

Broadband Stakeholder Group 2013 work programme launched:

“Capitalising on UK broadband: exploiting the potential benefits”

30 January 2013

Today the UK’s leading independent advisory body on broadband, the Broadband Stakeholder Group (BSG) publishes its 2013 work programme.

The programme puts the issue of usage of broadband at its heart and focuses on the key question of how broadband infrastructure can be best exploited for socioeconomic benefit to the UK.

Commenting on the publication of the programme, BSG CEO Pamela Learmonth stated, *“In 2007, the BSG published a report on prospects for next generation broadband in the UK entitled ‘Pipe Dreams’. In 2013 superfast broadband is no longer a pipe dream in the UK but a reality. 65% of UK premises can now access speeds of 30Mbps+ and this will increase over the next couple of years through private and public sector investment. What we need to focus on now is how to ensure consumers and businesses use this connectivity and the services it supports to the best advantage.”*

In 2013 the BSG will lead this policy discussion on better understanding the links between the provision of broadband infrastructure, the uses this infrastructure supports and the benefits that ensue. Its focus on usage in 2013 follows the work BSG has led on demand-side issues through its 2012 report, *Demand for Superfast Broadband*.

Welcoming the BSG’s programme, Secretary of State Rt Hon Maria Miller MP, commented: *“Better connectivity is critical for driving UK growth and attracting investment. We want to ensure that businesses and individuals can fully exploit the benefits of having better broadband, which is why we support the BSG’s 2013 plan and why Broadband Delivery UK continues to work closely with partners like Go ON UK to ensure broadband projects incorporate effective campaigns to boost demand.”*

The key areas of focus of the BSG 2013 work programme are set out below and the work programme can be found in full at: www.broadbanduk.org/2013plan

For further enquiries please contact the BSG media contact Sam Hartwell on 020 7331 2172.

Notes to editors

The Broadband Stakeholder Group is UK government’s leading advisory group on broadband. It provides a neutral forum for organisations across the converging broadband value-chain to discuss and resolve key policy, regulatory and commercial issues, with the ultimate aim of helping to create a strong and competitive UK knowledge economy.

Ofcom’s Communications Infrastructure Report of November 2012 reveals that approximately 65% of UK premises have access to superfast broadband, defined as services offering 30Mbps or above.

The BSG’s previous report, *Demand for Superfast Broadband* compares the demand rates for superfast broadband across a number of markets and is available at: www.broadbanduk.org/superfastbroadband

Broadband Stakeholder Group – key themes and outputs in 2013

The BSG work programme focuses on the three core strategic priorities of:

1. Fit-for purpose broadband infrastructure
2. Demand, take-up and usage of broadband and superfast broadband
3. Operation and innovation of broadband-enabled services and the regulatory environment

And from these, the following inter-related themes:

1. How best to harness benefit from **usage** and exploitation of broadband connectivity

BSG will instigate a new work-stream around this important issue with the following elements:

- Cross-market review of usage of superfast broadband to more fully understand the relationship between the nature and level of connectivity with usage and associated benefits
 - SMEs and broadband use – in light of evidence of low exploitation of broadband and the internet by SMEs, work with other interested parties to better understand this dynamic and explore how SMEs could be better incentivised to utilise connectivity to support the operation and growth of their businesses
 - Continue to track demand for superfast services, building on the 2012 BSG report, *Demand for Superfast Broadband*, holding regular demand clinics to analyse take-up rates and the drivers for this demand
2. Driving forward the debate around **universality** of access to broadband
 - BSG will lead and facilitate the debate across industry, government and broader stakeholders on how this debate should be taken forward in the medium to longer term against developments in both the provision and usage of broadband
 3. Ensuring effective **competition** in a superfast environment
 - BSG will provide a forum for debate between industry, government and the regulator on this important issue as Ofcom takes forward its priority in 2013 to ensure effective competition in the delivery of superfast broadband
 4. Identifying the right **regulatory environment** for the evolving market
 - BSG will establish itself as the home for analysis of the evolving UK value chain and debate over the right regulatory approach for the increasingly converged environment in light of anticipated policy debates engendered in the UK and Europe
 5. The conditions for **innovation** of broadband-enabled services
 - BSG will continue to house the UK debate on net neutrality further to its work in 2011 and 2012 on codes of practice for traffic management transparency and the open internet;

explore more fully the links between innovation and bandwidth availability and continue to call for a regulatory environment that incentivises innovation

6. Driving digital **inclusion** in an increasingly superfast world

- BSG will contribute to the debate on digital inclusion and digital engagement, highlighting the importance of tackling this in harnessing the benefits of broadband for the UK, supporting the work of GO ON UK through outputs from our usage programme that may further inform the potential benefits out of reach of the digitally excluded

7. Ensuring the right environment for ongoing **investment** in broadband and harnessing technology to maximum effect

- BSG will continue to support measures to support efficient investment in broadband infrastructure and efficient rollout of this, continue to promote technology neutrality and the role that a variety of technologies can play; and support the development of an effective long-term spectrum release strategy

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