

Digital Connectivity Working Group Update

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Most recently, the ADEPT Digital Connectivity Working Group has met virtually on 7th November. The full packed agenda attracted representatives from 20 local authorities across the country, also colleagues from LGA and Mobile UK.

The meeting started with the Digital Connectivity Forum (DCF) report looking at the role of local authorities as enablers of digital connectivity and Steve Smith from Farr Point shared a number of key recommendations for policy makers and the industry itself across four areas: communications and engagement; planning; street and roadworks; and local authorities as landlords and site providers. Key recommendations include that the government should consider requiring local authorities to have a digital champion, with a clearly defined role and allocated funding. The full report can be read [here](#).

LGA Officers regularly attend the ADEPT digital connectivity working group meetings to ensure being aware of any concerns from the sector, and the LGA representatives also sit on the Digital Connectivity Forum. The LGA's digital champion Cllr Mark Hawthorne, explained why UK needs a local digital champion for every area. Also highlighted the scale of the challenge of digital exclusion.

As a standing item on the agenda, we received a presentations from Gareth Elliot, Mobile UK. Local Authorities are asked to continue promoting the Live Better-Connected Campaign. Which is to raise awareness of how mobile connectivity improves lives. [Find out how connected you are. \(outgrow.us\)](#)

Additionally, Gareth wanted to take attention on 2G/3G Switch Off and what you need to know. Mobile networks will be gradually switching off their 2G and 3G networks. All the mobile providers have confirmed with the UK Government that they do not plan to offer their 2G and 3G services beyond 2033. Mobile providers will contact customers to let them know if affected and what steps to take.

In October 2023, Mobile Infrastructure Forum is launched to support delivery of world-class mobile infrastructure throughout the UK. Forum members represent four key organisations operating large-scale portfolios of shared mobile infrastructure in the UK (Cellnex UK, Cornerstone, MBNL and Wireless Infrastructure Group).

The Working group then had presentation from Matt Croucher, Believ, who help local authorities deliver a bespoke, privately funded reliable EV charging network. A zero-cost privately funded model offers a future-proofed solution to local authorities to deliver an EV charging network for residents. Believ can also support local authorities in applying for LEVI funding if that's a route they also which to pursue.

And lastly, a global wireless infrastructure provider, Icon Tower done a presentation to the group as they are investing significantly in the UK's wireless infrastructure. Icon Tower is keen to develop new partnerships to ensure they are building towers and investing in infrastructure in exactly the right places. Working in collaboration with tech companies, they are developing flight corridors for commercial drones and driverless cars and also have access to a software company that has digitally mapped the UK's not spots to a (highly impressive) granular level to enable to pinpoint where both large towers and small cells can be most effective.