



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

5th September 2019

We're going to remove some payphones from your area

Dear Chief Planning Officer,

We've been looking at how people are using public payphones in your planning area and we've spotted 3 that we'd like to remove, although this number may be subject to minor change. But before we do that we want to make sure that local communities are happy for us to go ahead.

So we'll be holding a 90-day consultation process to give people a chance to let us know what they think. During the next couple of weeks, we'll start posting notices about this in the payphones that we've earmarked to remove. It'll take us about 15 days to cover all of the affected payphones. As soon as we've finished posting the notices, we'll send you a letter listing all the payphones involved and confirming the beginning of the formal consultation period.

What you need to do now

Nothing, for the moment. We'll be in touch again to let you know when we're starting the 90-day removal consultation period.

How are we deciding which payphones to remove and which to keep?

We're only looking at removing payphones that we think people don't need any more. There are two categories of public payphone that we'll be keeping in service:

1. Payphones that are still in use, which means any public payphone that's -

- the only payphone within 800 metres,
- had at least 120 calls of any type within a 12-month period,
- and the local population (within one kilometre of the payphone) is not fewer than 500 households.

2. Where there's a compelling social need for the payphone, which means it's -

- close to a suicide hotspot, or
- near an accident blackspot, or
- in an area without any mobile coverage, or
- within 400 metres of the coast where an alternative payphone is not available.

Why are we removing public payphones across the country?

One word: mobiles. Over the last 10 years, payphone usage has plummeted by over 90 per cent. It used to be that we needed to keep public payphones going for emergency situations, so people could call 999 if they were in trouble. But even the need for that has ebbed away as 98 per cent of UK premises now have either 3G or 4G coverage.

You'll probably have realised, through handling planning applications for mobile mast upgrades, that EE have improved 4G coverage to support the Emergency Services Network. This has been happening all over the UK. It means that – wherever there's network coverage – people can call the emergency services even if they don't have any credit on their mobile or there isn't any coverage from their own mobile provider.

And people with hearing or speech difficulties can use emergency SMS to get hold of the emergency services, fast.

Can a community keep a traditional red phone box if they like it?

Yes, through our Adopt a Kiosk scheme a community can keep one of these iconic landmarks for just £1. People use them for loads of different, imaginative purposes. Someone runs a grocery shop from one; a wildlife information centre from another; and the Community Heartbeat Trust charity has installed defibrillators in many boxes.

You can find out more about the scheme at www.bt.com/adopt

If you would like to speak to us about adopting a payphone in your local area, please get in touch by email at: btp.authorisation.team@bt.com or by post at: BT Payphones, pp 4th Floor Monument TE, 11–13 Great Tower Street, London, EC3R 5AQ.

Yours sincerely

Rick Thompson

Rick Thompson
Payphone Planning Officer