

QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORT - Q1 2017

Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce



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BACKGROUND

The Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce, co-chaired by Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Heather Humphreys TD, and Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Denis Naughten TD, was established in July 2016, arising from a commitment in the Programme for a Partnership Government, to deliver on the actions set out in the National Broadband Plan (NBP).

The NBP is a Government policy initiative which aims to deliver high speed broadband to every citizen and business in Ireland. The NBP's ambition is to achieve 100% coverage across Ireland within 3 – 5 years of commencement of large scale rollout. This will be achieved through a combination of accelerated commercial investment by telecoms operators, and State intervention to deliver access to high speed broadband to those parts of the country where there is no certainty that the commercial sector will invest.

The role of the Taskforce was to examine solutions to address broadband/mobile phone coverage deficits and to identify tangible actions that can be taken to improve the quality of broadband and mobile voice services being provided to citizens across Ireland, prior to the rollout of the NBP.

The Taskforce published its final report in December 2016¹. The Taskforce report addresses, in a very comprehensive manner, a wide range of issues impacting on broadband and mobile services. The report contains 40 actions aimed at accelerating the delivery of telecoms infrastructure by commercial operators and also at facilitating the rollout of the State led Intervention under the NBP.

¹ Available on both Departments' websites: <http://www.ahrrga.gov.ie/app/uploads/2017/02/taskforce-report-final-pdf.pdf> and <http://dcca.gov.ie/documents/Taskforce%20Report.pdf>

IMPLEMENTATION GROUP

An Implementation Group, chaired by Ministers Naughten and Humphreys, has been convened to oversee the timely implementation all of the actions in the report. The Implementation Group is supported by senior officials from the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DCCAE) and the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (DAHRRGA).

Government Departments and agencies that are central to the delivery of the actions contained in the final report are represented on the Group. This includes the Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg) which attends both as an action owner and in an observer capacity in recognition of its statutory independence as Regulator. This Group will play a vital role in monitoring and driving progress, to ensure the full delivery of all actions recommended by the Taskforce.

The Implementation Group will report every 90 days to both Ministers, who will in turn jointly brief the Cabinet on progress made. The first meeting of the Implementation Group took place on 8 March, followed by a series of bilateral meetings with action holders. These discussions formed the basis of this first quarterly progress report.

The Implementation Group is also tasked with comprehensively reviewing progress made after twelve months, and producing an annual report summarising progress across all actions. The Group is also mandated to recommend further actions that would result in an improved service for consumers.

As outlined in the Taskforce Report, a forum will be convened in late September that will allow all stakeholders to discuss wider issues impacting on the rollout of telecoms infrastructure.

This is the first quarterly progress report of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce Implementation Group, established by Government to monitor and drive implementation of the measures contained in the final report of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce, published in December 2016.

This report outlines progress made on measures due for completion in the first quarter of 2017. There are a total of 9 measures due for completion in Q1 2017. In addition, this report highlights the status of a further 7 ongoing measures which were under delivery during Q1 2017. Of the 16 measures, 12 are complete, substantially complete or in progress; 4 are delayed for the reasons outlined in this report.

Summary of Progress Made

Considerable progress has been made in relation to implementation of the actions identified for Q1. Engagement by all the actions owners with the two Departments has been very readily forthcoming, with a particular focus on proactively pursuing synergies and producing robust outcomes. Industry has provided positive feedback on its engagement with the newly appointed broadband officers who are acting as a single point of contact in local authorities. The local authority sector is also working with the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTAS) in relation to use of the MapRoad Roadworks Licensing System² as the single national centralised road opening licensing. The operators have confirmed they will continue to be proactive regarding social inclusiveness and in meeting the needs of vulnerable groups, in accordance with their commitment in the Taskforce Report.

ComReg has continued to provide expert advice in its role as Regulator. The Commission is also making preparations in relation to handset sensitivity testing. Work has also commenced in relation to a composite national mobile phone coverage map. In addition, ComReg is in the process of collecting relevant information from mobile service providers in respect of breakdown of contract costs including monthly handset and services costs to be made available to consumers. It has also

² MapRoad Roadworks Licensing is the new national system for the management and processing of roadworks licence applications - <https://maproadroadworkslicensing.ie/MRL/>

launched a consultation in relation to the code of practice for complaints handling required to be put in place by electronic communications service (ECS) providers.

The Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government has worked to ensure that the majority of local authorities have adopted revised contribution schemes in compliance with the 2013 Guidelines. The Department is also working to present revised Regulations on exempted development to the Oireachtas for consideration and approval in the coming weeks.

DTTAS has held the first meeting of the Monitoring Committee to monitor the roll-out of actions in the Report of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Task Force Report on the MapRoad Licensing System and the Road Management Office (RMO), implementation of the Guidelines for Managing Openings in Public Roads (Purple Book), Guidance on the Potential Location of Overground Telecommunications Infrastructure on Public Roads (Green Book). In addition, work is underway towards the establishment of the Stakeholder User Forum to provide for a transparent engagement and feedback process between local authorities and utilities to address operational matters.

The two lead Departments are also reaching out to non-commercial State bodies to assist in removing impediments to reasonable access to State owned property to facilitate deployment of telecoms infrastructure.

Ensuring consumers are kept well informed of progress made on all aspects of the NBP and with the work of the Taskforce Implementation Group is a priority for both Ministers. In that regard, the development of a comprehensive communications and awareness plan is in active progress.

DAHRRGA has established subgroups of the Regional Action Groups to address various aspects relating to assisting rollout of the NBP.

Impact

The immediate impact of these short term actions arising from the work of the Taskforce Implementation Group pending rollout of the NBP State Intervention, will be to produce tangible improvements in all local authority areas in preparation for high speed broadband.

The appointment of Broadband Officers in each local authority area is already reaping benefits in terms of ensuring a much greater degree of consistency in engagement with operators and clearing obstacles to rollout of infrastructure. eir is actively engaging with Broadband Officers in Donegal, Roscommon, Cavan, Monaghan, Laois and Cork on piloting a solution for mobile blackspots.

The new structures which have been established, such as the Regional Action Groups and their subgroups, and the DTTAS monitoring committee, are all working in a coordinated fashion, streamlining interaction between the key stakeholders, and resolving any emerging challenges.

The awareness raising activities by the Departments and ComReg will ensure that consumers are better informed on specific progress being made in their local areas, as well as equipping them to make more informed decisions on available products and services.

Looking ahead, operators are committed to individual and collective engagement with the Implementation Group to optimise the performance of their networks. They will also engage on network features and functionality enhancements.

Next Steps

The two Ministers are determined to ensure steady progress is made in relation to all the actions and that mitigation measures will be put promptly in place to deal with any slippages. New innovations and ideas emerging from ongoing discussions with all action holders which hold the potential to further enhance progress will be given careful consideration and incorporated into the work programme of the Taskforce going forward.

In tandem with commercial rollout of mobile and broadband infrastructure and services, the Taskforce measures will feed into the wider National Broadband Plan. This will accrue new business opportunities and benefits nationwide, boosting the growing Irish digital economy. Having a fit for purpose digital infrastructure will support all of this growth, and will provide the level of mobile and broadband coverage and data capacity necessary to meet the needs of business and society alike.

On behalf of the Implementation Group, the two Ministers would like to thank all involved for their engagement in ensuring barriers to the rollout of infrastructure are removed prior to the rollout of the NBP.

QUARTER 1 ACTIONS – PROGRESS UPDATES

Action 3: Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs will fund all local authorities to assign an officer with responsibility for broadband to act as the single point of contact for engagement with operators to assist with accelerated rollout of the National Broadband Plan and create awareness of/stimulate demand for broadband services.

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (Local authorities/DAHRRGA).

Update (Substantively complete)

Funding for an officer with specific responsibility for broadband has been provided to all local authorities. To date, 30 of the 31 local authorities have appointed Broadband Officers. Processes are currently underway to fill the remaining vacancy. All local authorities are available to meet with telecommunications operators and will facilitate with the rollout of the NBP.

Next Steps: DAHRRGA will continue to engage with the remaining local authority to ensure a Broadband Officer is appointed as soon as possible.

Action 4: Run a public awareness campaign on all aspects of the National Broadband Plan and the work of the Taskforce.

Q1/2 Measure: As per headline action. (DCCA/DAHRRGA).

Update (In Progress)

The development of a comprehensive communications and awareness plan is in progress. DCCA and DAHRRGA are jointly developing a strategy which will set out key messages to consumers and other interested parties about the NBP and the work of the Taskforce Implementation Group. In parallel, DAHRRGA continues to raise awareness of the NBP with the local authorities through the Northern and Southern Regional Action Groups, and by frequent bilateral engagement with local authorities and councillors.

Next Steps: Joint Departmental Communications Plan to be finalised by end Q2 2017.

Action 5: In line with the Programme for Government commitment, the Government will ensure that appropriate funding is made available to support the timely rollout of the NBP.

Measure – Ongoing: As per headline action. (Government).

Update (In Progress)

DCCAIE is managing a procurement process to select a company or companies who will roll-out a new high-speed broadband network within the State Intervention Area, with the cost to be part-funded by a Government subsidy. European Regional Development Funding will also be used. €275m is included in the Capital Plan as an initial commitment to the NBP rollout. The Department is currently engaged in a “competitive dialogue” process with the three bidders.

DAHRRGA continues to engage with local authorities on identifying and addressing barriers in advance of the rollout of the NBP, in order to accelerate the rollout once contracts are in place. Funding has been made available to support this task through the appointment of broadband officers in every local authority.

Next Steps: The next phase in the procurement process is the Invitation to Submit Detailed Solutions. This is an invitation to bidders to submit their proposed solutions and is the stage before bidders are asked to submit final bids. DAHRRGA will continue to engage with local authorities.

Action 6: Establish an Implementation Group led by officials of Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment and Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in order to ensure that the actions identified by the Taskforce are implemented and reported on to Government.

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (DCCAIE/DAHRRGA).

Update (Complete)

The Taskforce Implementation Group has been established, with the first meeting of the Group taking place on 8 March, chaired by Ministers Naughten and Humphreys. All State action holders identified in the Taskforce Report are represented on the Implementation Group. This will ensure that strong momentum and timely delivery is maintained, with proactive management of any emerging challenges faced by action holders.

Next Steps: The Implementation Group will continue to meet quarterly, with the next meeting scheduled for early July.

Action 13: The Northern and Southern Broadband Regional Action Groups will review and address barriers [within their remit] identified by stakeholders as impacting on the rollout of telecommunications infrastructure in partnership with the local government sector.

Q1 Measure: Establish sub-group of Regional Action Groups. (DAHRRGA).

Update (Complete)

DAHRRGA has established 6 sub-groups to progress work items that have been identified as aiding the rollout of the National Broadband Plan, including: Scenario Planning, Engagement with Telecommunication Companies, Environmental Issues, Local Digital Strategies, Co-Development, and Strategic Community Access Hubs Procurement. Each sub-group has met at least once, with terms of reference and work programmes in place. The subgroups will continue to report on progress to the Northern and Southern Regional Action Groups.

Next Steps: Further sub-group meetings will be held on a regular basis.

Action 14: Non-commercial State bodies will ensure that no impediments are placed in the way of reasonable access to State-owned property.

Measure – Ongoing: As per headline action. (Non-commercial State bodies).

Update (In Progress)

DAHRRGA has written to the Secretary General of relevant Government Departments during Quarter 1 seeking contact points in non-commercial State bodies to act as co-ordinators in relation to this action. Once nominated contact points are identified, DAHRRGA will bilaterally engage with each non-commercial State body in order to ensure that reasonable access is facilitated to State-owned property for installation of telecoms infrastructure.

Next Steps: DAHRRGA has received confirmation of nominated contacted points from a number of Departments and will liaise directly with them with regard to this action.

Action 17: Telecommunications operators should identify, in consultation with local communities where appropriate, optimal locations/areas in which they require additional infrastructure to improve coverage prior to engaging with local authorities and non-commercial State bodies. Industry will then engage with the single point of contact to scope and manage any issues and risks associated with site selection.

Measure – Ongoing: As per headline action. (Local authorities/local communities/Non-commercial State bodies/ telecommunications operators).

Update (In Progress)

All local authorities are available to meet with telecommunications operators. Already, a large number of formal and informal meetings have taken place between operators and 16 local authorities. Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) is also available to engage in order to identify suitable sites for telecommunications infrastructure.

Contact has been made with relevant representative bodies and individual operators to highlight the availability of the TII and Broadband Officers to facilitate the delivery of this action.

Engagement between industry and the Broadband Officers has led to tangible action. For example, eir is actively engaging with Broadband Officers in Donegal, Roscommon, Cavan, Monaghan, Laois and Cork on piloting a solution for mobile blackspots.

Operators have also provided the Broadband Officers with nominated points of contact in their organisations. They also plan to engage through town hall meetings and other relevant fora, where appropriate, in addition to their existing community liaison.

The Rural Internet Service Providers are working to develop actions in this area.

Next Steps: Telecommunications operators will continue to engage with local authorities through the Regional Action Groups (RAGs) and via the Broadband Officers. A subgroup of the RAGs is also focusing on developing a protocol to guide the engagement with industry.

The possibility of a pilot project is being explored by DAHRRGA and DCCAE to identify and address rural blackspots. This is currently under discussion with the local authorities and the telecommunications operators.

Given the nature of the ongoing and evolving interaction between telecommunication companies and local authorities, this action will be considered 'ongoing' rather than Q1 in subsequent reports, and will continue to be reported on.

Action 20: The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport will review the Guidelines for Managing Openings in Public Roads (Purple Book) on an ongoing basis and, building on existing arrangements, will establish an appropriate stakeholder forum to provide for a clear and transparent engagement process for formal dialogue between the relevant stakeholders in relation to road openings.

Measure – Ongoing: As per headline action (DTTAS).

Update (In Progress)

The Purple Book sets out a summary of the legal framework relating to opening or forming openings in public roads in Ireland. Following extensive consultation over the past three years, including with utilities and telecommunication companies, DTTAS published the latest version of the Purple Book in early Q2. A Stakeholder Forum will be established in Autumn 2017 to provide a transparent road opening engagement process between local authorities and users such as utilities companies.

Next Steps: Establishment of Stakeholder Forum, as referenced above.

Action 21: The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport will strengthen the existing multi-sector group to steer and oversee/monitor the progress of the road opening licensing system and stakeholder forum and to examine solutions to barriers identified by Stakeholders as impacting on the rollout of telecommunications infrastructure and utility works (including a nationally agreed pricing framework).

Q1 Measure: As per headline action.

(This group (the Monitoring Committee) will comprise senior officials from the DTTAS, DCCAE, DAHRRGA and DHPCLG).

Update (In Progress)

A Monitoring Committee was established on 5 April 2017 to monitor the roll-out of actions in the Report of the Mobile Phone and Broadband TaskForce Report on the MapRoad Licensing System and the Road Management Office (RMO), implementation of the Guidelines for Managing Openings in Public Roads (Purple Book), and Guidance on the Potential Location of Overground Telecommunications Infrastructure on Public Roads (Green Book). In addition, work is underway towards the establishment of the Stakeholder User Forum to provide for a transparent engagement and feedback process between local authorities and utilities to address operational matters.

Next Steps: Further meetings of the Monitoring Committee will be held.

Action 33: ComReg will engage with a suitable third party to produce a publication that sets out a five year forecast of data traffic that is reviewed, updated at regular intervals and made available on ComReg's website. Examples of forecast items include: 1. Mobile data volumes/speeds, 2. Fixed broadband connections/speeds.

Measure – Ongoing: As per headline action. (ComReg/telecommunications operators).

Update (In Progress)

ComReg is commencing work in relation to this action. On a quarterly basis, comprehensive data is provided to ComReg by operators on a range of fixed and mobile data traffic usage, including:

- Data from mobile operators on total traffic for 3G and 4G subscriptions.
- Data from fixed operators on traffic type by technology including ADSL, Fibre to the Cabinet, Fibre to the home/premises, fixed wireless access, cable and satellite.

Comprehensive historical data is also available that will provide a solid platform for development of future data trend predictions.

Next Steps: Work will continue on producing a publication that sets out a five year forecast of data traffic, with a view to publishing the forecast in line with the headline action.

Action 34: Adequate funding will be made available to support the commitment in the Programme for a Partnership Government to accelerate the rollout of infrastructure including funding to local authorities to assign officers with responsibility for broadband.

Measure – Ongoing: As per headline action. (DAHRRGA). See also updates on Action 3 and Action 5.

Update (Substantively Complete)

Funding for an officer with specific responsibility for broadband has been provided to all local authorities by DAHRRGA. As part of the rollout of high-speed broadband in the State intervention area, DAHRRGA will also provide funding to local authorities to connect up to 12 locations in each local authority area. This will bring the benefits of high-speed broadband to communities that might otherwise only be reached towards the end of the intervention process. Funding will be provided for the initial technology and managed service.

Next Steps: The requirement to fund additional specialist services to support local authorities in the NBP rollout is being kept under review.

Action 35: Mobile network operators will be more proactive in social inclusiveness and in meeting the specific needs of more vulnerable groups.

Measure – Ongoing: As per headline action. (Telecommunications operators).

Update (In Progress)

Mobile network operators will continue to work with DCCAE and DAHRRGA to improve social inclusiveness and meet the specific needs of vulnerable groups, including through awareness raising activities. Existing good practice includes:

- Three is working with An Cosán Virtual Community College (VCC). VCC is a start-up education initiative which has a unique vision: to eliminate poverty and social inequality through education using online and mobile technology. Its goal is to empower young people from the most disadvantaged communities in Ireland to reach their potential through virtual and mLearning technologies, going on to gain employment and exit poverty. Using their technology and expertise, Three is helping VCC to deliver its online and mobile learning platform and suite of educational courses to marginalised communities nationwide.
- Vodafone is continuing its community outreach programme including its national smartphone clinics for older people.
- Eir is active on an ongoing basis with a range of vulnerable groups. These include:
 - The National Council of the Blind Ireland to provide tech training classes for children and young people with sight loss.
 - Age Action to run volunteer led technology training programmes for older people.
 - Sponsorship of the open eir Silver Surfer awards highlighting the benefits internet access brings to the lives of older people. The most recent awards were held on March 28th 2017.
 - Camera Ireland to train teachers throughout Leinster DEIS schools to ensure they are equipped to use technology to teach children.

Next Steps: DAHRRGA and DCCAE will continue to work with operators, ComReg and industry representative bodies to identify and implement initiatives to improve social inclusiveness and target vulnerable groups.

MEASURES NOT DELIVERED AS PLANNED IN QUARTER 1

Action 8: All remaining local authorities to be fully compliant with the Development Contributions Guidelines for planning authorities, issued by the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government in January 2013.

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (DHPCLG)/local authorities).

Update (Delayed)

26 of the 31 local authorities have adopted revised development contribution schemes in compliance with the 2013 guidelines, which exempt telecommunications infrastructure from development contributions. Of the remaining five, three schemes are currently under review, with DHPCLG following up on the two other schemes with the relevant local authorities.

Next Steps: DHPCLG will continue to engage with relevant Councils and monitor the reviews of schemes in this context, recognising the role of the elected members in this matter.

Action 9: Revised Exempted Development Regulations will immediately be brought forward to the Oireachtas.

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (DHPCLG).

Update (Delayed)

There is a broad range of exempted development provisions in the planning regulations relating to telecommunications infrastructure. This ensures that telecommunications infrastructure can be deployed rapidly in order to meet emerging demands. DHPCLG has had extensive engagement with DCCAIE regarding proposed amendments to these existing exemptions to reflect advancements in new technology and to facilitate increased capacity on existing structures. While other priority legislative commitments in DHPCLG in recent months delayed the finalisation of the proposed regulatory amendments, it is expected that this work will be completed, in conjunction with DCCAIE, as soon as possible.

Next Steps: It is intended to present revised regulations to the Oireachtas for consideration and approval in Q2 2017. Once Oireachtas approval is secured, the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government will sign the regulations to bring them into immediate force.

Action 30: In line with provisions in respect of contracts and transparency under the existing Universal Services Regulations, a breakdown of contract costs including monthly handset and services costs will be made available to consumers.

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (ComReg/telecommunications operators).

Update (Delayed)

Under existing Universal Service and Consumer Information regulations, customers are required to be provided with comprehensive information on their contract.

ComReg has updated its public Annual Action Plan with a related action in Q1 2017 to “Engage with telecommunications operators regarding awareness of end-user contract costs”. In this respect, it is in the process of collecting relevant information from mobile service providers.

The industry representative body TIF has confirmed that while industry believes that the existing terms and conditions are adequate and sufficiently transparent, it is willing to engage with ComReg on the matter.

Next Steps: ComReg will review the information collected from providers and make adjustments to its 2017-18 Action Plan as required. TIF members will support agreed recommendations from the consultation review.

Action 31: Both Service Providers and ComReg will make their complaints procedures readily available to consumers on all issues relating to mobile phone and broadband Services.

Q1 Measure: As per headline action. (ComReg/telecommunication operators).

Update (Delayed)

In December 2016, in line with its Action Plan 2016-17, ComReg launched a consultation in relation to the Code of Practice for complaints handling required by operators. This work will ensure that all operators' complaints procedures are readily available on all issues relating to mobile phone and broadband services.

All operators publish codes of practice on their websites and Industry is fully engaged in the consultation process initiated by ComReg.

Next Steps: ComReg is analysing responses to the consultation and anticipates that the process will be completed in Q2 2017. Subsequently, ComReg will decide on the most appropriate ways to further inform consumers about how to complain to their service provider and to ComReg if their issue remains unresolved. ComReg will keep its website updated regarding any developments in this area and will provide information to consumers as necessary.

GLOSSARY

ComReg	Commission for Communications Regulation
DAHRRGA	Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs
DCCA	Department of Communications, Climate Control and Environment
DHPCLG	Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government
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.
LA	Local Authority
LGMA	Local Government Management Agency
Mbps	Megabits per second
MRL	MapRoad Roadworks Licensing
NBP	National Broadband Plan
RMO	Road Management Office
RSP	Retail service providers. Firms that sell retail products to end users. They do not necessarily have their own network infrastructure.
TII	Transport Infrastructure Ireland
TIF	Telecommunications and Internet Federation