

WINCHESTER CITY COUNCIL – UPPER MEON VALLEY WARD

Parish update for February 2025

Salt Lane mobile mast

Just over a year ago planning permission was given for the mobile phone tower towards the end of Salt Lane by the junction with Stake's Lane. The tower was built shortly afterwards, however, some residents in Upham raised questions as to whether the tower was operational as they have seen no improvement in signal.

We thought our findings worth sharing with the other parish councils and meetings given the central proximity of the mast which was designed to improve the signal not just in Upham but also to parts of Owslebury, Beauworth, Preshaw, Kilmeston and Morestead.

The tower is owned and operated by WHP Telecoms Ltd. We managed to track down the head of construction at WHP who is investigating the state of operation of the tower.

So far, they have reported that the mobile operator, Three, went live back in October last year and it is planned that Vodaphone will also go live very shortly.

The tower can support a maximum of four mobile phone network operators and usually only three. In the UK there are only four mobile phone network operators, namely, Three, Vodaphone, EE and O2, soon only to be three as Three has just merged with Vodaphone. We are still waiting to hear if there are plans for EE and O2 to operate from the tower.

There are four Mobile Virtual Network Operators (MVNOs) that use Three's network, specifically SMARTY, iD, Superdrug Mobile and Honest Mobile. If you use any one of these providers, then so long as you are within a reasonable proximity to the tower and have line of sight to the antenna you should get a signal. If, however, you are in a hollow or behind dense woodland and do not have line of sight then you may struggle to get a signal.

When Vodaphone goes live, there are four other mobile providers that piggyback off Vodaphone's network, which are also available. These are VOXI, Asda Mobile, Lebara and Talk Mobile.

Boomtown Festival licensing review – par deux

We reported in the last couple of parish updates that Hampshire Constabulary had requested a Licensing sub-committee hearing to review the licensing for the Boomtown Festival on the grounds of crime and disorder, sadly due to another death at last year's festival.

You will remember the Police withdrew their representation and the meeting was adjourned in order to provide additional time to reassess the resubmission of an updated subcommittee information pack and the manner in which the adjourned subcommittee hearing will be heard at a future date to be agreed.

That meeting took place on 30th January 2025, and after considering the 17 other submissions from local parish councils and residents and a number of representations at the meeting the subcommittee decided to approve the review of the licence with no changes to the original licence.

The withdrawal of the representation by the police unfortunately, in our view, left the subcommittee with little choice but to wave the licence through, as any other imposition of further conditions would have led, almost certainly, to judicial review that the council would have lost a great cost.

In essence, the licence review was called for by the Police on the grounds of crime and disorder as is their right. By withdrawing their request for the review, any conditions subsequently imposed by the sub-committee would lack the support of the Police and on appeal would likely be overturned.

Many of the other representations by residents and parish councils were brought under prevention of public nuisance, generally in respect of sound levels and operating hours of the festival that have not changed, in any significant way, since the original licence was granted. These matter although raised were not up for review under the terms of the original application and so again any imposition of further conditions would likely result in a costly appeal that the council would have lost.

In summary, it seems to us that with the benefit of hindsight it would have been better, once the Police had withdrawn their application for the review, that the review did not proceed from that point and other representations were not heard, as the entire basis of the review had gone away. This would have saved everyone involved the unnecessary trouble of sitting through two hearings.

It remains the case that Boomtown are engaged in consultation with Hampshire Constabulary to agree any measures the Police feel might be necessary to reduce the further risk of death by drug misuse and retain the right to bring a further review if they cannot reach agreement.

Kind Regards

Jerry Pett

Neil Bolton

Winchester City Council Ward Members for Upper Meon Valley