

I am disappointed that Sure chose not to share financial data with the Committee. This would have allowed us to gauge what the financial impact might be of self-provision and allow financial modelling to be undertaken.

The lack of this data and the seeming reluctance to provide it means that I have to draw my own conclusions as to why this might be and to whether this reluctance means that self-provisioning might not be as cataclysmic as seemed to be implied at times. An implication that was not backed by any hard evidence.

It is my belief that the present provider (Sure) for reasons which to me were not made clear, were either not able or perhaps willing to move with the times and be able to provide what their customers have been wanting and complaining about for some time – cheaper, quicker and more reliable internet. I believe this was something that was actually described in their agreement with us.

From the evidence presented to this committee, I was unable to draw a conclusion, that Sure, mindful of Starlink and other LEO operators who were appearing, initially made any meaningful attempt to try and match what was coming over the horizon and indeed now is a reality, or to make meaningful attempts to become a re-seller or provider. Therefore, I must draw my own conclusions and that is that they did not.

I also noted that attempts to provide some form of LEO coverage via One Web has still not happened and am also mindful of the company saying in a meeting that normal users would not see much if any effect from the proposed One Web service. I also note that the agreed date for One Web to be operational has now passed.

Sures belief that they have complete exclusivity has been stated by them many times during the presentation of their evidence to the Committee and in the subsequent questioning. I do wonder whether their belief in their exclusivity meant that they had decided that they could move at the pace of their choosing in a world that was moving quickly, a decision that may have been driven by the technology that they were determined to use but also perhaps driven by an overwhelming desire to protect their profit margins until the end of their present contract.

Whilst the decisions made when the last agreement was signed up to, was of its time and very much underlined by the technology that was available at the time and the forecast of what might become available. It has been proved by recent events to be not fit for purpose. The decision at the time was for exclusivity and universal provision. Technology has moved at such a speed that a different and more innovative solution must now be found. One such solution is passing over the Falklands with great regularity.

I have listened to evidence from our youth, from a person who is using Starlink experimentally and have read through the written submissions to this committee carefully, and was strongly impressed by the reasoning stated in submissions from our rural sector. Some do go for prolonged periods of time without reliable communications, although in fairness to the present telecoms provider, not all of the fault can be laid at their door. Nevertheless, if there was a case for a backup system in the interests of safety and business continuity, this would be it.

In business, in health and across nearly every sector, the requirement for speedy internet at a reasonable price is a must. Even in the home, more and more items rely on the internet and people should be able to enjoy streaming movies and TV as well as being able to game online without the headache of latency issues and buffering and also the friction that can be witnessed in Falklands households caused by too much of your internet package being used in one day or the worries that you will run out before the end of the month. To use a fairly modern expression – that situation is so yesterday – and so it should be for the people of the Falkland Islands.

Having listened to and read the evidence provided and taking into account where telecoms have got to at this moment, I find in favour of point one in the petition to this House – that the licence fee should be reduced to a maximum of £180

I note that the remainder of the requirements e.g. to apply to the regulator, making a case that the present telecoms provider cannot provide, at a reasonable price, the service that they require, will remain as is.

On point two, that the Falklands authorities approve Starlink Domestic Tariffs also calling on the Communications Regulator to grant regulatory approval for Starlink to offer domestic tariffs in the Falkland Islands, I say this:

I have listened carefully to the evidence given by the Regulator and am content that at no time (that can be evidenced) has the regulator or the Falkland Islands authorities stated to Starlink that they cannot apply for permission to operate and that Starlink has not, up to this moment applied for any permissions.

Whilst having great sympathies with point two in the petition and indeed it has my support, and even though I am aware that there are ongoing communications between Falklands authorities and Starlink, the ball is very much in the court of Starlink and I would urge them to make that application as speedily as they can.

To summarise, I find myself in support of the recommendations of this committee and look forward to them passing through the Assembly and Exco and look forward with much eagerness to a new chapter being opened in the world of telecoms here in the Falklands. Chair, the future has arrived.