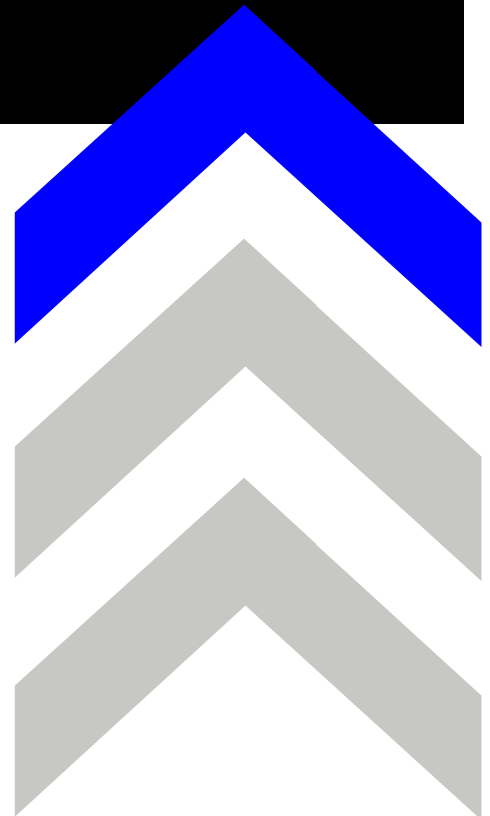


**PlatformX Communications response  
to “call termination rate market and  
end-to-end market condition”  
consultation**



## ABOUT PLATFORMX COMMUNICATIONS

TalkTalk Communications Ltd t/a PlatformX Communications (PXC) is part of the TalkTalk Group. PXC plays a unique and important role in the UK telecoms market.

Providing broadband and leased line connections to Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and resellers utilising other networks from larger providers through to alternative networks (Altnets). It is the UK's largest wholesale provider to ISPs and supports TalkTalk Consumer, as well as over 1,000 smaller ISPs, who in turn, provide services to 3.2m residential and business end-customers.

PXC is committed to providing crucial support to the emerging Altnet sector, with ambitions to become the industry's aggregator of choice. We have wholesale supply agreements with five major Altnets and are hoping to add more, continuing to underpin the success of the Altnet sector and ensure a diverse and competitive supply. No other major operator connects to more than one Altnet across their network.

A fair and competitive telecommunications industry is crucial to the success of PXC, our Altnet suppliers and our ISP customers. We look forward to making a useful contribution which reflects not only the interests of PXC but also those of our customers and suppliers.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. As a major contributor to the telecommunications market, PXC welcomes the opportunity to comment on the "call termination rate markets and end-to-end market condition" consultation.
2. PXC is supportive broadly of the proposals from Ofcom to lift the End-to-End connectivity condition. PXC is also generally supportive of Ofcom's proposals in respect of WCT, MCT and 070 call termination markets. PXC does however have some comments surrounding each which are detailed within this document.
3. The regular review of the regulation in place for the wholesale call termination market is an important feature in the responsibilities of Ofcom. It is key that the changes proposed reflect the changed market and how the market is expected to continue to change in the period concurrent with the Ofcom Telecoms Access Review.

## PROPOSAL TO INCREASE ADDITIONAL NETWORK ACCESS OBLIGATIONS ON BT

4. PXC is supportive of the proposal to increase network access obligations on BT. Especially as there are several asymmetries in the ongoing negotiations between [REDACTED] following the statement in 2021 surrounding BT standard IP interconnect Agreement (SIPIA) and an associated reference offer. Some of the issues seen during and following the SIPIA agreement in October 2021 [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]
5. PXC believes that the remedy which Ofcom proposes in 5.52 To ensure that contracts with BT clearly distinguish between any reference offer that is created and the other services that are procured via BT (whether in negotiation or active) and, the remedy that there is to be no obligation to purchase any extra commercial services, or accept terms associated with such services in order to be able to obtain a reasonable reference offer, will address some of the issues being faced.
6. Perhaps some of the most notable remedies proposed by Ofcom include the requirement for maintenance and quality conditions to be included within the BT reference offer, along with better technical information.

## REGULATORY REPORTING & KPI REQUIREMENTS FOR BT

7. PXC welcomes the instruction from Ofcom that the publishing of BT performance against the existing six KPIs should continue. However, it would be further beneficial to industry if Ofcom were to [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

8. Additionally, it may be beneficial to industry if BT were to be able to be assessed per its performance in relation to KPIs associated with time to identify and time to resolve complex interconnection issues.

## MARKET DEFINITIONS

9. The industry must recognise that the way end-users connect and communicate, especially over technology, has changed significantly since the last voice market review. With the majority of end-users currently indifferent to which underlying technologies are utilised to allow them to complete their day-to-day activities and with that indifference, is a continued unknowing increase in end-users moving to “online connectivity services” to complete those activities.

It could be argued that there is actually a position to put forward that there is not a need to define different markets within the telephony element of the telecoms industry (i.e. internet based calling vs landline or MNO).

10. Whilst Ofcom doesn't place much focus on the handling of these services in the short term, there are questions and issues that need to be answered and accounted for in the long term view. It could be expected, per the data in the consultation, that the use of OCS is only set to continue to increase during this review period. Therefore highlighting the need to ensure that OCS is regulated with as stringent a set of rules as the MCT & WCT markets.
11. If the regulation of OCS doesn't begin in the same vein as MCT & WCT, then we will be left with situations whereby consumers could be placed at a higher risk of being impacted by fraud, which seems counterproductive given the work that Ofcom has been doing on tackling telephony fraud.
12. If consumers or SMEs were to be the victim to malicious actors on an OCS platform, where would they be placed in terms of the protections (or lack thereof)?
13. There is a concern that as the fraudulent actors within industry develop their understanding of technology and change their methodology for conducting malicious acts, that OCS platforms will begin to fall more and more within the scope of their attempts. This could especially adversely impact already vulnerable users who, for example may begin using the 999 BSL platform.
14. We would encourage Ofcom to consider its position on the matters relating to OCS and to publish a timeline in support of that.

## 070 CALL TERMINATION

15. PXC supports the proposal to maintain the current market definitions surrounding 070 call termination, as well as keeping the existing charge controls.
16. There may be a potential towards the end of this review period, for Ofcom to consider reviewing the 070 personal numbering activity further and grouping what remains of that activity within the umbrella of the normal mobile use number ranges.

## WCT & MCT CHARGE CONTROLS

17. In section 5.6 of the consultation, Ofcom are proposing to keep, mainly, the same requirements that currently apply to WCT & MCT providers, however, there is a change proposed to caps on the UK originating calls, which would mean that the calls in question would be capped for the whole five year period. In practice, meaning that the fixed call termination rates would be capped at 0.0365ppm and mobile call termination rates at 0.487ppm.
18. This cap could benefit the users of the termination services, especially higher volume users, from a resource perspective, as the cap could significantly reduce billing administrative activity.
19. Whilst [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] we have seen over recent years, instability in the financial markets have caused rapid rates of inflation and this may no longer be the case for those providers.

## SMP IN WCT & MCT

20. PXC are generally supportive of the findings and justifications in the consultation surrounding SMP in WCT & MCT.

## MAINTAINING NETWORK ACCESS OBLIGATION ON WCT PROVIDERS

21. PXC are generally supportive of Ofcom's findings and justifications surrounding the network access obligation.

## END-TO-END MARKET CONDITION

22. The ability for Ofcom to be able to call a review of the end-to-end market condition has been useful.
23. PXC agrees that there has been an increase in the number of telephone services being provided as "over the top" services, via broadband. This coupled with the planned Openreach exchange exit and closure plans, means that there will continue to be less and less reliance on BT purchasing narrowband termination, to allow end-users to contact other end-users via telephone.
24. [REDACTED]
25. PXC believes that due to the technological advances afforded to the telephony market, in relation to delivering calls from one area of the country to another, that there is no longer as much of a geographical need as in previous review cycles for smaller providers to fill the gaps and sell band to BT. [REDACTED]
26. It is because of these reasons, that PXC supports the removal of the end-to-end market condition. However, Ofcom must consider the next steps to ensure that any of the services in the telecoms industry, potentially in more technologically / infrastructurally challenged areas of the UK will continue and that the removal of the obligation does not allow BT to remove support for any of those services in the legacy areas without a service exit process. Any exit from providing these services needs to be done with a reasonable timeframe to ensure that end-users are not disadvantaged.