ISPA Conference 2019 - Securing Network Rollout and Integrity

The ISPA Conference 2019 was a packed event with panels on business broadband, DNS-over-HTTPS and broadband barriers and fireside chats with **DCMS** and **Openreach**. **Netgem** highlighted how ISPs can maximise ROI by offering a TV service alongside their voice/broadband products and **Salumanus** used the conference to introduce their brand and products to UK ISPs.

DCMS confident that Government has taken the rights steps to support industry

The morning was opened by **Bird&Bird Partner, Simon Shooter,** who welcomed **ISPA Chair, Andrew Glover,** and **Deputy Director for Telecoms at DCMS, Henry Shennan,** to discuss the Government's thinking and ambitions a year on from the Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review (FTIR).

Henry was confident in the progress made by Government since the FTIR, and noted the Rural Gigabit Connectivity Programme launched just a few days prior. The pilot phase of the Programme will be followed by a 15-year programme, with substantially more funding, targeting the hardest to reach areas in the country as part of the 'outside in' strategy. In order to help DCMS make the best possible case for digital within Government, Henry called on industry to show consensus and to provide shared positions, supported by as much evidence as possible.

Industry keen that business broadband gets specific attention

Point Topic CEO, Oliver Johnson, gave an expert's view of where the market currently sits, with a short presentation showing the regional variation in FTTP Deployment. This informed the first panel on the future of Business Broadband, given the transformative impact FTTP will have on the business market. Key takeaways included:
- Regulatory consistency is key to ISPs properly serving business customers, particularly SMB customers. This relies on Ofcom having full understanding of how businesses work in practise rather than just in theory.
- There is a clear need to address business connectivity, especially in rural areas and business parks, to avoid a digital divide as the market moves towards all-IP.
- Agility in the market will largely be driven by competition but will need to ensure this is not a race to the bottom on price.

Openreach increasing rollout plans and supporting Duct and Pole Access (DPA)

ISPA Chair, Andrew Glover, returned to the stage for an interview with **Richard Allwood, Chief Strategy Officer at Openreach**. Richard stressed that Openreach are keen to improve the service that it delivers to its customers, including providers in the room. He pointed out that Openreach had doubled both its FTTP footprint and its near-term rollout ambitions (4 million by 2021 and 15 million by the mid-twenties). In terms of challenges, Richard suggested that Openreach was facing similar issues to its competitors, including operational challenges, regulatory burdens and commercial imperatives. However, he highlighted that access to funding was not a problem for Openreach and went on to stress that they actively support competition.

In terms of DPA, Richard stressed that competition was best delivered through an agile approach to equivalence. He closed the discussion by inviting ISPA member to take an active role in Openreach's exchange switchover work.

Industry seek further progress on barrier busting

William Newton, President & EMEA Managing Director at WiredScore chaired a panel on broadband barriers. Industry speakers on the panel agreed with **Pete McDougal from DCMS** that the Government had adopted a supportive and pragmatic approach. However, there was a clear sense that industry would like to see more action from Government. Key discussion points included:

- The importance of ensuring the upcoming legislation on wayleaves and absentee landlords is as effective as possible.
- The negative impact of business rates was raised by ISPs.
- **Charles Trotman, Senior Economist at the CLA**, downplayed the issues around access to land but welcomed that there was now a more constructive debate between landowners and ISPs.
- The panel briefly considered connectivity for new builds and the importance of educating house builders, particularly smaller ones.

DNS-over-HTTPS should be a concern to all ISPA members

The Conference concluded with a panel on DNS-over-HTTPs (DoH), a technical protocol, backed by Google and Mozillia, that will have fundamental consequences for how ISPs run their networks by shifting DNS resolution from local ISPs to resolvers that are selected by applications. The panel recognised that DoH would provide some clear benefits, mainly an encrypted connection, but there were also significant concerns:

- **ISPs**, the **Open Rights Group** and **NCSC** highlighted that the privacy advantages of DoH were not straightforward and that DoH was somewhat aimed at solving problems present in the US rather than UK.
- The NCSC and ISPs particularly stressed their concerns about the clear (unintended) consequences of rolling out DoH by default in the UK, especially as it undermines the delivery of parental control systems and the Active Cyber Defence initiatives.
- The panel welcomed the fact that browser manufactures had started to engage with the discussion in the UK but emphasised that more had to be done in order to protect the rights of users in the rollout of DoH.

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