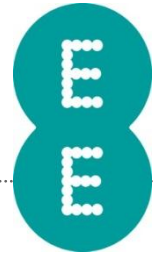


# EE Parliamentary briefing: Welsh planning policy



## About EE

EE is the UK's most advanced digital communications company and the first in Britain to offer superfast 4G mobile services alongside fibre broadband. EE services customers on EE, Orange and T-Mobile plans, with a vision to deliver the best network and the best service to its 27 million customers.

## Mobile coverage in Wales

Operators recognize that there are parts of rural Wales where there is either no signal or only a weak signal; and we agree that there are compelling economic and social reasons for improving mobile connectivity, including mobile broadband, in rural areas. According to Ofcom

- 99.8% of Wales' population had access to a 2G mobile signal
- 97.4% had a 3G signal

EE is currently halfway through a significant infrastructure investment programme to roll out 4G – the next generation of mobile internet with speeds typically 5-10times quicker than 3G – and to upgrade our existing 2G and 3G infrastructure to improve performance.

- EE is investing £80million to bring 4G to Wales, including £8.9 million in Cardiff and £2.7million in Swansea
- 4G now activated in Cardiff (double-speed, 24-30Mbps), Swansea, Newport, Cwmbran, Caerphilly, Pontypool, Merthyr Tydfil, Port Talbot and Rhyl (200<sup>th</sup> 4G town)
- EE aims to reach 98% of the UK population by the end of 2014.

## Challenges to improving coverage

Rolling out networks in rural areas is more difficult and costly than urban areas and many of our rural sites are in fact loss-making. The rural nature of Wales means it is even more important to get the regulatory framework right, to ensure investment is promoted.

## Proposals for reform of the Welsh Planning Regime for mobile telecoms development

Last year the Welsh Government issued a consultation paper on planning rules for telecommunications, which proposed an easing of the planning restrictions on telecoms sites. We welcome this document and look forward to seeing it progressed. Northern Ireland, England and Scotland have already made comparable changes to their planning regimes which incentivises investment in those areas.

- Work with operators to revise the Best Practice guidance on Mobile Telecoms Development (the English version was updated after changes to the English Planning system).
- Increase the current prior approval threshold for antenna mounted on buildings and structures from 4 metres to 6 metres.
- Introduce a new permitted development right for the installation of a limited number of small cell antennas which will help maintain network capacity and coverage.
- Introduce Permitted Development Rights (with prior approval) for new masts

We hope that a Planning Bill will be brought forward to the National Assembly soon, so that the planning regime can be brought into line with the other nations as operators work towards their coverage targets throughout 2014/15.