

## **Kentmere Parish Meeting 07 November 2011**

### **Broadband Developments**

This report is divided into two parts. The first is a summary of the key points of the Connecting Cumbria Project being managed by Cumbria County Council (CCC). The second part is a more detailed report of the Project which may not be of interest to many residents. You need to read only the summary to know what is happening but the detailed report is included for those who are interested.

#### **Summary of the key points**

There is £23.8M earmarked for improving broadband in rural areas. This can only be spent on areas which are not commercially viable.

CCC have gone out to tender and are currently in discussion with three potential suppliers - BT Global Services, Cable & Wireless and Fujitsu.

CCC hope to select the successful bidder at their December cabinet meeting.

Detailed planning will take place between January and April 2012 and it is then that we will find out if Kentmere will feature in the initial phase.

Roll-out of the initial phase will start in April 2012.

Given the relatively small amount of money available it is highly unlikely that this phase of the Project will provide BB services to houses. It is more likely that there will be some sort of 'centre point' provided which can then be used by a supplier (not necessarily the main supplier) to distribute BB to houses. We will not know whether Kentmere will get anything until Spring 2012.

In the short term, for those who do not have BB or who have very poor BB there is the option of a satellite system. If anyone is interested in this, I can provide costing details.

CCC are committed to rolling out BB to all of rural Cumbria and so are continuing to look for further funding. Presently they are bidding to the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) for funds to support BB for rural businesses.

When BB services eventually reach rural areas, it is a condition within the contract that the charges will be in line with equivalent services in urban areas which means that suppliers will not be able to charge a premium for services in rural areas.

#### **Late News - 31.10.11**

It has just been announced that the procurement timetable for Connecting Cumbria has been extended. The main reason for this is that CCC are in the process of securing more funding through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and feel that they need to complete that process so that they know what extra funding is available before awarding any contracts. The new timetable has not yet been announced.

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## **Broadband Developments**

### **Detailed report**

#### **Background**

I suspect it is not very clear what is happening with the Cumbria County Council (CCC) broadband project so I will attempt to summarise what is happening and where Kentmere fits into the management structures. The situation is rather fragmented with many fingers in the pie, not always helpfully.

The project was originally called 'Accessible Cumbria' but has been renamed '**Connecting Cumbria**'. The provision of Broadband (BB) for rural Cumbria is only part of a much wider project aimed at providing next generation access services for CCC and their communities. You can view the information and newsletters provided by CCC on their web site at <http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/broadband/>

CCC are responsible for the implementation of the project across the whole County and they have various committees and groups managing the whole project. The part of the project concerned with rural BB is represented on the CCC Connecting Cumbria Partnership Board.

Because Cumbria is such a difficult area to cover, meetings concerned with rural BB are being held in both the North and South to ease travelling.

In South Lakeland there are Broadband Hub Co-ordinators who represent each Local Area Partnership (LAP). The Hub Co-ordinator for the Upper Kent LAP is John Farmer (Long Sleddale) with myself as deputy if he cannot attend meetings. A member of this group sits on the CCC Connecting Cumbria Partnership Board.

In every LAP there is supposed to be a Broadband Pioneer for each Parish but many Parishes have not nominated a representative. The reason for this is not clear but many Parishes already have good Broadband and some Parishes are not active. In the Upper Kent LAP there are only 3/4 active BB Pioneers - Long Sleddale, Kentmere, New Hutton and occasionally Selside. The BB Pioneers are kept informed through the Hub Co-ordinators. There are also some other groups around Cumbria who hold meetings but as far as I can see they are peripheral to the main project and do not have any power. So far there have been meetings of the Hub Co-ordinators and the Broadband Pioneers and additionally, John Farmer and myself have met with Cllr Mallinson (the CCC Councillor responsible for the Connecting Cumbria project) and Jim Savege (CCC Corporate Director for Organisational Development) and just recently with Tim Farron. The meeting with Cllr Mallinson and Jim Savege was the most illuminating so there are detailed notes of that meeting in Appendix A. There are also notes of the meeting with Tim Farron in Appendix B.

#### **Funding & pricing**

Currently there is £17.1M awarded to CCC from BDUK and these funds can be used only in areas of 'market failure' - i.e. rural BB. There is also £6.7M which has been awarded to CCC for meeting certain performance targets and we have been told that this will also be used for rural BB. The successful bidder will be expected to put some capital into the project (100% matching funding is what CCC are aiming for) and CCC are also bidding for additional funding from ERDF which will be targeted at Business needs. It is not clear whether diversified farm business will be part of the criteria or not.

One important point is that the pricing range to the customer will be the same as in a metropolitan area so the suppliers will not be able to charge a premium for rural areas.

#### **Project Progress**

Currently the tender process is continuing and CCC are in detailed discussion with the three remaining bidders - BT Global Services, Cable & Wireless and Fujitsu. The tenders are due in very soon and CCC hope to select the successful supplier at their December Cabinet meeting and a public

announcement should follow soon after that. Detailed planning with the successful supplier will follow from January to April with roll out starting in Spring 2012. There is no set date for identification of the areas that will be addressed and in what order.

Meanwhile there are several areas where work is progressing in parallel. A sub-group of the Connecting Cumbria Partnership Board has been established to progress development of the strategy which focuses on how to deliver broadband to even the county's most rural areas. The draft strategy will go to all members of the Connecting Cumbria Partnership Board to allow them to consult with their stakeholder groups.

The Hub co-ordinators are drafting a Community Engagement Strategy to detail how Hub Co-ordinators and BB Pioneers will work together in engaging with communities on Broadband.

### **Pilot Projects**

There are 6 pilot projects in Cumbria which are part of a national scheme. The funds for the 6 pilot projects are separate from the funds awarded to CCC from BDUK. The projects are:

fibreGarDen (Dent and GArsdale)	<a href="http://fibre-garden.co.uk/">http://fibre-garden.co.uk/</a>
Fell End (near Kirby Stephen)	
Eden Valley Digital (Lyvennet Valley)	<a href="http://www.edenvalleydigital.com/">http://www.edenvalleydigital.com/</a>
Great Ashby	<a href="http://www.greatasbybroadband.org.uk/">http://www.greatasbybroadband.org.uk/</a>
Northern Fells (Caldbeck and surrounds)	<a href="http://www.northernfellsbroadband.co.uk/">http://www.northernfellsbroadband.co.uk/</a>

It is hoped that these pilot projects will help with the roll-out of services to other areas.

### **Conclusions**

It is going to be some time before communities like Kentmere will even know what is likely to be provided. Given that £17.1M + £6.7M is a very small sum for what is needed in Cumbria it seems unlikely that BB to houses will be provided. It is more likely that a 'point of presence' could be provided and then a smaller independent supplier provide local connectivity as a commercial venture. There are several independent suppliers operating in and around South Lakeland such as Kencomp, NextGenUs, B4RN. Meanwhile for anyone in Kentmere who cannot get a BB service then the only short-term solution is a satellite installation. I can provide information and costs for this for anyone interested.

### **Appendix A**

#### **Notes of the meeting with Cllr Elizabeth Mallinson held on 22 August 2011**

At the last Parish Meeting I mentioned that there would be a meeting with Elizabeth Mallinson, the CCC Councillor responsible for the Connecting Cumbria project. This meeting took place on 22 August 2011 and three people from the UKLAP broadband group (John Farmer, Longsleddale; Michael Burke, New Hutton; and myself) attended along with Jim Savege, CCC Corporate Director for Organisational Development. This was the result of the LAP writing to CCC expressing concerns about the Connecting Cumbria Project.

The meeting was positive and useful and it helped us to understand what was happening. However, it reinforced our view that the delivery of good Broadband services to rural Cumbria was still some way off. The issues we raised were:

#### **1. Organisation**

We are concerned about the multitude of peripheral organisations trying to establish roles for themselves without any clear view of what they are doing or where they stand vis-a-vis the Connecting Cumbria Project. These organisations include MPs, Cumbria Association of Local Councils (CALC), Cumbria Broadband, Eden Broadband, East Cumbria Broadband. CCC said they were trying to keep everyone (suppliers, business, communities) on board but we still felt that the

organisational aspects of the project are very unclear. We were also concerned about how the BB coordinators fitted in and how they could influence developments.

## **2. Web site and information**

The Connecting Cumbria web site carried very little information so it is very difficult to keep up to date and know what is happening. For example there have been several announcements in the press and by Government ministers about the money available for BB in rural Cumbria but the fact is that there is only one pot of £17M and CCC also felt that the multiple announcements of the same money was not helpful. We felt there should be public information about the Connecting Cumbria procurement process, about the pilot projects that are ongoing, where we could go for technical advice and a monthly update on progress. CCC agreed that the web site was not good and agreed to improve the information flow. There have now been some updates to the web site. If you want to keep up to date yourself, please visit the Connecting Cumbria web site at

<http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/broadband/>

## **3. Technical advice**

We felt that the Connecting Cumbria project should provide independent technical advice to communities. Advice from commercial companies such as BT or Kencomp is always presented in a favourable light for the supplier. CCC said they would try to provide some technical information.

## **4. Marketing**

We felt there was a need for a marketing plan to clarify how and what information and messages we communicate such as the increasing importance of broadband [e.g. for medical applications and farming records] that will maximise interest and therefore increase the likelihood of commercial solutions.

## **Appendix B**

### **Notes of the meeting with Tim Farron 14th October 2011**

John Farmer (Long Sleddale) and myself met with Tim Farron and one of his advisers on Friday 14th October. We had been concerned that TF seemed to be going off at a tangent to the Connect Cumbria project. He is obviously having his ear bent by some of the independent suppliers (naturally enough) and in true LibDem fashion is suspicious of large businesses such as BT (probably also natural enough). However, CCC are in charge of the project and they are responsible for spending the money so it is very important that we work with them and don't just snipe at them from the outside. We found TF rather ill-informed and his adviser extremely ill-informed so we asked TF to set up a meeting with Jim Savege of CCC and ourselves so that TF and his adviser can get some better information about what is happening. I hope that will happen in the near future,

The other issue we raised was about the mobile 4G licences that the Government is currently involved in negotiating. We asked that some conditions be imposed **before the contracts are awarded** that would result in rural areas getting 4G coverage. This would give rural areas another option for BB. He promised to raise this and I believe that other bodies are also pressing for this.