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Chief Planning Officer  
St Albans City and District Council  
Civic Centre, St Peters Street  
St Albans  
Hertfordshire  
AL1 3JE

25 September 2019

TIME SENSITIVE - 90 Day Consultation period end date: 24 December 2019

Dear Chief Planning Officer,

Further to our previous letter, we are writing to you as part of a formal consultation process regarding our current programme of intended public payphone removals. This letter formally starts our consultation with you and the local community.

There are currently 3 public payphones in your area which have been identified and proposed for removal by BT under the 90-day consultation process and details of these payphones are attached.

To ensure that the local community are fully informed, we have placed consultation notices on the relevant payphones, and a sample notice is enclosed. We have also included the date we posted these notices on the payphones. The consultation period will close on 24 December 2019.

This consultation process gives your local communities the opportunity to adopt a traditional red 'heritage' phone box and make it an asset that local people can enjoy. It's really simple to do and it costs just £1 - <http://bt.com/adopt>

Overall use of payphones has declined by over 90 per cent in the last decade and the need to provide payphones for use in emergency situations is diminishing all the time, with at least 98 per cent of the UK having either 3G or 4G coverage. This is important because as long as there is network coverage, it's now possible to call the emergency services, even when there is no credit or no coverage from your own mobile provider.

You may also want to consider Ofcom's affordability report which found that most people do not view payphones as essential for most consumers in most circumstances -

[http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/affordability/affordability\\_report.pdf](http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/affordability/affordability_report.pdf)

On the 14 March 2006 Ofcom published a statement following their 2005 review of universal service in the telecommunications market, which includes a requirement for payphone provision to meet reasonable needs. Part of that statement amended our obligations with regard to the removal of payphone service:

[https://www.ofcom.org.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0021/34266/statement.pdf](https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0021/34266/statement.pdf) removal of payphone

service [https://www.ofcom.org.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0021/34266/statement.pdf](https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0021/34266/statement.pdf)

British Telecommunications plc  
Registered office:  
81 Newgate Street  
London EC1A 7AJ  
Registered in England No 1800000  
[www.bt.com](http://www.bt.com)



**St Albans**  
City & District Council

25 SEP 2019

**Digital Services**

As stated in Ofcom's 2005 review, it is the responsibility of the local authority to initiate its own consultation process to canvas the views of the local community. They would normally expect these consultations to involve other public organisations such as parish or community councils and work within the terms of the Communications Act 2003. This means that you must be able to objectively justify your decisions.

Full guidance on the removal process can be viewed at:

<http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/consultations/uso/statement/removals.pdf>

and a summary is available at:

[http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/consultations/uso/statement/removing\\_callboxes.pdf](http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/consultations/uso/statement/removing_callboxes.pdf)

The guidance also details the appeals process we must follow in case of unreasonable objections.

What you need to do next

Please complete and return the attached annex with your decision on each payphone.

If the decision is that the local community wish to 'adopt', please provide their contact details and we'll do the rest.

If you wish to 'object', you'll need to complete the last column with your reasons, having reviewed all of the factors set out in Annex 1 of Ofcom's guidance (see link above), and the information sent to you in our previous letter.

If the information is incomplete for any payphone in the list, then we'll assume you have no objection to its removal and also that you do not wish to adopt it.

The best way to respond to us is by email at [btp.authorisation.team@bt.com](mailto:btp.authorisation.team@bt.com). Please retain proof that the email was sent or apply a read receipt. If you would prefer to respond by post please use the following address and allow at least two days for postal delivery:

BT Payphones  
pp 4th Floor Monument TE  
11 – 13 Great Tower Street  
London  
EC3R 5AQ

You will need to obtain proof of postage and be aware that we are unable to receive mail that requires a signature.

If you've got any questions then please get in touch with us by emailing [btp.authorisation.team@bt.com](mailto:btp.authorisation.team@bt.com).

Yours sincerely

**Rick Thompson**  
Payphone Planning Officer

Please use this annex and return in this format to ensure that the telephone number of the kiosk is clearly shown.  
 A separate sheet can be used for further comments if required.

If you would like an electronic copy of this letter, please e mail [bt.authorisation.team@bt.com](mailto:bt.authorisation.team@bt.com)

St Albans

Telephone Number	Address	Post Code	Number of calls in last 12 months	Posting Completed Date	Agree/ Adopt/ Object	Comments/Reasons
1 01582460039	JCN HYDE VIEW RD PCO1 WESTFIELD ROAD HARPENDEN	AL5 4HL	41	17/09/2019		
2 01727855476	ADJ NO.59 LADIES GROVE ST. ALBANS	AL3 5TR	19	17/09/2019		
3 01923673032	PCO PCO1 OAKWOOD ROAD BRICKET WOOD ST. ALBANS	AL2 3QB	33	16/09/2019		

Signature: .....  
 Area: St Albans

British Telecommunications plc  
 Registered office:  
 81 Newgate Street  
 London EC1A 7AJ  
 Registered in England No 1800000  
[www.bt.com](http://www.bt.com)



25 SEP 2019  
 Digital Services



25 SEP 2019

## Digital Services

2 May 2019



Jane Rumble

Director Consumer Policy

publiccallboxes@ofcom.org.uk

Dear Sir/Madam,

### Public call box removals

BT is currently engaged in a round of public call box removals and may be contacting you to seek your views, in accordance with regulatory obligations imposed by Ofcom. This letter gives more information about your role as a relevant local authority under those obligations and some factors you may wish to consider in your response.

Under Universal Service obligations set by Ofcom, BT must provide public call boxes in order to meet the reasonable needs of end-users in terms of geographical coverage, the number of public call boxes and the quality of call box services.

A public call box is a public pay telephone which is permanently installed on public land and to which the public has access at all times. This definition excludes many public pay telephones in locations such as stations.

If BT proposes to remove the last public call box at a site, it must notify the relevant local authority, and it cannot remove the box if the local authority objects in writing within 90 days (the 'local veto'). A site is defined as any area within a walking distance of 400 metres from that public call box. This means that a box could be nearer than 400 metres away as the crow flies, but not easily accessible because of an obstacle such as a railway line.

The process for removal of such public call boxes is set out in a Direction and Guidance published by Ofcom. We are writing to draw your attention to the Direction and Guidance and to respond to some questions that have been raised with us.

Direction: <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/consultations/uso/statement/callboxdirection.pdf>

Guidance: <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/consultations/uso/statement/removals.pdf>

### ***Why does BT seek to remove some public call boxes?***

Public call box use has been in heavy decline, and 20% of public call boxes have not been used to make a call in the last twelve months. Mobile take-up and coverage are both high - 94% of adults personally use a mobile phone and 98% of premises have 3G/4G coverage. Mobile 'roaming' for emergency calls has been in place since 2009, meaning that where a caller has no signal from their provider, a 999 call will be switched automatically to another provider's network if there is one available.

BT uses its own published criteria ([www.bt.com/payphones/removals](http://www.bt.com/payphones/removals)) when considering which public call boxes to remove. These are intended to ensure that boxes are retained either where they are actively used or where there is a social need for their retention.

BT's 'overriding criteria' for payphone retention are:

- No mobile coverage (from any provider);
- Suicide hotspot;
- Accident blackspot;
- Coastal location.

Its 'reasonable needs' criteria are:

- The public call box in question is the only one within 800 metres;
- There are at least 500 households within 1 kilometre;
- At least 12 calls have been made from the public call box within the previous 12 months.

If a public call box meets any of the overriding criteria or all the reasonable needs criteria, BT has stated that it will not be proposed for removal.

***Can a local authority veto the removal of a public call box because it is a local landmark or on 'heritage' grounds?***

Ofcom's Guidance sets out matters that local authorities should take into account when making a decision to consent or object to BT's proposal to remove the last box from a site. In particular, at Annex 1 it sets out factors which Ofcom considers relevant to the decision. The Guidance explains that local authorities should refer to these factors and publish the reasons for their decision. BT could challenge a veto that it considers to be inappropriate in the Competition Appeal Tribunal.

BT's Universal Service Obligation applies to the telephone, not the kiosk. It would therefore be inappropriate for a local authority to object to removal of a public call box because it is a local landmark or on 'heritage' grounds. However, BT has a scheme ([www.bt.com/adopt](http://www.bt.com/adopt)) whereby kiosks can be 'adopted' by bodies such as parish councils for £1. The telephone equipment is removed, and the kiosk can then be used for another purpose such as a community book exchange.

***Can a local authority veto all public call box removals in its area?***

Each public call box should be considered separately. Any local authority objection to removal of a public call box should be supported by clear, objective and proportionate reasons, related to the provision of the communications service at the box in question.

***Can Ofcom give us more information about the public call boxes in our area?***

Ofcom does not hold details of the locations of public call boxes or individual boxes that BT may be proposing for removal. BT will be able to give you information about the boxes in your area.

Yours faithfully,



Jane Rumble

25 SEP 2019

Digital Services



Notice date:

## PUBLIC NOTICE

# Payphone kiosk removal

**Hello.**

Our information shows that this phone box has had very little use over a significant period of time.

We're therefore proposing to remove this phone box. There is a consultation period of 42 days from the above date.

**Please contact your Local Authority if you have any comments.**

If you'd like to know where the nearest alternative payphone is, or who your local authority is please contact us on:

**0800 661 610 option 1**

This number is only able to provide alternative payphone details and the name of your local authority.