

From the Office of the Minister



Department of  
**Enterprise, Trade  
and Investment**

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**Our Ref: DETI SUB 37/2012**

Mr Phil Flanagan  
Room 343  
Parliament Buildings  
Stormont  
Belfast  
BT4 3XX

25<sup>th</sup> January 2012

*Dear Mr Flanagan,*

**FOLLOW UP INFORMATION - AQO 1036/11-15**

During Oral Questions on 16 January 2012, I agreed to provide you with information on any technical trials carried out prior to the award of the Remote Broadband Services contract to Onwave and details of the process we undertook to award the contract.

As I indicated during my answer, there were no technical trials, as such, carried out by my Department. However, my officials did have a number of opportunities to observe demonstrations of the broadband technology used by Onwave.

Prior to the commencement of the procurement process, two evaluation visits were undertaken to look at a new development in the provision of broadband via satellite – the Eutelsat broadband service, which was made available on a wholesale basis to a number of service providers, including Onwave.

The first visit was to a demonstration event in London on 31 May 2011, organised by SkyLogic (Eutelsat's agent in the UK). At this event, the specification of the product was outlined to officials, along with its capabilities. Features of the product were demonstrated, including its ability to stream video material, browse the internet and handle email. Demonstrations also indicated the time taken to download large files. Fault systems were also displayed alongside the hardware used to deliver services to consumers.

Officials were able to experience the service by visiting a number of websites and comparing the experience to other broadband services, including ADSL and WiFi systems. Advice was sought on any known limitations, which highlighted online gaming. It was, however, clarified that the system could support Virtual Private Network (VPN) services, purchasing services and be configured to provide a Voice over IP services. The latter was confirmed through follow up conversations with an appointed supplier.

A second opportunity to review an identical service took place on 25 July 2011. This was supplied from an alternative service provider. The system was identical to that demonstrated in London, but took place at the offices of Digiweb in Dundalk. Again, officials visited a number of websites, including Government websites, shopping websites and sites that provided video on demand services. Views on the service



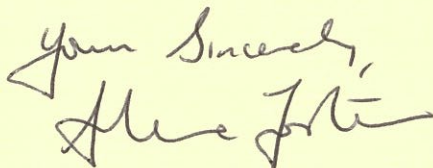
were formed by comparing the experience to that of an ADSL service and corporate internet services.

Advice was sought on any known limitations and this again highlighted online gaming. The impact that the weather might have on the system was also discussed. It was reported that the weather has minimal impact as steps have been taken with the technology to adapt encoding techniques to improve the performance of the product, although it was not possible to test this during the demonstration. It was clarified that the system could support VPN services and purchasing services. The supplier confirmed that, whilst aware the system could offer VOIP services, they did not currently intend to offer this service.

The competitive procurement process to appoint a new satellite provider was managed by the Central Procurement Directorate (CPD). During the procurement process, tenderers were asked to provide technical details of their solution. The details sought and the marking criteria were set out in the tender pack published on the CPD's website. For each tender submitted, this information, along with a number of other criteria, was evaluated and scored by an evaluation panel. The outcome of the evaluation resulted in Onwave being awarded the contract.

I hope you find this information helpful.

I will arrange for a copy of the letter to be sent to the Speaker's office and that a copy will be placed in the Assembly Library.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Arlene Foster".

**ARLENE FOSTER MLA**  
**Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment**