



16 August 2024

Dear all,

I am writing to you following my appointment as Minister of State with responsibility for telecoms infrastructure.

As you will know, this Government wants to drive economic growth across the UK, and we see delivering fast and reliable broadband as crucial to this mission. We want to give communities across all four nations opportunities to work, learn and play in ways that wouldn't previously be possible without it.

However, I am acutely aware of public concerns surrounding the deployment of telegraph poles. Many people are calling for the Government to remove permitted development rights for poles. I do not, at this stage, believe that this is the right move. I want to ensure that my Department does everything it can to support fast-paced rollout of digital infrastructure across the UK to meet the Government's objectives.

However, at the same time, we must look to address the concerns that people across this country have expressed and recognise that unnecessary pole deployment is immensely frustrating for them. I am grateful for the industry coming together to reform the Cabinet Siting and Pole Siting Code of Practice, and the work you have already undertaken to drive this work forward.

This work should of course be done in cooperation with local planning authorities, highway authorities and other interested parties to make sure that a diverse range of voices are considered and so that the guidelines fall under regulation 17 of the Electronic Communications Code (Conditions and Restrictions) Regulations 2003. My officials would be happy to facilitate connections, in order for the Working Group to reach planning or highway authorities in order to consult them on changes to the Code of Practice.

While the contents of this revised Code of Practice are for your Working Group to design; it is my hope that a revised Code of Practice can set out examples of considerations that should be taken into account before new poles are deployed; and that it can be brought into effect this autumn to ensure that community voices can be taken into account.

A revised Code of Practice is vital to ensuring continued smooth broadband rollout. I would therefore like to invite you to a roundtable on 12 September to discuss this project with me. At that roundtable I would also appreciate your commitment that you will do everything possible to share infrastructure and deploy poles in a considerate way.

Should the revised Code of Practice fail to address those public concerns and lead to far greater infrastructure sharing and fewer unnecessary pole deployments; I will not hesitate to consider changing existing regulations or wider legislative options to ensure that communities' concerns are taken into account when deploying infrastructure.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Bryant". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Chris" and the last name "Bryant" clearly legible.

Sir Chris Bryant MP
Minister of State for Data Protection and Telecoms