Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Mobile Phone & Broadband Taskforce

Meeting Minutes

27/04/2022

Prepared by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications
and the Department of Rural and Community Development
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Minutes of the Mobile and Broadband Taskforce

Date: Wednesday 27th April 2022

Venue: Herbert Park Hotel, Ballsbridge

Time: 14:00 – 16.00

State Attendees: Minister of State Ossian Smyth, T.D. (co-Chair), Minister Heather Humphreys, T.D. (co-Chair), Ciarán Ó hÓbáin (D/ECC), Fintan O'Brien (D/RCD), Jake Ryan (D/RCD), Patrick Neary (D/ECC), Peter Burke (LGMA), Paul Fox (LGMA), Stephen Flynn (RMO) Garrett Blaney (ComReg), Barbara Delaney (ComReg), Catherine Eddery (OPW), Orla Twomey (ASAI), Bernard Quinn (D/Transport), Yvonne Dalton (D/HLGH), Eoghan O'Brien (D/HLGH), Brian Loughlin (D/HLGH)

Industry Attendees (joined meeting from 15:00): Torlach Denihan (TII Ibec), Emer Sherry (TII Ibec), Ronan Lupton (ALTO), Dan Lewis (Eurona, representing WISPs), and wider Industry member representatives.

Observers: Jane Dooley (D/ECC), Etain Hobson (D/RCD)

Secretariat: Rachel Lawless (D/ECC)

Dept. Officials: Timothy Ollry (D/RCD), Andrew O'Sullivan (D/ECC), Rory Hinchy (D/ECC), Breda Callan (D/ECC)

Apologies: Eamonn Confrey (D/ECC), Ethna Brogan (D/Transport), Andrew Ebrill (D/Transport), Paddy Mahon (CCMA)

1. Opening Remarks for State Stakeholder Session – Minister Heather Humphreys and Minister of State Ossian Smyth

- Minister Humphreys and Minister of State Smyth opened the meeting, extending their thanks to all the participants and providing a high-level outline of the new proposed Taskforce Work Programme.
- It was outlined that the first session of this meeting was for State Stakeholders to converse freely and openly regarding the work of the Taskforce, and to agree on the Work Programme.
- The minutes of the previous meeting of the Taskforce were confirmed and accepted by all attendees.

2. New Proposed Work Programme

- All the attendees were asked whether they were agreeable to accepting the actions assigned to them as lead bodies for implementation as part of the new proposed Work Programme.

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage ('D/HLGH')

- The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (D/HLGH) accepted ownership of actions assigned to them as part of the new Work Programme, including Action 2 (to update the Taskforce on the review of the Planning and Development Act), Action 3 (to update the Taskforce on measures to address the ownership of ducting) and Action 4 (review and update of Planning Guidelines).
- Regarding Action 4, it was noted that the telecoms planning guidelines were developed in 1996 and last updated with a minor amendment in 2012. Consequently, an update to the guidelines is overdue and required and, in that regard, D/HLGH will consult and engage with D/ECC in time when the update is underway, following from the ongoing AGO review of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. It was noted that any new guidelines will be subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening and will feed into the National Planning Framework.

Department of Transport ('D/Transport')

- The Department of Transport (D/Transport) accepted ownership of actions assigned to them as part of the new Work Programme, including Action 3 (to update the

Taskforce on measures to address the ownership of ducting) and Action 9 (develop a standard approach and guidance document in relation to ducting).

Department of Environment, Climate and Communications ('D/ECC')

- The Department of Environment, Climate and Communications accepted ownership of the action assigned to the Department as part of the new Work Programme, including Action 7 (supporting the local government to drive efficiencies in the telecoms infrastructure).
- This action will build on work that has been ongoing over the past 2 years in this area. The need for additional funding for local authorities to address recognised resourcing challenges which will further facilitate the rapid rollout of the National Broadband Plan was also discussed.

Department of Rural and Community Development ('D/RCD')

- The Department of Rural and Community Development (D/RCD) accepted ownership of actions assigned to them as part of the new Work Programme, including Action 6 (continue to refine and enhance the Broadband Officer role).
- The work of the Broadband Officers since their inception was well-recognised and consequently their role will continue to be leveraged and enhanced as part of this new iteration of the Taskforce. D/RCD will continue to engage with the CCMA and LGMA on the work of the Broadband Officers.
- D/RCD are also hoping to align this action with the Connectivity Toolbox and Smart City and County Agenda.

Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg)

- ComReg accepted ownership of the actions assigned to them as part of the new Work Programme, including Action 12 (launch consumer information campaign aiming to improve awareness of the basics of new technologies) and Action 13 (assisting the State in steps to further improve geographic mobile coverage). It is noted that ComReg's membership status with the Taskforce is in an independent advisory capacity.

- ComReg informed the attendees that, relating to Action 13, a requirement to increase coverage is now embedded in all Spectrum auctions.

County and City Management Association (CCMA)

- The CCMA accepted ownership of the actions assigned to them as part of the new Work Programme, including Action 9 (develop a standard approach and guidance document in relation to ducting), and Action 5 (to bring all elements of the planning permission application and determination process fully online across all local authorities).
- Action 9 is co-owned with the Department of Transport, and Action 5 is co-owned with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Planning.
- The CCMA informed the attendees that the project involved in the work of Action 5 is already well underway, with an intention to begin the rollout of the ePlanning system in waves beginning in Q3 of 2022. A pilot scheme ended in March, and 35% of all applications came in electronically.

Advertising Standards Authority for Ireland (ASAI)

- The ASAI accepted ownership of the action assigned to them as part of the new Work Programme - Action 10 (conduct a data analysis exercise to examine the main areas of telecoms advertising that consumer complaints and provide guidance).
- All actions were accepted by the various State stakeholders, to include ComReg and the ASAI, and Minister Humphreys thanked the attendees for their work in drafting the Work Programme.

3. Opening Remarks for Industry Stakeholder Session – Minister of State Ossian Smyth

- Minister of State Smyth opened the second session of the meeting, extending his thanks to all the participants and giving an outline of the new Taskforce Work Programme.

- It was outlined that this second session of this meeting was for Industry Stakeholders to converse freely and openly with State stakeholders regarding the work of the Taskforce, having engaged with the work of the Taskforce in the past.

4. Industry Stakeholder Discussion

- Torlach Denihan, Chair of Telecommunications Industry Ireland (TII) of Ibec, strongly welcomed the reconstitution of the Taskforce and acknowledged the political commitment and hard work of the two co-managing Departments, D/ECC and D/RCD, in getting the draft work programme to the stage it is at today. He asked the Taskforce to consider the legacy of the pandemic on telecoms rollout and the war in Ukraine effecting supply chains as a standing item on any forthcoming meeting agendas. TII will discuss specifics in terms of Industry's actions for inclusion in the Taskforce work programme with both Departments over the coming weeks.
- Jane Dooley, D/ECC, gave a short overview of what the EU Connectivity Toolbox aims to achieve - an EU collection of best practices for implementation on a national scale where relevant, to speed up economic recovery and telecoms infrastructure deployment timelines and conditions in the EU in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The attendees were informed that the Taskforce will be used as a vehicle to implement EU Connectivity Toolbox best practice actions in Ireland, insofar as they relate to the further streamlining of permit-granting processes and improving availability of information and access to State Assets. The Toolbox is well-aligned with the work of the Taskforce, which will act as an appropriate platform to consult with Industry on its implementation over the course of the coming three years.
- Ciarán Ó hÓbáin, D/ECC, gave his thanks to and acknowledgement of Industry's dedication to delivering excellent services to citizens and businesses during the pandemic, notwithstanding the various challenges that arose as a result of same over that period. He informed the industry attendees that the Work Programme had been agreed on by other State members during the first half of the meeting, and that they will be consulted with as the work continues.

Minister of State Smyth opened the floor to comments from Industry:

- Ronan Lupton, Chair of ALTO, spoke on the challenges of the European Electronic Communications Code ('the Code') transposition and the Framework change for industry.
- Garett Blaney, ComReg Commissioner, discussed how investment in the telecoms sector in Ireland has continued and that consumers are seeing the benefits arising from same. However, he discussed how 'dark clouds' are on the horizon with the war in Ukraine, price rises and issues surrounding sustainability. He asked industry to consider if there are any responses to these issues that ComReg could help facilitate.
- Colin Cunningham, Cellnex, discussed the great work done with the previous iterations of the Taskforce, with industry now seeing the benefits of changes made to legislation in 2018. Companies are now bringing best practices from Ireland to other European markets, all due to the work of the Taskforce, which is a benefit to the supply chain in Ireland. Therefore, any other changes can now benefit Irish companies in other markets.
- Minister of State Smyth introduced Jaime Cudden from Dublin City Council ('DCC') to give a presentation on Smart Dublin.

5. Presentation from Dublin City Council ('DCC') on Smart Dublin

- Jamie Cudden and Seamus Doran from Dublin City Council ('DCC') gave a presentation on Smart Dublin and the work of the newly established DCC Telecoms Unit.
- DCC launched the Telecoms Unit in March, a 'one stop shop' for all telecoms related requests coming through to Dublin City Council. Through this Telecoms Unit the DCC has learned that ducting and access is the biggest challenge facing the telecoms industry.
- DCC and specifically the Telecoms Unit would like to work closer to Industry to collaborate and facilitate Industry through its Assets Registry: a project DCC have undertaken involving mapping all of their ducting and infrastructure.

- Ronan Lupton (ALTO) and Torlach Denihan (TII) applauded DCC for their presentation, and for the work of the Telecoms Unit. TII will provide any assistance they can to the unit.
- Colin Cunningham (Cellnex) who has been working with DCC and the Telecoms Unit applauds the work they are doing.
- Jamie Cudden and Seamus Doran appreciated the positive feedback given and mentioned that they would appreciate the continued support from both government and industry.

6. Next Steps

- Fintan O'Brien (D/RCD) officially closed the meeting and conveyed his thanks to all participants, and the organisers of the meeting.
- The next formal meeting of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce is suggested to take place on the 9th of September.
- It was suggested that the Terms of Reference will be formally ratified in the next meeting.

To be completed when all of the minutes are agreed.