

## Text of letter sent to MNO CEOs, 15 November 2016

Dear XXXXX,

I wanted to write to you about the next phase of Ofcom's work on mobile coverage.

Consumer expectations of coverage have risen and continue to rise. For many people the smartphone is now their most important device, and they rely on being able to use it wherever they are. We know too that people remain dissatisfied with coverage, particularly outside urban centres, and particularly in the Nations and the English regions. The ongoing high public profile of the issue reflects this. Although national figures show an increase in headline levels of coverage, they also illustrate the significant challenges that remain. Last year, our Connected Nations report noted that, whilst 91% of urban premises were reported to have indoor coverage from all networks, this was true of only 31% of rural premises.

I know that further improvements will come about in the light of your planned network investment and existing coverage obligations in spectrum licences. However, I would like to look at how we can enable further significant improvements in both the availability and the quality of coverage in order to keep pace with consumers' expectations in the future.

Whilst acknowledging the challenging economics of providing coverage in less populated areas, I would like to examine an aspiration of comprehensive coverage. Considering the availability of coverage to 100% of the UK's geography would stretch our thinking as to what may be possible. There could be range of technical approaches and regulatory options, both existing and new, that can help materially move the dial. Some of these measures are already in the pipeline, ranging from the deployment of new technologies to improve indoor coverage, reform of planning rules and the opportunities that may be presented by the new Emergency Services Network sites. We have already said that we will consider new obligations in the context of the 700 MHz award. I am keen to examine all available options, including the most radical and ambitious solutions.

We envisage a programme of work through to next summer to understand where the current investment programmes are likely to take us and identify the options for achieving varying levels of further coverage and quality of service. Along with the consideration of broader outdoor coverage, I expect the work to focus on challenges such as indoor coverage, and coverage along transport corridors.

It will be key to this work that we understand your perspective on these issues. We have touched on these questions before, and I look forward to picking up this conversation when we next meet. I would also like our respective teams to begin to engage on this agenda at a working level in the near future. The Ofcom work is being led by Philip Marnick and Charles Jenne who will be getting in touch with your team.

I am copying this letter to Karen Bradley MP, Fergus Ewing MSP, Simon Hamilton MLA, and Julie James AM.

Yours sincerely



Sharon White