Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce

IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW 2017

An initiative of the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment and the Department of Rural and Community Development

Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

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Foreword by Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment

The Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce was established specifically to tackle immediate issues which have been hindering the delivery of a better connected digital Ireland.

A lot has been achieved in 2017 which this Annual Review sets out in detail. One of the most positive aspects to emerge from the work of the Taskforce is the extent to which practical cooperation between all agencies has developed. This has been fundamental to achieving real results and actions on the ground that have delivered improvements in services for people, particularly in rural Ireland.

Connecting people and businesses is key to supporting a sustainable digital economy across this island. Telecoms infrastructure and software not only connects Ireland internally but also with the wider world.

Some of the barriers to the rollout of telecommunications infrastructure in areas can be geographic or topographic; others are regulatory or administrative, which can therefore be addressed. The range and commitment shown by the members of the Taskforce and the organisations that they represent is one of the most critical contributory factors in finally removing some of the onerous barriers which have delayed service rollout.

I wish to acknowledge the Group's vital work and dedication and I look forward to continuing to work closely with all members during 2018. By tackling and pre-empting many of the roadblocks to telecommunications infrastructure now, pending physical rollout of the National Broadband Plan State Intervention, we will have laid a solid foundation to ensure the people of Ireland get services they deserve.

Minister Denis Naughten, T.D.
Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment

Foreword by Minister for Community Development, Natural Resources and Digital Development

Mar chomh-chathaoirleach ar ghrúpa feidhmithe Thascfhórsa Fón Póca agus Leathanbhanda, is údar misneach agam an dul chun cinn atá á dhéanamh maidir le raon clúdaigh fón póca agus le rochtain ar leathanbhanda a fheabhsú do theaghlaigh, do ghnóthais agus do phobail.

The increasing use of digital technologies is impacting on every aspect of our lives: from transport, to education, leisure and entertainment and health services. Infrastructure to deliver better connected services is vital to our continued economic growth, supporting businesses and enhancing our communities.

High quality, high-speed broadband is critically important for schools, businesses and communities right across Ireland. Access to high-speed broadband will enable the formation of new enterprises, allow existing businesses to grow and expand their markets, and avail of increased business opportunities – no matter where you live or work.

The provision of high quality broadband and mobile services to rural areas will provide important support for rurally-based industries and communities. The availability of reliable high-speed broadband will support employment in all sectors and complement the suite of regional enterprise initiatives. High-speed broadband will act as a catalyst for the delivery of a host of new and improved services and activities, and will enhance the lives of all individuals.

The Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce Implementation Group has made strong progress during 2017, and will continue to further build on and evolve the work of the Group throughout 2018. I would like to acknowledge the important contribution of all action holder organisations, for delivering on a wide ranging agenda of measures which will benefit consumers and lead to more coordinated approaches to address issues impacting on the rollout of telecoms infrastructure.

Minister of State Seán Kyne
Minister for Community Development, Natural Resources and Digital Development

About the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce

Establishment

The Programme for a Partnership Government gave a commitment to establish a Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce to identify solutions to broadband/mobile phone coverage deficits and to investigate how better services could be provided to consumers prior to full build and rollout of the network planned under the National Broadband Plan (NBP) State Intervention. The Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce was established in July 2016 arising from this commitment.

The Taskforce published its final report[1] in December 2016. The Taskforce report addresses, in a very comprehensive manner, a wide range of issues impacting on the provision of broadband and mobile services. The report contains 40 actions aimed at accelerating the delivery of telecoms infrastructure by commercial operators and also at facilitating the rollout of the State led Intervention under the NBP.

All of the actions that the Taskforce identified targeted specific issues that had been raised by stakeholders or identified through the work of the Taskforce. In addition, many addressed underlying issues that are of fundamental importance to the ability of the telecommunication operators to deliver improved services, particularly in rural areas.

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[1] Report of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce, December 2016, is available at http://drcd.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/taskforce-report-final-pdf-1.pdf and
https://www.dccae.gov.ie/documents/Taskforce%20Report.pdf

Implementation Process

An Implementation Group, chaired by the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Denis Naughten T.D., and Minister of State at the Department of Rural and Community Development, Seán Kyne[2] T.D., was established early in 2017 to oversee the timely implementation of all of the actions in the Taskforce's report. The Implementation Group is supported by senior officials from the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DCCAE) and the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD).

Government Departments and agencies that are central to the delivery of the actions contained in the Taskforce's report are represented on the Implementation Group. This includes the Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg) which attends both as an action owner and in an observer capacity in recognition of its statutory independence as Regulator. This Group played a vital role in monitoring and driving progress in 2017, to ensure timely progress on the delivery of all actions recommended by the Taskforce.

The first meeting of the Implementation Group took place on 8 March 2017. The Group met on a quarterly basis and published quarterly progress reports on the implementation status of actions. The Implementation Group was also tasked with comprehensively reviewing progress made after twelve months and identifying appropriate new actions. This annual report delivers on that task.

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[2] Minister Seán Kyne replaced Minister Michael Ring as co-Chair of the Implementation Group with effect from November 2017.

Executive Summary

Introduction

Telecoms infrastructure and software connects Ireland internally and with the wider world. The wider economic significance of telecoms is that it is a crucial enabler for employment in other sectors of the economy. By leveraging the opportunities offered by advanced telecoms networks, the range of goods and services produced can be expanded, and markets serviced, thereby generating substantial employment. Telecoms also plays a crucial social role by connecting family, friends and communities.

The telecoms sector employs 25,000 people in Ireland, generates substantial VAT and other tax revenue for the Exchequer, and has invested approximately €2.75 billion in the network over the past 5 years. Since 2012 it has paid €932 million to the Exchequer for spectrum licences[3] in various spectrum bands.

While much of this investment was in nationally important new technologies such as 4G or fibre, a significant proportion was in less high profile upgrading and enhancement of the existing network. This latter investment is of equal importance because of its significance in catering for the constant growth in data traffic, thereby addressing issues such as coverage and service quality.

Irish consumers are benefiting every day from this investment by the telecoms industry, and will continue to do so. As of September 2017 more than 65% of the 2.3 million premises around the country have access to high-speed broadband. However, the reality is that there are parts of this country which are significantly behind where they need to be in terms of having access to modern reliable communications infrastructure, particularly in the area of broadband. A key challenge facing Ireland today is how to ensure all parts of the country and all members of society can avail of the benefits of advanced telecoms.

As the digital economy grows, we must ensure that the business opportunities and benefits are felt in every city, town, village and outlying rural area. We need a digital infrastructure that can support this and one that provides nationwide coverage with sufficient capacity to ensure that data can flow at the volume, speed and reliability required to meet the demands of modern life.

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[3] A spectrum license grants the licensee permission to use a portion of the radio frequency spectrum for the provision of wireless broadband, both mobile and fixed broadband.

While the telecommunications industry continues to play a vital role in the economy in terms of investment and employment, the Government identified the need for a Taskforce to examine solutions to address broadband/mobile phone coverage deficits and to identify tangible actions that can be taken in the short-term to improve the quality of broadband and mobile services being provided to citizens across Ireland.

Given the exponential growth of mobile data usage - a five-fold increase in mobile data usage over the last five years - there is a clear need to reinforce, develop and expand telecommunications networks on an ongoing basis. To do this effectively requires the input and cooperation of a broad range of public and private actors. The Taskforce has identified how these relationships can be strengthened to deliver a better quality of service to citizens and businesses.

The telecommunications sector underpins our transition to a digital economy. It provides the networks on which we rely, and as networks increasingly reach every home, school and business in Ireland, there is an over-riding imperative to ensure equality of access and service quality. A state-of-the-art telecoms infrastructure will underpin Ireland's continued economic competitiveness and is a key part of our future economic development strategy.

The NBP will play an integral role in delivering this infrastructure and revitalising businesses and communities across rural Ireland. The work of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce complements the NBP by assisting in the acceleration of the commercial rollout of telecoms infrastructure, and ultimately paving the way at a local level for the rollout of the network planned under the State-led intervention.

Summary of Progress

The Taskforce Implementation Group progressed a number of areas in 2017 where direct action by Government Departments and State Agencies accelerated benefits to consumers from industry investments.

For example, the Government has agreed a series of concrete and immediate actions focussed on:

- removing barriers to investment for telecoms providers;
- reducing the cost and streamlining planning processes for the deployment of telecommunications infrastructure;
- providing consumers with information so that they are better informed when selecting broadband and mobile phone services and purchasing mobile phone handsets;
- practical initiatives to boost reception of mobile phone and broadband services in homes and businesses;
- greater cooperation, including better information sharing between all stakeholders, to support better outcomes for consumers.

Of the 40 actions for delivery in 2017, the following overall progress was made:

No. of actions completed or substantially completed	29
No. of ongoing actions carried into 2018 work programme for completion	11

In addition to the actions carried over from 2017, a number of new actions have been included in the work programme of the Implementation Group for 2018. The inclusion of these actions is a result of discussions held at bilateral meetings with action holders, in addition to feedback received from key stakeholders at the National Forum held in October 2017.

There are a total of 34 actions, outlined in this report, for delivery in 2018.

Impact of delivery of actions

Progressing each of the Taskforce actions will help expedite the rollout of required infrastructure to support improved mobile phone and broadband services, particularly in rural Ireland. Delivery of the actions will realise efficiencies in the planning process and in enabling access to infrastructure, as well as improving customer information and experience.

A state of the art telecoms infrastructure will provide important support for rurally-based industries and communities. The delivery of reliable high-speed broadband and mobile services will support employment and cost competitiveness in existing businesses and enable the formation of new business ventures.

The benefits of bringing together the diverse range of stakeholders involved in this project are increasingly clear; the strong cooperation between action holders is resulting in faster delivery of actions. A collaborative approach is developing between stakeholders with sharing of information taking place at a level which has not occurred previously.

Some specific actions progressed during 2017, which are bringing about positive impacts include:

Planning and Infrastructure

- The majority of local authorities have removed development contributions for broadband infrastructure. A further action has been included in the 2018 work programme to review and update the planning guidelines for Development Contribution Schemes, and progress the removal of development contributions for all telecommunications infrastructure. These changes will result in cost reductions for industry, thereby enabling increased placement of telecommunications infrastructure to improve services for customers.

- The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG) has revised the Exempted Development Regulations allows industry to put in place infrastructure which will facilitate new and improved services (e.g. 4G and 5G) and which will ensure future proofing of the regulations.

- DHPLG, in conjunction with local authorities, will introduce an online system for planning applications which will standardise and streamline the application process for telecoms operators and lead to quicker timelines and greater efficiencies.

- Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) has carried out ducting installation works (for example the 90km of ducting along the M7/M8 and N25 motorways) which will close gaps on sections

of the motorway network and facilitate telecoms operators to deploy infrastructure to expand their networks along the route.

- TII updated its road construction standards in December 2017 to require the installation of ducting on all new road schemes (not just motorways). This means that going forward, new schemes on two lane roads will also involve the installation of ducting.

- TII's review of costs associated with accessing its ducts will bring about a reduction in administration costs which will free up more capital expenditure for investment in infrastructure.

- The establishment of the Road Opening Monitoring Committee by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTAS) is streamlining interaction between the key stakeholders and in discussion with the Users' Forum, is resolving any emerging challenges surrounding the road opening process.

Informing Consumers

- ComReg is progressing the development of a composite national mobile coverage map which will help consumers and businesses choose the network provider that best meets their needs for where they live and work.

- In addition, ComReg has conducted research on handset sensitivity due to antenna performance and network coverage which will allow consumers to make informed choices about the level of signal they can expect from different handsets.

Communications and Stakeholder engagement

- All local authorities have assigned a Broadband Officer, and this is already paying dividends in terms of a much greater degree of consistency in engagement with telecommunications operators and assisting in clearing obstacles to the rollout of infrastructure.

- ComReg is undertaking a forecast report on mobile data speeds and fixed broadband speeds, which will enable better network planning by operators and ensure they keep pace with consumer demand.

- For the first time, a National Stakeholder Forum was held in October 2017. This provided a unique opportunity for an open dialogue for all stakeholders to discuss issues impacting on the provision of telecommunications infrastructure and services across the country, and

contributed to the high level of engagement which is now taking place between stakeholders on a level which has not occurred up to this point. Following on from this success, the forum will take place on an annual basis. As part of a new collaborative approach to tackling barriers to delivery of telecoms services.

Technology Initiatives

- ComReg is developing a scheme for the use of mobile phone repeaters, which will allow householders and businesses to boost signals into their premises, and bring immediate improvements in mobile phone coverage.

- The implementation of WiFi calling and other network features and functionality enhancements by the mobile operators will continue to improve user experience.

- Each of the 31 local authorities around the country is developing a digital strategy tailored to their area, which will ensure that local authorities are primed to take advantage of high-speed broadband coverage over the coming years.

- The blackspots pilot project being undertaken by the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment in conjunction with mobile operators and a number of local authorities is a significant step in identifying problem areas and any infrastructure that could potentially be used to improve mobile coverage.

The work of the Taskforce Implementation Group is a continuously evolving process. The structures now in place, across the Government system and beyond, have established a strong mechanism for open and transparent engagement amongst key stakeholders. This mechanism will continue to enable consistent approaches to policymaking and will assist in streamlining delivery of enhanced telecommunications services.

In order to keep up with demand and with the constant changes in technology, the work of the Implementation Group will continue to be reviewed and refreshed in order to ensure that it is future-proofed. All action owners are given the opportunity to feed into the strategic direction of the implementation process. In this context, the Implementation Group is also mandated to recommend further actions that would result in an improved service for consumers and businesses. In that regard, a 2018 Work Programme is included in this Annual Review.

Chapter 1: Strategic Planning

Overview of Strategic Planning Issues

The Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce identified a number of issues which it deemed to be overarching in their nature and which complement the more specific recommended actions set out in Chapters 2 to 5 of the Taskforce Report. The Taskforce was of the view that these issues, if addressed, would contribute to a smoother and quicker rollout of telecommunications infrastructure and services. While the issues are general in nature, the actions set out by the Taskforce were specific in order to achieve clear outcomes and, in the main, ensure that barrier issues would be continuously reviewed and addressed on an ongoing basis.

Action 1: Hold an annual forum for all stakeholders to discuss issues impacting on the rollout of telecoms infrastructure.
Responsible bodies: Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment / Department of Rural and Community Development
Action Complete: Yes
Progress Made in 2017: The inaugural National Stakeholder Forum was held in Athlone on 6 October 2017. It brought together key stakeholders to engage in an open dialogue on issues impacting on the rollout of telecommunications infrastructure. It also afforded an opportunity for stakeholders to highlight any barriers being experienced in the implementation of actions identified by the Taskforce, and to suggest new recommendations for the Taskforce Implementation Group to adopt in order to accelerate the provision of improved services to consumers. The Report of the Forum was published on the websites of DCCAE and DRCD[4] on 27 November 2017.

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[4] The National Stakeholder Forum report is available at
https://www.dccae.gov.ie/documents/Taskforce%20Forum%20Report.pdf and http://drcd.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/Taskforce-Forum-Report.pdf

Action 2: Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government and Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment will work to bring forward the necessary legislation to ensure that all new builds are broadband enabled, including mandating that ducting is in place to facilitate connection to high-speed networks.

Responsible bodies: Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government / Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment

Action Complete: No – carried forward.

Progress Made in 2017:

This action was significantly progressed in 2017. The necessary legislative amendments have been identified between the two Departments. The amendments are at an advanced stage of drafting and are expected to be brought forward for public consultation commencing in Q2 2018.

2018 Action: This action has been carried forward to the 2018 Work Programme (2018 Action 25).

Action 3: Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs will fund all local authorities to assign an officer with responsibility for broadband to act as the single point of contact for engagement with operators to assist with accelerated rollout of the National Broadband Plan and create awareness of/stimulate demand for broadband services.

Responsible bodies: Local authorities / Department of Rural and Community Development

Action Complete: Yes

Progress Made in 2017:

By the end of 2017, all local authorities have assigned a Broadband Officer with co-funding provided by the Department of Rural and Community Development. The industry response to the assignment of a Broadband Officer as the dedicated point of contact for engagement with telecommunications operatives in their own local authority has been strongly welcomed throughout the year and echoed at the National Stakeholder Forum.

The introduction of the Broadband Officers has been a hugely positive step but it is recognised that there is a need to ensure consistency across local authority areas and there have been calls for the development of structures to support the Broadband Officers. In light of the fact that the role has expanded significantly since its introduction 12 months ago, the Implementation Group recognise that there is a requirement to review and assess the definition, scope and requisite support resources of the role in order to ensure consistency across local authority areas.

2018 Action: A review of the role of these Officers is proposed in the 2018 Work Programme (2018 Action 21).

Action 4: Run a public awareness campaign on all aspects of the National Broadband Plan and the work of the Taskforce.

Responsible bodies: Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment / Department of Rural and Community Development

Action Complete: Yes

Progress Made in 2017:

A Communications Strategy was developed and adopted in 2017, which aligned the communications activities of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce, the National Broadband Plan (NBP) Project and the National Digital Strategy. The purpose of the combined strategy was to identify the types and frequency of message and to facilitate the identification of opportunities for coordinated messages across all three areas.

Much work has already been done already in relation to raising awareness and communicating messages. The development of the strategy has primarily resulted in aligning the thinking around co-ordinated and joint messaging, as appropriate.

While this action is complete, raising awareness and communicating the key messages will continue to be a key element of the work of the Implementation Group as a matter of course, in the context of progressing the Implementation Plan for the NBP Communications Strategy.

Action 5: In line with the Programme for Government commitment, the Government will ensure that appropriate funding is made available to support the timely rollout of the NBP.

Responsible bodies: Government

Action Complete: Yes

Progress Made in 2017:

Funding the rollout of the NBP is an ongoing matter for Government. It is not an issue that will be progressed through the Implementation Group and, as such, the action is being closed.

The Government's National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to ensure high-speed broadband access (minimum 30 megabits per second) to all premises in Ireland, regardless of location. The NBP has been a catalyst in encouraging investment by the telecoms sector so that today 7 out of 10 premises in Ireland have access to high-speed broadband and this is set to increase to close to 8 out of 10 by the end of 2018 and to 9 out of 10 by the end of 2020. The NBP is being achieved through a combination of commercial investment and a State led Intervention in those areas where commercial investors acting alone will not provide this essential service. The State Intervention is the subject of an ongoing

procurement process.

On 29 September 2015 the Government agreed on and published its 6 year Capital Plan, *Building on Recovery*, which included an allocation of €275m for the State led Intervention under the NBP. This provides the initial stimulus required to deliver the Government's intervention. Funding of €75m has also been committed through the European Regional Development Fund.

Further funding will be required over the lifetime of the proposed 25 year contract to build, maintain and operate the broadband network in the State Intervention Area. In this regard, the Programme for a Partnership Government (PfG) notes that Government will provide additional Exchequer capital, if needed, to deliver on the commitment to bring next generation broadband to every house and business in the country.

Action 6: Establish an Implementation Group led by officials of the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment and the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in order to ensure that the actions identified by the Taskforce are implemented and reported on to Government.

Responsible bodies: Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment / Department of Rural and Community Development

Action Complete: Yes

Progress Made in 2017:

The Implementation Group was established in March 2017, to drive and monitor implementation of the Taskforce actions with membership comprising all key stakeholders responsible for delivery. The Implementation Group comprises senior officials from the following organisations:

- Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment
- Department of Rural and Community Development
- Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government
- Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport
- Transport Infrastructure Ireland
- County and City Management Association
- Local Government Management Agency
- Advertising Standards Authority for Ireland
- Commission for Communications Regulation (which sits on the Group as both the owner of several actions and as an observer in its capacity as the independent Regulator of the telecommunications sector).

Bilateral meetings are held with action holders and industry representatives on a quarterly basis.

Whilst the action is considered complete, the Implementation Group will continue to meet quarterly, and this is reflected in the 2018 Work Programme.

Chapter 2: Planning and Licensing

Overview of Planning and Licensing Issues

If high-quality mobile and broadband services are to be provided to consumers, telecommunications infrastructure must be correctly sited. The erection of equipment, such as masts and antennae, or access to ducts is essential to the delivery of such services. However, such structures and infrastructure must be sited and erected in a manner that fits within the wider planning and development framework and within the appropriate planning guidelines and principles.

Erecting equipment or opening roads to access or lay ducts can require development consent or permission in the form of planning permissions or roadworks licences. Timely decision-making is also important in the delivery of telecommunications infrastructure.

An operator wishing to deploy telecommunications infrastructure will need to engage with the relevant local authority to work through the planning regulations and/or the licensing system to ensure that the necessary approvals and permits from the relevant competent authorities are in place before commencing any works.

One of the main issues identified by the Taskforce was the need for a consistent approach in the way road opening and planning procedures are dealt with across local authorities. These variations can sometimes be a result of different geographic, topographic or scenic characteristics of an area. However, the inconsistencies can result in a variance in the costs and charges applied to telecommunications projects, leading to differing levels of service being provided in different counties.

The Taskforce noted that there is often significant opposition to planning permission for masts at a local level; this can result in poor mobile coverage when essential infrastructure is either delayed or not installed. This needs to change if mobile coverage is to improve. Added to this, the constant rapid evolution in telecommunications technology requires planning and licensing processes to keep pace with consumer demand and the growth in new and emerging technologies (e.g. 5G).

The Taskforce examined the above issues in great detail, including engaging directly with industry, and in each case looked at the current position, the issue arising and proposed solutions.

Action 7: Review the statutory planning guidelines (Telecommunications and Antennae and Support Structures Guidelines (1996) – updated October 2012), in conjunction with telecoms industry representatives and other relevant stakeholders.

Responsible bodies: Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government

Action Complete: No – carried forward.

Progress Made in 2017:

The review of the planning guidelines due in 2017 was not completed due to the priority delivery of the revised exempted development regulations by DHPLG (Action 9). It is intended to commence this action in 2018 and provide necessary updates, as required. In the interim, DCCAE has initiated early discussions with industry, via TIF, and sought its members' observations on the guidelines which will feed into the subsequent review of the Guidelines in 2018.

2018 Action: The 2018 Work Programme proposes to initiate a focused review of the 1996 statutory Planning Guidelines in Q4 2018. (2018 Action 32).

Action 8: All remaining local authorities to be fully compliant with the Development Contributions Guidelines for planning authorities, issued by the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government in January 2013.

Responsible bodies: Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government / local authorities

Action Complete: Substantially complete

Progress Made in 2017:

The application of waivers of Development Contributions for telecoms infrastructure is vital for the roll-out of improved services. At the end of 2017, 29 of the 31 local authorities are now effectively in compliance with the 2013 guidelines, which exempt broadband infrastructure (masts and antennae) from development contributions. Of the remaining two schemes, one draft scheme is currently out for public consultation and the second will commence consultation on a draft scheme in February 2018. DHPLG will continue to engage with relevant Councils and monitor the reviews of schemes in this context, recognising the role of the elected members in this matter.

On a related note, there was unanimous agreement from participants at the National Stakeholder Forum that waivers should include mobile as well as broadband infrastructure and that the guidelines could be clearer, as well as reviewed and updated where necessary to deal with this issue.

2018 Action: The 2018 Work Programme includes an action to review and update the planning guidelines for Development Contribution Schemes to clarify the scope of the waiver (2018 Action 3).

Action 9: Revised Exempted Development Regulations will immediately be brought forward to the Oireachtas.

Responsible bodies: Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government

Action Complete: Yes

Progress Made in 2017:

The purpose of this action was to amend existing exemptions to reflect advancements in new technology and to facilitate increased capacity on existing structures. While other priority legislative commitments in DHPLG delayed the finalisation of the proposed regulatory amendments, by year-end 2017, substantial progress had been made and, as discussed at the National Stakeholder Forum, it was prioritised by the Department for completion as soon as possible. As required under the Planning and Development Act 2000, draft exempted development regulations must be presented to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Housing, Planning and Local Government for consideration and require subsequent approval by both Houses of the Oireachtas, prior to being signed by the Minister and brought into force. Draft regulations were presented to the Joint Oireachtas Committee and laid before both Houses on 13 December 2017 and presented for approval to the Oireachtas in January 2018. The Minister signed the regulations on 8 February 2018, to bring them into operation with effect from that date.

Action 10: Telecoms operators will engage with Transport Infrastructure Ireland and local authorities in order to ensure that the Green Book is actively used to identify specific access sites. The Green Book will be reviewed, if necessary, in light of the experience gained from this engagement.

Responsible bodies: Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport / Transport Infrastructure Ireland / local authorities / telecommunications operators

Action Complete: Yes

Progress Made in 2017:

Throughout 2017 there was strong engagement between Transport Infrastructure Ireland and the Telecoms Industry Federation (TIF) working through the process of identification of suitable sites for the accommodation of telecoms mast infrastructure on the motorway network, based on the guidelines set out in the Green Book. TIF members have identified an initial 14 sites along the network. Two priority sites are currently being progressed with the relevant local authorities.

This will be an ongoing process. Continuing engagement between TII and TIF will be required, to assist both parties in the identification and development of suitable sites, in line with the guidance provided in the Green Book. Arising from the lessons learnt from the process, updates will be made to the

Green Book – however this will follow from the process of continuing engagement rather than as an end in itself.

Both parties found the exercise very useful in order to fully understand each other's requirements. In the medium to longer term, establishing an interface between industry and TII will provide a platform for engagement on such issues as the rollout of 5G – particularly in relation to the anticipated deployment of connected and automated vehicles.

2018 Action: Once the sites that have been selected for development have been through the planning process, DTTAS and TII will look at the need to update the Green Book to take into account the lessons learned through the engagement (2018 Action 1).

Action 11: Ensure that broadband and mobile phone infrastructure providers have access to new on-line facilities for planning applications as part of the new e-planning arrangements.

Responsible bodies: Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government/ local authorities / Local Government Management Agency

Action Complete: Ongoing

Progress Made in 2017:

Development of the ePlanning system is ongoing and running to schedule. Pilots are due to commence in Q1 2018. The new ePlanning system will facilitate applications in relation to broadband and mobile phone infrastructure as part of the nationwide roll-out of e-planning and online access to planning services. The Planning and Development (Amendment) Bill 2016, currently progressing through the Oireachtas, will provide the underpinning legislation for e-Planning, which will see the introduction of online planning applications, appeals and associated payment of fees. An efficient online ePlanning application system will result in greater efficiencies for local authorities and telecoms operators through time savings and reduced costs.

2018 Action: As the Planning and Development (Amendment) Bill 2016 is expected to complete its passage in the Oireachtas by end Q2 2018 with the rollout of ePlanning expected in late 2018, this action has been carried forward to the 2018 Work Programme (2018 Action 16).

Action 12: The Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government to explore the potential of introducing smart, innovative and cost effective solutions-based problem solving approach in respect of planning.

Responsible bodies: Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government

Action Complete: Yes

Progress Made in 2017:

This action arose out of the Taskforce's view that there was scope to consider more innovative approaches to planning which reflect the pace of economic, social and technological change while at the same time respecting the environment and needs of the wider communities. The action was conceptual in nature. However, work under other actions has focused on introducing more innovative approaches to planning and to a large extent capture the spirit of what was intended by the Taskforce under this action.

Some relevant examples include the development of the e-Planning system as a key driver to delivering a more responsive, innovative and cost effective planning system. The new initiatives encompassed in the revision of the Exempted Development Regulations centring on the inclusion of small cell antennae, demonstrate the move to incorporating smarter ways of dealing with planning issues.

2018 Action: Another planning issue raised at the National Stakeholder Forum was permissions for the removal of obsolete telecommunications related street furniture and the provision of clarification by DHPLG on the matter to local authorities, as required. This was seen as an effective way to resolve issues arising for operators and local authorities. This has been included as an action in the 2018 Work Programme (2018 Action 2) and demonstrates the commitment on all sides, especially DHPLG, to continue to explore more innovative and cost effective ways of resolving planning problems.

Action 13: The Northern and Southern Broadband Regional Action Groups will review and address barriers [within their remit] identified by Stakeholders as impacting on the rollout of telecommunications infrastructure in partnership with the local government sector.

Responsible bodies: Department of Rural and Community Development / local authorities

Action Complete: Yes

Progress Made in 2017:

The Regional Action Groups (RAGs), made up of Broadband Officers from the local authorities, meet on a bi-monthly basis. During 2017, the Northern Group convened in Carrick-on-Shannon for four meetings, while four meetings of the Southern Group were held in Kilkenny. In addition, an end of year combined meeting was held at the end of November.

The RAGs were recognised at the National Stakeholder Forum as being beneficial for raising awareness of issues and for the Broadband Officers to communicate about, and problem solve, specific matters as they emerge.

Six sub-groups were also established to progress work items that have been identified as aiding the rollout of the National Broadband Plan, including: Scenario Planning, Engagement with Telecommunication Companies, Environmental Issues, Local Digital Strategies, Co-Development, and Strategic Community Access Hubs Procurement. The subgroups report on progress to the Northern and Southern Regional Action Groups.

The local authority sector reaffirms its commitment to supporting and facilitating broadband infrastructure rollout and Broadband Officers are being kept up to date with proposals being put together to tackle issues as they arise. The Regional Action Groups will continue to meet during 2018 to discuss issues related to the rollout of telecoms infrastructure.

Overview of Access Issues

In order to deliver telecommunications services effectively, operators need access to appropriate locations to house their relevant infrastructure and equipment so as to effectively reach the widest possible number of consumers. In looking at "Access to Infrastructure" issues, the Taskforce examined matters other than planning or licensing issues which were addressed separately in Chapter 2 of the Taskforce Report.

As the State is the largest asset owner of land and property in the country, telecommunications operators recognise the opportunity in using State assets to house telecommunications infrastructure. The Taskforce similarly recognised the potential for State-owned assets to be used to improve telecommunications networks, while acknowledging that many State bodies do not currently have a commercial mandate, remit or competence to fully exploit this opportunity. Furthermore, many State bodies have no visibility of the potential financial benefits to be accrued from allowing telecommunications operators to locate infrastructure on their property.

The Taskforce was of the opinion that requests for access to State owned assets that are appropriate and reasonable should be facilitated in order to address telecommunications service deficits.

Action 14: Non-commercial State bodies will ensure that no impediments are placed in the way of reasonable access to State-owned property.
Responsible bodies: Non-commercial State bodies
Action Complete: Closed
Progress Made in 2017:   The Telecommunications industry indicated to the Taskforce that there were a number of impediments, including existing cost structures, to accessing State-owned property for the installation of telecoms infrastructure. A number of specific examples were supplied to support this position.   In light of these examples, and the discussions on the issue in 2017, a new action was highlighted to the Taskforce Implementation Group on the requirement for the development of a standardised policy, lease and costing arrangement for using State assets for the deployment of telecoms infrastructure.
2018 Action: Ensuring fair access to State assets is vital for the roll-out of telecoms infrastructure. The Implementation Group has identified, for the 2018 Work Programme, an action to explore the potential benefits of developing a central policy on accessing such assets (2018 Action 18).

Action 15: Non–commercial State bodies to consider nominating a single point of contact to engage with telecommunications operators.

Responsible bodies: Non-commercial State bodies

Action Complete: Yes

Progress Made in 2017:

The Taskforce recognised that the majority of non-commercial public sector bodies have no formal framework or expertise for engaging with telecommunications operators seeking access to, and use of, State-owned property. Each Secretary General of relevant Government Departments was written to, seeking contact points in non-commercial State bodies to act as co-ordinators in relation to this action. Follow up bilateral engagement with each non-commercial State body was subsequently undertaken in order to ensure that reasonable access is facilitated to State-owned property for installation of telecoms infrastructure.

2018 Action: This piece of work was part of the wider discussions during 2017 on accessing State-owned property for the installation of telecoms infrastructure, and as previously mentioned, will continue to be a focus during 2018. (2018 Action 18).

Action 16: Non-commercial State bodies and local authorities will publish maps of available ducts, where possible.

Responsible bodies: Transport Infrastructure Ireland / local authorities / non-commercial State bodies

Action Complete: Yes

Progress Made in 2017:

The sharing of information is wider than this action originally envisaged. Information is required from telecoms operators to local authorities in relation to updated location specific information on coverage and network improvements. In tandem with this, operators require access to detailed infrastructure maps (e.g. of available lighting poles, ducts, etc.) which the local authorities hold.

The Work Programme for 2018 includes an action to explore the feasibility of developing a database for the sharing of information on infrastructure between operators and local authorities.

Transport Infrastructure Ireland has already made available mapping of motorway duct locations to the Telecoms Industry. The mapping has been updated to reflect the installation of additional ducting on the gap sections on the M7 and M8 Dublin Cork route and on the N25 Little Island to Middleton. Publication of updated mapping will take place in Q1 2018, and will be updated as installations are completed.

2018 Action: The Work Programme for 2018 includes an action to explore the feasibility of developing a database for the sharing of information on infrastructure between operators and local authorities (2018 Action 20).

Action 17: Telecommunications operators should identify, in consultation with local communities where appropriate, optimal locations/areas in which they require additional infrastructure to improve coverage prior to engaging with local authorities and non-commercial State bodies.

Industry will then engage with the single point of contact to scope and manage any issues and risks associated with site selection.

Responsible bodies: Local authorities / local communities / Non-commercial State bodies / telecommunications operators

Action Complete: Yes

Progress Made in 2017:

The aim of this action was to achieve a greater consensus around site selection for telecoms infrastructure and therefore improve mobile phone coverage. Throughout the year, operators have been actively engaging on both a formal and informal basis with Broadband officers in all the local authorities, and have reported that they are acting as a valuable liaison between industry and the local community. Operators have provided the Broadband Officers with nominated points of contact in their organisations in order to streamline engagement. Telecommunications operators will continue to engage with local authorities through the Regional Action Groups (RAGs) and via the Broadband Officers. A subgroup of the RAGs is also focusing on developing a protocol to guide the engagement with industry.

2018 Action: In addition, DRCD and DCCAE worked with a pilot group of local authorities to identify the issues associated with mapping local blackspots. The pilot exercise has since been completed, with all local authorities now being asked to map local blackspots and identify infrastructure that could potentially be used to provide additional coverage on an economic basis. This exercise will be included in the 2018 Work Programme and it is planned to have dedicated GIS resources in place to support this (2018 Action 12).

Action 18: The dedicated agency established for the management of the NBP contract(s) and the management of all of the State's commercial communications contracts to be the nominated single entity tasked with the provision of advice and assistance to non-commercial public sector bodies, as appropriate, in their engagement with telecommunications operators seeking access to and use of such State-owned property in the rollout of telecommunications infrastructure and services.

Responsible bodies: Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment

Action Complete: Closed

Progress Made in 2017:

This recommendation is being considered as part of the ongoing preparation of proposals in relation to the management of the State's commercial communications contracts including the National Broadband Plan Contract(s).

Action 19: The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment will explore whether take up of the Metropolitan Area Networks (MANs) can be improved including a review of the pricing and other arrangements relating to connections to the MANs.

Responsible bodies: Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment

Action Complete: Closed

Progress Made in 2017:

The Taskforce recognised the strategic importance of the Metropolitan Area Networks (MANs) in providing wholesale fibre infrastructure in regional towns and cities and noted that Service Providers believed that more could be done to incentivise the use of the MANs to provide greater availability of connectivity in the regions. This action to review the pricing and other arrangements relating to access to the Metropolitan Area Networks was undertaken in 2017. The review took longer than expected because of the complexity of the MANs and their unique position as a wholesale open access fibre network in 94 regional towns and cities.

DCCAE will shortly be commencing its discussions with enet, which manages and operates the MANs on behalf of the State, on potential recommendations arising from the review. It is hoped that the outcome of this process will facilitate improved access to the MANs for retail service providers.

Action 20: The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport will review the Guidelines for Managing Openings in Public Roads (Purple Book) on an ongoing basis and, building on existing arrangements, will establish an appropriate stakeholder forum to provide for a clear and transparent engagement process for formal dialogue between the relevant stakeholders in relation to road openings.

Responsible bodies: Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport

Action Complete: Yes

Progress Made in 2017:

Following extensive consultation (including with utilities/telecos) over a three year period, the latest version of the Guidelines for Managing Openings in Public Roads (Purple Book) was published in April 2017. This document provides guidance and specifications for excavation and road opening works on public roads, material on the legal background and requirements as well as procedures for the use of the MapRoad Licensing System (national centralised road opening licensing system). Training to support implementation is being rolled out, including to telecos. The Purple Book will be reviewed on an on-going basis.

During the consultation process for the revised Purple Book, the need for a user forum to discuss day-to-day implementation issues arose. This was subsequently echoed by the Taskforce and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport established the Stakeholder (User) Forum in November 2017. This Forum, which comprises representatives of utilities, telcos, local authorities and TII, will seek to address operational issues relating to the Purple Book, the MapRoad Road Licensing System and the Green Book (Guidance on the Potential Location of Overground Telecommunications Infrastructure on Public Roads) together with any subsequent associated guidelines. Should it be required, the Forum can raise issues for consideration by the Monitoring Committee (Action 21 refers) which has also been put in place.

2018 Action: The 2018 Work Programme also contains an action to undertake ongoing monitoring of the implementation of the Purple Book, including the structures currently in place (2018 Action 8).

Action 21: The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport will strengthen the existing multi-sector group to steer and oversee/monitor the progress of the road opening licensing system and stakeholder forum and to examine solutions to barriers identified by Stakeholders as impacting on the rollout of telecommunications infrastructure and utility works (including a nationally agreed pricing framework).

Responsible bodies: Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport

Action Complete: Yes

Progress Made in 2017:

A Monitoring Committee, which includes senior officials from DTTAS, DCCAE, DRCD and DHPLG together with TII and the CCMA, was established by DTTAS on 5 April 2017 and met a number of times in 2017. While it was established in the context of the Mobile Phone & Broadband Taskforce Report, it has a wider remit in relation to road openings. Among other things, the Committee's remit is to examine related barriers identified by stakeholders as impacting on the rollout of telecommunications infrastructure and utility works and, where appropriate, make recommendations for prioritised, cost effective measures to address these.

While the action for 2017 is complete, the structures put in place by virtue of this action will continue in existence in 2018, and any relevant issues brought to the attention of the Implementation Group for discussion.

Action 22: The MapRoad Roadworks Licensing (MRL) System will be utilised by all local authorities and road opening licencing applicants as the single national centralised road opening licensing system.

Responsible bodies: Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport / local authorities / telecommunications operators

Action Complete: Ongoing

Progress Made in 2017:

The merit in having the MRL system used by all local authorities and operators as a means of moving towards a more standardised approach was recognised by the Taskforce. By the end of 2017, the MapRoad Roadworks Licensing System (MRL) was being used by 27 local authorities. The Road Management Office continues to engage with the remaining 4 major urban local authorities towards migrating those local authorities to the MRL System. Three of those authorities are in the process of managing some road opening licence applications through the MRL System with a view to migrating fully to it. The one remaining local authority is engaging with the Road Management Office towards identifying how it can progress its migration to the system.

2018 Action: This action has been carried into the 2018 work programme for completion (2018 Action 26).

Action 23: A training and communications programme will be developed and rolled out to local authorities and telecommunications operators to support the implementation of the Purple Book.
Responsible bodies: Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport / local authorities
Action Complete: Yes
Progress Made in 2017: The idea behind this action was to ensure that each local authority and telco operators follow a consistent approach in the application of the Purple Book. Six regional seminars for approximately 300 local authority staff were rolled out in May/June 2017. One further seminar/workshop for local authority staff was held on 27 October 2017. This was followed by a seminar/workshop for telecommunication companies in November 2017 which included material on the Green Book. It is also intended to provide a briefing session for Local Authority Broadband Officers relating to both the Purple Book and Green Book.

Action 24: Transport Infrastructure Ireland will bring forward revised charges in relation to duct access and report on the cost of access to the Taskforce Working Group within six months and annually thereafter.
Responsible bodies: Transport Infrastructure Ireland
Action Complete: Yes
Progress Made in 2017: The Board of TII approved revised charges for access to ducting, including duct rental charge; administration charge and installation supervision charges have also been amended. The changes result in a reduction in cost to telecoms operators accessing the ducts, most particularly in upfront charges. As required by legislation, in relation to the duct rental charge, TII wrote to the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport seeking the approval of the Minister, who must consult with the Minister of Finance and the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment before responding. The Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport subsequently wrote to the other two Ministers in December 2017 seeking their views in the matter.
2018 Action: The finalisation of this process is included in the 2018 Work Programme (2018 Action 17).

Action 25: Transport Infrastructure Ireland will work towards aligning the reinstatement requirements in the TII standards with those in the revised Purple Book where appropriate. TII will report to the Taskforce Working Group on progress at six monthly intervals until the task has been completed.

Responsible bodies: Transport Infrastructure Ireland

Action Complete: Substantially complete

Progress Made in 2017:

The review of reinstatement requirements set out in TII's standards has been completed. Given the broader scope of TII standards, which for example cover aspects not covered in the Purple Book such as excavations at and adjacent to bridges, full alignment of the standards is not feasible. In so far as possible, alignment of the TTI standards with the Purple Book has been achieved. Final consultations with interested parties will be held ahead of the publication as part of the end of March 2018 update of TII standards.

Action 26: Transport Infrastructure Ireland will work to complete the duct installation on 95km of roadway on the M7/M8 corridor between Dublin and Cork.

Responsible bodies: Transport Infrastructure Ireland

Action Complete: Substantially complete

Progress Made in 2017:

Works have been completed on the installation of ducting on the M7 & M8 totalling approximately 90km on the route. A short section of the Kildare Town By-pass remains to be completed due to complications arising from the presence of a tanking membrane beneath the motorway, which will necessitate ducting being installed along the fence line. These works will be completed in Q1 2018. The works in question will result in the creation of end to end duct connectivity between the cities of Cork and Limerick and the M7 at Naas.

Works have also commenced on the installation of ducting on the N40 South Ring Road in Cork. The intention is that these works will result in continuous ducting on the Cork South Ring Road, which will then connect via new ducting to be installed as part of the major Dunkettle Interchange upgrade works with the ducting installed on the M8 and N25.

In 2018 TII will continue the installation of ducting on the N40. In addition TII will undertake limited additional ducting works on the M6 and M9 so as to eliminate existing short un-ducted sections.

2018 Action: The Implementation Group recognises the ongoing valuable work being undertaken by the TII in this regard, and gives formal recognition to the fact that the TII will complete this action and continue to investigate any opportunity for further deployment of ducting in 2018 (2018 Action 6).

Action 27: Review the legislation governing Transport Infrastructure Ireland's and the road authorities' statutory roles and functions in so far as they relate to telecommunications operators accessing the assets under their control or the TII fully exploiting such assets: the Communication Regulation (Premium Rate Services and Electronic Communications Infrastructure) Act 2010; and the Road Acts.
Responsible bodies: Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment / Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport
Action Complete: No – carried forward into 2018.
Progress Made in 2017: There has been active engagement between the Departments and TII with a view to progressing this action. Reviews are being conducted, pending legal advice, on identifying the amendments to be made to both Acts.
2018 Action: This body of work will continue into 2018 (2018 Action 27).

Overview of Consumer Issues

The quality of broadband and mobile phone services vary considerably according to location and type of connection. It is important that consumers are fully aware of the factors that potentially may impact on service quality in their area. Equipping consumers with the right information is an important means of helping them choose the right device and/or provider to maximise the quality of the services that they are paying for. For example, most consumers are unaware of the reasons why mobile phone reception is lost indoors, which can be due to a number of factors including building materials (metal, concrete, wood, and particularly insulation), wall density, the number of windows and building height. It is important that consumers take these factors into account when choosing a product or service and that they know their rights if they have a problem. The Taskforce examined the above issues in great detail, and in each case looked at the current position, the issue at stake and proposed solutions.

Action 28: ComReg will carry out regular testing to determine the sensitivity of mobile phone handsets on the market. The results will be updated at regular intervals. Industry should consider making this information available at point of sale.

Responsible bodies: ComReg

Action Complete: No – carried forward into 2018.

Progress Made in 2017:

Discussion at the National Stakeholder Forum noted that the quality of broadband and mobile phone services vary considerably according to location and type of connection. The importance of ensuring that consumers are fully aware of the factors that potentially may impact on service quality in their area was also highlighted. It was also felt that equipping consumers with the right information was an important means of ensuring that they maximised the quality of the services that they are paying for. The breakout session on consumer issues at the Forum discussed ways to equip consumers with the right information to help them choose the right device and/or provider to ensure they receive the services for which they are paying, as well as ensuring consumers are aware of their rights.

ComReg is committed to implementing a number of projects which are designed to improve the service experience of mobile phone users. The Regulator expects to publish over the coming weeks, the results of tests on the voice call performance of mobile handsets currently on the market in Ireland. These results will improve the ability of consumers to make informed decisions when choosing a mobile device.

2018 Action: Finalising this work is carried over to the 2018 Work Programme (2018 Action 30).

Action 29: A composite national coverage map will be generated from comprehensive data, including data provided by operators and made available by ComReg on its consumer website.
Responsible bodies: ComReg
Action Complete: Ongoing (due for delivery in Q4 2018)
Progress Made in 2017:   ComReg is in the process of developing a "coverage map" to help mobile phone users understand the quality and extent of coverage across Ireland. This map will show coverage across 2G, 3G and 4G platforms for all networks.
2018 Action: This work will continue into 2018. (2018 Action 31).

Action 30: In line with provisions in respect of contracts and transparency under the existing Universal Services Regulations, a breakdown of contract costs including monthly handset and services costs will be made available to consumers.
Responsible bodies: ComReg / telecommunications operators
Action Complete: Yes
Progress Made in 2017:   The Regulator updated its public Annual Action Plan with a related action in Q1 2017 to "Engage with telecommunications operators regarding awareness of end-user contract costs". In this respect, ComReg has now collected relevant information from mobile phone service providers and has issued a request to industry to publish a set of frequently asked consumer questions (FAQs). These FAQs will greatly improve consumers' information when purchasing handsets. ComReg provides links to these FAQs on its own website: https://www.comreg.ie/mobile-contracts-transparency-faqs/   ComReg's new price comparison tool www.comreg.ie/compare is now live. The tool offers increased functionality to consumers including the ability to view packages by total cost or average monthly cost; handset costs are also listed and there is a mobile phone application (App) to calculate usage on an Android smartphone and/or the facility to upload a bill allowing consumers make more informed decisions.

Action 31: Both Service Providers and ComReg will make their complaints procedures readily available to consumers on all issues relating to mobile phone and broadband services.
Responsible bodies: ComReg / telecommunications operators
Action Complete: Yes
Progress Made in 2017: In June 2017, ComReg published its Decision on new minimum requirements for Service Providers' Codes of Practice for complaint handling. Service Providers had to implement these by 1 January 2018, and the new measures will greatly assist consumers (including businesses) if they need to complain to their service provider. ComReg has completed its online campaign to create awareness of the new obligations on service providers from January 2018. The Regulator has also presented to the Broadband Officers in local authorities on these new obligations as well as on ComReg's complaints handling service.

Action 32: The Advertising Standards Authority should undertake a review of advertising of telecommunications services. Individual operators should review their own advertising to ensure they are not creating a false or misleading impression.
Responsible bodies: Advertising Standards Authority / telecommunications operators
Action Complete: Yes
Progress Made in 2017: The Advertising Standards Authority (ASAI) has completed its Review of Advertising by Telecommunications Services. In relation to the actions that the ASAI are in position to undertake, the Authority considers that further guidance on advertising for telecommunications services should be developed. The ASAI will examine how best to progress this action during 2018.
2018 Action: As a follow up exercise to the completion of the review of advertising of telecoms services, the Advertising Standards Authority will develop guidelines for telecommunications operators on advertising of telecommunications services during 2018. (2018 Action 24).

Action 33: ComReg will engage with a suitable third party to produce a publication that sets out a five year forecast of data traffic that is reviewed, updated at regular intervals and made available on ComReg's website. Examples of forecast items include: 1. Mobile data volumes/ speeds and 2. Fixed broadband connections/speeds.

Responsible bodies: ComReg / telecommunications operators

Action Complete: Ongoing

Progress Made in 2017:

ComReg has commenced work on this action. On a quarterly basis, comprehensive data is provided to ComReg by operators on a range of fixed and mobile data traffic usage, including: data from mobile operators on total traffic for 3G and 4G subscriptions; data from fixed operators on traffic type by technology including ADSL, Fibre to the Cabinet, Fibre to the home/premises (FTTH), fixed wireless access, cable and satellite. Comprehensive historical data is also available that will provide a solid platform for the development of future data trend predictions.

Telco operators have indicated that they are ready to engage with ComReg on this matter. The Rural Internet Service Providers association has also indicated that it will co-ordinate responses from its membership to ensure that there is accurate representation of its customers and communities.

2018 Action: Work will continue on producing a publication that sets out a five-year forecast of data traffic with a view to publishing the forecast in line with the headline action. This action has been included in the 2018 work programme (2018 Action 28).

Action 34: Adequate funding will be made available to support the commitment in the Programme for a Partnership Government to accelerate the rollout of infrastructure including funding to local authorities to assign officers with responsibility for broadband.

Responsible bodies: Department of Rural and Community Development

Action Complete: Yes

Progress Made in 2017:

DRCD has provided financial support (€35,000 p.a.) to all 31 local authorities to co-fund the assignment of a Broadband Officer in their area in 2017 and 2018. The role of the Broadband Officer is to act as the dedicated local point of contact with responsibility for promoting telecommunications infrastructure development and to act as the liaison with telecoms operators on coverage and rollout issues. DRCD continues to engage with local authorities through the Regional Action Groups and on a bilateral basis. DRCD is also supporting all local authorities on the development of a local digital strategy for their locality.

Action 35: Mobile network operators will be more proactive in social inclusiveness and in meeting the specific needs of more vulnerable groups.

Responsible bodies: Telecommunications operators

Action Complete: Yes

Progress Made in 2017:

A lot of work was done by operators in this area throughout 2017. Examples of activities that were undertaken over the last quarter include:

Responsible Connectivity: Virgin Media has developed a range of information toolkits for customers including: Parental Controls: a service that restricts access to websites that contain age inappropriate content while connected to your home broadband; Online safety toolkits: designed to target specific age groups and are compiled by world experts – for example, Play and Learn: Being Online: for children aged 4-8 years and available in 16 languages; Family eSafety Kit: for children aged 6-12 years and available in 18 languages; The Web We Want: for young people aged 13-16 years. Partnership with the National Parent's Council: designed to support parents worried about Internet safety through training programmes online.

Vodafone is continuing its community outreach programme including national smartphone clinics for the elderly. This is just one element of their community engagement and broader Corporate Responsibility agenda.

Eir is active on an ongoing basis with a range of vulnerable groups. These include: The National Council of the Blind Ireland to provide tech training classes for children and young people with sight loss; Age Action to run volunteer led technology training programmes for older people; Sponsorship of the open eir Silver Surfer awards highlighting the benefits internet access brings to the lives of older people; Camera Ireland to train teachers throughout Leinster DEIS schools to ensure they are equipped to use technology to teach children.

Mobile network operators will continue to participate in social initiatives and programmes to meet the specific needs of vulnerable groups.

Action 36: Local digital strategies will be developed in each Local Authority Area to ensure that the benefits of infrastructure development under the NBP are fully realised from an economic and social perspective.

Responsible bodies: Department of Rural and Community Development / Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment / local authorities

Action Complete: No – carried forward into 2018.

Progress Made in 2017:

DRCD, supported by DCCAE, has engaged external consultants to work with all 31 local authorities to provide support for the development of a local digital strategy for their area. The consultants are commencing engagement with individual local authorities to gather specific information to inform the preparation of digital readiness assessments for each local authority.

The development of local digital strategies will ensure that local authorities are primed to take advantage of high-speed broadband coverage over the coming years.

2018 Action: Work on this project will continue into next year and this action has been included in the 2018 work programme (2018 Action 34).

Chapter 5: Network Improvement

Overview of Network Improvement

Network performance is of fundamental importance to the level and quality of service provided by the operators to consumers now and into the future. Optimising performance to take account of changing demands, weather conditions, line problems and available relevant data are key factors in ensuring that the ongoing increase in demand on the networks can continue to be met. It is imperative that operators actively manage their networks through constant evaluation and optimisation. Failure to adequately manage networks will often lead to a poor user experience and service complaints to the operator, or to The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission.

Enhanced network performance has a key role to play in delivering wider benefits to consumers. For example, all new cars in Ireland must be equipped with an "eCall device" from 31 March 2018. An eCall device will trigger an emergency call in the event of a collision. Information on the accident, especially the location, will be sent to the emergency services. All mobile network operators will treat these emergency calls in the same way as any other emergency call. The difference is that the emergency services will be able to locate the vehicle from coordinates transmitted by the eCall device. A non-responsive driver will not hamper the efforts of the emergency services.

The Taskforce examined in considerable detail issues related to network performance, with the sub-group bilaterally meeting each of the three network providers. In each case the Taskforce looked at the current position, the issues and proposed solutions.

Action 37: ComReg will develop a licensing scheme allowing the use of mobile phone repeaters to help address the issue of indoor coverage, particularly in rural areas.

Responsible bodies: ComReg

Action Complete: No – carried forward into 2018

Progress Made in 2017:

Indoor coverage is regularly raised as an issue impacting many rural households. However, there is a relative dearth of research and solutions. As a result, ComReg has taken the decision to conduct extensive research into commonly used building materials for domestic dwellings. It is strongly suspected that the levels of insulation currently used in houses is a significant impediment to indoor coverage as heat and radio signals are part of the same electromagnetic spectrum (keeping heat in by default keeps radio signals out).

ComReg has identified two potential solutions: native Wi-Fi calling and the use of high standard repeaters. Native Wi-Fi calling is for the Mobile Network Operators to implement (some operators have already introduced this service to their customers and others are currently looking at it). To facilitate the use of repeaters by the general public, ComReg is conducting background research on the feasibility of the introduction of mobile phone repeaters that are beyond network control. ComReg published a consultation document on 8 December 2017 (https://www.comreg.ie/publication/mobile-phone-repeaters-consultation/).

2018 Action: A final decision is expected in Q2 2018. This work will continue into 2018 (2018 Action 29).

Action 38: Wireless and fixed network operators will report quarterly to the Taskforce Implementation Group on activities undertaken to optimise the performance of their networks.

Responsible bodies: Telecommunications operators

Action Complete: Yes

Progress Made in 2017:

The establishment of regular information sharing mechanisms to improve the flow of information from telecoms operators to local authorities in relation to updated location specific information on coverage and network improvements is crucial to bringing about tangible results in identifying solutions to issues impacting on mobile phone and broadband services. A mechanism to provide regular updates from operators to assist the work of the Broadband Officers is being prepared by DRCD and DCCAE. While this action is complete, operators will continue to provide updates to the Taskforce Implementation Group on activities undertaken to optimise the performance of their networks.

Action 39: All operators will introduce WiFi calling, Voice over Long Term Evolution (VoLTE) and other network feature and functionality enhancements at the earliest juncture and report on progress to the Taskforce Implementation Group.

Responsible bodies: Telecommunications operators

Action Complete: Ongoing

Progress Made in 2017:

The following updates have been provided by telecommunication operators:

- WiFi calling and VoLTE are on their technology roadmap and will be introduced to the market.

- Virgin Media launched Project Lightning last year, which is a digital infrastructure investment programme that will extend the reach of their cable footprint from 49% today to 60% of all Irish homes by 2020. To date the network has been extended to reach Ballina, Drogheda, Dundalk, Ennis, Enniscorthy, Gorey, Greystones, Kildare and Tullamore, Wexford, Castlebar, Arklow. Free wifi has been installed in a number of these towns so the local community get to experience lightning speeds for free.

- eir launched WiFi calling in early 2017 and since its launch, eir have extended its range of supported products. There has been positive feedback from customers and eir have plans to continue to extend its device capability range over the coming months.

2018 Action: Telecoms operators will continue to report to the Taskforce Implementation Group on an ongoing basis in relation to network features and functionality enhancements (2018 Action 33). Additionally, mobile operators who have not yet done so will introduce WiFi calling to enable mobile users to make calls over 4G (2018 Action 13).

Action 40: A review will be undertaken to address the issue of blackspots to include recommendations on initiatives to address the issue, taking account of the various innovative options available.

Responsible bodies: Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment

Action Complete: Yes

Progress Made in 2017:

The review to identify recommendations to address blackspots was completed. The recommendations identified included:

- Expediting a number of existing taskforce initiatives and actions, for example, extending the exemptions to planning regulations, implementing a consistent local authority and NRA infrastructure pricing framework etc.

- Further development of the project assisting local authorities and operators to jointly identify sites to address critical blackspot locations (Action 17)

- Initiation of a focus group to identify specific categories of locations where high quality mobile coverage should be available, to inform future policy development and initiatives.

2018 Action: Concluding the work of the focus group to identify specific categories of locations where high quality mobile coverage should be available, to inform future policy development and initiatives, is included in the 2018 Work Programme (2018 Action 15).

2018 Work Programme

Continuing Structures for Ongoing Dialogue

In the course of work carried out in 2017, many different structures were set up facilitating dialogue between key stakeholders. The establishment of these structures met the requirements of specific 2017 actions. The positive effects of putting in place these structures have proved invaluable, going above and beyond what was originally anticipated. In that regard, although the relevant 2017 actions are now considered complete, certain structures will continue in force in 2018 to build on the progress made in 2017 and to ensure delivery of the 2018 Work Programme. These are shown in the table below.

Group	Frequency of meeting
Implementation Group *The Implementation Group is chaired by Minister Naughten and Minister of State Kyne. It drives and monitors implementation of the Taskforce actions, with membership comprising all key stakeholders responsible for delivery.*	Quarterly
Road Openings Monitoring Committee *The Monitoring Committee includes senior officials from DTTAS, DCCAE, DRCD and DHPLG. The LGMA, CCMA and RMO are also represented. The Committee's remit includes examining barriers identified by stakeholders as impacting on the rollout of telecommunications infrastructure and utility works and, where appropriate, make recommendations for prioritised, cost effective measures to address these.*	Quarterly
Stakeholder (Users) Forum *The Stakeholder (Users) Forum will establish a transparent engagement and feedback process between local authorities and utilities to address day-to-day operational matters related to road opening processes.*	Quarterly
Regional Action Groups *The Northern and Southern Broadband Regional Action Groups will continue to review and address barriers identified by stakeholders as impacting on the rollout of telecommunications infrastructure. The Regional Action Groups will continue to meet regularly and act as a means of engagement between Departments and the local authorities.*	Bimonthly
National Stakeholder Forum *The National Stakeholder Forum brings together key stakeholders to engage in an open dialogue on issues impacting on the rollout of telecommunications infrastructure. It affords an opportunity for stakeholders to highlight any barriers being experienced in the implementation of actions identified by the Taskforce, and to suggest new recommendations for the Taskforce Implementation Group to adopt in its subsequent Work Programme in order to accelerate the provision of improved services to consumers.*	Annual

The agreed list of actions included in the 2018 work programme for the Taskforce Implementation Group incorporates a small number of items carried over from 2017 for completion and a range of new measures. The new actions included are as a direct result of discussions throughout the year with action holders and other key stakeholders, in addition to feedback received from attendees at the National Forum held in October 2017.

Actions are centred round the potential for developing policies, legislative matters, raising consumer awareness and improving communications streams. Implementation of the measures outlined for delivery during 2018 will result in increased efficiencies and streamlining of processes for siting of telecoms infrastructure, greater information sharing between action holders to resolve emerging issues, and a higher level of consumer awareness on available products and services and complaints procedures.

Legislative Issues/Processes				
No.	*Action*	*Lead Body*	*Timeline for Delivery*	*Impact*
1	Revise the Guidance on the Potential Location of Overground Telecommunications Infrastructure on Public Roads (Green Book).	Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (supported by Transport Infrastructure Ireland and CCMA)	Q4 2018	A relevant and tested Green Book, along with strong, productive engagement between telecommunications operators and TII will allow for quicker roll-out of infrastructure. It is vital the Green Book is used consistently and is subject to ongoing review as necessary.
2	Review the Section 254 licence application process and associated guidance. Identify need for additional guidance and/or legislative changes	County and City Management Association	Q4 2018	Better regulation of activity. Improved efficiency and consistency in application of the processes.

3	Revise the guidelines for Development Contribution Schemes to ensure any waivers apply to both mobile phone and broadband.	Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government	Q1 2018	Removal of existing discrepancies in application and interpretation of development contributions will enable increased placement of telecommunications infrastructure.
4	Undertake a review of planning applications for the renewal of temporary permissions for mobile phone masts.	Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government	Q4 2018	Will provide consistency of application and clarity on conditions for the renewal of temporary permissions for mobile phone masts.
5	Agree a protocol for periodic engagement on general planning matters, including exempted development provisions, between the DHPLG and the industry, in conjunction with DCCAE.	Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government	Q1 2018	Will ensure planning system is responsive to developments in the telecommunications sector.
6	Install ducting on new national primary/secondary roads and engage in consultation with industry on where additional ducting is required to improve coverage.	Transport Infrastructure Ireland	Ongoing	A wider network of ducting will result in telecoms operators being able to deploy end-to-end infrastructure.
7	Establish structures to enable greater coordination amongst telcos on: ■ Engaging with Broadband Officers at the preplanning stage of new planning applications; and ■ Sharing of telecoms Infrastructure.	Telecommunications and Internet Federation	Ongoing	Increased engagement will result in streamlining of applications and greater information sharing leading ultimately to improved telecoms infrastructure and services.
8	Monitor progress on (i) the implementation of the Guidelines for Managing Openings in Public Roads (Purple Book) and (ii) the general efficiencies of Monitoring Committee and Stakeholder (User) Forum.	Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport	Ongoing	Ongoing monitoring will help early identification and addressing of any issues arising.

9	Monitor progress on the implementation of the nationally agreed pricing framework for road opening licences.	County and City Management Association	Ongoing	Ongoing monitoring will help early identification and required action to address any issues arising.
10	Working with stakeholders, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport will lead the development of a roadmap over the course of 2018, setting out the key issues to be considered in response to the ongoing developments in relation to Connected and Automated Vehicles, taking account of emerging and evolving EU and international policies and approaches to the sector.	Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport	Q4 2018	Roadmap will identify key issues to be addressed.
11	Consider the need to develop guidance on alternative methods to trenching such as micro-trenching for application across all local authority areas.	Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (supported by Transport Infrastructure Ireland and CCMA)	Q4 2018	Clear guidance on the application of micro-trenching across all local authority areas.
12	Expand the mobile coverage blackspots pilot project to encompass all 31 local authority areas.	Department of Rural and Community Development	Q2 2018	Addressing blackspot locations will result in improved mobile phone coverage for consumers.
13	Geo-code all new ducting and make information on the ducting accessible to local authorities – where practicable, feasible and there are no security issues.	County and City Management Association	Ongoing	Awareness of ducting location will enable the deployment of telecoms infrastructure.
14	All mobile operators to introduce WiFi calling to enable mobile users to make phone calls over 4G.	Telecommunications and Internet Federation	Ongoing	The introduction of WiFi calling will support higher quality calls and connect calls faster than over the traditional cellular network.

No.	Action	Lead Body	Timeline for Delivery	Impact
15	Establish a focus group to provide guidance with respect to categories of location where high quality reliable mobile coverage should be made available as a priority taking account of consumer expectations.	Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment	Q1 2018	A ranked list of categories of location, where high quality and reliable mobile coverage should be available, will inform future policy in respect of mobile voice and data services.
16	Ensure that broadband and mobile phone infrastructure providers have access to new on-line facilities for planning applications as part of the new e-planning arrangements.	Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government	Q4 2018	An efficient online ePlanning application system will result in greater efficiencies for local authorities and telecoms operators through time savings and reduced costs.

Policy				
No.	*Action*	*Lead Body*	*Timeline for Delivery*	*Impact*
17	The Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport to consider Transport Infrastructure Ireland request for revised duct access charge on receipt of views from the Ministers for Finance, and Communications, Climate Action and Environment.	Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport	Q1 2018	Clarity around the charges relating to duct access.
18	Develop and publish a policy for all local authorities around access to and use of infrastructure. To be supported by maps of available infrastructure across the country and guidelines on where infrastructure can and cannot be located.	County and City Management Association	Q4 2018	Will enable telecoms operators to access appropriate locations to house infrastructure and equipment so as to effectively reach the widest possible number of consumers.
19	Establish a working group to explore the feasibility of developing a standardised policy for accessing and utilising State assets for the	Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment/ Department of Rural	Q2 2018	Greater use of State assets to house telecommunications infrastructure will deliver improved

No.	Action	Lead Body	Timeline for Delivery	Impact
	deployment of telecoms infrastructure.	and Community Development		broadband and mobile coverage.
20	Explore the feasibility of developing a database for sharing of telecoms operator information and local authority infrastructure information.	Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment/ Department of Rural and Community Development	Q3 2018	The availability of a database will facilitate enhanced information sharing between stakeholders.
21	Review the role of Broadband Officers in order to clearly define and standardise the scope of the role across all local authorities. In addition put in place structures to provide a greater level of support to Broadband Officers.	Department of Rural and Community Development/County and City Management Association	Q2 2018	Strengthening of support for Broadband Officers will assist them in acting as a valuable liaison between industry and the local community on telecoms matters.

Communications				
No.	Action	Lead Body	Timeline for Delivery	Impact
22	Commence the production of a National Digital Strategy, to set out a vision for Ireland to reap the full rewards of a digitally enabled society.	Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment	Ongoing	The Strategy will encourage and assist more citizens and small businesses to get on line.
23	Improved dissemination of information on developments in high-speed broadband, and awareness raising of its benefits: ■ Broadband Officers to engage with PPNs to increase community awareness around high-speed broadband. ■ Communications at local level to address concerns arising from proposed siting of masts.	County and City Management Association	Ongoing	Improved public awareness of measures being undertaken to deliver improved telecoms services.
24	The Advertising Standards Authority to develop guidelines for telecommunications operators on advertising of telecommunications services.	Advertising Standards Authority	Q4 2018	Consumer awareness will be increased on the technical aspects of services provided by telecoms operators.

Ongoing Actions from 2017				
No.	Action	Lead Body	Timeline for Delivery	Impact
25	**(Former 2017 Action 2)** Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment and Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government will complete the necessary legislation to ensure that all new-builds are broadband enabled, including mandating that ducting is in place to facilitate connection to high-speed networks.	Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment/ Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government	Q4 2018	If high-speed broadband is included in building regulations, the requirement to facilitate installation in future new build homes and businesses will be a given.
26	**(Former 2017 Action 22)** The MapRoad Roadworks Licensing System will be utilised by practically all local authorities and road opening licencing applicants as the single national centralised road opening licensing system.	Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport/ local authorities / telecommunications operators	Q4 2018	A more efficient and standardised application process will be in place across local authorities in relation to road openings.
27	**(Former 2017 Action 27)** Formulate legislative proposals that may be required to deal with issues arising from the review of legislation governing TII's and the road authorities' statutory roles and functions in so far as they relate to telecommunications operators accessing the assets under their control or TII fully exploiting such assets: - the Communication Regulation (Premium Rate Services and Electronic Communications Infrastructure) Act 2010; and - the Road Acts.	Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment/ Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport	Q4 2018	This will allow for greater clarity in the processes, timelines and charging regimes in so far as they relate to consents for telecoms operators accessing the assets under TII and local authority control.

28	**(Former 2017 Action 33)** ComReg will engage a suitable third party to produce a publication that sets out a five year forecast of data traffic that is reviewed, updated at regular intervals and made available on ComReg's website. Examples of forecast items include 1. Mobile data volumes/ speeds 2. Fixed broadband connections/speeds.	ComReg/ telecommunications operators	Q1 2018	Better network planning by operators to ensure they keep pace with consumer demand for services.
29	**(Former 2017 Action 37)** ComReg will introduce a scheme allowing the use of accredited mobile phone repeaters to help address the issue of indoor coverage, particularly in rural areas.	ComReg	Q2 2018	Improve the quality of indoor mobile coverage, particularly in rural areas.
30	**(Former 2017 Action 28)** ComReg to finalise testing to determine the sensitivity of mobile phone handsets on the market, and make data publicly available.	ComReg	Q1 2018	Enhanced consumer information and potential increased competition on key factors such as mobile handset signal performance. Leading to better consumer choice.
31	**(Former 2017 Action 29)** ComReg to publish on its consumer website a composite national coverage map, outlining telecoms operator coverage information.	ComReg	Q4 2018	Consumers will be better informed when choosing providers.
32	**(Former 2017 Action 7)** Initiate a focussed review of the statutory Planning Guidelines (1996 and 2012 update), and amend as required, to reflect changes in telecommunications sector.	Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government	Q4 2018	Consistency in interpretation and implementation of guidelines by local authorities; Guidelines will keep apace with newer forms of technology.

33	**(Former 2017 Action 39)** Each telco to produce a quarterly report to the Taskforce Implementation Group on network enhancements, new services and future plans and the benefits to consumers of their products and services.	Telecommunications and Internet Federation	Ongoing	Customer experience improved by optimising innovative technology.
34	**(Former 2017 Action 36)** Each local authority should have a Local Digital Strategy, encompassing a digital readiness assessment, in place to support the evolving needs of the digital society and to ensure that the full benefits of the enhanced telecoms infrastructure delivered by the NBP rollout are felt by businesses and communities across the country.	Department of Rural and Community Development/ County and City Management Association	Q4 2018	Local digital strategies will help ensure that business and communities are in a position to realise the full benefit of the NBP once it is rolled out across the country.

Glossary

ASAI	Advertising Standards Authority for Ireland – the independent self-regulatory body set up and financed by the advertising industry and committed, in the public interest, to promoting the highest standards of marketing communications, that is, advertising, promotional marketing and direct marketing. www.asai.ie
CCMA	Country and City Management Association – the "representative voice" of the local government management network. Its members are Chief Executives of the County and City Councils and the Assistant Chief Executives of Dublin City Council. www.lgma.ie/en/CCMA
ComReg	Commission for Communications Regulation – the statutory body responsible for the regulation of the electronic communications sector (telecommunications, radio communications, broadcasting transmission and premium rate services) and the postal sector. www.comreg.ie
DCCAE	Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment www.dccae.gov.ie
DHPLG	Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government www.housing.gov.ie
DRCD	Department of Rural and Community Development www.drcd.gov.ie
DTTAS	Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport www.dttas.ie
Green Book	*Guidance on the Potential Location of Overground Telecommunications Infrastructure on Public Roads* is designed to address the engineering appropriateness of siting telecommunications equipment on the roads network. The Green Book can be found on the DTTAS website at: www.dttas.ie
LA	Local Authority
LGMA	Local Government Management Agency – a state agency of DHPLG established to provide a range of services to the Local Government Sector in support of co-ordinated and cost effective delivery of Local Government services and policy www.lgma.ie
MANs	Metropolitan Area Networks – these are networks that consist of telecoms ducting and fibre optic cable, laid in a ring formation in a metropolitan area. More information is available on the DCCAE website at www.dccae.gov.ie
Mbps	Megabits per second
MRL	MapRoad Roadworks Licensing is the new national system for the management and processing of roadworks licence applications.
NBP	National Broadband Plan – a Government-wide initiative to deliver high-speed broadband services to all businesses and households in Ireland. The NBP defines high-speed broadband as a minimum speed of 30Mbps download and 6Mbps upload. This is being achieved through a combination of commercial investment by the telecommunications sector and a State Intervention in those areas where commercial providers acting alone will not provide this essential service. For more information, visit www.broadband.gov.ie

NDS	National Digital Strategy – a Government policy setting out a vision and a number of practical actions and steps to encourage and assist more citizens and small businesses to get on line. More information is available on the DCCAE website at www.dccae.gov.ie
PPN	Public Participation Network - formal networks that allow local authorities to connect with community groups around the country. More information can be found on the DRCD website at: www.drcd.gov.ie
Purple Book	The *Guidelines for Managing Openings in Public Roads* set out a summary of the legal framework relating to powers of road authorities, various statutory bodies and private individuals in opening or forming openings in public roads in Ireland. The document prescribes standards in respect of the work of forming openings, backfilling and the reinstatement of road surfaces and the associated materials to be used on all roads other than National Roads. Furthermore the document prescribes procedures and requirements in relation to the use of MRL and its use for all road openings in public roads other than those carried out by a road authority. The Purple Book can be found on the DTTAS website at: www.dttas.ie
RAGs	Regional Action Groups
RMO	Road Management Office – a local authority shared service to develop and provide supports to roads authorities in the development of best practice and supporting ICT tools for road pavement management and road licensing. www.rmo.ie
Telcos	Telecommunications Operators
TIF	Telecommunications and Internet Federation – a representative body for industry and associated interest groups in the field of electronic communications, representing companies involved in fixed, mobile, wireless, fixed wireless, satellite and cable based service provisions, outsourcing and internet service provision. www.tif.ie
TII	Transport Infrastructure Ireland – TII's primary function is to provide an integrated approach to the future development and operation of the national roads network and light rail infrastructure throughout Ireland. www.tii.ie