

Press release: Reforms to boost Wales' digital infrastructure

People in areas of Wales and the rest of the UK with poor mobile coverage will soon get a significant boost to their connections thanks to UK Government action to speed up the rollout of mobile and broadband services.

Reforms made today to outdated legislation will reduce the costs of housing phone masts and other communications infrastructure on private land. This opens the way for faster and more reliable broadband and mobile services, particularly in rural areas.

Changes to the UK's Electronic Communications Code will:

- bring down the rents telecoms operators pay to landowners to install equipment to be more in line with utilities providers, such as gas and water;
- make it easier for operators to upgrade and share their equipment with other operators to help increase coverage;
- make it easier for telecoms operators and landowners to resolve legal disputes.

UK Government Minister for Wales Guto Bebb said:

I welcome the changes made today as they enable rural areas of Wales to keep pace with the digital transformation happening across the UK.

Faster broadband and mobile service seeks to benefit everyone; from local businesses looking to boost productivity and capacity, to residents who want continuous, superfast coverage.

The UK Government is committed to speeding up service and investing in new communication infrastructure, strengthening the Welsh economy. Thanks to reforms like these, the journey to digital transformation is well underway for all communities in Wales, regardless of how rural they are.

Matt Hancock, Minister of State for Digital, said:

It's not good enough that many people are struggling with poor mobile and broadband connections which is why we are improving coverage across the UK.

We want everyone to benefit from the growth of digital services. Removing these outdated restrictions will help promote investment in new technologies such as 5G, and give mobile operators more

freedom to improve their networks in hard-to-reach places.

By the end of the year all mobile operators are required to deliver coverage to 90 per cent of the UK and 95 per cent of all homes and businesses will be able to get superfast broadband, but more needs to be done.

These reforms will help to drive investment and stimulate the continued growth, rollout and maintenance of communication technology infrastructure, an increasingly significant area of the UK's economy.

Hamish MacLeod, Director of Mobile UK said:

The Electronic Communications Code is an important piece of the puzzle alongside further planning reform that will help mobile operators to overcome the challenges they face with expanding their networks, while also developing innovative services for customers.

Good mobile connectivity is no longer an optional extra. It is essential infrastructure as core to modern economic activity as broadband, electricity and other essential services.

Mark Talbot FRICS, Chair of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) Telecoms Forum Board, said:

RICS recognises the critical role that a modern, efficient and equitable digital infrastructure has on the future development of the UK economy. RICS has worked closely with our colleagues in DCMS to ensure that the new Code enables investment in our national digital infrastructure whilst balancing the needs of the public and private property owners.

With high speed internet seen by many as the fourth utility service the public and businesses expect access to digital services when they want and as they want, and RICS believes that the reformed Code is a great step forward towards this ultimate goal.

The old Electronic Communications Code was originally enacted in 1984, and became out-of-date as technology evolved, making it difficult for landowners and network operators to reach agreements and resolve disputes when rolling out modern digital infrastructure.

The Government reformed the Code through the Digital Economy Act, which received Royal Assent in April. The supporting regulations laid in Parliament today will bring the new Code into force, which is expected to take effect in December 2017.

ENDS

Notes for Editors:

1. The Government has today laid draft regulations in Parliament needed to commence reform of the Electronic Communications Code. The changes will help ensure network providers achieve the coverage and connectivity targets set by government to reach the hardest-to-reach places in the UK.
2. The Electronic Communications Code (the Code) is the legislative framework that enables electronic communications network providers to construct electronic communications networks.
3. The Code was reviewed by the Law Commission in 2012 which recommended reform, and the Government has carried out extensive consultation with all stakeholders before bringing forward the amendments to the legislation.
4. For further information on reform of the Electronic Communications Code:

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[Press release: Major flood defence exercise in Stratford](#)

The Environment Agency's field team will deploy a temporary flood barrier along the street. The exercise, starting at 0700, will provide an opportunity to test barrier deployment plan and procedures, train staff and test working arrangements with partners, so the barriers can be quickly and safely erected when needed during a flood with minimum disruption.

Waterside will be closed to traffic for most of the day. Pedestrians will be unable to walk along the areas immediately in front of and behind the barrier, between the Encore Pub and the junction of Waterside and Chapel Lane, for health and safety reasons. Businesses on Waterside will be accessible.

The Environment Agency is supporting communities across England that remain at risk of flooding with 40km of temporary barriers which can be deployed at suitable sites during a flood. Stratford has been identified as one of those suitable locations.

Environment Agency Operations Manager Emma Smailes said:

This is a major test of our operational equipment. Although we have carried out numerous barrier deployment exercises at our training depots, doing it on location will give our field team invaluable experience.

Cllr Daren Pemberton, Planning and Administrative Services Portfolio at Stratford-on-Avon District Council, said:

This exercise will allow Environment Agency staff and partners, including the district council, to work together and test this new barrier deployment in Stratford-upon-Avon, thereby gaining valuable training experience.

In the past Stratford-upon-Avon, and Waterside in particular, has flooded and remains at risk of flooding, so the temporary barrier will now help to protect vulnerable properties in this location during future flooding events.

Testing the assembly of the barrier is important to ensure that it all works smoothly in a live emergency situation.

Cllr Howard Roberts, portfolio holder for Community Safety with Warwickshire County Council, said:

Flooding is one of the major hazards potentially affecting Warwickshire residents and it is vital that we are prepared to respond.

Exercises like this are key to making sure that partners are well practised at working together in response to a flood emergency.

Emma added:

It's important to remember that we can never protect 100% against

flooding, and we can't guarantee that specific communities will always have access to temporary barriers.

Local residents and businesses should be prepared by checking their flood risk, signing up to flood warnings and finding out what they can do to protect themselves and their property by visiting the Prepare for Flooding page on GOV.UK or calling Floodline on 0345 988 1188.

Environment Agency staff will be available during the exercise to provide members of the public with information about access restrictions, alternative routes and general flood advice. The exercise is likely to conclude around 1300.

Press release: Environment Agency warns of flood risk in Devon and Cornwall

The Environment Agency is urging people to remain vigilant to potential flooding as a low pressure coastal storm is forecast to hit the south coasts of Cornwall and Devon on Saturday.

Current forecasts show a low pressure storm on Saturday 21 October which, combined with close-to-spring tides, means flood warnings are likely to be issued along the south coasts of Cornwall and Devon and will require the routine closure of flood gates.

On Thursday 19 October the Environment Agency will be deploying temporary flood barriers in Fowey. The temporary barriers are designed to give Fowey better protection from potential coastal flooding. This type of flood defence has been used to prevent flooding from rivers for a number of years but this is the first time they have been used on the Cornish coast.

Environment Agency teams have been mobilised across the area to check on flood defences, clear any river blockages and closely monitor river levels. These teams have been working around the clock to reduce the risk of flooding, and will be out in force over the weekend.

Kevin Ward of the Environment Agency said:

We urge residents to take care on the coast this weekend. Strong winds pose a risk of waves overtopping defences and we advise not to stop and admire the waves or take 'storm selfies'.

Also, avoid exposed coastal areas and do not walk or drive through flood water, which can be dirty and contain hidden debris. Just 30cm of flowing water can move a car and driving through water can also create waves.

The Environment Agency continues to monitor the situation across Devon and Cornwall and will review their plans as the forecasts are updated.

Residents and businesses are encouraged to sign up to [flood warnings on the Environment Agency website](#). People can also call Floodline on 0345 988 1188. Once registered, if a flood warning is issued, they will receive an automatic message by telephone, SMS text message, email and/or fax.

Find out [how to prepare for flooding and if your home is at risk](#).

[Press release: £15 billion road upgrade plan updated to minimise congestion](#)

Plans for twenty-six road upgrades have been revised to reduce roadworks taking place in the same area of the network or on popular journey routes at the same time. This will mean less congestion for motorists as Highways England embarks on the biggest road upgrade plan for a generation.

The Supplementary Delivery Plan published today will see Highways England rescheduling its programme for the schemes between three and 24 months – meaning a number of schemes will be completed earlier than planned. All are still set for delivery as part of the Government's first road investment strategy.

Jim O'Sullivan, Highways England Chief Executive said:

Our update today is a sensible and responsible way to deliver major national investment in road infrastructure. It will keep our roads moving, deliver a lasting legacy for the country and ensure best value for money for the taxpayer.

Now, more than two years into delivery of a £15 billion Government investment in motorways and major A roads, Highways England has already completed 18 major schemes, adding more than 190 lane miles of much-needed capacity to the nation's roads.

The 10 schemes being brought forward are:

- A19 Testos

- A19 Downhill Lane
- M56 junctions 6-8 smart motorway
- M6 junctions 21a – 26 smart motorway
- M6 junction 22 upgrade
- A500 Etruria
- M6 junction 10
- M4 Heathrow Slips
- A47 Acle Straight -small scale improvement
- A47 and A12 junction enhancement

The 16 schemes being re-scheduled to smooth the timing and frequency of roadworks are:

- A5 Dodwells to Longshoot widening
- M3 junction 9 improvement
- A31 Ringwood
- M27 junctions 4-11
- A47 North Tuddenham to Easton
- A47 Blofield to North Burlingham dualling
- M25 junction 25 improvement
- M25 junction 28 improvement
- A1 Birtley to Coal House
- M60 junctions 24-27 and junction 1-4 smart motorway
- A47/A11 Thickthorn
- A47 Wansford to Sutton
- A47 Guyhirn Junction
- A12 Chelmsford to A120 widening
- M25 junction 10/A3 Wisley interchange
- M25 junctions 10-16

Highways England is obliged to ensure that investment in the road network delivers good value for money. Following a full review the Road Investment Strategy (RIS) programme some schemes require further development to achieve an acceptable return on investment. As a result, in addition to the 26 schemes above, 6 schemes have been paused for further review and consideration as part of future RIS planning process.

These schemes are:

- A1 & A19 Technology enhancements
- M11 junctions 8 to 14 technology upgrade
- A12 whole-route technology upgrade
- M53 junctions 5-11 smart motorway
- A14 Junction 10a
- M62/ M606 Chain Bar

Two further schemes required rework to achieve value for money; however, changes in local development plans mean that these schemes can be progressed, albeit in the early stages of Road Period 2. These are:

- M5 Bridgwater junction improvements
- A50 Uttroter Project B growth corridor project

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.