

30 March 2020

COVID-19 and data centres: Bulletin FOUR

This Bulletin pulls together developments since Thursday 26th March. Useful links are at the bottom. Last Friday we held our regular sector catch up call, kindly hosted by 4D Data Centres. We got an update from LINX on internet traffic through the main exchanges, and from DCMS on latest policy developments. The main points are summarised below. We also submitted a preliminary list of critical workers and a list of ongoing construction projects to ensure that the sector is factored in when policy decisions are made. Work is ongoing to refine both of those lists, on the development of a risk timeline for the sector and on updating international comparisons so we can compare notes both between operators and between nation states.

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1 Internet traffic:

On the catch up call last Friday Kurtis Lindqvist from LINX provided a helpful update on the increase in data traffic rates through the main exchanges. Significant increases were showing across the board and there had been a big surge in requests for upgrades. LINX saw a new traffic record every day over the past week, but it is worth keeping in mind that most traffic stays inside an operator's network. Despite the increase there is also a bit of margin; Kurtis said that average utilisation on LINX members ports are around 20% so even if we were to see further increase in traffic interconnects will not be an issue.

2 CNI (Critical National Infrastructure) status:

There has been a lot of talk about CNI. Data centres are not classed as CNI (critical national infrastructure) by default in the UK. This is similar to most but not all other countries where individual sites may be so designated, depending on function. Government is currently considering whether to confer a temporary, "quasi-CNI" designation on data centres. This is not a simple decision and operators will be in two minds about CNI-type status - there are pros and cons with a whole raft of legal and other issues. We are on hand to work with government on this and meanwhile have been working with our Dutch and EU counterparts to compare notes.

3 Construction sites:

Government is considering the issue of construction sites so we sent out an urgent request on Thursday 26th to operators. Thanks to a very fast response from those in the sector we were able to submit a reasonably comprehensive list of data centre construction sites in time to assist government deliberations. Our data has been joined up with that of other sectors to inform cross-sector decision making. However, the discussions are ongoing and we will need to revisit our submission and add more detail, probably about size and value of

projects – though with a little less urgency! We will keep you posted. We don't yet know how granular their approach will be so if you missed the window to submit a list of construction sites, do send them over.

4 Critical workers:

Getting on the key worker list for childcare is only the first step in ensuring that data centre staff and contractors are designated as critical should movement be further restricted. We have been pushing very hard on this and it is clear that government understands the critical nature of data centre operations. Again we have provided an indicative list and were careful to ensure that both specialist cleaning and construction were included. So the core message has been landed but again the policy decision making is an ongoing process. Currently, Government has decided against issuing a specific exemption list because of the risk of it being too narrow. This may change so in the meantime we have been asked to assemble more granular information, such as approximate numbers of staff, transport patterns and restrictions already being applied by operators to limit footfall. This is because if things change, they may do so very quickly and it will be an advantage to have this information to hand. My colleague Tom Henderson: tom.henderson@techuk.org will be collating information about approximate footfall and travel patterns.

5 Letters of authority:

Government has stated that no formal ID requirements have been imposed and that they do not plan to introduce authorisation letters at the moment. Again this could change very quickly depending on how well their existing guidance is followed. Companies are therefore responsible for determining who their critical staff are and many operators have already issued their own letters of authority to staff and key contractors: those who haven't should do so because people are already being stopped and questioned. Staff are advised to carry government issued ID, especially if their corporate pass is blank.

In terms of letters of authority, here are some of the elements already included by operators.

- Full company header
- Contact details in case confirmation is needed
- A sentence saying that you provide **data infrastructure** and as such your staff are critical and included on the government list of key workers.
- Something to link the person holding the letter of authority to their ID, such as name or NI number.

6 Risk timelines:

Operators also discussed risk timelines and we are trying to pull together a coherent slide or infographic. In the discussion we felt that there were three levels of risk. We issued the following draft to get you thinking – make sure you download the latest version – <https://www.techuk.org/insights/news/item/17118-covid-19-and-data-centres> The first picture/slide essentially covers economic risks to the wider economy, the second slide covers operational risks. We think we need something that pulls them together and also covers economic risks for operators. We will be working on this over the next few days. If you have any brilliant thoughts along the infographic or filtered slide route do get in touch with emma.fryer@techuk.org

7 COVID-19 FAQ:

We also discussed questions for our FAQ <https://www.techuk.org/insights/news/item/17135-COVID-19-and-data-centres> We will add to this as questions are posed and dealt with.

8 Energy:

Members discussed energy supply issues on last Friday's call. Operators were relatively confident that energy supply would not be compromised in view of the drop off in demand across the economy. With

excellent timing, Schneider Electric is hosting an energy webinar this Thursday, 2nd April, 3-4pm. It will cover the energy market impacts caused by the virus' global reach: [\[Live Update\] Global Impacts of COVID-19 on Energy Markets + Open Q&A](#), Schneider's experts will take a closer look at the impact on Crude & Natural Gas markets globally. Robbie Fraser, Senior Commodity Analyst based in the USA, will host the session, joined by Balint Balazs, a Commodity Analyst based in Europe. If you cannot make the date/time, you can [still register](#) for a recording.

9 Catch up calls

We are continuing to hold operator catch-up calls at least once a week to compare notes, and bulletins will be issued each time we have something to report. Next call is scheduled for 9.30 on Friday, access details will be in the email circular. Get in touch if you are not receiving these.

10 Useful links:

DCMS Data Infrastructure Resilience Team mailbox: COVID-data-resilience@culture.gov.uk for queries from data centre operators, customers and suppliers. They understand the critical role that data centres play and are ensuring that this is understood across government.

techUK information hub: Don't forget that we are trying to group as much information as possible into the data centre section of [techUK's COVID-19 information hub](#). Look for the pink tab centre bottom.

Operator statements

Digital Realty: <https://www.digitalrealty.com/coronavirus-statement>

Equinix: <https://www.equinix.com/lp/equinix-coronavirus-statement-to-customers-and-partners/>

Equinix: <https://blog.equinix.com/blog/2020/03/26/covid-19-protecting-our-critical-ibx-data-center-infrastructure/>

4D Data Centres: <https://www.4d-dc.com/insight/4d-data-centres-covid-19-latest-response-plan-statement>

Useful URLs

WHO guidelines: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

Latest govt advice: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>

PHE: Decontaminating non healthcare environments: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>

For further information on techUK's data centres programme see our programme overview:

<https://www.techuk.org/insights/news/item/272-data-centre-programme-overview>

Or visit our website <https://www.techuk.org/focus/programmes/data-centres>

11 Contacts



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