

CMA Press Statement on

Digital Britain – the UK Government’s Interim Report

London, January 29th 2009

CMA has today welcomed the UK government’s interim report on Digital Britain and its focus on strong public and private investment.

For too long the mindset has been how to conform to State Aid and Public Procurement rules without exposure to legislative risk. What has been needed, and Digital Britain now recommends, is the introduction of an umbrella organisation to co-ordinate how the barriers to local innovation can be broken down. A growth in "islands of fibre" as a result is to be expected and welcomed.

Ring-fencing of digital dividend for broadband - or incentive of spectrum to encourage private investment - "Spectrum for Speed" is a sensible, practical approach to utilising this invaluable resource for the economic benefit of the entire nation. It should kick-start the roll out of both 4G and fixed wireless broadband, complementing a national fibre infrastructure. CMA welcomes today’s announcement that the universal service obligation will embrace broadband and therefore include every communications service provider, including mobile operators.

However, CMA is disappointed that the report does not specify a minimum threshold for broadband, but merely suggests that *up to* 2 mega bits per second threshold is made available.

We look forward to the government’s forthcoming proposals to rationalise our existing confusing and conflicting mix of legislation in relation to anti-piracy by introducing a Rights Agency and Code of Practice. We are anxious, however, that unnecessary or disproportionate burdens are not placed on UK plc as a result of the natural desire to harmonise and streamline our approach to issues such as IPR and data retention.

The proposals to secure the future of public sector broadband and ensure the financial stability of commercial TV by the possible merger of TV Channel 4 with BBC Worldwide are bound up with the shift of advertising and content delivery to the online sector. While the trend to online delivery is welcomed as a powerful stimulant to the universal provision of real bandwidth, CMA is concerned to ensure that the UK’s telecoms infrastructure is not overburdened in the short term by video entertainment at the expense of content that is more directly associated with the wider economic benefit.

The UK government has now introduced an interim report with 22 action points. CMA looks forward to taking part in the follow-up work leading to the final Digital Britain report which is expected in Spring 2009.

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CMA (The Communications Management Association) is the UK's premier independent membership body for professionals and organisations focused on exploiting communications, networking and ICT for business advantage. We have been supporting telecoms and ICT professionals and organisations within private and public sectors for 50 years. Through our research & analysis, specialist forums, publications and events we provide the assistance, information, training and representation so essential in an ever changing business environment.

Our goal is to ensure that CMA's members, who spend £13.4 billion in the communications market annually are the best informed professionals in the industry. CMA is the definitive voice of the ICT user on key issues to government and regulatory authorities. We work directly with Ofcom in the UK and are represented internationally through our membership of the international telecoms user group - INTUG.

In 2007 CMA joined the BCS Group to strengthen both organisations. This will enable the BCS to have a stronger offering in the field of communications and for CMA to have access to new resources and a wider community of IT professionals.

The British Computer Society (BCS) is the Chartered industry body for IT professionals, the Chartered Engineering Institution for Information Technology and a Chartered Science Institution. With our rapidly growing membership, BCS is playing an increasingly pivotal role in leading the development and implementation of world class standards for the IT profession through innovative products, services and support.

Through our specific "Professionalism in IT" programme, BCS is leading and building IT professionalism to levels which are currently only seen in more traditional long standing professions such as law, medicine, and accountancy but which will increasingly become the de facto standards for IT professionals.