

GLASGOW CITY COUNCIL

RESPONSE TO DEPARTMENT FOR CULTURE, MEDIA & SPORT – CONSULTATION ON CONNECTION VOUCHERS

Dear James

BDUK Urban Broadband Fund - Connection Voucher Scheme

We are writing to you as an urban local authority not in receipt of funding from BDUK or a part of the Super Connected Cities programme (SCCP). We recognise that through your public consultation you are particularly interested in the views of SMEs and suppliers, however we felt it was important to register particular comments.

At paragraph 2.1.3 you highlight that consideration is being given as to whether it may be appropriate to extend the scheme beyond the SCCP cities. Glasgow City Council would in particular welcome this approach:

- Glasgow city centre competes directly with Edinburgh and Perth as a business location in central Scotland with commuting distances of less than 1 hour between the cities. The introduction of such a scheme may have a displacement effect on investment into Glasgow and in turn economic growth in our city
- As you will be aware, Glasgow city centre was removed from the scope of the BDUK Scottish Government Rest of Scotland superfast broadband intervention along with Aberdeen and Edinburgh city centres. Whilst we are still to be made fully aware of commercial investment plans by network operators in Glasgow city centre without public sector intervention we anticipate there will be gaps. One of the rationales for your proposed intervention with connection vouchers is to stimulate demand which in turn will support commercial investment in city broadband infrastructure. Glasgow will be left at a disadvantage to Aberdeen and Edinburgh in this regard.

In relation to the specific questions within your consultation, we would advocate that increasing broadband takeup is only part of what is required to drive economic growth. As important to economic growth is a strong local partnership which supports local business to understand how digital technologies can be applied to drive sales and boost productivity aligned with programmes which provide the support, access to skills and a buoyant local supply chain to support effective implementation.

Glasgow City Council has launched the Digital Glasgow programme which draws together public, private and voluntary sector agencies to ensure Glasgow is a world leading digital city by 2017. This initiative includes the local Chamber of Commerce, national trade body (ScotlandIS) and economic development agency. An integrated roadmap of initiatives from all partners in the city will be published later this year. It would be useful to work with BDUK to identify potential contributions that you could make to this process.

If you would like further information or to discuss any of the matters raised, please do not hesitate to contact Lynsey Telford at 0141 276 0981 or Lynsey.telford@glasgow.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely

David Coyne

Head of Business and the Economy

Development and Regeneration Services

Glasgow City Council

Question 1 – What methods do you consider most useful and practical in the context of stimulating awareness and demand for a broadband connection scheme?

Question 2 – If you are an SME, ISP or network operator : (a) would you be keen to participate in the voucher scheme on the basis that we have set out in this consultation? (b) in addition to the elements described in this consultation document, what further steps, if any, would BDUK need to take to ensure your participation in the scheme (eg. broadening the categories of eligible end-users)?

Question 3 – Does BDUK need to place any conditions or criteria on the vouchers to ensure effective take up by end users?

Question 4 – Which costs do you consider should be eligible for funding by the connection voucher?

Question 5 – Do you think the current value range proposed for the connection vouchers (£250 to £3,000) is appropriate?

Question 6 – Should a contribution to the connectivity costs be required of end-users or should the scheme support the total costs of connectivity? If you consider a contribution to be appropriate please explain why and confirm which end user should be required to contribute (SME, residents etc) and what the minimum contribution should be.

Question 7: Do you agree that a 'portal' (web based interface) providing is the best mechanism to enable end-user's to meet potential suppliers? If so, what information do you consider should be provided on the 'portal'?

Question 8: Other than the use of a portal, what steps could be taken by BDUK to maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of the scheme for suppliers and end-users?

Question 9: The measures that BDUK is proposing are designed to stimulate the take-up of high-grade connectivity demanded by SMEs. These measures and the voucher scheme in particular have been formulated to work with the current regulatory framework and State aid rules. Please confirm:

- (a) Whether and how you consider these measures might result in a distortion to competition and what, if any, adjustments to the scheme might serve to correct for such distortions; and**

- (b) Whether the operation of the proposed scheme is likely to give rise to any regulatory concerns.**

Question 10: What methods do you consider might be most useful and practical to monitor the Voucher Scheme and evaluate its outcomes?

Question 11: Are there any other aspects that directly relate to BDUK's proposed demand-side measures that you would like to raise?