



Next Generation Access Background Paper March 2009

Purpose

1. The purpose of this paper is to provide some background on the Panel's involvement in the debate so far about next-generation access to broadband (NGA). It should be read in conjunction with the Panel position paper published in September 2008: <http://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/smartweb/nga-s-economic-and-social-value/nga-position-paper> . Another useful document is a report that resulted from the Caio review: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/caio_review_index.htm . Francesco Caio, a former chief executive of Cable & Wireless and Vice-Chairman of Lehman Brothers' European operations, was commissioned by Government last year to report on the barriers to investment in NGA and what steps can be taken to remove them. The review was published in September 2008. You may also find it helpful to see a glossary of technical terms that relate to NGA: http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consult/condocs/nga_future_broadband/glossary/

Panel's Ambition

2. The Panel's ambition in the NGA debate has been to establish the following:
 - a. That there is not just an economic, but also a social value to the roll-out of NGA – we think this case is now well understood, although its scale is still hotly debated.
 - b. That there is good reason to try to address not-spots before they emerge and use NGA networks to allow those with the worst narrowband service to leapfrog the old networks. There is a wide acceptance that commercial rollout will stop a long way short of universal coverage and so we should think now about how to manage it.
 - c. That there is a value in promoting and supporting local and community initiatives, particularly in the context of extending NGA coverage. Opinion remains divided on the value of such initiatives, but there is a more support for this idea than there was.

The Panel and the Broadband Stakeholder Group

3. The Panel is a member of the BSG executive. Panel Member Roger Darlington represents the Panel at the monthly executive meetings. Its webpage can be found here:

http://www.broadbanduk.org/component/option,com_frontpage/Itemid,1/

4. The BSG's membership is made-up of industry, government bodies and community stakeholders and has four NGA workstreams: Policy; Commercial; Regulation; and Public sector intervention. The BSG's work on NGA can be found here:

http://www.broadbanduk.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=66&Itemid=43

5. On the 9th June 2008 the Panel co-hosted with the BSG a conference on next generation access (NGA) entitled, 'Beyond Pipe Dreams? Prospects for Next Generation Broadband in the UK'. The conference page can be found here:

http://www.broadbanduk.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=295&Itemid=43

6. At the event the BSG published two reports:

- *A Framework for Evaluating the Value of Next Generation Broadband* by Plum Consulting. The Panel jointly commissioned the research with the BSG to ensure social as well as private value is captured within the framework. Panel Member Damien Tambini wrote the social value section.
- *Models for efficient and effective public sector intervention in next generation broadband access networks* by Analysys Mason. This report sets out a number of different and innovative fibre-to-the-home public sector intervention models that have occurred in Europe.

7. We commissioned and presented a video at the event, [Across the Generations: Contrasting experience of broadband](#). It contrasts the consumer experience of those who have a fibre connection and those without. The video can be found here:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/CommsConsumerPanel>

Recent Panel work on NGA

8. Anna Bradley met Francesco Caio prior to the publication of his review and met Derek Wyatt MP to discuss the Panel's position on those communities where market-led NGA is unviable, i.e. they should not be left behind and should be supported to leapfrog from current generation broadband to an NGA environment. Roger Darlington made a speech at a national NGA conference:

<http://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/Roger%20Darlington%20Next%20Gen%202008%20Conference.pdf>

The Panel has communicated its position on NGA to the Government's Digital Britain Project.

9. The Panel has called on the Government to map the likely geographic patterns of exclusion that will follow from the various models for roll-out of NGA and to examine the costs and benefits of closing the geographic not-spots. This work is now being undertaken by the Department for Communities and Local Government Digital Inclusion team, building on the BSG report, "*The costs of deploying fibre-based next-generation broadband infrastructure*" and will feed into Digital Britain.
10. In January of this year, the Panel published a report mapping the local broadband initiatives that are happening around the country:
<http://www.communicationsconsumerpanel.org.uk/smartweb/nga-s-economic-and-social-value/community-led-broadband-schemes>
11. We found almost 40 schemes that are of very different sizes and at very different stages of development. Collectively they represent a range of funding and business models, and technical delivery options, that should contribute significantly to the national debate on the timing and form of the roll-out of NGA in the UK.
12. The Panel will continue to monitor NGA-related developments closely and will step in where necessary to ensure that the interests of consumers and citizens are protected and promoted.