

Digital Connectivity Working Group update October 2019

The Digital Connectivity Working Group (DCWG) met on 8th October at the LGA with its new Chair, Nicola McCoy-Brown (Nottinghamshire). There were 10 attendees from councils, plus a number of guest speakers. The Working Group now reports in to the Transport and Connectivity Board, and Nicola shared papers and feedback from the Board's meeting on 6th September. Nicola also shared a report and feedback from the ADEPT corporate partners seminar on 26th September.

Gareth Elliott of Mobile UK, the trade body for mobile network operators, presented an overview of their proposed Shared Rural Network (SRN) which they are hoping to agree with Government and Ofcom. Following discussion, it was suggested that the Working Group write to Nicky Morgan, Secretary of State at DCMS, to express in principle support for the SRN but highlighting ongoing concerns including the quality of mobile coverage data.

Louise Lancaster and Richard Maddock of DCMS presented on planning consultation, streetworks, new build development, digital champions in councils, and 5G health concerns. There was a wide-ranging discussion, recognising the need to work with DCMS to ensure consistency of messaging to counter misinformation about 5G health concerns, and to lobby Ofcom to ask them to be more rigorous in challenging mobile coverage data provided by the industry. It was agreed that Nicola would co-ordinate a response to the current Government consultation on planning reform – proposed changes to permitted development rights to support the deployment of 5G. This response will be available on the ADEPT website once it has been submitted by 4th November.

The DCWG agreed a programme of quarterly meetings for 2020.