

Bidders for bust broadband provider put off by rats' taste for fibre

James Warrington

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A potential rescue bid for the bust London broadband provider G.Network has been ruled out over fears that rats have chewed through its fibre-optic cables.

Community Fibre, a rival network builder in the capital, has been considering an acquisition of G.Network from administrators, who were called in last month when its £300m of debts and broadband subscriber base of just 25,000 forced it under.

However, Community Fibre chief executive Graeme Oxby told The Telegraph the rescue would not go ahead, partly because of the cost of repairing rodent damage to cables.

“Rodents like ducts and they like fibres which are very tasty,” he said, adding the prospect of costly work to fix the damage had partly deterred a rescue of G.Network by his company.

“It’s not something we’ve been particularly interested in because we think it’s got quite a lot of structural issues and would be quite an expensive fix,” he added.

Rats are known to attack underground fibre-optic cables in search of nesting material and in some cases [have been blamed for internet connections being disrupted](#).

Mr Oxby said his company had not carried out a technical assessment of G.Network and that there were other factors driving the decision not to bid.

Openreach blamed nesting rats for days worth of network issues in Tring two years ago, with engineers discovering rats had chewed through strong ducting, outer casing and multiple cables – which typically require a drill to penetrate.

Residents and businesses in Doncaster were also hit with rat-related broadband issues last month, with local MP and Energy Secretary Ed Miliband saying the issues were caused by “rodent damage”.

He said he had “asked [Openreach] what they’re going to do to prevent widespread outages like this in future”.



The city-dwelling rodents are known to have a taste for fibre-optic cables - Susanne Kosig/iStockphoto

Broadband companies such as Openreach typically seal openings to cables to try to prevent rats accessing them. They can also re-route cables to avoid nests.

This is a problem for G.Network because it has laid much of its broadband cables in ducts located in the middle of busy London road, rather than under pavements like its rivals.

Industry sources said this meant the company was required to dig up the road to carry out rodent-linked repair work, leading to costly and disruptive closures.

Residents in areas of the capital including Islington have previously complained of lengthy disruption as a result of G.Network's installation works.

G.Network was [plunged into administration earlier this month](#) just a week after it was acquired by the private equity firm FitzWalter Capital.

FitzWalter, a so-called "vulture fund" that specialises in distressed assets, will now seek to sell off G.Network's fibre broadband network and its customer base.
