



Department for
Digital, Culture
Media & Sport

Baroness Barran
Minister for Civil Society
4th Floor
100 Parliament Street
London SW1A 2BQ

www.gov.uk/dcms
enquiries@dcms.gov.uk

Lord Clement-Jones
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

INT2021/03960/DC
22 February 2021

Dear Tim,

Telecoms supply chain diversification

As I promised, I am writing to you to give you a fuller answer to some of the points that you raised during the Telecommunications Infrastructure (Leasehold Property) Bill's Third Reading on 28 January about the diversification of telecoms supply chains.

I can confirm that the Government is supporting and funding the NEC Open RAN trial, which aims to see live 5G Open RAN within the UK in 2021, testing solutions to deploy 5G networks in the most cost effective, innovative and secure way.

The SmartRAN Open Network Interoperability Centre (SONIC) is a joint programme between the Digital Catapult and Ofcom for testing interoperability and integration of open networking solutions, starting with Open RAN. It is not a precursor to the NEC Open RAN project.

You also requested an update on the current status of the Telecoms Diversification Taskforce. As you will know, the Taskforce is composed of independent experts from industry and academia, and is chaired by Lord Livingston. Its initial findings are expected in the coming weeks.

With regard to the current status of the UK Telecoms Lab (UKTL), the UKTL will be a secure research facility that will bring together operators, existing and new suppliers, academia and the government to create representative networks in which to research and test new ways of increasing security and interoperability. The Government continues to work through the cost and implementation options.

You also asked about the current status of international collaboration. As the UK only represents around 2% of the global telecoms market, collaboration and engagement with a wide range of international partners will be essential to achieving the UK's ambitions, and building international consensus on diversification of the telecoms supply chain. The Government remains committed to driving this issue on the international stage, and is taking this forward as one of our priorities for the UK's G7 Presidency.

Bilateral engagement will also be crucial to this work, and we have begun engagement with a number of key partners including the Five Eyes countries, Japan, Finland and Sweden. We recognise that our international engagement needs to include a critical mass of nations if we are to effect lasting change to the market, and we intend to increase our international engagement over the coming months.

We fully agree with your statement that these measures will lead to further flexibility in the market, and dismantle the key barriers to diversification.

I want to thank you again for your help throughout the passage of this Bill; I appreciate your overall support for the Government's aim of providing nationwide gigabit capable connectivity as soon as possible. This legislation is an important step in reducing the barriers to gigabit deployment and the Government is committed to continuing to work with the telecoms industry and Parliament to tackle other barriers to help ensure that the UK's digital infrastructure network keeps pace with the increasing demands on it, as well as ensuring that people in more rural and remote places are not left behind.

I trust that you will find this letter helpful, but do please get in touch with my officials via dcmslordsminister@dcms.gov.uk if you have any questions about any of the above. I will place a copy of this letter in the library of both Houses.

With best wishes

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Diana Barran".

Baroness Barran
Minister for Civil Society