



GigaPlus Argyll Press Release. 19<sup>th</sup> July 2017 From Moray Finch Chairman of GigaPlus Argyll

At the beginning of May 2017, our contractor AB Internet confirmed what we had suspected for several weeks - that they were in financial difficulties and had decided to enter into voluntary administration. AB Internet were under contract to design a fixed wireless access network and then to build and operate it for us. This would have involved constructing around 38 masts throughout Mull, Lismore, Colonsay, Craginish, Luing and parts of Islay and Jura.

By the time they went into administration, they had successfully negotiated 11 leases with local landowners and had obtained planning consents for 27 mast sites. In addition, the fibre backhaul in Oban had been installed along with its power supply from SSE, the masts at Oban and Torosay (Mull) had been constructed and the transmitters installed. Two properties had been connected to help prove the links, as part of the normal commissioning process. Eight other masts have been erected on Mull.

It is likely that the contract with AB Internet will be terminated rather than passed onto another contractor (a process called novation). However, we are reserving judgement on this pending progress by the administrator in finding a buyer for the AB Internet business.

Despite this massive setback, we are still dedicated to find a way to deliver next generation broadband to the area within our project scope. The situation is extremely complicated; State Aid rules, which govern grant funding of broadband projects, are very strictly applied and not very well understood by anyone outside of a very small group of specialists in London. In addition, grant funding brings with it strict rules regarding how contracts are procured. All in all this means that we probably face a delay of around 12 months before we have a new contract in place.

Once we have a clear picture of a way forward, we intend to consult the communities included in the project to confirm whether they still support the project as the best means of delivering a solution to the problem of poor broadband.

The board of GigaPlus Argyll would like to take this opportunity to thank all the various landowners, supporters, steering group members, volunteers and our funders, Community Broadband Scotland and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, who have been helping with the project to date and to provide reassurance that we remain committed to vigorously pursuing a positive outcome.

GigaPlus Argyll is a membership organisation run by a board of volunteer directors drawn from the membership and encourages applications for membership – from residents in all areas covered by the project.

For more information, please contact our project manager, Richard Thorne, telephone 01680 812906, [rthorne@gigaplusargyll.co.uk](mailto:rthorne@gigaplusargyll.co.uk) or visit our website, [www.gigaplusargyll.co.uk](http://www.gigaplusargyll.co.uk).