

Thank you madam chair, I rise to talk briefly about the performance of Connecting Devon & Somerset (CDS). It is a fact that nearly 2 years into the programme, many parts of Devon's intervention area are still either "**completely out of programme**", or, still have not been given **any** certainty by CDS regarding **when** they may reasonably expect to get this vital 4th utility and I **now** understand that the program is at risk of being pushed even beyond 2017, maybe out to 2021!

I have attended innumerable broadband meetings at Parish, District, County, **and even** at Westminster, to very quickly understand that CDS appear to be in **complete** denial that they may have **any** accountability regarding the delivery of this program. Rather than answering the many simple questions that arise from villages and communities, they appear only able to quote BDUK policies and repeat mantras about "**Premises Passed**".

The Economy officer of a district council recently reconfirmed to me that, like many other councils, they had **No** intention of match funding CDS, because, they were **also** unable to get the necessary assurances from the CDS board. This could also explain why BT felt unable to sign the phase 2 broadband contract; as **their** expected level of funding may **just not be on the table** anymore! **Further**, CDS I believe rather naively expected BT to just **increase** their labour resource and run their phase 1 and 2 programmes simultaneously, in order to meet government deadlines. **I actually agree** with CDS however, that this is a technically complex subject but ask them to please stop just quoting "**Premises Passed**" as a measure of success! The reality is so different, for example, recent work in "Superfast Surrey" confirms **only 20% of post codes connected to new fibre cabinets** are able to achieve the official stated government speed targets!! **THEREFORE Council, I believe there are legitimate, financial, time and technical concerns with this CDS programme.**

I am **extremely** grateful to note that cabinet has referred CDS to an extraordinary meeting of the Place Scrutiny Committee to be held on September 3rd. **Unfortunately**, I have just learnt that the Committee chairman "is apparently **not** inclined" to take evidence from external witnesses (!)

At the last scrutiny meeting I attended on this subject the Leader **himself** came down and spoke for CDS and, while there were some good opposition questions, unfortunately Councillor Peter Bowden was the **only** Tory member **plucky** enough to raise a challenging question! **Council**, the fair provision of vital rural services, such as broadband, is far too serious for councillors to play politics and blindly follow party dogma.

Finally, I have a simple question

"In order to get a balanced view, as well as just inviting BDUK to present evidence (they are a big part of the problem and are on the CDS board anyway!), should not the Scrutiny Committee seek evidence from, independent, technical experts as well as from some real Devon people, who may actually be effected by the current performance of CDS?" Thank you madam Chairman.