

Note of the Cross Party Group in the Scottish Parliament on Digital Participation meeting - 4 September 2013

MSPs in attendance

Willie Coffey
Fiona McLeod

WC welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked all speakers for presenting and Three for sponsoring the refreshments. Vicki Nash advised members that Ofcom will be presenting on the findings from the Communications Market Report 2013 at an event in the Macdonald Holyrood Hotel on 10 October. Anyone who'd like to attend was asked to contact her.

The minutes from the meeting in April were agreed.

1. Three presentation

Jennifer Amphlett and Jessica Tompkinson from the mobile operator, Three, gave a presentation on Three's work to encourage digital participation.

More and more people are accessing the internet on their mobile and it is predicted that more people will be using mobile, rather than fixed broadband, by 2015. Three is the newest mobile operator, having joined the market through the 3G auction.. Data use on the Three network has grown significantly since 2007 –an increase of 2000%. 98% of all traffic over Three's network is data.

JA and JT ran through Three's price plans and what Three is doing to support this demand for data. This includes: network rollout/coverage and introducing price plans which encourage people to use data. Fear of bill shock was a barrier to many consumers using data, so Three introduced the One Plan, an all-you-can-eat data plan, in 2009. Three will not be charging consumers any extra to use 4G data services when they launch. Three's 3-2-1 pay-as-you-go proposition is targeted at low income families and doesn't require those signing up to have a fixed address or a credit check.

Digital participation is a big feature of Three's corporate responsibility strategy. In 2009, 9million people had never been online in the UK. Three's objective is to help unconnected communities get connected. There are three areas which Three is seeking to address:

1. Social exclusion – the impact of digital exclusion on relationships, such as keeping in touch with families.

JT gave an overview of the project at Glenboig House near Glasgow. The project has digital champions with Mi-Fi devices who go into people's homes to show them how to get online. The benefits of this is that the champions are trusted people in the community.. JT also cited the example of teenagers who were job hunting and were introduced to job-hunting online and subsequently engaged more widely on the internet. Three also work in collaboration with Get Online centres and Age UK. A list of all their projects is available at three.co.uk/company. Three estimate that they have helped about 10,000 people get online through these projects.

2. Geographic barriers – for example, if children do not have internet at home and can't do their homework

JT talked about Three's work in providing mobile broadband coverage where fixed broadband is patchy. JT gave an example where Three were approached by the local council in Nottinghamshire to get people online. The community already had 3G connectivity, but weren't aware they could access mobile broadband through a dongle. Three are currently looking for communities in Northern Ireland who can't get fixed broadband to work with.

3. Enabling communities

JT talked about Three's work with businesses. Three provided a dongle to an East Kilbride business. BT is now installing fixed broadband in the area as wider demand has now been proved there. JT also gave the examples of the Park Run organisation, where Three connectivity allowed runners to upload their running times in real time and another example whereby mobile dongles provided internet access for seamen when they dock in port.

Three also provide low cost packages which social housing providers can buy to get their tenants online. These do not require credit checks and are rolling contracts. JT also emphasised the importance of getting people to enjoy the internet and what it can offer, as an incentive to get them online. JT also gave the example of girl guides training people to use their mobiles and get online.

Three think that Government should be focussed on the outcomes of digital participation, rather than technology, such as 4G. A holistic approach should be taken, with whatever technology works. It costs around £600k to build a mast in rural areas.

WC asked if Three get the sense that the mobile operators are increasingly looking at underserved communities and he asked what Three needed from the CPG. JA said that Three, as one of the smallest providers, has a smaller amount of customers and is focussing on the 9m consumers who are not online. Three is not charging extra for 4G, which would send the wrong message, as they want customers to use their network as much as possible. JA added that with Three entering the market prices have fallen to £7.50 for 1Gb. Three's focus is on being affordable and being a consumer champion. A challenge for Three is communicating with the hard-to-reach customer base, as they are not online they are hard to find. Three's basic policy asks are around planning which can be a barrier to infrastructure roll-out.

Michael Fourman (MF) asked for clarification around Three's pricing and how many Gb people tend to use with all-you-can-eat packages. JA said that on average customers tend to use between 4 and 7 GB.

Douglas White from the Carnegie Trust asked what Three's annual Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) budget was. JT replied that Three's CSR doesn't just focus on digital participation. The majority of Three's digital participation work is funded by the marketing team. Three has spent roughly half a million pounds in terms of data and connectivity.

Graeme Hamilton from Glasgow Housing Association asked what Three's view was on the internet being the fourth utility and whether greater collaboration across the UK with providers with large social housing portfolios is needed, rather than one-to-one discussions with providers. JA said that Three had rolled out low cost data to 98.5% of the population without any

supplement from Government. There are areas which are more commercially viable to reach, however there are other areas where Government has to step in. JT added that affordability was an interesting point and is why Three work a lot with residents' associations. Three work on a one-to-one basis to tailor packages and affordability - they can drive down prices where housing associations buy in bulk. GH added that connectivity was well and good, but that the provision of devices was also important.

WC asked what Three's view was on driving down barriers on prices between jurisdictions and roaming. JA said that Three had lobbied the European Commission through the UK Parliament to lower the caps. Three launched the 'Feel at Home' tariff so that people can use their package in an equivalent way when they travel abroad. Three can only do this where they have a sister network – the European Commission is looking at other roaming options without caps which could drive prices up.

MF asked what Three's view was on UK-wide roaming to address coverage issues. JA said that the costs of this were high to reach around 0.5% of the population. Three have not gone down that route due to competition considerations.

Joe Wilson from the Scottish Qualifications Authority (JW) asked about Mi-Fi tariffs and how to get connected. JA said that Three had worked with the tourist information centre to get some areas connected. JT said to talk to Three or go into a Three store to get further information about how mobile broadband can be provided over Mi-Fi.

2. Presentation from Ian McCracken and John Crawford

Ian McCracken ran through some common assumptions which teachers have when asking students to carry out research online. IM gave the example of an educational resource without teaching pupils proper enquiry skills, such as Wikipedia citing Edward Jenner as "one of the greatest killers"! Teachers assume that pupils have developed online search skills, that pupils know what keywords are and how to use them and that pupils know how to use a search engine. Accessibility of information is also important – if pupils have 'googled' the question, did they get the right answer?

IM ran through the results of a survey conducted in West Lothian of 900 pupils. 5% had no internet access at home, while 75% had no rules in the home about how to use the internet. 84% of pupils use the internet for homework, while 67% trusted what they read online. 70% of pupils did not check where the information was coming from and less than a third checked their sources.

IM also ran through the results of a YOSCI survey which looked, on an international basis, at how suitable and engaging science websites were for young people. One finding was that the text should be concise and engaging. A concerning finding was the lack of a sound editing process on the websites and the lack of knowledge as to the sources behind the websites in question. There is no correlation between outcomes and teaching pupils how to use information – the normal measure of success is how much information pupils find. If teachers aren't marking the process of finding information, there is no incentive for pupils to learn good research skills.

John Crawford is Chair of the Information Skills Forum for a 21st Century Scotland. John also directed the Scottish Information Literacy Project from 2003 to 2005. JC's last major project was to evaluate the information skills at a library. Intellectual Property rights also play an important role in

information literacy. JC gave a definition of information literacy as how to find information, evaluate it and communicate it.

The key objective of the Scottish Information Literacy Project was to engage with a wide range of organisations on information literacy. The project evolved from an original idea to develop a framework of a ladder of skills through secondary education to higher education. The Right Information is an online community of practice, promoting information literacy frameworks. This skills framework is in continuous development. There is a need to develop information skills literacy for trainee teachers, in order to teach the pupils to be information literate. Edinburgh Library is a leading institution in the UK in developing e-learning online training packages. JC also ran through some information literacy projects to date, such as Project Blaster which is a project run by the National Library of Scotland with primary schools.

MF quoted the finding that 5% of pupils don't have the internet at home. He asked whether students do use the internet for studying.

IM said that in most cases, students use the internet for studying, but less so for the younger primary school age students. Primary schools have non-fiction books at certain reading levels, but search terms and academic materials online are less tailored to age. MF said that Vint Cerf had recently visited the Royal Society. He will suggest to Google filtering search terms by reading age.

JW offered assurance that the Scottish Library and Information Council work ties together. The need for information literacy skills is built into the system.

Fiona Mcleod MSP (FM) welcomed the presentations and said that information literacy is the foundation to digital participation. She made a number of points

- Libraries are clustering with primary schools, so that right from the start pupils develop these skills
- She suggested that the Right Information applies to the Equality Improvement Fund which SLIC administers and partner with public libraries
- She further suggested that the Right Information coordinate with SCURL

JC said that they did work with the Head of School Libraries, Claire Jones . One of the problems they are encountering in their work is that libraries aren't confident in imparting information skills advice. He did write to SCURL some years ago but has not yet heard back.

It was agreed that the Kateri survey of pupils would be shared with members. ACTION: Charlie to circulate slides.

Ends.