



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Mobile Phone & Broadband Taskforce

Quarterly Progress Report – Q3 2018

Prepared by the Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment
and the Department of Rural and Community Development

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Background

The Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce was established in July 2016 arising from the Programme for a Partnership commitment to identify solutions to broadband and 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 Taskforce published its final report¹ in December 2016, which set out 40 actions aimed at alleviating the issues that it identified.

An Implementation Group was established in 2017 to oversee the timely implementation of all the actions of the Taskforce's report. This Group is now chaired by Minister of State for Natural Resources, Community Affairs and Digital Development, Sean Canney T.D.

The Group published its 2017 Review² on 21 February 2018, which outlined progress made on each action, as well as identifying 34 new actions for delivery in 2018.

This is the third quarterly progress report on the 2018 Work Programme of the Implementation Group. It outlines progress made on 10 actions ongoing and/or due for delivery in Quarter 3. It also provides an update on 5 actions for Q1 and Q2 which were previously reported as delayed.

Summary of Progress Made

Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTAS)

The Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport has considered and approved the revision of duct access rental charges, which will encourage the development of telecommunications infrastructure by operators. Delivery of this action will bring more clarity around duct access rental charges and will lower costs for operators.

¹ <https://www.dccae.gov.ie/documents/Taskforce%20Report.pdf>

² <https://www.dccae.gov.ie/documents/Taskforce-Implementation-Review-2017.pdf>

DTTAS also continues to monitor the implementation of the Guidelines for Managing Openings in Public Roads (Purple Book) with a number of meetings of the JULA (Joint Utility Local Authority Users Group) held in Q3. The Group offers a vehicle for ongoing engagement between the utilities and local authorities, and is providing a valuable forum for dialogue.

Telecommunications Industry Federation (TIF)

TIF once again mentioned the invaluable role played by Broadband Officers in every local authority and highlighted again that the Broadband Officer position is key to the deployment of infrastructure throughout the country. Their local knowledge and understanding of the sector continues to prove very helpful in facilitating a fast and efficient rollout.

The cooperation between telecommunication operators continues to work well on the ground with a number of bespoke commercial agreements in place to reduce costs through a variety of mechanisms, including the sharing of mast infrastructure, sharing of trench openings, infrastructure swaps, duct or sub-duct rental and managed services. This increased engagement results in greater information sharing which in turn leads to improved telecoms infrastructure deployment.

Mobile operators are gradually introducing WiFi calling to enable mobile users to make indoor phone calls over fixed broadband services. Whilst WiFi calling relies upon a high-speed broadband connection, operators who have already introduced the service see a very strong usage by their customers. This will support higher quality calls and connect calls faster than over the traditional mobile phone coverage network. In rural areas WiFi calling can address poor indoor coverage issues. It is anticipated that two of the three mobile operators will provide this service by the end of Q1 2019.

Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG)

The protocol for periodic engagement on general planning matters between DHPLG and industry has now been finalised and agreed. An initial meeting with industry will be held in the new year, which will ensure that the planning system is responsive to developments in the telecommunications sector.

This protocol will enable DHPLG to engage with TIF and other representative bodies on a range of planning related matters. The review of planning applications for the renewal of temporary permissions for mobile phone masts as well as the review of the statutory planning guidelines will now also be progressed through this forum. Such engagement will ensure a consistency of approach and implementation of guidelines by local authorities which in turn, should improve efficiency, save time and reduce costs.

County and City Management Association (CCMA)

The CCMA has now implemented standardised application fees for road opening licences nationally and is monitoring its impact nationwide. Delivery of a standardised National Charging Framework has been a key delivery of the Implementation Group and will provide certainty to operators over road opening charges across the country. In addition, there is also a general agreement between the sector and TIF on the implementation of the National Deposit Scheme, which will start in Q1 2019.

Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DCCAIE)

The State Assets Working Group, led by DCCAIE and DRCD, with the remit of investigating the feasibility of developing standardised policy for accessing and utilising State and publicly owned assets for the deployment of telecommunications infrastructure, is progressing well. The Group is currently finalising a Government Policy Statement with the intention of submitting it to Cabinet before end Q1 2019. The Policy Statement will attempt to leverage State and publicly owned assets suitable for the housing and deployment of telecommunications infrastructure. This has the potential to greatly improve mobile and broadband coverage, particularly in rural areas.

Looking towards Q4

A number of actions are due for delivery by the end of Q4 of this year. A brief synopsis on the state of play of the relevant actions is provided below.

ComReg continues to progress the development of its composite national coverage map. The relevant data has been gathered from mobile operators and is being verified and collated in a single map. Once published on ComReg's website, consumers will be able to access clear

information on which operator covers their area best, across 2G, 3G and 4G, allowing them to make informed decisions when choosing a provider. Work on the map is progressing well and ComReg is on track to deliver this map before the end of the year.

The new e-Planning system, a project started by DHPLG and now being managed and developed by LGMA, is currently being tested, with a view to rolling out a pilot next year. Online access to the planning services will facilitate not only the infrastructure applications, but also the appeal process and associated payment of fees and will streamline the entire planning process. This will greatly improve the experience of all involved in the planning stage of infrastructure deployment and will result in an overall faster and more efficient procedure.

The Department of Rural and Community Development continues to support all local authorities in the development of their local digital strategies. A guidance document has been produced by Indecon and circulated to all local authorities as well as substantial reference material. In addition, one-to-one sessions are planned between local authorities and Indecon in order to provide further support. A number of strategies have already been completed, with more to be published over the coming months.

Next Steps

As well as focusing their efforts towards delivering all actions due by year end in a timely fashion, the Implementation Group is now working on developing the 2019 work programme. A number of potential actions for next year have already started to emerge from various interactions with stakeholders and are currently being reviewed. The ever evolving work of the Taskforce is such that some actions currently marked as 'ongoing' may be carried forward into next year's work programme, either as currently worded or with additional provisions. In addition, discussions that took place during the National Stakeholder Forum in October are providing a rich source of data for potential 2019 actions.

The Minister recognises the tremendous amount of work that has been achieved by the Taskforce so far, and re-affirms the need for a timely completion of the 2018 Work Programme. He also acknowledges that the cooperation within the Implementation Group and amongst action holders is what drives delivery and plays a huge role in improving the

environment for the rollout of telecommunications infrastructures. The Minister urged all action holders to redouble their efforts as we move towards the end of 2018.

The Q4 progress report will be published in early 2019 and will include a review of all actions encompassed in the 2018 Work Programme, as well as setting out the 2019 Work Programme.

Action 6			
Install ducting on new national primary/secondary roads and engage in consultation with industry on where additional ducting is required to improve coverage.			
Timeline	Status	Lead body	Supporting bodies
Ongoing	In Progress	TII	None
<p>Ducting work has been completed on the originally targeted gap sections on the network, covering the M7, M8 and N25 Middleton to Little Island.</p> <p>Next steps:</p> <p>Further ducting works are planned for early 2019. In addition to the planned replacement of ducts, TII has commenced a process of “proving” older sections of duct to ensure their adequacy to accommodate fibre infrastructure. TII has consequently undertaken the replacement of deficient ducting (pre-2003) on the M8 at Watergrasshill. In addition, TII plans in Q1 2019 to commence installation of approximately 40km of ducting on the M18 from Shannon to Limerick and on the Limerick Southern Ring Phase 1, sections of the network which predated the practice of duct installation. This will result in ducting being available on the full M17/M18 corridor from Tuam to Limerick.</p> <p>Special duct installation will also be undertaken on the tanked section of the M7 Kildare Town by-pass, where conventional installation of ducting is precluded by the tanking membrane on this short section. It is anticipated that the planned works will result in ducting being installed on all of the M4, M6, M7, M8, M9, M17 & M18 routes apart from a short section between Kilcullen and Newbridge on the M9. In this case, if there is interest from industry TII will consider installation of ducting on this section also.</p>			

Action 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.			
Timeline	Status	Lead body	Supporting bodies
Ongoing	In Progress	TIF	None
<p>Update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing discussion with Broadband Officers to promote pre-planning meeting where helpful. • Structures in place for sharing of telecoms Infrastructure. (commercial discussions will take place from time-to-time but no further structures needed). • Broadband Officers continue to develop their roles within the local authorities and are becoming key facilitators for operators to engage with officials at the early stages of infrastructure development, through the applications process and into the deployment phases. • Mast infrastructure sharing has been sufficiently developed by mobile operators and tower companies and is operating effectively. • Broadband operators have bespoke commercial agreements to reduce costs through a variety of mechanisms including the sharing of trench openings, infrastructure swops, duct or sub-duct rental and managed services. <p>Next steps:</p> <p>Companies to continue engagements with Broadband Officers to deepen their understanding of the sectors' needs and its desire to access local authority owned infrastructure at appropriate rates to assist deployment decisions.</p> <p>Publication of local authority telecoms infrastructure assets and terms of rental/leasing would greatly enhance the early feasibility studies of competitive broadband deployment especially if the Broadband Officers had this information available.</p>			

Action 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.			
Timeline	Status	Lead body	Supporting bodies
Ongoing	In Progress	DTTAS	None
<p>Update:</p> <p>DTTAS continues to monitor implementation of the Purple Book and the Monitoring Committee meets as necessary in that regard. In addition, the Joint Utilities Local Authority Users Forum continues to meet under joint chairs selected by the Forum members, and is now recognised by participants as a hugely valuable structure that will make a significant contribution to further improving relations between utilities and local authorities.</p>			

Next steps:

Joint Chairs of Users Forum (JULA) to be invited to next meeting of the Monitoring Committee towards an update on progress achieved to date together with an outline of issues to be considered/addressed in 2019.

Action 9

Monitor progress on the implementation of the nationally agreed pricing framework for road opening licences.

Timeline	Status	Lead body	Supporting bodies
Ongoing	In Progress	CCMA	None

Update:

Standardised application fees and Long-Term Impact (LTI) charges have been implemented nationally. There is also general agreement between the sector and TIF (IBEC) on the implementation of a National Deposit Scheme. The Joint Utility/Local Authority Forum continue to meet and these engagements are proving to be both beneficial and productive.

Next steps:

The CCMA will move to “median” rates for Long-Term Impact charges under the National Charging Framework from January 2019. It is envisioned that a National Deposit Scheme will also be implemented in January 2019.

Action 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.

Timeline	Status	Lead body	Supporting bodies
Ongoing	In Progress	CCMA	None

Update:

An application for funding under the Digital Innovation Programme by Mayo CoCo has been approved by the Department of Rural and Community Development. The project will produce a detailed GIS map of underground assets such as ducts and cables in the county. The Maproad Roadworks Licensing system records locations of road openings but not the detail of ducting. Location drawings are available, a requirement of the Purple Book, but geo-coding this data will make it more readily available for the first time.

Next steps:

Geo-coding of new ducts could come under the remit of Broadband Office Support Unit as this proposal gets reviewed by the sector. Consideration to be given to agreeing a spatial data specification document for utilities to inform local authorities of location of ducting.

Action 14			
All mobile operators to introduce WiFi calling to enable mobile users to make indoor phone calls over fixed broadband services.			
Timeline	Status	Lead body	Supporting bodies
Ongoing	In Progress	TIF	None
<p>Update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eir introduced WiFi calling in Q1 2017 and see very strong usage by its customer to enhance their mobile experience. • Three is continuing to consider the introduction of WiFi calling. • Vodafone will introduce WiFi calling in the current financial year (to end-March 2019). <p>Next steps: Operators to progress the introduction of WiFi calling.</p>			

Action 20			
Explore the feasibility of developing a database for sharing of telecoms operator information and local authority infrastructure information.			
Timeline	Status	Lead body	Supporting bodies
Q3	In Progress	DCCAE	DRCD
<p>Update: This action is being considered under the work programme of the Working Group on State and Publically Owned Assets.</p> <p>Next steps: Agree an approach to sharing of telco operator data in the context of submitting a Policy Statement to the Government before end Q1 2019.</p>			

Action 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; and -Communications at local level to address concerns arising from proposed siting of masts.			
Timeline	Status	Lead body	Supporting bodies
Ongoing	In Progress	CCMA	None
<p>Update: The CCMA is awaiting the NBP contract to be put in place. Once certainty is provided around rollout times and locations BBOs will engage in local communications with Public Participation Networks and communities to drive demand and take up. Also the proposal for a Broadband Office addresses awareness and communication considerations.</p> <p>Next steps:</p>			

On-going engagement planned, however more meaningful progress would be made post NBP contract signing – as the uncertainty around the NBP process tends to dominate local engagement.

Action 33

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.

Timeline	Status	Lead body	Supporting bodies
Ongoing	In Progress	TIF	None

Update:

Industry currently provides a detailed report to ComReg. Comments have been provided on the proposed new format report which seeks more detail than companies would typically have available. There are significant issues with providing information on future plans as these can change at relatively short notice.

Next steps:

Continue dialogue on best method of providing regular updates on progress to date, future developments being significantly more difficult to forecast. Discussions are ongoing in respect of the 2019 Implementation Work Programme and how this action can be delivered.

Update on Q1 and Q2 Actions that were reported as delayed

Action 5			
Agree a protocol for periodic engagement on general planning matters, including exempted development provisions, between the DHPLG and the industry, in conjunction with DCCAIE.			
Timeline	Status	Lead body	Supporting bodies
Q1	Completed in Q3	DHPLG	None
<p>Update: Final agreed protocol was circulated on 19 July 2018. DHPLG will arrange a formal meeting with Industry in early 2019, in tandem with progression of Action 4 and 32.</p> <p>Next steps: Action Complete. Initial meeting with the Industry to be held in early 2019.</p>			

Action 12			
Expand the mobile coverage blackspots pilot project to encompass all 31 local authority areas.			
Timeline	Status	Lead body	Supporting bodies
Q2	Paused	DRCD	None
<p>Update: A revised data collection exercise was completed in Q2 by local authorities, which was followed by multiple engagements with mobile telecommunication companies over the course of the summer. As a consequence of renewed mobile infrastructure activity by infrastructure and telecoms providers, the Department is considering alternative approaches to redressing blackspots. As a first step, the Department is co-funding a pilot blackspot project in MalinBeg with Vodafone and Donegal County Council. It is hoped that the learnings from this project will directly contribute to a revised approach to addressing mobile phone blackspots in rural Ireland.</p> <p>Next steps: The Department will review the findings of the pilot project with Vodafone and Donegal County Council and incorporate the learnings into a renewed approach to addressing blackspots.</p>			

Action 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.			
Timeline	Status	Lead body	Supporting bodies
Q1	Completed in Q3	DTTAS	None
<p>Update: Ministerial approval for a reduction in its duct access rental charge was conveyed to TII in July 2018 following receipt of views from the Ministers for Finance, and Communications, Climate Action and Environment. This should help to encourage prompt development of telecommunications infrastructure by operators.</p> <p>Next steps: N/A</p>			

Action 19			
Establish a working group to explore the feasibility of developing a standardised policy for accessing and utilising State assets for the deployment of telecoms infrastructure.			
Timeline	Status	Lead body	Supporting bodies
Q2	Started in Q3 and now In Progress	DCCAE	DRCD
<p>Update: The Working Group on State Assets will shortly submit to Government a draft Government Policy Statement on leveraging State and publically owned assets suitable for the housing and deployment of telecommunications infrastructure.</p> <p>Next steps: Submit draft Government Policy Statement by end Q1 2019.</p>			

Action 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.			
Timeline	Status	Lead body	Supporting bodies
Q2	Delayed	CCMA	DRCD
<p>Update: A proposal to establish a Digital Development Office in local authorities is being drafted. This reflects the sector's commitment to the National Broadband Plan, a vital infrastructure project, and an essential service in the form of Digital Engagement with citizens and communities.</p> <p>Next steps:</p>			

The sector will consider the role of the Broadband Officer/Support Unit in local authorities and determine what expertise and knowledge is necessary to complement the existing skillset of the Broadband Officers, as well as what other resources are required. Proposal document will be reviewed by sector in Q4 2018/Q1 2019.

CCMA	County and City Management Association
ComReg	Commission for Communications Regulation
DCCAE	Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment
DHPLG	Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government
DRCD	Department of Rural and Community Development
DTTAS	Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport
Intervention Area	The area of the country which will require State intervention to bring about the deployment of high speed broadband services.
JULA	Joint Utility Local Authority Users Group
LA	Local Authority
LGMA	Local Government Management Agency
LUTS	Land Use and Transportation Services
M2M	Machine to Machine
Mbps	Megabits per second
MRL	MapRoad Roadworks Licensing
NBP	National Broadband Plan
PPNs	Public Participation Networks
RAG	Regional Action Group
RMO	Road Management Office
TIF	Telecommunications and Internet Federation
TII	Transport Infrastructure Ireland