

**Name and title under which you would like this response to appear:**

Stephanie Northen

**Representing:**

Self

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

See additional comments.

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

See additional comments.

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

See additional comments.

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

See additional comments.

**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?:**

See additional comments.

**Additional comments:**

My response to this consultation is only concerned with the problem of the "digital divide". I live on the wrong side of it - in a rural area of Norfolk which, though it is only 100 miles from London, may as well be 1,000 miles in terms of the broadband services we can access. This is also a deprived area where most jobs pay only the minimum wage. My partner and I work from home, running a small editorial agency. Our neighbours do likewise, running a successful design business. We, and many others like us, represent the future for areas like this, in terms of generating income and bringing up children who have higher aspirations than is currently the norm here. If regions like this are to not fall further and further behind wealthy ones, we need connectivity at least as good as urban areas. The reality is we have no choice other than BT landlines and the reality of that is broadband "speeds" sometimes half as fast as dial-up! With this level of service we cannot even keep our computers up-to-date by downloading virus protection software etc. If we cannot do that, we cannot carry

on our business. Unlike, city-dwellers we certainly cannot download movies - and it is an irony that our popular local DVD rental shop recently closed. The chain, Choices, had seen profits damaged by the increasing number of people accessing movies and music online. Not us! Our children, who benefit from living in beautiful countryside, cannot survive in a modern age by just looking at a view. They, and their schools, need good connections if they are to "keep up" with their digitally rich urban peers - who have a vast choice of other entertainment on their doorsteps. Museums, clubs, concerts, theatre, cinema etc etc are all easily available to them. Not so here. It would be a grave injustice, and ultimately economic foolishness, to let them slide into a digital void created by the broadband greed of the people on the other side of the divide.