

## **INCA – Independent Networks Co-Operative Association <http://www.inca.coop/>**

In 2009, the Community Broadband Network [<http://www.broadband-uk.coop/>] facilitated the creation of the Independent Networks Co-operative Association (INCA) to meet the Digital Britain recommendations.

In 2009 INCA received £150k in seed funding from the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and CBN was charged with facilitating the creation of INCA. In turn, INCA has been charged with being self-sufficient and having an elected board by the end of June 2010, whereupon the initial round of funding would end.

INCA's mission statement is as follows:

***“The members of the Independent Networks Cooperative Association (INCA) are supporting, planning, building and operating sustainable, independent and interconnected networks that advance the economic and social development of the communities they serve and permit the provision of applications and services through open competition, innovation and diversity. They are working together to create cohesive interconnected next generation networks.”***

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INCA's role is to:

- Promote the development and adoption of common technical & business standards amongst local projects
- Underpin the development of next generation networks by developing joint purchasing and marketing approaches
- Act as a unified voice for local projects to government and industry
- Promote the sector and explain why next generation broadband is important
- Support the development of next generation broadband projects by sharing expertise and information
- Work with other agencies to promote and support local project opportunities
- Encourage partnerships with public, private and community sector organisations to facilitate investment and faster roll out of next generation broadband infrastructure, particularly in under-served areas – the ‘Final Third’ of the country.

INCA's first AGM was held on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2010, whereupon a new board was selected from its membership. That board consists of:

- Dave Carter – Manchester Digital Development Agency
- Loic Flaguel – Alcatel-Lucent
- Rob Leenderts - Cable&Wireless Worldwide
- Annette Murphy – Geo Networks
- Liz Reid – Gateshead Council
- Daniel Heery – Alston Cybermoor

The first meeting of the new board will take place on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2010, whereupon CEO, Secretary and other necessary posts will be filled. CBN's role of facilitating the creation of INCA comes to an end at this broad meeting.

As CBN is not a network builder or owner it has become an associate member of INCA; a role which has no voting rights within INCA. CBN currently hold no board or executive positions within INCA.

## **COTS project Commercial, Operational & Technical Standards (for Next Generation Access)**

Around the world there are now numerous examples of successful local and community-led broadband infrastructure projects. Many of these have extended the availability of broadband services to locations that the market alone would have not reached, or would have taken much longer to deploy to. The success of these projects has come from their ability to develop successful local partnerships, galvanise local community support and develop innovative business models. Looking forward, it is likely that similar projects could play a key role in delivering next generation broadband to parts of the UK.

Whilst the development of local and community-led broadband projects is supported by government in the UK, there is a concern shared by government, industry and the regulator that this access network fragmentation may lead to islands of technology that are commercially unattractive to national communication providers (CPs), resulting in consumers and businesses being offered a sub-optimal range of services at the retail level.

As investments in these projects continue to grow this becomes a larger and more urgent challenge to ensure that a cohesive patchwork of networks emerges, and that all consumers will have access to a range of services at the retail level. Government, regulator, industry and other stakeholders have all indicated that this is an issue that needs to be addressed, and is currently being examined in other markets.

The COTS Project, an industry project facilitated by the Broadband Stakeholder Group, is seeking to address this issue, in order that consumers have a choice of service providers regardless of who operates the access network or the technology employed. The project has identified a number of challenges created by the small scale of these networks that can mean that national CPs are unable to deliver commercially viable services to end-users. These challenges include a lack of product homogeneity, the costs of interfacing with multiple systems and process, and the different business models of the access infrastructure providers, which lead to very different commercial terms.

The project's participants have agreed that, in order to resolve these challenges, some form of aggregation will be required in order to enable small network operators to do business with national CPs. Furthermore, this could mean that a market opportunity exists for any of a number of organisations in the industry to deliver a solution that resolves these issues. The challenge is now to understand how such a solution might work.

## JON – Joint Open Network exchange

<http://www.jon-exchange.net/>

JON is a concept of Adrian Wooster (CBN) formulated in 2008, and focussed on solving the particular problem outlined above – that of aggregation of supply/demand and generation of competition of Service Provision in Local Access networks, or Next Generation Access networks in the UK and Europe.

The telecommunications world is undergoing what is probably the single biggest transformation in its history. The sheer cost and complexity of this change has resulted in a variety of alternative strategies – some countries have opted for massive state led programmes, others favouring market forces; some areas choosing national programmes, others regional and locally led deployments. These different approaches create a new richness to the sector but also create new challenges.

People and businesses prefer to choose from a wide variety of local, national and international service providers but some of the most common market scenarios make linking customers with such a rich choice challenging.

Today there are two main intellectual camps – those that tend towards a top-down national roll-out and those that see a bottom-up, locally led market transition. These basic models imply three scenarios which are currently playing out around the world:

- Da Wo (“Big Me”)                      A traditional incumbent operator willing to build NGA networks alone or with state sponsorship. Examples include Japan and Australia
- Islands of Connectivity                Access networks develop largely in isolation with few links to other projects. This is the traditional municipal network approach, eg. Sweden, Netherlands
- The Patchwork Quilt                    Local projects develop but exist within a framework offering a consistent market interface, examples in the UK includes G-Ti, SYDR, Fibrecity

A patchwork quilt approach permits local innovation, where alternative access networks are able to reflect local needs and colour while offering the consistent market interface of Da Wo but without the potential problems. This is the world of the JON Exchange.

JON aims to ‘hide’ the potential differences between local provision of NGA around the UK and beyond, whilst providing a standard interface and suite of products that Service Providers need in order to minimise integration costs.

JON aims to answer the problem highlighted by the COTS project.

INCA is providing some funding to help JON develop into a sustainable solution that supports its members.