



Q1 2021



Contents

Foreword

How the Shared Rural Network will connect the countryside for the benefits of all

5G – let's check the facts and set the record straight

Speed Up Britain – full steam ahead to the next stop

Why complaints are important to us

Community Relations - what goes on behind the scenes?





Foreword

by Juliette Wallace, Property Director

Welcome to the first issue of MBNL InSite for 2021, and what a great time to share our latest company updates and industry news, just as Spring has arrived! An even bigger reason to get excited is that we are finally seeing the light at the end of the tunnel with the Government's recently announced roadmap for the country to come out of the lockdown/restrictions.

For more details on the lifting of the lockdown, please see full government guidance:

- "COVID-19 Response – Spring 2021" guidance for England: [gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-spring-2021](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-spring-2021)
- Recent and upcoming changes for all nations in the UK: [gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)

"I wanted to thank every single member of our site provider community for your unwavering support in facilitating access to our telecommunications apparatus throughout this challenging period. Your cooperation has enabled us to keep the UK's mobile networks running to support the new way of life during the COVID-19 pandemic. Digital connectivity has been a lifeline, keeping society functioning this past year."

As the country pours in a huge amount of effort and resources to support communities and individuals, as well as businesses, to get back on track and return to normality, it is vital we continue to keep our mobile networks running to facilitate a smooth recovery. Our priority remains to ensure reliable and high-quality mobile connectivity throughout the UK as well as supporting the effective operations of emergency services such as the NHS and the Emergency Services Network (ESN).

To kick start 2021, a hopeful yet uncertain year, this issue of MBNL InSite is packed with good news and uplifting stories to bring you some joy and reassurance at these unprecedented times, and perhaps an idea or two for what to do during this Easter holiday as well. Check out our articles on the latest developments of the Shared Rural Network and the benefits it will bring to the country, facts about 5G, and information about the Speed Up Britain campaign. I am also delighted to have contributions from my colleagues who specialise in engaging with our site provider community. Liz Glover, MBNL's Site Access Project Manager, explains why you should share your grumbles with us, and Samantha Gray, our Community Relations Manager, reveals what goes on behind the scenes in her work.

I hope you enjoy reading our newsletter.

Have a safe and happy Easter!



How the Shared Rural Network will connect the countryside for the benefits of all

Looking for Easter holiday activity ideas? How about a trip to one of the beautiful National Parks with your family? Nowadays, with digital connectivity becoming an indispensable part of modern life, many of us may worry about the lack of mobile service when visiting some of those “not spots” of poor, patchy or even non-existent mobile coverage in rural areas. Well, this will soon be a thing of the past thanks to the Shared Rural Network (SRN) programme launched in March 2020. Jointly funded by the mobile industry and the government to improve rural mobile coverage throughout the UK, the landmark programme is investing £1 billion in new and existing mobile phone masts. The commitment is to increase all operators’ 4G coverage to at least 90% of UK landmass and their aggregate coverage to 95% by 2026. The aim is to reduce ‘total not spots’ -- the hard-to-reach areas of the UK where there is currently no coverage from any mobile operator. Closing these ‘total not spots’ will give rural consumers coverage in certain areas for the first time. People will also benefit from access to essential digital services such as mobile banking, government and emergency services as well as shopping and other online benefits.

As the UK’s leading mobile operators, EE and Three play a key role in the SRN and have already been making significant progress on extending rural coverage in the first stage of the programme. The 4G network has already been extended to cover a number of areas expected to have high visitor footfall as warmer weather approaches, including National Parks, coastal locations and roads.

EE has upgraded its 4G network in 110 areas to bring improved connectivity to each UK nation. A further 469 upgrades will follow by the end of this year, meaning that a total of 579 areas will benefit from extended EE 4G coverage by the end of 2021 – 333 in England, 132 in Scotland, 76 in Wales, and 38 in Northern Ireland. Three is partnering with O2 and Vodafone to build and share 222 new mobile masts to boost rural coverage across the UK. 124 new sites will be built in Scotland, 33 in Wales, 11 in Northern Ireland, and 54 in England. The new masts are scheduled to be completed by 2024 in line with the SRN agreement.

Philip Jansen, Chief Executive of BT Group, said:

“Reliable connectivity is important wherever you live, work or travel, and we’re committed to improving and adding coverage to even the most remote areas.”

Robert Finnegan, CEO of Three UK, said:

“The Shared Rural Network will have a transformative effect on coverage across the UK and it is great to be working with the rest of the industry to achieve this.”

The SRN is set to benefit both residents in rural areas and visitors alike. So next time when you visit one of the National Parks, you will be able to use handy online tools such as “SaferLakes” for a safer and more enjoyable trip.

For more information on the Shared Rural Network please see: [press release by EE](#), [press release by Three](#), [press release by Mobile UK](#)



5G – let's check the facts and set the record straight



5G has been live in the UK for almost two years now and is available in more and more towns and cities across the country. With its rollout rapidly gaining pace, and coverage continuing to expand, how much do you know about 5G? The mobile industry has engaged in a number of public information initiatives to provide clear and easily digestible information about 5G and the benefits of this new technology.

Mobile UK, the trade association for the UK's mobile network operators, has recently launched the **'#5GCheckTheFacts'** campaign to provide factually accurate information to help alleviate any concerns and improve understanding about 5G. The campaign also highlights the socioeconomic benefits and opportunities 5G will bring to the UK.

Mobile UK's campaign has been built on nationwide research into the public's views on 5G and health, the extent of these concerns and the barriers to understanding. This includes a survey of 2000 adults across the UK, public focus groups and in-depth interviews. The campaign also publishes a series of fact-based messages about 5G on social media, circulates information toolkits to local authorities and provides a wide range of information and resources on Mobile UK's website (www.mobileuk.org) for the general public to access.

The safety of mobile phones and network signals has been extensively researched over the past few decades. To date, no adverse health effects have been established. Mobile phones communicate by transmitting radio waves. Radio waves are a type of electromagnetic radiation but operate on very low levels of power. They are classed as non-ionising, meaning that they do not

carry enough energy to cause harm to our bodies, unlike ionising radiation such as UV-rays and gamma rays. Exposure to radiation emissions is not new in our modern world and many home appliances such as televisions, microwave ovens and WiFi equipment also produce non-ionising radiation.

5G offers much faster data download and upload speeds than existing technologies, a more reliable data connection and the ability for many more devices to access the mobile internet at the same time. With its powerful connectivity, 5G has the potential to deliver a wide range of benefits to enhance our everyday life and provide economic growth right now and into the future, benefiting individuals and businesses alike. The government has a target for the UK to become a world leader in 5G and for the majority of the population to be covered by a 5G signal by 2027. A recent [report by the Centre for Policy Studies \(CPS\)](#) points out that an on-track 5G rollout could provide a £41 billion boost to the UK economy by 2027. As acknowledged by the government, enhanced connectivity is fundamental to the UK's COVID-19 recovery and delivering 5G is one of the key enablers.

Like 2G, 3G, and 4G, 5G is a safe technology and will be a game changer in transforming our lives socially and economically.

See more information on Mobile UK's ['#5GCheckTheFacts'](#) campaign

Check out our [5G Q&A: Answers to the Most Asked Questions](#) brochure

Speed Up Britain – full steam ahead to the next stop

Speed Up Britain, the cross-industry, non-partisan organisation campaigning for better mobile connectivity in every part of the UK, has achieved a significant campaign milestone with the government's Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) having launched a [consultation on potential changes to the 2017 Electronic Communications Code](#) ("the Code").

Speed Up Britain, of which MBNL is a founding member, believes the Code, introduced to regulate the relationship between network operators and site providers, is not working as intended. Disagreements and lengthy legal proceedings over rights designed to facilitate the installation and maintenance of electronic communications networks are slowing down the buildout needed to deliver 4G and 5G technology across the country. The campaign calls for targeted changes to the Code to accelerate the process of enabling connectivity improvements in every part of the UK.

Since its launch in July 2020, Speed Up Britain has delivered a number of targeted activities to raise understanding, obtain input and build trust among campaign stakeholders, and provided a platform for sharing important industry information. For instance, Speed Up Britain has published the government's [updated Best Value Statutory Guidance](#) for local authorities, launched a [report](#) on the importance of a quick 5G rollout to the UK with the Centre for Policy Studies, organised multiple ministerial and industry roundtables, and met with landowner representative groups, national and local leaders from across the UK. The network of industry supporters has also been growing, further bolstering the campaign's reach.

Matt Warman, Minister for Digital Infrastructure, said: "The government is committed to ensuring that the Code is fit for purpose in order to deliver our digital connectivity targets. The potential economic and social benefits of fast and reliable connectivity can only be realised if we have confidence in the effectiveness of the underpinning legislation."

The Rt Hon Patricia Hewitt, Speed Up Britain's Campaign Chair, said: "Speed Up Britain welcomes this consultation on the Code and the government's commitment to improving connectivity in the UK. The Code needs urgent legislative reform to deliver best-in-class connectivity across Britain for the benefit of everyone – industry, landowners, government, and wider society. Small changes to the Code could unlock billions of pounds in our economy, drive the UK's COVID-19 recovery, and make a real difference to the public, businesses, and local authorities regionally."

The announcement of the Code consultation marks a new chapter in Speed Up Britain's journey. The campaign aims to create an open and constructive environment for industry, landowners and their representatives to come together to resolve some of the problems that have appeared in the past, to consult and agree on actions and behaviours to improve relationships, and to move forward in a collaborative way. MBNL supports the aims of Speed Up Britain and hopes that by working with landowners and their representatives, Code agreements can be reached quickly between all parties without requiring recourse to legal proceedings. This will ultimately help to deliver enhanced mobile connectivity critical for the UK's COVID-19 recovery and future growth more efficiently.



For more information on the Code consultation please see [Speed Up Britain's press release](#), [Speed Up Britain's official website](#)



Why complaints are important to us

by Liz Glover, Site Access Project Manager



They say, “no news is good news” and people often make assumptions that if things are quiet, everything is ticking along nicely. But this is not necessarily the case in the site access arena for our industry: we take on board and value feedback from our site providers as this helps us to identify and work on areas where we can improve. This is indeed the core of customer service and to MBNL, our site providers are our most important customers.

As our site providers, you are the foundation for helping us to keep EE and Three’s customers connected. For me, one of the most rewarding learnings from the lockdowns has been that people across the country can work from home, and it is our industry, and our collective effort, which has facilitated that.

My role at MBNL gives me the privilege of liaising with our site providers and their agents to develop solutions to enable us to gain access to our equipment whilst executing our access rights for planned maintenance purposes, critical repair and also upgrade works, at the same time taking into careful consideration the needs of the site provider who may or may not need to facilitate us by opening the door. It is a delicate balance and requires very good customer service skills.

Not surprisingly, I am always fascinated by what constitutes excellent customer service, and have enjoyed reading Gavin Scott’s book, “**Finding Gold Dust: How to Create Exceptional Customer Experiences**”. At MBNL we have adopted quite a lot of Scott’s recommendations, and take enhancing our relationships with site providers as a priority. We want to walk in our landlords’ shoes and take the time to understand issues from their perspective. We completely agree with Gavin Scott when he says,

“You can’t underestimate the value of making that human-to-human connection.”

My team and I welcome feedback from our site providers, good or bad, because it gives us critical information to enable us to better understand any issues, where improvements can be made, and importantly to ensure the processes in place for access are working as they should.

My experience in customer service over the past 30 years has taught me that a chance conversation about a relatively small, easy to resolve matter can spiral into effective change: change how we do things for the better. We want to know about the needs and wants of our site providers so we can weigh these up with what we are trying to achieve. We are committed to listening to our site providers and taking their comments seriously. As in life, there is nearly always room to improve our relationship to enable better communications, which in turn can facilitate access more efficiently in the future. Scott tells us “think of it [the complaint] as an opportunity”, “learn how you can help a customer...you’ll see a more positive resolution to the situation”.

So, please be assured, we very much want to hear from you with opportunities for improvement. So please send your comments, complaints and more to site.access@mbnl.co.uk because we can’t help or change if we don’t know.

“Finding Gold Dust – How to Create Exceptional Customer Experiences” by Gavin Scott 2020, is independently published and available on Amazon.



Community Relations - what goes on behind the scenes?

by Samantha Gray, Community Relations Manager

At MBNL we are proud of the services we provide with the knowledge that they benefit the lives of so many people in the UK. But maintaining and improving our infrastructure and services and keeping local communities happy at the same time is not always easy.

Local communities often have concerns about the visual impact of our sites and the perceived health risks or disturbances that our operations might have. We have tens of thousands of neighbours around our sites, including site providers and owners. Our neighbours elect the councillors who may decide on our planning applications and they also elect their Members of Parliament who influence decisions on public policy, regulation and telecommunications and broadcasting planning. So, working closely with these groups can significantly assist our operations and business performance, and ultimately EE and Three's service quality for their customers.

Building a trusting relationship with communities takes time, but it can be destroyed in an instant by an act of thoughtlessness or by not communicating effectively. Our neighbours are also our eyes and ears around many of our remote sites, so having a strong relationship can be a powerful tool to help us tackle any problems that might arise. Our Community Relations team are here to help us create and manage those relationships.

As site providers, we recognise that you may find yourself being approached by neighbours or members of the community to ask questions about the sites on your land and it is important that we can support you in answering them. Whether that is by sharing contact details for MBNL, or by providing you with information you can share, we want to help.

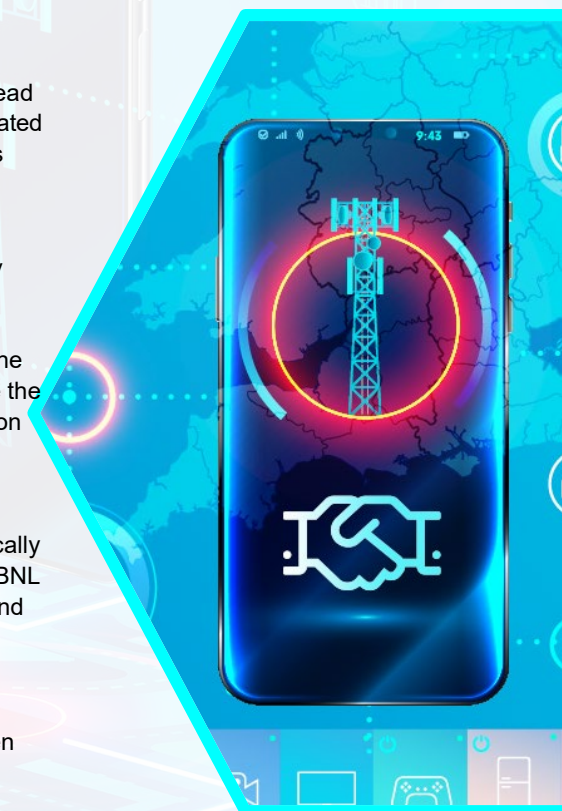
Meet Sam, our Community Relations Manager

Samantha Gray is our Community Relations Manager. Sam works hard to ensure we engage appropriately with local communities ahead of new projects and is also available to manage any community-related issues and complaints that may arise around existing sites, such as equipment noise, untidy sites, light pollution or concerns about the safety of transmissions or interference.

Most recently Sam was supporting a community that were unhappy with the proposed location of a temporary mast structure. On this occasion MBNL were themselves tenants on a mast provided by a third party. Due to an extensive new housing scheme being built, the mast needed to be removed and therefore MBNL needed to vacate the mast. Despite substantial efforts to identify a new permanent location for a new mast, we had not secured planning consent which meant that in order to continue providing critical coverage in the area for consumers, businesses and the Emergency Services, a temporary mast was required. By working with the Community Council, the locally elected Councillors, our site providers, and the local community, MBNL were able to secure a solution to balance the community's needs and maintaining digital connectivity in the area.

How to get in touch

If you have any issues that you would like to make me aware of then please get in touch by email: community.relations@mbnl.co.uk



Have a safe and happy Easter!

