



department for
**culture, media
and sport**

BIS | Department for
Business Innovation & Skills

Digital Britain Unconference outputs and other online feedback on Digital Britain

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improving
the quality
of life for all

Our aim is to improve the quality of life for all through cultural and sporting activities, support the pursuit of excellence, and champion the tourism, creative and leisure industries.

One striking aspect of the Digital Britain project has been the extent to which the online community has engaged with the issues. There has been a very lively debate sparked both by the interim report and the Digital Britain summit on 17 April this year, with a lot of criticism, particularly initially, that consultation and engagement over policy formation was too much focussed on traditional offline avenues and too little on the online world. Some of the key online contributions can be found on:

- the Digital Britain Unconferences
<http://digitalbritainunconference.wordpress.com/final-report/>
- Write to Reply:
<http://writetoreply.org/digitalbritain/>
- the Fake Digital Britain report (wiki):
http://wiki.writetoreply.org/wiki/The_Fake_Digital_Britain_Report
- our own Digital Britain forum site:
<http://digitalbritainforum.org.uk/>
- and on Twitter.

See below for some highlights from the comments we got.

Digital Britain Unconferences

For a summary of the unconferences and a full report, go to the Digital Britain Unconferences site above – key themes are:

- Infrastructure and the scope for regeneration through broadband technology in urban and rural areas
- How to inspire the people who can get online but choose not to

The potential of connectivity for new forms of co-creativity

- A commitment to alternative models of IP and a rethink on copyright
- The need for Government to be visionary

Selected comments from Writetoreply

Need to investigate environmental impact more.

Need to stress 'opt in' nature of services.

Low carbon and knowledge economy are actually different objectives.

You can't automatically link data transfer with family friendly ways of working
Digital TV and radio are white elephants – people will get content on the internet.

The Government should declare public policy goals e.g. management of chronic health problems in the home or reduction in transport emissions.

The Government should match private investment with low interest loans

We should have a cashpoint style revenue share for roaming.

You could have watermarks on digital content, and then statistical sampling over the net to decide who should be awarded royalties.

You currently need permission from the SoS to watch each out of region DVD.

This needs to be changed. You should be able to play DVDs you buy legally on the equipment you buy legally.

2MB/s is not enough.

We should follow the Norwegian model for net neutrality.

Latency and upstream rates need to be specified as well.

We should set a relative minimum (ie not less than half the average national speed)

It would be interesting to see what BT would offer in return for being allowed to remove all their phone boxes

There is a fatal obsession with content and entertainment – the internet is really about communication.

It would be a missed opportunity if we rolled out Digital Switch Over with receive only boxes.

Skills training needs to include development of 'hybrid professionals' ie techies with some creative skills and vice-versa.

The IWF is a quango operating as a censor – see the Scorpions incident.

Highlights from the ‘fake Digital Britain report’ (wiki)

Fibre to the home for everyone. Just do it. Start with rural areas. Utilise all available means to help rollout, eg Virgin’s network. Change building regs to ensure every new home is equipped with fibre.

Need to equip the whole network with Ipv6 hardware.

All telecoms networks should be considered unbundled and wholesale access should be allowed to them all.

DAB is hamstrung by its low data rates. We need to launch DAB+

The Government should support the creation of a federated ePortfolio system, to specify skills required for jobs and individual competencies, with the aggregate data to be used for course design.

Education on creating and maintaining personal profiles which will support the individual’s growth and development over their lifetime be made available to all.

There should be an environmental assessment

Selected comments from the digitalbritainforum site

Why turn off FM? It will just result in hundreds of radios in landfill.

2MB/s is not enough

Upstream speeds are important

The only way to bring a reliable and affordable 2Mbps to 98.5% of the population will be to roll out next-generation access (probably fibre-to-the-curb in most cases) to most of the slowband areas of the country. But NGA will then support much higher speeds - up to 40Mbps for most people. The rest of the country will soon want to catch up and will probably offer easier economics. So a 2Mbps USO will actually support and drive the rollout of the much higher speeds we all want to see.

1. Use sewers to carry the cable to a distribution box on the streets.

2. Nearly every other house will have a lamp post outside. Modify the lamp posts to house Wi-fi connections so communities can use them.
3. Why not use the power lines from the electricity companies to deliver broadband?

Online channels should supplement, not replace. Forcing people to access services online is a diminution of choice, even if it saves costs. It is fine for commerce to do this perhaps but Government should not think in this way.

on a monthly basis, each ISP would be required to provide a series of detailed statistics relating to speeds and quality of service. These would include

- The average speed for the total customer base of a particular ISP;
- The average speed for each speed-based product offered by the ISP;
- The percentage of users of each speed-based product plotted against the speeds they are actually achieving (to distinguish ISPs providing a fairly good service to most customers from those providing a high speed service to relatively few and much lower speeds to a larger proportion of customers);
- The number of new complaints received per month;
- The number of complaints resolved to the satisfaction of the customer per month;
- The number of unresolved complaints outstanding;
- The number of complaints not being pursued on grounds of cost.

BBC should be retained as the sole public service broadcaster with plurality ensured by a robust system of funding for public interest programming in the commercial sector. A combination of contestable public funding and obligations based on audience share could result in public service content being maximised both in terms of its audience reach and efficiency. New and additional public funding should be sourced from the digital switchover license fee surplus, BBC Worldwide profits, sale of spectrum reserved for analogue TV licenses after 2012. We also believe the license fee should be absorbed by the general tax system beyond 2017.

Support an open source DRM system to allay piracy fears. Create a one-stop-shop for licensing, insuring and paying for the content.

Twitter

The Digital Britain summit on 17 April generated a huge response on Twitter, both on the day and the following week. The spreadsheet attached gives a flavour of these.

A few common themes were:

General enthusiasm and agreement with Stephen Fry's comments

it's all about stuff becoming easier to use
the focus should be on the outcomes and objectives, not the media themselves
Questioning exactly what is meant by 'digital skills'

A lot of agreement with Anthony Lilley's comments:
strategy needs to be about investment
should focus firmly on the consumer
Games not getting enough focus
Focus on users, activity, innovation

On infrastructure, comments on 2Mbps not being enough
a lot of comments on copyright, IP issues; too much focus on protecting content
support for Will Hutton's idea of free wifi
a general feeling that the plumbing isn't broken but needs fixing or updating
some comments on need for investment & government action
general support for money in the Budget for broadband
Advertising is not a sustainable business model to fragmented media streams
not enough attention on games industry
criticism about role of OFCOM (not many comments about BBC or public sector
broadcasting)
shame that too much of today has been about 'why it can't be done' rather than
'how it could be done'

A lot of comments about the event itself and praise for the biscuits, but criticism
of the livestreaming falling down and the fact that no one from the Open
Source/Free Software community who drive Open Innovation listed as a speaker.

Digital Britain Project Team



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