



# Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport

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20 April 2019

Our Ref:  
MC2019/03202/DB

Dear Kevin,

Thank you for your correspondence of 29 March, regarding the challenges of providing mobile connectivity in rural areas, and the potential for rural roaming to help to address this.

The government recognises the importance of having good quality mobile coverage where we live, work and travel. We are committed to extending geographic mobile coverage to 95% of the UK by 2022, as well as providing an uninterrupted mobile signal on all major roads.

While there have been significant improvements in coverage overall, coverage levels remain poorer in rural areas. The government recognises that there is more to do, and we continue to work with industry to support investment and deliver coverage improvements.

Ofcom's September 2018 advice on rural roaming is helping to develop our policy thinking, and the consultation on our Statement of Strategic Priorities (SSP) reflects our consideration of rural roaming as one option for improving rural coverage. You may have noticed in the news that mobile network operators are currently engaged in discussions on a Single Rural Network, something that was suggested by the APPG for Rural Business in October 2018. We look forward to hearing industry's solution to the issue of rural mobile coverage and continue to consider the full range of possible options to deliver against our target.

We also welcome the proposals set out in Ofcom's consultation on awarding the 700 MHz and 3.6-3.8GHz spectrum bands. These will help to improve coverage across the whole of the UK. In the meantime, I would encourage you to write to your constituency's local councils to ensure that it is as easy as possible to roll out infrastructure in your area. Our Digital Connectivity Portal provides guidance for local authorities and network providers on improving connectivity in local areas. It can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/digital-connectivity-portal>. I welcome any suggestions on how we can increase engagement with local councils on this.

I understand how frustrating poor mobile connectivity can be and I appreciate your support for our ambition to improve rural coverage. I can assure you that government will take it into account as a response to the SSP and ensure it is given the appropriate weight when considering next steps for rural coverage.

Yours ever

Rt Hon Jeremy Wright QC MP  
Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

