

I provide and use, in my daily life, open public Wi-Fi networks; for work and social purposes. Without the widely available public hotspot network that exist in the UK today my ability to share information, news, collaborate and enjoy spare moments of leisure time would be severely impacted.

My concern is that without an exception, for Wi-Fi providers, in the Digital Economy Act, many businesses and individuals that currently provide public access to the internet will to cease do so. The possibility that the provider may be held liable for the infractions of a user is a strong deterrent. The suppliers of motor vehicles aren't held liable when an individual exceeds the speed limit or alcohol allowance and kills innocent bystanders or passengers. Why should a public WiFi provider be held liable for the possible infractions of a miscreant user? My belief is that the minimal impact on copyright infringement will be far outweighed by the damage and restriction to freely available public internet access.

The costs and complexity involved for businesses, and individuals, to maintain public hotspots that implement authentication, accounting and authorization, and to adhere to data protection and privacy laws will be unfeasible and cost-prohibitive in almost every individual's case and an unnecessary burden in business cases. Without an exception for WiFi providers, within the Act, such implementations would be the only feasible method to offer some protection to the WiFi provider. Furthermore, without verifying sensitive, confidential information; such as credit/bank card details - a criminal user of a public hotspot simply won't provide truthful details; in this eventuality the average, honest, user is put at risk by forcing them to divulge confidential sensitive information to validate their identify, just to make use of a public WiFi spot.

It is easy to see how much of a burden this Act will be in the lives of everyday public WiFi users as well as the WiFi providers, and very little justification behind the claims that it will protect copyright holders.

Please, please amend the act to create an exception for WiFi providers.