

# Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee

7th Meeting, 2022 (Session 6), Wednesday 4  
May 2022

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

## Note by the Clerk

**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>

## Introduction

1. This is a new petition that was lodged on 4 April 2022.
2. The petition seeks to give priority in the R100 programme (Broadband Voucher Scheme designed to provide superfast access) to properties with slower internet speeds, particularly in rural areas. He explains that rural households should have fair access to prevent digital exclusion. A full summary of this petition and its aims can be found at **Annexe A**.
3. A SPICe briefing has been prepared to inform the Committee's consideration of the petition and can be found at **Annexe B**.
4. While not a formal requirement, petitioners have the option to collect signatures on their petition. On this occasion, the petitioner elected to collect this information. 63 signatures have been received.

5. The Committee seeks views from the Scottish Government on all new petitions before they are formally considered. A response has been received from the Scottish Government and is included at **Annexe C** of this paper.

## **Action**

6. The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take on this petition.

### **Clerk to the Committee**

## Annexe A

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

#### Petitioner

Ian Barker

#### Date lodged

4/04/2022

#### 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

The logo for SPICe, featuring the text 'SPICe' in a white, sans-serif font on a dark blue background.

**The Information Centre**  
An t-Ionad Fiosrachaidh

### Briefing for the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee on petition PE1931: Improve the R100 rollout by prioritising properties who currently have speeds of less than 5 Mbps, lodged by Ian Barker

#### Brief overview of issues raised by the petition

Petition PE1931 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 R100 programme to properties with internet speeds of less than 5 megabits per second (Mbps).

The petitioner highlights that his property, and his neighbours, have not yet been upgraded to a fibre broadband connection, but that properties 800 metres away already have access to fibre speeds of up to 70 Mbps, and are currently being upgraded again to speeds of up to 900 Mbps.

All legislative and regulatory responsibility for telecommunications rests with the UK government and Ofcom respectively. While the Scottish Government do not have legislative responsibility, [Reaching 100 \(R100\)](#) is a high-profile programme of work to improve digital connectivity in Scotland.

The £600 million R100 programme is 96.5% funded by the Scottish Government, alongside the [Scottish Broadband Voucher Scheme](#) (SBVS) and commercial build, they aim to deliver a minimum of superfast (greater than 30Mbps) broadband to remaining premises (5.2% of premises) currently without superfast access in Scotland.

The R100 project was first established as a follow-on programme to [Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband](#) (DSSB) in 2017 and aspired to extend superfast broadband connectivity to 100% of Scottish premises by the end of 2021 (March 2022 as a financial year). However, due to a range of challenges, R100 now has extended target dates for completion. Background on the timeline for R100 and the challenges experienced are set out in a series of SPICe Spotlight blogs:

- [Superfast broadband – will Scotland reach 100?](#) (September 2019)
- [R100: Moving \(slowly\) towards superfast broadband](#) (January 2020)
- [Connecting R100 – making broadband progress](#) (October 2020)

The R100 procurement programme is being delivered in a series of phased milestones. Payment for each phase is based on the cost of deployments to the premises and will not be made if premises are not connected without reason. Once a milestone has been achieved, action is taken to ensure that the network is performing correctly before payment is made.

A [PQ from August 2021](#) showed households in each local authority it estimates (a) currently and (b) will access broadband through (i) the R100 contracts, (ii) the superfast broadband voucher scheme and (iii) commercial coverage.

**Andrew Feeney-Seale**

**Senior Researcher**

[01/04/2022]

The purpose of this briefing is to provide a brief overview of issues raised by the petition. SPICe research specialists are not able to discuss the content of petition briefings with petitioners or other members of the public. However, if you have any comments on any petition briefing you can email us at [spice@parliament.scot](mailto:spice@parliament.scot)

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in petition briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

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## Annexe C

### Scottish Government submission of 31 March 2022

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

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the aforementioned petition. The Committee has asked the Scottish Government for its views on the action called for in the petition, which is:

*“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.”*

The Scottish Government recognises the ever-increasing importance of good quality digital connectivity in all aspects of our lives, particularly in Scotland’s more remote and rural areas, and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have only served to reinforce that. This is why, despite the reserved nature of telecommunications legislation, we made our commitment to extend superfast broadband access to 100% of premises in Scotland, regardless of remoteness or rurality.

We chose to exclude urban properties from the procurement for the R100 contracts, reflecting our view that public investment should be made where it is most needed – in rural Scotland. Given the critical importance of delivering a network that has genuine geographic reach across all of Scotland, we also took the decision to mandate infrastructure deployment in key remote rural locations.

We have always known that ongoing commercial build and the R100 contracts alone would not provide superfast broadband for everyone. This is why we developed the R100 Scottish Broadband Voucher Scheme (SBVS) to ensure that everyone had the ability to access a superfast broadband service.

It is important to note that the R100 contracts and the R100 SBVS can only target properties currently capable of accessing sub-superfast speed (less than 30 Megabits per second (Mbps)).

The Scottish Government recognises the desire of owners and tenants to secure a connection at their property with their preferred supplier and technology. However, the purpose of a SBVS voucher is to allow those who are eligible to secure a superfast connection of 30Mbps. There are a number of suppliers offering alternative technology services - including 4G, satellite and fixed wireless - that will achieve that.

In determining the technical requirements associated with the SBVS, we have carefully considered the affordability threshold. As a result, the terms and conditions for the SBVS define an affordable service as one that will cost the customer no more than £46.10 per month. This is the same monthly cost as services delivered through the UK Government's Universal Service Obligation (USO). We considered it appropriate to adopt this criteria, given the extensive consultation, robust analysis and monitoring that Ofcom (the UK's telecoms regulator) undertook to support their decision. Ofcom has also committed to reviewing pricing regularly. It should also be noted that the USO only guarantees a 10 Mbps service.

I trust that this information proves useful to the Committee.