Committee   Wellington Regional Strategy Committee
Author   Melanie Thornton WRS Project Leader

Broadband Project Update

1.   Purpose

To provide an update on the progress of the Broadband project.

2.   Significance of the decision

The matters for decision in this report **do not** trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

3.   Background

The Broadband Operational Group (BOG) continues to work collaboratively in preparation for the roll-out of the Government's Ultra Fast Broadband Initiative (UFBI) and the Rural Broadband Initiative (RBI). The focus is on local government's facilitation role through approval processes and asset standards.

The region made a submission on the Ministry of Economic Development's discussion paper "Facilitating the Deployment of Broadband Infrastructure" which closed on 27 November. The submission was supportive of the deployment of broadband infrastructure and recommended the refinement and better use of existing tools, codifying best practice and voluntary discussion between the interested parties.

The government has made it clear what it expects the role of local authorities to be in the establishment of broadband networks for the country. These roles lie mainly in establishing rules around road openings, road trenching, aerial deployment and access to assets.

The regional work programme is concentrating on the planning and infrastructure rules and guidelines needed to support efficient deployment of broadband. The Government's invitation for proposals to the UFBI closed on 29 January 2010.

4. Workstreams

The five workstreams of the Broadband Project to date have been:

- Governance
- Funding
- Deployment Technologies/ RMA
- Demand /Uptake
- Communications

4.1 Governance

Current Status: This workstream has been stopped because the government's new initiative establishes clear governance arrangements for developing a regional broadband network.

4.2 Funding

Current Status: This workstream has been stopped because the government's new initiative has established clear funding arrangements for establishing a regional broadband network.

4.3 Deployment Technologies/RMA

There are four areas of work in this topic.

4.3.1 Access to assets policies

Current Status/Activities
A regional stocktake has been undertaken focussing on existing policies, charges and legal documents for access to council assets. The stocktake was broken down into five separate categories of asset. These were:

- Below ground structures in the road corridor
- Above ground structures in the road corridor
- Council-built assets
- Reserves
- Water assets

The regional Chief Executives Group has asked BOG to investigate with the councils and Council Controlled Organisations (through their respective council representatives) the development of a consistent policy to assist councils to deal with approaches for access to council assets for the purpose of facilitating the rapid rollout of fibre networks.

4.3.2   Region-wide rules for new trenching technologies

Current Status/Activities

- A workshop was held on 10 December with the region's local authority infrastructure managers. It was agreed by councils to work collaboratively on providing 'reasonable' regional conditions for trenching technologies. Logan Logeswaran (Wellington City Council) will be leading this work.

- A stocktake to be undertaken on various councils' rules.

- Each council to nominate an engineer to take part in a workshop to discuss and agree the use of particular technologies and to establish a reasonable set of regionally-agreed standards

- Obtain approval from each of the council infrastructure departments to progress and implement the policy changes.

4.3.3   Road openings

The Government has stated – "it would be appropriate for Local Councils to introduce a rule requiring companies that open roads to make an offer to network operators to take advantage of that opening. The rule would be based on the Council as land-owner, and therefore could be implemented as part of the Council's policy on allowing access and as a reasonable condition to the right of entry."

Current Status/Activities

- An assessment of Plan IT (a software package for sharing road opening information) is to be undertaken to investigate any issues regarding the use of the software. An assessment of the benefits and barriers of the "Dial Before You Dig" programme is also to be undertaken

- A stocktake is to be undertaken of what all councils are currently doing re-road openings in order to determine which system is working the best. Aim to develop a possible recommendation for the region's councils to adopt a consistent approach to road openings.

4.3.4   Region-wide rules for aerial deployment

Current Status/Activities

A team leader for this workstream has now been nominated to progress this work and a stocktake of council rules for aerial deployment is being undertaken.

4.4 Demand/ Uptake

Current Status/ Activities

It was agreed at the last BOG meeting that this workstream is to be put on hold until such time as there is a Grow Wellington resource that can be dedicated to this workstream. Also, until such time as a clearly defined project can show value for money from an economic development viewpoint.

4.5 Communication

Current Status/ Activities

A communications plan is being developed

5. Communication

Communication on matters relating to the workstreams above will happen as relevant information is identified.

6. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. **Receives** the report.

2. **Notes** the content of the report.

Report prepared by: Report approved by:

Melanie Thornton   **Jane Davis**
Project Leader   General Manager, Strategy &
                                    Community Engagement