

## Your response

Question	Your response
<p>Do you have any comments on our proposals?</p>	<p>Confidential? N</p> <p>Your work in 2021 potentially improved life for boaters and boat residents substantially. I refer to the proposed changes in mobile phone repeaters. <a href="https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0032/227579/statement-mobile-phone-repeaters.pdf">https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0032/227579/statement-mobile-phone-repeaters.pdf</a></p> <p>a) However, there is no clarity on what signal boosting (excepting passive) may be used inside boats.</p> <p>b) As you will, or should, be aware, there has been an increase in the use of boats for residential purposes, albeit that many of these vessels also cruise. These are typically on the inland waterway system of the UK (navigable rivers and canals). They are usually at the lowest point in any terrain and sometimes rural, points at which both reception and mast coverage can be at their worst.</p> <p>c) The large use of narrowboats within this community adds to the issue – (They are effectively rectangular mild steel tubes that act like a Faraday cage). The ambiguity in the current regulations makes working from home, at best, a marginal option on these vessels.</p> <p>d) UK rural mobile phone (and internet) signal networks are far from the best in Europe. Our rural fixed broadband network far from extensive: (here it is copper based, contention is substantial, the cost of running / extending to a boat veers beyond prohibitive).</p>

e) To add to the above issues, many of the mooring sites (rural and metropolitan) are beautiful and become tourist hotspots on fair weekends and in summer. There is nothing wrong with this per se (the converse may apply, it's good that people can enjoy our countryside and heritage). However it does mean that mobile phone signal contention rises. Where hotspots exist they are typically of low bandwidth and highly contended in peak periods. With narrowboats being typically circa 20m long and of low height, getting outside the range of these is not difficult. Getting a signal inside these vessels is sometimes impossible.

f) For most boat dwellers, mobile telephony (and internet) is a key issue. Forum activity on it is substantial, driven by the problems highlighted above.

g) It is fairly common for boat dwellers to switch providers. This is based as much on QoS as price. If a provider installs a new mast, improves the transmission technology or adds a spectrum, people will change.

h) Boats with multiple occupants will often have multiple providers if it is possible to get more than one signal of reasonable quality at the home mooring. This on the basis that they are single points of failure in people's ability to communicate and coverage by individual providers is patchy over the canal and river systems.

i) The telephony environment and requirement of inland waterways and coastal ones is different and there are different limitations and fail points (e.g., topography, buildings, contention, vegetation). The problems are also differing on different hull and superstructure types (i.e. steel, GRP, aluminium), which have differing earthing and shielding issues. Ofcom simplistically lumps these together as 'boats'.

j) I have seen few improvements in 10+ years in what I can achieve with mobile telephone communications. As bandwidth has improved so have the demands on it for normal personal and business use. I am still forced to go outside at times in bad weather or at night to conduct a conversation. What was considered a 'big' file a decade ago now isn't. I was hoping that the results of the consultation of last year might provide some relief. I doubt it will. I suspect that 'boats' will be excluded from the solutions again.

k) Whilst the proposed move to legalize the installation of multiple provider signal boosters makes the installation of one more financially viable, the previous prohibitions on 'boats' doubtlessly applies.

l) Currently I know that I am barred from installing a vehicular system. It is still unclear whether I can install one of the systems that are available for home use. Or whether Ofcom has disenfranchised me and other inland waterway boat dwellers from the communications of this decade. And with that the normal expectations therein of employers, government agencies, friends and family, of how I should be able to communicate.

m) I would like Ofcom's schedule of work for 2022/23 to provide a specific and clear set of guidelines on mobile phone repeaters, that provide clarity, in so doing, removing its current discrimination against the boat dwelling and cruising communities.

Should it need to provide different solutions for coastal and deep water vessels and inland waterway ones, that might be logical. Should there be specific requirements for differing hull types, for technical reasons, that might also be reasonable. What is not reasonable is the current status quo.