

ADEPT Corporate Partners Seminar on Digital Connectivity 26 September 2019

The ADEPT Corporate Partners Seminar on Digital Connectivity brought together a wide range of industry professionals, as well as policy, executive agencies and local government experts from across the UK. Hosted at the HQ of the Chartered Institute of Water and Environmental Management (CIWEM) in London, the seminar offered a wide range of professional and personal development opportunities while defining the priorities for ADEPT's Digital Connectivity Working Group ([here](#)) to focus on.

This was a chance to share experience, knowledge and inspiration with like-minded individuals, whilst discovering the latest issues on 5G and full fibre broadband policy and investment from leading experts in their fields.

The event was opened by Darryl Evers, the President of ADEPT, with Nicola M^cCoy-Brown, Chair of the ADEPT Digital Connectivity Working Group, the master of ceremonies.

The esteemed line-up of speakers included:

- Louise Lancaster, Joint Head of Barrier Buster Task Force, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport;
- Laura Allen, Team Leader – National Infrastructure Policy, Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government;
- Alastair McMahon, Analytics Director, Telefonica UK;
- Graham Smith, Chief Executive, Highways Electrical Association;
- Dr Azadeh Peyman, Principal Radiation Protection Scientist, Public Health England; and
- Matt Smith, Operations Manager, Fastershire, Hertfordshire County Council.



Picture: The Amazon Room at CIWEM before partners arrived

Following the presentations and some initial questions to the speakers, the discussion was structured around five key questions:

1. What barriers do corporate partners face in unlocking digital innovation? How can ADEPT work with corporate partners to maximise impact?
2. How can ADEPT and corporate partners work together to create the right environment for others – including SMEs – to encourage digital innovation?
3. What particular aspects of digital connectivity should ADEPT / local government focus on over the next 3 years? What are the challenges we face as a sector in enabling more of our place services to be digitally enabled?
4. How can councils work together to improve connectivity and digital opportunities?
5. How can ADEPT best target its influencing and policy development work to frame the role of local government in developing digital connectivity and innovation?

Five key points from the floor discussion were:

1. Prudent management of infrastructure – achieving balance in getting as much use as possible out of existing assets, whilst designing for the future to cost-effectively deploy 5G solutions and future-proof new infrastructure
2. 5G myth-busting and the importance of consistency of messaging, especially but not limited to, increasing the knowledge of those in democratically elected positions who are closer to their communities, taking local leaders with us and enabling them to help shape the debate in a constructive way
3. Recognising complexity and challenge of deploying tech solutions at scale
4. In appreciation of the convergence between digital technology and physical infrastructure, the need for Place Directors to understand the challenges and opportunities created by increasing digitisation of built infrastructure projects and the opportunity for Corporate Partners to contribute to this understanding
5. The acute need for sustained collaborative effort, driven by the desired outcome. This would see a move away from focussing on immediate technical and commercial concerns, rather creating the conditions for integrated working and innovative procurement to flourish.