



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

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As you may be aware, Steve Reed and I are co-chairing a new All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on London. Although the Group has so far only met on a few occasions, it is already clear that one of the most pressing issues facing many of our constituents, from all four corners of the capital, is the difficulty a significant number of households face accessing fast fibre broadband.

Proper digital connectivity has rapidly become a vital utility that strengthens communities and can boost economic productivity. However, the most recent Ookla speed test gave London a download speed of 27.4 Mbps, around half the speed residents of other European cities enjoy. Indeed, the list of those we drastically lag behind not only includes cities of comparable size and status, such as Paris, but others further afield including Bucharest, Vilnius, Stockholm and Bern.

As I am sure you can appreciate, this is, on one level, incredibly frustrating for homeowners in constituencies like mine who understandably expect, living within ten miles of central London, an adequate coverage. On a more a serious level, it is also extremely damaging to businesses of all sizes, hindering their ability to compete effectively and undermining our reputation as a global city.

Of course, the Government's £1.7 billion investment in extending superfast broadband is to be welcomed, as is the successful broadband connection voucher scheme, but as you know these subsidised programmes are primarily targeted at rural areas. I understand that this problem is further complicated by state aid rules on commercial provision, however we believe more can, and must, be done to avoid the increasingly disparate picture in which London is not only left behind by other cities, but also countless rural towns and villages.

I am aware that the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee will be conducting an inquiry into this issue over the coming months, and I believe the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee has also indicated her committee's intention to do likewise. I know many members of the APPG for London would greatly appreciate an opportunity to discuss this matter with you further, and perhaps we can arrange a short meeting at your convenience sometime in the months to come.

I would be very grateful for your thoughts on how the Government hopes to address this problem, and look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Bob Neill MP