

Proposal to apply Code powers to Westnetworks Innovations Limited

Response from: James Richards

Until recently I was a director of a Fixed Wireless Broadband (FWB) company operating in the same regions as WestNetworks Innovations (WNI) now operate. My company ceased trading and sold its assets and customers to WNI.

One of the reasons that I ceased trading as a FWB provider was the huge costs of expanding our network to cover more hard-to-reach customers. Our wireless network footprint encompassed many small hamlets and small villages but due to the limitations of FWB available frequencies many more physical aerials were needed and it was financially impossible to expand to the many rural areas that are crying out for broadband – too many line-of-sight restrictions/obstructions. The planning costs for a small mast that might provide coverage for 10 customers and subsequent rental cost for tiny amounts of land are/were exorbitant. Land holders' expectations are such that a small mast could command >£4000/year in rental costs; servicing 10 customers from such an installation is a non-starter, this on top of expensive and long planning processes.

Innovative companies like WNI, need access to affordable infrastructure. Smaller broadband providers, who seek to provide connections where the BIG players will not, can only compete if access is made available through sharing or creation of new infrastructure that is not hampered by excess planning time/costs and unreasonable expectations for rental values. Code powers would enable rapid expansion of WNI into areas that have no central or local planning for BDUK rollout.