

Rats take a large byte from internet cables

By Howard Smith
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Engineers had to get their heads around a chewy problem last week. Rats had taken a byte out of broadband cables – and cut off vast numbers of homes in South London. Residents expressed their horror at the incident.

Brixton, Balham, Tulse Hill, Nine Elms, Streatham, Dulwich, Vauxhall, South Clapham, Forest Hill and Battersea were all affected. That certainly ate a lot into people's internet time.

Sky has confirmed it was caused by “rodents” – though none of the firm's staff has been able to squeal on the species responsible for the act of sabotage from the teeth marks alone. But rats with a taste for plastic wiring and click bait have been blamed. The fibre optic cable owned by Virgin Media, but serving people with Talk Talk and Sky, was severed at 9.25pm on August 10. Engineers were on the scene by 11pm and gnawed away at the problem for more than 11 hours.

Sky tweeted: “Engineers have been on site overnight and repair work continues this morning, on damaged fibre cables.” The following morning, the account added: “Work continues on repairing broken fibre cables. We have identified the cause of the fault to be the work of rodents.” And by 10:30am the following morning, Sky confirmed service had returned to normal with the tweet: “Resolved: South London customers will now be able to get online and make/receive calls. We apologise for any inconvenience caused.” So they had not bitten off more than they could chew.



A Virgin Media spokesman said: “Last week a fibre break occurred on a section of our network which affected a small number of TalkTalk and Sky customers in South London. Thanks to the efforts of our engineers this was fixed last weekend and services were restored.” The firm stressed no Virgin Media customers or other ISPs outside of TalkTalk and Sky were affected.

In some locations, Virgin has an agreement with TalkTalk, and other ISPs, to carry traffic from an exchange to their core network. But the dirty rat didn’t care.