

Common questions

Q. Can we have a tree mast instead?

A. Atlas do not currently consider tree masts; this is mostly due to the maintenance required and the difficulty with site sharing. In addition to this, the structures involve much higher costs and are not as environmentally friendly. There are other considerations we could potentially explore.

Q. Are we able to have our church host equipment instead?

A. Whilst this would be a least visual impact solution, a church site brings difficulties. These include accessing the equipment, health and safety concerns, signal attenuation, bearings fixed by the church direction, not enough space for sharing with other operators, cost and a complex process.

Q. Are masts safe to the general public?

A. Mobile phone networks use the same technology as Bluetooth headphones, DAB radio and wifi. The emission levels from mobile base stations are legally controlled by International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP). For an independent view on health safety concerns, the following organisations have more detailed information and studies: Cancer Research UK, NHS, Gov.uk and Mobile UK.

Q. Will the site have battery backup in case of a power outage?

A. The exact equipment specification is yet to be finalised for this site but most rural sites have battery back-up as standard. If there is a history of power cuts in the area then the capacity is increased, likewise if the site is a long way from the nearest operational centre.

Q. Why do I need mobile phone coverage?

A. Great Britain's Emergency Services currently communicate using the Airwave Network <https://www.airwavesolutions.co.uk/>, which is due to be replaced by EE's Emergency Services Network (ESN). ESN is due to be phased in from 2027 onwards, becoming fully operational in 2029. This is important as without reliable mobile signal, the police, fire and ambulance services will be unable to communicate with each other and respond to calls.

In the near future, driverless cars, connected agriculture and healthcare applications will also make use of mobile connectivity. Defra use the mobile networks to connect critical sensors measuring water levels in the county.

Q. I have wifi at home, isn't this enough?

A. Wifi is not an alternative to mobile coverage for a number of reasons. Home/public wifi is unable to support mobile services such as the ESN network. Smart meters rely on the mobile networks and cannot use home wifi. Wifi routers will not work in the event of a power cut.

Q. Can't we use satellites instead?

A. New satellite networks, such as Starlink, are complimentary to 4G and 5G networks and not a replacement. Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellites have capacity limitations, which means for the foreseeable future they are not a replacement for terrestrial mobile networks.

Q. What is the UK's Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) and what does it mean for me?

A. The PSTN switch-off is switching off the UK's legacy analogue phone network, as part of the transition to next-generation digital services. The deadline for the PSTN switch off is 31st December 2025 for normal cases and 31st January 2027 for special cases. Broadband Routers also rely on the home power and so Wi-Fi calling will not function in the event of a power cut.