



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Julia Lopez MP  
Minister for Data and Digital Infrastructure  
Department for Science, Innovation and Technology  
100 Parliament Street  
SW1A 2BQ

26th March 2024

Dear Julia,

Thank you for your time earlier today. We, and most importantly, our constituents, very much appreciate it.

We know that, after the meeting and our numerous letters and previous meetings, that you are fully aware of the situation.

However, following the meeting, we want to write, with one voice, to make clear the unique problem in Hull and the East Riding.

The companies (KCOM, MS3, Grain and Connexin) have been incapable of reaching agreement for the good of residents. That isn't acceptable for residents of Hull and the East Riding.

For years we've had complaints from residents that there isn't any choice in broadband. While we welcome competition, that should be in a way that is sympathetic with the beautiful communities we have the pleasure to represent.

As Emma said, there is a race among the "alt-nets" to be the 'second' set of infrastructure. This will only continue while KCOM is dragging feet in sharing infrastructure. While we welcome your efforts so far, speed really is of the essence.

Therefore we ask you to put pressure on Ofcom to move forward its market review in Hull and the East Riding. As Dame Diana said, Ofcom seems to have no official problem with KCOM at this point. We need action on this now to force KCOM to open up its network.

While we understand that the Electronic Communications Code was written at a time when getting the nation connected to the internet was the priority, we now need to use the infrastructure we already have.

That means ending the permitted development of broadband poles where infrastructure already exists – be it poles or underground ducts.

While we understand this won't be immediate, the Government must act quickly to prevent our communities being covered in a spiders nest of broadband cables above the surface while ducts serve the same function underneath the streets.



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Finally, we are concerned at the manner in which these poles are being erected, as is clearly echoed throughout the country. You mentioned that you hadn't been made aware of creosote use in these poles.

Graham wrote to Viscount Younger of Leckie Parliamentary-Under-Secretary of State, regarding safety concerns raised with me about creosote on telegraph poles on 27 February and kindly received a response last week. Creosote is classified as a Category 1B carcinogen under the assimilated Classification, Labelling and Packaging of Chemicals Regulation (CLP) (EU 1272/2008), meaning that evidence from animals indicates the potential for carcinogenic effects in humans.

Viscount Younger tells me "there is a rigorous two-stage process to ensure the safety of creosote for professional users and only for the preservation of essential timbers which are in continuous contact with the ground, such as telegraph poles. Active substance approvals are granted for specific periods of time, which is normally 10 years.

"However, due to the classification of creosote as a carcinogen, it was granted a shorter approval period of 5 years, requiring it to be reassessed more frequently in order to ensure that it meets regulatory standards based on the currently available information.

"The existing approval for creosote has an expiry date of 13 February 2025, and it is currently undergoing assessment for renewal of the approval. In addition, the 10 currently authorised creosote products are also subject to reassessment at the product authorisation renewal stage. Applications for renewal must be submitted to the HSE by 28 October 2024.

"Should the risks associated with either the active substance or biocidal products be considered unacceptable based on current evidence at the renewal stage, suitable regulatory action will be taken to mitigate or remove these risks."

As there is such concern over the use of this product in highly residential areas, near schools and other highly populated areas, would it be prudent to reconsider this date and expedite the assessment to ensure that current evidence is considered as soon as is practicable?

We urge you to act quickly on this, and that we can find a path to a resolution for the good of all residents in Hull and the East Riding.

Yours,

Rt. Hon. Graham Stuart MP  
Beverley and Holderness

Emma Hardy MP  
Hull West and Hessle

Rt. Hon. Dame Diana Johnson MP  
Hull North