



Department for
Science, Innovation
& Technology

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Matthew Western MP
Chair of the Joint Committee on the National Security
Strategy

10 July 2025

Dear Matt,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy (JCNSS) for its important Inquiry on Undersea Cables. As promised during the Inquiry hearing on Monday 30 June, I am writing to provide the Committee with additional information regarding cable landing station security, cross-government responsibility for assessing sector impacts, and the exercising of response plans.

Cable landing stations

The Committee asked about the balance of responsibility between the State and commercial providers in protecting cable landing sites, including landing stations. The government's role is to set the national security policy framework for such sites, including through regulation as necessary. It provides strategic oversight of the security risks affecting cable landing sites, and guidance to industry on good security and resilience practices, through its agencies including the National Protective Security Authority (NPSA) and the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC). Regulators, including Ofcom, monitor and enforce compliance with security and resilience regulations. Law enforcement organisations, including the Police, are responsible for using their powers when necessary to respond to security threats to cable landing stations.

Commercial operators, who own and manage the cable landing stations, are responsible for the day-to-day security, resilience planning, and operational management of these sites. This shared responsibility model recognises private ownership alongside the national interest in securing critical infrastructure, allowing flexibility and innovation while ensuring effective government oversight.

We regularly review this balance as threats evolve. Last year, DSIT commissioned the NCSC and NPSA to conduct cyber and physical security risk assessments at several cable landing stations. The resulting reports were shared with industry and government. A major telecoms provider owning multiple sites has since committed to significantly raising security standards.

Security at cable landing sites has improved markedly in recent years, but we recognise there is always room for further progress. We are now exploring options to raise sector-wide security standards as part of a broader legislation review.

Cross-government responsibility for assessing the impacts of subsea telecoms cable disruption

Contingency planning for each Critical National Infrastructure (CNI) sector is managed by individual Lead Government Departments (LGDs) and led across Government by the Cabinet Office. DSIT is the LGD for data and telecoms infrastructure, including subsea telecoms cables. Consequently, it is responsible for assessing the risks to subsea telecoms cables and how disruption would impact the UK's data/telecoms connectivity. DSIT is also responsible for working with other LGDs to determine the



potential impacts of disruption to such connectivity on the UK, particularly other critical sectors (e.g. finance).

HM Treasury (HMT) is the LGD responsible for the financial sector. Its responsibilities include assessing potential risks of disruption to that sector. DSIT works with HMT, and other LGDs, to determine their sectors' exposure to subsea telecoms cable disruption, so they can decide what mitigating action is required. We continue to work closely with HMT to understand the potential impacts of disruption to subsea cables on the financial sector, to support the sector in developing such risk mitigation policies.

Exercising response plans

DSIT leads work to prepare for incidents affecting subsea cables. DSIT also regularly conducts exercises including tabletop simulations aligned to the reasonable worst-case scenario set out in the National Risk Register to test those plans.

The current National Emergency Plan for Subsea Fibre Optic Cables (NEP-S) was developed by DSIT and the subsea cables industry in 2024, following a joint industry-government exercise commissioned by DSIT and delivered by the Emergency Planning College (now the UK Resilience Academy). Since then, the emergency plan has been successfully tested between Government and industry twice in exercises, once in collaboration with EC-RRG (a terrestrial telecoms focused industry group), in a scenario simulating multiple simultaneous cable breaks. The Department is planning to deliver a further exercise later this year, to test the response within Government and between Government and industry to a reasonable worst-case scenario. We will continue to ensure they are tested appropriately so that any improvements can be identified and implemented as applicable.

We continue to support the Committee in this important work and remain available to answer any questions or provide further assistance as required.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Bryant', with a large, stylized initial 'C'.

Sir Chris Bryant MP
Minister of State