



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Baroness Lloyd of Effra
Minister for Digital Economy
Department for Science, Innovation and Technology
100 Parliament Street
London
SW1A 2BQ

23rd February 2026

Dear Baroness Lloyd,

Re: Mobile Market Review and Rural Connectivity

We are writing to you following the launch of the mobile market review to highlight our concerns about service quality across the country – particularly in rural constituencies like ours.

Ofcom's figures show that rural constituencies continue to lag urban areas on access to "Very High Confidence" 5G. Even where there is coverage, it is often from just a single provider. Because different providers offer coverage in different parts of a given constituency, the result in practice is patchy signal. In many of our areas, not a single premises has access to high quality 5G from all four of the major mobile-network operators (MNOs). Residents and businesses have less choice and risk paying more to ensure that their phones and other devices have reliable access to fast internet.

The lack of effective competition within the mobile market is not a problem among MNOs only. You will know that, following changes to the Electronic Communications Code by the previous Government in 2017, MNOs sold their masts to wireless infrastructure providers (WIPs). This section of the market is highly concentrated: a handful of WIPs control 70% of mobile-phone sites. Because of long-term exclusivity agreements with MNOs, there is little room for new entrants who would bring healthy competition. The Competition and Markets Authority has warned that by 2030 two companies could control 90% of the market. These firms are not subject to coverage obligations.

The geographic disparities in 5G quality suggest MNOs and WIPs are investing where short-term returns are highest rather than ensuring comprehensive quality and choice across all communities

In August 2024 Sir Chris Bryant wrote to Ofcom to express frustration that official coverage data did not match reality. He called this "misleading" and noted that "the overall picture Ofcom paints of near-complete geographic coverage masks the fact that the performance of the networks frequently doesn't meet the expectations of users."

He identified a fundamental problem: the absence of clear requirements defining what quality of service must be delivered for a geographical area to be deemed to have coverage. Having a single bar of signal means nothing if you cannot stream video, join a call or load a web page.

Ofcom responded with its Map Your Mobile tool in June 2025, which improved how this problem is measured. While transparency is welcome, it does not solve the underlying problem that Sir Chris identified and that the output of the new tool has underlined.

Britain has the slowest 5G rollout in the G7. Other countries are doing things differently and delivering better results. Germany requires operators to deliver high-quality 5G on major transport routes and achieved 90% advanced 5G coverage (known as '5G Standalone' or 5G SA) across the whole country by at least one network in April 2024. France's requirements on 5G quality have stimulated 5G SA investment. The previous Government set a target of "higher quality 5G SA in all populated areas by 2030" but did not set out what this standard really meant in practice. We should learn from this mistake.

Fixing this problem is key to our growth mission. The Government's own research shows that widespread deployment and adoption of high quality 5G could provide an additional £159 billion in gross value added to the economy by 2035—equivalent to £529 additional output per capita. We need to ensure that the UK does not lag behind other countries – and that every region benefits from better connectivity.

The mobile market review must address this fundamental issue – and we would urge you to ensure that it is within the review's scope. We must set clear quality standards that define in detail the minimum 4G and 5G service levels that all parts of the UK should receive. We need to do more than measure the problem – we must move to address it.

Alongside that, Ministers should work with Ofcom to require transparency on spectrum deployment, so that communities understand why service quality varies geographically; examine whether current licensing and regulatory fee arrangements create sufficient incentives for operators to deploy across all areas, not just where short-term returns are highest; and consider the barrier that exclusivity arrangements between MNOs and WIPs create to new market entrants.

We look forward to your response and would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss these issues.

Yours sincerely,



Dave Robertson MP
Lichfield

Sadik Al-Hassan MP
North Somerset

Lee Barron MP
Corby & East Northamptonshire

Julia Buckley MP
Shrewsbury

Torcuil Crichton MP
Na h-Eileanan an Iar

Anna Gelderd MP
South East Cornwall

Amanda Hack MP
North West Leicestershire

Terry Jermy MP
South West Norfolk

Jayne Kirkham MP
Truro & Falmouth

Noah Law MP
St Austell & Newquay

Kevin McKenna MP
Sittingbourne & Sheppey

Perran Moon MP
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Josh Newbury MP
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Richard Quigley MP
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Andrew Ranger MP
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John Whitby MP
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Steve Witherden MP
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