

Digital Connectivity Working Group Update

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Date: February 2024

The ADEPT Digital Connectivity Working Group has met virtually on 29th February 2024 with representatives from 10 local authorities across the country, also colleagues attended from LGA, UKTIN and Mobile UK.

The meeting started with a presentation from the UK Telecoms Innovation Network (UKTIN) which is the innovation network for the UK telecoms sector bringing together industry, government stakeholders and academia. There was an open invitation to members to join UKTIN's Clusters Forum which is open to businesses & other institutions, to boost innovation & attract inward investment; where regional members are showcasing local R&D&I assets, capabilities & programmes.

Also as part of the UKTIN's wider aims and objectives, a UKTIN market insights survey has been developed by the UKTIN Adoption Working Group. This UKTIN survey aims to capture market insights into the adoption of advanced wireless technology in public services and vertical industry sectors. It is looking to get a snapshot view of the market and understand what might be done to speed up adoption, including examples and success and failures, plus the reasons why. The responses will contribute towards an interim report and the key findings will be published. The link for the survey can be found [here](#).

One other role of UKTIN is to act as a 'front door' to connect employers, FE/skills providers and talent to accelerate innovation. The talent group aims to increase awareness of the sector in terms of current and future employment opportunities to new entrants & career returners/pivoters.

During the meeting, guest speakers from UKTIN shared the details of [UKTIN Innovation Platform](#) which has been specifically designed to support early-stage companies to navigate the UK telecoms sector, with fully-funded growth programmes and a focus on investment, incubation and acceleration.

As a standing item on the agenda, we heard from Gareth Elliot, Mobile UK about the latest news. 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 confirmed that Vodafone UK has successfully switched off its legacy 3G network across the UK Mobile providers as off end of February and they will contact customers to let them know if affected and what steps to take. The 3G switch off is part of a wider network modernisation programme which includes the rollout of faster 5G and 4G services to more locations across the UK. Vodafone has also extended its 4G coverage further through the Shared Rural Network (SRN) programme, a £1bn joint initiative between Government and the UK's four mobile network operators.

Lastly, as a reminder to the members, the National Audit Office (NAO) has published a report titled “Supporting mobile connectivity” which examines whether DSIT is on track to deliver UK-wide reliable mobile connectivity that meets the country’s needs now and in the future. Read the full report on the [NAO website](#).

The plan for the next working group meeting is to focus on the Government’s Project Gigabit, what is next, challenges, and any updates from the gigabit voucher scheme. The meeting is scheduled for mid-April.

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