

# **PUBLIC MEETING NEW MILLS VILLAGE HALL THURSDAY 10<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2016**

## **– MOBILE COVERAGE MANAFON VALLEY**

Councillor J. Davies welcomed Russell George AM, Alex Williams (Policy Advisor to Russell at the Welsh Assembly and has extensive communications background) and all members of the community to the meeting.

RG gave an overview of current situations and clearly is passionate about ensuring his constituents are able to receive the best in terms of communications. He asks the most questions across party groups as his constituency is more affected than most.

In November 2015 he convened a meeting in Newtown which included members of the local community, all mobile operators and Ofcom as Montgomeryshire has different issues in respect of mobile coverage being achieved.

Operators have a degree of commitment but shareholders of providers, government intervention and some funding is required to encourage solutions. Operators squabble amongst themselves, more recently he convened a one hour debate in the assembly covering broadband and mobile communications and used Scotland as an example of where the government have achieved acceptable solutions.

One aspect of government intervention required is a change to planning regulations, this to make access to land easier and for operators to provide taller masts. The Welsh Government has committed to address community schemes which can be spread to other areas and to look at the Scottish model for solutions.

AW stated that there are no concrete plans by any of the operators for upgrading any infrastructure that will service the Manafon valley as the topography is a difficult one. O2 are the optimum network for the area and are currently upgrading 2 sites, Berriew and Tregynon.

Three are 4/5 nearer sites for 4G but again will not include Manafon valley. Nearest mast to us is 8.5 KMS away, Vodaphone are on the very edge of our area some voice signal available across G2 but no plans to upgrade infrastructure, roll out of Superfast Broadband and use of Suresignal over broadband is possible but that is not mobile coverage, only the ability to use mobile over Wi-Fi.

EE yet to upgrade any infrastructure to 4G they have been awarded the ESMP (emergency services mobile provision) which is a secure communications system for the emergency services, it is a different network and sits underneath the public service, and there is a mast in Manafon area used by police currently via airwaves, not overly successful. AW suggested we put pressure on EE and home office and Glyn Davies to adopt the mast to use for civilian infrastructure and should be capable of delivering 4G services.

Where there are mobile 'not spots' communities' can be empowered to adopt existing infrastructure for rural communities. Basically across the 4 main operators there is zero opportunity right now, operators are not keen to invest in rural areas as there is insufficient return on investment due to smaller take up, it's chicken and egg, if no service people won't buy into mobile contracts so operators stance is simply that there are not enough demand to justify investment, for purposes of the notes, EE and Three share infrastructure and O2 and Vodaphone share.

One possibility might be with EE and the existing Tetra mast, it is feasible to upgrade (different airwaves depending on usage) it to use 4G technology for public service and pressure needs to be applied to both EE and the Home Office to allow it to be so and have same technology for public service.

There is the possibility of VOIP (voice over internet provider) but this is restricted to being accessible to Wi-Fi, i.e. the home or business and therefore is not a mobile solution.

AW will provide Clerk with contact details for Home Office and EE and a draft letter to start the process.

### **Several questions and points were made from the 'floor', in summary:**

Rail network don't seem to have restrictions on the masts they have for their services

Inability to be able to roam via mobile networks is an issue and does expose people to risks in the event of accidents/breakdowns etc. etc., especially 'lone' females travelling when large areas have no mobile coverage.

Both New Mills and Manafon are losing public phone kiosks.

Accidents particularly on the land, this can have dire consequences for anyone involved in an accident.

Emergency services, Shropdoc, carers, all regularly calling at houses in the village and the outskirts because they cannot find homes that have summoned medical assistance, could be life threatening.

RG/AW advised that with roaming operators don't want to share knowledge nor networks and this would result in less investment in infrastructure, investment is hindered by lower take up rates for services, only 999 services have roaming capability unlike Europe which is not restricted. RG confirmed that MIP had been a total failure

### **Manafon Community Council ACTION PLAN going forward.**

Apply pressure to Home Office and EE vis a vis the Tetra mast including initial letters outlining issues

Apply pressure and lobby Welsh Government re planning changes required

Explore community option with Duncan Taylor @ the Ger-y-Gors Community Forum

Invite other local councils with same issues to do same lobbying/pressure; Clerk will circulate information to enable this

### **Welsh Assembly action plan**

Encourage Welsh Assembly to adopt some of the strategies that Scottish government has done, they have same powers and get some times scales out on this, particularly in respect of planning for masts, access to and etc. etc.

Keep pressure on BT to deliver on broadband – Ensure Superfast broadband is rolled out as quickly as possible, Superfast Cymru ends June 2017. 96% Wales will have SFB by then and the remaining 4% are rural areas including part of Montgomeryshire, needs infill projects to resolve the 4%, they do the easy ones and leave the rest it would seem!

RG stated that if anyone has any specifics they wish to address to him to do so and he will take it up, please include your full name, address and land line number in any emails and copy to Glyn Davies MP for Montgomeryshire, email addresses are:

Russell George AM [Russell.George@wales.gov.uk](mailto:Russell.George@wales.gov.uk)

Glyn Davies MP [glyn.davies.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:glyn.davies.mp@parliament.uk)

Meeting closed and Councillor J. Davies thanked everyone for attending.

**Attached:** copy of the debate from Russell George from the Assembly 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2016