

Digital Britain Summit highlights broadband progress and challenges ahead

Submitted by: MS4

Monday, 20 April 2009

The Digital Britain Summit took place on Friday 17 April 2009 at the British Library, which saw politicians, key organisations and individuals debate on how to prepare and equip Britain for a digital future.

SeekBroadband.com, the independent resource for broadband (<http://SeekBroadband.com>) services in the UK, believes the debate was very encouraging and highlights the progress now being made in preparing Britain's infrastructure, but also sought to light the challenges that lay ahead in getting Britain truly 'connected'.

- Promoting digital benefits and offering digital skills is key -

Although over half of the UK population is using broadband, there are still a significant number that are not online for various reasons. Many of these people are often not aware of how broadband could benefit their lives. A fear of technology may also still be prevalent.

"Promoting the benefits of a Digital Britain and persuading these users to actually get online will be a big challenge for the Government," says Manoj Solanki from SeekBroadband.com.

"Gordon Brown explained that there will be a need to provide and promote digital skills. This will play a key role in getting these users online. One way to do this is to provide free and open classes to educate them on the benefits, such as online banking, shopping, watching TV content, listening to music and online gaming to name a few. Many would also welcome the opportunity to learn any PC skills they need in an open and non-intimidating environment.

"Small businesses owners can also benefit from broadband in their line of business. There is potential for better communication with employees and customers, cost savings, increased efficiency and home or mobile working.

"Yet there are still many small businesses who hardly use the Internet, and barely use email."

- Rural users need reassurance -

Solanki continues: "From some of the feedback I've seen and heard so far in response to the Digital Britain summit, many rural users are concerned that their areas will not receive enough attention, and that plans seem to concentrate on cities and towns.

"Users in rural areas often suffer from a lack of broadband availability, or performance that simply isn't good enough to be useful. Despite the prospect of a Universal Service Obligation to provide broadband to every household in the UK with a minimum speed of 2Mbps (Megabits per second), I think rural users would like further re-assurance that they are not going to be left behind."

- Further incentives needed for investment -

“BT is currently working on installing fibre-optic based broadband services that will serve around 10 million users in the UK. This was a crucial development and a step in the right direction. However, BT had some form of re-assurance from Ofcom that would ensure a return on investment.

“To continue on the road to super-fast broadband, further incentives and rewards like this will be critical to ensure that adequate investment continues into something that is likely to become vital to the UK economy.”

- Ends -

Notes to editors:

About SeekBroadband.com

SeekBroadband.com is an independent resource for broadband in the UK. The website originally launched in 2005 and provides information about home broadband (<http://SeekBroadband.com>) and mobile broadband (<http://SeekBroadband.com/mobile-broadband.php>) services.

For more information, visit <http://SeekBroadband.com>

Contacts:

Manoj Solanki, Technical Director
pr@seekbroadband.com
07940 818183