

## **North Yorkshire County Council's response to the Ofcom consultation on assessment of future mobile competition and proposals for the award of 800 MHz and 2.6 GHz spectrum and related issues**

### Background

North Yorkshire is a great place to live and work. But some of the reasons why this is the case are also the reasons why the provision of a universal high quality broadband service is a challenge.

North Yorkshire has the highest proportion of homes and businesses that receive less than 2Mbps (18%)

We are determined that North Yorkshire and York (we have partnership arrangements with our colleagues at the City of York Council) rise to this challenge. We know that the people of North Yorkshire and York are creative and grasp broadband when it is available.

Our Strategy is a shared vision of partners across North Yorkshire and York. The focus is on 'high quality' broadband recognising that for some this will mean next generation access (or superfast broadband) while for others this may mean getting broadband for the very first time.

We are determined to ensure that the businesses and people of North Yorkshire and York continue to thrive – high quality broadband is essential, indeed critical, to achieve that.

North Yorkshire County Council is a significant investor, lead facilitator and supporter of the transition of broadband services across North Yorkshire. North Yorkshire County Council has set up a 100% owned arms length company NYnet to lead on the development of broadband services across the county. North Yorkshire County Council also leads on a multi agency and multi community approach to broadband transformation called Connecting North Yorkshire.

### Areas we would wish you to consider

In our submission of the Local Broadband Plan to BDUK, we detailed the significant economic and social disadvantages faced by North Yorkshire in terms of the willingness (or not) of the telecommunications market to invest in fixed and wireless infrastructure to supply broadband in our rural county. This is a significant challenge for us and other rural communities and we would wish to see Ofcom use this sale opportunity to secure effective and substantial investment and future leverage within the detail to ensure the specific public policy goal of provision of broadband in rural areas. North Yorkshire County Council consider this a key element if we are to be able to rebalance the negative impact of a purely market led approach.

North Yorkshire County Council are aware the sale of 800MHz is a key component of the future for broadband and how it is sold will be critical to how effective our local approach is to securing the fastest and widest cover for the people and businesses of North Yorkshire. To help meet the ambitious targets set by BDUK we would like to see the following enhancements to the coverage obligation;

- 97-98% population coverage at a North Yorkshire county level
- Delivery indoor of a “real” 2Mbps
- Provision and allowance for use of external antennas.
- Roll out by 2015

Specifically, North Yorkshire County Council wish to communicate to Ofcom the need for a more realistic coverage obligation on the very valuable 800 MHz radio spectrum licence and for that obligation to require mobile network operators to build at least 1400 new radio mast sites specifically to improve mobile broadband coverage to the last 5% of the population.

If we are nationally and locally to make a meaningful and fitting contribution to being considered best in Europe, North Yorkshire County Council was expecting provision to be made for a more comprehensive coverage obligation, particularly the provision of additional masts and timings of upgrades. We believe this provision could be made by enhancing the coverage obligation or making separate provision to gap fund the additional elements once the auction was complete. It has been estimated that incremental gap funding need to support enhanced coverage provision would be £120m to £150m, significantly less than the proposed £200m reserve on each of the 6 blocks available for release.

North Yorkshire County Council, NYnet and Connecting North Yorkshire are very clear and passionate about our role in positively and proactively supporting the transformation of broadband. We would want to be further involved in the development of Ofcom's proposals and would welcome the opportunity.

North Yorkshire County Council are anxious any decisions will need tempering with care due to the national economic picture.

We very much look forward to further opportunities to help shape your approach, indeed we would be very keen to work through the detail with regard to the specifics of North Yorkshire and York and the wider issues of combating the rural challenges for high quality, second generation broadband.