



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

# Mobile Phone & Broadband Taskforce

## Quarterly Progress Report

### Q1 2018

Prepared by the Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment  
and the Department of Rural and Community Development

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## **Background**

The Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce was established in July 2016 arising from the Programme for a Partnership commitment to identify solutions to broadband and mobile phone coverage deficits and to investigate how better services could be provided to consumers prior to full build and rollout of the network planned under the National Broadband Plan (NBP) State Intervention. The Taskforce published its final report<sup>1</sup> in December 2016, which set out 40 actions aimed at alleviating the issues that it identified.

An Implementation Group was established in early 2017 to oversee the timely delivery of all the actions of the Taskforce's report. This Group published its 2017<sup>2</sup> Implementation Review on 21 February 2018, which contains a review of progress made during 2017 and the 2018 Taskforce Work Programme. The Work Programme incorporates a small number of items carried over from 2017 as well as a range of new measures. The new actions are a direct result of discussions throughout the year with action holders and other key stakeholders, in addition to feedback received from attendees at the National Stakeholder Forum<sup>3</sup> held in October 2017. There are a total of 34 actions for delivery in 2018.

This is the first quarterly progress report on the 2018 Work Programme of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce Implementation Group.<sup>4</sup> It outlines progress made on the 6 measures due for delivery in the first quarter of 2018, as well as a further 9 actions marked as ongoing throughout 2018.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.dccae.gov.ie/documents/Taskforce%20Report.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/communications/publications/Documents/80/Taskforce-Implementation-Review-2017.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.dccae.gov.ie/documents/Taskforce%20Forum%20Report.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> The 2018 Work Programme is identified in the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce Implementation Review 2017.

## ***Summary of Progress Made***

The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG) is currently updating the 2013 Development Contribution Guidelines in order to ensure that waivers apply to both broadband and mobile phone infrastructure. In conjunction with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DCCA), DHPLG is also currently drafting a protocol to facilitate periodic engagement with industry on general planning matters, including exempted development provisions.

The sharing of mast infrastructure between mobile operators continues to operate successfully and mobile operators have committed to also apply this arrangement to any new mast infrastructure.

The engagement between Broadband Officers and the telecommunications industry continues to develop positively. The effectiveness of this relationship has been demonstrated where local authorities have shared information with industry to help solve mobile coverage issues. The Broadband Officer has been at the heart of this engagement.

The Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) and the County and City Management Association (CCMA) have also commenced a review of the Broadband Officer role in order to ensure that adequate resources are in place across all local authorities to deal with telecommunications-related issues.

Following consultation with industry, the CCMA is now working with local authorities on the introduction of a revised standardised charging framework for road opening licences. It is anticipated that a common regime will be agreed in Q3 2018.

DCCA has established a focus group composed of Government Departments, ComReg and independent Agencies. This Group is tasked with providing guidance in respect of categories of location where high-quality reliable mobile coverage should be made available as a priority, taking into account the consumer's expectations. Work in this regard is expected to be finalised in quarter 2. The Department is also engaging with Department of the Taoiseach and others on the production of a high level National Digital Strategy to provide a coherent vision for Ireland to maximise economic and societal benefits from digitalisation.

The Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg) has published its results of handset testing for voice communications. ComReg is also currently working on a consumer-friendly document to report the findings from this study.

The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTAS), through its Stakeholder (User) Forum is monitoring the implementation of the 'Guidelines for Managing Openings in Public Roads' (Purple Book), 'Guidance on the Potential Location of Over-ground Telecommunications Infrastructure on Public Roads' (Green Book) and the MapRoad Licensing System. The Forum has held a number of meetings to date and will continue to progress its work throughout 2018.

TII is working with the telecommunications industry to identify suitable sites for infrastructure close to the motorway network. Two sites have been identified (in counties Wicklow and Galway) and work is currently being progressed. The next stage will be to make planning applications. TII is keen to see a further 5 sites progressed in discussion with industry and local authorities, prior to deciding whether the Green Book needs to be amended.

### ***Impact***

The fruitful engagement between industry and the Broadband Officers could potentially be further developed by expanding the role of the Broadband Officer to a 'Broadband Support Unit' implemented in each local authority. This would have a positive impact on reducing barriers to the rollout of telecommunications infrastructure.

The focus group established by DCCAE will inform future policy in respect of mobile voice and data services by providing guidance on categories of location where high quality reliable mobile phone coverage should be available.

The data resulting from the handset testing conducted by ComReg will bring more public awareness to the performance expected from the range of mobile handsets available on the market. The aim is for this information to ultimately assist the public in making informed decisions when purchasing mobile phones.

## ***Next Steps***

The Implementation Review 2017 clearly demonstrated the positive impact the Implementation Group has had in improving access to broadband and mobile phone coverage. This is largely due to the strong collaboration between the stakeholders involved and their ever growing co-operation when it comes to the sharing of information.

Progressing the 2018 Work Programme actions will result in increased efficiencies and streamlining of processes for siting of telecoms infrastructure, greater information sharing between action holders to resolve emerging issues, and a higher level of consumer awareness on available products and services and complaints procedures.

The Ministers recognise the efforts of all stakeholders involved in the Taskforce Implementation Group and fully appreciate their continuous engagement with both of their Departments. They will continue to monitor closely the timely implementation of the 2018 Work Programme actions and look forward to seeing further progress in the next quarters.

**Action 6:** Install ducting on new national primary/secondary roads and engage in consultation with industry on where additional ducting is required to improve coverage.

**Timeline:** Ongoing

**Lead Body:** Transport Infrastructure Ireland

**Update:** In Progress

Standards were amended in December 2017 to ensure that, in addition to motorways and dual carriageways, all new major road schemes and minor realignment schemes on two-lane national roads will have ducting installed in the verges.

**Next steps:**

Continue with the implementation of updated standard.

**Action 7:** Establish structures to enable greater coordination amongst telcos on:

- Engaging with Broadband Officers at the preplanning stage of new planning applications; and
- Sharing of telecoms Infrastructure.

**Timeline:** Ongoing

**Lead Body:** Telecommunications and Internet Federation

**Update:** In Progress

Engagement with the Broadband Officers has been incredibly useful in terms of liaison and promotion of existing and available local authority infrastructure, and through their understanding of the commercial restrictions that private companies face. Productive engagement is taking place at the preplanning stage between Broadband Officers and industry. It is now considered that preplanning stage discussions with planners would also be useful.

Sharing of mast infrastructure has been agreed among all mobile operators and is operating effectively.

**Next steps:**

It is planned to ensure that direct pre-planning discussions with planners will take place in order to help speed up the planning process.

**Action 8:** Monitor progress on (i) the implementation of the Guidelines for Managing Openings in Public Roads (Purple Book) and (ii) the general efficiencies of Monitoring Committee and Stakeholder (User) Forum.

**Timeline:** Ongoing

**Lead Body:** Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport

**Update:** In Progress

The Stakeholder (User) Forum (which comprises representatives of utilities, telcos, local authorities and TII) will seek to address operational issues relating to the implementation of the 'Guidelines for Managing Openings in Public Roads' (Purple Book), the MapRoad Road Licensing System and the 'Guidance on the Potential Location of Overground Telecommunications Infrastructure on Public Roads' (Green Book) together with any subsequent associated guidelines. The Forum has met twice in 2018 (January and April) during which local authority/utility joint chair-persons were agreed. The Forum will now proceed to identify themes for consideration in terms of how they progress their work programme.

An associated Monitoring Committee (which includes senior officials from DTTAS, DCCA, DRCD and DHPLG, together with TII and the CCMA) has a remit to examine related barriers identified by stakeholders as impacting on the rollout of telecommunications infrastructure and utility works and, where appropriate, make recommendations for prioritised, cost effective measures to address these. The Committee met on 17 April 2018 and is due to meet again on 20 June 2018.

Good progress continues to be made with the Basic and Advanced Trench Reinstatement training courses being rolled out. It is proposed to hold a workshop for Broadband Officers in Athlone on 10 May 2018 in conjunction with a DRCD Regional Action Group meeting.

**Next steps:**

Any issues arising to be addressed as required.

**Action 9:** Monitor progress on the implementation of the nationally agreed pricing framework for road opening licences.

**Timeline:** Ongoing

**Lead Body:** County and City Management Association

**Update:** In Progress

Following consultation with industry the CCMA has proposed a revised pricing framework. The framework addresses application fees and long-term impact charges consistent with the DTTAS guidelines. The framework is expected to be implemented in Q3 2018.

**Next steps:**

The charges will be implemented by each local authority and reviewed during Q3-Q4 2018. During the coming months the CCMA will also consult on an appropriate deposit framework for implementation to include a capped deposit for utilities consistent with the DTTAS guidelines.

**Action 13:** Geo-code all new ducting and make information on the ducting accessible to local authorities – where practicable, feasible and there are no security issues.

**Timeline:** Ongoing

**Lead Body:** County and City Management Association

**Update:** In Progress

It is a requirement of the Guidelines for Managing Openings in Public Roads (Purple Book) that location drawings of ducting are available to local authorities upon request. However there are issues of security of commercial information to be considered.

**Next steps:**

Some local authorities are considering ways of geo-coding ducting using Mobile App technologies, the results of which will be considered by the CCMA.

**Action 14:** All mobile operators to introduce WiFi calling to enable mobile users to make phone calls over 4G.

**Timeline:** Ongoing

**Lead Body:** Telecommunications and Internet Federation

**Update:** In Progress

TIF suggest the Action Point is reworded to

“**Action 14:** All mobile operators to introduce VoLTE calling to enable mobile users to make phone calls over 4G.”

Mobile operators, through TIF, have indicated that the Commercial Implementation of VoLTE is planned by all operators for 2018.

**Next steps:**

Commercial implementation planned for 2018.

**Action 15:** Establish a focus group to provide guidance with respect to categories of location where high quality reliable mobile coverage should be made available as a priority taking account of consumer expectations.

**Timeline:** Q1

**Lead Body:** Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment

**Update:** Completed

The focus group has been established with membership from DCCAE and four other Departments, ComReg and four other Agencies. It has held two meetings to date and expects to finalise its work in Q2.

**Next steps:**

Further meetings will be held during Q2 in order to finalise the work of the Group.

**Action 22:** Commence the production of a National Digital Strategy, to set out a vision for Ireland to reap the full rewards of a digitally enabled society.

**Timeline:** Ongoing

**Lead Body:** Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment

**Update:** In Progress

Stakeholder engagements with relevant public sector bodies have been initiated and will continue in Q2 2018.

**Next steps:**

Ongoing stakeholder engagement.

**Action 23:** Improved dissemination of information on developments in high-speed broadband, and awareness raising of its benefits:

- Broadband Officers to engage with PPNs to increase community awareness around high-speed broadband.
- Communications at local level to address concerns arising from proposed siting of masts.

**Timeline:** Ongoing

**Lead Body:** County and City Management Association

**Update:** In Progress

DRCD will address this issue in the context of the development of local digital strategies.

**Next steps:**

DRCD have scheduled a seminar with Broadband Officers. In addition, a workshop is being arranged for Broadband Officers to highlight pertinent issues from the 'Guidelines for Managing Openings in Public Roads' (Purple Book).

**Action 30:** ComReg to finalise testing to determine the sensitivity of mobile phone handsets on the market, and make data publicly available.

**Timeline:** Q1

**Lead Body:** ComReg

**Update:** Completed

ComReg identified in its current Radio Spectrum Management Strategy Statement (ComReg 16/50) that poor antenna performance in handsets is likely one of the issues that has a significant effect on the user's experience. ComReg took the decision to test the performance of handsets currently on the market to better inform consumers of the effect handset performance can have on their experience. In total this phase of testing took c. 2,000 hours to complete and resulted in the publication of the Mobile Handset Performance (Voice) report (ComReg 18/05).

**Next steps:**

ComReg will work with stakeholders to disseminate this report as widely as possible.

**Action 33:** Each telco to produce a quarterly report to the Taskforce Implementation Group on network enhancements, new services and future plans and the benefits to consumers of their products and services.

**Timeline:** Ongoing

**Lead Body:** Telecommunications and Internet Federation

**Update:** In Progress

Telecoms operators have requested a more structured process with a clear timetable of when information is required. In that regard, DCCAE has undertaken to assist in establishing a reporting structure to satisfy the requirements of this action.

**Next steps:**

DCCAE will work with the operators to finalise a reporting structure in Q2.

**Action 3:** Revise the guidelines for Development Contribution Schemes to ensure any waivers apply to both mobile phone and broadband.

**Timeline:** Q1

**Lead Body:** Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government

**Update:** Delayed

DHPLG is preparing an update to the 2013 Development Contribution Guidelines to extend the current waivers for broadband infrastructure to also incorporate mobile phone infrastructure. It is proposed to revise the Guidelines by way of Circular letter issued to planning authorities under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000. Planning authorities must have regard to guidelines issued under Section 28 in the performance of their functions generally under the Planning Acts.

**Next steps:**

The Circular letter is at an advanced stage of development and it is intended that the finalised Circular will be issued in Q2 2018.

**Action 5:** Agree a protocol for periodic engagement on general planning matters, including exempted development provisions, between the DHPLG and the industry, in conjunction with DCCAE.

**Timeline:** Q1

**Lead Body:** Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government

**Update:** Delayed

A draft protocol has been prepared by DHPLG and will be shared with DCCAE/industry representatives for comment/observations prior to finalisation.

**Next steps:**

Finalise and implement the protocol in Q2 2018.

**Action 17:** The Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport to consider Transport Infrastructure Ireland's request for revised duct access charge on receipt of views from the Ministers for Finance, and Communications, Climate Action and Environment.

**Timeline:** Q1

**Lead Body:** Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport

**Update:** Delayed

As required by law, the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport wrote to the Minister for Finance and the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment in December 2017 to consult them on the matter. Responses are awaited.

**Next steps:**

The Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport will consider Transport Infrastructure Ireland's request in the light of any comments received from the Minister for Finance and the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment.

**Action 28:** ComReg will engage 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.

**Timeline:** Q1

**Lead Body:** ComReg/telecommunications operators

**Update:** Delayed

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. ComReg engaged a third party to provide a forecast of likely data requirements based on available data.

**Next steps:**

Work is complete and the publication of the report is imminent.

## GLOSSARY

<b>ComReg</b>	Commission for Communications Regulation
<b>DCCA</b>	Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment
<b>DHPLG</b>	Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government
<b>DRCD</b>	Department of Rural and Community Development
<b>DTTAS</b>	Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport
<b>Intervention Area</b>	The area of the country which will require State intervention to bring about the deployment of high speed broadband services
<b>LA</b>	Local Authority
<b>LGMA</b>	Local Government Management Agency
<b>Mbps</b>	Megabits per second
<b>MRL</b>	MapRoad Roadworks Licensing
<b>NBP</b>	National Broadband Plan
<b>RMO</b>	Road Management Office
<b>TIF</b>	Telecommunications and Internet Federation
<b>TII</b>	Transport Infrastructure Ireland