



## PRESS RELEASE



### Gigamull – Community Broadband Project

A community led initiative to provide Next Generation Broadband for Mull and Iona and other Argyll Isles.

Since our last press release in January, the scope of the Gigamull project for Mull and Iona has increased significantly. Under the guidance of Community Broadband Scotland (CBS), the project now includes Lismore, Luing, Jura, Colonsay, Islay, Craignish and Appin. The reason for this is to increase the number of subscribers to the network thereby increasing the financial viability of the project by sharing fixed infrastructure costs amongst a larger customer base. The project will be known as the Argyll Isles Community Broadband Project (AICBP).

CBS have encouraged Gigamull to take the lead on the AICBP as we have the largest population and therefore the greatest capacity to do so – this is amply demonstrated by the strength of the volunteer members of the steering group.

One of the issues that has been addressed in the last couple of months relates to the £146m contract between Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) and BT. This contract will bring fibre optic broadband to some areas of Mull. The funding for the BT contract is primarily from the Scottish Government and is considered as “State Aid”. The majority of our funding (89%) will also be State Aid from the Scottish Government. It is not permissible for double funding of State Aid in the same post code area. So, we are in the process of confirming with HIE whether BT intend to deliver Next Generation Broadband to the areas we are proposing to include in the AICBP.

Once HIE exclude our post code areas from the BT contract it will mean that BT will not be able to use any State Aid to deploy into the specific post codes as part of the current contract.

On Mull, the AICBP project area is everywhere excluding Tobermory, Craignure, Lochdon and Dervaig - see below for details of the BT project.

Once the included areas of the AICBP have been confirmed by HIE, Gigamull will issue an Invitation to Tender (ITT) to select a contractor to design and supply the AICBP network.

Gigamull is in the final stages of business planning with support of a specialist consultant. The result suggests that the business model is sound and will be able to deliver a competitively priced service which is financially sustainable. Crucially, the Gigamull service will be better than the alternatives available to islanders, particularly in the more remote areas. The business model is based on a charging structure which is comparable to others in the market. The unique selling point will be that Gigamull will combine a fast and reliable support with strong customer service and

with a human being answering the phone and locally based technical support – no endless menus to navigate!

There is strong support for the project from Community Broadband Scotland, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and therefore from the Scottish Government. Combined with a technically and commercially competent steering group there is a high degree of optimism that the project will succeed in delivering Next Generation Broadband to islanders. Next Generation Broadband is understood to mean at least 24Mega bits per second (Mbps)

Preparations are underway to set up a community owned company with appropriate governance to ensure local control, asset lock and recycling of profits back into the business (and not to any individuals or shareholders). Legal advice for this will be paid for by Community Broadband Scotland as part of their support to Mull and Iona Community Trust.

It is hoped that Gigamull will start to deploy the first Next Generation Broadband service to the Lochbuie area over the coming winter months and to the rest of the island very soon thereafter. It is likely that this will be based on state of the art wireless technology.

Anyone who is interested in subscribing to Gigamull for broadband should consider very carefully their existing contract and avoid committing to any upgrade or discount offer as this will involve an 18 month contract.

The latest information we have from BT about the plans for Mull and Iona is as follows:

- Installation of subsea cables to/from Mull is underway and will be completed by the end of 2014. Three cables are involved – Oban to Lochdon, Tobermory to Kilchoan and Calgary to Tiree.
- a combined solution of Fibre To The Cabinet (FTTC) and Fibre To The Premises (FTTP) to Lochdon/Craignure during the second half of 2014
- FTTC to Tobermory in the second half of 2016
- FTTC to Dervaig in the second half of 2016.

A new website is being launched which will be developed over the coming months to provide more detailed information on the project [www.gigamull.co.uk](http://www.gigamull.co.uk)

For more information phone Moray Finch, General Manager of MICT on 01680 812900

**PRESS RELEASE ENDS**

18<sup>th</sup> June 2014

Mull and Iona Community Trust was formed in 1997 and is one of more than 200 Development Trusts across Scotland. They are community controlled for the long term benefit of their neighbourhood. MICT are involved in a wide range of services and projects that range from a dementia singing group to a £1m Hydro scheme.