

FCS Response to DCMS Consultation “Ensuring Tenants access to gigabit-capable connections

Introduction

The Federation of Communication Services represents companies which provide professional communications solutions to business users. Our members deliver telecommunications services via mobile and fixed line telephony networks, broadband, satellite, wi-fi and business radio. Our members’ customers range from SMEs, home-workers and micro-businesses up to the very largest national and international private enterprises and public-sector users. FCS is the largest trade organisation in the professional communications arena, representing the interests of around 300 companies who supply B2B services nationwide.

Overview

We are at a time of huge change in the communications marketplace: technologies are evolving and demands from business and residential consumers are increasing. With the PSTN “switch-off” only a few years away, it is vital that the growth of full-fibre is encouraged by all means possible as providers move away from legacy copper networks.

Comments on Policy Proposals

The FCS welcomes the proposals put forward by the DCMS: we believe that expediting the process to get equipment into premises so that tenants can benefit from gigabit connectivity is vital. In particular the business market, which was largely ignored by the BDUK roll-out of FTTC, needs to have the opportunity to have access to ultrafast technology if we are to be able to compete effectively with other countries.

To miss supplying gigabit connectivity to large proportions of buildings that currently fall within operators’ fibre footprints simply because of administrative problems is not acceptable and needs to be remedied.

The FCS has long argued that telecoms connectivity should be regarded as a utility, along with gas, water and electricity. We would take the proposals set out one step further so that, if operators are given code powers to enter buildings in the same way as other essential utilities, they should also be recognised and treated as utilities with appropriate regulations, as applied to essential utility networks. This could include, for example: open, non-discriminatory access, price controls such as rpi-x, guaranteed standards, separation of retail and distribution arms and so on.

Conclusion

The FCS hopes that these comments are helpful to the DCMS in its considerations and would be pleased to work with you to develop any of the themes we have identified above.