



National Parks England

And

Mobile Operators Association

Joint Accord

This Joint Accord is between National Parks Englandⁱ and the Mobile Operators Associationⁱⁱ. It has been developed to complement the Code of Best Practice on Mobile Phone Network Development (2013)ⁱⁱⁱ, recognising the special nature of the National Parks as sensitive environments that seek to support thriving communities.

Both parties to this Accord recognise that a modern telecommunications infrastructure is vital for a modern economy and society; the installation and maintenance of which needs to respect the environment, particularly in National Parks given their environmental sensitivity. To this end we seek to achieve the following objectives:

- Help communities living in our National Parks to benefit from consistent high quality connectivity;
- Protect the special qualities of the National Parks by minimising any adverse environmental impacts ; and
- Work proactively and pragmatically in order to achieve these aims.

We recognise the importance of the spatial planning process for adopting a strategic approach that can assist in mediating different objectives and finding solutions.

National Parks as sensitive environments that seek to support thriving communities

- The National Parks are iconic landscapes, rich in wildlife and cultural heritage. They have been recognised as such by Parliament and successive Governments.
- The Statutory purposes of National Parks are to conserve and enhance the landscape, wildlife and cultural heritage of their areas and to promote understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Parks by the public. In furthering these, the National Park Authorities seek to foster the social and economic well being of their local communities.

- The sensitivity of, and need to protect, the National Parks has been recognised in Government planning policy through the National Planning Policy Framework and the National Parks and Broads Circular.
- National Parks England has a shared Vision for National Parks with the Government that sees the National Parks as places where there are thriving, working landscapes, where sustainable development can be seen in action and where the communities of the Parks take an active part in decisions about their future. As part of this National Park Authorities are keen to facilitate appropriate development of mobile network infrastructure, as part of the package of delivering connectivity.
- The benefits of modern communications technology are likely to be greater in National Parks than other rural locations because of their high volume of tourists (approximately 90m visitors a year in England) in addition to the needs of their resident population.

A range of economic factors can affect investment decisions for new infrastructure

- The availability of land on viable commercial terms.
- The capital cost of building sites.
- The annual running costs of a site, and the revenue likely to be generated from the traffic the site supports.
- The provision/availability of an electricity supply to the site.
- The provision of a link into the main telephone/broadband network (known as 'backhaul').

These factors affect investment decisions in all areas, but can be particularly challenging in rural areas, especially upland areas, where the provision of an electricity supply and backhaul connections may not readily be available, and where low population density means little revenue will be generated to cover the capital expenditure and on-going operating costs of a site.

Constraints on the practical functioning of the network

- In order for mobile networks to function, they need a network of base stations ('masts') to provide sufficient radio coverage in any geographical area to handle customer voice, text, or data. Hence if there are no base stations in a particular area, there will be no mobile signal.
- Mobile base stations and devices use radio waves, similar to those used by broadcast radio or TV channels. These radio waves travel in straight lines and are affected by obstructions that can alter the radio signal.
- Coverage in some areas is therefore limited because of terrain or the built environment. In all areas, the quality of indoor signal coverage will also be affected by the type of building in which the device is being used: for example, a stone building may have poorer indoor coverage than a brick-built one, because it is harder for radio waves to penetrate stone.

These issues are explained in more detail in the Code of Best Practice on Mobile Phone Network Development (2013)^{iv} and in the MOA's publication, 'Mobile Networks: What They Are And How They Work'^v, which has been produced to complement the Code.

To aid the achievement of our shared objectives:

- The National Park Authorities and Mobile Operators will identify key link people for the purposes of constructive early dialogue over operators' plans for new site rollout
- The operators will engage with the Park Authority at an early stage if there is a major phase of new site rollout in the area, and will undertake pre-application discussion with the Park Authority, in line with the Code of Best Practice on Mobile Network Development.
- The operators will provide appropriate technical information to assist National Park Authorities to identify potential new sites and to demonstrate that an acceptable environmental and network coverage location has been located.
- The operators' acquisition agents/planning consultants will initiate appropriate pre-application discussions with the relevant National Park Authority prior to the submission of any application for new telecommunications sites within the National Parks in order to explore acceptable environmental and network solutions, in line with the Code of Best Practice on Mobile Network Development^{vi}.
- As part of any pre-application discussions, the National Park Authorities will aim to provide greater certainty of timescales for decision-making on planning applications, for example through the use of Planning Performance Agreements.
- Options to minimise adverse landscape effects in National Parks should include consideration of mast-sharing, site-sharing, and any other technical advances where this would provide the required coverage and represent an acceptable environmental solution.
- The National Park Authority and Operators will be open to consideration of alternative designs, innovative proposals and network solutions, or mitigation measures to facilitate network deployment in an environmentally sensitive manner.
- Both parties will seek to find solutions in recognition of the fact that many of the harder to reach rural areas are, as well as being environmentally sensitive, also less attractive to invest in financially.
- The National Park Authorities and Operators will discuss from time to time, any plans or aspirations to remove redundant infrastructure on the basis that it no longer has a viable use.
- National Parks England and the MOA will work together to share and promote good practice in design solutions, including through discussions with Government on the Code of Best Practice on Mobile Network Development^{vii}.

- To ensure that the objectives of this Accord are achieved, the signatories will meet from time to time, at least once a year to monitor progress.

Chair of National Parks England, Jim Bailey



Executive Director of Mobile Operators Association, John Cooke



ⁱ Members of the Mobile Operators Association are: EE (the company that runs EE, Orange and T-Mobile); O2; Three; and Vodafone

ⁱⁱ Members of National Parks England are: Broads Authority, Dartmoor, Exmoor, Lake District, New Forest, North York Moors, Northumberland, Peak District, South Downs and Yorkshire Dales National Park Authorities

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http://www.mobilemastinfo.com/images/stories/2013_Code_of_best_practice/Code_of_Best_Practice_on_Mobile_Network_Development_-_Published_24-07-2013.pdf

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http://www.mobilemastinfo.com/images/stories/2013_Code_of_best_practice/Code_of_Best_Practice_on_Mobile_Network_Development_-_Published_24-07-2013.pdf

^v <http://www.mobilemastinfo.com/mobile-networks-what-they-are-and-how-they-work/jargon-buster.html>

^{vi}

http://www.mobilemastinfo.com/images/stories/2013_Code_of_best_practice/Code_of_Best_Practice_on_Mobile_Network_Development_-_Published_24-07-2013.pdf

^{vii} Ibid