

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee
Wednesday 7 May 2025
8th Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

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

Introduction

Petitioner Ian Barker

Petition summary Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to prevent digital exclusion for rural properties and their households by giving priority in the R100 programme to properties with internet speeds of less than 5 Mbps.

Webpage <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE1931>

1. [The Committee last considered this petition at its meeting on 9 October 2024](#). At that meeting, the Committee agreed to write to the Scottish Government.
2. The petition summary is included in **Annexe A** and the Official Report of the Committee's last consideration of this petition is at **Annexe B**.
3. The Committee has received a new written submission from the Scottish Government which is set out in **Annexe C**.
4. [Written submissions received prior to the Committee's last consideration can be found on the petition's webpage](#).
5. [Further background information about this petition can be found in the SPICe briefing](#) for this petition.
6. [The Scottish Government gave its initial response to the petition on 31 March 2022](#).
7. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 69 signatures have been received on this petition.

Action

8. The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take.

Clerks to the Committee
May 2025

Annexe A: Summary of petition

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

Petitioner

Ian Barker

Date Lodged

7 March 2022

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to prevent digital exclusion for rural properties and their households by giving priority in the R100 programme to properties with internet speeds of less than 5 Mbps.

Previous action

Written to my MSP and MP.

I have had an article published in the local newspaper explaining the problems.

Background information

I live in a property which lies 800 m from fibre. We applied for a community partnership which quoted over £100000 for 6 houses. We are connected by copper back to box number 3 which in turn is connected to Lhanbryde exchange by copper.

Last year a new cabinet was installed on the B9103. This meant running fibre less than 1 metre away from cabinet number 3. The fibre runs down the B9103 and under the minor road to Scotstonhill. This is 800m to my property.

We are apparently not in the scope for fibre or even a new cabinet at the junction to the Scotstonhill road, yet properties who already have speeds of 70 Mbps are being upgraded to 900 Mbps.

This is digital exclusion. Rural households should have fair access to the internet supplier market rather than being restricted to expensive alternative solutions.

Vouchers provide only expensive solutions and don't allow households fair access to the whole internet provider market, again exclusion.

Annexe B: Extract from Official Report of last consideration of PE1931 on 9 October 2024

The Convener: Our next continued petition, PE1931, from Ian Barker, calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to prevent digital exclusion for rural properties and their households by giving priority in the reaching 100 per cent—R100—programme to properties with internet speeds of less than 5 megabits per second.

We last considered the petition at our meeting on 22 November 2023, when we agreed to write to the Scottish Government and Openreach. After the meeting, we received a written submission from the petitioner highlighting his on-going frustration that people with speeds of below 5Mbps are not being prioritised and expressing that he feels like people are being digitally excluded. I am sure that colleagues will have had letters from constituents on those issues.

The Scottish Government's response informs us that about 52,000 properties remain eligible for the R100 Scottish broadband voucher scheme and, as at December 2023, 3,639 connections had been delivered through the use of those vouchers. Since then, around 460 vouchers have been issued, with approximately 100 further vouchers requested.

Openreach has stated that it routinely reviews the sequencing of its build programme to identify additional build that can be brought in. That is linked to the delivery of connections to an additional 8,653 properties through contractual overspill.

That is what we have been told. It remains a live issue. I do not know whether colleagues have any suggestions as to how we might respond in that light.

Maurice Golden: Further work needs to be carried out on the petition to understand how the voucher scheme is working—or not, as the case may be. It may be down to access to broadband. Even if someone can pay for a service, if they cannot actually get that service, it is slightly irrelevant that they can get a voucher for it.

We should write to the Scottish Government to ask whether, in the light of the low uptake of vouchers, it believes that the Scottish broadband voucher scheme is an adequate approach to providing connections to properties in rural Scotland.

The Convener: As there are no other suggestions from colleagues, are we content to proceed on that basis?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: We will keep the petition open, and we will proceed to make that further inquiry.

Annexe C: Written submission

Scottish Government written submission, 13 November 2024

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

Thank you for your email of 18 October 2024, seeking an update on the petition referenced above, particularly with regards to the adequacy of the Reaching 100% Scottish Broadband Voucher Scheme (R100 SBVS).

The Scottish Government recognises the importance of good quality digital connectivity in all aspects of our lives, which is why we made our commitment to extend broadband access across the whole of Scotland, regardless of location or rurality, through the Reaching 100% (R100) programme. Through the three strands of activity that make up the R100 programme – the £600 million R100 contracts (North, Central and South), our R100 SBVS and the ongoing expansion of commercial coverage, including newly emerging technologies such as Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite connections – that commitment has been met.

The R100 SBVS was designed to ensure that anyone who could not access a superfast broadband connection – either through R100 contract build or commercial coverage – would be able to do so. Through the combination of the subsidy of up to £5,000 (to cover capital costs associated with equipment and installation) and the affordability threshold of £56.20 per month (guaranteed for 12 months), we believe that the scheme offers an affordable and accessible means for eligible properties to secure a connection.

As of October 2024, over 4,600 connections have been delivered as a direct result of R100 SBVS vouchers since its launch in September 2020 – each delivering superfast speeds of 30 Megabits per second (Mbps) or above – and there are over 1,000 further potential connections in the pipeline. With around 40 registered suppliers, there is a good mix of technology available, including fixed wireless, 4G mobile, satellite and even fibre services. Indeed, of those connections delivered to date, almost a quarter utilise fibre-to-the-premises (FTTP) technology – a much higher percentage than envisaged when the scheme launched.

With regards to take-up of vouchers, the R100 SBVS actually performs favourably when compared to other publicly-funded demand-led interventions. For example, by way of contrast, the UK Government's current broadband Universal Service Obligation (USO) scheme – which only guarantees speeds of 10Mbps or above – has had minimal impact in Scotland, with just 111 USO orders being placed for around 600 premises connected since its launch in March 2020 (as per Ofcom's last published annual Connected Nations report for 2023 - <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/phones-and-broadband/coverage-and-speeds/connected-nations-2023/nations/>).

For a more detailed breakdown of these figures, the Data Insights page on our website at <https://digitalconnectivity.campaign.gov.scot/data-insights> now provides regular updates on how many connections have been delivered through both the R100 SBVS and the three R100 contracts. This information is broken down and

provided at contract lot, Scottish Local Authority and Scottish Parliamentary constituency levels.

The R100 SBVS remains available for those eligible, and further information – including on how to apply for a voucher – can be found on our website at <https://digitalconnectivity.campaign.gov.scot/sbvs>.

I trust that this information proves useful to the Committee.

Digital Connectivity Division