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Stuart Robertson  
Director of Digital Highlands & Islands  
Highlands & Islands Enterprise  
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Dear Stuart

I am writing once again on behalf of the residents of West Harris regarding the ongoing broadband issue. The main Western Isles fibre cable now runs through the West Harris Estate, yet we are an area that has still not been promised that it will be reached by the fibre network.

Since we last met a number of developments that we were planning are now in the process of becoming reality. The new Pairc Niseaboist Community Enterprise Centre that is due to be completed in summer of 2016, which HIE has part funded, will contain 1 restaurant, 4 business units as well as offices for the West Harris Trust, The RSPB and Harris Development Ltd. All of these businesses will rely heavily on a strong internet connection. In addition to the approximately 130 residents in our area, there is a significant number of holiday homes, guesthouses and campsites, approximately 30 all in, which would benefit immensely from fibre broadband.

One of the key aims of West Harris is population growth. There are currently 3 self build homes in progress throughout the area, with a further 4 plots available and also a further 6 Hebridean Housing Partnership homes due to complete in 2016. We are making progress to increase the population by 40% by 2020. There is one family we are aware of who have land in Seilebost and would love to build and move here permanently but the broadband issue is a key for them. Being employed by a large pharmaceutical company and working from home, a strong and reliable internet connection is paramount (satellite internet is not an acceptable alternative).

[www.westharristrust.org](http://www.westharristrust.org)

West Harris Trust, Old School, Seilebost, Isle of Harris, HS3 3HP

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We don't think the desktop modeling that produced the original planned coverage map has taken into account that the cabling runs through our estate. If it has there is a fundamental injustice in a system that expects us to host a cable that benefits the whole of the island chain but produces no benefit for our community. We note that additional funds for modelling and installation work are being made available and trust that West Harris will have a good chance of benefitting from these funds.

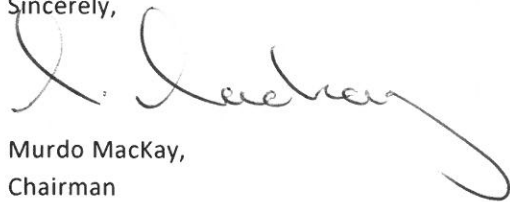
Based on each cabinet covering 1km-1.5km on each side, would it be feasible for cabinets to be installed at Scarista, Borve, Horgabost, Seilebost and Luskentyre? How much would this cost? We are aware that other rural communities with broadband issues are developing their own solutions, i.e. Wi-Fi systems similar to Connected Communities, or Satellite Broadband which both cost significantly more than other broadband providers. Why should we as a community pay more for less choice when there is a fibre cable outside our doors?

There is now the £9 million Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) broadband scheme which has just been launched for community led projects for hard to reach communities. **We are not hard to reach**, the cable runs right through the heart of our community. We want the best for the community as a whole, and anything other than being connected to the BT Broadband fibre network and being able to access the whole market of service providers is definitely second best.

If there is more survey work scheduled for West Harris, we would very much welcome a meeting with the surveyors to discuss in more depth.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Murdo MacKay,  
Chairman

West Harris Trust

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