

Speech

Keith Todd, Chairman BSG

BSG Reception at the House of Commons

Monday 5th April, 2004



Thank you Stephen [Timms MP].

Can I start by welcoming your response to the BSG's January Report. This positive response provides further evidence of the way in which you have engaged with the BSG.... considered and listened to the recommendations that we have put forward.

As you have mentioned, there has been a very good record of follow-up on the issues that we have raised over the last few years.

I also welcome the personal commitment that you have shown. Indeed, I believe we have been particularly fortunate to have a Minister who understands so well the issues that we are trying to address and who understands how they can make a real long-term difference to the daily lives of his constituents and the welfare of this nation.

Reflection

We have undoubtedly made significant progress over the past three years but we need to guard against being too triumphant! I think that we are all acutely aware of how far there is still to go.

The broadband journey, that I've been going on about, is not a sprint, it's a long distance endurance event, and we need to maintain our energies and brace ourselves for more hard graft to come. We must all guard against 'broadband fatigue' and complacency.

We have in my view brought into focus some profound insights...too many to mention, all but two that stand out for me...

The broadband journey for a user Adopt, Adapt, Absorb.

That the Broadband message is communicated best by role models ...not consultants... SME / public sector leaders / teachers etc.

I believe passionately that achieving our communal broadband vision is critically important for the UK economy and society.

It matters for your businesses;

It matters for your children's education;

It matters for your village or community;

It matters for your local hospital;

It matters for making our public services more effective;

It matters for raising levels of productivity and innovation to create new jobs and growth for the future.

But I know I'm very much preaching to the converted. The fact that there are so many of you here today demonstrates the passion and commitment that exists across the stakeholder community.

The BSG has succeeded in bringing together a rich cocktail of experience over the last three years and has worked as an open knowledge network on the open source principle. It has uniquely connected grass roots activists with ministers and big business - it is in my view an excellent modern day knowledge network.

It has truly been a stakeholder group covering business, government and individual members of society.

The Future

Over recent months it has become very apparent that although it was intended to close the BSG, there is a strong appetite on the part of both the industry, government and the membership for a continuation of the stakeholder approach to the next phase of the broadband journey, to try and achieve a further step change in the UK's progress.

It is therefore our intention to launch a new stakeholder group in October 2004, with a revised mission, a new Chairman and Executive and a new working structure.

This organisation will take forward the knowledge network that is the BSG today. It will continue to be independent, open to all, and dominated by no one stakeholder.

It will focus on helping achieve the **UK's Broadband Vision for 2010**.

The BSG will continue to act as an independent 'knowledgeable critical friend of government' in achieving this goal.

In this next phase, the BSG will strive to focus on achieving outcomes (i.e. the sophisticated use and exploitation of broadband-enabled ICT, content services and applications), as well as on the technology and infrastructure inputs.

As the Minister mentioned, we have agreed to continue running the current BSG through to the end of September and we have received commitments from the DTI and a number of major industry players from across the broadband value chain including: BT, AOL, Telewest, BBC, Marconi, T-Mobile, Nortel and IBM, to enable the BSG to function through the interim period, and I warmly welcome and thank them for their support.

I with my colleagues on the Executive and the Secretariat will work over the next few months to deliver this new organisation.

In addition.... over this period

OFCOM

We will also be taking forward our work on the OFCOM telecommunications review and we have been discussing with the OFCOM team where the BSG can best contribute, with the following four themes emerging from our discussions:

'Incentivising investment' – exploring the models that will allow access networks to stay ahead of the demand curve to support innovative services and how competitive access might be provided. In essence, Ofcom is interested to understand how both more bandwidth and more competition in the provision of that bandwidth can be achieved, particularly at local level.

Thoughts on what will drive content and applications development and how business plans might need to adapt to support this area. They are also interested in views on how current concerns regarding piracy can be addressed and how DRM issues can be progressed to support wider availability of broadband content.

'Convergence', and thoughts on the conditions that will allow 'broadcast type' linear content to become available for broadband delivery and the extent to which there will be a move towards all IP delivery in future. Fixed/mobile convergence and the role that wireless access can play in delivering future broadband services is also of interest.

Finally, views on how take up will evolve in the medium term. Ofcom has seen forecasts of 45% projected take up at end of decade but would welcome other input.

I think these issues have been constant themes in the work that the BSG has done over the last three years and I think OFCOM will find a broad stakeholder perspective very helpful in its deliberations through the course of this year.

Content

The other area where I think we'd like to see the BSG more active this year is in its engagement with the media and content applications sector. The 'Content Matters' event that was held last year was hugely instructive for me personally and as we move into this next phase of the market, we need to deepen our engagement on the content side of the value chain with the key industry players and stakeholders.

Visions

As you will be aware, earlier this year we asked members of the BSG to contribute their thinking on what a broadband-enabled Britain might look like in 2010. We received over 40 contributions from individuals and organisations from across the broadband value chain. The submissions, which are published on the BSG web site today for the first time, provide a rich open source of views and opinions from a wide range of perspectives and are a valuable resource for anyone thinking about the potential implications of the global broadband revolution.

These submissions have not been edited and represent the views of the authors themselves, rather than the agreed views of the BSG. The result of this exercise has been to develop a mosaic of visions from different view-points and perspectives that when you stand back, start to provide a pattern for what the future might look like. If, having read some of the articles below, you would like to add your vision to this discussion, please e-mail your contribution to the Secretariat.

Thanks

Finally, I'd like to thank the people who have made today possible. Stephen Speed's team at the DTI that have done much of the work. Intellect: John Higgins for providing a great team. Antony Walker in particular but critical contributions from Camilla Young, and, over the course of the last two years, Robert Millar and Alex Quinn. Most important my thanks to you all ...the stakeholders for your efforts and support.

Thank you.

Ends

Keith Todd

5th April 2004