



Department for  
Science, Innovation  
& Technology

Ministerial Support Team  
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2 February 2026

Mr Phil Burgess  
[clerk@eastdeanfriston-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@eastdeanfriston-pc.gov.uk)

Our Ref: TO2026-00015806-PS

Dear Mr Burgess,

Thank you for your correspondence of 5 January regarding connectivity in East Dean and Friston area. I am replying as a member of the Ministerial Support Team.

We recognise that reliable broadband underpins all aspects of modern life, including access to and modernisation of essential services, such as education and healthcare. This is why the government remains committed to delivering nationwide (99%) gigabit coverage, which we now expect to be achieved by 2032.

Project Gigabit is the government's programme to deliver gigabit-capable broadband to UK premises that are not included in suppliers' commercial plans.

As you may be aware, as part of Project Gigabit, CityFibre is delivering a contract across East and West Sussex. However, BDUK and CityFibre are currently working together to redesign the scope of their contracts to avoid overlap with other suppliers' commercial rollout ('overbuild') and to ensure best use of public funding. Because this redesign is still in progress, we cannot yet confirm the revised coverage plans from the contract. Once the review is complete, we will have a clearer understanding of which premises remain in scope and the expected delivery schedule. In the meantime, we recommend visiting CityFibre's website and registering for updates on availability: <https://www.cityfibre.com>. This will ensure you receive the latest information directly from the supplier.

Ofcom's broadband checker suggests that residents in the BN20 0HR area may already have access to superfast (30 Mbps or faster) fixed line connections. Alternatively, connectivity may be available through fixed wireless access (FWA). Your constituents can check what is available to them through Ofcom's broadband checker: <https://checker.ofcom.org.uk/> and directly via supplier websites (for example EE and Vodafone for FWA).

As you are aware, the technology underpinning the landline network, the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN), is being upgraded to digital Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP). The PSTN is a privately-owned telecoms network and the decision to upgrade it to VoIP was taken by the telecoms industry back in 2017. The industry's decision to upgrade the PSTN is due to necessity, as the network is increasingly unreliable and prone to failure. Some telecoms companies are finding it difficult to source certain spare parts required to maintain or repair connections as the parts are no longer made. The network is being held together by recycling spare parts.

The number of major incidents on the PSTN (affecting 500 or more customers) has been increasing. In 2024, there was a 45% increase compared to the previous year. In 2024/25 there were over 2,600 major incidents on the PSTN. According to Ofcom's Connected Nations report 2025, the number of telecoms resilience incidents is now declining sharply as the PSTN is being closed. The migration is therefore necessary to ensure a more resilient and modern communications system. Germany, Japan, Estonia, and The Netherlands have already switched off their PSTN. France and Australia will do so soon.

Fewer than 4.2 million PSTN lines remain operational. This includes residential lines, business lines, and critical national infrastructure lines. As of October 2025, fewer than one fifth of residential landline connections continue to use legacy Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) systems.

The UK government has acted to ensure consumers are protected during the upgrade. Major communication providers and network operators signed voluntary charters in December 2023 and March 2024, ensuring their commitment to protect vulnerable consumers and critical national infrastructure during the PSTN migration to VoIP. To enhance protections for vulnerable customers, the government secured new commitments from the telecoms industry in November 2024, including further safeguards set out in the non-voluntary migrations checklist and the Critical National Infrastructure Charter. These agreements and more information can be found at the following address:

[www.gov.uk/government/collections/public-switch-telephone-network-pstn](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/public-switch-telephone-network-pstn).

Leaving vulnerable customers on a failing PSTN is a growing risk. The safeguards secured by government in the checklist seek to ensure vulnerable customers are protected during the migration.

These safeguards include:

- timely and repeated communications with customers, using multiple methods, in advance of any proposed migration;
- identifying vulnerable people through signing data sharing agreements;
- where a customer is identified as being in need of additional support, offering them an engineer visit for free; and,
- ensuring that customers that have been identified as vulnerable, are provided with a battery back-up solution that provides over one hour of access to emergency services in the event of a power outage. Many providers are going beyond these safeguards, including batteries that last 4-7 hours.

In order to function correctly, VoIP requires a minimum connection speed of just 0.5 Mbps, and, for current landline-only customers it will be possible to order a VoIP landline without purchasing a general internet connection.

The government and industry are appealing directly to telecare users and their support networks to self-identify to their communication provider to ensure that they are provided with additional support when their landlines are migrated from the PSTN. Self-identification by vulnerable customers and their support networks is in addition to the extensive safeguards implemented by communication providers designed to accurately identify these individuals listed above.

I urge any constituent that is concerned about what the PSTN migration means for them, particularly if they identify as vulnerable (for any reason, including being landline-



dependent and having age related vulnerabilities), to contact their communication provider and let them know. Communication providers can then provide them with additional support when their landline is upgraded.

Turning to your concerns regarding poor mobile signal, communities such as East Dean and Friston should rightly expect to have the connectivity they need to participate in the modern digital economy. This is why it is the government's ambition that all populated areas have access to higher quality mobile coverage by 2030, provided by the latest network technology called standalone 5G. This is being delivered through commercial investment by the three mobile operators.

VodafoneThree has committed to invest £11 billion to upgrade their joint networks, as a result of the merger between Vodafone UK and Three UK. Similar significant investment plans are underway by BT/EE and Virgin Media O2, reinforcing the sector's collective push to deliver widespread high-quality connectivity. BT/EE have publicly announced that they share the same 2030 ambition as the government.

These commitments are positive, and government is working with network operators to ensure that there is continued investment that translates into benefits for communities such as East Dean and Friston. If indoor coverage is an issue for residents of the Parish, Ofcom have a webpage which suggests ways to improve indoor coverage in consumers' homes, which is available at [Improving your indoor coverage](#).

In relation to your concerns about poor mobile coverage and safety, you may also wish to note, if your current mobile network is unavailable, all emergency 999 calls made from mobile phones should automatically switch to an alternative available network. This ensures that even if your mobile network is down or has poor signal, your emergency call can still go through by using another available network.

Ofcom is responsible for the setting, monitoring and enforcement of regulatory obligations on the operators, this includes obligations set out in the General Conditions of Entitlement (made under the Communications Act 2003) in relation to ensuring the continuity of access to the 999 and the emergency services.

Thank you again for your correspondence.

Yours sincerely,

**Ministerial Support Team**