Ensuring your connected world is always within reach: Building awareness and understanding of the SRN Programme

February 2024

RURAL SERVICES NETWORK

Welcome to the journey of innovation and connectivity

Our purpose is to design, build, and deploy shared digital infrastructure. We enable our customers across the UK to provide seamless connectivity by bringing together land, property, infrastructure and technology for positive change. This is the story of our commitment to transforming how we enable communications and data services through sustainable and considerate digital infrastructure.

Cornerstone is building 450 sites as part of the Government's Shared Rural Network (SRN) program, bringing coverage to millions of people living and working in hard-to-reach areas

We have a strong track record in successful planning applications on behalf of our Customers VMO2 and Vodafone.

Through close collaboration with local communities, planners, councils and the national parks, we have been able to meet our customers' needs while respecting the environment, areas of outstanding beauty and its flora and fauna.

SRN: Importance for national roll out and development

- Largest investment programmes in our history of digital connectivity for rural communities

- Will provide coverage to 280,000 more premises and 16,000km of the UK's roads

- Improve coverage to 79% in Areas of Natural Beauty and 74% of National Parks benefitting millions of visitors

- Proved benefits and success to rural communities, in partnership with local planning councils and national parks, most recently with Carmarthenshire Council and National Park In Snowdonia

- Infrastructure is a foundational enabler for many things we take for granted in everyday life

Benefits of SRN

REDUCING RURAL CRIME

Connected cameras could monitor fly-tipping areas.

IMPROVING PUBLIC SAFETY

Ensuring emergency services can be contacted whenever and wherever an emergency happens.

DRIVING ECONOMIC GROWTH

Business owners need to be able to contact their customers and suppliers. Connectivity will stimulate job opportunities in rural areas.

SUPPORTING RURAL WORK

From safe working practices that will minimise agricultural accidents to monitoring farm animals.

ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING

Remote sensors and IOT to monitor the ecosystem in very remote areas.

STAYING CONNECTED DURING ADVERSE WEATHER

SUPPORTING TOURISM

Complexities of SRN

- Complex title issues

- Physicality of a site

- Juxtaposition against the ethos of other organisations e.g National Trust and AONB partnerships objecting

- Impacts of topography on radio propagation or in getting line of sight for backhaul

- Build periods

- ECC – delays in implementation

Complexities of SRN

- Unresponsive case officers mid-determination of the planning application

- Excessive determination periods

- Local Authorities can sometimes not give enough weight to the social and economic benefits of connectivity as a counterbalance to perceived harm

- Lack of resource in LPA's

- Local objections

- Lack of awareness of the benefits for rural areas

Cornerstone recognises the invaluable role Local Authorities play in shaping the future of UK mobile connectivity

As we transition into an era dominated by 5G and other advanced technologies, our collaboration with Local Authorities is more critical than ever.

IP & ownership
of Cornerstone

Local Authorities as key enablers

Digital Connectivity Forum

Explaining the benefits to the public helps to mitigate concerns

Benefits of a local digital strategy is evident

Clear definition of stakeholder roles and responsibilities is required

The role of the Digital Champion is essential

Communication between levels of Government could be improved

There is a need to improve understanding, through education, within Local Authorities
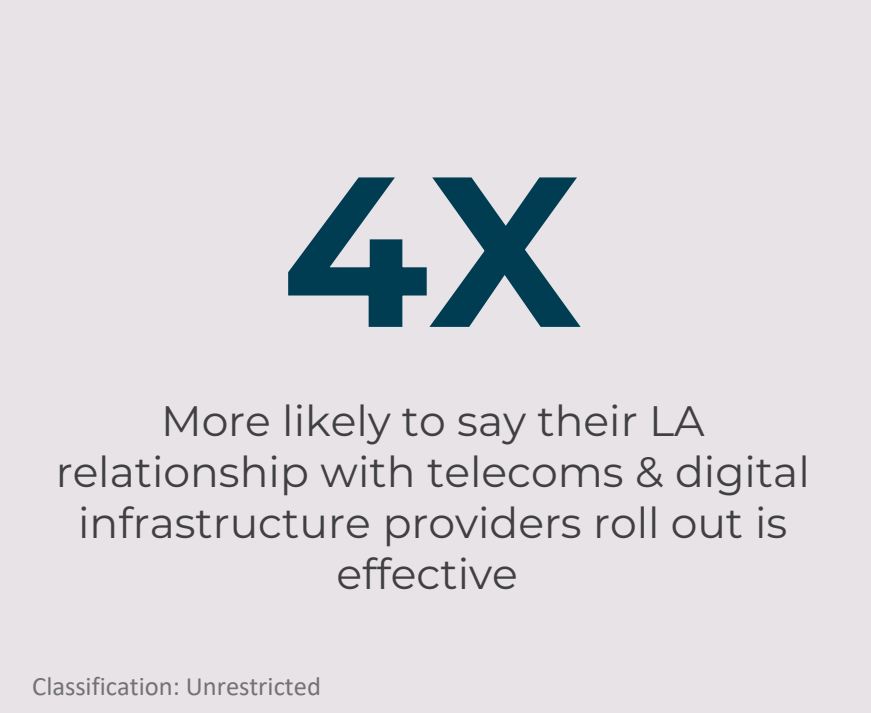
Communications still have room for improvement between industry and Local Authorities

3X

More likely to agree promoting and improving **digital connectivity** is a priority for the local area

4X

More likely to say their LA relationship with telecoms & digital infrastructure providers roll out is effective

4X

More likely to say their LA is doing enough to smooth the way for rollout of connectivity infrastructure services in the local area

North Yorkshire

Local Authorities can work with the industry and consider the wider benefits of mobile connectivity- levelling up and giving rural communities the same opportunities as the urban areas.

A mast recently proposed in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty with strict planning laws, a council officer recommended the application was refused to preserve the "scenic beauty".

Councillors however, assessed the recommendation against the merits of supporting telecoms rollout, and the positive impact on residents and businesses, and decided to support the mast proposal.

Councillors said the plans should be approved "as a matter of principle" so rural communities could receive the same services as urban ones.

"Here are people who are unable to work from home, they can't get any form of communication, that has an impact on running businesses. It's not for townies to impose rules and restrictions on rural communities that makes them impossible to be viable. The plans are to be welcomed."

"Residents and businesses of rural North Yorkshire have an absolute expectation to receive the same service as the rest of this nation. Communications are a necessity for the safety of the public and viability of farming and rural businesses."

Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority

Full planning permission for the installation of a 25-metre-high lattice tower, for the Shared Rural Network project on behalf of Cornerstone.

- Supporting 6 x antennas

- 4 x Transmission dishes

- 2 x Equipment cabinets

- 1 x Meter cabinet and ancillary development, including a generator, associated fuel tank and a fenced compound

cornerstone

Planning approved

The PC considered that the lack of effective mobile coverage in the parish was impacting people's lives:

- Safety

- Increasing need for access to health services

- Smart meters

- National Parks electric vehicle charging scheme

- Contactless payment on the bus (a feature of the governments "Bus Back Better" strategy)

- Tourism

"As the first generation of "digital natives" grow up they are less likely to want to visit, live in and bring up families in areas where they are not able to use mobile – potentially further increasing the average age of an already aging demographic."

cornerstone

Our ask of you

Local authorities are critical to the roll-out of digital infrastructure across the UK. We are lobbying for:

- Simpler planning regime
- Additional resources for the roll-out of digital infrastructure
- Local authorities as enablers of digital connectivity
- More Digital Champions

SRN is about more than just connectivity. It's about unlocking new horizons for communities and businesses, paving the way for innovation, growth, and prosperity.

Thank you
Let's stay connected