

**The 2008 Parliament and Internet Conference
Thursday 16th October**

The 2008 Parliament and Internet Conference was held in Portcullis House on Thursday 16th October. The Conference, now in its third year, was sponsored by Nominet and organised by the All Party Parliamentary Communications Group with help from a number of industry organisations.

With attendees crammed into the Attlee Suite, Co-Chair of apComms Derek Wyatt MP introduced delegates and welcomed Ofcom CEO Ed Richards to the lectern.

Mr Richards delivered a well-received speech that was both interesting and thought provoking. He touched upon a number of issues in which Ofcom is involved including the Code of Practice on Broadband Speeds and the ongoing discussions between ISPs and rights holders following the Memorandum of Understanding. Mr Richards was challenged on a variety of points from the audience before delegates dispersed to the different morning workshops. Summaries of each workshop are available at the end of this report.

Following the workshops, Derek Wyatt MP chaired a lively plenary session where the leaders of each workshop were invited to give feedback to delegates. Amongst those reporting back were Rt Hon Alun Michael MP, Dr Tanya Byron, Andrew Miller MP, Rob Bratby and Mark Gracey. Mr Wyatt's Co-Chair, John Robertson MP, then introduced Francesco Caio to the stage.

Mr Caio summarised the recommendations made in the Review into Next Generation Broadband that he recently conducted. He assessed the case for intervention by the Government or regulator to make the regulatory environment more welcoming to potential investors. The conclusion from Mr Caio, which was supported by a number of delegates, was that the market should determine when investment was necessary, but that intervention should ensure that there were no barriers to investment.

Following a lunch break that gave delegates an opportunity to continue discussions from the morning sessions, Derek Wyatt MP delivered a short speech to the Conference. Mr Wyatt spoke about the global nature of the Internet and about the importance of engaging with industry and parliamentarians across the world. Mr Wyatt then invited Robert Pepper from Cisco to explain about some of the international work that he had been responsible for.

Nominet, the kind sponsors of the Conference, introduced the next session which looked at the importance of the Internet Governance Forum. The Nominet presentation included a range of interesting speeches from Nominet Chair Lesley Cowley, Chief Executive Emily Taylor, former UK ambassador to the UN Nick Thorne and Director of European and International Relations at the Department for Business Tom Walker. Following the concluding thoughts from Nominet, delegates dispersed for the afternoon workshop sessions (further information about these sessions is available below).

With afternoon sessions and plenary feedback completed, apComms Co-Chairs Derek Wyatt and John Robertson concluded the formal Conference. Delegates then made their way to Strangers Dining Room in the House of Commons for drinks and canapés and to continue their discussions. A well-received speech from the new Deputy Minister for Digital Inclusion Wayne David MP gave delegates some information on the forthcoming Digital Equality Action Plan.

Workshop A

Workshop A saw David Harrington, Leader of CMA's regulatory affairs forum, introduce the discussion on "Connecting the Business", under Andrew Miller's chairmanship. Rob Bratby, a Partner at Olswang, acted as rapporteur. David pointed out that the business customer in the

UK had not been as well served under the Communications Act 2003 as had the domestic user, and suggested that legislation was required to redress this oversight. He quoted extensively from reports by UKCTA and BT Global to support his view and acknowledged that Ofcom is now considering remedial action. Several speakers agreed with the proposition that UK businesses could not get broadband where and when they want it, while others were uncertain about the effect of affordability on the statistics. David also proposed that the current review of the Framework Directives had lost its way in “turf wars” over the responsibilities of national regulatory authorities and, as a result, we were no nearer a common market in telecoms services. “

Workshop B

This focus of this workshop, organised by Nominet, was on the Internet as a force for good, but much of the discussion was about responding to threats. The good things from the Internet tend to be forgotten: we need to build on these, enabling people to get the benefit of the Internet, while teaching them how to be “Internet wise”.

Simply leaving it to users to cope with the threats from crime and understand the choices they make in sharing personal information is no longer an option: a lack of core values means that there are challenges and threats to business and other users. All actors need to share the responsibility for providing a safer on-line environment.

New technologies can cause “moral panic”. We should help people respond to the risks so that they do not miss the benefits. Life has risks that need to be understood – and we see with children the need to explore risks as part of their development – and education is a key element in helping in this process. Cooperation between all stakeholders will help us achieve the benefits and minimise the risks from the greatest flourishing of human creativity since the renaissance.

Workshop C

Workshop C, organised by the Internet Services Providers’ Association (ISPA), concentrated on the UK transposition of the EU Directive on Data Retention. Baroness Miller, Peter Milford, Charles Miller, Professor Lilian Edwards and Judith Rauhofer joined workshop Chair Mark Gracey on the panel. Following an introduction from the Chair, panellists gave a short background to their experience in the area. The panellists subsequently led a lively debate with other delegates present at the workshop about a range of issues including the proportionality of the retention period, the scope of the data to be retained and the proposed cost to industry and Government.

Concerns were raised during the workshop about the process to date that had led to the requirement to implement a Directive that is seen by many to contain a number of flaws. However, the chair and panellists sought to avoid these issues where possible choosing instead to focus on the most effective implementation to satisfy all stakeholders. The workshop was seen as part of an ongoing consultation process, which ISPA has contributed to at every step.

Workshop D

Chair: Rt Hon Alun Michael MP

Rapporteur: Philip Virgo

The government vision for a national e-crime strategy is a three-legged stool: the Police Central E-Crime Unit (PCEU), Fraud Authority and the e-Crime Reduction Partnership.

The Partnership will start by looking at the concerns of three communities:

- The elderly: who are being brought on-line, combating isolation and easing contact with grandchildren...but are vulnerable to fraud and often fearful.
- Schools: where cyberbullying and stalking, including of young teachers by older pupils, are major concerns.
- Small Firms: where there are a number of initiatives on which to build, but there is often a lack of security and IT capacity.

Workshop E

The Broadband Stakeholder Group hosted a lively debate on the challenge of next generation broadband. Opening the debate, Richard Allan from Cisco questioned whether the current generation of broadband services was going to meet the needs of consumers and business going forward. Malcolm Corbett from the Community Broadband network agreed that the UK needed to find alternatives for delivering next generation services and argued that local community and municipal projects were pioneering in the development of innovative investment models for delivering NGA. Andrew Heaney from Carphone Warehouse disagreed and argued that the market would and should be left to meet demand for bandwidth, while Alan Lazarus from BT argued that the questions was more about how than if and that we were now entering a more practical phase of the debate about how NGA can be delivered. All of the speakers agreed the analysis and recommendations in the Caio Report were about right but there was still a great deal of policy and regulatory detail to be worked out.

There was a question from the floor about whether government should set out a vision and target for NGA which met a mixed response from the panel. With some extolling the benefits of visions while others warned of the risks of mirages. All of the speakers agreed that room should be left for commercial innovation and that building consumer trust and confidence was key to addressing a range of issues from behavioural advertising to copyright infringement. The panel also differed on the question of extending the universal service obligation to broadband. The final question assessed the danger for the UK of not having next generation broadband? Summarising, Antony Walker put forward the crucial issue of whether the UK can afford not to be a highly competitive, low carbon, knowledge economy?

Workshop F

Lord Eroll chaired the ITSPA seminar titled 'Opportunities and Applications of Mobile VoIP' with panellists Trefor Davies from Timico and ITSPA Council Member, James Tagg from Truphone and Xavier Mooyart from T-Mobile.

The discussion encouraged some lively debate surrounding the current system of tariffs, the Ofcom number ranges and recent disputes about mobile VoIP. While it was generally acknowledged that the quality of mobile VoIP services at present was still not at a GSM level, it was accepted that there were still advantages to be explored.

It is already becoming clear with the new handsets coming to the market that opportunities through mobile IP are not just limited to voice. It was also acknowledged by Lord Erroll that with improved reliability mobile VoIP would provide further flexibility in the workspace.

Despite differing of opinion over some current pricing and handset issues, there was agreement that a symbiotic relationship between GSM and mobile VoIP operators could exist and that there were areas in the market for both technologies to operate.