



Home Office

Kit Malthouse MP
Minister of State for Crime and Policing
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF
www.gov.uk/home-office

Janet Finch- Saunders MS
The Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

DECS Reference: MIN/0160307/21
Your Reference: MJ/JF0518

170721

Thank you for your letter of 24 June to the Minister for Digital Infrastructure about mobile phone masts being built in your area by the Home Office's Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP). Your letter has been transferred to the Home Office and I am replying as the Minister of State for Crime and Policing.

This programme is building a new Emergency Services Network (ESN) to replace the current Airwave network used by the Emergency Services. The ESN network is being built by EE, by upgrading their existing network. This includes building approximately 700 additional 4G radio masts across this country, as part of their contractual obligations to ensure coverage on 218,000km of major and minor roads.

In addition to the masts built by EE, the Home Office is building a further 292 masts in the most remote and rural areas of Britain. This set of masts is referred to as 'Extended Area Services' (EAS) within ESN.

We are striving to deliver the EAS component of ESN for emergency services' use, as quickly as possible. 4G commercial mobile phone coverage will generally be available to EE customers as soon as these masts are activated for ESN.

The EAS masts will also be made available to the Shared Rural Network (SRN) which is being delivered by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). SRN is a partnership between Government and industry to increase mobile coverage to 95% of the UK landmass by the end of the programme. Through SRN, the Government will fund upgrades to the Home Office EAS sites and enable Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) to provide commercial mobile coverage from these sites wherever possible, although we recognise that, in some cases, upgrades may not be possible due to technical, financial or other reasons.

Gaining the relevant planning permissions (initial or upgraded) is obviously key to the success of the EAS mast building programme. Any help that can be provided by MS's at the local level to achieve this would be greatly appreciated and will help in providing mobile coverage for local residents.

There are several stages to making a mast operational. The key stages are:

- 1) building the structure (this is known as 'passive build');
- 2) connecting the mast to the network, either by a cable link or (on occasions) via a satellite connection;
- 3) activating the mast for operational use – including emergency services use and generally enabling EE commercial coverage;
- 4) upgrading the site for other MNOs to provide commercial coverage on other networks (as part of the SRN programme, rather than ESMCP).

The contract for connecting all 292 EAS masts to the network (stage 2) has not yet been awarded to a supplier. We expect this contract to be awarded in Autumn 2021. We do need to follow Government procurement processes fully in this award, so I regret we are unable to accelerate this. Even after the award of this contract, we will still need to complete the physical work to connect the mast to the network and, separately, activate the mast. There can be a delay of a number of months in activating the mast due to the physical installation of fibre. We cannot therefore give firm dates for the final activation of masts at this stage.

There are currently five sites in Aberconwy which are at different stages of the build process. The table below provides an update on their current progress:

Site ID	Site Address	Planning Status	Legal Access	Passive Build Complete	Site Live (Estimated)
EAS0051	Land at Tyddyn Gethin Penmachno Betws Y Coed Conwy LL24 OPS	Q4 2021	Q4 2021	Q1 2022	Q2 2023
EAS0056	Llyn Conwy Treatment Works adjacent to B4407 near Blaen y Coed Ysbyty Ifan C, LL24 0NU	Complete	Complete	Q2 2021	Q3 2022
EAS0513	Unnamed Road, Beyws-y-Coed LL24 0RG	Complete	Q3 2021	Q4 2021	Q4 2022
EAS0552	Land at Bryn Tyrch Uchaf, Capel Curig, Conwy, LL24 0EH	Q4 2021	Q4 2021	Q2 2022	Q2 2023
EAS1018	Car Park Ogwen Centre Bethesda LL57 3LZ	Complete	Q3 2021	Q1 2022	Q3 2023

I hope this addresses the issues you have raised.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kit Malthouse'.

Kit Malthouse MP