



From left: Stuart Robertson, HIE; Robert Thorburn, BT; Cllr Jim McGillivray; Cllr Deirdre Mackay; Cllr Graham Phillips; Keith Young, Openreach.

Forum gets together to discuss connection issues

THE difficulty of getting telephone and broadband connections, fault repairs and slow broadband speeds were discussed at East Sutherland and Edderton Ward Forum last week.

Keith Young, senior operations manager and local operations manager, Robert Maclean, both from Openreach, explained that there have been significant problems this winter caused by a high number of electrical storms affecting connections throughout Scotland, but these issues have now been resolved.

Regarding broadband speeds there was discussion about the limits of the existing technology, although it was noted that it is often worth contacting telecom providers to get Openreach to check there is not a fault with the line.

Robert Thorburn, BT's Next Generation Broadband programme manager and Stuart

Robertson, HIE's director of Digital Highlands and Islands, gave a presentation about the roll-out of Next Generation Broadband across Highland. Most exchanges in East Sutherland and Edderton Ward should be connected to superfast broadband by the end of 2015, bringing speeds in excess of 24MB/s for those living in the vicinity of the exchanges or new cabinets to be installed at locations throughout the ward.

Speeds will be slower in rural areas due to the length of line between the exchange and the property reducing available speeds. A map showing the planned timetable for the rollout can be found on the HIE website: <http://www.hie.co.uk/regional-information/digital-highlands-and-islands/next-generation-broadband/where-and-when.html>

Councillor Graham Phillips, who chaired the forum, said: "These are very important issues

for households and businesses across the ward. I am glad to see progress being made with the rollout of broadband, and look forward to seeing the benefits arrive in the ward.

"I am also heartened by the response of Openreach to the connections issues raised, but still think there is room for improvement and I urge all customers to raise faults, even if they know their neighbours have already complained, to ensure that faults are given due priority.

"We had received a variety of complaints and comments from residents, so it was a very interesting meeting from which much was learned. People can find out more on the BT and HIE websites and I encourage people to take a look so they can see what's coming with the superfast broadband roll-out. I am grateful to the BT and HIE representatives who travelled to be with us."