



WIG

The Whitehall & Industry Group
connecting the sectors



'Infrastructure' Series

COVID-19 Sector Updates: Telecoms with
Simon Miller, Head of UK Public Policy, O2
Telefonica

Expert Insight

We were joined by Simon Miller, Head of UK Public Policy at O2 Telefonica to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on the telecoms sector. He touched upon points including:

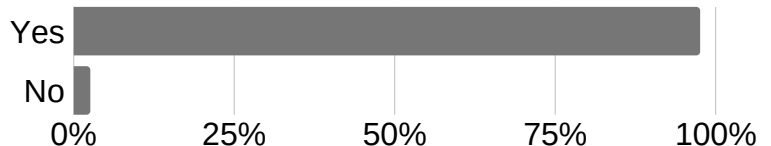
- As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the demand on networks has not only surged but also changed shape in terms of its location and peak times. Nevertheless, networks are holding up well.
- Fake news, mast attacks, and access to sites have presented further challenges to the industry.
- The industry has been working productively with government through regular and structured communications and by supporting public policy priorities. More work between the industry and government is to come and should remain collaborative even after the crisis is over.
- For effective policy-making post-pandemic, planning policy needs to be built to support the provision of digital connectivity for everyone, and the system of regulation should focus on driving investment up rather than tariffs down. It would also be time to consider a separate department for infrastructure.



Cross-sector Opinion

Attendees from the breadth of our cross-sector membership listened in, we asked them:

As a result of COVID-19, would you want to see public policy give greater priority to supporting digital infrastructure as an element of national infrastructure?



Our members' questions

Our members raised some challenging questions to be answered, some of the big issues raised included:

- The impact of COVID-19 on backhaul and fixed networks.
- The impact of increasing and changing demand for digital connectivity on planning policy, demand for new infrastructure to facilitate this and concerns for network capacity.
- Challenges for supporting business and communities with their reliance on digital connectivity.
- Government proposals for Smart Data in telecoms.
- Prioritisation of network traffic.
- The implementation of a permanent emergency crisis text message system.

WIG members can listen to Simon's presentation [here](#)
To see our full programme of webinars, visit www.wig.co.uk