

## RURAL ECONOMY AND CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE

### DRAFT BUDGET 2017-18; BROADBAND

#### SUBMISSION FROM ATHOLL ESTATES AND BLAIR CASTLE

We are a diversified rural business with various levels of demand for connectivity and various third parties; tenants, contractors, partners, who have even more varied demands.

It is clear there is no single answer and with the rapid development of technology, it is a moving target.

The Highland Perthshire Community Partnership Wi-Fi community broadband initiative has provided a very useful and unique solution to big data requirements within our business such as the provision of site wide Wi-Fi broadband at our caravan park and streaming data service at our annual international horse trials. But the requirement for line of sight limits the service to the wider community and economy. So within the current matrix of technology and demand, they have been a valuable new comer to the market and their imminent closure due to sudden funding termination is extremely worrying.

BT Openreach substation upgrading to fibre remains the big solution for villages and towns although the use of copper wire distribution limits the potential to built up areas. More remote hamlets and houses continue to be stranded by distance from sub stations and lack of line of sight from regional Wi-Fi networks. Satellite broadband remains their only fall back, which is expensive but increasingly competitive and reliable.

What the rural economy and communities require is central co-ordination and leadership from government so there is a connectivity plan for each region, which then gives confidence to funders to invest in long term agreements both with the private sector and community based service providers.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment

Andrew BruceWootton  
General Manager for Atholl Estates and Blair Castle  
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