

Response to DCMS consultation:

Ensuring tenants' access to gigabit-capable connections

Response to: tenantconnectivity@culture.gov.uk

West Sussex County Council (WSSCC) has been working since 2013 with BDUK and BT to roll out new publicly-funded 'superfast' broadband. WSSCC is also working with DCMS and CityFibre to build gigabit-capable full fibre infrastructure to public sector sites in the county as part of the LFFN programme.

WSSCC's Digital Infrastructure Team would like to respond with comments regarding wayleaves permission for accessing privately-owned land (MDUs in our larger towns have been included in the commercial roll outs of operators).

No court action has been taken by Openreach to gain access to buildings in the county's BDUK roll out.

Landlords of large estates have been helpful and have signed off multiple wayleaves. Often the landowner and/or managing agent see broadband as part of a social responsibility for their tenants as well as a means to improving the rentable condition of properties.

Farmers and individual landowners, if they benefit, are generally amenable. We have experience of some householders who have refused permission for Openreach to site a cabinet on their land e.g. within a garden or hedgerow and this is usually due to the terms of the wayleave and ongoing access requirement by engineers to the equipment.

If in the future, the landowner wishes for the equipment to be removed the current terms of the wayleave agreements relating to 'lift and shift' place the financial burden on the landowner which could run into tens of thousands of pounds. This is often the reason that private individuals give for not granting permission at the outset.

The information that is sent by operators to landlords requesting permission for access could be better supported at the first point of contact with a clear explanation as to what is being asked, and why. Currently the information is legal detail which is often confusing for the individual and lends itself to being a task that is 'put off'.

It would be helpful if operators engaged more positively from the outset with landowners and landlords, explaining the benefits of broadband and seeking collaboration before initiating the process to gain permission to install equipment.

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