



Two virtual meetings took place on 14 July 2020.

Meeting No. 1: The first meeting was for the wider ADEPT Digital Connectivity Working Group. The ten local authorities of: Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Gloucestershire, Kent, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Wokingham and Wolverhampton were represented, including professional services firm WSP.

The Group received insights from the Local Government Association (LGA) and Mobile UK (the trade association for the UK's mobile network operators – EE, O2, Three and Vodafone), for which there were three actions:

- a) the need for colleagues to evidence occasions where the Universal Service Obligation (USO) for broadband was not working at a local level¹.
- b) LGA and ADEPT to review their respective Digital Policy positions considering COVID-19 and the Shared Rural Network (SRN) deal².
- c) Collaborate with Mobile UK on 5G messaging and myth busting

The Group received a presentation from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) Barrier Busting Task Force. As their focus is in looking at cross-departmental roadblocks to deployment, Group engaged in a productive roundtable discussion on the possible future COVID-19 scenarios for digital delivery to the uncommercial areas.

Meeting No. 2: The second meeting was for local authorities only to support the National Audit Office (NAO) about local body experience with the Government's broadband programmes. The five local authorities of: Buckinghamshire, Kent, Nottinghamshire, Shropshire and Somerset were represented.

The NAO is undertaking a piece of work on Broadband which it is aiming to publish in the Autumn. The study director was joined by her team and was specifically, looking at DCMS and whether it has learned lessons from the Superfast programme and is applying them as it looks to support government's gigabit ambition. The questions they looked for the Group to answer were:

- What has the Superfast Broadband roll-out (Building Digital UK (BDUK) rural broadband programme) achieved, at what cost and what is left to do?
- How is the UK's existing (mostly superfast) broadband infrastructure holding up in the face of significant increases in internet traffic as people stay home during the current Covid-19 lockdown?
- What lessons have been learned as DCMS and BDUK look towards supporting nationwide full fibre/gigabit-capable infrastructure?

It is pleasing to note that the Group is building a reputation amongst civil servants and with the digital sector alike, as evidenced by our recent requests to provide guidance and help shape policy thinking. It is a clear indication we are fostering progress and making an impact.

The next meeting is scheduled for 6 October 2020.

Nicola M^cCoy-Brown
Chair, ADEPT Digital Working Group
17 July 2020

¹ The USO provides a legal right to request a decent broadband connection, up to a cost threshold of £3,400. However, it is the case that some premises are too expensive to reach via the USO which (notwithstanding plans appear to have been dented by the COVID-19 situation), suggests a disconnect between the ambition and reality

² The SRN will see EE, O2, Three and Vodafone investing in a network of new and existing phone masts, overseen by a jointly owned company called Digital Mobile Spectrum Limited they would all share