

EE: Government's 4G Signal-Blocking Trees Must Not Be Repeated

Steve McCaskill , July 16, 2015, 4:24 pm

EE says trees it was obligated to plant to obscure masts are now affecting signal and wants future legislation to avoid such mistakes ahead of 5G

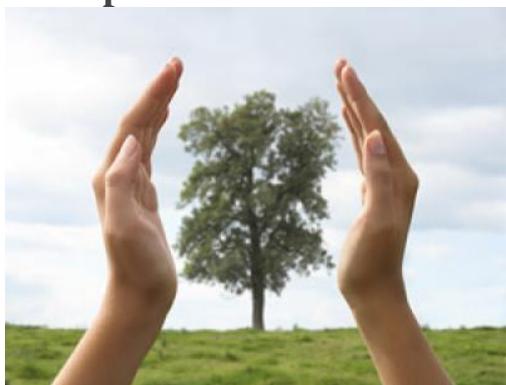
EE says “short-sighted” regulation must be avoided if the UK is to take a leading role in the future of mobile.

Trees that Orange and T-Mobile were obligated to plant in order to hide ‘unsightly’ mobile phone antennas now have a significant negative impact on coverage, it asserted.

The operator lamented the “shameful” fact the UK was the 54th country in the world to launch a 4G network, but in the three years since had become a European and world leader **in terms of LTE technology and adoption**, innovating on a par with the US and Asia.

However, it says a regulatory framework that allows mobile operators to invest, innovate and profit is necessary if the country is not to fall behind again.

Mast problems



“Society has moved to be mobile-centric but legislation has not,” Mansoor Hanif, director of networks at EE told a Westminster eForum in London. “We need urgent reform.”

Hanif said mobile phone masts would never win any beauty contests, but reforms 10-15 years ago had made them more acceptable at a time when fears about radiation and aesthetics were more common. However he called the requirement to plant trees as a “good example” of poor planning because no-one envisaged that the growth of the trees planted 15 years ago would have an impact.

“Today the balance in society has shifted,” he continued. “You still have people who hate antennas and mobiles but they are a minority. Most people want more coverage.”

Hanif welcomed **recent proposals by the government** to make it easier for mobile operators to erect masts, but said as mobile coverage becomes increasingly important, networks should have better access to sites, just like utilities companies.

“We need stronger powers to access sites,” he said. “This is one of the biggest frustrations for our engineers.”

EE says it is “passionate” that the **UK will not fall behind with 5G** as it did with 4G and reiterated its commitment to the development of next generation networks. However rather than implement a full-scale changeover, EE plans to introduce 5G innovation “incrementally” to its LTE network.

“LTE is the best technology we’ve ever seen in mobile networks,” Hanif explained. “I don’t see us doing a massive site upgrade for a number of years.”