



Client story



How we're supporting WightFibre's Isle of Wight roll-out with wayleaves

About WightFibre

At Trenches Law, we're committed to unlocking the benefits of high-speed connectivity across the UK. That's why we leverage our wayleave expertise to work with telecoms companies such as WightFibre. They chose our expertise to help them roll out an ambitious £110 million fibre-optic broadband project on the Isle of Wight.

Trenches Law joined forces with two key firms to initiate a game-changing fibre-optic broadband project across the Isle of

Wight. Working with WightFibre and BSC Management, the firm's wayleave experts would negotiate myriad challenges to meet crucial deadlines.

WightFibre is an Internet Service Provider (ISP) based on the Isle of Wight. Specialising in providing high-speed internet to rural areas, WightFibre announced an ambitious development in 2021. The Gigabit Island project seeks to support 80,000 homes across the Island with ultrafast broadband.

The challenge

The £110 million installation would see 80,000 homes on the Isle of Wight connected to ultrafast broadband. This significant engineering development would take 600km of trenches being dug, containing five million metres of duct and 750 million metres of fibre-optic cable.

Understandably, this would put pressure on WightFibre from the outset - predominantly with wayleave considerations. The project would see regular negotiations with bodies including:

- The Isle of Wight Council
- The Maritime Management Organisations
- The Crown Estates

Notwithstanding the general public, the development required daily checks with the Land Registry.

WightFibre would also have environmental concerns to address. Namely, the project required fibre-optic cable to be laid across the River Yar, which would need extensive public consultation. The teams would consult with Natural England to prohibit the project from disturbing breeding and nesting seasons.

The solution

The ISP needed a law firm they could trust. Trenches Law was founded by Virgin Media's Head of Legal Sharon McDermott, who would bring her extensive wayleave experience to the table.

Trenches Law headed up daily communications with all interested parties. These included addressing concerns as early as possible to prevent project delays. They also took regular community feedback, and made alterations to construction plans for continuous improvement.

Wayleave Liaison Manager and Isle of Wight resident Carole Lee spoke to locals on a regular basis. She helped to ease any concerns about roads being dug up, helping the project progress as planned.

The results

WightFibre had a significant target of 80,000 homes by the end of 2022. By July 2021, their ultrafast broadband was already available to install at over 45,000 properties.

The Island's gigabit Fibre-to-the-Home network is now on an even faster growth path. Thanks to Trenches Law's outstanding communications, limits of construction have fallen from 38% to 21% across the Island. The number of buildable premises has increased by 50% from 41,000 to 60,000.

Best of all, residents are being kept up-to-date with the latest developments, ensuring they do not disrupt their way of life. WightFibre is now well on the way to reaching its 80,000-home target.

John Irvine, CEO of WightFibre, said: "Overall, WightFibre's Gigabit Island project is a significant civil engineering development and includes 600km of trenches being dug, containing 5 million metres of duct and 750 million metres of fibre-optic cable alone.

"None of that could be made possible without a seamless wayleave process in place. For us, Trenches Law recognises, assesses and mitigates risk in a way that an ordinary lawyer simply could not do. The team continues to play a huge role in helping WightFibre connect the Isle of Wight."



John Irvine
CEO
WightFibre

We're here to help your business grow.

So, why not tap into the knowledge of our straight-talking and technically experienced telecoms specialists? Get in touch today.

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