

## **BETTER BROADBAND FOR DURRIS – HOW AND WHEN?**

### **Summary**

This report explains how Durriss fits into Government plans for ‘better broadband’ both now and in the future. In summary:

- Certain parts of Durriss can access Fibre to the Cabinet (FTTC) now from the cabinet on the South Deeside Road - (see section ‘What does this mean for Durriss?’).
- Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband (DSSB) have confirmed to us that a significant number of additional premises will be able to connect to FTTC as a result of new infrastructure builds that will take place over the next two years (see section ‘What does this mean for Durriss?’).
- FTTC will allow some premises to get ‘superfast speeds’ and others to get an uplift on their current speeds (though remaining below ‘superfast’). Information on a premises by premises basis with regard to this should be available mid 2017.
- The residents of Durriss who will not get FTTC – or who will not get speeds that are acceptable to themselves – can consider community options or short term alternative solutions, whilst waiting for more government solutions (see sections ‘What does this mean for Durriss?’ and ‘Can we do anything as a Community?’). The government has pledged to bring super-fast broadband to all houses by 2021 – but be aware that currently this is a manifesto pledge only.
- If households wish to consider a community option – they will need to be proactive about this, either considering fibre with close neighbours or by telling us that they wish to be involved in a community broadband project. We cannot take this forward without that information.
- There are short term alternatives that some households are successfully getting good speeds with (see ‘Is there anything I can do in the shorter term?’).

It’s not an easy subject – and information and technology are continually updating. We have tried to piece together the current jigsaw for you, but if you have any questions – please email us at [durrissbbsurvey@durrissmail.co.uk](mailto:durrissbbsurvey@durrissmail.co.uk)

### **Government initiatives**

In 2013 the Scottish Government pledged to bring *access to a super-fast broadband network* (at that date defined as speeds over 24mbps) to 95% of Scottish postcodes by March 2018 (we will call this the ‘95% project’). This programme is managed by DSSB in conjunction with Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) and delivery in Scotland is split between two contracts – one for the Highlands and Islands region and one for the ‘Rest of Scotland’. Both contracts were awarded to BT with an FTTC solution. The contracts also stated that if the project had any savings, these would be reinvested into the project in order to increase the 95% upwards (‘Gainshare’) and DSSB are now predicting coverage of 97%.

It is important to note that *access to a super-fast broadband network* does not mean that every house in that 97% will access super-fast speeds. It does, however, mean that properties in that area will live in an area that is 'fibre-enabled'. We should also state that FTTC currently allows super-fast speeds to properties within 1.2 km of a BT fibre-enabled cabinet and some improvements in speed to those up to 2km from the cabinet and sometimes beyond (we will term these longer lines as 'non-superfast FTTC'). BT are also looking at ways to improve their non-superfast FTTC option (using Long Reach VDSL) which could improve speeds to within 3.5km of a fibre-enabled cabinet, but this is currently in testing, with no defined deadline.

In 2016 the Scottish Government made a manifesto pledge to bring a superfast speed to all properties by 2021 on a premises by premises basis. This is sometimes referred to as 'R100' or 'Reaching 100%' and this project is in the pre-procurement stage (not therefore contractually committed to). Concurrently, the UK Government has recently discussed the possibility of a legally binding requirement (a universal service obligation - USO) for all houses in the UK to have 10Mbps by 2020.

For details of the '95% project' and 'Gainshare' – see [http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/docs/central/2015/nr\\_150226\\_broadband.pdf](http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/docs/central/2015/nr_150226_broadband.pdf) and for R100 - see [https://www.scotlandsuperfast.com/media/1355/dssb\\_info\\_sheet\\_last\\_5.pdf](https://www.scotlandsuperfast.com/media/1355/dssb_info_sheet_last_5.pdf)

### **What does this mean for Durris?**

#### **A) Will parts of Durris benefit from the 95% project and from Gainshare?**

##### **1. 95% project**

As part of the '95% project', a fibre cabinet was installed on the South Deeside Road. This has enabled some properties in certain parts of Woodlands to benefit from FTTC speeds of between 8-20Mbps (as shown in the survey results).

##### **2. Gainshare**

DSSB has confirmed that as a result of the 'Gainshare' project, new infrastructure will be built which will allow a significant number of properties in Durris to see an uplift to their internet speeds, with some areas being able to access superfast speeds.

### **Combining the two**

As a result of these two projects we have been told that the following postcodes are part of the DSSB solution and should therefore be in a fibre enabled area:

6AB, 6BA, 6BB, 6BD, 6BE, 6BF, 6BH, 6BJ, 6BL, 6BS, 6BU, 6BW, 6DQ, 6DR, 6DS, 6DT, 6DU, 6EA, 6EB, 6ED

Please be aware that at this stage we are unable to say which PREMISES within these postcodes will receive super-fast speeds. This information will be available mid 2017 following completion of an Open Market Review (OMR) undertaken by the Scottish Government as part of the R100 programme. In addition, surveying is still to be done. With this in mind we would also encourage you to read the sections of this report called – ‘Can we do anything as a community?’ and ‘So – what should I do now?’

The postcode information included in this section is shown on a basic map at the end of this report.

#### B) What about the rest of Durris?

The following postcodes will not benefit from the 95% project or Gainshare.

6BG, 6BN, 6BP, 6BQ, 6BR, 6BT, 6BX, 6BY, 6DA, 6DB, 6DD, 6DE, 6DH, 6DJ, 6DL, 6DN, 6DP 6DX, 6DY

(Please note that 6AA is not included in either listing. Solutions via the 95% project, Gainshare and CBS funding at this stage are only available to postcodes that were present in 2012).

#### **So what does this mean?**

This means that properties within these postcodes would fall under the R100 project if that becomes contractual (government solutions for this are as yet unclear) or can undertake a community option as they are eligible for CBS funding (see community section).

The postcode information included in this section is shown on a basic map at the end of this report.

#### **Can we do anything as a Community?**

There are Community initiatives available for those properties who are not going to receive FTTC as a result of the 95% project and Gainshare – i.e. those in part B) above – and also those in part A) who are identified mid 2017 as not having super-fast broadband. Both of these solutions should result in super-fast broadband but would most likely require a level of community funding.

##### 1. Community Fibre Partnership (CFP)

This involves entering into a CFP for FTTC (or fibre to the premises (FTTP) if feasible) – working directly with BT: <http://www.communityfibre.bt.com>. It is most suited to properties where neighbours are also keen for improvement and groups of properties would take forward their own proposal to BT. BT Openreach would then consider the proposal against their own criteria and advise of a potential solution (with associated costs – split between BT and the community). The community might have some influence in

minimising costs through identifying low-cost fibre routes (fields / land ownership options) and possibly even by assisting with trenching etc.

## 2. Community Broadband Scotland (CBS)

This second community option is likely to be relevant to non-clustered premises and/or outlying properties where an FTTC solution is not feasible. CBS operates on a 'technology neutral' basis and may fund any solution (up to 100% of the capital cost – though business cases that involve an element of additional funding or private investment may naturally be more convincing) that meets the European Union defined 'Next Generation Access' (NGA) criteria (this basically means making sure the technology is future-proof as much as possible). Projects of this nature take approximately 18 months to reach completion and a community group would need to be established (see the section 'So – what should I do now?').

CBS-supported projects have typically used fixed point wireless technology allowing them to cover larger geographic areas than cabled networks. Fixed wireless involves radio signals being passed from a radio mast to an antenna on an individual property, feeding into an internal router and if this is done on a community basis - the mast can be ideally located (it is dependent on a suitable fast backbone infrastructure) and the problems of being unable to reach certain properties due to hills and trees etc. can normally be overcome by 'bouncing waves' around properties and buildings in order to reach more houses. This means that those of us who have always thought that solutions like this are not possible for our own properties could find that a solution is available. A local example of this is [Marykirk.com](http://Marykirk.com), near to Montrose.

More information about Community Broadband Scotland is available at:  
<http://www.hie.co.uk/community-support/community-broadband-scotland/>

### **So – what should I do now?**

For the short-term you can either wait or consider short term options (see next section). For the longer term - it depends on where you live!

If you're in the postcodes mentioned in A) on page 2 – it is worth waiting until mid 2017 to see how the DSSB new infrastructure will impact your property. Information will become available at the appropriate time via the DSSB interactive map – <https://www.scotlandsuperfast.com/where-when/#modal> – and in addition as we receive this information– we will also distribute it. Some properties are going to get super-fast broadband and some aren't. If you fall into the latter category, this next paragraph is also relevant to you.

If you're in the postcodes mentioned in B) on page 2 (or you are part of A, but won't get super-fast) then you have two options. You can either wait and see what the government does as a result of the R100 pledge (perhaps you are happy with the speed you have or will get through Gainshare) – or you can consider one of the two community options – CFP and

CBS. The advantages of a community option over the 'wait and see' option are that it is likely that super-fast broadband would be available to you sooner using a technology that is future-proof. Also we must remember that R100 is not yet contracted. However, a community option does involve community action – and we also appreciate that everyone has different needs.

- a) For a CFP solution any interested group would need to initiate their own project.
- b) For a CBS solution – this could be taken forward as a community project (possibly in conjunction with other surrounding areas) once the property by property R100 information is made available in the middle of the year (CBS have advised us to wait until then so that we have all of the relevant Durriss properties involved, to ensure correct positioning of any solution).

A CBS solution can only be taken forward if enough members of our community wish to do so. Therefore, please email us at [durrissbbsurvey@durrismail.co.uk](mailto:durrissbbsurvey@durrismail.co.uk) if this is of interest to you.

### **Is there anything I can do in the shorter term?**

There are things that can be done in the shorter term if you wish. Whilst perhaps an obvious thing to say, the first thing to do is to double check that you cannot access FTTC at the moment. We know that some residents were surprised to find that they can. For those that can't – there are alternative solutions being used locally and we can see that some local residents have already adopted these and are benefitting from significantly improved speeds. Fixed wireless, mobile home broadband and satellite are in use in the area:

- Fixed Wireless – this involves radio signals being passed from a radio mast to an antenna on an individual property, feeding into an internal router. In this area this is provided by Caleycom (we are not sure if this is covered by the voucher scheme see next section – but it would be worth asking) - <http://caleycom.net>
- Mobile Home Broadband – follows the same concept as Fixed Wireless, but instead picks up the signal from a mobile phone provider mast using an antenna attached to the individual property and which then feeds into an internal router. In this area the product is called Mastband and is provided by NotSpot Broadband (eligible under the voucher scheme in the next section) - <http://notspotbroadband.com>
- Satellite – this involves using a satellite dish attached to the house to link to a satellite system again feeding into an internal router. In this area - provided by a number of different suppliers as listed under the voucher scheme below (eligible under the scheme also).

We really encourage you to do your own research into this area – and decide what is suitable for you and your property (for example, satellite tends to be cheaper, but has latency issues whereas fixed wireless and mobile home broadband are not as cheap but have no latency issues) – but if you do want a different solution before a Gainshare or community solution is available, these are options to consider. It should also be said that

you shouldn't be put off by what you think your own property is capable of. Even if you have no 4G signal on your mobile phone in your house for example – the fixed wireless or the mobile home broadband providers still might be able to get a signal for you, as they use very different equipment / technology in their receiving equipment and can also set antennas in varying positions on your property. It's worth a call!

### **Voucher scheme**

As noted with the providers listed above, there might be installation funding available. If your speed is currently under 2Mbps (the survey suggests this is approximately 42% of Durris residents) you could benefit from government assistance towards the installation of some of these alternative solutions (and this does not stop you from getting future funding from either Digital Scotland or Community Broadband Scotland). The Better Broadband Scheme (second scheme on the following website) covers different solutions and is available until the end of December 2017, whereas the Avanti Pilot Project which covers satellite only is available until the end of March 2017. Details for both can be found on the following website: <https://www.scotlandsuperfast.com/where-when/the-programme/alternative-solutions/>

As a sub-note, you may be wondering why it is worth considering a CFP or CBS community based solution if there are already alternative solutions available. The answer to that is – because it is likely that, assuming funding was successful, a cheaper and future-proof solution would result.

### **Conclusion**

As we said in the summary at the start, this is not a straight forward subject! However hopefully this has been of some use to you. We will continue to communicate anything else we find out via the Community Council Facebook page and website. In addition, if you have any questions at all on anything we have written about here, please email us at [durrisbbsurvey@durrismail.co.uk](mailto:durrisbbsurvey@durrismail.co.uk) and we will come back to you as soon as we can.

Finally - we are sure there is more knowledge out there– so please let us know if you know something new / that we have missed. In addition, if a longer term community solution is wanted in the area – we will also need more willing volunteers to be involved – so again, please email us and let us know if this is something you might be interested in.

# PICTORIAL POSTCODE MAP

