

UK Telco Operators at Risk of £1bn in Wasted Investment under Proposed Copper Switchover Framework

LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM, August 14, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The UK fibre broadband market is often heralded as a success story as fibre network coverage has expanded rapidly in recent years. However, the market is highly fragmented and

increasing fibre overbuild places pressure on operators to gain sufficient market share to generate a return on their investments. The case becomes particularly challenging in rural areas where the cost of fibre network build often exceeds £1000 per home. In these areas, it may only make economic sense for one fibre network to exist.



In this market context, we are highlighting a problem with Ofcom's proposed copper switchover framework. This requires Openreach to build fibre coverage to 90% or more of each exchange area that it wants to switch away from copper – even if there is an existing fibre network from another operator. This risks uneconomic fibre overbuild and wasted investment in rural areas where an alternative operator has already built.

We are proposing that Ofcom adapts its copper switchover framework, so that it supports Openreach's copper switchover programme while avoiding wasted investment. We discuss solutions in our latest report "The State of UK Fibre" – for example the coverage thresholds could include any existing fibre networks that are present or alternative technologies such as satellite broadband, with safeguards to ensure consumer protection.

Why does copper switchover matter? It is important for the UK to move away from copper onto next generation broadband infrastructure, which offers faster bandwidths, lower fault rates, and savings in both operating costs and energy.

How much of an issue is the proposed framework? We estimate around 1m premises in rural areas could see Openreach overbuild an existing fibre network to achieve Ofcom's proposed thresholds, where in reality the economics don't make sense for two networks to co-exist. The alternative network operators have likely spent around £1000+ per home passed, and the overbuild may therefore represent £1bn+ of wasted investment.

Our report provides discussion, analysis and solutions on this topic with additional market context and scenarios.

[READ THE REPORT HERE > The State of UK Fibre](#)

Disclosure: This report was commissioned by Gigaclear. Cartesian retained full editorial independence.

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