

**MAYOR OF LONDON****Fiona Twycross AM**

Chair of the Economy Committee  
City Hall  
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More London  
London SE1 2AA

**Our ref:** MGLA031215-0538**Date:** 03 MAR 2016

Dear Fiona

**Re: A Mayoral Manifesto for the Digital Economy**

Thank you for your version of a Mayoral Manifesto for the Digital Economy report which you kindly sent me on 3 December 2015. London's digital economy is a significant priority area for London's continuing economic growth and I have established a number of initiatives and programmes that are already implementing recommendations within your report. I will address the three key barriers you have identified below.

**Poor broadband connectivity for London businesses**

Londoners are increasingly reliant on the web for services and for business. To ensure that London continues to be a competitive city, and a great place to live, I am committed to helping ensure the availability of affordable high-speed broadband for every resident and business.

Areas of London remain that need connectivity improvements as a result of a number of structural barriers such as legacy infrastructure. There is also a lack of awareness of the alternatives to fibre as a means to deliver superfast connectivity – your report rightly points out the need for a variety of technologies to deliver digital connectivity.

Only 1 in 4 connections in London are superfast fibre broadband connections and there remains a low appreciation of the benefits of faster connectivity. Research indicates that moving from basic broadband to superfast broadband could boost London's economy by around £4bn by 2024.

It is with all this in mind that I have convened London's Connectivity Summit which brings together providers, key boroughs and regulators to discuss barriers to affordable high-speed internet connectivity provision in some areas of London. Following the Summits a London Connectivity Group has been formed, which includes members from the same wide range stakeholder groups represented and is intended to function as a working group with a collegiate ethos.

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It is tasked with taking forward a range of agreed actions, some of which are detailed below in addressing the recommendations of the Assembly's report.

A connectivity toolkit is available on the [London.gov.uk](http://London.gov.uk) webpages<sup>1</sup> and includes a variety of information sources; a connectivity map; key contacts in London authorities; information on GLA assets; a list of available providers; and case studies. An important feature of the toolkit is the connectivity map which displays Ofcom data on availability of superfast broadband and average speeds at a detailed level. The map allows residents and businesses to register publically their demand for superfast services in their area, thereby acting as an aggregator and signposting tool. GLA officers are looking at how additional layers to the map could be provided, detailing mobile network coverage and potentially public WiFi network coverage.

My Connectivity Rating Scheme was launched last October. London Enterprise Panel (LEP) funding totalling £50,000 was used to procure an agreement with the provider, WiredScore, to deliver the scheme in London. The scheme aims to improve connectivity awareness by creating a transparent rating for prospective business tenants, indicative of the effectiveness and affordability of connectivity in commercial buildings. WiredScore has recently introduced a new service, developed to meet the needs of the London planning and developer community – the 'pre certification' service advises on the provision of connectivity infrastructure in developments prior to build and will ensure that businesses' connectivity needs are met without the need for expensive retrofitting. The scheme has been well received by the landlord and developer community and has to date rated or received requests to rate over 12 million sq feet of commercial space.

My officers are supporting the work of Central London Forward in their development of a standardised digital infrastructure wayleave and, upon the work being finalised, we will look at ways in which the wayleave can be endorsed and promoted among statutory planning authorities. The project has been developed in conjunction with the British Standards Institute with the aim of speeding up connectivity deployment times. The Connectivity Rating Scheme will promote the use of the standardised wayleave in their guidance and the scoring parameters will include preferential weighting for those using it.

The London Plan promotes competitive connectivity through policy 4.11 and further measures have been consulted on for inclusion in the forthcoming Central Activities Zone Supplementary Planning Guidance.

I will continue to lobby Government to improve the regulatory and investment environment to enable the digital connectivity infrastructure deployment that London requires.

## **A lack of gender, and socio-economic, diversity in the digital labour market**

I have launched a £5m Digital Talent programme in collaboration with the LEP to address the lack of diversity in the digital and technology sector. This programme will build a pipeline of talent that will inspire young Londoners from diverse backgrounds and particularly young women to gain higher level digital skills and seek jobs in the sector.

The LEP's Skills and Employment Working Group will explore how best to use the Digital Talent programme, the network of new Enterprise Advisers and my annual Education Conference to pilot the London Ambitions Careers Offer, including the promotion of 100 hours experience of the world of work in partnership with tech sector employers. Enterprise Advisers have already been recruited from several tech or digital companies, and we are recruiting more Advisers by the day. The

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<sup>1</sup> [www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/business-and-economy/science-and-technology/connectivity](http://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/business-and-economy/science-and-technology/connectivity)

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implementation plan for London Ambitions, the Digital Talent Programme, and the Enterprise Advisors will all provide good opportunities to strengthen the engagement with schools by tech businesses.

## **The shortage of skilled workers**

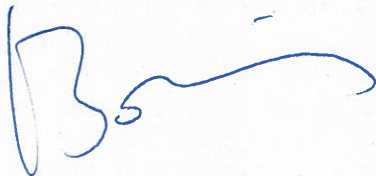
The LEP's Digital Talent programme seeks to address this issue by fostering new talent within London via targeted activity including new courses and apprenticeships. Through this programme we will be working with employers and skills providers to create a demand-led system that provides opportunities for young Londoners to access high quality provision that will lead to jobs.

The programme will seek to establish new apprenticeships with tech and digital firms, enabling both corporates and SMEs to benefit from the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy by working with private providers and Further Education colleges.

Employer engagement by skills providers has been a priority for the LEP's Skills and Employment Working Group during my time in office and I would encourage my successor to continue this important work across all sectors vital to London's economy, including digital and tech.

Thank you for writing to me on this important topic.

Yours ever,



**Boris Johnson**  
Mayor of London