[GB] Creating the Superhighways of the Future

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David Goldberg
deeJgee Research/Consultancy

The President of the Board of Trade presented the considerations of the Government on issues raised by convergence, the development of multimedia and the scope for creating new broadband applications. The Paper also responds to the Report of the Trade and Industry Select Committee optical fibre networks.

Three related issues, in particular, are examined: the potential public and private sector uses for emerging communications networks, in the light of the ten areas for application highlighted by the Bangemann Report (May 1994); the role of the regulatory framework for the telecommunications industry in providing for the development of the underlying broadband networks; and the role of the Government in regulation, the promotion of successful and competitive telecommunications companies, the delivery of efficient services to the general public, the enhancement of the overall competitiveness of the whole economy and the rapid delivery of entertainment services to unfranchised parts of the United Kingdom.

The Government conclusions broadly are that:

- the existing regulatory framework (based on the 1991 White Paper) continues to provide the best framework for the provision of internationally competitive communications in the UK;

- the new local delivery franchises for broadcasting services should continue to be awarded on an exclusive basis. However, the Government is keen to see to Public Telecommunications Operators (PTOs) bid for such franchises, and would seek to license franchises in such a way to permit PTOs to test new technologies alongside existing services;

- the Government is to place more emphasis on its own use and promotion of communications applications; and

- the Parliamentary Under Secretary for Trade and Industry is to have a new, co-ordinating role in order to focus the Department of Trade's interests in multimedia services. A group of senior industrialists will offer advice. (David Goldberg, School of Law, University of Glasgow) Information on law related policy developments which may have legal consequences but of which no documents or other texts are available yet.

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Creating the Superhighways of the Future: Developing Broadband Communications in the UK, Cm 2734.

http://www.open.gov.uk/dti/broadband-comms.htm

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