



Digital TV Group (DTG) response to the BBC Trust's Canvas Proposals Provisional Conclusions

Context

The DTG's membership of over 140 organisations is drawn from broadcasters, manufacturers, platform operators, retailers, trade bodies, charities (including interest groups such as RNIB, RNID and Age Concern) and consumer groups. The DTG has received a high volume of feedback from our membership on the BBC Executive's proposal for Project Canvas throughout the consultation process¹.

It is clear the industry is optimistic about the potential for IP to the TV and shares the Canvas project's vision of universal deployment of IPTV services in the UK. The DTG, on behalf of our membership, has already taken significant steps to support and develop the proposition via our Connected TV project. BBC executives from the Canvas team have presented to the DTG's general membership at the Group's annual Summit, at a 'Canvas Kick-off' event in September 2009, to the DTG's governing Council, to the Group's HD Forum and in ongoing discussions with the DTG Chairman and Executive Directors.

Despite this the DTG's membership continues to raise concerns regarding the Canvas project, especially regarding the JV's commitment to engage with the industry. While many of our members will provide individual responses to the Trust's consultation, a significant number have urged the DTG in the strongest possible terms to urgently seek clarification or additional commitments from the Trust on a number of points before final approval of the Canvas Proposals is granted.

Industry Engagement

To date, the DTG Executive and our membership have spent in excess of 4000 man hours developing commercial requirements and initiating the drafting of a specification and other technical documentation for the DTG's Connected TV project. The DTG's Connected TV project was encouraged by the Trust who, along with the BBC Executive, indicated that the DTG's Connected TV specification would be at the core of any future Canvas devices and that the Canvas JV would closely engage with the digital television industry via the DTG.

While our members have welcomed recent improvements in engagement by the BBC and other members of the Canvas JV, particularly in areas such as IP Delivery, feedback from our membership indicates that there remains widespread concern in the industry that there is a parallel process in place - with

¹ DTG members such as the BBC who are directly involved in the Canvas project have been invited to provide feedback to the Group on this, and previous consultations on the Canvas project, but understandably declined, citing a conflict of interest.

a Canvas specification being developed between the Canvas JV and its innovation partners separately from, and regardless of, the DTG's Connected TV specification work.

A number of our members have voiced serious concerns that the Trust's provisional approval document does not contain a clear and unequivocal condition that the Canvas JV work with the DTG to develop a common standard for Connected TV devices and services.

The view of our membership is that several of the conditions in section 7 of the provisional conclusion document should be clarified to ensure that the BBC's participation in the Canvas JV is dependent on a precise, explicit commitment to engaging with industry via the DTG.

Examples of ambiguous wording of conditions in the consultation document are as follows:

7.3. The Executive's Additional Statement indicates that, as well as continuing to work with its existing partners, the Executive will take steps to work with the broader industry in developing the Canvas core technical specification (as opposed to the UI). The Executive adds that it will work with DTG to understand how its proposals might facilitate the development of the Canvas core technical specification, subject to agreeing a work plan that allows delivery by Autumn 2010.

Feedback from our membership indicates that the wording of this condition should be tightened to include a clear, precise requirement for the Canvas project to engage with the industry via the DTG.

DTG Members believe that the time limit of 'Autumn 2010' could potentially be used as a 'get out clause' to allow the Canvas JV to disengage with industry and has the potential to disincentivise the JV from engaging with industry in a timely manner. The DTG request that this date is removed.

7.4. We consider that the BBC should only participate in the joint venture provided that Canvas works to achieve industry consensus, whether through the DTG or otherwise, and gives all manufacturers an opportunity to develop Canvas-enabled devices.

Please see concerns expressed in the section below: Public / Private Partnership

Public / Private Partnership

DTG members have indicated that there is concern that BBC copyrighted specification documents, funded by the licence fee, have not been released to industry via DTG Connected TV Working Groups. The DTG have seen documents

where the external release date in the document history is stated as January 2009.

The DTG urges the Trust to make approval of the BBC Executive's Canvas proposals conditional on the immediate release to the DTG of the following documents, which we believe to be BBC copyright [even if currently only available as a draft]:

- Consumer Device Platform for Connected Television
- IP Content Delivery for Connected Television
- Presentation Engine Core Requirements
- Metadata Aggregation Service
- Search Service
- Usage and Reporting
- Configuration Management
- Canvas IPR document

Without the release of these documents we believe it is unreasonable for the Canvas JV to claim that they have fully engaged with industry via the DTG. The failure by the BBC or the Canvas JV to release this documentation to the DTG has severely impacted upon the ability of the DTG's Connected TV Working Groups to deliver a Connected TV specification in a timely manner.

Intellectual Property Rights

DTG members have voiced concern that there is a lack of clarity over the IPR status of Canvas technical documentation. As a result, the DTG's membership believes that the Trust should make approval of the BBC Executive's Canvas proposal conditional on the clarification of the precise IPR position of the Canvas commercial requirements, technical documentation and specification.

Technical Comparison of D-Book 6 and Canvas

The D-Book is the detailed interoperability specification for UK Digital Terrestrial Television (Freeview). The DTG has published and maintained the D-Book for over a decade. The 6th Edition of the D-Book was published in March 2009.

The supporting research and analysis to the provisional conclusions contains a report by Value Partners on the Model to assess the Impact of Canvas on the TV Market. Section 8 (Appendix 1) of the report is a technical comparison of D-Book 6 and Canvas.

The Group is concerned that this report fundamentally misunderstands, and therefore misrepresents, the D-Book and its processes.

The D-Book is a living document and is constantly developed, refined and enhanced via the DTG's working groups. D-Book 6 represented a step-change in the UK DTT platform at the time of publication as it contained the specification for the introduction of DVB-T2 MPEG-4 services, enabling the launch of high definition services on the Freeview platform and adding a broadband return path and enhanced interactivity to the specification.

The Freeview HD service enabled by D-Book 6 received its technical launch in late 2009, product testing for DVB-T2 products is already underway in the DTG's test centre and the service will receive a consumer launch in advance of the World Cup in summer 2010. Given the extraordinary rate of change in the digital television industry the DTG does not believe that a comparison between D-Book 6 and the proposed Canvas specification is a valid one.

Following the publication of D-Book 6 the DTG began drafting the specification for D-Book 7. D-Book 7 will include the specification for Connected TV services – a specification that is already being generated by the DTG's Connected TV Working Groups. The Group believes that it is this specification that Value Partners should have compared to Canvas if they wished to draw accurate conclusions on Canvas's market impact.

Conclusion and Summary

Many DTG Members have expressed concern that, while the DTG Membership have demonstrated a willingness to develop a Connected TV specification through the normal DTG process, the proposed Canvas JV members appear to have not fully engaged with industry.

A significant number of DTG Members fear that the published Trust Provisional Conclusions making only a "best endeavours" requirement on the Canvas JV to engage with industry to achieve consensus is insufficient and unlikely to deliver an industry agreed specification.

Many DTG Members believe that it would be a great shame if this were allowed to happen and a major departure from the processes that have delivered the successful platform that Freeview is today.

Feedback we have received from our membership indicates that the consensus among our members is that only a mandatory requirement for the Canvas JV to engage with industry to deliver an agreed specification can achieve widespread market success and represent the best interests of the UK consumers and TV Licence Fee payers.

There remains clear support from our members for the Canvas project's objective of universal deployment of IP to the TV and recognition of the vision and technical leadership of the BBC's iPlayer service. (D-Book 6 mandates broadband network connectivity on all Freeview HD receivers.)

The DTG is deeply committed to developing an open specification for the delivery of Connected TV, and look forward to working with the BBC Trust, Executive and the Canvas JV to expedite the introduction of these services as fairly and systematically as possible.

About the DTG

The Digital TV Group (DTG) is the industry association for digital television in the UK. The Group publishes and maintains the detailed interoperability specification for the UK's Freeview and Freeview HD platforms (the D-Book) and runs the digital television industry's test centre: DTG Testing.

The DTG provides the benchmark test and conformance services for the UK's Digital Tick certification mark, the Freeview and Freesat services and international platforms.

The DTG was established by the industry to protect consumers and safeguard the reputations of distribution platforms and receiver manufacturers.

The Group provides important additional services for industry, including the management of the Engineering Channel which allows continuous maintenance of the Freeview and Freesat platforms, and maintains a receiver collection comprised of over 200 models (over 95% coverage of the UK receiver population) on its premises for testing of new transmission modes and software downloads.

The DTG allows Digital Europe to use areas of its copyright under licence to encourage international harmonisation.

The Group represents its membership at government and regulatory level and provides expert consultancy for organisations who wish to enter the UK market and for those developing platforms internationally.

In 2008 the Group delivered the test and conformance regime for the Freesat platform, building on the success gained on the Freeview DTT platform.

2009 saw the publication of the 6th edition of the D-Book. D-Book 6 represents a landmark in UK broadcasting, providing the specification for the launch of high definition services on the Freeview platform by late 2009.



The Group is now focused on delivering the test and conformance regime for the Freeview HD service and has begun work on developing the technical specification for Connected TV through its expert working groups.

The DTG launched a consultation on 3DTV in March 2009 asking members for their views on the technological feasibility and viability of 3DTV and the role in which the DTG should play in its development. Following members concerns over uncertainties over standards for 3D, the DTG has now committed to profiling a UK standard for 3DTV.