



Department  
for Culture  
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Our ref: MCDC2015/06681/AS

22 April 2015

Dear Ms Leslie

Thank you for your email of 6 March to Matt Hancock enclosing correspondence from your constituent, Mr Adrian Wade of Bright Things. I have been asked to reply as the Minister for Digital issues. I am sorry that with the election fast approaching the diary is particularly busy so I will be unable to meet with him to discuss his business. However, I was interested to read about your constituent's business and how he is using encryption to develop innovative products and services.

The Government supports the development of the Internet of Things as it sees it as a growth area for the UK economy. To that end, in the recent Budget the Chancellor announced a Government investment of £40 million for new research projects in health and social care and cities to demonstrate Internet of Things technology.

The Government also recognises the importance of data privacy, and we are working closely with other EU Member States on the development of new European data protection regulations. We are also working with the Digital Economy Council and the Digital Catapult Centre to create a new framework that will provide guidance to companies on responsible use of data, and explain to consumers in clear terms how information about them is collected and used.

The Government supports encryption which helps to keep personal data and intellectual property safe from theft by cyber means. This is fundamental as without the development of strong encryption allowing the secure transfer of banking details there would be no online commerce.

The Prime Minister has been clear that there cannot be areas of the internet that are off limits to the rule of law and that includes where necessary and proportionate individuals' private communications. This does not mean that we are planning to ban internet companies' use of encryption in the UK nor read everyone's emails or instant messages but we need to have a legal framework in place to allow the police and the Security and Intelligence Agencies to access communications of terrorists and serious criminals to prevent or solve crime.

MI5 and GCHQ recognise that the increase in privacy including that of "end to end encryption", where some companies have developed products with personal encryption keys which are said to guarantee privacy or be beyond the reach of intelligence agencies, does present a challenge.

However, we are working with international communications' service providers and key international partners to improve access to and sharing of data in different jurisdictions. The expansion of encryption and companies not storing any data does pose challenges for the Government's effort to keep people safe. We agree that there shouldn't be any safe space for terrorists but steps to address the technological challenges we face also need to be addressed sensitively.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the Prime Minister did not single out encryption or any specific company for attack, still less pledge to ban specific companies. The point he was making was one of principle: in extremis we will need to retain the ability to access information where necessary for a counter-terrorism investigation and under a warrant signed by the Home Secretary.

I hope this helps to explain Government's position on encryption and what is being done to protect our citizens and businesses as well as support firms which rely on digital technologies.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ed Vaizey', enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

**Ed Vaizey**  
Minister for Culture and Digital Economy