



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

1st March 2024

Dear Julia,

Thank you for our recent meeting about telegraph poles in Hedon and Beverley. I'm pleased that this is on the Department's radar.

This issue is causing no end of problems locally and, while I recognise that this is a matter particular to Hull and the surrounding areas, and that MS3 and Connexin are perfectly within their rights to erect these poles, I know my constituents would appreciate a definitive answer on the issue of poles.

Aside from the points I have already raised some of the personal concerns raised by many of my constituents are the citing of poles, one writes: "The placement of the pole is virtually on my property. It will affect the value of my home and it will also affect the line of sight backing out of my drive which will be dangerous as we will not be able to see oncoming traffic and pedestrians as well as young children who play on the close.

"The poles are on pavements causing difficulties for people with pushchairs and wheelchairs. They have turned our beautiful neighbourhood into an eyesore with overhead cables everywhere."

The installation of these poles is having a very real detrimental effect on many of my constituents. The hardworking, decent residents of my constituency are rightly very concerned, and I share their frustration.

I ask for your consideration on the below:

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*Working hard for Beverley and Holderness*

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### **1/ Companies erecting poles for broadband when KCOM ducts exist**

The reality is that while KCOM has not been a good steward of its ducts, as recognised by Ofcom, companies like MS3 and Connexin have stoked significant concerns by the fact of erecting these telegraph poles.

While I have written to MS3 and Connexin about going through a formal process to share infrastructure with KCOM, KCOM does not appear to have acted in a swift fashion. Indeed, the Connexin application, which I understand was submitted in December, has not resulted in either acceptance or refusal.

I would be most grateful if you could write to KCOM reminding them of their responsibility to provide access to their ducts.

### **2/ Poles being erected in a careless and haphazard fashion**

While I appreciate that the erection of poles is permitted by the Electronic Communications Code, I am concerned at the fashion in which they are erected. Surely there should be some oversight of this?

While MS3 and Connexin have made improvements to their customer service departments to take this into account, I am continuing to receive numerous emails complaining about the citing of poles.

Is there a code of conduct which they could refer to, and I would be grateful if you could write to MS3 and Connexin to remind them of their responsibilities to cite poles in an appropriate manner.

### **3/ Permitted development of telegraph poles**

This problem is caused by permitted development. Would you consider an urgent review of permitted development with regards to telegraph poles for broadband delivery, particularly in areas with pre-existing ducts?



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There is clearly a need for poles in areas where it would never be practical or economical to dig, but in areas like Hedon and Beverley, where there is pre-existing underground infrastructure, there is a strong argument that poles are an unnecessary and ugly imposition on residents.

#### 4/ Code of conduct

Companies like MS3 and Connexin are subject to a code of conduct in the Electronics Communications Code, but because it is advisory, there is no incentive for companies to put residents first.

Any community engagement is simply by pressure by elected officials and the goodwill of the companies themselves. We've seen the limitations of this in Hedon and Beverley where, after initial engagement, companies are simply overwhelmed by complaints, leading to a sharp drop-off in engagement. The companies themselves operate under the assumption that people will eventually accept the poles in their streets.

Is there a way that you can amend the code to make it mandatory?

This is a continuing and real concern for my constituents and is causing the possibility of real choice in broadband to leave a sour taste in the mouth.

The proper place for broadband cabling is clearly underground.

I would greatly appreciate action by your department to provide some relief to residents of Beverley and Hedon.

Yours ever,

Graham