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The BSG
monthly update from the BSG



[BSG news](#)



[Industry news](#)



[Broadband statistics](#)



[Diary dates](#)

Welcome to The BSG, the monthly update of BSG activity and news from the Broadband Stakeholder Group. We are keen to provide BSG members with news and information relevant to them. If you have any comments about this edition, likes and dislikes, what you would like to see more or less of, please send them to Peter Shearman, T 020 7331 2163 E peter.shearman@intellectuk.org

BSG news

BSG calls for regulatory flexibility

In its submission to the European Commission's consultation on the regulation of next generation access networks, the BSG has called for a greater level of regulatory freedom for national regulators. While welcoming the general principles for regulation as a useful guide, the BSG believes that the level of prescription applied in the current Recommendation would not achieve the desired outcome and would have unintended consequences. It should be the responsibility of the national regulatory authorities to implement the general principles set out by the Commission in the most appropriate way for their market conditions.

The Commission is currently considering submissions made by stakeholders across the EU, and will adopt a revised Recommendation in 2009.

[BSG response to EC NGA Recommendation consultation](#)

BSG CEO addresses European eInclusion Ministerial Conference

BSG CEO Antony Walker was among the speakers at the [eInclusion Ministerial Conference](#), held in Vienna. Discussing '[Future broadband challenges: the long term view](#)', Walker set out the immediate challenges he saw, and the key issues that need to be addressed in the long term.

In the near term, Walker highlighted that the outlook for investment in next generation broadband was very different across the various European markets, and the current economic climate made investment more challenging. Therefore, it was even more important that public and regulatory policy makers use the various levers at their disposal to encourage market-led deployment. The key long-term challenge is likely to be the rise of a new digital divide, as next generation broadband will almost certainly not be deployed ubiquitously within markets. Thinking is therefore required now, to determine how each nation plans to address this challenge, when the time comes.

[Download Antony Walker's speech](#)

BSG responds to BERR illicit P2P file-sharing consultation

Following on from the Gowers Review, the government recently launched a public consultation on legislation to address the issue of illicit peer-to-peer file-sharing. The BSG, given its broad membership that reaches across the value chain and encompasses both sides of the argument, believes that none of the proposals are appropriate for tackling this issue.

The issue of illicit peer-to-peer file-sharing is clearly very important. Copyright must be respected and protected, and rights owners must be able to make a return on their intellectual property. However, the challenge will be to build a sustainable model for respecting intellectual property for the digital future, where future developments, such as a transition to a next generation environment, will have an impact. As such, the BSG welcomes the inclusion of intellectual property issues within the Digital Britain report and the recent [discussion paper](#) published by the UK Intellectual Property Office to inform the UK's copyright policy for the 21st century.

[Download the BSG submission to illicit P2P file-sharing consultation](#)

Industry news

Virgin Media launch 50Mbps service

NGA has finally arrived in the UK. On 15 December [Virgin Media announced](#) that 1.5m of its customers would be able to receive its new 50Mbps service, with plans to rollout the service across its entire network of 12.6m households by the summer of 2009. This is clearly a hugely significant step, and moves the NGA debate from the theoretical to the practical.

The interest now will be on the levels of take-up the service receives, and at which price points - although the stand alone package is £51 per month, this comes down to £35 per month or lower in various bundles. With BT due to begin FTTC trials in the summer of 2009, just as Virgin Media's rollout should be complete, of great interest will be consumer's willingness to pay a premium for the service. In many markets across the world investment by cable companies has been the key competitive driver for the deployment of fibre by the incumbent. Time will tell whether this will be the case in the UK.

[BSG statement on Virgin Media 50Mbps launch](#)

Content filtering controversy

Earlier this month the [Internet Watch Foundation](#) added a [Wikipedia](#) page to its blacklist due to a [complaint received about artwork](#) on a 1976 album cover. The IWF is a highly valuable organisation that performs an excellent job in blocking child abuse and other illegal content on the web. However, on this occasion it made a mis-judgement (as denoted by its [retraction](#)), and highlights the challenge of filtering content.

Never before has the world had so much information at its fingertips. The Internet has changed almost every aspect of our lives, and will continue to do so. However, the range of information available often means that inappropriate or illegal content is available to users, including children. The Internet is still in its infancy, and as a society our methods for tackling this issue are still developing and evolving. Other societies, such as [Australia](#), are having similar debates. This incident highlights one of the many challenges facing policymakers in the Internet age.

[BSG digital media policy and regulation work stream](#)

BBC, ITV and BT announce Project Canvas

The BBC, ITV and BT have announced [Project Canvas](#), an initiative designed to use broadband functionality in next generation set-top boxes in the Freeview and Freesat services. The plan would make catch-up services, along with a range of other web-based and interactive content, available through the set-top box on to TV sets. The platform will be open to other PSBs, and is aiming to be up and running in 18 months' time.

The BSG has repeatedly put forward the argument that new business models need to emerge in the broadband value chain. Over the last year there have been signs that, at the edges, new business models are being explored by various parties. This development could be a further sign that value chain participants are now more willing to enter into positive discussions.

[Kip Meek speech to BSG Reception](#)

Broadband Statistics

Broadband growth continues to slow

Q3 stats recently released by [Point Topic](#) show a marked slowdown in the growth of broadband connections. 321,000 new connections were added in Q3, which is the smallest growth since 2002 and the first time that growth has fallen from Q2 to Q3.

[Broadband Statistics provided by Point Topic](#)

iPlayer anniversary

The iPlayer recently celebrated its first anniversary since its soft launch in December 2007, and to celebrate this the BBC Internet blog held an [iPlayer Day](#) with a series of interesting pieces about the iPlayer. The iPlayer has had a successful first year, with over 180m programmes viewed, and distribution now on a wide range of platforms. Interestingly, views over Virgin Media's cable TV service accounted for roughly a third of all views in September.

[BSG blog - iPlayer Day](#)

Digital Television Progress Report

Ofcom recently published its [Digital Television Progress Report](#) for Q3 this year. A range of useful information can be found in the report; of particular interest is that 88% of UK households are now watching digital television. In the period Virgin Media (up 37,700) and Sky (up 87,000) both increased their TV subscriber numbers despite the recession, and almost half of Virgin's subscribers were making use of Video on Demand services, with over 45m programmes viewed in the quarter.

[BSG commercial issues work stream](#)

Diary dates

Westminster eForum: Digital Britain-issues for the Government's action plan - 14 January 2009

Stephen Carter, Minister for Technology, Telecommunications and Broadcasting, and BSG Chairman Kip Meek will be amongst the speakers.

[More information and booking](#)

Intellect Workshop: Superfast Broadband and the Role of Wireless - 09 February 2009

A range of speakers from the wireless community will address this event. There are limited places available for non-Intellect members.

[More information and booking](#)

About the Broadband Stakeholder Group (BSG)

The BSG is the UK Government's advisory group on broadband.

It provides a neutral forum for organisations across the converging broadband value-chain to tackle key policy, regulatory and commercial issues, with the aim of helping to create a strong and competitive UK knowledge economy.

The BSG network comprises telecoms operators, manufacturers, investors, aggregators, ISPs, broadcasters, mobile players, content producers and rights holders, as well as Ofcom, BERR, DCMS, RDAs, devolved administrations and others.

For more information, visit www.broadbanduk.org