



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP
Minister of State
Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
100 Parliament Street
London, SW1A 2BQ

19 October 2017

Our Ref: HS458733

Hew Matt -

I am writing to you having been contacted by large numbers of my constituents regarding the poor broadband coverage and lack of broadband speed within my East Devon constituency.

For far too long, rural areas have been left behind through a lack of planning and infrastructure, in a world where a reliable broadband connection is becoming increasingly important.

Therefore, I find it unacceptable that rural communities, including my own, are having such issues with their broadband service.

Currently, Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS) have contracted Gigaclear for the Phase Two rollout of ultrafast fibre in the area. I understand that this will be capable of delivering speeds of up to 1,000Mbps. However, I have been told that the current target date for completing the whole Gigaclear rollout for CDS is December 2019. Given that this is a large infrastructure programme, it is highly likely this project will not meet the intended completion date.

Therefore, it would be useful for the Government to attempt to find a stop-gap solution so that my constituents do not have to suffer continuously with their broadband coverage and speed for the next two years, at the very least.

Many of my constituents have also commented on the complete monopoly that BT Openreach currently has over broadband infrastructure. One constituent who owns a small business in the Exmouth area, which is one of

the largest towns in my constituency, has been held to ransom by BT, having been sold a dedicated package at £600 per month. This business is extremely close to the Exmouth exchange, yet only has an upload speed of 1Mbps and a maximum download speed of 20Mbps. However, my constituent tells me that his download speed never reaches anywhere near 20Mbps.

This is a real issue affecting vast numbers of businesses and families, not only in East Devon, but across the rest of the country where our colleagues represent rural communities.

I would urge you to do everything in your power to get to grips with this issue so that our rural communities can have the connectivity that they need and deserve, in order for them to thrive and continue to help grow the economy.

I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours ever,

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