COVID-19 and Data Centres
Notes from Operator-DCMS call 3rd July 2020

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1   DCMS Data Infrastructure Resilience Team – recap and update

The dedicated team established in March had advocated very successfully on behalf of the sector on key worker status, construction site protection and quarantine exemption. The team was funded for a year from July 2019 with a broad remit to protect sector resilience and competitiveness. It would initially comprise 5 members, though this might change depending on the scope of activity needed and other Government priorities.   There had also been an information-gathering exercise and, with the help of input from operators, a report was being finalised. This would direct the team's work for the next 12 months. Essentially, priorities were:

- Guaranteeing the future security of the sector
- Fostering and accommodating sector growth
- Protecting sector competitiveness
- Application and interpretation of environmental policy
- Assessing medium term impacts of health measures on parts and labour
- Access to skills
- Competitive status of the UK market

Sam Roberts, who had been the main contact for operators into DCMS, would be moving into Cabinet Office. Operators were very grateful for the excellent support he had given the sector.

2   Supply chain resilience

Current policy focus was on ensuring supply chain resilience. This was a cross government exercise involving DIT and due to run for the next 5-6 weeks. Data centre supply chains were firmly within scope. Activity would cover access to core digital infrastructure components and commodities and M&E. Work was already ramping up and deep dive was planned for 26th July.
NB: A call to be scheduled around 15th July to outline government thinking on supply chain resilience and take questions and comments from suppliers and operators.

3   Security and resilience

The Security Policy Oversight Board (SPOB) was a cross Whitehall group that met every month to oversee security policy. As a decision-making group it involved senior officials from Cabinet Office and elsewhere across Government. The DCMS team would be engaged.

4   National Data Strategy
A National Data Strategy was being developed and was due to be published in October. Depending on how strongly data centres featured, there might be additional workstreams emerging from this policy document.

5   Planning policy
It looked likely that revisions would be made to planning policy for infrastructure projects. Data centres were not currently classified as infrastructure so this was a good time for the sector to engage in dialogue. A call was scheduled for 7th July to identify existing issues and barriers operators and developers were encountering in the planning process.

6   Issues and questions raised by members
Operators were very grateful for the excellent support that DCMS had provided. They were keen to ensure that the sector continued to be integrated with government thinking.

- It was important to compare definitions to ensure that what government meant by security and resilience was understood by operators, and vice versa.
- The sector already worked to multiple common standards relating to security and resilience, such as 27001, 22301, etc.
- The discussion around data centres as part of critical infrastructure should not be binary and should include the option to create something new rather than be bound by existing classification routes.
- The sector needed to ensure that government understood how resilience was currently delivered and the security levels that operators could handle in terms of sensitive data.
- The sector needed to communicate market information to government to ensure policy makers were aware of growth drivers and growth opportunities.
- The sector needed to brief government on future technology trends relevant to the market to ensure these were accommodated in policy decisions.

7   Next call
The next call was scheduled for Friday 17th July at 09.30

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