitions for digital infrastructure delivery, while also supporting wider Scottish Government policies and ambitions relating to fair working practices and workforce development.

Specifically, signatories commit to accelerate deployment of new full fibre networks, prioritise areas of no coverage for broadband and mobile connectivity, and trial new technologies to improve connectivity. Through pledges to support and develop Scotland's workforce, signatories also commit to support fair working practices and inclusion in the telecoms workforce.

At present, there are eight Charter signatories. Openreach, CityFibre and Axione signed in December 2020, while Borderlink, Cloudnet, Hyperoptic, Lothian Broadband Group and Virgin Media O2 signed in April 2022. We have seen continued interest from industry in becoming Charter signatories and are in discussions with a number of other operators at present.

The Scottish Government supports operators through commitments which include working to identify areas of priority, areas of opportunity and to investigate the barriers operators face to deploying infrastructure. One pledge already fulfilled by the Scottish Government has been to offer [100% non-domestic rates relief](#) on newly laid and lit fibre infrastructure, extended until March 2034. This is the most extended period of rates relief in the UK.

All Charter signatories have agreed to work with the Scottish Government to produce annual case studies designed to evidence their good practice in relation to pledges. Signatories are in agreement that this is the most appropriate and effective means to capture the efficacy of the Charter in achieving its overarching aim of creating an environment that encourages and promotes commercial investment in

digital infrastructure. To date, four [signatory case studies](#) have been published, with a pipeline of further case studies in development.

It is expected that this approach to reporting will be reviewed at the 2023 Charter Ministerial Forum. The Scottish Government welcomes this, and remains open to discussing suitable and appropriate approaches to monitoring and reporting with all Charter signatories.

I trust that this information proves useful to the Committee.