

LETTER OF THE DAY

About UCC's statement on fibre infrastructure...

I am one of the Ugandans who felt genuinely excited to see the statement issued by the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) on March 23, 2026 via X (formerly Twitter).

It addressed something many of us have quietly complained about for years!

That is the duplication of utility poles, especially those used for fibre internet connections.

What stood out for me in this post was not just the acknowledgment of the problem, but the fact that UCC openly admitted what many of us see every day.

Kampala, the surrounding suburbs and most cities and towns in Uganda have been operating under a very disorganised and, frankly, shabby regime of fibre infrastructure instalments.

You only need to walk through parts of Kampala to see what I usually describe as "spaghetti lines" of aerial fibre cables that are stretching from pole to pole, criss-crossing streets, and in some cases, sagging dangerously low.

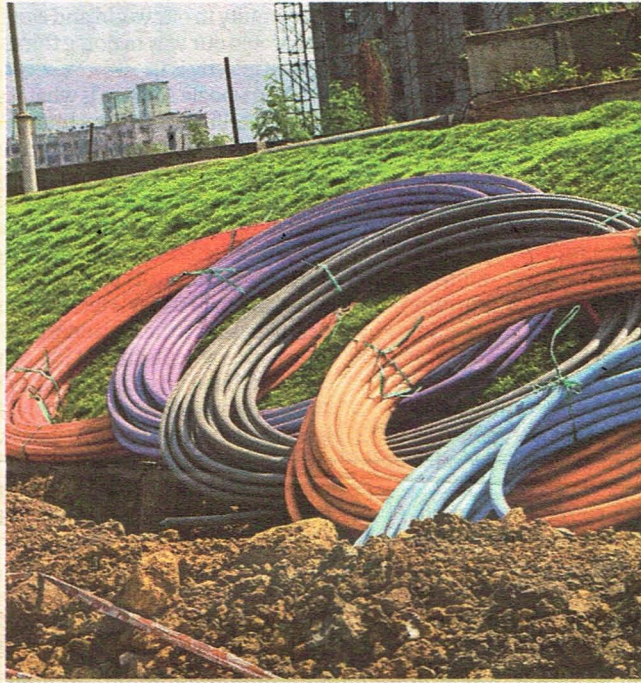
The poles themselves often look like they are competing for space, almost like plants stretching toward sunlight.

For a long time, I kept asking myself a simple question: why has this never been addressed in a serious way?

I have personally witnessed newly commissioned roads being dug up sometimes just months after completion to lay fibre cables underground.

Every time, the same thought comes to mind: where is the planning? If we know that fibre connectivity is essential infrastructure, why isn't it treated that way from the beginning?

Thankfully, in the statement, the Commission recommends



integrating telecom infrastructure into civil and road construction projects, just like water, drainage, and electricity.

On paper, this is exactly what should have been happening all along.

In fact, this direction was already backed by the Uganda Communications Commission Framework on Optical Fibre Installation, Maintenance, Protection, and Disposal, which took effect on January 1, 2026.

In all honesty, Uganda does not suffer from a lack of policy frameworks.

We suffer from a lack of coordination and enforcement because by the existence of this framework, the real issue becomes implementation. This begs the questions:

Who is responsible for ensuring that road contractors include fibre ducts in their designs?

At what stage are telecom operators required to coordinate with agencies like Ministry of Works and KCCA?

And perhaps most importantly, what are the consequences when this coordination does not happen?

Without clear enforcement mechanisms, even the best written frameworks risk becoming reference documents instead of operational tools.

Another issue that cannot be ignored is the market structure of telecom infrastructure.

Multiple operators, rightfully so, often deploy parallel infrastructure instead of sharing it.

From a business perspective, that might make sense.

But from a national infrastructure standpoint, it leads to duplication, inefficiency, and the exact pole congestion we are now trying to fix.

This is where UCC has an even

bigger role to play, not just as a regulator, but as a coordinator of shared infrastructure.

Policies around infrastructure sharing need to move from being encouraged to being enforced, especially in dense urban areas.

Now, on a more personal note, I have always preferred underground cabling for cities. And it's not just about functionality, it is also about what kind of cities we want to live in.

For me, when I look up, I would rather see trees, buildings, and open sky.

Underground systems make practical sense because they are less susceptible to accidental cuts, more resilient to weather conditions, and generally more reliable when properly implemented.

Over time, this reduces service interruptions and the constant maintenance cycles we currently see with aerial systems.

The other end of this stick is also a balancing act, because underground infrastructure is more expensive upfront. It requires planning, coordination, and strong governance. Which brings us back to the same issue: execution, execution, execution!

There are cities where infrastructure planning has been done more deliberately. These cities are not perfect, but you can clearly see the difference in how space is managed.

In my final thoughts, it is notable that UCC has done something important here, now comes the hard part.

Will we enforce coordination? Will we prioritise shared infrastructure? Will we build with foresight instead of reacting after the fact? Or will we keep adding more poles...and more spaghetti?

Simon Peter Wamahe,
Information Technology
consultant and digital strate-
gist.