

THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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Jo-Anne Dobson asked:

To ask the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what steps her Department is taking to improve internet access availability in the Loughbrickland and Ballyward areas.

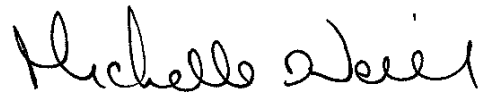
ANSWER

As you will be aware broadband infrastructure and policy is the responsibility of the Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment. However access to rural broadband is one of my highest priorities, and my Department is currently investing £5m as part of the larger NI Broadband Improvement Project, this has already seen some 7,000 rural dwellers across the north being enabled to be connected to broadband if they wish.

The areas of Loughbrickland and Ballyward will benefit generally from improved access to broadband from the overall project, but at this point in time it is too early to say what addresses will specifically benefit.

The project has still some implementation to do on the ground. To help keep you up to date I have attached a note providing websites that can offer information and help regarding current and future access to broadband. A copy of which has also been placed in the Assembly library.

I can assure you that my Department will continue to work with other stakeholders to help ensure broadband service access is increased throughout rural communities in the north of Ireland. This will ensure that more rural dwellers, farmers and businesses, can enjoy the benefits of working with the various government Departments online services.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michelle O'Neill', written in a cursive style.

MICHELLE O'NEILL MLA

ACCESS TO BROADBAND IN RURAL AREAS

Broadband speeds are continuing to improve so that rural dwellers can enjoy a faster and more reliable service at home and at work. It is important that rural dwellers understand how and where to find broadband information and get the answers needed quickly and with ease.

The site www.nibroadband.com provides answers to common questions and has a search option so you can check what broadband speeds are currently available in your area. The site also provides information on developments planned or in progress for your area.

Here is the link to the [FAQs](#) which will help with answering most questions. For others not covered in this section you can email superfastni@bt.com where someone will be happy to help.

This resource will give you the best and most up-to-date.