

PRESS RELEASE

DIGITAL BRITAIN DELAYS WILL PUT BUSINESSES AT A LONG-TERM COMPETITIVE DISADVANTAGE

18 August 2009

Responding to comments by Stephen Timms MP, the UK Minister responsible for the Digital Britain report, that plans to pay for the full roll-out of next generation broadband will be delayed until after the General Election, **Gareth Williams, Policy Manager – North, Scottish Council for Development and Industry (SCDI)**, said:

"The roll-out of nation-wide high-speed communications network would support economic recovery and the product and service innovation in our businesses which sustains Britain's position as a leading digital economy. But the UK is already falling behind the US and the Far East with next generation broadband, and there is a danger that delays in decision-making will reinforce the digital divide between urban and rural areas.

"The question of how high-speed broadband can be extended to the third of UK homes and businesses to which the market is unlikely to deliver it cannot be kicked into the long grass.

"As the Digital Britain report said, we are at a point in technology development that those who are without these networks will be at a substantial and long-lasting active competitive disadvantage and, without active intervention by Government, this will include many parts of Scotland, such as the Highlands and Islands.

"The EU's recent Digital Competitiveness Report recently highlighted the importance of ensuring that everyone in Europe has a high-speed internet connection and it is vital that all the political parties make it clear how they strategically push forward the digital communications sector in every part of the country."

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