

## Questions

**Question 1:** When do you consider it would be timely and efficient for next generation access investment to take place in the UK?

In view of the pressing demand for help from such a large number of people who can not receive broadband or receive it in a substandard form, the need for on going financial assistance is real and immediate. The efficiency of the investment would be radically enhanced if the bulk of the funds provided found their way to those who are actually providing real solutions in areas where they are needed. i.e. rural areas. Local companies trying to meet real needs in these areas in a sustainable and professional way have proven their contribution is vital and their ability to 'stay' is rooted in local commitment, yet it appears that the process to secure financial assistance for their efforts is largely in vain and would often lead to the demise of the company when trying to complete the requirements of the NGO's. Efficiency is also addressed by the amount of money used by the 'assisting' organisation NGO's compared to those actually doing the work. My company was helping rural communities before the last round of initiatives were announced and it is still helping people now they have ended, and I trust will go on helping until the next assistance is available. There is a clear dilemma here. If a small company in South Shropshire has been, can, and still is providing real and tangible commercially sustainable help to those who need it, why do those who can afford to do it end up getting the bulk of the financial assistance. Sadly the answer is all too simple and clear. Yet a fraction of what was awarded to those who can afford to do it, would enable companies like Jentech to do a better job quicker and for more people. I am not trying to be clever here and I do appreciate the difficulties faced, but at the end of the day the investment largely ended up in the hands of those who simply augmented their income stream and have made little real difference in the rural areas we serve. That money could have encouraged and strengthened local initiatives and produced sustainable business growth social cohesion, community spirit, and brought much needed financial help into rural areas directly and indirectly.

The process for selecting the companies who received the assistance, was the very reason we had to drop out of the accreditation. We could not afford to complete the application process. As it was designed it eliminated almost all of the people who were actually already doing the job it was designed to encourage and enable.

**Question 2:** Do you agree with the principles outlined for regulating next generation access?

I answer this question to try to encourage your help in a very serious area of this process, and confess I do not have a slick or smart answer. My desire is to communicate first hand experience of the 'process' over recent years. The commercial reality of a company such as mine is, we have to work very hard to maintain our day to day activity and profitability.

I have scanned the proposal but can not allocate the time it would take me in all good conscience to read and digest its implication. Therefore my response is a plea to you to hear this 'cry from what can feel like the wilderness'. The process is unaffordable in time and commitment from a company like ours, we are too busy doing what the process is designed to assist us with to claim the assistance! A Catch 22. If we joined the process (as we have tried to do) we would fail as a company. How can I say that? We tried it last time and it almost crippled us financially. It took 'me' about three to five working weeks to reach the point where I realised I could not fulfill the needs of the process, and had to revert to doing the job we do to stay alive as a company. So the principles in this new proposal may be fine, I don't know? I do know I can't allocate the time to find out. We are too busy doing what those who don't have broadband in rural areas need. Installing and providing Broadband!

**Question 3:** How should Ofcom reflect risk in regulated access terms?

I am not sure I understand what that is so can not comment in a relevant way.

**Question 4:** Do you agree with the need for both passive and active access remedies to promote competition?

It is not more competition we need it is the right help in the right areas to the right companies. Putting huge sums of money in the hands of the largest organizations, does not seem to have delivered broadband to many of those in remote rural areas in our part of the country.

**Question 5:** Do you consider there to be a role of direct regulatory or public policy intervention to create artificial incentives for earlier investment in next generation access?

Yes.

The hard bit is to harness the initiative and drive of those who will provide real breakthrough in the fringes of the community, as well as those who will provide the mega solution for the larger urban areas. In general the market size for those projects is self financing and sustainable and will happen with or without financial intervention. The assistance is needed where the model is marginal due to small population densities, diverse communities, rugged landscape, etc., yet the need is as great if we are to see this significant sector 'included' in the way ahead. To try to illustrate this point, we have installed broadband service provision in many properties where they don't even have mains electric or telephones. Also community after community where 6 to 16+ homes have been told they will not get broadband via their telephone for 3 to 5 years! We install it in that number of weeks. We are not the enemy of the larger organisation, we are part of the solution. Please get us the help we need, and help us help you to develop the way ahead in the remote rural communities. We have the inventiveness, drive, initiative and need. We just can't afford it quickly enough. I believe money channeled into this area for development as well as service provision would release that very British flare for creative engineering and practical deliverable solutions would flourish.

**Additional comments**

I am sure by now you can hear the cry of my heart. I am not eloquent, well educated, or wealthy. (Forgive my poor grammar and inevitable spelling mistakes. Along with so many engineers I am not blessed with great linguistic skills.) I represent a 'service' industry company on the ground in a beautiful and rural area of my county. Our customers are our neighbors and friends as they often are in rural areas. We can help meet people in rural areas in their place of need. That is our real response to a real need from the heart. The government has a great policy and desire to see help and services delivered to those who can so easily be 'excluded' in such areas. We can and are doing what we are asking for help with, but we are doing it on shoe string, while we watch huge sums of government money ploughed into the 'process' allocated to those who were already charged with the responsibility to do what the money has been used for, and have still not delivered to many of those areas I refer to, despite fine words, commitment that it would all be done, by a date, and who have the resources to survive the application and approval process. We can, were and are doing it THEN AND NOW. We will go on doing it, God willing, with or without grant assistance. It would be wonderful however if you could find ways of 'really' helping companies like ours to help the very people that it was intended to be helped and include those in the more

remote rural areas who we serve. Thanks for the opportunity to respond. If we can be of further help please don't hesitate to contact us/me.