

## Cross-Party Group on Digital Participation

### Meeting at the Scottish Parliament, 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2018

#### **Attendees:**

Willie Coffey MSP (WC) - Convenor	Margaret Ellis, European Knowledge Tree Group (ME)
Jonathan Ruff, Ofcom (JR)	John Trower, Optimity (JT)
Diarmuid Cowan, Ofcom (DC)	Andrew Trower, Independent (AT)
April Conroy, Highlands and Islands Enterprise (AC)	David Jeffrey, Tap into It (DJ)
Emma Harper MSP (EH)	Laura Muir, Edinburgh Napier University (LM)
Domhnall Dods, Towerhouse Consulting (DD)	Graeme Hamilton, Blackwood Group (GH)
Julie Melville, Lothian Broadband (JM)	David McNeill, Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (DM)
David Walls, Lothian Broadband (DW)	Finlay Carson MSP (FC)
Mark Dames, BT Scotland (MD)	

#### **Minutes of 30 May meeting:**

Thanks to all those who came back with comments on the minutes from our last meeting, these have now been passed to the Clerks and will be uploaded to the Parliament website in coming days.

#### **1. Introduction and Welcome**

The Chair welcomes everyone to the meeting.

Liam MacArthur MSP sends his apologies.

The meeting is quorate for the Annual General Meeting of the Group to go ahead.

#### **2. AGM Business**

The current officers of the CPG will continue in their roles, and the secretary functions continue to be carried out by Ofcom.

#### **3. Roundtable Updates**

##### **Connected Nations Report**

- JR – Connected Nations Interim Report published, highlighting the continued work on increasing coverage and access for people in Scotland;

##### **Skills, infrastructure and hybrids solutions**

- DM – In May across the UK the Basic Skills Framework was made into the Essential Skills Framework. Document published on understanding and measuring digital skills. A range of engagement, with focus on digital inclusion and connectivity;
- JT – Praises the Department for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport Digital Telecoms Review, with the strategy for public and private investment set out. Full fibre scheme is the main focus but mentions Optimity is engaged in the wireless hybrid solutions. The Group expressed interest in papers on hybrid solutions and asked for them to be shared with the group.

### **Learning from other nations**

- ME – Mentions recent international events, how risk management is carried out in other countries with significant digital infrastructure such as Estonia.

### **Garden Lobby Event**

- DJ – Raises Garden Lobby event as a possible route for sharing and discussion among interested parties and stakeholders;
- JR – Internet for Everyone and its three sub-themes of Skills, Infrastructure, and the Future. There is a rural CPG that has held a similar event recently, but it might be an opportunity for an event around an anchor event or publication. The Group was invited to share ideas with JR, and to help with organisation and co-ordination.

### **Broadband**

- JM – Raises issue that East Lothian does not have good connectivity, and the impact this has on workers. Asks for more understanding and information to be provided to consumers. What the impact will be of Reaching 100% scheme, and the barriers of red tape and planning permissions;
- DD – Major impact of digging up roads to lay infrastructure may produce reluctance from Councils on giving permission. Impacts of blocking roads, business rates, etc. The Duct and Pole Access might mitigate this, with contract negotiations ongoing for access.

### **Mobile**

- WC – asks whether there is resistance to mobile masts;
- No issues with planning permissions, but new solutions available from Sweden, for example.

### **Policy and Enterprise**

- FC - Impact of policy on enterprise, and how policy might benefit larger firms rather than smaller. Supports a Voucher scheme for the Reaching 100% scheme;
- GH – social housing builders might benefit from such a voucher scheme;
- Fixed Wireless Access might help offer high quality broadband to rural consumers as a solution.

### **Highlands and Islands Connectivity**

- AC – Remote and rural connections improved in highlands and islands. Benefits to economy from digital engagement, better manufacturing systems, focus on business community. Mentions event on the 12<sup>th</sup> December on how technology can level the playing field to support disability in the workplace. Event will raise awareness of supportive and assistive technologies. Ask CPS for any suggestions for speakers and facts on the matter. Facility available for events and live streaming in Inverness;
- ME – Central Belt of Scotland benefits from current infrastructure but rural communities do not have much choice. Minimal competition. Raises potential of satellite provision.

**4. Presentation from Mark Dames (BT Scotland) on the Fourth Industrial Revolution joint BT/SCDI/RSE/Scotland IS report on “Automatic for the people: How Scotland can harness the technologies of the Fourth Industrial Revolution to increase economic and social prosperity”**

MD presents to group. Slides to be shared after meeting to the Group.

MD mentions BT will run some Thought Leadership sessions in the short-term future in Glasgow and Edinburgh. MD was asked for some rural sessions to be delivered, particularly to highlands and islands.

Discussion on how to stop people being left behind.

DW – People disadvantaged if they are unable to access services. 10% of population may be resistant to engaging digitally. Ensuring public services are open, not just digital. Raises question of what the role of regulation and competition is to ensure connectivity even to those not engaged?

JR – role of the Consumer Scotland and Ofcom’s Consumer Panel as response to this.

FC – ethical standards and the impact of only digital services. How dual meters can disadvantage consumers.

ME – Impact of austerity measures and the Brexit negotiations on infrastructure projects. No activity on Tallinn declaration even though UK is a signatory. MD and ME to discuss figures and data.

EH – studies in South East Scotland. The benefits of EU money on technology that benefits those with care needs. Examining impact on farmers and the technology enhanced farming.

DJ – supporting older people with digital skills. Support this with policy for industry on privacy and guidance.

JT – Rapid changes in industry and employment areas. Shifts from primary sector jobs to tertiary sector jobs (from mining to services). The impact of education on ensuring Scotland is prepared, encouraging critical thinking in young people. Also need to be connected to European cables, connecting Scotland, like London is, to Europe. New cables being put in that are going to bypass London due to Brexit. Coming within 30 miles of Scottish coast so can this be accessed by Scotland?

MD – queries the time scales for this.

DD – mentions services BT has that save them significant sums.

EH – older generations will use services if supported to do so.

DW – current ICT skill provision needs reviewing and asks whether students should be more focused on problem solving. Raises concerns about provision of computers in schools. Asks how to help teachers teach digital skills?

MD – BT provide support for this through the ‘Barefoot Computing’ scheme that is accredited.

FC – raises concerns about risk averseness in public sector procurement, and how this might benefit larger firms rather than smaller disruptor firms.

The Chair and the Group thanked MD for his presentation.

Next meeting to be on the 29<sup>th</sup> January.