

## **Ensuring tenants' access to gigabit-capable connections**

*Response from Vodafone UK*

### **Introduction**

We believe that gigabit-capable connectivity is key to ensuring the UK's digital and economic success now and into the future.

Gigabit connectivity can transform the way we work and go about our daily lives. As well as focusing on what this connectivity can do, it is crucial that we focus on how easy it is to deploy the underlying infrastructure required to deliver it.

It is right that the Government recognises that it has a role to play in supporting industry to deliver these services and we welcome the recent focus on full fibre and 5G.

Ensuring that tenants are able to access gigabit-capable connections is something that will increasingly be seen as crucial to both tenants themselves as well as landlords who are seeking to make their properties attractive places to be in, e.g. for running a successful business.

### **Working with landlords**

In seeking to make the process of providing connectivity to these premises easier and more efficient, it is important that any intervention doesn't undermine existing arrangements and agreements between operators and landlords, especially given the introduction of the new Electronic Communications Code which aims to make the process simpler and to support the deployment of telecommunications infrastructure.

Any new measures should aim to work in a way that takes into account and complements the ECC which is in place to cover agreements between operators and landlords for a wide range of sites.

This consultation specifically addresses situations in which there has been engagement between the tenant and the operator and in particular where a landlord is considered absent or unresponsive.

We would support the further reduction of time than two months before a landlord is considered absent. However, it is also crucial to define what constitutes a meaningful response from a landlord within this period. For example, it is possible to foresee a circumstance in which a landlord "times out" the process simply by acknowledging contact from the operator and committing to a further, more detailed response at some point in the future. This would not take the situation forward.

In the case of absentee landlords, we should also consider whether we need a more robust process altogether, when taking into consideration the significant costs and time associated with going to court.

This could involve ensuring that allowing access to operators for the purposes of providing connectivity was part of leases in the first place. This would also allow landlords to market their property as "gigabit capable". In such cases, reference could be made to wayleaves under relevant operators' standard terms which can be made available.