



DIRECT LINK

Colocation choices UK





DIRECT LINK

Selecting a colocation data center is one thing, but will it work with your communications partner of choice? NextGenAccess's Alex Williamson explains why this is important

NextGenAccess is one of a new wave of communications infrastructure providers in the UK, rolling out fiber networks across the country. It is also one of the wide range of network providers that plugs its network directly into Vantage's hyperscale Cardiff CWL1 data center.

Not only that, but NextGenAccess has installed a direct link between Vantage's data center and the nearest major point of presence on the UK's backbone network, just outside Bristol. As a wholesale-focused provider, NextGenAccess's presence enables CWL1 clients to use their provider of choice, not the limited range that some data center operators insist their clients work with.

"Vantage's customers were demanding diversity into the data center – hyperscalers and government bodies – and by building a route from Bristol into CWL1 we effectively created the default diverse route of choice for all the other carriers," says NextGenAccess business development director Alex Williamson. The company also runs a link from CWL1 to BT's Cardiff exchange.

NextGenAccess holds a public infrastructure access license enabling it to take advantage of BT Openreach's ducts and cables, saving both the company and the public the cost and aggravation of the company digging out its own trenches. Typically, though, it uses a sub-duct and blows its fiber through that in order to better protect

its network, rather than putting its fiber natively alongside the fiber belonging to Openreach and anyone else with a similar license.

"There's seven or eight BT exchanges that we either pass or have a physical presence within along the route.

Then we have a whole load of nodes, as well, that enable others to splice into our fiber backbone. Our approach to deploying fiber nodes for that purpose is to build standoff chambers adjacent to the Openreach infrastructure because that's far more secure and less likely to be damaged by other contractors working in that environment," says Williamson.

"We're a neutral host. If you go into the CWL1 data center in Cardiff you'll find a NextGenAccess rack with 432-fibers terminated on it, of which about 15 fiber pairs are being used right now by customers like Vodafone, Neos Networks, or Colt. They use that as a way of extending their existing network into the building, and doing it diversely from anything else that's connected," he adds.

Before joining NextGenAccess, Williamson (like so many people in the communications industry in the UK today) worked at BT. Over time, he's seen the data center sector migrate out of London, both as fiber networks have proliferated and as the sector has grown.

These days, while many potential clients will ask detailed technical questions about latency and round-

trips between various locations in the UK, no more than ten percent really need to be in one specific location – typically, as close to the City of London as possible – because their business demands it, he says.

"London is still a desirable data center location, but they're very expensive and the data centers in Central London are starting to run out of space," he says. More important questions, he adds, are "Can I build something big? Can I do it cost-effectively? Can I get enough power?"

Increasingly, the answer to all three of those questions in places like London and Slough, are a resounding "no". And it's not just Vantage's Cardiff data center that communications companies like NextGenAccess are plugging into. The company is also working with the data centers – edge data centers, conventional and hyperscale – springing up in unlikely places right across the UK to provide a diversity of network access to them as well.

London is still a desirable data center location, but they're very expensive and the data centers in Central London are starting to run out of space