

## Cathedrals and Church Buildings Division

Becky Clark  
Director of Churches and Cathedrals  
The Archbishops' Council  
Church House  
Great Smith Street  
London  
SW1P 3AZ

24 August 2018

FAO: Diocesan Secretaries; Diocesan Advisory Committee Secretaries; Archdeacons; Diocesan Registrars

Dear all,

### **Re: Telecoms infrastructure - arrangements for contracts to install mobile network infrastructure in church buildings**

#### **Summary**

I am writing to let you know that Parish Buying has established a standard framework contract with NET Coverage Solutions for parishes whose buildings may be considered for use in accommodating mobile network infrastructure.

We know that some parishes have already been approached by mobile operators wanting to use church buildings in this way. With the new framework contract in place we would now strongly advise parishes to refer the approach to NET Coverage Solutions Limited, and to their DAC Secretary.

NET Coverage Solutions has been working with the Church of England since 2004, helping parishes whose buildings may be considered for use in hosting mobile network equipment. They can arrange for the appropriate processes to be undertaken and, subject to a successful survey, will undertake the work necessary for a faculty application.

The full details of the framework contract, with details of how to use it, can be found here:

<https://www.paritybuying.org.uk/categories/phone-and-broadband/mobile-phone-infrastructure>

#### **Background**

In December 2017 the Government introduced a new Electronic Communications Code which substantially altered the rights and responsibilities of landlords and licensed telecoms operators when contracting for connectivity. The new Code contains wide-ranging reforms in favour of

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operators. **Application of the new Code will lead in all likelihood to a significant reduction in rents.** In addition, the new Code gives telecoms operators the right to share sites, transfer their leases, and upgrade their equipment without the landlord's consent.

The Government's stated expectation for the new Code is to reduce licence costs to operators by between 10% and 40% and to eliminate the practice of some landowners charging 'ransom rents'. Following discussions between the Department of Culture Media and Sport and the Rural Bishops, the National Church Institutions (NCIs) signed a Joint Accord in February 2018 to "encourage where possible the development of guidance for dioceses, parishes and Chancellors which has in view a consistent approach to the use of Church property to enable digital connectivity" and to "establish a standard framework contract that could be put in place for church entities to use in contracting for connectivity in areas with no conventional wired broadband provision".

The new standard framework contract has been established in line with the Joint Accord. This contract is the result of a national tender process and offers the following benefits for parishes:

- Standardised terms and a consistent approach to obtain a fair price, with template documents for use.
- Efficient project management through a trusted delivery partner with established process timelines for implementation.
- Compliance with the relevant legal requirements (including the requirements of ecclesiastical law).
- NET Coverage Solutions has partnered with Shared Access Ltd, a third party Wholesale Infrastructure Provider (WIP), to finance the passive infrastructure, manage the legal contracts, and manage site access arrangements following initial installation works.

The purpose of my writing to you is to ask that you:

- Recommend the standard framework contract arrangements with NET Coverage Solutions to all parishes and particularly those seeking to develop, renew or terminate telecoms infrastructure contracts.
- Encourage parishes to contact [Caroline.Humphries@london.anglican.org](mailto:Caroline.Humphries@london.anglican.org), the Development Manager in the Diocese of London responsible for commercial aspects of mobile telecommunication installations in churches, for further information; or to contact NET Coverage Solutions at [CoE@netcs.eu](mailto:CoE@netcs.eu).

We strongly recommend that parishes are encouraged to use the standard contract framework arrangements that have been put in place. This is a complex and technical area of work, but one that can be of benefit to parishes if handled correctly. NET Coverage Solutions are, in our view, in the best position to support this.

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Work is currently underway to produce further guidance to support a consistent and lawful approach to the use of church property to enable digital connectivity, in line with the Accord agreed between the National Church Institutions and Government in February. I will write with news of this when it is available.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Clark', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Becky Clark  
Director of Churches and Cathedrals  
The Archbishops' Council

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