

# **Digital Communications Infrastructure Strategy (issued by Department of Culture, Media and Sport)**

## **Comments from Digital York Board**

The consultation document is a recognition that digital technology is a critical infrastructure need. Infrastructure provision no longer has a narrow definition of roads, railways and airport extensions, but has a wider definition including all types of communication and technology.

One of the challenges of the consultation paper is that those who are digitally connected are much further forward in their thinking than government. The consultation document is prepared principally from a government perspective. The consultation paper describes three scenarios on future demand for digital technology and the type of networks which would need to be in place to support each of the scenarios. However, it is axiomatic that given new technologies and speed, whether it is 100 mbps or even gigabit speeds, 4G or 5G mobile technology, or the application of Big Data, then businesses and residents will make use it if it provides advantages. The consultation paper tends to read as a document written by government without a strong industry input.

## **Basis for a York Response**

In responding to the consultation it is preferable to make a small number of significant points, rather than respond to all 44 questions set out in the document. The key points the Digital York Board might make are:

- Exploitation of the infrastructure is critical, and the main role of government is an enabling one to make sure an appropriate environment i.e. the infrastructure, is in place that will allow new technologies and applications to emerge. But government could consider whether there is a role to accelerate this process perhaps through a mechanism that promotes and disseminates world class projects and through targeted seed funding possibly linked to LEP programmes.

- Looking ahead 10 or 11 years to 2025 is too short term. Infrastructure investment needs to be future proofed and a world class infrastructure must cope with increasing demand post 2025. Increasingly this suggests that pure fibre infrastructure should be the way forward, and a shift from FTTC technology to FTTP.
- Exploiting the infrastructure to help provide the UK with a leadership role in sectors within the current R & D and Innovation landscape will be significant for the national economy. It is not practical to assume that the UK, and therefore specific cities, will have a leadership role across the whole innovation landscape. It might be sensible to identify those areas where the UK has a competitive advantage and direct investment towards those areas.
- Exploiting new digital technology will require world class skills. The consultation paper says little about what is required to ensure a world class infrastructure is matched by skills. A plan needs to be put in place to ensure schools, colleges and universities are providing the right number and quality of skilled individuals able to work in the digital industry and able to exploit the opportunities it creates.
- In focussing on opportunities it is important not to lose sight of those areas, the “not spots”, where it is not a commercial proposition to invest in new infrastructure.