

A USO is essential & urgent, the BDUK projects have been a success, but only for those consumers that live within Metropolitan catchments, where BT (who have won the majority of the BDUK contracts - thanks to their monopoly of scale) have successfully milked the project and snatched all the low hanging fruit, concentrating FTTC (Fibre To The Cabinet), within the large catchment areas, and concentrating the benefits of VDSL onto homes & business who may already have had a perfectly serviceable ADSL level of service.

This is reflected by the low take up (at time of writing - reported at just 30% of VDSL capable connections) - had the BTUK projects been targeted at those in rural catchments first, who have long suffered very poor ADSL speeds, then the take up would I am sure, be much higher than currently reported.

Those of us in rural locations are basically gagging at the bit and looking up the road to the nearest village in envy.

Those of us in purely rural areas, or small hamlets catchments are still waiting with little better than dial up speed performance, demonstrating that the USC of 2Mb that was offered on winning the BDUK contracts, has not been adhered too by the BDUK contractors - BT in particular.

Establishing a USO will ensure that customers in this predicament, will also enjoy the benefit of network investment, supported by taxpayers money, including ours, that urban areas now enjoy.

The USO must specify that it applies to traditional ground based, fibre, or LTE / wireless solutions, at equivalent costs & bandwidth capabilities to those enjoying super & ultra fast speeds in the larger catchments areas.

Ergo, the cop out of pushing Satellite solutions for the consumer who currently receives telephone and sub-standard ADSL speeds, as a way of meeting the USO commitment, should NOT be allowed as an option to the Suppliers.

Satellite is a failed solution - we would not require a USO if this was anything other than true. Satellite is very expensive compared to VDSL solutions (advertised to those that can receive them on our televisions every day). Satellite based broadband, has severe limitations in the form of download allowance and with this, speed step reductions, therefore Satellite solutions are a poor substitute compared to a terrestrial based service. Not least, the very long latency associated with the transmission and receipt of information to and from the Satellite, make the solution unsuitable as a permanent home or business connection.

Therefore 'Satellite' should be excluded as an Option to meeting the USO, for all but very exceptional cases, or where temporary access is required by a consumer.

Furthermore, where a consumer does have traditional ADSL service at lower than USO (or indeed USC speed) then it is their ADSL based service that should be upgraded to a suitable VDSL service that meets or exceed the new USO - any alternate solution should not be an option for the supplier (BT et al) to put forward where a property is service by an ADSL capable line.

Additionally, for those requiring a permanent USO solution, where Satellite is the only viable

option on offer (limited to those that are completely off grid) then the Satellite service should be offered at comparable cost to the Consumer (as equivalent ADSL or VDSL solutions) not be Rate Capped, or if Rate Capped, then only to match an equivalent service offering, as provided by traditional ADSL or VDSL solutions (this at the choice of the Consumer), and should guarantee USO speeds at all times of day and not step down speed due to the high congestion, which is common on Satellite solutions.

If this cannot be guaranteed, then an alternate wireless, microwave or 4G offering should be put forward, but again, offering equivalent level of service that match the more common ADSL or VDSL solutions which the majority enjoy.

Finally, overhead charges for delivery of the USO should be capped - at a reasonable level of costs that can be met by the average consumer, and over charge should be challenged, especially where it can be demonstrated that delivery for 1 property in a catchment area, brings USO speeds to other properties in the same catchment. IN such cases over head charging should be subdivided to the number of properties serviced by new infrastructure, regardless, of whether those properties / consumers choose to take up the service or not.

The On Demand USO request made by a Consumer, should not be used by the incumbent supplier, to upgrade their network at the cost of an individual Customer or Business. In brief - the first consumer in a catchment should not 'pay for the bus'.