



Phase 1 Community Engagement Report

APRIL 2016

North Skye Broadband – Phase 1 Community Engagement Report.

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Background

North Skye Broadband a community led broadband project seeking to deliver world class reliable superfast broadband formally launched in February 2016. A key component of the project is to ensure the communities within the project area and local vicinity are engaged and informed with regard to the project aims and objectives.

Community engagement will feature throughout the development of the project and will be delivered over a number of phases.

As the North Skye Broadband project develops, community support and engagement will ensure that there is a high level of dialogue and understanding between the participants involved in delivering the project and those areas which will benefit from the project. Engagement will also provide those involved in delivering the project the opportunity to measure ongoing support, interest and feedback from the communities. Through a process of direct engagement, it is intended to provide an additional platform for direct queries and questions above and beyond email, social media and website correspondence.

There will be several phases of community engagement ensuring continued transparency regarding the progress and ambitions of the project.

This report provides details of the 1st phase of community engagement carried out by North Skye Broadband.

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Engagement Overview

The 1st phase of community engagement was delivered six weeks after the public launch of North Skye Broadband during a three-week period from the 21st of March 2016 until the 6th of April 2016. This phase consisted of a series of 10 well publicised public meetings in each of the areas identified as being included the North Skye Broadband project footprint and local vicinity. These areas were identified and published in the [State Aid Public Consultation Document](#) on the 13th December 2015.

The locations of the 10 public meetings were.

- **Skeabost Community Hall**
- **Glendale Community Hall**
- **Waternish Community Hall**
- **Struan Primary School**
- **Braes Community Hall**
- **Sligachan Hotel**
- **Minginish Community Hall**
- **Staffin Community Hall**
- **Dunvegan Community Hall**
- **Kilmuir Community**

Each meeting, open for all to attend was held at 7:30pm. Advertising of the events was carried out locally in each of the areas, by members of the North Skye Broadband steering group. Advertising consisted of posters in local shops, community communication board's and adverts were also placed in the local press (WHFP), on social media (Facebook) and via the North Skye Broadband website.

Each event followed the same simple format –

- 1) Presentation from North Skye Broadband detailing -
 - a. The reasoning for the project
 - b. The proposed outcomes of the project
 - c. Work carried out to date
 - d. The next steps / work required to be completed including timescales
 - e. Call to action – Register an interest, support the project moving forward.
- 2) Question and Answer Session
- 3) Informal discussion with refreshments.

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Community Engagement Meetings

The turnout at each meeting varied with some meetings having low numbers and others having particularly high numbers. As would be expected those communities which have had longer term involvement throughout the project, such as Minginish and Glendale had higher numbers of attendees, areas like Sligachan have low numbers of properties so numbers were expected to be low. There were no formal sign in procedures at the meetings so an estimate of the number of attendees has been provided below.

Location	Numbers (Approx)
Skeabost Community Hall	10
Glendale Community Hall	20
Minginish Community Hall	40
Waternish	14
Struan Primary School	18
Braes Community Hall	8
Sligachan Hotel	3
Dunvegan Community Hall	23
Staffin Community Hall	12
Kilmuir Community	6
Total	154



Figure 1 Minginish Community Hall

There were significantly high levels of strong support from those that attended the meetings in terms of further developing the project. Throughout the engagement meetings there were no negative comments received nor did any individual express a concern that the project should not go ahead for any reason.

Each meeting received excellent levels of feedback and supportive comments including further follow up comments and email dialogue. Elgar Finlay and Niall Till facilitated each meeting on behalf of North Skye Broadband with other members of the organisation attending various local events.



Figure 2 Struan Primary School

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Several important notes were made throughout the engagement

- **There was a strong desire to ensure that any project was futureproof in terms of, expected increases in demand for ever higher speed, scalability, and extensibility.**
- **Strong levels of support for locally operated services which would deliver skills and local employment.**
- **Frustration at the level and standards of current Broadband provision**

Throughout the engagement many members of community expressed a willingness to support the project in many forms not only in terms of providing personal skills and energy but also in terms of finance and equipment. By the end of the process there had been formal offers of three diggers.

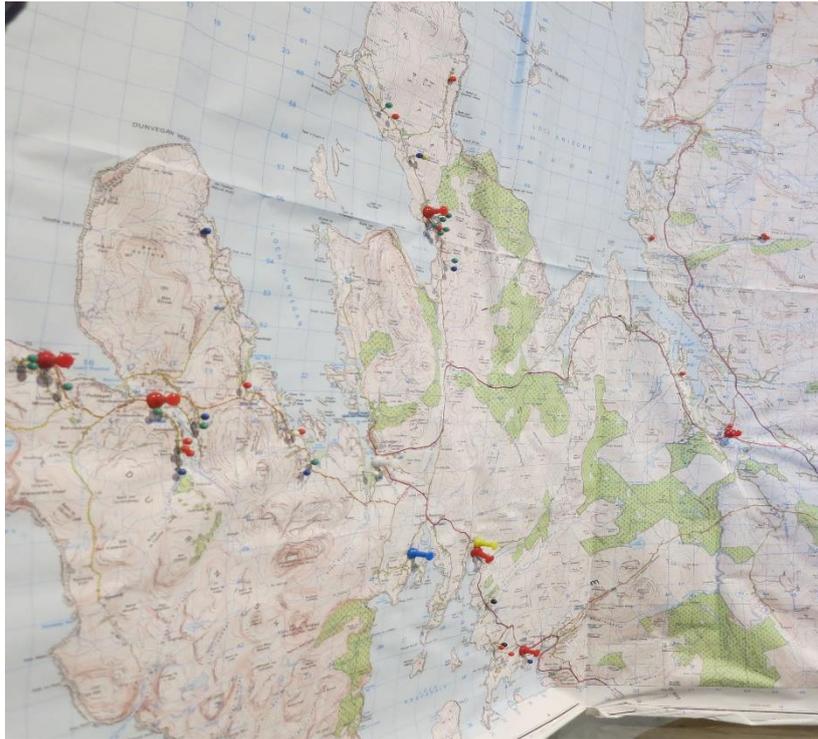
Some of the written follow up comments have been provided below –

“I would be happy to help to get this project off the ground. I own some plant machinery (digger / dumper) from my build / renovation ventures, should that be of any help (no skills to drive them but I'm sure there are people around who have).” - Received via email

“Many thanks for your presentation yesterday. You have no idea how much you lifted my day. Although several further steps are required, in my view the future really does look positive. I may be a bit of a nerd regarding technology but this is not about computer games and last months soaps.....Once again I can only applaud your initiative. I have to admit that I am a little saddened knowing that I cannot take an active part in the scheme, I would have loved to be climbing towers, feeding fibre, digging cableways etc knowing what the reward would ultimately be but to see this project successfully completed will give me immense pleasure. Early days yet but when the overall design has been decided, I can offer some ground which may be of use if free to air data streams are used in the distribution process, wayleaves would not be a problem. In the meantime, best of luck with tasks in hand and a fair wind to the finish.” - Received via email

“Enjoyed the Skeabost meeting the other evening. Thanks..... I think any BT service will be an inferior service to the World Class service you were talking so eloquently about, which is very frustrating. We'd be interested in helping in any practical way and, perhaps, even with a modest donation toward the cost of the necessary cable or conduit” Received via email (edited to remove identification).

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At each meeting attendees were invited to pin their properties onto an Ordnance Survey map of the area so that a picture could be built up of where attendees resided or had premises. It is the intention of North Skye Broadband to continue to develop this hard copy map as the project progresses. The map has proved to be a useful tool which may aid planning and visualisation in the future. Currently there are over 80 pins across the map.

Figure 3 Map with pin locations

At each map station attendees were also encouraged to complete a registration of interest for the project.

By providing the information contained in the registering an interest form as well as contact details individuals and businesses can be kept informed with regard to the development of the project. There is no commitment from completing the forms other than that registrants will be kept informed when significant milestones in the project have been met.



Figure 4 Completing registration of interest forms Braes Community Hall

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Registrations of Interest

Registration of interest forms are available via the [North Skye Broadband website](#) as well as in hard copy form. Hard copy forms were provided at each of the community engagement meetings and attendees were encouraged to complete and return a copy.

Completed registration of interest forms are useful measuring tools for North Skye Broadband as they can be used as a gauge in the levels of interest in the project as well as an additional communication tool for questions and queries.

Since the launch of the project 124 forms have been completed by those not directly involved in the project. This is an extremely encouraging level of engagement at such an early stage. Many of the forms have expressed strong supportive comments and commitments to the project. A snap shot of the statistics show –

- **100%** of completed forms indicate an interest in taking services from North Skye Broadband.
- **60%** of the completed forms indicate an interest in investing in the project
- **21%** indicated that they were landowners and may be interested in providing free way leave access
- **70%** have indicated that they would be willing to undertake a basic survey of their property

Questions were raised in 6 of the submitted forms with **33 submissions offering direct assistance** in regard to the overall delivery of the project.

It is the intention to continue to encourage everyone in all areas who are interested in the project to register an interest. This will allow communication with the community and those involved to be much more efficient as the project progresses.

The 33 offers of assistance range from highly skilled individuals to those who were willing to help in any way possible to people just willing to “do whatever I can”.

The 6 queries which have been received directly through the registration forms range from “*where do I sign up?*” To more specific technical and organisational questions “*This is our second home and we spend only 4-5 moths per year on Skye. Would this be a service we could connect/disconnect during the year?*”

“Would the structure be such that the investment could be a shareholding?”

It should be noted that a significant number of the forms completed in hard copy appeared to only have one side completed, this may have been due to individuals not noticing that the forms were double sided. It should be a priority that any information that is gathered is accurate while ensuring those who are registering an interest are encouraged to complete the forms with as much information as possible, in particular contact details.

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Questions and Answers

As expected, throughout the community engagement there were a significant number of questions and queries. Many of the questions raised at each of the meetings have been covered on the [North Skye Broadband FAQs](#) page. However, there were some excellent discussion points raised at all the meetings. All the questions that could be answered at this stage of the project were provided.

Questions covered all aspects of the project in terms of technical, financial, operational and risks. Many of the attendees had significant understanding of the technical and financial issues surrounding a project of this scale and complexity, while others, who were less technical were concerned more with timescales and cost. The Q&A sessions also provided the opportunity for further suggestions and ideas from the community two examples are provided below.

- **A high level project plan with milestones be provided on the website so that progress of the project can be easily followed by those not involved.**
- **Consider innovative billing procedures such as short term contracts for holiday lets or residents who were only at their properties for short period of time.**

The Minginish meeting which was co-hosted by the Connect Minginish group had invited Stuart Robertson Director of Highland and Islands Enterprise (HIE) Digital and Alastair Nicolson of Community Broadband Scotland (CBS). This meeting provided excellent relevant feedback for the community not only in terms of North Skye Broadband's project but also the current superfast roll out being managed and delivered by HIE. Mr Robertson made it clear that efforts would be made to refine the post code areas that will benefit from the roll out as soon as possible so that detailed planning can be completed at the earliest opportunity, this would ensure all areas on the island will be clear on the options available to them in their local area.

All attendees were encouraged to get in touch directly if they had any queries either via the website, email or Facebook page. A full list of questions received including answers are provided on the resources page of the North Skye Broadband website.

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Conclusion

The North Skye Broadband Phase 1 community engagement has been a highly rewarding exercise which has been very well received in all communities.

The project has been met with very high levels of support and understanding especially with regard to ensuring that any system or infrastructure is futureproof and sustainable.

There is a clear desire to deliver the maximum level of social and economic benefits that the project can deliver in terms of local employment and improving local skills.

There is very obvious frustration at the current provision of broadband services in many locations and a very strong desire to see North Skye communities benefit from access to world class superfast broadband services as soon as possible.

Concerns were raised with regard to the provision of a service which may be limited to 30Mbps 15Mbps upload. There is a clear understanding at the potential limitations of a project which offers a lack of future proofing in its design and development could have long term implications.

Concerns were also raised with many locations who may potentially miss benefiting from the roll out and the North Skye Broadband project due to the limitations of the Fibre to the Cabinet provision and the reliance on long copper connections.

The community engagement was appreciated by many of the attendees and it is clear that continued communication will be important as the project progresses in terms of the technical infrastructure that is proposed, as well as the costs and financial implications of the service.

The strong support should be further encouraged in order to facilitate greater engagement in the following phases of community engagement. It should be a priority to ensure even stronger turnouts at public meetings as well as encouraging engagement through the use of communication tools such as the website, email and Facebook page.

It will be important to clarify as soon as possible the post code areas for the North Skye Broadband Phase 1 in order that communities and individuals are left with no confusion as to what broadband options will be potentially available in their areas.

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Special Thanks

A special thanks to all the groups and organisations who helped deliver the community engagement, in particular the many volunteers of the various Hall committees and local organisations who helped facilitate the meetings, especially those like the Skeabost Hall which provide the meeting space free of charge.

Thanks to The Glendale Trust and Connect Minginish groups for providing equipment and the Sligachan Hotel for generously providing space and refreshments at such a busy time of the year.