



Joint Accord

Home Office and National Parks England

25 May 2016

This Joint Accord is between the Home Office and National Parks England. It has been developed in recognition of the need for critical national infrastructure and commercial telecommunications services within National Parks, whilst recognising the special nature of the Parks as sensitive environments seeking to support sustainable, thriving communities.

Both parties to this Accord recognise that a resilient, cost effective, emergency services mobile communications system, providing a secure and reliable service to users, is an essential component of critical national infrastructure; the installation of which must respect the environment, in particular, within the National Parks with their enhanced environmental sensitivities. To this end, we seek to achieve the following objectives:

- Collaborate in the roll-out of the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme so that users, visitors and those residents living in our National Parks will benefit from the Emergency Services Network and any commercial mobile services which result.

- 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 capable of assisting in mediating differing objectives and finding solutions.

National Parks as sensitive environments which 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 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 which 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 Parks Authorities are

keen to facilitate appropriate development of mobile network infrastructure as part of a 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 per annum in England,) in addition to the needs of their resident population.

A range of factors affect the decision for new infrastructure

- The availability of land on viable commercial terms
- The capital cost, funded from the public purse, of building sites.
- The annual costs of a site.
- The commercial viability of a site, dictating the decision by Mobile Phone Operators of whether to open the site for commercial use in addition to Emergency Service use.
- The provision / availability of an electricity supply to the site.
- The site as part of a secure and resilient network.
- The provision of a link into the main telephone / broadband network, (known as 'backhaul.')
- Appropriate coverage for Emergency Services on roads, in the air and in areas agreed between the Home Office and end-users.

These factors affect investment decisions in all areas but can be particularly challenging in rural locations, especially upland areas, where the provision of an electricity supply and backhaul connections may not readily be available and, from a commercial perspective, where low population density means comparatively little revenue will be generated.

Constraints on the practical functioning of a 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) and in the MOA's publication, 'Mobile Networks: What They Are And How They Work,' which has been produced to complement the Code.

To aid the achievement of our shared objectives:

- The National Park Authorities and the Home Office will identify key link people for the purposes of constructive early dialogue over operators' plans for new site rollout
- The Home Office and its Delivery Partners 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 Home Office and its Delivery Partners 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 Home Office and its Delivery Partners 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.
- 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.

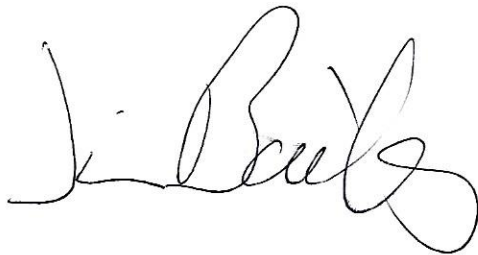
- The National Park Authorities and Operators will discuss from time to time, any plans or aspirations to remove redundant infrastructure on the basis that it no longer has a viable use.
- National Parks England and the Home Office will work together to share and promote good practice in design solutions.
- National Parks England and the Home Office agree to meet periodically in order to track progress across the National Parks and potentially raise any issues or concerns regarding the implementation of this Accord and its objectives.

Signatories:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike Penning', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rt. Hon Mike Penning MP

Minister of State for Policing, Fire, Criminal Justice and Victims, Home Office

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jim Bailey', with a large, looping flourish at the end.

Mr Jim Bailey

Chair, National Parks England