

Responding to the SMEs Call for Inputs: (Name Confidential)

Representing:

Organisation

Question 1: What are the communications needs of SMEs and how may these differ by: business size, sector and business model, location, other relevant factors?:

Access to robust broadband connectivity to allow business to utilise the internet. This needs to be delivered, in particular in rural locations by strong 3/4 G and hard wired, fibre optic connection to business.

Question 2: How do the needs of SMEs for communications services differ from (a) residential consumers and (b) large enterprises?:

Both are similar and require speedy data back up to the prevalent cloud systems which manage data.

Question 3: What are the types and degree of network availability issues that affect SMEs, for example issues with specific locations or services and what is the effect of these issues on SMEs? businesses?:

In our tourism business our guests have multiple devices, kids have devices, perhaps multiple. Business users and personal users both require robust connectivity to stay connected, for business, marketing through social media - a boon for our business and our team members for both business and personal use.

Question 4: What opportunities do communications providers see in serving the SME market and how are these evolving as a result of developments in technology and infrastructure?:

Not enough - commercial reasons to provide infrastructure focuses on main population hubs, however rural tourism businesses require as good connectivity as their customers enjoy at home. We sell as good as home if not better and connectivity is a big part of what are customers are used to at home and are dissatisfied with the service we are able to offer as a result of comms companies being unwilling to invest as the perceived ROI is not there.

Question 5: How far does the choice, quality and price of products in the retail market meet the needs of SMEs?:

BT have monopoly over our area of Argyll, therefore no choice as of course theirs is the only infrastructure with 3G and 4 G not being robust and reliant on BT infrastructure.

Question 6: Are there challenges for communications providers in targeting the SME sector, and do these vary by geography, SME size and SME sector?:

Yes - absolutely - There needs to be a collective agreement to supply all and not just the commercially profitable areas for residential business broadband/ communications. In remoter areas there needs to be intervention to provide solutions.

Question 7: Are there issues facing retail providers in engaging with wholesale providers in order to offer retail products which meet the needs of SMEs?:

Yes - again BT control infrastructure which in turn affects a business ability to explore other providers.

Question 8: How far does the quality of service delivered by communications providers meet the needs of SMEs?:

Uncertainty of what is being planned, who, when and what is not information which is transparent to SME or individuals causes the most concern.

Question 9: What issues face SMEs in ensuring that they have appropriate SLAs and are able to gain redress when quality of services falls below the standards expected?:

Again with little or no perceived alternative - service falls well below that we are expected to provide as an SME to our customers whom hold us responsible as a business for the lack of communications from mobile phones to broadband speed and capacity.

Question 10: What products and service enhancements are available, at what indicative price points, to deliver on SMEs? quality of service needs (e.g. in terms of technical product characteristics or fault resolution)?:

Communication as with most service challenges is critical. The amount of wasted time spent sending engineers with the wrong information which is then referred and the inability of responding engineers to fix faults which at times the consumer is obliged to have identified is a constant theme.

Question 11: What information is available to SMEs to enable them to select communications services appropriate for their business needs? Please identify any additional information or measures which you consider would enhance transparency for SMEs and your reasons for this view?:

There is little/ no choice rurally to consider change.

Question 12: What factors do SMEs take into account when they are considering changing their communications service or provider? Please identify any that you consider may deter SMEs from switching and your reasons for this view.:

Infrastructure governs all decisions and the control of the infrastructure to have any chance of receiving any level of service both now and in the future to expand and develop our product

relies on nurturing relationship built on who you pay your bill to. This dictates our choice of provider in rural locations.

Question 13: What evidence is there of issues where bad practices by communications providers causes harm to SMEs?:

Dissatisfied business consumers and customers alike post on review websites negatively impacting our ability to attract customers who insist on good comms when making decisions on where to travel to.

Question 14: Are there any other issues in relation to the provision of communications services to SMEs, or SMEs? experience of these services, which you consider should be included within our assessment?:

Face to face communications with providers for SME are essential - this is a comms business with the poorest levels of customer facing support/ account management. SME need people who understand and care about our business not faceless call centres who do not care or understand our business.

Question 15: For any issues identified in response to any of the questions above do you have any views on how they may be resolved?:

COMMUNICATION