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Science, Innovation
& Technology

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Dame Chi Onwurah MP
Chair
Science, Innovation and Technology Committee
House of Commons SW1A 0AA
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24 March 2026

Dear Dame Chi,

Telecoms Modernisation

I am writing to inform you of the agreement and forthcoming publication of a set of voluntary telecoms industry charters to ensure that the modernisation of the UK's digital infrastructure is carried out safely, with appropriate protections for consumers and for critical national infrastructure (CNI).

Following a roundtable I hosted yesterday with telecommunications providers, the Government has secured industry agreement to further protect customers and prevent disruption to essential services during telecoms modernisation programmes. These commitments are set out in the **2G Switch-Off Charter**, the **Fixed Telecoms Modernisation Charter**, the **Critical National Infrastructure Charter**, the **Non-Voluntary Migration Checklist**, and two **Final Engagement Protocols** (for communication providers, and separately for network operators and wholesalers) for people who are not responding to repeated contact from their provider. Copies of these documents are enclosed. These have been agreed by BT, VMO2, KCOM, VodafoneThree, Sky, Tesco Mobile, TalkTalk, and CityFibre.

These documents have been developed in response to, and in anticipation of, essential industry decisions and industry-led programmes to modernise the UK's digital infrastructure. Modernisation is necessary to support economic growth and to ensure households and businesses can benefit from faster download and upload speeds, improved network security, greater reliability and resilience, better call quality, and lower latency (time delays). In addition, some legacy telecoms equipment is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain, such as for the analogue Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN), as spare parts are no longer manufactured and decommissioned components are used to maintain networks.

Mobile Network Modernisation

All of the mobile network operators have now safely completed the switch-off of 3G services, with the final network switching off in early 2026. The spectrum released has been repurposed to strengthen 4G and 5G connectivity.

Operators are now turning to the switch-off of 2G networks. This transition requires particular care, as 2G continues to support a number of critical services and customers who require additional support, including users of older 2G-only mobile phones (of which there are around two million), as well as certain telecare devices.

Through the **2G Switch-Off Charter**, mobile operators have made significant commitments to ensure a safe and smooth migration for their customers. These include contacting affected customers well in advance using multiple communication channels, trialling the switch-off in different geographic areas before any national rollout, verifying the presence of 4G or 5G coverage before switching off 2G, and maintaining access to emergency services. Although 2G-only mobile phones ceased to be sold at scale in the mid-2010s, remaining users will receive repeated communications well in advance of switch-off dates, between 2029 and 2033.

Fixed Network Modernisation

The UK's fixed telecoms networks are also undergoing major modernisation, including the PSTN migration. These upgrades are essential as legacy networks become more unreliable. Openreach have also commenced their Exchange Exit programme, with thousands of telephone exchanges expected to close in the coming years, as they will no longer be required to operate modern networks.

As with mobile network modernisation, some customers are reliant on landlines, including those who use analogue telecare devices. In November 2024, the Government secured industry agreement to protect vulnerable people and critical services during the PSTN migration through the **Non-voluntary Migration Checklist** and the **Critical National Infrastructure Charter**. These measures have placed safety and continuity of service at the heart of the migration process. As of 31 December 2025, only 3.6 million PSTN lines remained in operation, down from 6.5 million at the end of 2024 and from a peak of 35.2 million in 2000.

It is imperative that the lessons learnt from the PSTN migration are implemented for current and future telecoms modernisations. This is why industry has agreed the **Fixed Telecoms Modernisation Charter** and agreed to extend and update the **Critical National Infrastructure Charter**, and **Non-voluntary Migration Checklist** to be applicable to all fixed telecoms modernisation, beyond just the PSTN migration.

Supporting customers and critical services

In addition to the updated Charters and Checklist, industry has agreed two **Final Engagement Protocols**. These act as a backstop for situations where a small number of customers do not

engage with communication providers despite repeated attempts to contact them about necessary service changes.

The protocols set out additional safeguards to protect customers while enabling networks and services to be modernised. These include a commitment to contact customers at least three times using a minimum of two suitable communication channels, to use clear and accessible language, and to allow a minimum response period of 30 days. Additional time, communications, and safeguards are in place for customers who require extra support during service upgrades or closures. The protocol for network operators and wholesalers sets out the steps they should take when closing or upgrading a network that might result in the loss of connection for the end customer if no action is taken. It acknowledges the complexity of telecom supply chains and the possibility of communication providers remaining unengaged.

During the roundtable, telecoms providers were clear that their first priority is always to protect customers. I also set out the Government's intention to work closely with industry to ensure that the commitments in these Charters and Protocols are met, and to engage with sectors that rely on digital connectivity so that products and services are upgraded in step with network modernisation.

I hope this update is helpful to the Committees in understanding the Government's approach to telecoms modernisation.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E.A. Lloyd' with a large flourish at the end.

**Baroness Lloyd
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the
Department for Science, Innovation & Technology**