


Digital Britain: Polis responds

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Stephen Carter's [Digital Britain \(interim\) report](#) caught most of the headlines with its promise of broadband for all by the time the of the London Olympics. However, that isn't a great omen. As we now know the 2012 sports fest will be massively over-budget and not a patch on the Chinese version.

If the digital economy is so central to our future success as an economy and as a society in general then why is the scope of this report limited in terms of factors such as the power of the proposed infrastructure and the ambition to promote public service content?

The answer is partly that this is only an interim report and the new 'Entity' that will oversee content could come up with all sorts of clever ideas. We shall see.

Meanwhile here is the view of Polis' resident expert on all things regulatory and infrastructural, [Dr Damian Tambini](#) from the [LSE Media and Communications department](#), who also wrote our [Financial Journalism](#) report. This is a short piece he wrote for The Guardian:



Digital Britain is off to a great start: Carter has publicly committed to resolve some of the most difficult issues in coms policy. But:



Public Service Content



What happened to the vision of linking broadcasters with museums, galleries and universities to provide open-rights content on demand? The BBC, Ofcom and Channel Four developed the idea, but will the proposed Public Service Content Company share it? Government needs to give a strong lead to deliver such a vision, and not expect too much of Channel 4 or Worldwide.



Intellectual Property



ISPs will no longer be neutral conduits after new legislation, and they will be asked to release more data on our internet use. We can expect vigorous debate about user rights and privacy. Whilst something needs to be done to get past this impasse, it is essential that rights holders don't merely capture policy and trample free speech and privacy rights. Lets see if the new Rights Agency can be anything more than the military wing of the collecting societies.



Broadband



2 megs for all sounds great, but what does this mean in practice? Is the government going to subsidise access to internet enabled digiboxes at switchover? If ISPs can traffic shape, how do you ensure TV users can access public services and don't get cheapo, sub-standard ad-driven access? No funding for super fast broadband yet: but we already know that unemployed and isolated people- those who need access most – will not be served by the market for many years. Shouldn't government be coordinating the millions already being spend on local NGA and focusing it on them?

Dr Damian Tambini

