

## **Digital Britain - An Opportunity Missed**

This is a very good idea, a strategy to take Britain into its digital future, unfortunately this is now an opportunity missed. The issues we face are:

- Aging copper infrastructure managed by BT who compete with all the other ISPs
- 2 Market entrants that are fighting each other rather than providing services to their customers
- Rural areas being left behind by city expansion
- Road and rail networks bursting at their seams

All of this can be solved by one single investment programme, Fibre to the home for everyone in Great Britain.

At the moment we have an infrastructure put in by the General Post Office nearly one hundred years ago, a pair of copper wires to each home. This will not be able to support all the new digital applications; High Speed Internet, HD TV & On-Demand services. This is managed by a privatised BT that is still restrictive about who can do what wear. Sky has a satellite delivery system that they are very protective of. Virgin Media have a cable system that they do the same. I find it amazing that I can only get some TV services depending on which type of digital connection I have. There is only a small number of channel common to all three digital mediums Digital Terrestrial, Digital Cable and Digital Satellite.

I am proposing is replacing the copper cables to ever body's homes and offices with fibre optic cables. The bandwidth would then be almost limitless. All you have to do is change what is connected to the cable depending on what services you require. If this was installed and maintained by an infrastructure company that was not allowed to provide services on the network. The infrastructure company would have 2 sets of customers, the end users and all of the Service Providers. The company would be driven to provide the infrastructure for the country. Initially it would have to be Government funded but once they have built out some network and customer demand was there the company could be privatised and regulated by OffCom.

Initially cities and towns will benefit form the build out of the network, but if it was made mandatory to build out to everyone, then rural areas will be put on to the network. There are various models for this but the best is the way Transco build out the Gas network. This can give rural areas a life line, instead of upgrading roads or building railways into rural areas to turn them into commuter belts for Cities. With Very High Speed Internet new businesses will start up in these areas. The cost of installing this will be great but the cost of not installing it will be greater. Britain is great for being the leaders in Technology and working practises, but we are getting left behind by the rest of the world. If we commit to building Universal Fibre to the Home then will be in the forefront of the next 100 years.