

Question 1: What are your views on Ofcom's proposed work programme for 2010/11?:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond. Friends of the Lake District (FLD) is a landscape charity, covering the Lake District and Cumbria, and a company limited by guarantee. We have approximately 7000 members, represent the CPRE in Cumbria and are members of the Campaign for National Parks. Issues relating to the telecommunications industry have featured throughout our organisations' history and work.

We continue to view with dismay Ofcom's refusal to acknowledge its environmental duties, as outlined in the Defra guidance 'Duties on relevant authorities to have regard to the purposes of National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads' published in 2005. We believe that Ofcom's work programme should include a strand on discharging its duties to the environment including landscape character and landscape quality in protected areas.

Question 2: What are your views on Ofcom's proposed priorities for 2010/11?:

With regard to priorities we believe that Ofcom, as the regulator of Openreach, should develop a framework by which telephone lines can be placed underground. Such a framework has been introduced by Ofgem with regard to electricity distribution companies. We have been told that Ofcom does not have the regulatory powers to formally impose a scheme, through the NCC or any other specific vehicle. Further Ofcom's view is that any undergrounding activity should be conducted at the discretion of the relevant businesses Ofcom regulates, rather than through a formal Ofcom framework. FLD has had discussions directly with Openreach. With regard to placing lines underground the issue seems quite simple - electricity distribution companies have an incentive to place lines underground, whereas Openreach does not. We are not asking for more intervention or regulation but rather incentives to enable telephone lines to be placed underground in National Parks and AONBs in the same way that Ofgem has acted with regard to the electricity industry. The electricity companies did not act on their own discretion, they were provided with an incentive to underground lines. They would not be doing the work without this. We believe that a priority for Ofcom should be the introduction of an allowance for fixed telecoms similar to that available to electricity distribution companies.