Local Government North Yorkshire and York

28 January 2011

Rural Broadband in North Yorkshire

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To update Leaders and other partners on broadband related developments in North Yorkshire and seek views on future developments.

1.2 Please note that this report will be supplemented by a verbal presentation.

2.0 Background

2.1 Large parts of North Yorkshire are currently unable to get access to broadband. Even where broadband is available, the speeds are often inadequate to support many business and domestic demands. **Appendix A** illustrates the extent to which parts of the County and York are unable to access broadband ("not spots").

2.2 Broadband has been identified as a key priority for the emerging York and North Yorkshire LEP given its importance to develop rural businesses. In addition, the NYSP and various LSPs have identified rural broadband as a key barrier to social inclusion.

2.3 North Yorkshire has previously benefited from funding to develop the broadband network via NYnet. Whilst this has increased the reach of broadband across the County, there remain a significant number of communities (including within York) that are unlikely to be connected by the private sector given the current lack of commercial incentive. It is unlikely that this situation will change in the near future without some form of public intervention.

2.4 Significant activity is currently taking place in order to try and deliver broadband to more businesses and communities, details of which follow.

3.0 Importance of Good Quality Broadband

3.1 There are a range of social, environmental and economic interests in ensuring that as much of the population is able to access broadband as possible, including:-

- Permits businesses to be located within the County given the growth of e-commerce.

- Helps people to stay in touch better regardless of distance, including the ability for one to one support such as telecare / telemedicine.
- Allows people to access information and services at a time of personal choice as services are increasingly being migrated to the web.
- Helps to reduce the need to travel and remote working.
- Helps local communities to remain sustainable as people seek to live in areas with broadband and then use local services.

4.0 Funding Opportunities

4.1 The County Council / NYnet was chosen as one of the superfast broadband projects when the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the CSR. This initiative builds upon previous NYnet investment by increasing the speed and capacity of broadband for as many communities as possible (27 market towns plus). It is not yet possible to quantify the impact as funding is not yet finalised although it is anticipated that it will be at least £7.5m (and hopefully more). There is also the possibility of matching this with ERDF, creating a sizeable opportunity to ensure that large parts of the County are given the same broadband specification as other urban parts of the Country.

4.2 A bid is also being made to the Regional Growth Fund for £2.5m of funding to further roll out superfast broadband to communities where there are businesses who it is anticipated will directly benefit, aiding expansion and generation of jobs / wealth.

4.3 A further £215K has been secured through the Rural Delivery Programme for England (RDPE) and £750K through Performance Reward Grant earned on the North Yorkshire LAA (subject to NYSP approval). These funds allow greater flexibility so that social objectives can be pursued alongside economic objectives.

5.0 Next Steps

5.1 Further work is required in order to secure the funding referred to above. Whilst some deadlines are imminent, others are likely to take longer to reach fruition (e.g. ERDF). These opportunities will be pursued by the respective organisations leading on the specific funding streams.

5.2 An overall "Broadband Strategy for North Yorkshire" is currently being produced as it is an essential part of working with the government's delivery unit for the superfast broadband project (BDUK). It is recognised, however, that such a Strategy should encompass other initiatives and developments (e.g. support business in line with the emerging York and North Yorkshire LEP dealing with "not spots"). It is therefore suggested that wider partners be invited to contribute and sign-up to this Strategy.

5.3 It will also be necessary to work with local communities in order to ensure that broadband investment leaves a sustainable community legacy. At this stage it is envisaged that community (social enterprises?), rather than Public Sector Organisations, will run on-going broadband concerns at community level. Wider partners will clearly be able to collaborate in order to ensure that such a community based approach is achieved.
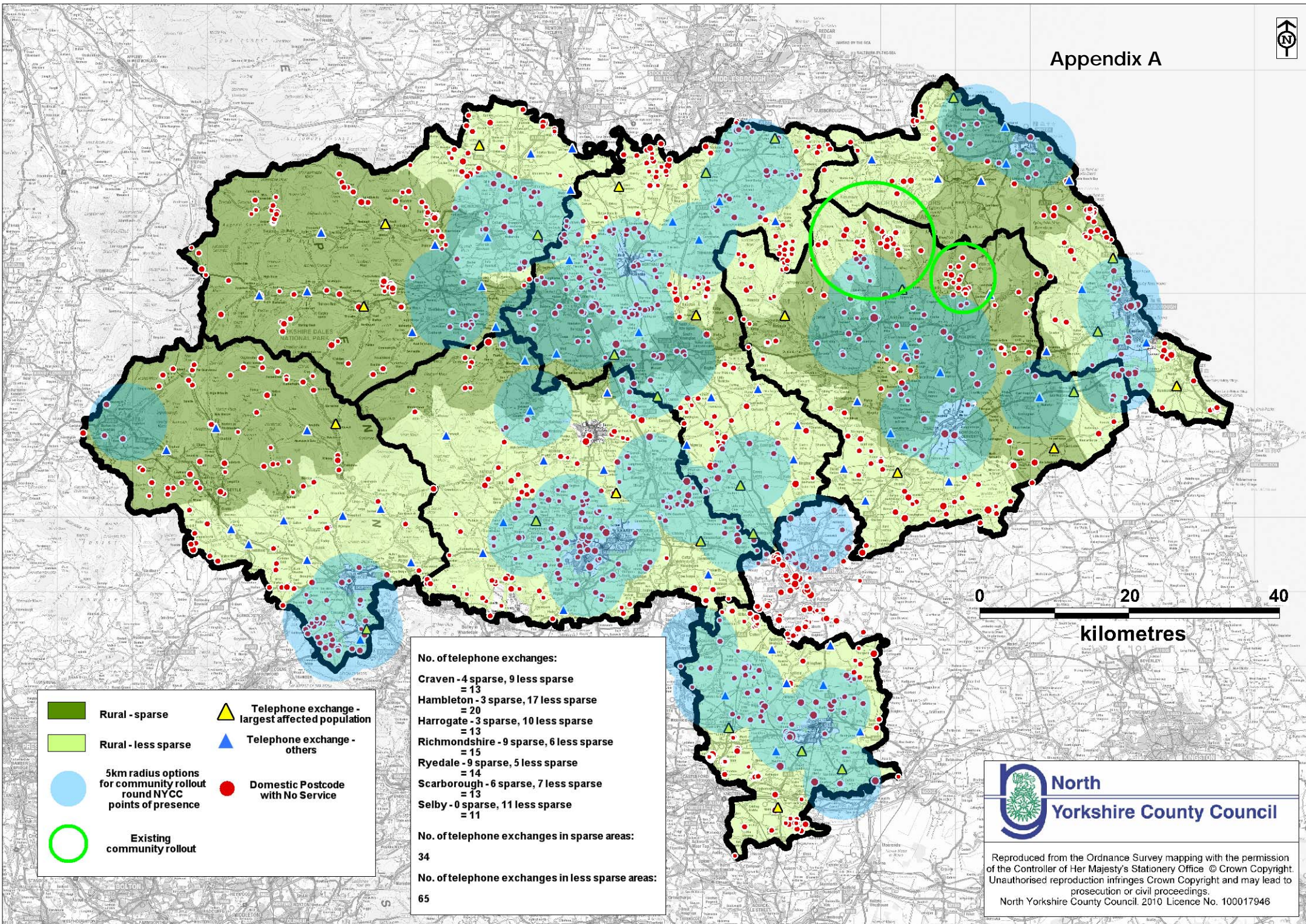
5.4 A broadband conference is being arranged on Saturday 19 February by Julian Smith MP. This will present an opportunity to update all on latest developments and to shape future Strategy.

6.0 Recommendation

6.1 Members are requested to offer their views and particularly in relation to Next Steps (Section 5).

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Appendix A

Legend:

- Rural - sparse
- Rural - less sparse
- 5km radius options for community rollout round NYCC points of presence
- Existing community rollout
- Telephone exchange - largest affected population
- Telephone exchange - others
- Domestic Postcode with No Service

No. of telephone exchanges:

Craven - 4 sparse, 9 less sparse = 13
Hambleton - 3 sparse, 17 less sparse = 20
Harrogate - 3 sparse, 10 less sparse = 13
Richmondshire - 9 sparse, 6 less sparse = 15
Ryedale - 9 sparse, 5 less sparse = 14
Scarborough - 6 sparse, 7 less sparse = 13
Selby - 0 sparse, 11 less sparse = 11

No. of telephone exchanges in sparse areas: 34

No. of telephone exchanges in less sparse areas: 65

North Yorkshire County Council

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