

The Global Digital Infrastructure Survey 2021

Angus Leslie Melville

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IJGlobal is delighted to join forces with international law firm Allen & Overy and our DI intelligence partner M&E Global to launch the second Global Digital Infrastructure Survey, sounding out international market sentiment for a booming sector.

To take part in survey – [click here...](#)

The inaugural survey (published early August 2020) revealed bullish sentiment for digital infrastructure (DI) with 63% of respondents – all of whom are actively involved in the financing or delivery of DI – believing the Covid-19 pandemic would serve as a catalyst for investment.

One year later and the market has matured swiftly – as is so often the case for technologies in the infra space – and digital infrastructure is increasingly deemed to be core, from an investor and lender perspective.

It is in this environment – in partnership with A&O and M&E Global – that IJGlobal launches the second Global Digital Infrastructure Survey, anticipating every bit as strong a response as the first.

David Lee (pictured), chair of the Allen & Overy projects, energy, natural resources and infrastructure (PENRI) group, says: “The growth in the digital infrastructure sector over the last few years and its resilience through the Covid pandemic has more than justified our investment in the sector. We’re excited to work with IJGlobal and their partners on this survey and we are looking forward to seeing how the sector has evolved since the inaugural survey.”

Thinking behind the survey

IJGlobal has in recent years matched market evolution by devoting greater editorial resource to tracking developments in the DI world, recognising it as the building block for a modern economy. And we’re not alone in thinking that.

Allen & Overy recognised early on the prominent role that digital infrastructure was going to play in the energy and infrastructure market and how it was going to impact their clients.



David Lee says: “We have strategically invested in people to ensure that we have the right mix of expertise to cover DI from all sides. Over the last five years alone we have advised on 50 transactions – more than any other law firm in the market – and as the sector evolves we are continuing to invest in order to meet the business needs of our clients.”

As for M&E Global, it has an established a presence in the digital infra space having for more than a decade laid the foundations for greater public and private involvements projects that range from advising cities on how to become smarter with their streetlighting systems to city-wide data transmission services.

Dr William Cox, managing partner of M&E Global, says: “Digital infrastructure is much more than just broadband connectivity, although this is an important first step. It’s the new digital economy fuelled by a technology ecosystem including IoT sensors, data centres and applications such as smart cities, transportation, telemedicine, and agriculture that are harnessing digital economy services to become more effective and productive. This is about empowering a technical ecosystem that serves as a gateway

to the digital economy.”



Given the breadth of definitions for digital infrastructure and the universe of applications that it has the potential to drive, IJGlobal – in partnership with A&O and M&E Global – is seeking to divine the future through consensus of opinion from market practitioners.

Last year, the most compelling results from the survey revealed:

- 50.7% – digital infra is key to re-booting economies post Coronavirus
- 69.6% – Europe, Asia and Asia-Pacific to benefit most from digital infra
- 63% – respondents actively involved in financing/delivery of digital infra
- 52.7% – already integrating digital infra into their current projects
- 22.2% – digital infra will support resilience of current infrastructure
- 59.2% – failure to invest in digital infra will drive down countries' competitiveness
- 32.4% – government support is key to unblocking digital infra investment
- 29.8% – PPP structures need to be re-designed to allow for digital infra investments
- 18.1% – lack of technical skills will hold back digital infra progress
- 41.3% – cyber security is greatest concern in deployment of digital infra
- 63.6% – benefits of digital infra outweigh risks

These results were found to be in line with Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) research that showed digital infrastructure needs an injection of more than \$1 trillion in the near future to meet demand for 5G, data centres and digital applications such as smart cities and intelligent transportation, with 50% of that attributable to Asia.

Meanwhile, from a United Nations perspective, this is all the more urgent given that the institution estimates 4 billion people are not even connected to the internet, while only 2.5 billion benefit from that service.

The urgency of this investment is underlined by World Economic Forum (WEF) research that identifies the global digital economy in 2018 was valued at \$11.5 trillion, or 15.3% of global GDP. By 2028, WEF estimates the digital economy will make up 25% of global GDP, more than any other sector. Worldwide, the digital economy is growing at more than 10% annually – 12-25% in emerging markets, according to WEF research (2020).

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