

Press Release

BSG comments on new government review on Next Generation Broadband



22 February 2008

Today the government announced its plan to establish an independent review on high-speed broadband as part of its creative economy programme.

Commenting on the announcement Kip Meek, Chairman of the Broadband Stakeholder Group (BSG) said, 'This is the right announcement at the right time. The BSG has stressed the importance of building an evidence base that permits more informed decision-making on the various policy, commercial and regulatory issues. The review addresses some of the BSG's central concerns about next generation broadband and we'll be fully engaged to support its work.'

In April last year the BSG set out nine recommendations for action in its Pipe Dreams report on prospects for next generation broadband¹. The review picks up on several of those recommendations and will help to identify the potential policy options available to government to help enable investment in next generation broadband.

In parallel to the questions to be addressed in the review, the government has asked the BSG to examine the economics of fibre deployment and specifically whether deployment of fibre to the premises will be viable without a first step of deploying fibre to the cabinet. Meanwhile, the BSG will engage closely with the review and ensure that it is fully informed by its existing and planned work on issues such as the economic and social value of NGA, potential models for public sector intervention to support broadband deployment.

"There are several positive signs that the UK's transition to next generation broadband is underway². However the scale of investment required is an order of magnitude greater than the investment that enabled the shift from narrowband to broadband.

¹ See notes to editors

² BT will start to deploy Fibre to the Home to new build locations and Virgin Media will upgrade its network to deliver 50Mbps services in 2008

Government must play its part in creating the right framework to enable timely and efficient investment”, said Meek.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

About the Broadband Stakeholder Group

The BSG was established as a cross-sector government advisory group in 2001 to help the UK lead the G7 in broadband penetration and connectivity. It provides a neutral forum for collaboration between organisations across the converging broadband value-chain with the ultimate aim of helping to create a strong and competitive UK knowledge economy

It aims to be a critical friend of government and the regulator, and comprises companies from the telecoms and technology sectors through to content providers and rights holders. It also has direct representation from government departments and Ofcom. It is funded through a combination of government funding and industry sponsorship.

The BSG focuses on strategic, medium- to long-term challenges, which have latterly included next generation access networks, predicting future bandwidth requirements, and digital inclusion.

BSG recommendations for next steps published in Pipe Dreams April 2007

Recommendations:

1. Define the public value of broadband networks
2. Monitor demand for bandwidth
3. Set a benchmarked target for 2012
4. Explore alternative commercial models to support network investment
5. Develop a regulatory framework for next generation broadband
6. Explore options for access to passive infrastructure
7. Identify models for efficient public sector intervention
8. Remove non-sector specific regulatory barriers
9. Review universal service/ universal access

To download the Pipe Dreams report in full go to :

<http://www.broadbanduk.org/content/view/236/7/>

For further information please contact:

Deborah Nazareth

T: 020 7331 2168

E: Deborah.Nazareth@intellectuk.org