The cross-party Digital Liberties campaign (#DigitalLiberties) seeks to establish a constitutional right to digital liberties in Britain.

It plans to do this either through a People’s Charter of Digital Liberties or through a British Constitution that incorporates the rights of digital citizens. With a view to introducing a People’s Charter of Digital Liberties in Parliament, we are crowd-sourcing public opinion on the topic. The internet is not just a commercial space; it is a community space, a learning space, and a creative space. Therefore, access to the internet should be considered as vital as access to power and water. More should be invested in infrastructure to connect remote places in the UK so that both the young and the elderly can benefit from online access.

Our actions online should not be governed by fear of surveillance. The rights of everyone, including children, should be protected online. People should own the data they create, or at least be able to gain tangible returns for the data they give away for free to companies. Irrespective of age, everyone should have the right to digital education. When I walk down a physical street I know I have certain rights as a citizen that are protected by law. The same is not true for the often-invisible, digital traces I leave behind as I walk. My phone emits its global position as it searches for Wi-Fi connections. To get to my current location, I have used my Oyster card, which tracks my transport routes around the city. My phone is logged into a social network that records my location on its system. These personal digital traces do not belong to me; in many cases, they can be used and sold by the companies that recorded them. If I use a public Wi-Fi connection, the company providing the Wi-Fi may keep my browsing history and some personal details from the device I’m using. For the sake of convenience, we trust - or assume - that we will be protected. Often, we are wrong. No law fully protects our human rights online. And that’s where the problem lies. Privacy, the right to education, and freedom of speech are fundamental human rights and should apply as much online as well as offline. Around the world, there have been several attempts to address online citizenship. Brazil and Italy have introduced Bills of Rights for the Digital Citizen.

The EU has introduced directives and modified laws to protect the rights of citizens online. While these are well-intended, such as the “Cookie Directive”,
they are often poorly informed, full of
dangerous loopholes, and obsolete by
the time they are passed. Patches of laws
and directives have attempted to address
some aspects of our lives and actions
online. But, the rights of citizens online
have not been addressed in their entirety,
and vital regulatory underpinnings that
determine how technology can be built
and deployed, such as network neutrality,
data protection, and copyright are among
the most-lobbied areas of legislation. The
UK’s referendum vote to leave the EU
opens a vast number of complex ques-
tions that will take many years to decide.
Unknowns include whether Britain will
remain within the Council of Europe and
under the jurisdiction of the European
Court of Human Rights (both of which
are separate bodies from the EU), or cre-
ate a new British constitution incorporat-
ing a new Human Rights Act. No matter
how these events play out, the situation
presents a great opportunity to address
afresh all the grey areas of the law re-
garding digital citizenship.
In the meantime, the internet and related
technologies continue to evolve quickly,
and large businesses will also see an op-
portunity to pursue their own agendas.
The internet belongs to everyone. We
should actively participate in the making
of a new bill of rights that addresses our
rights as citizens online. The time to act is
now! If you agree with all or at least one
of the assertions above, please visit our
website (http://digitalliberties.org.uk),
learn more about digital citizenship, use
our hashtag (#DigitalLiberties), and tell
us what you think! From January 2017 we
will conduct a series of events all around
Britain to collect people’s opinions about
digital citizenship and we will present
these to Parliament for debate. Depend-
ing on the course of action Britain takes,
we will campaign either to introduce a
People’s Charter of Digital Liberties or to
incorporate digital citizenship rights into
a new British Constitution.