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Bill Wiggin MP
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

11 September 2014

Dear Mr Wiggin

Mobile Infrastructure Project (MIP) in North Herefordshire

I refer to our meeting with Jesse Norman MP at Portcullis House on Tuesday. It was helpful to have an opportunity, albeit a brief one, to discuss the Mobile Infrastructure Project although had I known we were to meet I would have been better briefed on proposals for your constituency!

It might be as well to provide a little background on the project; please forgive me if this is all familiar to you:

Arqiva has the task of delivering the project in close cooperation with the Department of Culture Media and Sport who are funding the capital cost, and the four mobile network operators who have all agreed to occupy the MIP masts and meet all the operating costs of doing so for 20 years.

The aim of the MIP, which required State Aid approval, is to provide mobile phone coverage to 'complete not spots', which are areas, containing premises, with no coverage from any mobile operator at present. We cannot consider areas where there is coverage from at least one operator.

Since we started work on the MIP we have identified two challenges that we have been working with the DCMS and the mobile operators to address.

Firstly, as the project progressed and sites were submitted by Arqiva to the MIP Implementation Panel for approval, it became evident that some not spots already had mobile coverage.

This prompted further work with DCMS, Ofcom and the mobile operators to check the not spot data that underpinned the Network Implementation Plan. This process of verifying the data has been led by Ofcom who will now hold ownership of the not spot data going forward.

The work has produced more detailed data that now more accurately reflects coverage on the ground and is agreed by all four mobile operators. This has been essential work to ensure MIP delivers mobile coverage where it is needed most.

The second challenge relates to transmission. All MIP base stations have to be connected to the mobile operators' networks. This is normally achieved by a line-of-sight dish-to-dish radio transmission link to the operators' nearest visible sites. It is the MIP's remit to establish this initial link.

From that point on it is the mobile operators' task to provide the infrastructure to carry the traffic back into their core networks. The operators are in the process of upgrading the transmission service to all their sites to an 'IP' (Internet Protocol) system. This is a high-capacity system that is necessary to carry the ever-increasing volumes of data generated by mobile customers. The IP networks will give all sites the capability and capacity for them to be upgraded to 3G & 4G as the mobile operators elect to provide these services.

In some, usually the more geographically remote areas, the mobile operators do not yet have the network infrastructure in place to achieve this onward transmission. The operators are now working together at senior level and with BT and other providers to address the challenge of providing connectivity in these areas. Suitable MIP sites will be commissioned wherever the operators can make connectivity available, and where all the other necessary criteria for a MIP site can be met.

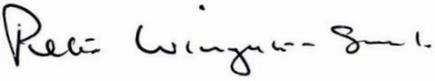
We provided an updated plan for Herefordshire to representatives of Herefordshire Council on 14 August and we will be consulting further with planning officers and local stakeholders as we progress individual sites.

With this letter I am sending a copy of presentation slides similar to the ones we used at the meeting with Mr Norman and included in those are Earth maps showing locations of four proposed MIP sites in your constituency, and a fifth about 300m outside the boundary. Of those sites we currently have potential transmission solutions for all but HER0357.

Also shown are the locations we are not now able to progress, including the one at Fownhope about which I know you have expressed strong views and asked several parliamentary questions. I hope that you will appreciate that the revised not spot data to which we are working, but which we are regrettably not able to share, indicates that there are not enough premises in complete not spots (that is with no coverage from any mobile operator) in that locality to justify a MIP mast.

Our meeting on Tuesday was somewhat rushed. I would be very willing to discuss the MIP with you further or provide further information should that be helpful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Wingate-Saul". The signature is written in a cursive style and is centered within a white rectangular box.

Peter Wingate-Saul FRICS
National Community Relations Manager